**CHAPTER ONE**

# *Introduction to the Book Series*

According to the Migration Policy Institute (2013), close to 5 million U.S. students, which represent 9 percent of public school enrollment, are English language learners (ELLs). Three-quarters of these 5 million students were born in the United States and are either the children or grandchildren of immigrants. In some large urban school districts such as Los Angeles, ELLs already comprise around 30 percent of the student population. These demographic trends, along with the rigorous content expectations of new content and language standards (e.g., CCSS, WIDA, ELPA21, etc.), require that educational systems become skilled at simultaneously scaffolding academic language and content for this growing group of students. For ELLs, academic language mastery is the key to accessing rigorous content. Now is a pivotal time in educational history to address both academic language and content simultaneously so that ELLs do not fall further behind in both areas while also becoming bored by methods that are cognitively banal and lead to disengagement.

Another group of students who have academic language needs, but are not formally identified as such, are standard English learners (SELs). SELs are students who speak languages that do not correspond to standard American English language structure and grammar but incorporate English vocabulary. They include African American students who speak African American language

(AAL), sometimes referred to as African American English, and Mexican American–non-new-immigrant students who speak Mexican American Language (MxAL) or what is commonly referred to as "Chicano English." ELLs and SELS also need instructional assistance in the academic language necessary to be successful in school, college, and beyond. For both groups of students, academic language represents the pathway to full access in meeting the rigorous demands of the new standards.

## PURPOSE OF THIS ACADEMIC LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT BOOK SERIES

The purpose of this series is to assist educators in developing expertise in, and practical strategies for, addressing four key dimensions of academic language when working with ELLs and SELs. To systemically address the needs of ELLs and SELs, we educators must share a common understanding of academic language development (ALD). Wong-Fillmore (2013) defines academic language as "the language of texts. The forms of speech and written discourse that are linguistic resources educated people in our society can draw on. This is language that is capable of supporting complex thought, argumentation, literacy, successful learning; it is the language used in written and spoken communication in college and beyond" (p. 15). Given that we are preparing ELLs and SELs for college, career, and beyond, they should receive ample opportunities to learn and use academic language, both in spoken and written form (Soto, 2014). ELLs and SELs also must be provided with scaffolded access to cognitively and linguistically demanding content, which allows them to cultivate their complex thinking and argumentation.

All students can benefit from academic language development modeling, scaffolding, and practice, but ELLs and SELs need it to survive and thrive in school. ELLs have plenty of language assets in their primary language that we must leverage to grow their academic English, yet there is often a very clear language and literacy gap that must be closed as soon as ELLs enter school. Similarly, SELs come to school with a language variation that, to be built upon in the classroom setting, must first be understood. In reviewing the wide range of literature by experts in this field, most agree that the key elements of academic English language for ELLs and SELs include these four

dimensions: academic vocabulary, syntax and grammar, discourse, and culturally responsive teaching.

We have therefore organized this book series around these four dimensions of academic English:

- Conversational Discourse—developing students' conversational skills as an avenue for fostering academic language and thinking in a discipline
- Academic Vocabulary—teaching high-frequency academic words and discipline-specific vocabulary across content areas
- Syntax and Grammar—teaching sophisticated and complex syntactical and grammatical structures in context
- Responsive Teaching—incorporating culture while addressing and teaching language and honoring students' home cultures and communities

The focus on these four dimensions in this book series makes this a unique offering for educators. By building upon the cultural and linguistic similarities of ELLs and SELs, we embed strategies and instructional approaches about academic vocabulary, discourse, and grammar and syntax within culturally responsive teaching practices to make them all accessible to teachers of diverse students. As the American poet and great thinker of modern Hispanic literature, Sabine Ulibarrí, noted, "Language is culture; it carries with it traditions, customs, the very life of a people. You cannot separate one from the other. To love one is to love the other; to hate one is to hate the other. If one wants to destroy a people, take away their language and their culture will soon disappear." Therefore, the heart of this book series is to integrate language and culture in a manner that has not been addressed with other books or book series on ALD.

## ACADEMIC LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT DIMENSIONS DEFINED AND CONNECTIONS TO THE BOOK SERIES

ALD is a pathway to equity. With new, rigorous state standards and expectations, ALD is the scaffold that provides access for ELLs and SELs so that high academic expectations can be maintained and reached. The following matrix defines each dimension of ALD

and demonstrates the connection of that ALD dimension across the book series. For full proficiency in ALD, it is integral that each dimension be addressed across disciplines—the dimensions should not be taught as either/or skills. Instead, each of the dimensions should be addressed throughout a course of study or unit. In that way, it is important to read the book series in its entirety, as an ongoing professional development growth tool (more on that later). The matrix also demonstrates the connections made between ALD dimensions, which will prove helpful as readers complete continue their study across the ALD book series.

