Unpacking Academic Language in Text: Starting with the End in Mind

Leslie Wriston
English Learner Program Specialist
San Juan Unified School District
lwriston@sanjuan.edu
March 2017
Today’s Outcomes

Participants will leave with awareness of the intentional planning that needs to occur for language learners.

Participants will walk through a short lesson series and receive a template for language considerations when designing lessons.

Participants will reflect on their expectations of learners in order to plan for student success.
Planning for Designated ELD Nonfiction
Part of the bigger picture....

Teaching and Learning Cycle

1. Setting the context & building the field
2. Modelling & deconstruction
3. Joint construction
4. Independent construction

Teaching sequence for developing independence

Derewianka, 2003
Gradual Release

- Modeling and think aloud: whale sharks (pg. 27)
- Shared experience: great white (pg. 31)
- Partner work: hammerhead shark (pg. 21)
- Independent work: Sharks (pg. 8)

….while doing lots of talking, reading, and engagement in the topic.
Think about your work…

What the unit you are working on? (or seeing in classrooms?)

What genre or text types will students be writing?

How can we help students with the language that they need to produce that writing?
I chose this text because it...

- Aligns to a bigger unit: I am doing a lot to build content.
- Models the text type that I want students to write.
- I can find several examples of the text type.
- I don’t need to use the whole book.
- It’s a high interest level.
Prompt
Starting with the end in mind….

What is the task that I want my students to produce?

**Task:** Using information from the source, develop a clear, descriptive paragraph on the topic (PI 3.10 a,b). Choose the most important information to support your main idea (PI 3.6). Clearly organize your paragraph and support your main idea with details from the source. Remember to use your own words unless directly quoting from the source. You will now review, plan, draft, revise and edit your writing (PII 3.5, PII 3.6, PII 3.7).
Starting with the end in mind....

What is the task that I want my students to produce?

**Task:** Using information from the source, develop a clear, descriptive paragraph on the topic (PI 3.10 a,b). Choose the most important information to support your main idea (PI 3.6). Clearly organize your paragraph and support your main idea with details from the source. Remember to use your own words unless directly quoting from the source. You will now review, plan, draft, revise and edit your writing (PII 3.5, PII 3.6, PII 3.7).
Sample of the Expectation
Write a sample: Whale Shark

My paragraph:

The largest shark in the ocean is the harmless whale shark. The whale shark can grow up to 60 feet and weigh 20 tons. Someone might think that this shark is dangerous for humans, however the whale shark does not attack. It eats plankton or small fish and usually lives alone or far out at sea.
Write your own sample: Great White

My paragraph:

The most dangerous shark in the ocean is the great white shark. The great white has big jaws with fifty 2.5-inch teeth. It’s body temperature is warmer than the water, so the shark can swim fast and catch its prey. Someone might think that this shark likes to eat humans, however the great white bites humans because it thinks that they are seals. It is still very dangerous because the bite can cause blood loss and death.
Vocabulary
Examine the Text for Vocabulary: Whale Shark

What Tier 2 word will I want students to use in their work? (Explicitly teach that)

harmless

What words do I just need to pause and state a quick definition to ensure that they know what is being said?

water strainer, plankton

What words should I point to the picture on?

whale shark
Examine the Text for Vocabulary: Great White

What Tier 2 word will I want students to use in their work? (Explicitly teach that)

dangerous

What words do I just need to pause and state a quick definition to ensure that they know what is being said?

fierce, accurate

What words should I point to the picture on?

Jaw, great white shark
Introducing Academic Vocabulary: harmless

1. Say the word, have students repeat it chorally, clap the syllables, write the word, and situate it in its context
   Harmless (adj.) In our text, it says the whale shark is harmless.

2. Explain the meaning with student friendly definitions
   When something is harmless, it is not able or likely to cause injury or danger.
   (Repeat twice, then have students echo sentence in segments.)
   (More nuanced meanings can be developed after the introductory lesson.)

