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Text Box 1: Distinguishing Features of Social and Academic Varieties of English

	Social Language (SL)	Academic Language (AL)	
		School “navigational” language (SNL)	Curriculum content language (CCL)
Purpose	To communicate with family, friends and others in everyday, social situations.	To communicate to teachers and peers in a broad school setting (incl. classroom management).	To communicate to teachers and peers about the content of instruction (incl. lesson materials, textbooks, tests etc.)
Formality	Informal. Hallmarks: incomplete sentences, use of contractions restricted vocabulary, contextualized language, restricted variety of genre (mainly narrative).	Informal and formal. Hallmarks: combination of both contextualized and decontextualized language.	Formal. Hallmarks: precise use of language/terminology, complete and complex sentences, lexical diversity, decontextualized referents, variety of genres (narrative and expository).
Context of use (setting)	Home. Peer group. Out-of-school activities.	School non-instructional time (incl. homeroom, lunch room and playground). School instructional time (focused on classroom management; personal relationships).	School instructional time (focused on concept learning). Note: some out-of-school activities including those at home or with peers may focus on concept learning and thus may include hallmarks of CCL (incl. the pre-school level).
Examples	<i>I took it [= the trash] out before [= before dinner]; Where’s the shop at?</i>	<i>I need you all to be facing this way before we begin; Where is your 3rd period English class located?</i>	<i>First, the stamen forms at the center of the flower; Describe the traits of the main characters.</i>
Context of acquisition¹	Acquired without explicit instruction.	Largely acquired without explicit instruction, unless student is an ELL student.	Acquired with and without explicit instruction. ELL students especially, may need explicit instruction.
Modality	Predominantly oral language	Predominantly oral language	Both oral and written language
Teacher expectations	Students will come to school already proficient unless the student is an ELL student.	Students will readily learn language skills unless the student is an ELL student.	All students will need to acquire linguistic and pragmatic skills for both general use (cutting across disciplines) and specialized within a discipline. Some teachers will hold students accountable for use of “precise” CCL, others and even the same teachers at other times will allow informal/ imprecise uses.
Grade level expectations	More sophisticated uses of language to solve disputes and participate as “good citizens.” For ELL students ELD levels should be taken into account (e.g., new to the US and at the beginning level will differ from a student who may be younger but at a higher ELD level).	More sophisticated uses of language. Teachers assume prior grades have prepared student to acquire the language (incl. reading and writing) necessary to take notes, read directions etc. Redesignated ELL student are expected to be able to cope with language demands of the classroom interaction.	More sophisticated uses of language. Higher grades rely on students having learned CCL of prior grades and rely on their reading ability to access and engage with the curriculum and on their writing ability to display or assess their learning. Redesignated ELL student are expected to be able to cope with language demands of instruction.

¹ Students may be acquiring English as an additional language alongside their native language, and thus may only be exposed to the school uses of English. Conversely, they may also have no exposure to the academic uses of their native language.