

Key Academic Syntactic Patterns to Support Students' Comprehension of Academic Text

Syntactic Pattern	Examples	What's its Function?	Age of Development	Academic Discipline, Content Topic, or Genre Often Seen
Passive voice	The radius <i>is</i> then <i>plugged</i> into the formula for the area of the circle.	Shifts emphasis to maintain focus on a particular person or thing	Late adolescence	<u>Content Areas</u> : Math, Science <u>Genres</u> : Newspaper stories, Memom, Historical Accounts, Explanations
Adverbial clauses with <i>when, while, so, because</i>	<i>While Max went to the store</i> , the bird ate all the food in the house.	Tells more about what's happening – time & reason	Early Childhood	<u>Genres</u> : Recounts, Stories (when, where, manner), Explanations (cause, reason), Reasoning (reason)
Adverbial clauses with <i>if-then, although, unless</i>	<i>Although several precautions were taken</i> , the key was lost.	Tells more about what's happening – possible outcomes (contingency, condition)	Late Childhood to Early Adolescence	<u>Genres</u> : Procedures (how long, in which way, by what means, how frequently)
Adjectival and noun clauses	She was <i>too busy</i> to listen. The <i>shop</i> owner became <i>enraged</i> . Alice was <i>very frightened</i> . Alice was <i>so frightened that she couldn't speak</i> <i>Their favorite recreation</i> is driving down the coast.	Expresses ideas by giving more information about the main person or thing Compacts information together about the main person or thing	Late childhood to Early adolescence	<u>Genres</u> : Recounts <u>Content Topics</u> : Drawing conclusions, determining author's purpose, comparing & contrasting
Dependent clauses	<u>adverbial</u> : see examples above adjectival/relative: The colonists, <i>who felt they did not have representation</i> , dumped the tea into Boston Harbor. <u>noun</u> : <i>Where the rebels were going</i> was unknown.	Connects ideas together by elaborating on the main message by giving more information either about what's happening in the message or who or what the message is about	Late childhood to Early adolescence	<u>Genres</u> : Poetry, Information reports,
Multiple dependent clauses	Gravel crackled beneath their feet <u>as Snape and Yaxley sped toward the front door, which swung inward at their approach, though nobody had visibly opened it</u> .	Connects ideas together by elaborating on the main message by giving more information either about what's happening in the message or who or what	Late childhood to Early Adolescence	<u>Genres</u> : Poetry



Syntactic Pattern	Examples	What's its Function?	Age of Development	Academic Discipline, Content Topic, or Genre Often Seen
		the message is about		
Connectives	<i>when, since, before, after, while, because, so, as a result, if, until, but, therefore, however, although, unless, and/then*</i> (*only if not used to keep conversation going)	Constructs logical relationships Brings several closely related ideas together	Late childhood to Early adolescence	<u>Content Areas</u> : History, Math <u>Genres</u> : Narratives <u>Content Topics</u> : Determining Cause & Effect, Sequencing
Elaboration of noun phrases	<u>Modifiers</u> : note the words in the noun phrase immediately preceding the head noun: The <i>two, expensive, big, white</i> cockatoos. <u>Qualifiers</u> : note the words that follow the noun: The big white cockatoos <i>in the pet store window</i> .	Expresses ideas by giving more information about the main person or thing Compacts information together about the main person or thing	by age 5: simple designating noun phrases <i>this boy, his shoe</i> by age 8: simple noun phrases with adjectives <i>this little boy, the kitchen counter</i> by age 11: complex noun phrases with noun postmodification such as prep. phrases (<i>face like aliens</i>) or clauses (<i>a dog that had fur</i>)	<u>Genres</u> : Narratives <u>Content Topics</u> : Drawing conclusions, determining author's purpose, comparing & contrasting
Mental/Linguistic Verbs	<u>Verbs that denote cognitive processes</u> : <i>think, know, forget, remember, consider, hypothesize</i> <u>Verbs that denote linguistic processes</u> : <i>say, report, promise</i>	Sensing verbs are used to relate what people are thinking, feeling, desiring, or perceiving. Saying verbs are used to report something verbally rather than directly.	Early childhood	<u>Genres</u> : Narratives (saying verbs), Arguments (saying verbs) <u>Content Topics</u> : Character analysis, Determining the Main idea or details, Sequencing, Determining author's purpose, Drawing conclusions

