GK	Hello Christina, and hello listeners! Welcome to Session 4 in Module 4 of the TALE Academy, Comprehensible Input: Finding the "Goldilocks Level" for English Language Learners.
	Goldilocks level….I'm assuming that we are identifying levels of instruction that are too hard, too easy, and just right.
CLH	Yup! And when the level is "just right", we call it comprehensible input. Let's start by defining what we mean by comprehensible input.
	Imagine that all of your subjects are in a language you do not understand. All of the input in your six-hour day – from the cafeteria to science, math, and language arts classes – are in a new language. Even on the playground or in gym, all of the language conveyed to you, whether through signs, teacher directions, or conversation, are in another language.
	Each subject would entail not only new content to learn but also linguistic demands that you would possibly not even notice in your first language. In order to effectively participate and learn the language, you would need the language input to be comprehensible.
	In the article *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, Stephen Krashen described the critical importance of presenting comprehensible input in order for students to acquire a new language. Unfamiliar language can be made comprehensible by adding context, such as physical objects, gestures, or visuals. Selecting how to make lessons more comprehensible depends on students' proficiency levels, as well as background and content knowledge, and should be tailored to be "just right" for each English language learner, or ELL.
	To put it another way, comprehensible input is the sweet spot between the content at a student's current proficiency level and content being too challenging for the learner.
GK	That is really the name of the game. As educators, we present students with a lot of information including language objectives, mini-lectures, worksheets, text assignments, directions, research papers, and video clips – all of which have language demands for learners. In a virtual environment, this becomes even more critical because students have less context to draw from to make the text understandable. When a lesson objective is presented virtually on a slide, for example, students miss out on the support a teacher tends to provide in a classroom, such as gesturing, pointing, demonstrating/modeling, and using physical examples. These scaffolds make the language input more accessible to the learner. When working with ELLs, we have to be conscious of the language demands presented and create a lot of context.

	So in this session, we will discuss how to make our teaching more accessible to ELLs across learning environments through comprehensible input.
CLH	Let's break down that term "comprehensible input". Ramsay Lewis wrote the following in the 2020 article "What Is Comprehensible Input and Why Does It Matter for Language Learning?": "Comprehensible input in English is English language that you can understand. Language inputs are things that you hear (like podcasts, the radio, conversations, and so on) as well as things you read (like books, articles, English blog articles, etc.)"
GK	That turns out to be a pretty self-evident term, "language you can understand." When we use only words, orally or in writing, without any other input or context, it's difficult for a language learner to understand what the speaker is saying. When these words are paired with visuals, multimedia, other texts, or a physical context, the meaning of the words is more easily understood. Even simple directions can be difficult to understand if one uses either the written or oral form alone, instead of the combination. The challenge for teachers is that when you have a classroom with a diversity of language proficiencies, each student needs a different type of comprehensible input and scaffolding to meet the linguistic demands. For example, if you say to newcomers, "Today, you will need a pen or pencil, a piece of scrap paper, and a magnifying glass," the newcomers may not understand unless they are familiar with the words. However, if we pair the words with inputs such as gestures, text, and visuals, we make the information much more accessible and comprehensible. In a classroom, if a teacher accompanies words with graphics that represent the required items, most newcomers would understand.
CLH	I like how this example seems very straightforward, but the more you think about it, the more there is to think about. Because even when the words are provided as a checklist and are paired with graphics, some words will still not make sense. Since the graphics show only a pencil, a newcomer may find it difficult to understand the phrase "a pen or pencil." The newcomer has no comprehensible input to understand the grammatical use of "or," nor do they have enough information to know which English word describes the object being held. Even intermediate students may not understand the colloquial phrase "scrap paper," but the teacher simplifies the written instructions and there is enough lesson context through the prior work – and likely the other students pulling out the materials – to act as comprehensible input. If the teacher reads the words aloud at a moderate pace while providing the written checklist with graphics, ELLs have the opportunity to hear and read the same information and apply it with meaning to their task. Providing clear

	instructions is essential for English language learners to access content in the classroom, and it benefits all students.
GK	Here's an example. Say I'm teaching a third-grade math lesson on the distributive property. I display the objective on the smart board, drawing directly from the curriculum. I know that this lesson poses both linguistic and academic demands on all of my students. I want to make sure my ELLs are able to access the content and also learn the language of math. Let's think through how we can make the lesson more comprehensible for ELLs and, most likely, other students in the class who thrive on multimodal forms of communication. Let's think about 3 kinds of language demands in any lesson.
GK	First, what tasks will students complete to meet the lesson objective? ● I know I'm going tol guide students through an application word problem. ● Students will use personal whiteboards during a mini-lesson on using number bonds to decompose numbers. ● Students will work on problem sets on a worksheet and debrief with the class, followed by exit tickets.
CLH	Second, what are the linguistic demands? ● Students must be able to understand such content terms as "number bond" and "decompose," as well as general academic terms with multiple meanings, such as "apply." ● Students must understand how words in a problem translate into operations, such as prepositional phrases. For example, with 10 levels, "on each level" means multiply by 10. ● Students must understand passive-voice verbs. For example,"How many cars are parked on each level?" ● Students must be able to read and understand word problems, represent them through various diagrams and visual arrays, and restate the answer with the correct units. ● Students must be able to write equations. ● Students must be able to write an exit ticket to summarize what they have learned.
GK	Third, what are the content demands?

