

# Language Is a Skill: Supporting Multilingual Learners in CTE Classrooms

## Opening Reflection

**Prompt:** Think about your classroom—how much language do students actually use to be successful?

Listening:

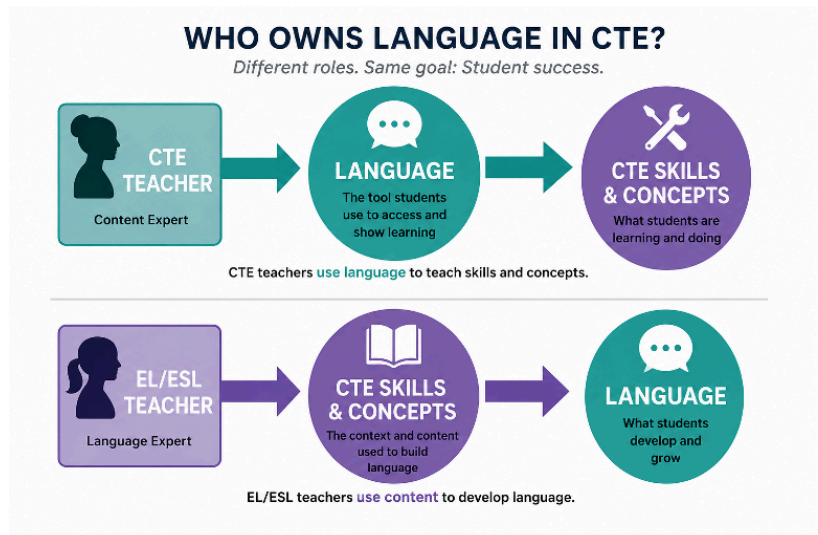
Speaking:

Reading:

Writing:

## Language Barriers in CTE

What barriers show up in your classroom or program?



## CTE Teachers and Language Development

CTE classrooms are not language-free environments—they are language-rich. Students are constantly required to listen, speak, read, and write in order to participate successfully. Whether following directions, explaining a process, reading technical materials, or collaborating with others, language is embedded in every task.

Multilingual learners do not need to wait until they “know enough English” to participate. In fact, CTE classrooms are one of the most powerful places for students to develop language because the learning is hands-on, contextual, and meaningful.

The role of the CTE teacher is not to become a language teacher, but to make the language of the task visible, supported, and learnable. When teachers intentionally

model, scaffold, and structure language use, they increase access without lowering expectations.

### **Discussion** (after reading)

What stands out to you from this reading?

Where do you see language demands in your own program?

What might need to shift in how language is supported?

## **5 Moves for Supporting Multilingual Learners in CTE**

Directions: As strategies are introduced, capture examples and your own ideas.

### 1. Make Language Visible

**Description:** Students can't use language they can't see. Identify and highlight the key words and phrases students need to successfully complete the task. Pair language with visuals, actions, or real examples.

Examples:

- Ag/Food & Natural Resources: Label tools, diagrams, and steps in processes (soil testing, plant growth)
- Business/Marketing: Define and use terms like profit, target audience, revenue with real examples
- Health Sciences: Post and use vocabulary during procedures (pulse, symptoms, dosage)
- Communication/IT: Show key terms alongside screen demonstrations or design processes

My Notes/Ideas:

### 2. Model First

**Description:** Before expecting students to do a task independently, show them exactly what it looks like. Model the process and think out loud so students hear both the steps and the language.

Examples:

- Skilled & Technical Sciences: Demonstrate a welding or repair task while narrating steps
- Health Sciences: Model taking vitals or patient interactions
- Communication/IT: Screen record and walk through a process step-by-step
- Human Sciences & Education: Model how to interact with children or lead an activity

My Notes/Ideas:

### 3. Structure Talk

**Description:** Don't assume students will naturally engage in productive conversation. Provide structure so all students, including multilingual learners, can participate.

Examples:

- Business: Sentence frames for presentations ("Our product solves...")
- Health Sciences: Role-play scripts for patient communication
- Human Sciences: Guided discussion prompts for group work
- All Areas: Assign roles (explainer, doer, checker) during tasks

My Notes/Ideas:

#### 4. Chunk Directions

**Description:** Break complex tasks into manageable steps. Deliver directions in smaller parts and pair them with visuals or demonstrations.

Examples:

- Skilled Trades: Step-by-step progression (watch → try → check → continue)
- Ag/Food: Break down lab or fieldwork into clear stages
- Communication/IT: Provide sequential steps for editing, coding, or design tasks
- Health Sciences: Separate procedures into clear, repeatable steps

My Notes/Ideas:

#### 5. Normalize Language Learning

**Description:** Make it clear that learning language is part of learning the skill. Mistakes are expected and growth happens through use.

Examples:

- Health Sciences: Emphasize the value of multilingual communication with patients
- Business: Highlight reaching broader markets through language skills
- School Counselors: Encourage access to CTE regardless of language level
- All Areas: Reinforce that communication improves with practice, not perfection

My Notes/Ideas:

### **Your Next Step**

One strategy I will try:

One class where I will try it: