Proficiency Level Descriptors
for English Language Proficiency Standards

Introduction

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) utilized the services of WestEd and the Understanding Language Initiative at Stanford University to develop a new set of English language proficiency standards (ELP Standards) (CCSSO, 2013). The ELP Standards were developed for grades K, 1, 2–3, 4–5, 6–8, and 9–12, to highlight and elaborate upon the critical language, knowledge about language, and skills using language that are within college and career readiness standards in mathematics, science, and English language arts (ELA)/literacy (CCR standards) and that are necessary in order for English language learners (ELLs) to be successful in schools.

The purpose of this *Proficiency Level Descriptors[1] for English Language Proficiency Standards* document is to complement, rather than replace, the ELP Standards. This document provides summary definitions and more detailed descriptions of what ELLs' *language forms*[2] might look like as ELLs gain proficiency with the strategic set of *language functions*[3] outlined in the ELP Standards. Following a glossary of key terms, the document concludes with an appendix that provides background information about the contexts in which the PLDs are situated.

Proficiency Level Descriptor Summaries

In general, PLDs provide "descriptions of the level of English language knowledge and skills required of each [proficiency] level" (Perie, 2008, p. 15). When designing the ELP Standards, the language forms outlined in the PLDs were embedded throughout the grade-level/grade-span ELP Standards according to the grade-appropriate expectations that had been placed in each ELP Standard.

Summaries of the PLDs provide an overview in relation to:

1. the degree of control of English that ELLs typically show as they participate in grade-appropriate classroom-based activities involving the strategic language functions outlined in the ELP Standards; and
2. what the forms of ELLs' language-related performance typically look like.

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[1] A note on the use of the term *Proficiency,* rather than *Performance,* in this phrase: The ELP Standards focus on *proficiency* levels rather than *performance* levels. For consistency with the ELP Standards, this document uses the term *Proficiency Level Descriptors,* rather than *Performance Level Descriptors* as had been suggested in Perie (2008), a journal article that primarily focuses on creating PLDs for content-area assessments. The descriptors detailed in this document address five ELP levels; the uppermost ELP level is part of the calculation of whether a student is fully English proficient.

[2] As used in the ELP Standards, the term *language forms* refers to vocabulary, grammar, and discourse specific to a particular content area or discipline.

[3] As used in the ELP Standards, the term *language functions* refers to what students *do* with language to accomplish content-specific tasks.

Table 1. Summaries of Language Forms Embedded within the ELP Standards

	By the end of each ELP level, an ELL can . . .				
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
PLD Summary	• show limited control of English when participating in grade-appropriate classroom activities • convey simple information, using simply constructed phrases and sentences with a limited range of vocabulary	• show emerging control of English when participating in grade-appropriate classroom activities • convey briefly sequenced and/or simply detailed information, using combinations of simple sentence structures and simple vocabulary	• show developing control of English when participating in grade-appropriate classroom activities • use related paragraphs to convey related events, ideas, and/or opinions, using frequently occurring complex sentence structures and a developing vocabulary	• show increasingly independent control of English when participating in grade-appropriate classroom activities • convey related events, ideas, and/or opinions, using multiple related paragraphs with increasingly complex, descriptive sentence structures and a wider vocabulary	• show independent control of English when participating in grade-appropriate classroom activities • convey a complex sequence of events, ideas, opinions, and/or steps in a process, using a wide variety of complex and sophisticated, descriptive sentence structures and a wide vocabulary

Additionally, once a student is considered English proficient for the purposes of ELL assessment and eligibility for ELL services, the student will continue to develop English language skills beyond involvement in an English language development program. Development of language skills is an ongoing process that continues throughout one's lifetime.

Detailed Proficiency Level Descriptors

The progressions shown in Table 2 provide more detailed information on the language forms which were embedded in ELP Standards according to grade-appropriate expectations. They show an increasingly sophisticated use and control of language forms at the discourse, sentence, and vocabulary levels, as ELLs develop use and control of the language functions needed to participate in content-specific practices (Bailey, Reynolds Kelly, Heritage, Jones & Bernstein-Blackstock, 2013; Bailey & Heritage, 2008; Cook, White, Castro, Patton, & Bird, 2012; Valdes, Walqui, Kibler, & Alvarez, 2012).

