



Experienced Multilingual Learners

Competency

Educators analyze the linguistic, academic, and sociocultural strengths of all students—whether Native or newcomer, regardless of race—and design instruction that maintains high expectations, supports disciplinary language development, and ensures equitable access to rigorous learning opportunities.

Key Method

The educator will backward map a grade-level lesson to analyze its academic language demands at the discourse, sentence, and word levels. They will design explicit instruction and scaffolds that amplify—not simplify—language so experienced multilingual learners can develop disciplinary language while accessing rigorous content standards.

Method Components

Assets of Experienced Multilingual Learners

Experienced multilingual learners are students enrolled in English Language Development (ELD) services for five or more years. It's important to view experienced multilingual learners through an asset-based lens. They deserve educators who believe in them and their ability to grow their language proficiency, so they can exit ELD services while accessing the same challenging grade-level content as their English-proficient peers.

In their 2023 book, *Long-Term Success of Experienced Multilinguals*, Tan Huynh and Beth Skelton identify four assets experienced multilingual learners bring to the classroom.

- Multiple years of experience in English-medium schools
- Multilingual and multicultural identities
- Ability to engage in grade-level, non-sheltered classrooms alongside English-proficient peers
- Access to an expanded linguistic repertoire across languages

When educators build on these assets, experienced multilingual learners can grow their language proficiency while accessing the same challenging content as their peers. Rather than labeling students as “stuck” or “behind,” this framework highlights their growing expertise in multiple languages and school systems.

What is Academic Language?

Academic language is the language used for disciplinary learning across content areas. It includes how students interpret ideas through listening, reading, and viewing, and express ideas through speaking, writing, and representing.

Genre Families

Academic language can be divided into four genre families:

- Narrate
- Inform
- Explain
- Argue

The content of each discipline determines the genre being taught in class, and each has specific organization and language structures associated with it.

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Evaluating Academic Language:

Academic language can be analyzed at three levels:

- Discourse level: Organization of the whole text (e.g., sequence, problem/solution, claim/evidence/reasoning);
- Sentence level: Grammatical structures and clause complexity (e.g., conjunctions, noun groups, verb tense, adverbial phrases);
- Word level: General academic and discipline-specific vocabulary, including morphology

This three-level analysis guides explicit instruction.

ELD Standards and Exit Criteria

Educators must be familiar with their state's ELD standards, which drive instruction and measure language proficiency levels. Annual proficiency assessments determine language levels and eligibility to exit services, but exit isn't the sole measure of success; fostering ongoing bilingualism and multilingualism remains an essential goal. Instruction for experienced multilingual learners must:

- Align with ELD standards
- Maintain grade-level rigor
- Intentionally advance students toward exit criteria

State or Consortia	ELD/ELP Standards	Link to Standards
Alabama, Alaska, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island,	These states and territories participate in the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment or WIDA Consortium	WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition Kindergarten - Grade 12

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South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Bureau of Indian Education, Dept. of Defense, Northern Mariana Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands		
Arizona	English Language Proficiency Standards	English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) Arizona Department of Education
California	English Language Development Standards	English Language Development Standards - Resources (CA Dept of Education)
Connecticut	English Language Learner Framework	State of Connecticut English Language Proficiency (CELP) Standards
New York	NYS ESL Learning Standards and Performance Indicators (Will be adopting Home Language Arts Progressions/New Language Arts Progressions)	Blueprint for English Language Learner Success ELL and ML Educator Tools & Best Practices New York State Education Department
Texas	Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for	19 TAC Chapter 128 Texas Education Agency

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	English as a Second Language	ELPS Resource Tools
ELPA21	English Language Proficiency Standards	ELP Standards – ELPA21
WIDA	2012 Amplification of The English Language Development Standards	WIDA

Shared Responsibility and Collaboration

Content and language educators share responsibility for the academic growth of experienced multilingual learners. Collaboration helps them share expertise, learn from one another, and strengthen instruction across classrooms. It also saves time and reduces the isolation that can make strategy development harder.

Functional Language Approach

Experienced multilingual learners benefit from a functional language approach to language learning. In this approach, educators teach language within the grade-level content rather than in isolation.

