ENGLISH LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS

Mastery of language and syntactic features allows students’ full participation in academics by enabling them to put ideas together in a wide range of ways. Mastery includes learning the breadth of language patterns to communicate relationships between ideas: to explain, describe, compare, and contrast, summarize, generalize, express, cause-and-effect relationships, sequences, and so on. The benefits of learning to use the language functions such as comparing, for example, extend beyond a given task because once students know how to compare; they can apply that skill to a range of contexts across content areas. Students practice and extend their language skills for comparing by applying it in different ways.

Increasing competence in any language function obligates the speaker or writer to use increasingly complex sentence structures. Using this approach, learning interesting content—and how to talk and write about that interesting content—is not delayed until more advanced levels of proficiency are reached. Academic language is developed from the beginning stages of second language learning. Competence in a range of functions equips students to participate in content instruction and supports academic language proficiency. Language becomes a vehicle, rather than a barrier, to learning.

Any act of verbal communication is composed of six elements, or factors:

1. a context
2. an addresser (a sender),
3. an addressee (a receiver),
4. a contact between an addresser and addressee,
5. a common code and
6. a message.

The message is what we often call a language function. The following are the most typical language functions with the most frequent structures used to achieve them.

1. **Student uses language to**: Observe and explore the environment, acquire information, inquire
   a. **Language of Inquiry/Seeking Information**

I wonder why . . .
How does . . . work?
I’d like to ask you about . . .
Am I correct in assuming that . . .?
Could you expand a little bit on what you said about . . .?
Could you be more specific about . . .?
Something else I’d like to know is . . .
If I have understood you correctly, your point is that . . .
I didn’t understand what you said about . . .
I’m sorry, could you repeat what you said about . . . ?
Sorry, but I’m not quite clear on . . .

b. Soliciting a Response

What do you think?
We haven’t heard from you yet.
Do you agree?
What answer did you get?

c. Expressing an Opinion

I think/believe that . . .
In my opinion, . . .
Based on my experience, I think . . .

d. Paraphrasing

So you are saying that . . .
In other words, you think . . .
What I hear you saying is . . .

2. Student uses language to: Identify, report or describe information
a. Reporting a Partner’s [or anyone’s] Idea
   - indicated that....
   - pointed out to me that....
   - emphasized that...
   - concluded that....

b. Language of Informing
   - The advantages of _____ outweigh the disadvantages of _____ insofar as...
   - The statistics are misleading because they do/not show...
   - These [facts/reasons/data] strongly suggest that... Yet some argue strongly that....

c. Language of Summarizing
   - On the whole...
   - Basically he/she is saying that....
   - In this text, the author argues that....
   - To support the main claim, the author provides evidence that suggests that....
   - Main Idea/ Supporting ideas/ Conclusion
3. **Student uses language to:** Describe similarities and differences in objects or ideas
   a. **Language of Comparing & Contrasting**
      - One similarity/difference between [subject 1] and [subject 2] is ....
      - [Subject 1] and [subject 2] are similar because they both....
      - [Subject 1] and [subject 2] are rather different because while
      - [subject 1] has ________, [subject 2] has __________.
      - Whereas [subject 1] is ..., [subject 2] is ...
      - [Subject 1] is .... Similarly / In contrast, [subject 2] is ....

   b. **Language of Agreeing**
      - My idea/answer/explanation is similar to/related to...
      - I agree with (a person) that...
      - My idea builds upon (a person’s) idea...
      - I don’t agree with you because...

4. **Student uses language to:** sequence objects, ideas, or events.
   a. **Language of Sequencing**
      - First, ... and second, ...
      - Meanwhile, the ___ appeared to be ...
      - While [subject 1] was ..., [subject 2] was simultaneously/concurrently...
      - Finally ____ proceeded to...
      - Consequently the ____ began to ...
      - Previously, ____ had decided to ...
      - Following this event, ...
      - Initially .... Some time later......
      - After ... the next step is/was to...
      - What occurred/happened prior to... was that...
      - In the first stage/phase, ....
      - The transition between stages __ and __ can be described as....

