

### Vignette 4.4 Designated ELD Instruction in Grade Three:

#### Analyzing Complex Sentences in Science Texts

**Background:** Mr. Franklin has noticed that some of his EL students at the Expanding level of English language proficiency experience challenges reading the language of the complex informational texts the class is using in integrated ELA and science (see Vignette 4.3). In particular, he's noticed that some of the domain-specific and general academic vocabulary, complex grammatical structures, and certain phrasings of the complex texts seem unfamiliar to students. Mr. Franklin often paraphrases and explains the meaning of the language as he reads complex informational texts aloud to students so that they will understand the content. However, he knows that when his students read independently and with others, they need to gain greater independence with understanding the language in the complex texts, and he also knows that the language they will encounter in texts as they move up through the grades will become even more complex. He'd like for his students to develop strategies for comprehending the complex language they encounter in science informational texts, and he'd also like for them to be able to use a greater variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures in their writing and speaking about science concepts and texts.

#### Lesson Context

The third grade teaching team plans their upcoming designated ELD lessons together. They begin by analyzing the language in the texts they use for instruction. One text that students will be reading in small reading groups during ELA instruction is *From Seed to Plant*, by Gail Gibbons. As they analyze the text, they find that there are several potentially new domain-specific words (e.g., *pod*, *pistile*, *ovule*), which they will teach during science as it corresponds to the unit on plants that all of the third grade teachers are teaching. In addition, the text contains several complex sentences and long sentences that they anticipate their EL students will find challenging. The team notices that there is a pattern in many of the complex sentences. Many of them contain subordinating conjunctions that create a relationship of time between two events (e.g., *Before a seed can begin to grow, a grain of pollen from the stamen must land on the stigma*). The team discusses the challenge students may face if they miss the meaning these relationships create, and they plan several designated ELD lessons, adjusted to different English language proficiency levels, where they can discuss this way of connecting ideas. The learning target and cluster of CA ELD Standards Mr. Franklin focuses on for the lesson excerpts below are the following:

**Learning Target:** The students will describe ideas using complex sentences to show relationships of time.

#### **Primary CA ELD Standards Addressed (Expanding level shown):**

*ELD.PI.3.1 - Contribute to class, group, and partner discussions ... ; ELD.PI.3.6 - Describe ideas, phenomena (e.g., how cows digest food), and text elements (e.g., main idea, characters, events) in greater detail based on understanding of a variety of grade-level texts and viewing of multimedia with moderate support; ELD.PI.3.6 - Combine clauses in an increasing variety of ways (e.g., creating compound and complex sentences) to make connections between and join ideas ...*

**Lesson Excerpt:** After the students have read the complex informational text, *From Seed to Plant* once during ELA, Mr. Franklin sets the stage with his designated ELD group of students at the Expanding level of English language proficiency by clearly explaining the purpose of the series of lessons he will teach that week:

Mr. Franklin: This week, we are going to be looking closely at some of the language in the book we are reading, *From Seed to Plant*. The way that we discuss the language in the book is going to help you understand what the author is trying to tell us. Discussing the language in books also helps you when you are reading and writing on your own.

Mr. Franklin distributes copies of the book to the children and reviews the general meanings in the text, which they discussed earlier that day. He asks them to work in pairs - not to read the text but instead to

look at the illustrations and to take turns describing what is happening in them, using what they remember from the morning's read aloud and discussion about the text. He tells them to encourage their partners to provide many details in their descriptions. As the students engage in the task, he listens to them and notes in his observation journal whether they are using domain-specific vocabulary and complex sentences to express time relationships (e.g., *When the fruit is ripe, it starts to break open.*). He notes that a few students are using compound sentences (e.g., *The fruit gets ripe, and it breaks open.*), and some are using complex sentences. However, most of the children are using only simple sentences (*The fruit gets ripe. The fruit breaks.*).

After several minutes of observing, Mr. Franklin stops the children and tells them that they're going to be using the text to put together two events in sentences in a way that shows when the events happened. In order to describe what he means by this, he orally models using complex sentences with time-related subordinating conjunctions using conversational language:

- *Before* I go to bed at night, I brush my teeth.
- *When* the bell rings, you all stop playing.
- You listen, *while* I read stories to you.
- *After* you come in from recess, I read you a story.

He explains that, when they observe closely the language they use when they speak and the language used in books, they can find out how the language works to make different meanings, such as showing when things happen. On his document reader, he shows the children the same complex sentences he's just provided orally. He explains that each sentence has two ideas that are happening. Sometimes the events are happening at the same time, and sometimes they are happening "in order" – one event first, and the other second. He underlines the subordinate clauses and highlights with a different color the subordinating conjunctions (*before, when, while*) while explaining that the words that are highlighted let us know when the two events in the sentence are happening:

Showing When Events Happen	
Sentence	When the events are happening
<u>Before</u> I go to bed at night, I brush my teeth.	happens second, happens first
I brush my teeth <u>before</u> I go to bed at night,	happens first, happens second
<u>When</u> the bell rings, you all stop playing.	both happen at the same time
You listen <u>while</u> I read stories to you.	both happen at the same time
<u>After</u> you come in from recess, I read you a story.	happens first, happens second
I read you a story, <u>after</u> you come in from recess.	happens second, happens first

Mr. Franklin reads the sentences with the children and discusses what's written on the chart.