During development, the PLDs in Table 2 were framed in relation to the "high-leverage characteristics" (Bailey, et al., 2013 p. 84) needed for addressing the language demands found within CCR standards, at the discourse, sentence, and vocabulary[4] levels. Bailey and colleagues (2013) clarify that "Analogous to Stevens et al.'s (2009) notion of a hypothetical learning trajectory, linguistic hallmarks present the trajectory of individual linguistic and discourse features" (p.74) helping to delineate steps taken along the progression of English language development. Based on the authors' preliminary analyses of pilot data, characteristics for discourse, sentence, and vocabulary levels include:

1. Discourse level: level of control over organization, cohesion, and overall stamina
2. Sentence level: sophistication of sentence structure
3. Vocabulary level: sophistication of vocabulary (e.g., range and specificity), including expansion of word groups and grammatical forms

Table 2. Detailed Proficiency Level Descriptors for Forms Embedded within the ELP Standards[5]

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Discourse Level *What is the amount of content-specific language that can be quickly processed or easily produced?*	• simple information about an event, experience, and/or topic • short sentences composed of simple or predictable phrases or sentences • limited (i.e., initial) cohesion among sentence structures	• a brief sequence of events in order and/or introduction of a topic with supporting details • multiple, related, simple sentences containing content-area descriptions in grade-appropriate text or word problems • loose cohesion of information and/or ideas using frequently occurring linking words, accomplished by repetition of words or phrases	• related events, ideas, and/or opinions (may retrace or restart an explanation being received or produced) • related paragraphs on grade-appropriate content-area texts • developing application of an increasing range of temporal and linking words and phrases to connect and organize events, ideas, and opinions	• related events, ideas, and/or opinions (developing ability to receive or provide a more elaborated explanation) • multiple paragraphs containing a variety of sentences on grade-appropriate content-area text • increasingly accurate application of transitional words and phrases to connect and organize events, ideas, and opinions (yet may struggle with naturalness of phrasing)	• complex sequences of events, ideas, opinions, and/or steps in a process (demonstrates stamina in receiving or providing an elaborated explanation} • multiple paragraphs, chapters, and essays on grade-appropriate content-area text • accurate application of a variety of linking words and phrases to connect and organize ideas, information, or events