5. **Student uses language to:** Group objects or ideas according to their characteristics. It is critical to identify the rules that govern class or category membership.
   a. **Language of Classifying**
      - consists of [quantity] categories.
      - The [quantity] categories of ____ are ____, ____, and ____.
      - We can classify _____ according to...
      - ______ and ______ are types of ... because....
      - The most salient characteristic(s) of this group is/are...
      - An appropriate name for this group is ... owing to the fact that they all...
      - correlates to______ insofar as....
      - These _____ are arranged according to....

6. **Student uses language to:** Separate whole into parts, identify relationships and patterns
   a. **Language of Analysis**
- We can interpret _____ as ....
- Given the evidence, we can deduce that...
- _____ can be differentiated from ______ based on...
- After a thorough analysis of the evidence, we conclude that....
- This ____ is significant because...
- After careful examination of... it appears that...
- _____ is related to ______ insofar as....
- ___ and ____ are connected by..... This is important because...
- We can draw parallels between _____ and the world/other texts/self
- because....

7. **Student uses language to:** make inferences, predict implications, and hypothesize.
   a. **Language of Prediction and Hypothesis**
      - I predict / imagine that...
      - Given ..., I hypothesize that ...
      - If I use ...then I predict...will happen.
      - Based on past results, I predict...
      - I deduced .... after analyzing ______ further.
      - I discerned that_______ because....
      - I foresee________ because....
      - I prognosticate...... because I know.....

b. **Language of Inference**
   - Based on ... I infer that ...
   - I infer that... based on...
   - My conjecture on ____ is....
   - I anticipate that...

8. **Student uses language to:** Give reasons for an action, decision, point of view; convince others
   a. **Language of Justification**
      - I believe this because...
      - My primary reason for thinking so is...
      - Perhaps the most convincing reason for this is...

b. **Language of Persuasion**
   - Based on the evidence presented so far, I believe that...
   - Although some people claim that..., opponents argue that....
   - It is vital to consider...
   - The advantages of ____ outweigh the disadvantages of ____ insofar as...
   - The statistics are misleading because they do/not show...
   - These [facts/reasons/data] strongly suggest that... Yet some argue strongly that....

9. **Student uses language to:** Define and represent a problem; determine a solution,
a. **Language of Describing Problems**
- A way of thinking about solving this problem is...
- In order to solve this problem we must first/initially....
- This problem is similar to....
- We need to identify...
- One way to visualize this problem is...
- Let’s break this into parts. First, ...
- Another way of looking at this problem is...
- The most important thing to remember in this problem is...
- In order to solve this problem we will need to know...

b. **Language of Explaining Solutions**
- A diagram or symbol that might represent this solution is...
- We know our solution is correct because....
- The solution to this problem is...
- I know I have solved the problem because...
- The solution to this problem will require....
- A critical element of the solution to this problem is...

### 10. Student uses language to: Combine or integrate ideas to form a whole group

a. **Language of Synthesizing**
- The main point(s) is/ are...
- The point that ______ makes is related to ______ in that.....
- The significance of ______ is.....
- From my perspective, ______ means.....
- The concept of _____ can be expressed as.....
- Our conclusion is a synthesis of _____ and ________.
- I feel that _____ and _____’s viewpoints are related in that....
- My visual represents a synthesis of ____ and ____ because....
- While creating _____, I built upon ........

b. **Acknowledging Ideas**
- My idea is similar to/related to _______’s idea.
- I agree/disagree with _______that . . .
- My idea builds upon _______’s idea.
- As _____already mentioned...

### 11. Student uses language to: assess and verify with of an object, idea or decision.

a. **Language of Evaluating**
- Based on ... I determined that...
- _______’s judgment of ... was ... because ...
- The critique of ______ was favorable/unfavorable because ...
- We/They judge ______ to be _____ because ....
- We/I evaluated _______ on the following criteria ...
- I assess that....
- After inspecting.... I have determined...
- After carefully scrutinizing_______ I believe that....
- My interpretation of______ is...
- When ranking its importance, I feel that... because...

b. Language of Appreciation
- Thank you.......  
- Thanks a lot for ..........  
- I am grateful to you for ..........

12. Student uses language to: Describe why and how relationships and patterns exist between events, ideas, processes, problems; Identify consequences that led to the outcome
   a. Language of Explaining Causes
   - Even though many people thought the cause was ..., I believe it was...
   - The most likely reason for... was...
   - I hypothesize that... made them...
   - That wasn’t caused by ...because
   - Several factors contributed to the outcome. Namely, ...

   b. Language of Describing an Effect
   - _____ was a result of...
   - The...led to..., which led to...
   - The change resulted in...
   - It combines with...to produce...

