Educational Linguistics

Ruth Harman *Editor*

# Bilingual Learners and Social Equity

## Critical Approaches to Systemic Functional Linguistics

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## Volume 33

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# Bilingual Learners and Social Equity

## Critical Approaches to Systemic Functional Linguistics

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# Preface

This edited volume provides literacy researchers and teacher educators with a powerful set of studies that outline different approaches in how to instantiate a critical perspective of language and literacy development within institutional contexts. The chapters address how formal learning is shaped in K-12 classrooms, college courses, and teacher education programs in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Drawing on over 40 years of research informed by Halliday's theory of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), the authors build on the valuable contributions of teacher-researchers, teacher educators, and educational linguists who have pushed forward the interdisciplinary fields of sociolinguistics, critical applied linguistics, multicultural education, literacy development, and teachers' professional development in profoundly important ways (e.g., Christie and Derewianka 2008; Gibbons 2006; Hasan 1996; Humphrey et al. 2011; Janks 2009; Macken-Horarik et al. 2011; New London Group 1996; O'Halloran 2004; Rose and Martin 2012; Rothery 1996; Schleppegrell 2004; Unsworth 2000; Williams 2005; Young and Fitzgerald 2006).

Despite this sizeable body of scholarship in the field of functional educational linguistics, newcomers to and skeptics of SFL often question how viable Halliday's theories are for teaching, learning, and working for equity in schools. This criticism is especially true in chronically underfunded schools serving non-dominant students in the context of new standardization and accountability systems—systems that tend to constrain critical reflection and professionalism at all levels of education through test-driven uses of scripted approaches to teaching and learning (e.g., Gebhard et al. 2013). These critics want to know how students and teachers can understand and use such a robust theory in praxis, how teacher educators can use SFL to inform teacher education programs, and how scholars can trace intertextual connections between investment in teachers' professional development and changes in students' abilities to use texts in more powerful social, cognitive, and political ways over time (e.g., Achugar et al. 2007; Gebhard et al. 2013; Harman 2013).

The chapters in this volume expertly tackle these questions by providing compelling evidence regarding how students, including very young emergent bilinguals, develop disciplinary literacies through their use of functional metalanguage. The authors demonstrate how teachers develop a critical awareness of language and innovative pedagogical practices to support an equity agenda in their classrooms. Moreover, the chapters illustrate how teacher educators and teachers are able to collaborate to design and research SFL-based interventions and how SFL scholars are able to inform pressing theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical debates regarding language and literacy development in the context of the twenty-first century.

Taken collectively, these chapters provide examples of how researchers, teacher educators, teachers, and students use SFL tools to address unproductive power dynamics that constrain the construction of knowledge, not just in classrooms between students and teachers but also between teachers in school systems and researchers at universities. One of the distinguishing features of this volume, therefore, is how the authors place the work of teachers and teacher educators at the center of the kind of semiotic mediation that takes place in schools as institutions. As several chapters demonstrate, this process of mediation is enhanced when students and teachers develop a critical language awareness by learning to use a functional metalanguage that allows them to make connections between text and context dynamics (e.g., Hasan 1996; New London Group 1996). In addition, other chapters bring to the fore the importance of conceiving classrooms as "translingual contact zones" where binaries regarding national languages and essentialized identities fail to hold as students learn to read and write disciplinary texts (Canagarajah 2013, p. 6–7). Finally, other chapters apply SFL tools to understanding multimodality in the textual practices of learners (e.g., O'Halloran 2004; Unsworth 2000).

