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edTPA: Understanding Academic Language

Participant Resource Booklet

Overview

- Develop a shared definition of academic language.
- Examine the specific edTPA requirements for academic language task.
- Explore the tools and supports
  - Understand the language of the edTPA document
  - Examples
  - Misconceptions

Key Questions

- What is academic language?
- How is academic language framed in the edTPA?
- What are the tools and supports pre-service teachers need in order to develop their understanding of the academic language of their content?

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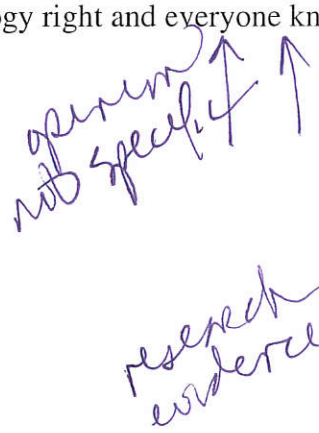
Section 1: What is Academic Language?

Everyday Language and Academic Language Excerpts

Excerpt 1

A lot of people are talking about technology and how it gets used in schools. We need to use technology better. People use technology all the time but they don't think about it and then mess things up because they don't know stuff about how it is used. Schools don't really use technology right and everyone knows that.



Excerpt 2

Research in digital literacy, specifically as it applies to pre-service teachers, continues to grow. Recent studies focus on digital technology as a means of structuring teacher education courses or engaging with content, i.e., wikis, blogs, and online professional communities (e.g., Baran & Cagiltay, 2010); pre-service teachers' reflections on their digital practices (e.g., Burnett, 2009); and the disconnect between pre-service teachers' enthusiasm with digital technologies in their coursework and their reluctance in field placements (e.g., Vratulis, V., Clarke, T., Hoban, G., & Erickson, G. 2011). Studies have examined how pre-service teachers develop specific multimodal and digital approaches to literacy instruction (e.g., Whitin, 2009) and engage in content-focused activities that can be used in their future classrooms (e.g., Swan & Hofer, 2006).

What do you notice about the two passages?

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Everyday Language and Academic Language

Everyday Language Characteristics	Academic Language Characteristics

Defining Academic Language

How do you define Academic Language?

Challenges Candidates Face:

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Apply Reading Strategy to Complex Text

Reading Strategy

1. Identify where there are struggles or questions.
2. Use context cues and prior knowledge to make sense of what we don't understand.
3. Share both questions and educated guesses.
4. Rewrite text in own words.
5. Then ask, what is still missing from my definition. What do I need to add or consider?

Complex Text
Academic Language Definition in the edTPA

Oral and written language used for academic purposes. Academic language is the means by which students develop and express content understandings. Academic language represents the language of the discipline that students need to learn and use to participate and engage in meaningful ways in the content area. There are the language demands that teachers need to consider as they support student learning. (Sec. ELA, edTPA Glossary, p. 39)