3. Explain the meaning in context
   In the text, the author describes the whale shark as harmless. Even though it is the biggest fish on earth, it is a plankton feeder and harmless to divers.

4. Provide sentences in which the word is used in other contexts
   Here are some other ways that we can use the word harmless.
   • My friend Steve is 6’9 and quite large. People think he looks mean too, but he is harmless.
   • Lots of people are afraid of spiders, but the venom of most spiders is harmless to humans.
   • Donating blood is harmless to the donor and yet gives a gift of life to a dying person.

5. Students provide their own sentences as teacher guides them with a) questions suggesting contexts; b) sentence frames
   Think about who or what you think is harmless. (Provide think time.) Use this sentence frame: _______ is harmless because_______.
   (Chant frame together. Brainstorm a list: my family, my teacher, kittens, baby birds. Call on a few students to model.)
   Now think about why you are harmless to others. (Provide think time.) Use this sentence frame when you tell your partner: I am harmless to others because________. (Chant frame together. Brainstorm a list: I am honest, I am a good friend.

6. Ask short-answer questions to hone understanding
   Think about whether or not this is harmless. Say harmless or not harmless.
   • goldfish
   • People who lie
   • Great white shark
   • Untied shoes

7. Repeat the word chorally
   When you go home today, and your mom or dad or whoever takes care of you asks you what you did at school today, you’ll tell them that you learned a new word, and that word is (choral response) harmless.
Framework Support

General Academic Vocabulary Instruction - Lesson Plan Template
(Whole group and small group) (cont.)

Routine:
1. Tell the students the word, and briefly show them the place in the story where they first heard it. Tell students any cognates in the students’ primary language (e.g., furious in English is furioso in Spanish).
2. Explain what the word means in child-friendly terms (1–2 sentences). Use the word in complete sentences, so you do not sound like a dictionary.
3. Explain what the word means in the context of the story.
4. Provide a few examples of how the word can be used in other grade-appropriate ways.
5. Guide students to use the word meaningfully in one or two think-pair-shares (three, if needed), with appropriate scaffolding (e.g., using a picture for a prompt, open sentence frames, etc.).
6. Ask short-answer questions to check for understanding (not a test – they are still learning the word).
7. Find ways to use the word a lot from now on, and encourage the children to use the word as much as they can. Tell them to teach the word to their parents when they go home.

If taught in small groups for ELD

Children in group (names):
EL proficiency level: Emerging, Expanding, Bridging
Differentiated sentence frames for step 5 (see CA ELD Standards):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Expanding</th>
<th>Bridging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**FRAYER MODEL**

**Definition:** Student-friendly description of the term (generally provided by teacher).

**Characteristics:** Features that help students to recognize, identify, or distinguish the term.

**Term:** The teacher should select a word that:
- Is an important concept to be learned
- Can connect to other related terms
- Has examples and non-examples of its applications

**Examples:** Synonyms, concrete applications, or relevant illustrations of the characteristics.

**Non-examples:** Antonyms, inappropriate applications, or relevant illustrations that do not fit the characteristics.

---

**TERM:** HARMLESS

**Definition:** Not able or likely to cause injury or danger

**Characteristics:**
- *can be helpful
- *someone or something will not get hurt

**Examples:**
- *kittens
- *sunscreen
- *books

**Non-examples:**
- *bank robbers
- *great white shark
- *mean words
Language Demands
Language Demands in Reading: Whale Shark

• Figurative language (imagery) in informational text.
  • Simile: heavy as a trailer truck, as tall as a basketball hoop (PI 3.8)
  • Metaphor: giant water strainer (PI 3.8)

• Long sentences with lots of information
This giant water strainer opens its six-foot-wide mouth and filters plankton and even entire schools of small fish from thousands of tons of seawater each hour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chunk</th>
<th>What it tells me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This giant water strainer</td>
<td>What: the whale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opens its six-foot-wide mouth</td>
<td>action: opening his big mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and filters plankton</td>
<td>action: and plankton goes in and stays in, water comes out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and even entire schools of small fish</td>
<td>he eats plankton and lots of fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from thousands of tons of seawater</td>
<td>where the food comes from: tells me he gets food from enormous amounts of water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>each hour</td>
<td>tells me how often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Long sentence that requires students have a perception of great white, background knowledge, and lots of vocabulary. Sentence needs deconstructing.