In sum, the authors in this book call for four changes related to the work of teachers, teacher educators, and literacy scholars. These changes center on conceptualizing (1) language from a SFL perspective (Halliday 1996; Hasan 1996), (2) learning from a critical sociocultural perspective of development (New London Group 1996), (3) teachers' work from a critical meaning-making perspective, and (4) teacher education and research as engaged scholarship anchored in an analysis of classroom literacy practices (e.g., Gebhard et al. 2013). Importantly, the authors draw on a critical perspective of learning and social change at *all* levels of education through research projects conducted in collaboration with pre- and in-service teachers in multilingual contexts using the tools of SFL. In doing so, they combine Halliday's (1996) contributions regarding language and literacy, Hasan's (1996) concept of reflective literacy, and Paulo Freire's (2002) approach to developing a pedagogy that enacts fundamentally different relationships among students, teachers, and society through SFL's teaching and learning cycle (Rose and Martin 2012). The result is a volume that makes clear that discriminating, de-professionalizing, and alienating institutional discourses circulating in schools are not impenetrable to change. Rather, there is always room for students, teachers, and researchers to collaborate in enacting counterdiscourses and creating new learning spaces where students and teachers are able to engage in powerful textual practices in service of equity.

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# Glossary of Key Terms

**Action literacies** A social semiotic process which enables students to engage with discourses, rather than passively consume previously constructed knowledge. Genre pedagogies which illuminate the linguistic structure and features of disciplinary knowledge can foster action literacy. (Schleppegrell and Moore, Chapter "Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School", this volume)

**Appraisal** Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Framework enables a reader to explicitly characterize and evaluate linguistic choices made by an author in a text; this framework enables the positive or negative attitudes of an author to be analyzed through a set of metalinguistic tools that evaluate their strength level. These tools include attitude, graduation and engagement. (Humphrey, Chapter "'We Can Speak to the World': Applying Meta-Linguistic Knowledge for Specialized and Reflexive Literacies", this volume)

**Attitude** Within the Appraisal framework, attitude deals with the linguistic construction of evaluation. (Humphrey, Chapter "'We Can Speak to the World': Applying Meta-Linguistic Knowledge for Specialized and Reflexive Literacies", this volume)

**Author attitude** The linguistic construction of an evaluative stance toward the field and reader of a text (Schleppegrell and Moore, Chapter "Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School", this volume)

**Compositional function** Corresponds with the textual metafunction of language; works to organize and synthesize different modes of a multimodal text; deals with layout, placement, and relative salience of multimodal resources. (Shin, Chapter "Multimodal Mediation and Argumentative Writing: A CaseStudy of a Multilingual Learner's Metalanguage Awareness Development", this volume)

**Context of Culture (COC)** The cultural context plays an important role in shaping the meanings of a text albeit the process is always a dialectical one (the conten-

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All terms and meanings in the glossary have been collected from different chapters and authors in the volume. We hope they help in your reading of the various studies.

tiousness of a recent U.S. political election influenced how it was portrayed in the media)

**Context of Situation (COS)** The immediate context of a speech event (e.g., buying fish at a farmer's market versus a supermarket) which shapes how interactants construe meaning and relate to each other.

**Critical praxis** A reflexive relationship between theory and practice which pushes for educational practice to inform theory and vice versa. (Potts, Chapter "Critical Praxis, Design and Reflection Literacy: A Lesson in Multimodality", this volume)

**Critical literacy** Enables students to see the ideological force of language choices and to critique such choices and to analyze and reconstruct social fields. (Schleppegrell and Moore; Potts, Chapters "Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School" and "Critical Praxis, Design and Reflection Literacy: A Lesson in Multimodality", this volume)

**Critical Social Literacy (CSL) Pedagogies** Pedagogical approaches which are focally concerned with supporting culturally and linguistically marginalized students and guiding them toward control of the genres needed to participate fully in academic and civic life. (Humphrey, Chapter "'We Can Speak to the World': Applying Meta-Linguistic Knowledge for Specialized and Reflexive Literacies", this volume)

**Design-based research** A research methodology by which researchers iteratively create and implement interventions in natural settings, such as the classroom, to test the practical validity of a dominant theory. (Schleppegrell and Moore, Chapter "Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School", this volume)

**Disciplinary literacy** The ability to engage in social, semiotic, and cognitive practices consistent with those of content experts

**Discourse semantics** According to Jim Martin and David Rose (2003) semantics is about the organization of texts above the clause (at the discourse level): the *patterns* of meaning manifest in a text (e.g. appraisal, ideation)

