

Grammar Instructional Routine: Language Pattern Detectives

Common Core State Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1 and CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.3 and CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.3: Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Overview

Language Pattern Detectives (LPD) is a 10-15 minute daily instructional routine that transforms students into language investigators who analyze, document, and solve grammar “cases.” Through careful examination of mentor sentences, guided practice, pattern analysis, and hands-on investigations, students develop both their detective skills (analytical thinking) and metacognitive awareness of grammar patterns, which empowers them to effectively use language in their own writing and speaking.

Symbol Key



Explicit Instruction



Opportunities to Respond



Feedback

General Instructional Routine

Case Background (Teacher Preparation)

- Select target grammatical structure & mentor sentence(s)
- Choose a mentor sentence(s) that:
 - Clearly demonstrates the target grammatical structure
 - Comes from authentic, grade-appropriate text (could be student writing, with permission)
 - Can be meaningfully connected to current learning
 - Contains language that students can realistically incorporate into their own writing
 - Is complex enough to analyze but not so complex that it overwhelms




Investigation Procedure

Step 1: Briefing (2-3 minutes)


Connect to Previous Learning (if applicable):

- Review previous learning that applies to current lesson
- Reference recent discussions about current lesson
- Connect to ongoing analysis in larger unit of study

Investigation Preview

-  Set the scene/Connect to students' lives:
 - Provide a real-world analogy or example of when the focus or pattern of the lesson may be relevant
-  Provide purpose(s)/learning target(s) for students
-  Explain real-world importance
- Frame the investigation
 - Create a "Case Background" (in a fun way, if desired)

Activate Prior Knowledge

-  Ask questions to activating background knowledge:
 - What do you already know about this topic/pattern?
 - What comes to mind when you hear the word _____?
 - How does the focus of today's lesson remind you of something we've talked about/learned before?



Review Key Terms

- Define or review key vocabulary words used in lesson


Step 2: Lead Detective Demonstration (7-8 minutes)

Initial Instruction


Evidence Presentation

-  Present mentor sentences to class

Lead Detective Think-Aloud

-  Model pattern analysis during think-aloud process
 - Example:
 - “First, I notice...”
 - “Now, I see...”
 - “This reminds me of...”
 - “I’m wondering...”

Guided Pattern Discovery

-  Walk through initial pattern identification with class
 - Example:
 - Circle or underline all grammatical structures under focus
 - Note differences, functions, or new structures



Engagement Check

- Ask questions to check for comprehension
 - “What patterns are we seeing?”
 - “Is there anything you are unfamiliar with or don’t understand?”
 - “Why might the author use different varieties?”
 - “Where else might we see patterns like this?”

Step 3: Partner/Group Investigation (10-12 minutes)


Teacher-Guided Practice






Detective Partnerships

- Pair students (or create small groups) for collaborative investigation
- Review partnership expectations


Guided Analysis

-  Partners/groups work together to:
 - Complete pattern analysis chart
 - Sort words by categories (e.g. types of verbs, adjectives, etc.)
 - Search through a selected text to find examples of target patterns
 - Use highlighters to color-code sentences based on patterns
 - Deconstruct/reconstruct sentences using sentence strips
 - Collect real-world language samples from different sources (books, magazines, websites)

Teacher Support

-  Circulate among partners/small groups to:
 - Monitor discussions
 -  Offer feedback
 -  Provide scaffolded prompts
 - Support struggling teams

Team Discussions

-  Have detective pairs/groups:
 - Explain patterns to each other
 - Compare findings with nearby teams/groups
 - Share discoveries with class

Step 4: Solo Investigation (5-7 minutes)

Independent Practice



Choose an activity/activities for students to practice:

- Provide opportunities for students to play with the grammatical structure
- Activities might include:
 - Changing the target feature while keeping the rest of the sentence the same
 - Creating new sentences using the same pattern
 - Combining or breaking apart sentences using the target structure
 - Discussing how meaning changes with different grammatical choices
 - Finding the target feature in other text(s)

- Apply target feature to their own writing

Step 5: Case Resolution (3-5 minutes)

- Add the pattern(s) to a class reference wall or individual grammar notebook
- Have students connect to their own writing
- Discuss where they might use this grammatical feature in their work
- Set a purpose for using the structure in upcoming writing

Materials

Detective Notebook Entry Template

Evidence Samples:

A: _____

B: _____

Pattern Clues:

1. Patterns:

a) _____

b) _____

2. Where I might use each:

a) _____

b) _____

3. My own examples:

a) _____

b) _____

Resources

Question Stems

- “What do you notice about...?”
- “Why might the author have chosen...?”
- “What would happen if we changed...?”
- “Where could you use this in your writing?”
- “How does this help the reader understand...?”

Activity Ideas

- Grammar sort
 - [TPT Link](#)
 - [YouTube video](#)
- Find the pattern
 - [¡Colorín Colorado!: Sentence Pattern Chart](#)
 - [National Urban Alliance: Sentence Frames](#)
- Sentence combining
 - [Reading Rockets: Sentence Combining](#)
 - [Intensive Intervention Guide in Sentence Combining](#)
- Sentence deconstruction
 - [¡Colorín Colorado!: Sentence Deconstruction](#)
 - [Cox Campus: Sentence Deconstruction Routine](#)
- Sentence reconstruction (deconstruction in reverse)
- Mentor text hunt
 - [Mentor Sentences: Grammar, Word Choice & More](#)
 - [Literacy Loving Gals: Using Mentor Texts to Teach Sentence Variety](#)