Language and Content Objective

Language objectives clarify how students will use speaking, listening, reading, and writing to demonstrate understanding of disciplinary content.

- Content objectives are based on the content standards and identify what a student will know and be able to do by the end of the lesson.
- Language objectives describe how students will use speaking, listening, reading, and/or writing to show understanding. For experienced multilingual learners, the language objective should reflect the academic language students need to advance their English proficiency level.

Writing Language Objectives

Educators first reflect on the academic language the lesson requires from students, and then plan instruction accordingly. The steps below should be followed to create effective language objectives.

1. Identify key vocabulary.

2. Name the language function.
3. Determine needed language skills.
4. Identify relevant grammar and structures.
5. Consider the task.
6. Select language learning strategies.
7. Ensure language objectives are transparent to support student agency.

Backwards Mapping to Analyze the Language Demands of a Task

To prepare for instruction, educators plan with the end in mind. This approach helps educators to decide which language features to teach explicitly while they simultaneously teach grade-level content standards. Standards vary by student and state. Backwards mapping starts with desired learning outcomes and plans backwards to identify the language and content support students will need. Tan Huynh's blog post, "[Planning for MLs: Forest, trees, leaves](#)," offers a helpful example of backwards mapping:

Lessons Focused on Expressive Language

When planning lessons that require students to write, speak, and display information, educators first need to think about an ideal student response. The questions below help educators analyze that ideal response and decide what academic language features to teach.

- Are students being asked to narrate, explain, inform, or argue?
- At the discourse level, how is the model organized? (i.e. sequentially, problem/solution, claim/evidence/reasoning)
- At the sentence level, what language features does the model use? (i.e. adverbial phrases, conjunctions, noun groups)
- At the word level, what general, specific, and technical vocabulary does the model use?

Lessons Focused on Interpretive Language

When planning lessons that require students to listen, read, and view information, educators analyze the language in the text or task to create language objectives that reflect the text. The questions below help educators analyze the text and decide which academic language features to teach.

- Is the text narrating, explaining, informing, or arguing?
- At the discourse level, how is the text organized? (i.e., sequentially, problem/solution, claim/evidence/reasoning)
- At the sentence level, what language features does the text use? (i.e. adverbial phrases, conjunctions, noun groups)
- At the word level, what general, specific, and technical vocabulary does the text use?

Explicit Instruction and Gradual Release

Explicit instruction teaches students how language is used within disciplinary content. A gradual release model gives students opportunities to hear the teacher think aloud, practice with their teacher and peers, and practice independently.

Adapted from De Oliveira, L. C. (2014). Writing Science in an Upper Elementary Classroom: A Genre-Based Approach to Teaching English Language Learners

- **Read to Build Background Knowledge:** Students read to build content knowledge. The educator explicitly teaches the language features of the content text.
- **Deconstruction of Text:** Educators think aloud about how the model text is organized. They explicitly annotate academic language at the discourse, sentence, and word levels.
- **Joint Construction of Text:** Students write a text with the educator. They can refer back to the deconstructed text for guidance.
- **Collaborative Construction of Text:** Students write a text with their peers. They can refer back to the deconstructed text for guidance.
- **Independent Practice:** Students independently write text using the language structures they learned from their teacher and when practicing joint construction.

Scaffolding

Scaffolding is used to amplify, not simplify, academic language so students can access grade-level content. They provide the necessary support for students to access challenging grade-level content.

Scaffolds are temporary and should fade away as students build mastery of the standard and language structures. For experienced multilingual learners, scaffolds support them in advancing their academic language toward the skills needed to exit the ELD program.

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Scaffolding Examples:

Graphic organizer

- Reflect the genre (narrate, argue, inform, explain) of the content.
- Use at the discourse level to organize ideas while reading, listening, and viewing information, and before speaking and writing.
- Use at the sentence level to plan longer sentences that include who, what, when, where, why, and/or how.

Chunking

- Discourse Level: Break assignments and complex text into sections with guiding questions. If a question has multiple parts, separate the parts so students can focus on answering one at a time.
- Sentence Level: Break the sentence into clauses to analyze what different parts of a sentence mean, reflecting on why specific language structures and academic vocabulary were used.

