Academic Language
Agenda

- Define academic language
- Examine academic language in the edTPA
- Discuss ways to support the candidates

November 8
- Workshop
- Specific Examples of Ways to Support
School is where you go to learn a secret language but they don’t tell you that it’s there. You have to figure it out on your own. It’s like an initiation to a secret club. Maya, 8th grade.
Language is the primary vehicle for learning, instruction, and overall intellectual development. It is not only a means for communicating information, it is also a vehicle for deepening their understanding of important ideas. (Kersaint, Thomspon, & Petkova, 2009, p. 46.)
- It ain’t that I don’t know nothin’, it’s that I can’t say it right.  Mitch, 7th grade

- So the test question asked for my hypothesis about the character’s behavior and I got confused cause I hadn’t done no experiment.  Emmet, 10th grade
Academic Language Definition

- The language of the discipline that students need to learn and use to participate and engage in meaningful ways in the content area.

- The oral, visual and written language used for academic purposes.

- The means by which students develop and express content understandings.
The more experience we get with our content area, the more expert we become; the harder it is to “see” academic language.

- blind spot
- familiarity
Academic Language Challenge
Zwiers’ describes academic language as “the set of words, grammar, and organizational strategies used to describe complex ideas, higher-order thinking processes, and abstract concepts” (p. 20).
Academic language is the **oral, visual, and written** language that students need in order to
- understand (read, listen, think)
- communicate (listen, speak, write, connect)
- perform (think, read, write, listen, speak, create)

**Academic Language** is necessary to participate in the content
- think
- question
- talk
- learn
I eventually figured it all out but, for a while there, all these words and terms and names that I didn’t understand were flying around. I felt pretty clueless. Amy, professional year

Pedagogy. Curriculum. Unpack. Reflect. I was pretty lost in my first education classes. I needed the secret decoder ring or something. Sam, professional year
- **Academic Language**
  - Language of the discipline
  - Argumentation in the discipline

- **Emphasis on texts & writing across content areas**

- **Developmental**
  - Vocabulary of discipline
  - Tools
  - Trajectory
Argument

Discipline
- Application beyond those engaged in argument
- Evidence required, intentional
- Specific citation
- Systematic inquiry
- Goal to find “truth”
  - official
  - Factual, professional
- Use of evidence makes stronger argument
- Use reason but source can be different
- Both social endeavors

Everyday Life
- Opinion is okay
- Hearsay can be evidence
- Personal experience
- They just happen
- Can be superficial
- Goal to be right
Support for Language Tasks

- **Language use in classroom**
  - Intentional
  - Purpose

- **Access**
  - Vocabulary
  - Command Terms
  - Instructional Language
  - Testing language

- **Scaffolds/Tools**

- **Structures for making meaning**
Pre-Service Teachers are asked to:

- Select one key **language function** essential for students to learn within the **central focus**.

- Identify a key **learning task** from plans that provide students **opportunities to practice** using the language function.

- **Language Demands** (consider language function & task) describe the language demands (written or oral) students need to understand and/or use.
  - Vocabulary
  - Syntax
  - Discourse

- **Language Supports**: Describe instructional supports that will help students understand and use language function & additional language demands.

- **Assessments**: What formal and informal assessments will provide evidence of students’ understanding and **fluency**?
Learning Segment

- A set of 3–5 lessons
  - coherent set of lessons
  - build on each other
  - toward a central focus
  - clearly defined beginning and end
A description of the important understandings and core concepts that you want students to develop within the learning segment.

The central focus should go beyond a list of facts and skills, align with content standards and learning objectives, and address the subject-specific components in the learning segment.
Learning Task

- Includes:
  - activities
  - discussions other modes of participation that engage students
    - to develop, practice, and apply skills and knowledge

- Learning tasks for segment
  - related to a specific learning goal
  - connected to language function for learning segment
**Language Functions**

- content and focus of the learning task
- represented by action verb within the learning outcome (describing, comparing, summarizing, etc.)

