words, demonstrate understanding of nuances in words, and analyze word parts (L.K-12.5) as they acquire and use general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in reading, writing, speaking, and listening (L.K-12.6). The CA ELD Standards also draw particular attention to domain-specific and general academic vocabulary knowledge and usage due to the prevalence of these types of vocabulary in academic contexts.

Some students may be unfamiliar with the language necessary to engage in some school tasks. These tasks might include participating in a debate about a controversial topic, writing an explanation about how something works in science, taking a stand in a discussion and supporting it with evidence, comprehending a historical account or a math problem in a textbook, or critiquing a story or novel. The language used in these tasks varies based on the discipline, topic, mode of communication, and even the relationship between the people interacting around the task. As they progress through the grades from the early elementary years and into secondary schooling and the language demands of academic tasks in school increase, all students need to continuously develop a facility with interpreting and using academic English. Figure 2.12 discusses the concept of academic language in more detail.

Figure 2.12. Academic Language

Academic language broadly refers to the language used in school to help students develop content knowledge and the language students are expected to use to convey their understanding of this knowledge. It is a different way of using language than the type of English used in informal, or everyday, social interactions. For example, the way we describe a movie to a friend is different from the way a movie review is written for a newspaper because what these two texts are trying to accomplish, as well as their audience, is different. Similarly, the text structure and organization of an oral argument is different than that of a written story because the purpose is different (to persuade someone to do something versus to entertain readers); therefore, the language resources that are selected to achieve these distinct purposes are different.

There are some features of academic English that cut across the disciplines, such as general academic vocabulary (e.g., *evaluate*, *infer*, *resist*), but there is also variation depending upon the discipline (in domain-specific vocabulary, such as *metamorphic* or *parallelogram*). However, academic English encompasses much more than vocabulary. In school or other academic settings, students choose particular language resources in order to meet the expectations of the people with whom they are interacting. Although these language resources include vocabulary, they also include ways of combining

clauses to show relationships between ideas, expanding sentences to add precision or detail, or organizing texts in cohesive ways. Language resources enable students to make meaning and achieve specific purposes (e.g., persuading, explaining, entertaining, describing) with different audiences in discipline-specific ways.

From this perspective, language is a meaning-making resource, and *academic English* encompasses discourse practices, text structures, grammatical structures, and vocabulary—all inseparable from meaning (Bailey and Huang 2011; Wong-Fillmore and Fillmore 2012; Schleppegrell 2004 Snow and Uccelli 2009). Academic English shares characteristics across disciplines (it is densely packed with meaning, authoritatively presented, and highly structured) but is also highly dependent upon disciplinary content (Christie and Derewianka 2008; Derewianka and Jones 2012; Moje 2010; Schleppegrell 2004). For more on the characteristics of academic English, see Chapter Five of the CA ELD Standards (CDE 2014a).

Not all children come to school equally prepared to engage with academic English. However, all students can learn academic English, use it to achieve success in academic tasks across the disciplines, and build upon it to prepare for college and careers. In particular, attending to how students can use the language resources of academic English to make meaning and achieve particular social purposes is critically important. Deep knowledge about how language works allows students to

- Represent their experiences and express their ideas effectively;
- Interact with a broader variety of audiences; and
- Structure their messages intentionally and purposefully in order to achieve particular purposes.

### *Vocabulary*

Over the past several decades, vocabulary knowledge has been repeatedly identified as a critical and powerful factor underlying language and literacy proficiency, including disciplinary literacy (e.g., Graves 1986; Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin 1990; Beck and McKeown 1991; Carlisle 2010;). Recent research with ELs in kindergarten through grade twelve  has demonstrated the positive effects of focusing on domain-specific and general academic vocabulary in the context of rich instruction using sophisticated texts (August, Carlo, Dressler, and Snow 2005; Calderón, and others 2005; Carlo, and others 2004; Kieffer and Lesaux 2008; 2010; Silverman 2007; Snow, Lawrence, and White 2009; Spycher 2009). Moreover, a panel convened by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences (IES), charged with developing a practice guide for teachers *Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School* recommended the teaching of "a set