Background Knowledge

- Help multilingual learners access prior knowledge about a topic and how it connects to their culture.
- Build the knowledge needed to access content.
- Built through visuals, videos, reading, and shared experiences.
- Support experienced multilingual learners to identify how their background knowledge can be used when interpreting or expressing language.

Academic Discourse

- Use discourse routines to create opportunities for students to agree, disagree, ask clarifying questions, and build off each other's ideas.
 - E.g. [7 Strategies for Math Language Routines](#)
- Build in opportunities for translanguageing where students use their home language to clarify their understanding of content material and make connections between English and their home language.

Word Banks

- Include words needed to write cohesive paragraphs and complex sentences. This includes transitions, conjunctions, and prepositions.

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- Include content-specific words, which allows educators to see if students can correctly use such words in context. It's helpful to organize content-specific words by part of speech (i.e. nouns, verbs, etc.).

Vocabulary Amplification

- Define academic words when they first appear in text or on an assignment. This can be done by providing a glossary or writing the word's definition in parentheses after the word.
- Amplify morphemes as they appear in text. Explicitly teach morphology so experienced multilingual learners can analyze general, specific, and technical vocabulary along with prefixes, suffixes, and/or Latin or Greek roots.

Sentence and Paragraph Frames

- Increase the amount of language students produce by providing sentence and/or paragraph structure;
- Help students use complex sentence structures, especially when frames begin with different conjunctions;
- Help students coherently organize longer writing pieces;
- Assess understanding by having students complete three sentences that all start the same way but end with the conjunctions because, but, or so:
 - She was late to school *because*...
 - She was late to school *but*...
 - She was late to school *so*...

Visual

- Provide visual support such as maps, photographs, videos for tasks, content, and target outcomes.
- Use color, text formatting, and tables for organization.

Cultural Relevance

- Ensure topics, content, and examples are culturally relevant, accurate, and inclusive;
- Provide opportunities for students to connect to their background and experiences.

I Do, We Do, You Do Routine

- I Do: Demonstrate a sample response or task to illustrate expectations and the desired level of performance. Deconstruct the task for its language features;
- We Do: Practice with students and jointly construct language with guidance and feedback;

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- You Do: Students independently try the response or task. Provide feedback on their progress.

Read more about the gradual release of responsibility from Fisher and Frey here: [Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework](#)

Supporting Rationale and Research

Aicha Zohbie, and Subrata Bhowmik. "Using a Genre-Based Approach to Teach Writing to Elementary ESL Students: A Boon or a Barrier?" TESOL Journal, 21 Mar. 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.819>.

Kim, So Lim, and Deoksoon Kim. "Empowering Diverse Learners: Integrating Writing-To-Learn Strategies in a Middle School Science Classroom in the U.S." Education Sciences, vol. 14, no. 9, 21 Sept. 2024, p. 1031, <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14091031>.

Sarmiento, Cherish M., et al. "Academic Language Use in Middle School Informational Writing." British Journal of Educational Psychology, vol. 95, no. 2, 3 Nov. 2024, pp. 384–404. pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12068036/

"Supporting Long-Term English Learners: Assessment, Reclassification, and Educational Opportunities." Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR), 2023. www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10824669.2022.2127727#d1e81

"(PDF) Writing Science in an Upper Elementary Classroom: A Genre-Based Approach to Teaching English Language Learners." Academia.edu, 2026. www.academia.edu/34676440/Writing_science_in_an_upper_elementary_classroom_A_genre_based_approach_to_teaching_English_language_learners.

Resources

General Resources

[NEA Toolkit: English Language Learners](#)

[Tan K Huynh Bathroom Briefs](#)

[WIDA ELL Standards Framework](#)

[Ways to Support Long-Term English-Language learners \(opinion\). Education Week](#)

[Translanguaging Guides. CUNY](#)

[Building Momentum with Long-Term English Learners](#)

[Video: Academic Language and English Language Learners](#)

[What is Translanguaging?](#)

[Supporting Intermediate English Learners in Every Subject](#)

[6 Strategies to Help ELLs Succeed in Peer Learning and Collaboration | Colorín Colorado](#)

[Visual Scaffolding Tips for ELLs](#)