- **Social Studies**
- **Math**
- **Science**
Language used for specific purposes

- Inform
  - Identify information
  - Report information
  - Describe information

- Solve problems
  - Define problem
  - Represent problem
  - Determine solution

Language used for specific purposes

- Compare/Contrast
  - Describe similarities and/or differences

- Order
  - Sequence objects, ideas, or events
  - Describe timeline or cycle

- Classify
  - Group objects or ideas according to their characteristics
  - Describe organizing principles

Language used for specific purposes

- **Analyze**
  - Separate whole into parts
  - Identify relationships and patterns
  - Describe features or main idea

- **Infer**
  - Generate hypotheses to suggest cause or outcomes
  - Predict implications

- **Justify & Persuade**
  - Give reasons for an action, decision, point of view
  - Give evidence why
  - Convince

Language used for specific purposes

- Synthesize
  - Summarize information cohesively
  - Combine or integrate ideas to form a new whole

- Evaluate
  - Identify criteria
  - Explain priorities
  - Assess and verify the worth of an object, idea or decision
“What I realized as I worked with my content was that I really had to show my students how to organize the stuff they were learning.” (Scott, 2011)

- **Social Studies**
- **Language Arts**
- **Science**
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Opportunities to Practice

- Language Function
- Lesson (learning segment)
- Learning Task
  - Opportunity to practice using the language function
Specific ways that academic language is used by students to participate in learning tasks
  - reading
  - writing
  - listening and/or speaking
  - demonstrate/perform

Specific ways that academic language is used by students to demonstrate their disciplinary understanding.
  - What do they know?
  - What can they do?
  - What can they use language to demonstrate?
There are language demands that teachers need to consider as they plan to support student learning of content, which include:

- Vocabulary
- Language Functions
- Syntax
- Discourse
I was wrong. I thought that y’all were just over-emphasizing something that students really just knew if they just paid attention. So, I assigned a writing prompt and the students wrote almost nothing. It was like they didn’t understand what I was asking them to do. (Ben, 2010)
Discuss Steve and Frankenstein.
They are books.

Monster is about a boy. Frankenstein is about a monster.

We read them in school.
I revised the prompt thinking that just doing that would solve the problems. I was careful about the verbs I chose to replace discuss. I wanted to be more specific about what they were actually going to do in the writing. (Ben, 2010)
Discuss Steve and Frankenstein.

Compare and contrast Steve in Monster and the monster in Frankenstein.
The response was better. The students kind of knew what to do but there was still something missing. So, this time I used several scaffolds to help the students. A Venn Diagram. Sentence frames. Sentence Combining. (Ben, 2010)
Steve in Monster got no future in the world he in. He broke the law got caught in a store spent jail and on trial. His future done gone away tho he ant convicted. It don’t matter that he might notta done it. He got nothin now jail done shaped him. He cant escape his maybe action. Like the monster in Frankenstein he got no choice in what people do. Both Steve and the monster shaped by they society.
Steve, the main character in Walter Dean Myer’s novel Monster, was not convicted of the crime he was accused of but he still has no future because of the appearance of being a convict. He is in a world that judges young men by the color of their skin. News stories about them. It will not matter to society that he was not convicted; he will always be a monster because of who he is. As a young, black man who has been in jail and on trial. He will be judged as monstrous because of how society will see him. He will always have the stigma of both trial and jail and won’t be able to escape that. Similarly, the monster in Frankenstein will always be judged by his outward appearance. He looks scary and people don’t know what to expect from him. Both Steve and the monster are products of their society and are judged and condemned by their society. It doesn’t matter that they may be innocent; they have the appearance of being monsters by society’s standards. Neither one of them will be able to escape the views of society.
“When we teach a subject, or any topic or text within that subject, we must teach the academic vocabulary for dealing with it—not just the words, but also the linguistic processes and patterns for delving deeply into and operating upon that content” (Wilhelm, p. 44).
Although hydrogen is explosive and oxygen supports combustion, a compound of them puts out fires.

Unless hydrogen and oxygen form a compound, they are explosive.

If hydrogen and oxygen form a compound, they lose their original properties of being explosive and supporting combustion.

Academic language development is making the language of the school, content, and classroom explicit to expand students’ control over language and improve their language choices according to the purpose (FUNCTION) and audience for the message.
A group of students measured the circumference of an exercise ball. Here are their measurements in inches:

42, 46, 45, 47, 43, 46, 46

Find the median, mode, and mean and enter your answers below. Show your work:

The median is \( \underline{46} \). The mode is \( \underline{46} \). The mean is \( \underline{45} \).
Example

Tom forgot to put his measurement on the list. When the students added Tom’s measurement to the list the mean and median decreased, but the mode stayed the same. Which value is most likely to be Tom’s measurement? Circle your choice:

a. 43
b. 45
c. 46
d. 47
Academic Language Functions

Explain why you chose this measurement.

The answer can’t be 47 or 46 because the mean and the median decreased, so Tom’s measurement had to be less than those. Also, it can’t be 45, because the mean would have stayed the same. It had to be 43.
Pre-Service Teachers are asked to:

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- Identify a key **learning task** from plans that provide students opportunities to practice using the language function.

