



THE TEXT PATTERN INTERVENTION – JULY 2011

ONLY AFTER LEARNING  
ABOUT LANGUAGE  
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LITERACY STRATEGIES.

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Struggling adolescent learners have language needs that are frequently not addressed by content area teachers. Recently, disciplinary literacy efforts have emphasized the teaching of discipline-specific strategies, which vary by subject matter. However, the language structures that appear in academic textbooks remain quite similar across the content areas. Only after learning about these language patterns will struggling readers be prepared to engage in disciplinary literacy strategies such as sourcing, self-questioning, and corroborating.

This intervention was developed using a design-based research sequence, which serves to address particular problems that arise in local contexts. More specifically, the literature on evidence-based practices was merged with practitioner knowledge to design a teacher-friendly approach to teaching students how to interact with language as they engage in reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills.

### WHY TEACH TEXT PATTERNS?

Even good readers may demonstrate difficulty understanding advanced passages of text when they lack knowledge about technical terminology and discipline-specific ways of thinking. In addition to content-area knowledge, subject-matter experts use complex language structures, including noun phrases that change concrete verbs into abstract ideas and connectives that join two ideas together. Academic writers also use passive voice to distance themselves from their message and to appear more objective, which often results in longer sentences that are harder to understand. For example, the sentences in the following text contain passive voice (*italicized*), multiple noun

### NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

During the validation study, the author of this intervention provided professional development and instructional coaching on a weekly basis to three teachers as they taught the Text Pattern Intervention, which really paid off.

- After learning the Text Pattern Intervention, students earned significantly higher scores (+28.71) than their peers (+0.97) when answering questions about a 400-word social studies passage.
- Results of a satisfaction survey, which used a 7-point Likert scale, indicated that both the teachers (6.22) and the students (5.31) viewed the intervention as helpful.

### PERSONNEL

Frances Ihle, doctoral fellow  
Don Deshler, KUCRL director

phrases consisting of three or more words (underlined) and connectives (bold):

The reason for the marked differences in the sensitivity among studies evaluating venous ultrasound imaging for asymptomatic proximal venous thrombosis is uncertain. **Because** of this relatively high incidence of thrombosis **despite** primary prophylaxis, *routine venography before hospital discharge* **in addition** to primary prophylaxis is advocated for by some authorities to detect silent deep venous thrombosis in patients who have major orthopedic procedures.

In contrast to students with average language comprehension skills, poor comprehenders frequently cannot construct meaning from the language patterns that appear in grade-level textbooks. Before struggling readers can recognize the similarities and differences between discipline-specific texts (and contexts), they must learn how authors use noun phrases and connectives to convey meaning.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

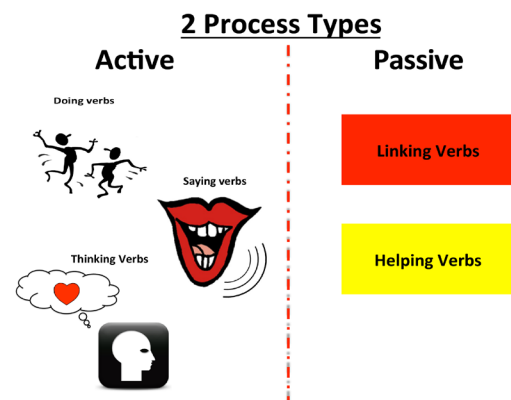
This intervention teaches students how academic writers use passive voice, noun phrases, and connectives to convey information to their readers. The manual has been organized into six lessons, in addition to pretest and posttest measures. Each lesson builds on previous instruction so that students learn how to approach content-area text in a scaffolded way as they proceed through explicit instructional procedures. The intervention includes the following prerequisite skills that students need to comprehend content-area texts:

Lesson	Concept	Purpose
1	Action Verbs	To teach students the difference between physical and mental activities and help develop variety in verb choice and usage
2	Linking and Helping Verbs	To teach students how to identify and use passive voice
3	Changing Verbs to Nouns	To teach students how to transform verbs into nouns
4	Noun Phrases	To teach students how to structure noun phrases
5	Temporal and Causal Connectives	To teach students how to connect phrases and show relationships between ideas
6	Identifying Text Structures	To teach students how to track ideas or themes in paragraphs

Students who learn this intervention first practice recognizing and making meaning from noun phrases, connectives, and passive voice at the sentence level. Then, they apply their knowledge to longer passages, including paragraphs and textbook sections. The lessons end with students using identifiers and connectives to discern the theme and important details of increasingly difficult social studies and science passages.