adapted from Catts, Hugh W., and Alan G. Kamhi. *Language and Reading Disabilities*. Boston: Pearson, 2005. Print. Christie, Frances. *Language Education throughout the School Years: A Functional Perspective*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. Print. Derewianka, B. (2011). *A new grammar companion: For teachers*. N.S.W., Australia: Primary English Teaching Association Australia. Erickson, Bridget, "Making the content of a language arts benchmark test accessible for low level readers: a functional linguistics approach" (2014). *School of Education Student Capstones and Dissertations*. Paper 543. Fang, Z., Schleppegrell, M., & Lukin, A. (2008). *Reading in secondary content areas: A language-based pedagogy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Examples of Language Organization/Syntax Teaching Points & Guiding Questions for Comprehension Skill Instruction

Comprehension Skill	Common Language Patterns & Corresponding Functional Guiding Question
Setting	Circumstances - Tell me more about what's happening, where is it happening? when? why? etc
Character	Participants - Who or what is this about? Processes - What's the person doing? saying? sensing? Circumstances - Tell me more about what's happening, where is it happening? when? why? etc
Compare/Contrast	Noun phrase expansion - Tell me more about the who or what , who? what? which? how many? what are they like? what type? Relating processes - What is being related? Circumstances - Tell me more about what's happening, where is it happening? when? why? etc Describing words - how is the who or what being described?
Main Idea/Details	Theme/rheme - what's the old and new information? How does the clause start? end? Participants - Who or what is this about? Processes - What's happening? Circumstances - Tell me more about what's happening, where is it happening? when? why? etc Lexical cohesion - what's the old information? Text structure - How is the information organized?
Cause/Effect	Connectors - How are the ideas being connected? Participants - Who or what is this about? Relating processes - What is being related?
Sequencing	Circumstances - Tell me more about what's happening, where is it happening? when? why? etc Participants - Who or what is this about? Processes - What's happening? Connectors - How are the ideas being connected? Sequence Adverbs - When is this happening?
Author's Purpose	Modals - What words tell us about other possibilities? Text structure - How does the author organize the information? Participants - Who or what is this about? Processes - What's happening?

	Describing words - how is the who or what being described? Text structure - How is the information organized?
Draw Conclusions	Describing words - how is the who or what being described? Processes - What's happening? Noun phrase expansion - Tell me more about the who or what , who? what? which? how many? what are they like? what type?

Examples of Language Organization/Syntax Teaching Points with Guiding Questions

Content Topic	Language Teaching Point + Guiding Questions
Fluency – Phrasing text	Phrase the meaningful pieces of text by determining the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> subjects in the text by asking who or what is this text about, the verbs by asking what's happening, the circumstances (adverbials) by asking tell me more about what's happening (where did it happen? when? why? how? etc), describers (adjectival) by asking tell me more about who or what this is about (which one? how long? etc.)
Inference Identifying Characters Character analysis Text details	Determine who the characters in the text are by identifying the referring words (anaphora) (e.g. that, its, his) by asking what “old” information is this word referring back to in the text? Start by reading the sentence before to determine this. If this sentence doesn't give the identifying information, keep reading back until the correct referent is found. Reading with correct phrasing and intonation will be helpful when doing this.
Setting	Describe the setting of a text by identifying the prepositions of place (e.g. in, to, with, on, above) by asking where is the action happening?
Inference Text details	Prepositional phrases can tell more about a person or thing which can be used as clues to make inferences in a text. Asking who or what is the phrase about then asking, tell me more about it by asking what kind is it? can identify the meaning behind the phrase. Students will most likely have to connect this information to previous known information from the text to make the final inference, or hold on to this information to connect to new information learned later in the text. This skill, called updating, is required when making inferences.
Text details Character analysis	Relative clauses (e.g. Michelle screams when she saw the spider <i>that dangled from the one clean bathroom towel</i> will provide more details or description in a text. Guiding questions to determine these details are what kind is it? How many are there? Which one is it?
Author's purpose Cause/effect	Prepositional phrases, specifically using the preposition “for” can tell us more about the reason why the author is writing the text. To connect the reason with the cause, we first determine who or what the text is about, then, what's happening. Once we know

	these two pieces of information, we ask, why is this happening?
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Examples of Text Structure/Genre Teaching Points with Guiding Questions