**Emergent bilinguals** Individuals who are still in the process of developing fluent language skills in two languages. (Brisk Ossa and Para, Chapter "Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change", this volume)

**Emergent critical language awareness** Characterized by one's ability to recognize text as an object that is open to analysis and scrutiny and that is composed of language choices that the author has made based on his or her point of view. (Schleppegrell and Moore, Chapter "Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School", this volume)

**Expression** In SFL the physiological sounding out of words or physically writing them out are seen as part of the expression stratum (grammar and semantics are the other strata in the language system and all are defined by context) (See Harman, Chapter "Transforming Normative Discourses of Schooling: Critical Systemic Functional Linguistics Praxis", this volume)

**Engagement** Within the Appraisal framework, this system deals with the degree to which other voices are incorporated or acknowledged within a text (Humphrey, Chapter "'We Can Speak to the World': Applying Meta-Linguistic Knowledge for Specialized and Reflexive Literacies", this volume)

**Field** The topic or subject matter of a given text or discourse. (Brisk and Ossa Para, Chapter "Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change", this volume; Shin, Chapter "Multimodal Mediation and Argumentative Writing: A CaseStudy of a Multilingual Learner's Metalanguage Awareness Development", this volume)

**Genre** Both a relatively stable configuration of linguistic resources and one that shifts according to context and social purpose. For example, a recipe consists of ingredients, constructed linguistically as quantified noun groups, and instructions, constructed through verbal phrases in the imperative mood, and serves the social purpose of informing someone how to cook a dish. The genre moves and language patterns of a recipe change according to register: if it is part of a comic skit, for example.

**Genre-based pedagogy** Focuses on the discipline-specific ways that meanings are constructed in texts and centers on genre as an entryway into understanding content knowledge. (Brisk and Ossa Para, Chapter "Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change", this volume)

**Graduation** The system of graduation enables analysis of the ways that the intensity of the meanings created within the other two systems are modulated (Humphrey, Chapter "'We Can Speak to the World': Applying Meta-Linguistic Knowledge for Specialized and Reflexive Literacies", this volume)

**Hybrid discourses practices** Juxtapose forms of communication, interaction, and material processes from different social and cultural worlds. (Brisk and Ossa Parra, Chapter "Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change", this volume)

**Ideation** The notion that language functions, at a clause-level, as creating and maintaining theories of experience and logic; the ideational metafunction of language is to realize the **field**, or subject matter, of a text

**Interactive function** Corresponds with the interpersonal function in SFL; it refers to the social relationships and evaluative meanings enacted in multimodal assemblages (Shin, Chapter "Multimodal Mediation and Argumentative Writing: A CaseStudy of a Multilingual Learner's Metalanguage Awareness Development", this volume)

**Interpersonal meanings** Meanings created in a text enact relationships between the author and others. For example, addressing someone by their first name or as *sir* can enact different levels of formality which correspond with different social relationships. (Schleppegrell and Moore, Chapter "Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School", this volume)

**Lexico grammatical choices** An SFL concept that emphasizes the interdependence between grammatical and lexical (vocabulary) choices in a clause and overall text to convey meaning

**Literacy** Defined broadly as knowledge of a social-semiotic activity through which people participate in the world, and reproduce and/or transform knowledge

**Medium** A technology that offers modal communication resources. (Shin, Chapter "Multimodal Mediation and Argumentative Writing: A Case Study of a Multilingual Learner's Metalanguage Awareness Development", this volume)

**Metalanguage** A language for talking about language, consisting of linguistic terminology, like *pronoun* or *appraisal,* as well as language which relates linguistic choices to context, like *genre* or *register* (Humphrey, Chapter "'We Can Speak to the World': Applying Meta-Linguistic Knowledge for Specialized and Reflexive Literacies", this volume)

**Mode** The manner in which a text is conveyed, or aspects of communication (e.g. oral, written, multimodal, monologic, dialogic, etc.) (Brisk and Ossa Parra, Chapter "Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change", this volume; Shin, Chapter "Multimodal Mediation and Argumentative Writing: A Case Study of a Multilingual Learner's Metalanguage Awareness Development", this volume)