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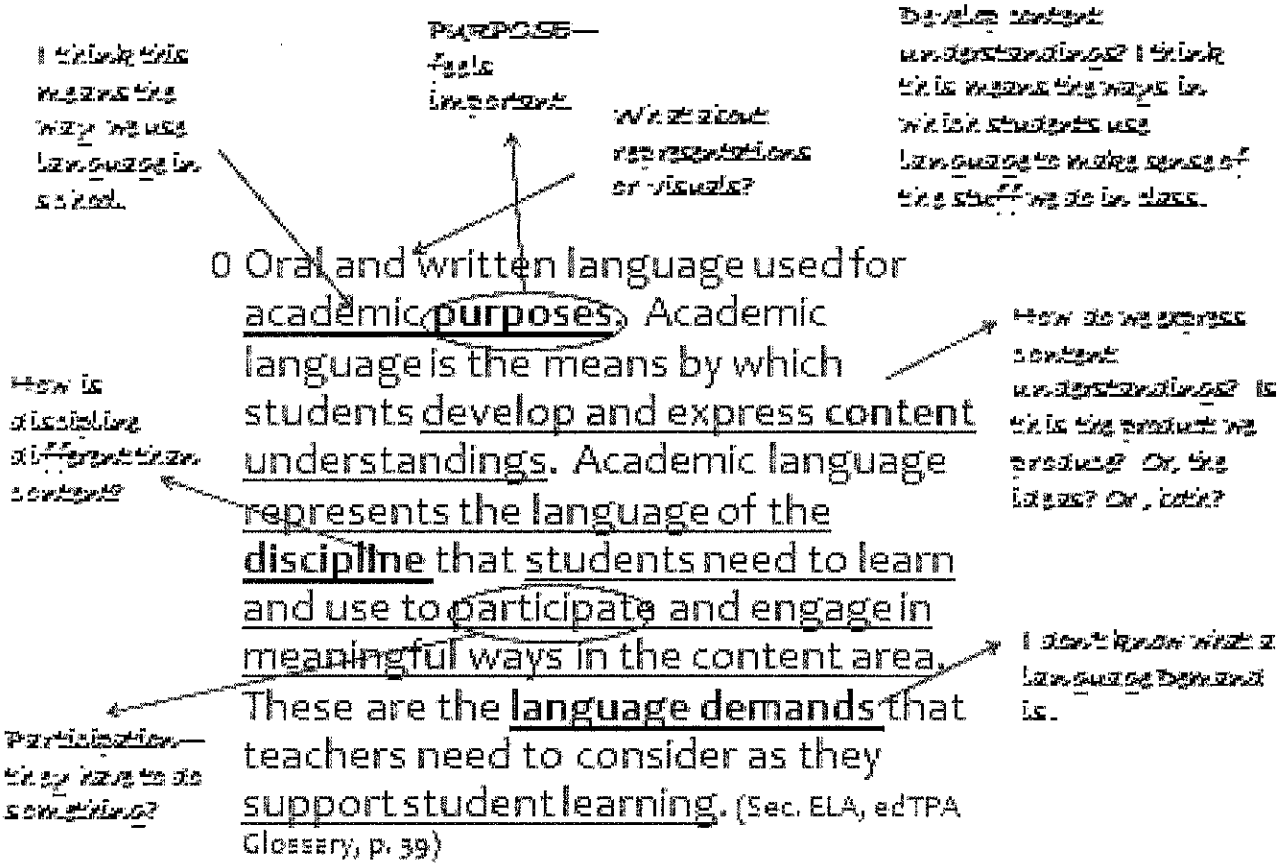
Candidate Example



Candidate Rephrase

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Academic language is the language of the content area and the discipline. It is the language students will use as they talk and write; they will use this language to show what they know and what they are learning about the content. It is necessary for me to attend to the language that students will need because they need to know it in order to learn the content, think about the content, and participate in class.

My Rephrase

Disciplinary Language Questions

What does writing look like in your discipline? What are the writing skills students need to be successful?

What does reading look like in your discipline? What are the reading skills students need to be successful?

What does speaking/listening/performing look like in your discipline? What are the speaking/listening/performing skills students need to be successful?

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Examples

Discipline	Writing	Reading	Speaking/ Listening/ Performing
English/Language Arts	essays, poems, memoirs, letters, etc.	novels, poetry, textbooks, plays, film, ads, etc.	speeches, read alouds, scenes, discussions, presentations, etc.
Visual Arts	critique, artist statements, how tos, process pieces, etc.	images, textbooks, art pieces, pottery, commentary, etc.	painting, sketching, drawing, making pottery, discussion, showcase, etc.
Physical Education	game plans, game analysis, plays, routines, etc.	textbooks, game plans, plays, game or practice video review, demonstrations, etc.	game play, practice, demonstrations, drills, etc.

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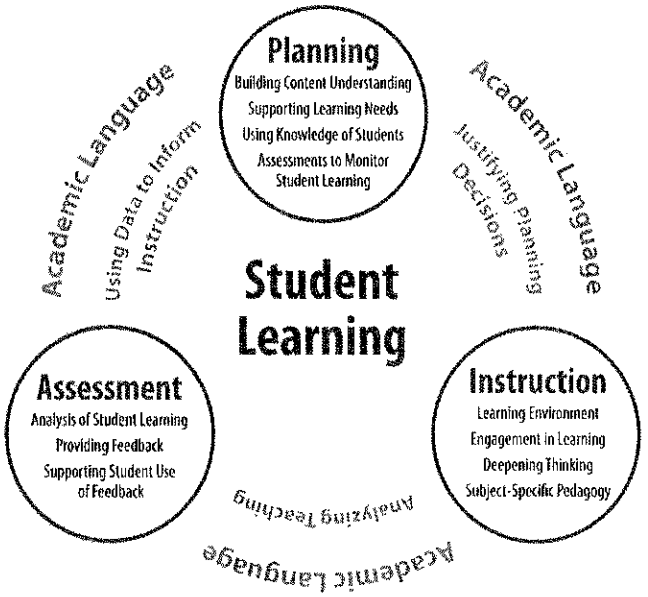
Section 2: Academic Language in the edTPA