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[4] Referred to as the "word" level in Bailey & Heritage, 2008; Bailey, et al., (2013).
[5] As a reminder: See the grade-level/grade-span ELP Standards (CCSSO, 2013) for specific expectations around student ELP-related performance.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Sentence Level *How much information is packed within a sentence structure (clause) or sentence?*	syntactically simple sentences including: • verb tenses such as present, present progressive, simple future (going to), simple past • modifiers such as adjectives, adverbs • simple grammatical constructions (e.g. commands, some *wh-* questions, declaratives) • common social and instructional patterns or forms	combinations of simple sentence structures including: • verb tenses such as past tense (irregular), past progressive, simple future • modifiers such as frequently occurring prepositions, adjectives, adverbs • repetitive phrases and sentence patterns across content areas	descriptive sentences characterized by frequently occurring complex sentence structures including: • verb tenses such as present perfect • modifiers such as subordinating conjunctions, and prepositional phrases • simple, compound and some complex grammatical constructions (e.g., (independent, dependent, relative, and adverbial) across content areas	descriptive sentences characterized by increasingly complex sentence structures including: • verb tenses such as past perfect • modifiers such as phrases and clauses within a sentence (recognizing and correcting most misplaced and dangling modifiers) • expanded simple compound, and complex sentence patterns characteristic of content areas	descriptive sentences characterized by wide variety of sophisticated sentence structures including: • verb tenses such as passive voice and subjunctive • modifiers such as phrases and clauses within a sentence (recognizing and correcting misplaced and dangling modifiers) • a wide range of idiomatic and unique sentence patterns characteristic of content areas
Vocabulary Level *What is the range and specificity of words, phrases, and expressions used?*	a limited (i.e., initial) range of simple vocabulary including: • very frequently occurring words and phrases (everyday terms, cognates, and expressions with clear, easily demonstrated referents) • a small number of frequently occurring words, phrases, and formulaic expressions based on literal definition of words • frequently occurring pronouns used with initial control (and occasional misapplications) • nonverbal communication	a simple vocabulary including: • frequently occurring words and phrases • one to two forms of words and phrases based on specific context, such as social, instructional, and general terms, cognates, and expressions across content areas • frequently occurring pronouns used with increasing precise control • a few transparent idioms (i.e., expressions in which literal meaning is clearly linked to figurative meaning) that are grammatically simple in form	a developing vocabulary including: • words and phrases in spoken and written forms in a growing number of contexts, such as specific content-area terms, cognates, and expressions • an emerging awareness of how to create new words from familiar words (i.e., *electricity from electric*), collocations (i.e., habitual juxtaposition of a particular word with another word or words, with a frequency greater than chance) and multiple-meaning words • relative pronouns (e.g., *who, whom, which, that*), relative adverbs (e.g., *where, when, why*) • transparent idioms with developing grammatical complexity	a wider vocabulary including: • a increasing proportion of less frequently occurring words and phrases; increasing use of vivid words and phrases • multiple meanings of words and phrases across contexts, such as specific and technical content-related terms, cognates, and expressions and some content-specific collocations • an increasing number of intensive pronouns to add emphasis to a statement (e.g., *myself, ourselves*) • semi-transparent idioms (i.e., expressions in which the link between literal and figurative meaning is less obvious) with increasing grammatical and figurative complexity	a wide vocabulary including: • a larger proportion of vivid, less frequently occurring words and phrases • precise derivations of words and phrases regardless of context, such as general, specific, technical, and abstract content-related vocabulary, cognates, content-specific collocations, and figurative language • precise use of intensive pronouns • opaque idioms (i.e., expressions with an undetectable link between literal and figurative language) with grammatical and metaphorical complexity

A Note on Tables 1 and 2

The Levels 1–5 descriptors in Table 1 and Table 2 describe targets for ELL performance by the end of each ELP level. However, students may demonstrate a range of abilities within and across each ELP level; second language acquisition does not necessarily occur in a linear fashion within or across proficiency levels. Differences in abilities within ELP levels are based upon ELLs' native language proficiency, their academic background in their first language, and their individual differences. For the purposes of presentation and understanding, the Levels 1–5 descriptors describe proficiency at the end of each ELP level in terms of a linear progression across the proficiency levels of an aligned set of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

At any given point along their trajectories of English learning, ELLs may exhibit some abilities (e.g., speaking skills) at a higher proficiency level while exhibiting other abilities (e.g., writing skills) at a lower proficiency level. Additionally, a student may successfully perform a particular task at a lower proficiency level but need review at the next highest proficiency level when presented with a new or more complex type of task. Since, by definition, ELL status is a temporary status, an ELP level does not categorize a student (e.g., "a Level 1 student"), but, rather, identifies what a student knows and can do at a particular stage of ELP (e.g., "a student at Level 1" or "a student whose listening performance is at Level 1").

A Note on Scaffolding

While many ELP standards' PLDs include references to scaffolding, the PLDs shown in this document do not include reference to scaffolding in relation to ELP levels. As outlined in Guiding Principle 4 of the ELP Standards, it is recommended that scaffolding should not be framed only as support to be provided to ELLs with lower levels of ELP, and it is important to avoid encouraging or reinforcing static notions of what students can or cannot do at various levels of ELP. Guiding Principle 4 states:

> ELLs at all levels of ELP should be provided with scaffolding in order to reach the next reasonable proficiency level as they develop grade-appropriate language capacities, particularly those that involve content-specific vocabulary and registers. *The type and intensity of the scaffolding provided will depend on each student's ability to undertake the particular task independently while continuing to uphold appropriate complexity for the student.* (CCSSO, 2013, p. 4; emphasis added)

It is important that educators use a more nuanced approach to scaffolding (Walqui, Bunch, Kibler, & Pimentel, 2013). Scaffolding can be provided to students throughout the process of ELP, not just at the lower ELP levels.