Mr. Franklin: What would happen if the words *before* or *after* or *when* were taken away? What if I said, "I go to bed. I brush my teeth."

Mai: We can't know when it happens.

David: It doesn't make sense!

Mr. Franklin: Right, sometimes it doesn't make sense. I can tell you about when things happen if I use the words *after*, *before*, *while*, and other words that show time. We're going to play a game to practice using those word to tell when things happen, and then we're going to see how those words are used in the book we're reading, *From Seed to Plant*.

Mr. Franklin reads the sentence frames he's written on the white board, as the children read chorally with him. He asks them to take turns making up two events and to use the sentence frames to show when the events happened. The sentence frames he uses are provided below:

- Before I come to school, I \_\_\_\_\_.
- After I get home from school, I \_\_\_\_\_.
- While I'm at school, I \_\_\_\_\_.

After the children have practiced putting together two familiar ideas using complex sentences and familiar language, he shows them how these same ways of telling when something is happening shows up in *From Seed to Plant*. He uses his document reader to show several sentences from the book. After each sentence, he thinks aloud, rephrasing what the sentences mean (e.g., I think this means...The word 'before' tells me that...). He underlines the subordinate clauses and highlights the subordinating conjunctions in each sentence.

<b>Showing When Events Happen</b>	
<b>Sentence</b>	<b>When the events are happening</b>
<u>Before a seed can begin to grow</u> , a grain of pollen from the stamen must land on the stigma...	happens second, happens first
<u>While they visit the flowers for their sweet juice, called nectar</u> , pollen rubs onto their bodies.	both happen at the same time
<u>When the fruit or pod ripens</u> , it breaks open.	happens first, happens second

Mr. Franklin discusses the meanings of the sentences with the students and guides them to articulate what the two events are and how the words *before*, *while*, and *when* create a relationship of time between the two events. Next, he asks the children to go back through *From Seed to Plant* again, focusing on the illustrations, but this time, he asks them to use the words *when*, *before*, and *while* to explain what is happening to their partner, using the pictures to help them. After, they can check what the text says and compare.

At the end of the lesson, Mr. Franklin asks the students to be listening for when their friends or teachers connect their ideas in different ways. Sometimes the ideas will be two events, but sometimes they will be other ideas. He tells them that they'll be learning about those other ways on another day. Mr. Franklin also encourages his students to use these types of sentences more often in their own speaking and writing.

#### **Teacher Reflection and Next Steps:**

When the third grade teachers meet the following week, they share their experiences teaching the designated ELD lessons they'd planned together to the different groups of EL students. Mr. Franklin's colleague, Mrs. Garcia, taught the differentiated lessons to the third grade EL students at the Emerging level of English language proficiency. This is a group of children who have been in the country for a year or less and needed substantial scaffolding to access the complex text.

Mrs. Garcia shares that she modified the designated ELD lessons by starting the week by providing time for the children to discuss the illustrations of the text, as well as other pictures, using simple sentences so that they could become familiar with the new vocabulary and syntax. This preparation appeared to

support these children when they began to tackle the complex sentences. Next, she spent some time with the students chorally chanting poems containing the subordinating conjunctions *before*, *while*, and *after* (e.g., Before I go to bed, I brush my teeth. Before I go to school, I eat my breakfast.). The class then created a big book using compound and complex sentences to describe the illustrations in *From Seed to Plant*.

With this differentiated instruction during designated ELD time, all of the EL students in the third grade classes were able to gain deeper understandings of how writers and speakers can choose to use language in particular ways to create time relationships between events. The teachers agree to continue to develop designated ELD lessons that build their students' understanding of how to create different kinds of relationships between ideas. They also agree that using the books and other texts students are reading in ELA, science, social studies, and other content areas is a useful way of supporting their ELs to both understand the language used in those texts, as well as the content of the texts.

Sources: Lessons based on Gibbons (2002); Christie (2005); Derewianka and Jones (2012)

### Resources

#### Web Sites:

- The Text Project (<http://www.textproject.org/>) has many resources about how to support students to read complex texts.

#### Recommended Reading:

See “7 Actions that Teachers Can Take Right Now: Text Complexity” for ideas for supporting students to read complex texts (<http://www.textproject.org/professional-development/text-matters/7-actions-that-teachers-can-take-right-now-text-complexity/>).

## Conclusion

The information and ideas in this grade-level section are provided to guide teachers in their instructional planning. Recognizing California’s richly diverse student population is critical for instructional and program planning and delivery. Teachers are responsible for educating a variety of learners, including **advanced learners, students with disabilities, ELs at different English language proficiency levels, Standard English learners**, and other **culturally and linguistically diverse learners**, as well as **students experiencing difficulties** with one or another of the themes presented in this chapter (meaning making, effective expression, language development, content knowledge, and foundational skills).

It is beyond the scope of a curriculum framework to provide guidance on meeting the learning needs of every student because each student comes to teachers with unique needs, histories, and circumstances. Teachers must know their students well through appropriate assessment practices and other methods, including communication with families, in order to design effective instruction for them. They need to adapt and