**Multimodality** The disciplinary representation of knowledge co-articulated through verbal, media and visual modes that elicits complex cognitive engagement from students

**Personalized meaning potential** The semiotic resources with which an individual makes meaning of their world (Potts, Chapter "Critical Praxis, Design and Reflection Literacy: A Lesson in Multimodality", this volume)

**Phonological-expression level** An SFL concept that focuses on the largest and smallest units of sound that can be recognized

**Praxis** The intersection of, or recursive connection between, theory and practice

**Reading to Learn** A highly explicit pedagogical methodology developed by Rose and Martin (2012) that integrates reading and writing across the curriculum in all levels of school. Beginning at the macro level of a text, the approach promotes building an initial understanding of broad social contexts before scaffolding students through the stages of genre analysis including micro linguistic analysis (at the sentence level) and thematic analysis of texts

**Reflection literacy** A social semiotic process in which people are positioned to actively participate in, reproduce and transforming the world around them. Reflection literacy takes *recognition* and *action* literacies literacy a step further by enabling students to consider the ideological weight of their own language choices and empowering them to create and re-design knowledge according to their own ideological orientation. (Schleppegrell and Moore, Chapter "Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School", this volume; Potts, Chapter "Critical Praxis, Design and Reflection Literacy: A Lesson in Multimodality", this volume)

**Register** The variation of language according to societal context, realized through linguistic choices to convey ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. In SFL, register is seen as being realized through **field**, **tenor**, and **mode**, each of which has its own entry in this glossary

**Recognition literacy** A social semiotic process which gives students access to codes, though it does not empower students to manipulate these codes; can be fostered through phonics instruction and reading comprehension work and is a precursor to *action* and *reflection* literacies (Schleppegrell and Moore, Chapter "Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School", this volume)

**Representational function** Corresponds with the ideational metafunction of language; the representational function of visual resources is to construct ideas (Shin, Chapter "Multimodal Mediation and Argumentative Writing: A Case Study of a Multilingual Learner's Metalanguage Awareness Development", this volume)

**Semiotics** The study of signs and symbols for meaning-making, including but not limited to linguistic symbols

**Systemic functional linguistics** Developed M.A.K. Halliday (1976), regards language as a semiotic system whose primary function is social and which also performs three general metafunctions: the construal of experience (its ideational metafunction), the enactment of social relationships (its interpersonal metafunction), and self-organization (its textual function)

**Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis** Concerned with the systematic organization of semiotic resources (e.g. visual, sound, embodied) as tools for creating meaning in society

**Teaching-to-Learning Cycle (TLC)** Developed by Martin and Rose (2005), a recursive pedagogical cycle consisting of three phases: *deconstruction, joint construction and independent writing*. The first phase involves developing learner's understanding of new subject matter (the **Field**) and the context of a particular **genre or register**, along with engaging learners in analysis of linguistic choices in mentor texts. The second phase calls for the co-creation of texts with active participation among peers as well as with the teacher. In the third phase, students independently construct texts for specific academic genres. (Brisk and Ossa Para, Chapter "Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change", this volume; Humphrey, Chapter "'We Can Speak to the World': Applying Meta-Linguistic Knowledge for Specialized and Reflexive Literacies", this volume)

**Tenor** The interpersonal relationship between the writer and reader of a text. (Brisk and Ossa Parra Chapter "Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change", this volume; Shin, Chapter "Multimodal Mediation and Argumentative Writing: A Case Study of a Multilingual Learner's Metalanguage Awareness Development", this volume)

**Texture** How a given text is structured as communication (e.g. cohesion through Theme and Rheme patterns, rhetorical structure, etc.)