> Students at *every* level of English language proficiency will engage in some academic tasks that require *little or no* scaffolding because the students have already mastered the requisite skills and language; other tasks that require *moderate* scaffolding because the students can carry out some aspects of the task independently but require linguistic or other support for other aspects; and tasks that require *substantial* scaffolding because they entail cognitively and linguistically unfamiliar and challenging content or skills. (Walqui et al., 2013, p. 5; emphasis in original)

Glossary

Cognate: A word that has the same linguistic derivation as another; from the same original word or root. Examples of cognates in Indo-European languages are the words *night* (English), *nuit* (French), *Nacht* (German), *nacht* (Dutch), etc., derived from the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) *nókʷts*, "night"; the Hebrew שלום *shalom*, the Arabic سلام *salām,* and the Amharic *selam* ("peace") are also cognates, derived from Proto-Semitic *šalām-*.

> **False cognates** are words that are commonly thought to be related (have a common origin), but that linguistic examination reveals are unrelated. The words *embarrassed* (self-conscious, humiliated) in English and *embarazada* (pregnant) in Spanish are examples of false cognates.

Coherence: A central, main theme or topic maintained across multiple sentences. One test of coherence is that sentences cannot be reordered without changing meaning.

Cohesion: Intra- and inter- sentence language connections made by using cohesive devices (e.g., pronoun or synonym replacement, logical connectors, conclusions that refer to prior content).

Collocation: The grouping of two or more words together with a frequency greater than chance. Such terms as "crystal clear," "middle management," "nuclear family," and "cosmetic surgery" are examples of collocated pairs of words.

Content-specific: Specific to a given discipline, content area, domain, or subject area. (Within the literature and among researchers, the term "discipline-specific" is more commonly used.) CCSSO (2012) defines it as "the language used, orally or in writing, to communicate ideas, concepts, and information or to engage in activities in particular subject areas (e.g., science)" (p. 107).

Context: This term is derived from Latin, meaning "a joining together" of external sources of information (schemas) with internal concepts (e.g., memories). It is also defined as a frame (e.g., background information, schema) that surrounds an event being examined and provides resources for appropriate interpretation (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992). As Fillmore observed, "When you pick up a word, you drag along with it a whole scene" (Fillmore, 1975, p. 114). Cummins (2000) describes effects of context on communication:

- **Context-embedded communication:** Participants can actively negotiate meaning (e.g., by providing feedback that the message has not been understood), and the language is supported by a wide range of meaningful interpersonal and situational cues.
- **Context-reduced communication**: Participants rely primarily on linguistic cues to meaning, and thus, successful interpretation of the message depends heavily on knowledge of the language itself. (p. 68)

Control: As used in the ELP Standards, refers to the degree to which a student may use a particular form with stability and precision. For example, independent control occurs when "In more sophisticated explanations, children have little or no difficulty simultaneously employing many complex and sophisticated linguistic devices [see **Linking words**], and their explanations require little effort from a listener to understand the steps or process being explained" (Bailey, 2013, p. 13).

Descriptive sentences: Sentences in which the speaker/writer is able to describe or paint an exact picture in the listener's or reader's mind of what the speaker/writer wants to convey. Unlike a simple sentence (e.g., "The cat ran"), a descriptive sentence uses adjectives and adverbs as well as complex sentence construction (dependent, adverbial clauses, prepositional phrases, etc.) (e.g., "The big fat white cat ran quickly along the edge of the garden" which could be expanded to "It was astonishing, although not surprising, to observe that Mr. Dewey's big fat white cat could run along the edge of the garden so quickly when there was a ferocious dog in close pursuit").

Discourse: Language used in a particular context, such as the academic discourse of a science classroom compared to the social discourse of the playground. Different types of discourse call for different vocabulary, phrases, structures, and language registers. According to Gee (1999), language is always used from a perspective and always occurs within a context; there is no neutral use of language.

English language proficiency (ELP): "A socially constructed notion of the ability or capacity of individuals to use language for specific purposes" (CCSSO, 2012, p. 107). Also referred to by some as English language development (ELD), ELP embodies the belief that language development is ongoing. Multiple pathways to ELP are possible, but the end goal for students' progress in acquiring English is to ensure full participation of ELLs in school contexts.

