**Unpacking Academic Language Chart**

This tool helps educators consider the [WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 edition](https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/standards/eld) at the unit and lesson levels. It is based on the 2020 Edition’s dimensions of language use[[1]](#footnote-1). These dimensions are one way to conceptualize the way students use language in sociocultural contexts, or how students make language choices to express themselves in various contexts, and for different purposes and audiences. The tool prompts educators to think about what language students will be expected to interpret and express at their particular English language proficiency levels as educators choose standards-based contexts, topics, themes, and texts for curriculum development. During this process, it is important for educators to continuously calibrate their expectations using the [WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors](https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/WIDA-ELD-Standards-Framework-2020.pdf) within their grade level cluster and multiple data points derived from current student work.

The *Unpacking Academic Language Chart* can be useful at different points throughout the unit development process, for example:

* In Stage 1, educators can use this chart as Focus Language Goals (FLGs) are designed using the [Collaboration Tool](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/instruction/collaboration-tool.docx); this tool can help them identify academic language embedded in FLGs to determine the linguistic and conceptual knowledge and skills driving the unit, and
* During Stage 3 development, when considering the progression of language instruction for the unit and planning/ sequencing how students will learn about and engage with target academic language in each lesson.

Tool components:

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| --- | --- |
| 1. The first few columns describe each dimension and provide sample language features to illustrate them. | snapshot of the unpacking academic language tool discourse dimension |
| 1. The last few columns provide space for educators to think through the language students will encounter throughout a unit or lesson and make decisions about what language features will be prioritized during instruction based on students’ current English language proficiency levels. | Image of section of chart  **Educator tip:** Use the WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors to make informed decisions about where students are and what language to teach next |

**Unpacking Academic Language Chart**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Performance Criteria** | **Sample Features** | **What Students Can ALREADY Do** | **What Students Are Ready to Learn NOW** | **What Students Will Learn LATER** |
| **Discourse Dimension** | **Organization:** *how ideas are organized for a specific purpose* | Organization patterns/structures (introduction, body, and conclusion; claim, evidence reasoning, etc.) |  |  |  |
| **Cohesion:** *how ideas are connected in and across sentences and oral or written discourse* | [Cohesive devices](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQBcWXO_oVQ):   * Repeated words * Synonyms * Pronoun substitutions * Connectors |  |  |  |
| **Density:** *how information is packed or expanded* | Noun groups packed with:   * Adjectives and modifiers * Prepositional phrases * [Nominalization](https://www.thoughtco.com/nominalization-in-grammar-1691430#:~:text=In%20English%20grammar%2C%20nominalization%20is,It%20is%20also%20called%20nouning.) |  |  |  |
| **Sentence** **Dimension** | **Grammatical complexity:** *how ideas are expressed through different types of clauses and sentences* | * Sentence types (simple, complex, compound) * Clauses (dependent and independent) * Conventions and mechanics |  |  |  |
| **Word/Phrase Dimension** | **Precision:** *how language is used to convey specific meaning* | * Every day, cross-disciplinary, and technical language[[2]](#footnote-2) (verb types, adverbs, abstract nouns, etc.) * Multiple meanings of words and phrases * Idiomatic expressions * Shades of meaning * Collocations |  |  |  |

**Additional Resources to Support Unpacking Academic Language**

1. Resources from the [WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition](https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/standards/eld):

* For educators wanting to learn more about each dimension of language use, see *Section 2* (pages 31-33).
* To learn more about expectations of how students can interpret and express language at different English language proficiency levels, see the *Proficiency Levels Descriptors* within *Grade Level Cluster Materials* (separated by grade bands: K, 1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8 and 9-12).
* To learn more about specific language features connected to ways students use language in school, see the Grade Level Cluster Materials in *Section 3*. These sample features in the 2020 Edition are organized by Key Language Uses of Language (KLUs), or prominent ways language is used in school across content areas. In addition, educators can learn more about the language their students will need to learn to succeed in school tasks in *Section 4: Resources* - which includes *Common Linguistic and Organizational Features of Key Language Uses* across content areas (p. 220-221) and *Unique Linguistic and Organizational Features of Key Language Uses* (p. 222- 233).

1. Other resources: The [*English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards with Correspondences to K–12 Practices and Common Core State Standards*](https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/Final%204_30%20ELPA21%20Standards%281%29.pdf) from the Council of Chief State School Officers describe what English language learners can do with language in relation to academic practices outlined in content area standards. It presents how English learners at five English language proficiency levels may use language to speak, read, write, and listen based on their grade level. Educators (content area, grade level, special education, bilingual, ESL teachers, etc.) can use this resource alongside the WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors to choose specific language to teach and practice with students.

1. WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition Section 2, p. 31 - 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For a quick definition of each one of these, see WIDA ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Edition p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)