*Narrow teeth on the bottom jaw hold the prey while the saw-edged teeth on top cut it into bite-sized chunks.*

*How might we chunk this? Why?*
Narrow teeth on the bottom jaw hold the prey while the saw-edged teeth on top cut it into bite-sized chunks.

*(one way to break up the sentence)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chunk</th>
<th>What it Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Narrow teeth on the bottom of the jaw      | • skinny teeth  
|                                            | • bottom of the mouth  
|                                            | • tells me what sentence is about                                             |
| hold the prey                               | • holds onto the food  
|                                            | • tells me what the bottom teeth do                                          |
| while                                      | • tells me the first part happens at the same time as the second              |
| saw-edged teeth on top                     | • teeth on the top are sharp  
|                                            | • tells me what the sentence is about                                       |
| cut it into bite sized chunks              | • breaks the food into small pieces.  
|                                            | • tells what the top teeth do                                               |
What I think it means...

The bottom teeth hold the food down. At the same time, the sharp, top teeth tear up food to pieces.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Chunk</th>
<th>What it means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Since only 1 per</td>
<td>Write only a little bit of sunlight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of sunlight</td>
<td>penetrates the forest's floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>permeates the forest floor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some types of flora are parasitic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and as a result,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they have special roots</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to extract nutrients from their host</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since only 1 percent of sunlight permeates the forest floor, some types of flora are parasitic, and as a result, they have special roots to extract nutrients from their host.
Since only 1 percent of sunlight permeates the forest floor, some types of flora are parasitic; and as a result, they have special roots to extract nutrients from their host.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Chunk</th>
<th>What it means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Since only 1 percent of sunlight permeates the forest floor,</td>
<td>While only a little bit of sunlight penetrates the bottom layer of the rainforest's floor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some types of flora are parasitic;</td>
<td>some kind of plants and trees are parasitic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and as a result,</td>
<td>causing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they have special roots</td>
<td>they have unique roots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to extract nutrients from their host.</td>
<td>to get food from their host.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Framework Support

Sentence Unpacking

Unpack the sentence to get at all the meanings:

- What's happening?
- Who or what is involved?
- What are the circumstances surrounding the action (when, where, in what ways)?

Repackage the meanings into your own words:

- What does this sentence mean in my own words?
- How can I condense my words to make the sentence more compact?

Think a more deeply about the original sentence:

- What do I notice about the language the author chose to use?
- How does this language make meanings in specific ways?
Text Structure
Text Structure

What is the structure of this text?
What is the structure of the writing that I want my students to produce?

*Informational, Description*
Information has lots of other text structures

- Compare and contrast
- Problem solution
- Sequence: procedure, time, cycles
- Cause and effect
- Causal explanation
- Recount
- Biography
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Defined</th>
<th>Clues</th>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Description** | Text provides details or characteristics of something | • Adjectives  
• Characteristics  
• Examples  
• Mental Image | ![Visual](image) | Ice cream is a frozen, sugary, sweet delicacy. The treat comes in flavors like vanilla. |
| **Compare + Contrast** | The text talks about similarities and differences between people, places, things, etc. | • Some/Different  
• Both, neither  
• In contrast on the other hand | ![Visual](image) | Although both ice cream and veggie (dairy) ice cream is less healthy and eaten as dessert, veggies, however, are a good dish in a meal. |
| **Order + Sequence** | The text outlines chronological events or a list of steps in a procedure. | • Order of events  
• History  
• Instructions  
• Steps  
• Signal Words | ![Visual](image) | Want delicious ice cream? First, scoop it into a bowl. Then, top it with goodies like sprinkles. Finally, grab a spoon and enjoy. |
| **Problem + Solution** | The text gives information about a problem and explains one of more solutions. | • Problem  
• Solution | ![Visual](image) | If your ice cream melts before you finish it, put it back into the freezer. |
| **Cause + Effect** | The text describes an event (cause) and the effects that follow. | • Cause  
• Effect  
• if/then  
• because  
• as a result due to | ![Visual](image) | If melted ice cream gets on your hand, your skin will be sticky. |
Text Structure