Evidence: Facts, figures, details, quotations, or other sources of data and information that provide support for claims or analyses and that can be evaluated by others. Evidence should appear in a form, and be derived from a source, that is widely accepted as appropriate to a particular discipline, such as details or quotations from a text in the study of literature or experimental results in the study of science. (See Appendix A of the CCSS for ELA & Literacy.)

Formulaic expressions*: Expressions produced in accordance with a mechanically followed rule or style. In the initial stages of English language acquisition, formulaic expressions are learned as a "chunk" in reference to familiar topics or objects in the immediate environment. Examples of formulaic expressions used during the initial phrase of English language acquisition in schools include "go to the bathroom," "stand in line," and other habitually-used phrases. These prefabricated units are important because they serve as a bridge to connect vocabulary and grammar. Cowie (1998) argues that formulaic expressions are a crucial step in helping student move towards the acquisitions of idioms and the development of native-like proficiency.

Frequently occurring words and phrases: As used in the ELP Standards, this refers to words and phrases used commonly in the classroom and to everyday language used in schools. It is important to note that this does *not* refer to the Top 100 High-Frequency Words (e.g., "the," "a,"

"and," "but"). The term "basic" is not used in the ELP Standards because a term that is basic to one person may not be basic to another; acquisition of specific words and phrases depends on exposure and experiences.

Grade appropriate: As used in the ELP Standards, this refers to level of content and text complexity in relation to CCR standards' requirements for a particular grade level or grade span. (See [Appendix A of the CCSS for ELA & Literacy](#) and [Defining the Core](#).)

Idioms: An idiom is an expression that cannot be understood from the meanings of its component words but has a meaning of its own. Usually that meaning is derived from the history of the language and culture in which it is used. Students' acquisition of idioms progresses from literal meanings to figurative and metaphorical meanings.

- **Transparent idioms** are expressions in which the literal meaning is clearly linked to the figurative meaning, e.g., *give the green light*, *break the ice.*
- **Semi-transparent idioms** are expressions in which the link between literal and figurative meaning is less obvious, e.g., *beat a dead horse*, *save one's breath.*
- **Opaque idioms** are expressions with an undetectable link between literal and figurative language, e.g., *pull one's leg*, *kick the bucket.*

Inflectional ending: A short suffix added to the end of a word to alter its meaning. In this document, the term typically refers to endings such as -s, -es, -ing, and -ed.

Inflectional forms: The forms of a word that include alteration of the word to indicate singular or plural, verb tense, and verb aspect. Inflected or inflectional forms also include irregular verbs (e.g. sing – sang –sung) and irregular plural nouns (e.g. mouse –mice).

Interactive language skills: Skills involved in producing language in spoken or written form during collaborative, interactive activities, including collaborative use of receptive and productive modalities. This modality "refers to the learner as a speaker/listener and as a reader/writer. It requires two-way interactive communication where negotiation of meaning may be observed. The exchange will provide evidence of awareness of the sociocultural aspects of communication as language proficiency develops" (Phillips, 2008, p. 96).

Language forms: Vocabulary, grammar, and features of discourse specific to a particular content area or discipline. This term refers to the surface features of language and how they are arranged according to the grammar of the language. As a means of connecting sound with meaning, it incorporates morphology, syntax, and phonology.

Language functions: What students do with language to accomplish content-specific tasks. As defined by Gibbons (1993), language functions can be used to describe the purposes for which language is used in the classroom. Their use offers a simple and practical way to ensure that content and language are integrated.

Linking words (a.k.a. cohesive devices): Words or phrases that can be used as sentence connectors to develop coherence within a paragraph by linking one idea/argument to another. Examples include *however, in conclusion, basically, as it turns out, at last, eventually, after all, rarely, normally, at first, often, further,* and *firstly.*

Modalities (modes of communication): The means or manner by communication takes place. This document identifies three modalities: receptive, productive, and interactive. The four language domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking are contained within these three modalities. (see page 7 of the ELP Standards for more information.)

