



THE HIDDEN LANGUAGE OF SCIENCE

More than facts – a language to explore, explain and evaluate.



THE IDEA

Science isn't just about knowledge – it has a specific language.

EAL learners often understand the ideas but struggle with the words, structures and ways of expressing scientific thinking.

Making the language of science visible helps students access the curriculum, take part in practical work and communicate their understanding with confidence.



IN THE CLASSROOM

Pre-teach key vocabulary and phrases. Use visuals, diagrams and real examples. Model how to use scientific language in context. Give sentence frames for practical work, explanations and evaluations.

Encourage students to talk science before they write it. Revisit and recycle key language regularly.

THE 3 STEPS

1



SPOT THE LANGUAGE

Identify the key language.

Look at the topic, lesson or task. Find the essential vocabulary, terms and phrases. Highlight the grammatical structures (e.g. cause and effect, comparison, explanation). Consider the language needed for practical work, analysis and evaluation.

"What are the key words?"

"What language will students need to explain this?"

"Which structures are most important?"

2



MAKE IT VISIBLE

Teach and model the language.

Pre-teach key vocabulary in context (with visuals). Use examples, diagrams and real data. Model how to use the language when describing, explaining and interpreting. Provide sentence frames and scaffolds.

"The graph shows ..."

"This happens because ..."

"A similar example is ..."

3



USE AND DEVELOP

Give opportunities to use it.

Build the language into class discussion, practical work and written tasks. Encourage students to talk, sketch, annotate and explain. Provide feedback on both content and language. Revisit and extend the language with new topics.

"I predict that ... because ..."

"The results suggest ..."

"One limitation of this method is ..."



WHY IT WORKS

- Helps EAL learners access challenging content.
- Builds confidence in speaking and writing about science.
- Improves accuracy and depth of understanding.
- Supports success in practical work, reports and exams.
- Develops scientific thinking as well as language.



EAL UPGRADE

- Build a science word bank.
- Use diagrams with key labels.
- Provide model answers and worked examples.
- Offer scaffolds for lab reports and SAQs.
- Encourage oral rehearsal before writing.
- Link vocabulary to key concepts (e.g. system, change, evidence).



TRY IT TOMORROW

- Choose one upcoming lesson. Identify 5–10 key words and phrases.
- Create a simple visual glossary.
- Use a sentence frame for a class activity.
- Ask students to explain an idea to a partner.
- Collect and review examples of their written or spoken responses.



TEACHER LANGUAGE

- "Let's look at the key words."*
- "Can you say that in your own words?"*
- "Use this sentence frame to help you."*
- "What evidence supports your idea?"*
- "Try explaining it to a partner first."*
- "Good use of scientific language."*