Problem and Solution

Tells about a problem and then gives one or more solutions

Problem

Solution

Signal Words

consequently, therefore, as a result, thereby, leads to, because of
Framework Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages and phases</th>
<th>Information Report Outline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Page 1</td>
<td>General statements:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tell/define what ecosystems are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify what ecosystem this one is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 2</td>
<td>Description of the Ecosystem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Describe the geography of the ecosystem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Describe what lives there and the food web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Describe the natural factors that affect the ecosystem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Describe what people have done to affect the ecosystem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Describe ways that people can fix the damage they have caused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 3</td>
<td>Conclusion: Summarize the report by rounding if off with a general statement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Framework Support

From the biography using a structured template, which follows.

### Biography Deconstruction Template

**Text Title:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages and Important Information</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation</strong> (tells where and when the person lived)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where and when the person was born</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What things were like before the person’s accomplishments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sequence of Events</strong> (tells what happened in the person’s life in order)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Early life, growing up (family, school, hobbies, accomplishments)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Later life (family, jobs, accomplishments)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How they died or where they are now</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation</strong> (tells why this person was significant)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why people remember the person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The impact this person had on California and the U.S.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How they improved the rights and privileges of Americans through their actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How their actions exemplified the principles outlined in the American Declaration of Independence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meaningful quote by this person that shows his or her character</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Language Resources
Language Resources

What language can I teach to help my students do this task?

Transition word: however (PII 3.2)

Combining clauses or ideas (PII 3.6)

Vocabulary – harmless, dangerous (PI 3.12)

Simile (PI 3.12)
Framework Support

Transition words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adding</th>
<th>Contrasting</th>
<th>Sequencing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in addition</td>
<td>however</td>
<td>to start with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>furthermore</td>
<td>despite this</td>
<td>to summarize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>similarly</td>
<td>instead</td>
<td>in conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>also</td>
<td>otherwise</td>
<td>finally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unfortunately</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause/Result</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Clarifying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>therefore</td>
<td>next</td>
<td>that is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consequently</td>
<td>meanwhile</td>
<td>in other words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because of this</td>
<td>until now</td>
<td>for example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in that case</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>for instance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Words for referring back to people or things: they, their, it, them, this, these, those, one, another, the ones
Little guys
When Events Happen

Excerpt | Clue Word(s) | Happens at the Same Time
--- | --- | ---

---

Excerpt:

One day a large toad appeared at first then, "I'll live on the other side of the island," he said. "But, I can hear you shouting 'It's mine! It's mine! It's mine!' all day long. There is no peace for the frogs because of your foolish bickering. You can't go on this way!" So that the road shrunk, turned around, and hugged away through the woods.

Clue Word(s):

- Toad speaks to the frogs.
- The road shrunk, turned around, and hugged away through the woods.

First:

- No sooner had he take road left than Milton ran off with a largeswot.
- Little by little the flood subsided. The rain fell gently and then stopped altogether.