Modeled sentences: As used in the ELP Standards, this term refers to the provision of exemplar speech and text to students as part of the instructional process. Examples of modeled sentences in the ELP Standards include sentence frames, sentence stems, and sentence models.

Nonverbal communication: As used in the ELP Standards, this term refers the process of communication through sending and receiving wordless (mostly visual) cues between people. Examples of nonverbal communication in the ELP Standards may include gestures, nods, thumbs up or down, or facial expressions.

Organize: In the ELP Standards, refers to discourse that conveys temporal, causal, categorical, or other logical relationships that are consistent with the author's apparent purpose in conveying information, narrating a story, making a persuasive argument, or some other emergent discourse form.

Productive language skills: Skills involved in producing language in spoken or written form. This modality "places the learner as speaker [and/or] writer for a 'distant' audience (one with whom interaction is not possible or is limited). The communication is set for a specified audience, has purpose, and generally abides by rules of genre or style. It is a planned or formalized speech act or written document, and the learner has an opportunity to draft, get feedback, and revise it before publication or broadcast" (Phillips, 2008, p. 96).

Receptive language skills: Skills involved in interpreting and comprehending spoken or written language. This modality "refers to the learner as a reader [and/or] listener/viewer working with 'text' whose author or deliverer is not present or accessible. It presumes that the interaction is with authentic written or oral documents where language input is meaningful and content laden. The learner brings background knowledge, experience, and appropriate interpretive strategies to the task, to promote understanding of language and content in order to develop a personal reaction" (Phillips, 2008, p. 96).

Referent: The thing that a word or phrase denotes or stands for; examples may include abstractions or physical examples.

Registers: Distinguishable patterns of communication based upon well-established language practices, such as the language used in subject-area classrooms. Registers are a "recognizable kind of language particular to specific functions and situation. A well-known non-academic example is *sports announcer talk*" (Ferguson, 1983, p. 155).

Scaffolding: As defined in [Appendix A of the CCSS ELA & Literacy Standards](), this refers to guidance or assistance provided to students by a teacher, another adult, or a more capable peer, enabling the students to perform tasks that they otherwise would not be able to perform alone, with the goal of fostering the students' capacity to perform the tasks on their own later on. Pedagogically, a scaffold is the support offered to students so that they can successfully engage in activity beyond their current ability to perform independently. Specific scaffolds temporarily support the development of understandings as well as disciplinary (and language) practices. Once the development takes place, the scaffolds are removed and new ones may be erected, if needed, to support new needed developmental work. For more information, see Walqui et al. (2013).

Simple: As used in the ELP Standards, this generally refers to the grammatical structure of a phrase, sentence, or text relative to its complexity or density. A "simple" sentence may use subject+verb+object construction without any embellishments.

Stamina: Refers to the ability to show tenacity in giving a more elaborated explanation (as fluency is gained). Students at earlier ELP levels may initially have retracings and restarts but continue on with their explanations to convey sufficient detail for the listener to make meaning. (See Bailey, et al., 2013.)

Visual aids: As used in the ELP Standards, this refers to pictures, realia (objects used in real life), sketches, diagrams, pictures, labeled pictures, and picture dictionaries.

Vocabulary: A set of words, phrases, or expressions, within a language, that is familiar to a person. (See the PLDs for specific vocabulary expectations by the end of each ELP level.)

- **Academic vocabulary** (see also [Appendix A of the CCSS for ELA & Literacy](), p. 33)**:**

    o **General academic words and phrases:** Vocabulary common to written texts but not commonly a part of speech; as used in the ELP Standards, analogous to Tier Two words and phrases. Bailey & Heritage (2008; 2010) refer to this as "school navigational language."