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  - Vocabulary
  - Syntax
  - Discourse

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Vocabulary

- includes words and phrases (and symbols) that are used within disciplines including:
  - words and phrases with subject specific meanings that differ from meanings used in everyday life (e.g., table, ruler, force, balance);
  - general academic vocabulary used across disciplines (e.g., compare, analyze, evaluate); and
  - subject-specific words defined for use in the discipline.
Annotate

- In English—you add notes and/or comments to a text, usually explaining something or going deeper into the specific meaning, make connections, identify and/or explore key literary elements

- In Science—add brief notes to a diagram or graph
Syntax

- Set of conventions for organizing symbols, words and phrases together into structures (e.g., sentences, graphs, tables)

- Examples from mathematics:
Grammar consists of set rules regarding language and sentence structure, such as no splitting infinitives and no hanging prepositions.

Syntax, in reference to sentences, is how a sentence is worded and structured and in ways that can create, extend, or change meaning.

- types of sentence (declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, imperative) and
- word order (passive vs. active voice),
- length of sentences (short vs. long).
Discourse

- Discourse
  - Structures of written and oral language
  - How members of the discipline talk, write, and participate in knowledge construction
  - Discipline-specific
    - Distinctive about features/way of structuring language (text structures)

- **English, Glossary**
- **Math, Glossary**
- **Social Studies, Glossary**
Discourse

- Common Core Text Types
  - Argument
  - Expository
  - Informational
  - Narrative

- Writing requires something to say, the words to say it, and the structure with which to write it (McCracken & McCracken, 1986).
Planning Commentary (4a-d)

- Teacher candidates must identify a language function essential to the central focus.
  - English Example
  - Math Example
  - Science Example
  - Social Studies Example

- Identify a key learning task that provides students with opportunities to practice using the language function.
Planning Commentary (4a-d)

- Additional language demands
  - Given the language function & identified task, identify associated language demands
    - Vocabulary
    - Syntax
    - Discourse

- Language Supports
  - Instructional supports that will help students UNDERSTAND and USE language function & identified language
There was a point in my planning that I realized that attending to academic language was really just good teaching. (Ellie, 2011)
Task 1, Planning

4. Supporting English-Language Arts Development Through Language

a. Language Demand: Language Function. Identify one language function essential for students within your central focus. Listed below are some sample language functions. You may choose one of these or another more appropriate one for your learning segment.

- Analyze
- Argue
- Describe
- Evaluate
- Explain
- Interpret
- Justify
- Synthesize
The academic language for this learning segment is related to using and understanding informational texts. Students have read many forms of narrative texts before, but are uncomfortable with other kinds of texts. On the whole, students do not understand how text features are used, especially in informational texts, and this affects their performance in content area classes. Many students are also unaware of less commonly used text features, like white space and pronunciations in parentheses. Therefore, this learning segment will focus on defining and using these terms.
The language demand for this segment is the interpretation of poetry using textual evidence. Students will identify their interpretation of the theme of a poem, and then support their analysis using evidence from the text and knowledge of poetic devices. Students have prior knowledge in analysis and interpretation of texts, but we have not yet worked with poetry or poetic devices in class. During previous whole group discussion, students were able to define and explain their knowledge of the terms annotate, interpret, and analyze. Some students can easily identify theme and can recognize the use of literary devices, but many students are still learning this skill. Though all of my students can use supporting details, some still struggle with using conventions and textual evidence correctly.
b. Identify a key learning task from your plans that provides students with opportunities to practice using the language function identified above. In which lesson does the learning task occur? (Give lesson/day/number.)

c. **Additional Language Demands.** Given the language function and task identified above, describe the following associated language demands (written or oral) student need to know and/or use:

- Vocabulary
- Plus at least one of the following:
  - Syntax
  - Discourse
In this learning segment, students will be learning about different text features that are often used in informational texts. The academic language includes white space, pictures, bullets, headings, sub-headings, captions, sidebars, maps, drawings, and graphs. Students will also need to learn vocabulary words such as reform and intuition, which are present in the news and magazine articles that they will be reading in this unit. Students will be exposed to the academic language in a practical and engaging manner, filled with multiple opportunities to apply the new academic language across various genres of informational texts.
The key language demand in this particular learning segment is providing a written interpretation of a poem’s theme using textual evidence and knowledge of literary devices to support their analysis. This is a language demand that combines many complex skills. Students will be scaffolded through graphic organizers, modeling, peer support, and teacher conferencing in order to internalize this demand. Ultimately, students will create an argumentative essay about a poem of their choice where they explain the theme and then use evidence to back up their claims. The demand is integral to the central focus of analyzing poems for theme and the use of literary devices. Students need to be able to support their opinions and interpretations with textual evidence. This demand is appropriate for the students’ language development because it builds on their knowledge of supporting claims using textual evidence (with other types of texts) and it helps to prepare them for future classes, standardized tests, and their future outside of school.
Students will also need to know the terms symbolism, metaphor, simile, imagery, blank verse, personification, and rhyme and rhythm in order to be able to support their interpretations of a poem’s theme. This learning segment also requires that students be able to communicate their ideas to their peers and clearly explain their claims with supporting evidence. Students will also need to be able to select key evidence from the poems and must know how to write a reflective essay on poetry.
d. Language Supports. Refer to your lesson plans and instructional materials as needed in your responses to the prompt.

