# What Are Language Objectives?

## Using Language Objectives to Promote Language Development

Language objectives are lesson objectives that are specifically designed to promote students' language development through all four language domains: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Language objectives can be taken from state or district language arts or ELD/ESL standards, or can be created based on student need. Language objectives often accompany a content objective when teaching content areas such as math, science or social studies. For example, the following content objectives and language objectives can be integrated within a lesson:

- Content Objective: Students will compare and contrast the physical adaptations that whales and sharks have that aid in their survival.
- Language Objective: Students will write a compare and contrast paragraph, using vocabulary associated with the language function of compare and contrast after completing a Venn Diagram with a partner.

The following categories can be used as language objectives within lessons:

### Vocabulary
One example of a language objective that can be included in a lesson is vocabulary. One type of vocabulary that can be emphasized is content-specific vocabulary that is associated with a topic, such as the words "plant", "seed" and "germinate" when studying about plants. A second dimension of vocabulary consists of teaching about language functions, or words that are associated with the purpose for using language. For example, language is used to compare, contrast, sequence and other language functions. When focusing on comparison, contrast, or another language function, specific vocabulary associated with the language function must be explicitly taught and practiced by students. A third aspect of vocabulary is teaching about the morphology of English, including but not limited to: prefixes, suffixes, and root words. For additional information about teaching vocabulary, please visit the academic language section of this website.

### Language Functions
One example of a language objective that might be emphasized during a lesson are language functions. As mentioned in the vocabulary section, language functions are specific purposes that we use language for. Examples of language functions include: compare, contrast, sequence, persuade, retell, summarize, asking for help, making suggestions, and other language functions. Specific vocabulary and sentence structures are associated with each language function. Additional information about language functions as

well as examples of vocabulary and sentence structures associated with each language function can be found <u>by clicking here</u>.

## Grammatical and Language Structures (Forms)

Grammatical structures, which are sometimes also called "forms", can be an example of a language objective to be taught in lessons. Grammatical structures can be emphasized in a lesson, such as: adjectives, sentence structure, verb conjugation, and other aspects of grammar. The following is an example of a content objective with a corresponding language objective that focuses on grammar:

- Content Objective: Describe the daily activities of Native Americans in a California mission.
- Language Objective: Using regular and irregular past tense verbs (i.e, grammar), orally describe the daily life of a Native American.
- Language Objective: After orally describing life in the mission, students will write a paragraph about daily mission life that includes regular and irregular past tense verbs.

## Literacy Skills

Another type of language objective that can be included in lessons are literacy skills, which include reading, writing, speaking and listening. Reading skills such as main idea/detail, paraphrasing, monitoring/clarifying, and comprehension skill instruction can be emphasized. Writing skills such as paragraph writing and sentence structure might be another example of a language objective.

# Linguistic Scaffolds for Writing Effective Language Objectives

**An effectively written language objective:**

- Stems form the linguistic demands of a standards-based lesson task
- Focuses on high-leverage language that will serve students in other contexts
- Uses active verbs to name functions/purposes for using language in a specific student task
- Specifies target language necessary to complete the task
- Emphasizes development of expressive language skills, speaking and writing, without neglecting listening and reading

**Sample language objectives:**

Students will **articulate main idea and details** using **target vocabulary: topic, main idea, detail.**
Students will **describe a character's emotions** using **precise adjectives.**
Students will **revise a paragraph** using **correct present tense and conditional verbs.**
Students will **report a group consensus** using **past tense citation verbs: determined, concludes**
Students will **use present tense persuasive verbs to defend a position: maintain, contend.**

**Language Objective Frames:**

Students will ___(function: active verb phrase)___ using ___(language target)___ .

Students will use ___(language target)___ to ___(function: active verb phrase)___ .

## Active Verb Bank to Name Functions for Expressive Language Tasks

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| articulate | defend | express | narrate | share |
| ask | define | identify | predict | state |
| compose | describe | justify | react to | summarize |
| compare | discuss | label | read | rephrase |
| contrast | elaborate | list | recite | revise |
| debate | explain | name | respond | write |

Language objectives are most effectively communicated with verb phrases such as the following:

Students will **point out similarities between...**    Students will **express agreement...**
Students will **articulate events in sequence...**    Students will **state opinions about....**

## Sample Noun Phrases Specifying Language Targets

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| academic vocabulary | complete sentences | subject verb agreement |
| precise adjectives | complex sentences | personal pronouns |
| citation verbs | clarifying questions | past-tense verbs |
| noun phrases | prepositional phrases | gerunds (verb + ing) |

# Language Objectives with Expressive Verbs and Specified Language Targets

## Related to Reading Standards:

Students will...
- make predictions using future tense, and text feature vocabulary (e.g. headings, captions).
- formulate pre-reading questions using appropriate question structure.
- articulate main idea and details using key vocabulary: main idea, detail.
- prioritize arguments in a text using target adjectives: important, essential, significant.
- specify bias in a text by identifying adjectives and opinions.
- articulate cause and effect relationships within a thinking map using subordinating conjunctions: since, because, when.
- describe a character's emotions using precise adjectives.
- retell a narrative story using past tense verbs and adverbs of time (e.g. the next day, later that wee
- read text passages containing target vocabulary with prosody
- ask and answer "how" questions about main events using the past-tense.

## Related to Writing Standards:

Students will...
- express an opinion in a topic sentence for a persuasive paragraph using strong verbs.
- write a persuasive paragraph using correct present and conditional verb tenses.
- articulate a position using strong present tense verbs: support, maintain, contend, believe.
- qualify a position using adverbs: agree/disagree...somewhat, entirely, absolutely, completely
- justify a position using relevant details and complete sentences.
- develop a supporting detail using complete and varied sentences.
- replace everyday vocabulary with precise word choices.
- write a personal narrative using regular and irregular past-tense verbs.
- provide anecdotes to support a point using regular and irregular past-tense verbs.
- summarize a non-fiction text using general present tense and citation verbs.
- revise sentence fragments into complex sentences.
- write habitual present tense sentences about a classmate's routines using correct pronouns and subject verb agreement.
- provide cohesion between sentences in exposition with appropriate transitional expressions.
- compose complex and simple sentences to support points in expository and persuasive writing.
- utilize precise word choices to convey actions, feelings, descriptors in narrative writing.
- utilize vocabulary, syntax and grammar reflective of academic register within writing.
- edit final drafts of sentences and paragraphs for appropriate tense, subject-verb agreement, prono reference, fragments and run-on sentences.

## Related to Classroom Discussion (Listening and Speaking):

Students will...
- restate a partner's response using paraphrasing expressions (e.g. so what you are saying is)
- listen for and point out similarities in ideas using target language: My idea is similar to/builds upon.
- report a group consensus using past-tense citation verbs: determined, concluded.
- articulate a perspective using strong present tense verbs: believe, agree/disagree, support
- analyze word parts to determine meaning using precise terms: prefix, suffix, root word
- define the unit concept stereotype using complete sentences and target vocabulary.
- listen for and record precise adjectives used by classmates to describe a character's reactions.