[Meaningful Classroom Talk: Supporting English Learners' Oral Language Development](#)

[Making Complex Text Accessible](#)

[Providing Sentence Frames and Sentence Starters](#)

[Language-Based Approach to Content Instruction](#)

[A Scaffolding Strategy to Help Experienced ELLs Express Complex Ideas](#)

Assets of Experienced Multilingual Learners

[Long-Term Success for Experienced Multilinguals Infographics](#)

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[Experienced Multilinguals: An Affirming Shift](#)

[Supporting Long-Term English Learners: Start by Changing the Label with Tan Huynh and Beth Skelton](#)

[Long-Term Success for Experienced Multilinguals Corwin Monday Afternoon Webinars](#)

[Supporting Intermediate English Learners in Every Subject Cult of Pedagogy](#)

[See Where They Can Go Learning2](#)

What is Academic Language

[WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition](#)

ELD Standards and Exit Criteria

[50-State Comparison: English Learner Policies](#)

Shared Responsibility and Collaboration

[ELLs are Everyone's Kids: The Role of Collaboration in the CCSS](#)

[The Best Collaborative and Instructional Strategies for Supporting Our ELs](#)

Functional Language Approach

[Planning for MLs: Forest, trees, leaves](#)

[Writing Language Objectives with Samples](#)

[Achieve The Core](#)

[Language Objectives: The Key to Effective Content Area Instruction for English Learners | ColorínColorado](#)

[7 Strategies for Math Language Routines](#)

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[Principles for the Design of Mathematics Curricula: Promoting Language and Content Development](#)

[How to Write Language Objectives: Tips for ELL Educators](#)

[Scaffolding Ensures Equity for Multilingual Learners](#)

[Scaffolding for Experienced English Language Learners](#)

[Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework](#)

[Bathroom briefs: ELL Strategies](#)

[Nine dimensions of scaffolding](#)

[Culturally Responsive Teaching for Multilingual Learners: Tools for Equity](#)

[Luciana C. de Oliveira LACI framework](#)

[Making Complex Text Accessible](#)

[A Scaffolding Strategy to Help Experienced ELLs Express Complex Ideas](#)

[Have a Writing Revolution in Your Classroom](#)

[Translanguaging Guides](#)

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn this micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3, and be proficient in all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

200-300 words.

Please don't include any information that identifies you to reviewers.

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Describe the experienced multilingual learners you teach. Include the grade level(s) you teach, the language proficiency levels represented in your classroom, and the general linguistic and cultural backgrounds of your students. Also describe how you currently approach language and content instruction for this population—what you already do and where you want to grow.

Passing:

The response provides a clear picture of the candidate's classroom context, including grade level, proficiency levels, and linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their students. The candidate describes their current instructional approach to language and content instruction for experienced multilingual learners and describes where they feel there's room to strengthen their approach.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following **three** artifacts as evidence of your learning. See the Rubric for the passing score.

Please don't include any information that identifies you or your students to reviewers.

Artifact 1: Identification of Experienced Multilingual Learners in the Classroom

Create a table that analyzes one experienced multilingual learner in your classroom. Include:

- Years enrolled in ELD services;
- Language proficiency data from the past three to five years;
- Listening, speaking, reading, and writing results from past three to five years.;
- Identified strengths;
- Areas requiring targeted language instruction;
- Linguistic, academic, and sociocultural assets.

Artifact 2: Backward Mapping of a Grade-Level Content Assignment for Language

Using the student identified in Artifact 1:

1. Create a backward mapping document to describe an upcoming grade-level lesson.

Include:

- Content objective;
 - Language objective;
 - Identified genre (narrate, inform, explain, argue);
 - Expressive or interpretive focus;
 - Activities and strategies to address the objectives;
 - Goal for the end of the lesson: What do you want the student to interpret or produce?
 - Criteria of success used to assess whether students are meeting the lesson objectives.
2. Identify whether the lesson involves the student either:
 - Interpreting information through reading, listening, or viewing, or
 - Expressing information through writing or speaking.
 3. If the lesson has student interpreting information through reading, listening, or viewing, please annotate what the student is interpreting.
 - How is the lesson organized? (i.e. sequential, cause and effect, claim/evidence/reasoning, etc.)
 - What language structures are used at the sentence level? (i.e. verb tense, clauses, adverbial phrases, noun group, etc.)
 - What specific and technical vocabulary words are being used?
 4. If the lesson has students expressing information through writing or speaking, describe:
 - How is the ideal answer organized? (i.e. sequential, cause and effect, claim/evidence/reasoning, etc.);
 - What language structures at the sentence level would your ideal answer include? (i.e. verb tense, clauses, adverbial phrases, noun groups, etc.)
 - What specific and technical vocabulary words do you want students to use?
 5. Include and describe at least three scaffolds you are going to add to the upcoming lesson for experienced multilingual learners to grow their language proficiency while engaging in grade-level content.

Artifact 3: Evidence of Student Work

200-300 words

After teaching the lesson:

- Submit a work sample from an experienced multilingual learner. Describe the student's achievement of the lesson's learning objectives. What do you recommend as next steps for this student?
- Analyze how scaffolds supported language development at the discourse, sentence, and/or word level. Explain how the lesson maintained high expectations while advancing academic language proficiency. Use specific examples from your lesson and from student work.

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Identification of Experienced Multilingual Learners in the Classroom	The table includes at least one Experienced Multilingual Learner and provides the number of years the student has been enrolled in ELD services along with language proficiency scores from the past three to five years. Assessment results across domains—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—are identified, with specific domains noted as strengths and areas for targeted language instruction. At least one linguistic, academic, or sociocultural asset is identified for each student.	The table includes at least one Experienced Multilingual Learner and provides most required elements, but may be missing proficiency data, domain trends, or asset identification. Trends or assets are noted but lack the specificity needed to give a clear picture of the student's language development.	The table is incomplete or missing required elements such as proficiency data, domain trends, or asset identification. The response focuses primarily on what the student cannot do, or doesn't identify linguistic, academic, or sociocultural assets.
Artifact 2: Backward Mapping of a Grade-Level	The backward mapping document identifies the content objective, language	The backward mapping document includes content and language objectives and	The backward mapping document is missing key elements such as objectives,

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Content Assignment for Language	objective, genre, and whether the lesson focuses on expressive or interpretive language. Academic language demands are analyzed at the discourse, sentence, and word levels, with organizational structures, grammatical features, and vocabulary identified and connected to the lesson task. At least three scaffolds are described, with an explanation of how each one supports language development at the discourse, sentence, or word level.	identifies genre and expressive or interpretive focus, but analysis of academic language demands is incomplete or addresses fewer than all three levels. At least three scaffolds are identified, but the connection between the scaffolds and the language demands of the lesson isn't fully explained.	genre, or expressive or interpretive focus. Academic language demands are described in general terms or fewer than three levels are addressed. Fewer than three scaffolds are identified, or the scaffolds listed aren't connected to the language demands of the lesson.
Artifact 3: Evidence of Student Work	A work sample from an Experienced Multilingual Learner is included. The analysis identifies at least one scaffold used in the lesson and describes how it supported the student's language development at the discourse, sentence, or word level.	A work sample from an Experienced Multilingual Learner is included. The reflection references scaffolds and language development but doesn't clearly connect them to a specific level—discourse, sentence, or word.	The work sample is missing or doesn't reflect grade-level content. The reflection doesn't address how scaffolds supported language development, or doesn't reference the discourse, sentence, or word level.

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	The reflection connects the student's work to the language objective from Artifact 2.	The connection between the student work and the language objective from Artifact 2 is limited or unclear.	The connection between the student work and the language objective from Artifact 2 is absent.
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Part 3 Reflection

(400-500 words)

For tips on writing a good reflection, review the following resource:

[How Do I Write a Good Personal Reflection?](#)

Please don't include any information that identifies you to reviewers.

Answer the following questions. Include concrete examples from your work and from your implementation with students.

1. What are some changes you will make in your instruction to ensure experienced multilingual learners grow their language proficiency while accessing challenging grade-level content?
2. What are your goals for continued learning about experienced multilingual learners?
3. What is a systemic barrier you want to address?

Passing:

- The reflection shows new understanding and includes specific examples of changes that will be made to support experienced multilingual learners.