Writing Language Objectives: Practical Tools for Lesson Development with a Language Focus

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In this session, we will explore:

- The characteristics of effective language objectives tied to standards-based tasks and instructional routines
- A practical and classroom-tested process for establishing language objectives for a lesson/unit
- Examples and non-examples of language objectives
- Challenges in writing effective language objectives
- Practical tools to facilitate identification and writing of appropriate language objectives
Two-Minute Activity

Independent Reflection

1. The Office of Civil Rights is closely monitoring a large urban district in Southern California because of the chronic underperformance of their long-term EL, Special Ed. and African American student populations.

2. During initial site visits throughout the district, the OCR teams documented the scarcity of language objectives and explicit language instruction evident in lessons across the subject areas and grade levels.

3. Write a brief response to this question:
   *What lesson-planning process do you follow to establish language objectives and related instruction?*

Two-Minute Activity

Partner Discussion Task

1. Make eye contact with an elbow partner.

2. Determine partner one and partner two.

3. Think about this question:
   *What challenges do teachers face writing language objectives for their lessons?*

4. Jot down two reasons.

5. At the signal, partner one will share first. Continue sharing until I call time.
Language Targets

One common challenge teachers face is __ (verb + ing: identifying, grasping)

My idea is similar to __’s idea.
My idea builds upon __’s idea.

Model Responses

- One common challenge teachers face is _ not having adequate models of effectively written language objectives to emulate.

- One common challenge teachers face is _ understanding their students’ English proficiency levels and knowledge gaps.
Challenges Teachers Experience Writing Objectives

- A lesson may have one content standard focus yet include tasks that require an orchestration of language objectives.

- The language objectives provided with published curricula are often vague, _______________ or _______________.

- They lack the _________ and _________ to write effective language objectives.

Instructional Routine: Vocabulary Knowledge Rating

Language Objectives

- Students will ask present tense questions using *do* or *are*.

- Students will qualify their word knowledge using precise vocabulary: *recognize, familiar, somewhat familiar, unfamiliar*.

- Students will report their group’s word knowledge using past tense citation verbs + that: *agreed that, decided that, determined that*. 
Instructional Routine: Prediction Using Text Features

Language Objectives

- Students will make predictions about informational text content using precise verbs in the present tense: *I predict that...*, *I imagine that...*
- Students will make predictions about text content using precise verbs in the future tense: *the article will focus on...the article will discuss...*
- Students will justify predictions about text content using the formal expression *based on...*
- Students will reference text features to make predictions using precise nouns: *title, heading, image, caption, chart, graph*

Sample Lesson: Active Listening Behaviors

Learning Objectives (for 2 lessons)

Content Objectives: Students will...

- identify active listening behaviors
- organize behaviors in an idea web
- select examples for use as supporting details in an informational paragraph
- support a topic sentence in an expository paragraph with 3 details
Sample Lesson: Active Listening Behaviors
Learning Objectives (for 1 lesson)

**Language Objectives:** Students will…

- describe behavior using precise verb choices
- describe a person’s behavior using 3rd person singular, habitual present tense
- refer to a person using correct subject pronoun
- listen for and point out similar ideas in a discussion using appropriate expressions

A Checklist

An Effective Language Objective…

- stems from the linguistic demands of a standards-based lesson task
- focuses on high-leverage language that will serve students in many contexts
- emphasizes expressive language domains: speaking and writing (but doesn’t exclude listening and reading)
- uses active verbs to explain functions/tasks
- names the specific language students will use
### Language Objective Frame 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs for Functions</th>
<th>Language Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>articulate</td>
<td>precise adjectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>describe</td>
<td>strong action verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>predict</td>
<td>past tense verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>summarize</td>
<td>sequencing words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>justify</td>
<td>complex sentences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students will _______ using _______ (function) using _______ (language target).

### Language Objective Frame 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Targets</th>
<th>Verbs for Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>precise adjectives</td>
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<td>justify</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students will use _______ to _______ (language target) _______ (function).
### Non-Examples: Language Objectives

Students will…

- read text fluently
- listen to the teacher read fluently
- use complete sentences
- answer reading comprehension questions
- take/copy Cornell Notes
- follow directions

### Steps for Writing an Appropriate Language Objective

- Determine the standard to be addressed
- Identify the lesson task(s) that will help students attain the standard
- Anticipate students’ default responses
- Write an ideal response (for the age, proficiency level) and linguistic scaffolds
- Write a language objective statement
Sample Language Objectives 1

- Standard-Based Task: **Identify sequence of events in a narrative**
- Language Objective: Students will...
  - Articulate events in a sequence using past tense verbs and sequencing words:
    - *first, next, then, finally* (early intermediate)
    - *initially, soon after, after that* (intermediate)

Sample Language Objectives 2

- Standards-Based Task: **Identify main idea and essential details in nonfiction text**
- Language Objectives: Students will...
  - discuss main idea in text using precise nouns: *section, topic, detail, main idea*
  - prioritize details in text using precise adjectives: *important, significant, essential*
Sample Language Objectives 3

- Standards-Based Task: **Write a summary of a nonfiction text**
- Language Objectives: Students will…
  - use citation verbs in the 3rd person singular habitual present-tense to introduce the author’s main points in an expository article: *points out, emphasizes, concludes*

Two-Minute Activity

**Partner Discussion Task**

1. Discuss this question: How do language objectives differ from content objectives?

2. Prepare a written response together using this frame:

   *While content objectives ____________, language objectives ____________*
Contact Information

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- Resource: Dr. Kinsella’s related 2.9.11 webinar
  http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/webinars