	● Students must be able to recognize that multiplication requires groupings. ● Students must be able to represent multiplication through arrays and number bonds. ● Students must be able to transfer information into equations and then back into information.
CLH	Finally, what are some possible ways to make the lesson content more comprehensible? ● Add a language objective with an icon of whether today's lesson will involve reading, writing, speaking, or listening. For example, students will label the array and number bonds with the number sentences; students will tell a partner how to solve the problem using a number bond. ● Have students act out as a class what distribution means – or how to form number bonds. ● Have students do a puzzle or card sort to put the steps and a sample problem in order or match the array and number bonds with the correct equations. ● Watch a sample video with problem sets presented visually. ● Pre-teach the vocabulary, such as "apply" and "method," as well as "distributive property" and "number bonds," with visuals. ● Provide modeling and examples that students can use to complete the problem sets. ● Rewrite word problems in the active voice, removing extraneous information. ● Provide numbers for the steps to follow, as well as such sequencing terms as first, then, next, and lastly. ● Have students work in pairs or small groups to solve the problem sets. ● Have students orally tell how to solve the problems before working on them in writing. ● Provide audio and written translations. While this is a third-grade example, the steps for increasing comprehensible input are useful across grade levels and subject areas.
GK	Let's continue this example by analyzing the language demands of the text and task. Our first consideration is consistency across curricular materials.

	After presenting the objectives and instructions for the lesson, I probably hand out student worksheets. In order for the worksheets to be comprehensible to ELLs, I need to identify the vocabulary, phrases, question types, and sentence structures students need to understand so that they can complete work independently. I revise the worksheets by looking for patterns and deviations, based on the language proficiencies of my students and their needs. I then use this analysis to establish consistency across different worksheets and other curricular materials. The other thing I look for is patterns and deviations. Do I use the same sentence structures a lot, and when do I deviate from that? And is there a reason to deviate?
CLH	I've never actually thought about the actual words and phrases that I repeat or refer to a common concept. I'm sure there are patterns, like "Turn to page X", or "Read the next section to yourself". These are helpful to identify for myself so I can actively teach what they mean. It's also interesting to just be aware of how, once a pattern is introduced, how confusing it would be to throw in something different!
GK	Like "what is the sum?" instead of "how many in all?" just for funzies.
CLH	It's not wrong to do that, we just have to be aware that we're doing that and aim for some kind of consistency in our instructions and formats.
GK	Honestly, providing materials in home languages just seems like a solid way to make sure students know what to do. Here's a TALE hack. Instead of paper worksheets, use Google Docs. With prior instruction on the technique, students can then use Google Translate within the document to select their home language for custom translation, if helpful. This saves you valuable teaching time. Instead of creating multiple versions of the same worksheet, you can focus on making the English version comprehensible and consistent. Let the technology translate! Remember to use caution since Google Translate may not always provide an exact translation.
CLH	Here are more ways to make your instruction comprehensible. Note which scaffolds you already implement and which ones you would like to start using. ● Provide clear instructions, both orally and in writing; create familiar routines around student assignments; and highlight key information in directions with icons, bold font, or color-coding. ● Add visuals to glossaries, word walls, and as much as possible to student assignments to create meaning. ● Add multimedia tools, such as video clips, online games (for example, Flippity), or Google Jamboard, to increase students' interaction with the content and one another and to reinforce the content through repetition.

	● Select texts and video clips that are "just right" for students. ● Speak with clarity and rephrase your ideas frequently, simplifying and/or amplifying your sentences depending on the proficiency levels of your students. ● Accompany speech with gestures, printed terms, and other visuals to emphasize key points. ● Pre-teach vocabulary that may be unfamiliar and/or teach mini-lessons on words or phrases that require more depth. ● Use graphic organizers and bulleted or numbered lists to display information rather than wordy text. ● Provide demonstrations, modeling, and sample work. ● Use a variety of language domains (such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking), modalities, and resources (such as read-aloud picture books, songs, puppets, and manipulatives). ● Allow wait time so that students can think about your directions or questions, especially for ELLs who may have to think or translate into the instructional language.
GK	I think it's important to note that while all students may benefit from comprehensible input, for ELLs who are approaching proficiency, this may be the only access they have to the grade-level content. For students who are at intermediate levels of proficiency, these scaffolds may help them to produce more language about lesson content. When thinking about when and how to provide comprehensible input, think about what your ELLs can currently do. What is their performance level in reading, writing, listening, and speaking? Compare their current performance with the description of the next level. How can we scaffold instruction to achieve the next performance level with support while they learn new academic content? That's the Goldilocks level.
CLH	Now it's your turn to think about how comprehensible our language is and how the learning environment affects comprehension. In your workbook, you will have a chance to brainstorm digital tools and portable practices that support comprehensible input across learning environments. The goal of the TALE Academy is to help teachers rethink education so that everyone – students, families, educators, school leaders, and communities – all have the opportunity to succeed. You've just added comprehensible input to your toolbox when you help ELLs find just the right level of learning. Thanks for listening!