13. Language of eliciting factual information: Students can express past and present habits, give a promise, prohibit, etc.....
   a. Past habit
   - I used to drink milk every day when I was a child.

   b. Present habit
   - I am used to sleeping early

   c. Prohibition
   - Don’t go

   d. Promise
   - I’ll .... If you .....  

   e. Wish
   - I wish I can ..... 

14. Language of finding out and expressing attitudes: students can ask for and express their own and others’ attitudes.
a. **Obligation**
- Have to
- Must
- Ought to

b. **Non-obligation**
- does/do not have to ...

c. **Asking permission**
- Can I, he, she, we, they (+ VPinf)?
  -- May I ....

d. **Giving permission**
- Yes
- You, he, she, they can (+ VPinf)

e. **No permission**
- (I’m) sorry
- You, he, she, they can’t (+ VPinf)

f. **Volitional wants and desires**
- I’d like to .....  
- I want to ....

g. **expressing intention**
- I will go .....  
  -- I am going to do ..... 

h. **enquiring about intention**
- will you go?

i. **expressing preference**
- I(’d) like to .....  
  -- I prefer....  
  -- I’d rather ..... 

j. **certainty**
- I am (not) sure
k. **Doubt**
   -- Are you sure.

l. **expressing liking**
   – Lovely!
   – It is (very) nice
   – I love(s)/like(s) it (very much)

m. **expressing dislike**
   – Horrible!
   – NP + be + not very nice
   – I, he, she, we, they hate + NP.
   – (disgust) Ugh!

n. **expressing hope**
   – I hope + so/declarative sentence

o. **expressing satisfaction**
   – Good!
   -- cool, wonderful, gorgeous....

p. **expressing dissatisfaction**
   – It’s not good --- it is only ..... 

q. **expressing disappointment**
   – What a pity!

r. **expressing gratitude**
   – Thank you (very much)

s. **Apologizing**
   - Sorry!
   - Whoops! Sorry!
   - Oh! Sorry.
   - Sorry ‘bout that.
   - I apologize

t. **granting forgiveness**
   - OK.
- That’s all right
- Never mind.
- You’re forgiven.

u. expressing appreciation

– (Very) good!
– (Very) nice!
-- Thanks a lot.
-- I am grateful to you.

v. expressing regret

– (I’m) (very) sorry.

w. expressing indifference

-- It is not important.
-- Who cares

x. Comfort

-- Don’t worry

y. Protest

-- That’s not fair
-- It is unfair
-- This is not enough

z. Encourage

-- off course you can
-- you can make it
-- Go ahead

15. Language of getting things done: students can suggest, offer, request .......

a. suggesting a course of action

– Why not .........?
-- How about ......?
– Let’s ......

b. agreeing to a suggestion

– OK
Yes, why not?
– Yes, let’s

c. requesting others to do something
   – Please, close the window
   – Please, can you open the door?

d. Offer
   Why not you ...
   You can ......
   Would you like to do ..... 

e. accepting an offer or invitation
   – Thank you
   – Yes, please
f. refusing an offer or invitation
   – No, thank you
   – Sorry


g. Blaming (late advice)
   -You should have ..... 

h. Advice
   -- You should go to the doctor
   -- You should study hard.

i. warning
   – (Be) Careful!
   -- you will ....... If you .........

j. offering assistance
   – Can I help you?

k. requesting assistance
   – Help!
   – Can you help me please?

l. Remind
   Don’t forget to ..... 

16. Language to Socialize
a. attracting attention
Hallo!
Excuse me, please

b. **greeting people**
Hi.
Hallo (+ *name*)!
How are you?

c. **responding**
Fine, thank you

17. **Language to Structure Discourse**: students use language to introduce, congratulate, take leave, ............

   a. **introducing someone**
      (other people) *(address form +)* This is + *name*
      (oneself) Hallo! I’m + *name*

   b. **reacting to being introduced**
      Hallo! (informal)
      How do you do? (formal)

   c. **congratulating someone**
      Congratulations!
      Well done!

d. **taking leave**
   Goodbye!
   See you (later, again, tomorrow)