- o **Content-specific words and phrases:** Words and phrases appropriate to the topic or specific to a particular field of study. Sometimes referred to as "terms." (*Terms* are words and phrases that are given specific meanings in specific contexts.) Bailey & Heritage (2008; 2010) refer to this as "curriculum content language." As defined in Language standard 6 of the CCSS, this refers to grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, analogous to Tier Three words. (However, the ELP Standards do not suggest that vocabulary taught to ELLs should be limited to only that defined by the CCSS.)
    - ▪ Three Tiers of Vocabulary:
        - • Tier One: Words acquired through everyday speech, usually learned in the early grades.
        - • Tier Two: Academic words that appear across all types of text. These are often precise words that are used by an author in place of common words (e.g., "gallop" instead of "run"). They change meaning with use.
        - • Tier Three: Domain-specific words that are specifically tied to content (e.g., "Constitution," "lava"). These are typically the types of vocabulary words that are included in glossaries, highlighted in textbooks, and addressed by teachers. They are considered difficult words that are important to understanding content.

- • **Frequently occurring vocabulary:** This includes common words and phrases, as well as idiomatic expressions.

- • **Social vocabulary/language:** Cummins (2000) refers to this as "surface proficiency" and, in earlier iterations of his work, as Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS).

Wh- **questions:** "Who," "what," "where," "when," "why," and "how" questions

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Appendix: Context for Proficiency Level Descriptors

During the past decade, there has been renewed interest in the notion that ELP standards and assessments "should measure students' academic language proficiency in order to gauge the accessibility of content instruction for ELL students" (Bailey & Kim Wolf, 2012, p. 1). Bailey (2013) explains,

> This renewal of interest in academic English is not simply as a result of the recent adoptions of the [Common Core State Standards] and [Next Generation Science Standards], rather it began prior to *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, 2001) with researchers documenting the lack of correspondence between the linguistic content of existing (i.e., first generation) ELD assessments commonly being used by schools and the kinds of English students needed to "access and engage in the curriculum" (Bailey & Heritage, 2008 p.12). This lack of correspondence was manifest in the poor predictive validity of the existing ELD assessments for student performance on assessments of ELA and mathematics (Butler, Stevens & Castellon, 2007; Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly & Callahan, 2003) and led to the creation of second-generation ELD/P assessments such as the ACCESS for ELLs assessment of the WIDA Consortium and the continually evolving California English Language Development Test (CELDT). These new millennial assessments were built to include more attention to the language of schooling that had emerged from more than a decade of classroom interaction and curricular (i.e., texts, tests) research (e.g., Butler, Bailey, Stevens, Huang, & Lord, 2004; Cazden, 1988; Schleppegrell, 2004), and replace the existing assessments that were commercially available assessments of general language such as the IPT and LAS (See Bailey, 2007 for a history of this period). (pp. 2-3)

Thus, these recent shifts around the framing of ELP standards, instruction, and assessment have challenged educators to avoid separating learning of content from the learning of language; they require shifts in educators' views around how to best support the simultaneous development of ELLs' language and content proficiencies.

The ELP Standards and supporting PLDs provide educators with tools for strategically unpacking the language demands of CCR standards, including support with both language forms and language functions. The language functions outlined in the ELP Standards provide guidance in relation to ELLs' abilities to use language to (1) engage with complex oral and written language to synthesize, construct, and communicate knowledge across the curriculum; (2) use evidence to understand, analyze, argue, and inform; and (3) engage in collaborative activities, developing an awareness of multiple perspectives, and producing language appropriate to a particular content area or community.[6] The ELP Standards were designed to meet students' specific language development needs during content instruction because "[t]he sophisticated use of language required by the [CCR] standards . . . entail[s] a reconceptualization of the way ELLs 'apprentice' into these demanding disciplinary practices by simultaneously acquiring and developing language as well as acquiring disciplinary knowledge and skills" (CCSSO, 2012, p. 6).

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[6] This summary of the functions found in the ELP Standards is aligned with the key shifts identified in the Common Core State Standards and the parallel description of key shifts outlined in Bunch, Kibler, and Pimentel (2013).

While some language teaching provided to ELLs primarily focuses on the surface forms of language (e.g., grammar, basic vocabulary, pronunciation) (Shuy, 1981; Cummins, 2005) as the main path for developing ELLs' functional and communicative proficiency, a number of approaches have been developed by educators to meaningfully integrate content and language instruction, e.g., through sheltered instruction (SI), content-based instruction (CBI), the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), and increasing use of Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) trainings. The ELP Standards and these associated PLDs an approach to helping ELLs develop control and use of English language forms and functions as part of authentic, meaningful, school-based communication around CCR standards.