edTPA Graphic



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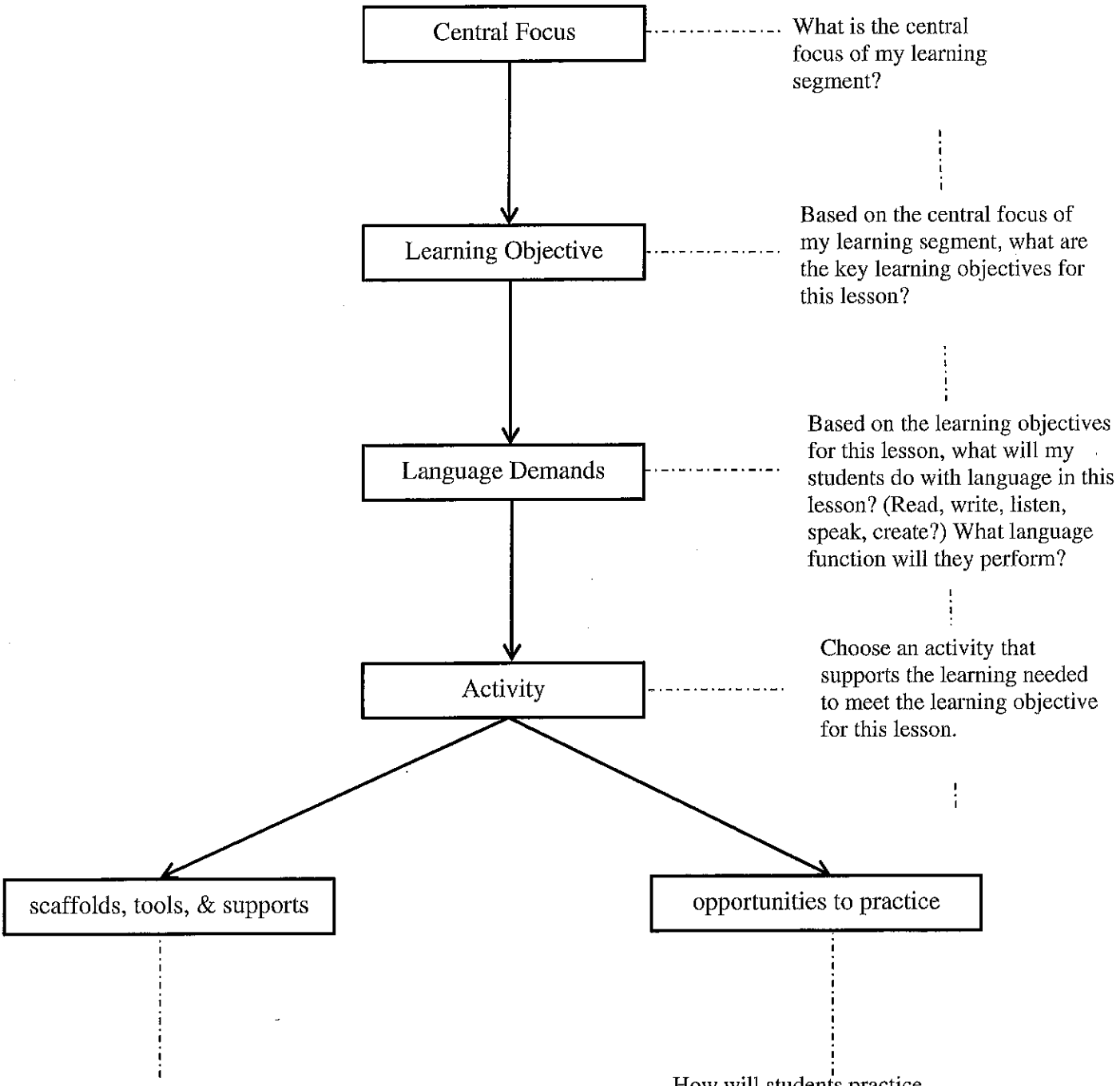
Academic Language in edTPA Lessons



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Terms Candidates Might Find Challenging

Term	Definition & Notes
Central Focus	What doing How doing Purpose doing
Language Function	Explain Students will define Students will describe Students will compare
Vocabulary	Content Vocab
Syntax	Key terms, symbols or phrases
Discourse	

For learning segment
Applies across disciplines
All disciplines have Syntax
order of terms, symbols or phrases

Learning Objective for Lesson

Language Function (that BEST fits the work of language in lesson)

Academic or Content Vocabulary (terms, phrases, and/or symbols) Related to the Objective

Syntax Examples

Academic Features of Syntax	Examples

Long noun phrases	**Write an inequality that, when solved, will give the amount of sales Mandy needs to cover her planned expenses. (math)**
Nominalizations	Opposition (social studies, physical education) Chord progression (music)
Conditional Sentences	If you give a mouse a cookie, he will want milk to go with it.
Passive Voice	The historic Ryman Theater, the Mother Church of Country Music, was reconstructed after the devastating 2010 floods. Sections of the famous stage were refinished and repaired. It was completed in early August.
Long, Complex Sentences	Few studies have examined the nutritional makeup of lunches that students bring from home (8,9) or whether bringing lunch from home is associated with better or worse dietary behaviors compared with getting lunch from other sources.