- Describe the instructional supports (during and prior to the learning task) that help students understand and successfully use the language function and additional language identified in prompts 4a-c.
In this learning segment, students will be supported in their use of informational text features in all of the lessons. At the beginning of each lesson, students will see the academic language in their Daily Do Nows. Students will see the new vocabulary words in a sentence and must come up with their own definitions. In all of the worksheets and graphic organizers that students will be using, key terms will be bolded. There will also be numerous opportunities for students to discuss the terms in class.
Throughout this learning segment, students will also be exposed to new vocabulary words in the poetry that we will read. In previous units, students have used multiple strategies, including context clues and knowledge of word parts to break down words to determine their meaning. Students each have a list of strategies to use when they encounter unknown words in their binders for the class. They will continue to use this list for support during this unit, as well as other supports under the academic language section. I have two ELL students who have fairly strong academic language skills, but sometimes struggle with making sense of new vocabulary words. I plan on pairing them with other students in the class and providing guided notes to support their learning.
I am using numerous instructional supports that will help students in meeting the language demand and learning about the various poetic terms and devices that they will need. I will use think-alouds and other forms of modeling when I introduce the interpretive essay. I wrote an example of an analysis essay based on a poem that we have previously covered in class, and I plan on going through the essay with students, and asking them to annotate my argument and the ways in which I am using textual evidence and the poetic devices. After modeling the think-aloud protocol, I will ask students to give their own examples from the poem and to brainstorm their own themes using textual evidence. Students will then discuss their responses in small groups.
I am also introducing a limited number of terms each day so that students have the opportunity to practice using academic language in pairs, table groups, and full-class discussions...I am also planning on using graphic organizers that have examples of terms, different ways in which they are used in various texts. Students will complete these organizers in small groups so that they have the opportunity to discuss the terms and language with each other. To support my ELL students and other students struggling with academic language, I will cover strategies multiple times. This will allow students multiple opportunities to practice using the language and to get feedback. I also plan on meeting with students individually to discuss their progress on the interpretive essay and to give feedback. The use of direct instruction, conferencing, graphic organizers, and peer support will all support students in using the targeted language.
Workshop

Examples
Academic
Language in
Planning
Some content areas address academic language differently.

- Early Childhood: vocabulary (as developmentally appropriate sounds, words, sentences, etc.)
- World Language (does not address academic language)
- Math: added “precise language” (CCSS)
- Special Education: Academic Language Communication
Example Clip

- [http://mpweb2.ncte.org/Pathways/BFfootage/LIL/Bonine1.html](http://mpweb2.ncte.org/Pathways/BFfootage/LIL/Bonine1.html)
  - Example of science teacher
Working with Lesson Plans

- Standards
- Goals
- Objectives
- Assessment

- Language Demand
What are the key words and phrases my students will need to understand, read and use in my lesson? (For TPA, learning segment.)

- Which of these words/phrases will be new to my students?
- Which of these words/phrases have different meanings in other contexts? Which might be confusing for students?
- Is there a non-jargon, student-friendly way to explain this to students?
How (i.e., for what purpose) will students be using language in the lesson?

- What key words/phrases will students need to understand in order to follow the directions in the lesson?
- What key words/phrases will students need to understand in order to work with texts in the lesson?
- What key words/phrases will students need to understand in order to
  - talk about the texts?
  - write about the texts?
  - create similar texts?
What are the key *mathematical* words and phrases my students will need to understand and use in my learning segment?

- Which of these words/phrases will be *new* to my students?
- Which of these words/phrases have different meanings in informal/non-mathematical conversations?
- What are “kid-friendly” ways of describing each of these?
Which new *mathematical representations* (including notation) will students need to learn to “read” and use in my learning segment?

What “non-mathematical” words or phrases will my students need to understand in order to make sense of the task scenarios in my learning segment?
How (i.e., for what purpose) will students be using language in your learning segment?