The ELP Standards focus on the strategic functions needed to access the language demands in CCR standards; the PLDs provide more detailed information on the forms that have been embedded in the ELP Standards. Both provide guidance on how ELLs might progressively develop the ELP needed to participate in the practices embedded within content-area instruction. This is important because, "[b]y explicitly calling attention to [the language needed to access] these [content-area] practices, state ELP standards [can be designed to] cultivate higher-order thinking skills in ELLs and target their ability to comprehend and communicate about complex text" (CCSSO, 2012, p. 16).

A new focus for ELP standards is needed because the demands in CCR standards place pressure on educators to prepare ELLs for more challenging texts and activities:

From . . .		*To . . .*
Simplified texts and activities, often separate from content knowledge	→	Complex texts and intellectually challenging activities with language integral to content learning

ELLs need school-based opportunities to learn how English works in each particular content area. The ELP Standards and the PLDs view language acquisition as active and interconnected; they focus on providing ELLs with schooling opportunities that require them to interact with other students in meaningful ways as they learn the content and language of CCR standards. This change in focus requires another paradigm shift:

From . . .		*To . . .*
Language development focused on accuracy and grammatical correctness	→	Language development focused on interaction, comprehension, and communication, with the provision of strategic scaffolding

As a result, researchers and practitioners' views on language development and the way ELLs are taught have shifted from seeing English as a

set of rules with discrete skills that are at the center of instruction, toward an expanded view of language as a social process, in which students can choose different options for making meaning in English, depending on whom the student is communicating with, what the student is trying to accomplish through language, and the mode of the communication. As another result, students' linguistic interactions in the classroom play a central role in mediating both linguistic and cognitive development. In this expanded view, traditional grammatical terms, such as *noun, verb, grammar, clause*, etc., are not ignored, but are embedded as part of meaningful, content-specific activities.

The ELP Standards also reconceptualize the relationship between ELP standards and content standards. Previously, achieving proficiency (as described in previous ELP standards) was seen as a prerequisite to acquiring the content standards. Yet it has been suggested for more than a decade that "it is no longer appropriate to talk about 'literacy across the curriculum.' Instead there is a need to delineate 'curriculum literacies,' specifying the interface between a specific curriculum and its literacies rather than imagining a singular literacy that could be spread homogeneously across the curriculum" (Unsworth, 2001, p. 11).

This reconceptualization embodies another paradigm shift:

From . . .	*To . . .*
ELP standards as "junior" to, or as a precursor to, ELA/literacy standards	→ ELP standards working in coordination with diverse CCR standards and seen as a way to support ELL participation in a range of grade-appropriate content-area activities

In this new paradigm, the ELP Standards and the PLDs conceptualize ELLs' English language acquisition as being intertwined with instruction and assessment based on CCR standards. As Lee, Quinn, and Valdes (2013) observe, students need to have access to: (a) multiple opportunities to hear and use language; (b) rich contexts (experiences) that create both the desire and the opportunity to engage in and contribute to classroom discourse; (c) appropriate supports; and (d) acceptance of their flawed language, with continuing support for language development.

CCR standards set high expectations for students to use English in advanced ways across different content areas. These expectations represent significant shifts from previous standards and necessitate key shifts in ELP standards, PLDs, and the instruction and assessment of ELLs. The 10 ELP Standards use a *language as action* approach (van Lier & Walqui, 2012) to highlight a strategic set of language functions (what students _do_ with language to accomplish content-specific tasks) and language forms (vocabulary, grammar, and discourse specific to a particular content area or discipline) which are needed by ELLs as they develop competence in the practices associated with English language arts (ELA) & literacy, mathematics, and science (Bunch, Kiber, & Pimentel, 2013; CCSSO, 2012; Lee, Quinn, & Valdez, 2013; Moschkovich, 2012; van Lier & Walqui, 2012). The five ELP levels for each of the ELP Standards address the question, "What might ELLs' language use look like at each ELP level as they progress toward independent participation in grade-appropriate activities?"