### LESSONS 1 AND 2: DEFINING VERB TYPES

The first two lessons focus on active and passive verbs, and the figure below shows a visual aid that is used to explicitly teach the types of verbs. Lesson 1 involves a review of action verbs and starts out with words representing concrete physical movements that students typically encounter in narrative texts, such as *jump* and *grumble*. The students then work with more abstract *thinking* verbs, such as *watch* and *listen*, so that they develop familiarity with the words that commonly appear in expository texts. Lesson 2 shifts the students' attention to passive verb formations, which scientists and historians often use in their writing. The students learn to choose and use both linking and helping verbs. This lesson helps students convey information in writing while maintaining the objective stance that portrays authority on the matter at hand. However, because some disciplines require that authors write in active voice, the students also practice translating passive into active voice sentences.



### LESSONS 3 AND 4: STRUCTURING NOUN PHRASES

The next two lessons build on the students' knowledge of verbs in order to convert them into nouns and noun phrases. Lesson three introduces a list of suffixes that change words from verbs to nouns. Once the students have practiced using root words as verbs and nouns, they add identifiers (i.e., *a* and *the*) and adjectives to the left

and prepositional phrases to the right of the main subject to form noun phrases (see the figure below). Finally, the teacher asks students to identify noun phrases in their content-area textbooks. This generalization activity helps the students apply their skills to new reading situations.

Elements of Noun Phrases

Identifiers	Ordering words	Describing words	Main subjects	Prepositional phrases
a	single	harsh	punishment	from the court
the	third	big	relationship	in his life
the	only	tired	runner	in the race
the	two	long	applications	for a job
a	lone	angry	fighter	on our side

## AND IDENTIFIERS IN CONTENT-AREA TEXTS

The last two lessons show students how to join phrases using temporal and causal connectives (i.e., conjunctions and transitions) and track previously introduced ideas or concepts. First, students learn how to join clauses together with connectives. Whereas conjunctions join two clauses together within a sentence (in this intervention), transitions introduce new information that relates to previously stated ideas. This intervention assigned specific symbols (e.g., ⊕ and ↗) to each type of connective and to positive (+) and negative (–) relations so that students associated icons with the concepts that they represented (see the Connectives Chart below). In addition, the concepts of presenting (i.e., introducing) and presuming (i.e., tracking) are addressed. Authors introduce main subjects to the reader using introducing identifiers such as *a*, *an*, and *some*, but they use different words—like *this*, *she*, and *they*—to succinctly refer back to concepts.

## LESSONS 5 AND 6: LOCATING CONNECTIVES

Connectives Chart			
Level I		Level II	
Temporal ⊕	Causal ↗	Additive ±	Comparison ⇔
<u>Conjunctions</u> after already as soon as before now that once then since still until when while  <u>Transitions</u> At last, At once, At the same time, Finally, First, Meanwhile, Next, Now, Previously, Recently, Subsequently,	<u>Conjunctions</u> + as +as long as + because + by + in order to + since + so + so that – although – but – even though – unless  <u>Transitions</u> + As a result, + Consequently, + In conclusion, + Therefore, + Thus, – Admittedly, – However, – Nevertheless, – Nonetheless,	<u>Conjunctions</u> + also + and + as well as + besides + just as + provided that + too – but – nor  <u>Transitions</u> + Another + Furthermore, + In addition, + In fact, + In summary, + Indeed, + Moreover, – However, – Nevertheless, – Nonetheless,	<u>Conjunctions</u> + actually + again + although + as if + either—or + even if + if + like – except – instead – neither—nor – rather than – unless – whereas  <u>Transitions</u> + For example, + In fact, + On the one hand, + Similarly, + That is, – Alternatively, – Conversely, – If not,—then – In contrast, – On the other hand,

# RESEARCH DESIGN

## PRELIMINARY PHASE

Define the setting demands and determine how to address the problem.



## PROTOTYPE PHASE

Develop the intervention and seek practitioner input.



## PILOT PHASE

Field test and refine the intervention.

## WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Educators need to explicitly teach students with language difficulties how to understand passive voice, noun phrases, and connectives. As a Tier II program (in a response to intervention system), the intervention attempts to provide a bridge between intensive strategy instruction and authentic practice comprehending content-area text. The validation study took place in three separate high schools in three different Midwestern states. Data were collected from three experimental classrooms and three comparison classrooms for a total of 49 students (see below).

	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C
Experimental class	n = 5	n = 12	n = 7
Comparison class	n = 5	n = 13	n = 7

The Text Pattern intervention was taught in the experimental classes whereas the teachers delivered instruction as planned in the comparison classes. Pretest and posttest results indicated that the students who learned the intervention outperformed the students who received instruction as usual when answering questions about a social studies passage.

### 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Passage and Questions (% correct)

	Pretest	Posttest
Experimental group	18.42	47.13
Comparison group	18.60	19.57