- Which key words/phrases will my students need to understand in order to follow *directions* during this learning segment, and which of these will be *new* to my students?
- Write some sentences (to develop into sentence frames) that capture how you expect students to be using academic language to achieve a particular purpose during the learning segment.
- What are “kid-friendly” ways of describing each of these?
Resource Slides
Language Functions: The function is the purpose the language is intended to achieve in the learning task.

Functions are associated with verbs found in learning outcome statements.

Common language functions in the language arts include:
- reading/listening for main ideas and details;
- analyzing and interpreting characters and plots;
- writing narrative, informational, or poetic text;
- using presentation skills to present a play, a speech, or do a dramatic reading;
- evaluating and interpreting an author’s purpose, message, and use of language choice, setting, mood, tone, and other literary strategies;
- comparing ideas within and between texts,
- making sense of unfamiliar vocabulary through pictures, word parts, and contextual clues.
- **Language Functions**: The function is the purpose the language is intended to achieve in the learning task.

- Functions are associated with verbs found in learning outcome statements.

- Common language functions in mathematics include
  - *describing* mathematical phenomena,
  - *predicting* from models and data,
  - *comparing* based on common attributes,
  - *summarizing* mathematical information,
  - *justifying* conclusions,
  - *evaluating* data and mathematical representations,
  - *classifying* based on attributes,
  - *explaining* phenomena and processes,
  - *drawing* conclusions based on data,
  - *representing* mathematical information and mathematical models, etc.
Language Functions: The function is the purpose the language is intended to achieve in the learning task.

Functions are associated with verbs found in learning outcome statements.

Common language functions in science include:
- **reading** investigative procedures, diagrams, figures, tables, graphs, and dense authoritative text;
- **writing** or **presenting** causal explanations; modeling scientific phenomena;
- **predicting** from models and data from scientific inquiries;
- **comparing** based on common attributes, summarizing scientific data from inquiries;
- **justifying** conclusions with scientific evidence;
- **evaluating** data and investigative procedures;
- **classifying** based on attributes;
- **describing** processes and procedures;
- **drawing** conclusions based on investigative results, etc.
Language Functions: The function is the purpose the language is intended to achieve in the learning task.

Functions are associated with verbs found in learning outcome statements.

Common language functions in history-social studies include

- **reading/listening** for main ideas and details in narrative, expository, and persuasive text;
- **reading/interpreting** maps, graphs, and data tables;
- **evaluating and interpreting** an author/presenter/historian’s purpose and message;
- **corroborating** an author’s claims;
- **examining** evidence an author/presenter/historian uses to support claims;
- **analyzing** arguments in favor of a perspective; writing/presenting persuasive arguments;
- **analyzing** and/or describing causes of historical, economic, geographic, and political events;
- **supporting** written or spoken claims with evidence and warrants; etc.
Readings


Readings


English

- Analyze
- Argue
- Describe
- Evaluate
- Explain
- Interpret
- Justify
- Synthesize
Social Studies

- Analyze
- Compare/Contrast
- Construct
- Describe
- Evaluate
- Examine
- Identify
- Interpret
- Justify
- Locate
Math

- Compare/Contrast
- Conjecture
- Describe
- Explain
- Prove
Science

- Analyze
- Explain
- Interpret
- Justify with Evidence
In history/social studies, language features include expository, narrative, journalistic, maps, and other graphic print materials; presentations of data in text, charts, and graphs; and video and live presentations. Discourse structures can be at the sentence, paragraph, or symbolic level. If the function is to develop a document-based argument, then appropriate language features could include written essays with specified formats and pattern sentences like “The two main causes of ______________ were ____________ and ____________. For example, the (author of) (document) stated that ________________” (citation).
In mathematics, language structures include symbolic representations such as numbers, equations, two-column proofs (which can be translated into words), graphic representation (which is shorthand language for complex sets of data), and narrative (e.g., to describe or compare). If the language function is to prove, then appropriate language structures include formal two-column proofs as well as informal explanations that begin with a statement of the problem and known information, followed by a series of statements like “And then, I know _______ because _______,” ending with what is to be proved.
In English-Language Arts, language structures include words, grammar and mechanics, text structures, writing processes, and genres. If the language function is to persuade, then appropriate language structures include claims, supporting evidence, and counterarguments.
Sentence Frames are tools that can help give students the words and the structures to use as they are initially developing fluency.

- Since the square root of __ is __, then __ squared must be ___. (Math)
- The __ is an important symbol for __ because __. (ELA)
- In the experiment, the __ acted on the __ and caused a __. (Science)
- The war was caused by __, __, and __ because __. (Social Studies)