Syntax Related to the Objective

Discourse Related to the Objective

Language Supports

List some language supports that are useful in your content area.

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Rubric 4

Rubric 4: Identifying and Supporting Language Demands How does the candidate identify and support language demands associated with a key English Language Arts learning task?				
Level 1	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**	**Level 5**
Language demands3 identified by the candidate are **not consistent with the selected language function4 OR task.** **OR** Language supports are **missing or are not aligned** with the language demand(s) for the learning task.	**Language supports primarily address one language demand** (vocabulary, function, syntax, discourse).	**General language supports address use of two or more language demands** (vocabulary, function, syntax, discourse).	**Targeted language supports** address use of • vocabulary, • **language function,** **AND** • one or more additional language demands (syntax, discourse).	**Level 4 plus:** Language supports are **designed to meet the needs of students with different levels of language learning.**

What are characteristics of general support?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What are characteristics of targeted support?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Rubric 4 cont.

Rubric 4: Identifying and Supporting Language Demands **How does the candidate identify and support language demands associated with a key English Language Arts learning task?**				
Level 1	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**	**Level 5**
Language demands3 identified by the candidate are **not consistent with the selected language function4 OR task.** **OR** Language supports are **missing or are not aligned** with the language demand(s) for the learning task.	**Language supports primarily address one language demand** (vocabulary, function, syntax, discourse).	**General language supports address use of two or more language demands** (vocabulary, function, syntax, discourse).	**Targeted language supports** address use of • vocabulary, • **language function, AND** • one or more additional language demands (syntax, discourse).	**Level 4 plus:** Language supports are **designed to meet the needs of students with different levels of language learning.**

1. **Read the sample responses to planning prompt 4.**
2. **Underline/Highlight the identified language function and any additional identified language demands (vocabulary, discourse, syntax).**
3. **Circle the language supports in the commentary.**
4. **Examine evidence you found and map it to the URLP for Rubric 4.**
5. **Are the levels represented accurately? Why?**
6. **Share the differences you notice between the three different samples.**

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One Extra Gift: Sample Response

Task 1: Planning Commentary

Respond to the prompts below (**no more than 9 single-spaced pages, including prompts**) by typing your responses within the brackets. Do not delete or alter the prompts. Pages exceeding the maximum will not be scored.

1. Central Focus

a. Describe the central focus and purpose for the content you will teach in this learning segment.

The central focus is analyzing figurative language, specifically imagery, similes and metaphors, within a variety of complex texts. In order to analyze how and why figurative language is used, students will explain instances of figurative language and their effects as well as use figurative language within their own writing. The purpose for teaching this content is that being able to analyze figurative language will help students understand and analyze *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* The students have written short analysis essays on previous works but they are going to be doing several kinds of analysis on the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God.*

b. Provide the title, author (or, if a film, the director), and a short description (about a paragraph in length) of salient features of the text(s) that a reviewer of your evidence, who is unfamiliar with the text(s), needs to know in order to understand your instruction. If there is more than one text, indicate the lesson(s) where each text will be the focus.

Consider including the following in your description: genre, text structure, theme, plot, imagery, or linguistic features, depending on the central focus of your learning segment.

Their Eyes Were Watching God, a novel by Zora Neale Hurston, is a text filled with figurative language. Because of the use of imagery and figurative language, the language of the novel is rich and vivid. However, the extensive use of this kind of language could potentially be a challenge for readers. We will use "A Dream Deferred" by Langston Hughes as a model text—it will help us connect the overarching theme developed across the whole unit and also provide a model for identifying and analyzing figurative language. "A Dream Deferred" is used in Lessons 1 & 2. In addition to the novel and poem, we will be using several contemporary songs that are examples of extended metaphors. These songs, "Firework" by Katy Perry, "Stereo Hearts" by Gym Class Heroes, "Radioactive" by Imagine Dragons, and "1000 Whispers" by Illogic.