Content Topic	Language Teaching Point + Guiding Questions
Compare/Contrast Prose and Poetry	Make explicit how the differences between how the sentence & discourse levels are organized in the two types of text (e.g. paragraphs vs. stanzas/sentences vs. lines), how poems use sound devices (e.g. rhyme) to convey meaning, and how they both use punctuation to convey meaning but with different approaches
Character Analysis Main Idea Theme Conflict/Resolution Plot	Analyze changes in a character by sequencing the moves , or transitions, in the text. First, identify the moves in the text by asking, who or what is this sentence about? what's happening? Continue asking these guiding questions through the text. When a change in the actions of the character, or people in the text, occurs, mark (annotate) the change. Then, sequence the changes (moves) of the text using a graphic organizer, or thinking map, to visualize how the characters, the actions of the characters, or the ideas of the text evolved.

More Strategies to Teach Syntax

Teaching Strategy	Description
Transformations Gray & Cowey Catts, Hugh W., and Alan G. Kamhi. <i>Language and Reading Disabilities</i> . Boston: Pearson, 2005. Print.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher reads the text 2. Working together, students and the teacher segment a sentence into its component words or phrases, looking for cues (such as commas) that may help them determine how to group the words into phrases. They discuss the author's word choices and how the words affect their interpretation of the text. They note the word order and syntactic patterns and discuss why the author ordered the ideas as he or she did. What was the author trying to highlight by the structure chosen? 3. Students may reorder segments of the sentence. 4. Students identify key words to describe and find similar meanings. 5. Students rewrite the text in their own words given a text pattern to follow.
Books to Develop	Relative Clauses



Teaching Strategy	Description
<p>Connectives/ Complex Clauses</p> <p>Catts, Hugh W., and Alan G. Kamhi. <i>Language and Reading Disabilities</i>. Boston: Pearson, 2005. Print.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Bringing the rain to Kapiti plain</i> by V. Aardema• <i>The pot that Juan built</i> by N. Andrews-Goebel• <i>Millions of cats</i> by W. Gag• <i>The house that Jack built</i> by J. Rogers• <i>The house that Drac built</i> by J. Rogers• <i>There was an old lady who swallowed a trout</i> by T. Sloat• <i>There was an old lady who swallowed a fly</i> by S. Taback <p>But</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The very hungry caterpillar</i> by E. Carle• <i>The very quiet cricket</i> by E. Carle• <i>The very lonely firefly</i> by E. Carle• <i>Wombat divine</i> by M. Fox• <i>Just for you</i> by M. Mayer• <i>One Monday morning</i> by U. Shulevitz <p>If-Then</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>If you lived at the time of Martin Luther King</i> by E. Levine• <i>If you traveled on the underground railroad</i> by E. Levine• <i>If I had</i> by M. Mayer• <i>If the dinosaurs came back</i> by B. Most• <i>If you give a moose a cookie</i> by L. Numeroff• <i>If you give a pig a pancake</i> by L. Numeroff• <i>If I were a toad</i> by D. Paterson <p>Adverbial Connectives & Adverbs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Previously</i> by A. Ahlberg• <i>Meanwhile</i> by J. Feiffer• <i>When I get bigger</i> by M. Mayer• <i>Suddenly!</i> by C. McNaughton



Teaching Strategy	Description			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>When I was young in the mountains</i> by C. Rylant• <i>Suddenly alligator: An adverbial tale</i> by R. Walton			
Using Visuals Texts & Wh- Questions Zoss & Swierzbin, MeEd 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Display a Visual Text (any image)<ul style="list-style-type: none">• narratives: introduce characters, show activities, show setting & circumstances• factual: display facts & concepts, show relationships• Using Wh-questions, identify the processes/verbs (what’s happening), participants/nouns (who or what is taking part?, circumstances/adverbs (where? how? when?) for the visual text• Fill in the process participant chart			
	Where?	Who/what is taking part?	What’s happening?	How? When?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organize & write the info into sentences			