| ALD Dimension | Definition | Connections to the Book Series |
|---|---|---|
| **Academic Discourse** | Academic discourse is putting words and sentences (the other two dimensions) together to clearly communicate complex ideas. The essential components of academic discourse include:<br><br>● Message organization and text structure<br>● Voice and register<br>● Density of words, sentences, and ideas<br>● Clarity and coherence<br>● Purpose, functions, and audience | As suggested in the definition, academic discourse involves the overlap of academic vocabulary (words) and many of the components also often associated with academic writing across genres (organization, text structure, purpose, and audience). This book addresses a specific form of discourse, conversational discourse, and the specific conversational skills that provide access to academic discourse. |
| **Academic Vocabulary** | Words are separate units of information; it is tempting to focus on them as "pieces of knowledge" to accumulate to show learning. Instead, words should be tools and materials for constructing more complete and complex messages. In this book series, we will focus on Tier 2 | Academic vocabulary is associated with the density of words used in academic discourse as well as the use of connectives and transitions used in grammar. |

| ALD Dimension | Definition | Connections to the Book Series |
|---|---|---|
| | (high-frequency words that go across content areas) and Tier 3 (abstract or nuanced words that exist within a particular content area or discipline) academic vocabulary. | |
| **Grammar and Syntax in Context** | Academic language is characterized by technical vocabulary, lexical density, and abstraction. Academic genres have predictable components, cohesive texts, and language structures that include nominalizations, passives, and complex sentences. | ELLs and SELs need to engage in academic discourse in the classroom and develop academic vocabulary. These are essential building blocks for learning to read and write cohesive texts using academic genres and the language structures characteristic of academic language. |
| **Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices** | Culturally responsive pedagogy incorporates high-status, accurate cultural knowledge about different ethnic groups into all subjects and skills taught. It validates, facilitates, liberates, and empowers ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their cultural integrity, individual abilities, and academic success (Gay, 2000). | ELLs and SELs are more likely to acquire ALD when they are viewed from an asset model and when ALD is taught as associated with concepts that connect to their cultural knowledge. This book will address linguistic diversity, including variations of English. |

*(Definitions adapted from* Academic Language Development Network. (n.d.) *unless otherwise noted*)

## FORMAT FOR EACH BOOK

At the beginning of each book is an introduction to the purpose of the book series, including the format of each book and their intersections. Additionally, connections between current ALD research and the specific dimension of ALD are included in an abbreviated literature

review. In the middle of each book, the voice of the expert in the particular ALD dimension is incorporated with practical strategies and classroom examples. These chapters include how to move from theory to practice, classroom examples at elementary and secondary levels, and ways to assess the dimension. At the end of each book, a summary of major points and how to overcome related challenges are included along with the rationale for use of the Institute for Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching (ICLRT) Design Principles as a bridge between ALD and content. Also included at the end of each book are additional professional development resources.

Additionally, each book in the series is organized in a similar manner for ease of use by the reader. Chapter 1 is the introduction to the series of books and not an introduction for each individual book. Instead, Chapter 2 introduces each dimension of ALD with the specific research base for that book. The heart of each book in the series is in Chapter 3, where practical application to theory and classroom examples can be found. Chapter 4 addresses how each ALD dimension fosters literacy development. In Chapter 5, how to assess the specific ALD dimension is discussed with checklists and rubrics to assist with formative assessment in this area. Last, Chapter 6 connects each volume with the others in the series and details how the book series can best be used in a professional development setting. The epilogue revisits the vision for the series and provides a description of the relationship to the underlying principles of the ICLRT.

- Chapter 1—Introduction to the Book Series
- Chapter 2—Abbreviated Literature Review/Research Base for Grammar and Syntax
- Chapter 3— Practical Application to the Classroom for Grammar and Syntax
- Chapter 4—Fostering Literacy With Grammar and Syntax
- Chapter 5— Assessing Grammar and Syntax
- Chapter 6—Conclusions, Challenges, and Connections
- Epilogue: The Vision

## How to Use the Book Series

While each book can stand alone, the book series was designed to be read together with colleagues and over time. As such, it is a professional development tool for educational communities, which

can also be used for extended learning on ALD. Educators may choose to begin with any of the four key dimensions of ALD that interests them the most or with which they need the most assistance.

## How to Use Reflect and Apply Queries

Embedded throughout this book series you will find queries that will ask you to reflect and apply new learning to your own practice. Please note that you may choose to use the queries in a variety of settings either with a book study buddy during PLC, grade-level, or department meetings. Each of the queries can be answered in a separate journal while one is reading the text, or as a group you may choose to reflect on only a few queries throughout a chapter. Please feel free to use as many or as few queries as are helpful to you, but we do encourage you to at least try a couple out for reflection as you read the book series.

Try it out by responding to the first query here.

**REFLECT AND APPLY**

What does the following Sabine Ulibarrí quote mean to you? How does it connect to your students?

"Language is culture; it carries with it traditions, customs, the very life of a people. You cannot separate one from the other. To love one is to love the other; to hate one is to hate the other. If one wants to destroy a people, take away their language and their culture will soon disappear."

## Book Series Connection to Grammar and Syntax

As previously discussed, grammar and syntax are essential components of ALD. Unfortunately, these components have either been overly emphasized and some teachers have taught grammar in a rote manner that is decontextualized and disconnected to student needs and learning, or they have completely disregarded grammar due to their lack of experience in teaching grammar and syntax appropriately. Still other teachers become overwhelmed with the

large gaps in the knowledge of grammar and syntax that ELLs may bring to school and are unsure of the best approaches to meeting students' needs. This book on grammar and syntax addresses these concerns, first by building background knowledge and confidence on the part of educators regarding the varying views of grammar that have been used and then by giving specific recommendations for how to teach ALD in a contextualized manner that addresses ELLs' and SELs' language gaps. The approach to teaching grammar and syntax introduced in this book in the series, along with the ICLRT Design Principles (in the epilogue), provide a theoretical and practical framework for addressing ALD in a contextualized manner across disciplines.