Second:

- Toad left.
- Milton got aware, and said, "It's mine!"
- The rain fell gently.
- The rain stopped.
## Framework Support

### Showing When Events Happen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>When the events are happening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before I go to bed at night, I brush my teeth.</td>
<td>happens second, happens first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I brush my teeth <strong>before</strong> I go to bed at night,</td>
<td>happens first, happens second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When</strong> the bell rings, you all stop playing.</td>
<td>both happen at the same time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You listen <strong>while</strong> I read stories to you.</td>
<td>both happen at the same time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>After</strong> you come in from recess, I read you a story.</td>
<td>happens first, happens second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read you a story <strong>after</strong> you come in from recess.</td>
<td>happens second, happens first</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scaffolds
Planned Scaffolds

What am I pretty sure my students will need?

Anchor chart: Descriptive text

Graphic Organizer: is, can, has

Text Reconstruction: (partner work) with hammerhead (pg. 28)

Explicit vocabulary instruction (harmless, dangerous). Require vocabulary in writing.

Text frame
What graphic organizer can students use to deconstruct meaning and construct a response?

- **is**
  - largest fish
  - harmless

- **has**
  - 6 foot wide mouth

- **can**
  - grow up to 60 feet
  - weigh up to 20 tons
Graphic Organizer: Great White

What graphic organizer can students use to deconstruct meaning and construct a response?

is
- most dangerous
- 3rd largest
- warm bodied

has
- 50 2.5-inch teeth
- big jaws
- largest teeth
- body temp higher than the water

can
- attack humans
- hold prey and bite it to pieces
- swim fast and catch its prey
For little guys
Very important!

Match the graphic organizer to the text type that students are learning and writing.
Description

A Butterfly
by Regina Davis

is  has  can

Clipart by Regina Davis
Process

LIFE CYCLE OF A BUTTERFLY

The ‘EGG’ is a tiny object with fine ribs and other microscopic structures. The female attaches the egg to leaves/stems, usually near caterpillar food.

The Adult is the colourful ‘BUTTERFLY’. The Butterfly is also the stage that migrates or colonizes new habitats.

The ‘LARVA’ is long, worm-like stage of the butterfly. It has stripes, and may have spine-like hairs. This is also the growth stage.

The ‘PUPA’ is the transformation stage within which the caterpillar tissues are broken and the structures are formed. The pupa is mostly brown/green and blends into the background. The Adult emerges from the Pupa.
Compare/Contrast

Moths and Butterflies

**Moths**
- Dull Colored
- Fly at Night
- Rest with wings spread
- Fat Furry Bodies

**Butterflies**
- Brightly Colored
- Fly during Day
- Rest with wings Up
- Thin sleek bodies

**Things in Common**

Moths and Butterflies both have two wings and six legs, eat nectar from flowers, and originally came from a caterpillar.
Text Frame

What is a thoughtful text frame for students?

One kind of ______________________ is the ___________________________________________. It can ___________________________________________________________ and ___________________________________________. It has ___________________________ and ___________________________. Someone might think ___________________________________________, however, ___________________________________________. These are features of the ___________________________.

LWriston2017 52
What might that look like?

One kind of shark is the great white shark. It can swim fast and catch its prey. It has 50 2.5-inch teeth and big jaws. Someone might think it is warm blooded, however, it is warm bodied. This helps the shark swim faster in the water. These are features of the dangerous great white.
Just in time Scaffolds…

What can I use if my students still aren’t developing the understanding?

Monitor and Prompt:

What do you remember about___?

Think about the hammerhead shark, ____________

Does that make sense?

Paraphrase

Link to primary language or background knowledge

Provide additional pictures
To sum up....

- Connect learning: this includes connecting language structures
- Know what you want students to produce: what it looks like, the length, number of sources, etc.
- Know the text type, vocabulary and language demands that you will need to teach
- Make the language learning explicit
- Build in scaffolds and gradual release
- Use formative assessment to inform each stage of the teaching and learning cycle.
Any Questions
Resources


California Department of Education (CDE). California English Language Development Standards. Sacramento: California Department of Education


Links

Sentence combining: http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/sentence_combining