4. **Supporting English Language Arts Development Through Language**

   a. **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 for your learning segment.

Analyze	Argue	Describe	Evaluate
Explain	Interpret	Justify	Synthesize

Within this learning segment, the essential language function is **explain**. Students will explain the figurative language and support their explanations with examples from the text.

   b. Identify a key learning task from your plans that provides students with opportunities to practice using the language function identified above. Identify the lesson in which the learning task occurs. (Give lesson day/number.)

A key learning task that provides students with opportunities to **explain** is the activity in Lesson 2 in which students work with the poem "A Dream Deferred" to identify and explain the meaning of the figurative language in the poem in preparation for their short analysis essay.

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

      Vocabulary

      Plus at least one of the

      following: Syntax

      Discourse

Consider the range of students' understandings of the language function and other language demands—what do students already know, what are they struggling with, and/or what is new to them?

As part of their vocabulary development, students will need to use the literary terms we are working with as they discuss the song lyrics with their partner and when they write down their explanation of
the lyrics. Key vocabulary terms include "figurative language," "metaphor," "simile," "compare," "effect,"
"image," "imagery," and "visualize." Other terms that they need to know the meaning of include "identify" and "explain." Students will need to know and be able to apply the definition of "figurative language," "metaphor," and "simile" in order to identify the examples of figurative language in the songs.

We will be focusing on discourse as students develop their written explanation into an academic format that uses textual examples and support. Students will identify what type of figurative language is being and then explain what they think it means. In explaining what the figurative language means, students will be discussing not only what the lyric means but

how students figured out this meaning based on the comparison drawn by the simile or metaphor. Moving beyond identifying the figurative language will be new to them so we will use three kinds of models to support their understanding (teacher model, class model, partner model.) Additionally, we will use sentence frames and our Writing Word Lists (this has transition words and phrases, introductory words and phrases, etc.)

d. **Language Supports.** Refer to your lesson plans and instructional materials as needed in your response to the prompt.

   Describe the instructional supports (during and/or prior to the learning task) that help students understand and successfully use the language function and additional language demands identified in prompts 4a–c.

In 3b, I talked about how each day I will provide modeling as a form of scaffolding. I will model the specific task using a different poem to what the students will be using. As I model, I will draw attention to the way that I explain the meaning of the figurative language. I will show the students how to use the chart to organize their ideas as a pre-writing activity. On the 3-column chart, the first column is where they will write the figurative language they have identified in the poem. The second column is where they write what they think the language means, and the final column is where they will develop a sentence explaining the meaning of the identified figurative language. To further support them in writing their explanations, I have several sentence stems listed on the board they can use. After modeling several examples, and demonstrating how to fill out the chart students will practice in small groups or partner adding another example to the chart. Next, students will do the task on their own after they practice with a partner or group. My modeling will help students see what to include in an explanation of figurative language as well as vocabulary they need to use. The models will include sample sentences, sample paragraphs, think alouds, sentence stems, and underlining key features of the sample paragraph so that students can see how the information from the chart became part of the paragraph.

While the vocabulary used in this lesson is not new because students have worked with these terms before, I have put the words and definitions back on the Word Wall that we use for literary terms. Also, during the modeling of the task, I will use the terms and definitions in my modeling. By using the sentence stems, students will be using the vocabulary in their responses and in their own sentences. Working with partners should be a support as well because they will have to talk and practice using the academic language; they will be able to work with partners as they go through the steps to explain their figurative language and as they use the vocabulary.

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Academic Language Chart

Language Demand	Identified Language Demands (Task)	General Language Supports	Targeted Language Supports
Function Using song lyrics as sample text, model interpreting figurative language using a think aloud approach. Use a chart with arrows to show the steps used in interpreting the meaning.	Explain	• Model explaining how figurative language is used. • Assign a practice explanation using song lyrics.	• Using song lyrics as sample text, model interpreting figurative language using a think aloud approach • Use a chart with arrows to show the steps used in interpreting the meaning
Vocabulary	explain, explanation, textual evidence, support, simile, figurative language, passage	• Review vocabulary • Word wall of vocabulary with meanings	

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Language Demand	Identified Language Demands (Task)	General Language Supports	Targeted Language Supports
Syntax	Patterns for citation, use of textual evidence, use of introductory and referential phrases in text	• Mini-lecture on how to use textual citations (color-coded example of MLA references) • Example of introductory phrases and phrases that refer to textual evidence	
Discourse	paragraph	Example of explanatory paragraph	

Culminating Task

Academic Language Definition Revisit

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What do you need to add/change in your definition of academic language?

What questions do you still have?