**Translanguaging** The linguistic process described by Garcia (2009) in which multilinguals are viewed as drawing from a single semiotic system or set of resources, rather than switching back and forth between distinct and separate languages and in which language is seen as fluid rather than bonded entity. (Brisk and Ossa Parra, Chapter "Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change", this volume)

# Transforming Normative Discourses of Schooling: Critical Systemic Functional Linguistics Praxis

**Ruth Harman**

**Abstract** One of Halliday's original purposes in developing Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) was to address and redress equity questions such as how and why certain groups of people are discriminated against because of their language use. This chapter provides an overview of SFL theory and why and how it has been used in recent years in the United States and elsewhere to support the academic, linguistic and cultural repertoires of multilingual and multicultural students and teachers. It further outlines key concepts drawn on by the mostly U.S. contributors throughout this volume, highlighting the similarities and differences of contributors' approaches to critical SFL. Finally, it provides an overview of each of the three sections in the volume: (1) Reflection Literacy and Critical Language Awareness; (2) Register Variation and Equity; and (3) Multimodal Designing as they relate to SFL.

**Keywords** Critical SFL Praxis • Multilingual learners • Social equity

## 1 Introduction

In K-12 public schools in the United States, over 11% of the public school population is now categorized as emergent bilingual learners[1] and this number is projected to grow exponentially in future decades (Lee and Buxton 2013). This forces the predominantly monolingual teacher population, 87% of whom are White, to develop pedagogic practices that support and foster the academic, linguistic and social literacies of their multilingual students (Crandall et al. 2001; O'Halloran 2007). In middle and high school, however, mainstream teachers (e.g. Science, Social Studies)

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[1] Informed by Garcia et al. (2008) we use the term emergent bilinguals (EBs) to highlight how students acquiring English through school or other social contexts are in the process of becoming bilingual, a fact that is eliminated by use of deficit terms such as English learners.

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often resist seeing language and literacy instruction as part of their responsibility and relegate it instead to language teachers (Harman and Khote 2017).

The new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in the United States have met with a lot of criticism recently because of their potential to perpetuate dominant discourses at the risk of further marginalizing others (e.g. Ravitch 2013). However, a potentially positive element of these standards, which have been adopted in 46 states, is that they require all teachers to be responsible for the disciplinary literacy development of their students (see Zygouris-Coe 2012). To develop expertise in a discipline, a student needs to integrate their funds of knowledge with the distinct discursive ways of conveying and organizing knowledge in oral, written and multimodal genres of the discipline (e.g. reading of graphs in Science versus Statistics). Fang (2012) described this disciplinary literacy as “the ability to engage in social, semiotic, and cognitive practices consistent with those of content experts” (p. 19). Science texts, for example, gravitate towards an economy of language to build knowledge, using high lexical density and passive voice to construct a representation of natural phenomena; this differs considerably from the linguistic play found in experimental literature (Fang and Schleppegrell 2008) in which several language strata (e.g. phonology, graphology, semantics and context) typically converge.

To address the interests and academic needs of multilingual learners, an increasing number of educators see Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as an effective way of providing students with “pathways” to complex academic and cultural literacies and also with the tools to challenge underlying ideologies of language majority discourses (e.g., Christie 2007; Harman and Simmons 2014; Schleppegrell 2002). Most research and praxis using SFL in past decades was developed and conducted in overseas contexts, especially in Australia (Christie 2007; Halliday and Matthiesen 2004; Humphrey 2010; Martin and Rose 2008). However, in recent years it has garnered considerable interest in the U.S. and other cultural contexts as a way to support academic access for all students (see Achugar and Carpenter 2012; Achugar et al. 2007; Brisk 2014; Byrnes 2006; Fang 2013; de Oliveira 2011; Gebhard et al. 2011; Harman 2013; Schleppegrell 2004, 2006, 2013; Schleppegrell and Colombi 2002).

Most of the studies selected for this book were conducted in the United States to provide readers with an understanding of the various ways that critical SFL practices have been implemented in a multilingual country with a large immigrant population. Two studies, however, provide insight into other cultural contexts, one conducted in Canada (Diane Potts) and one in Australia (Sally Humphrey). As the contributions to this volume will attest, SFL-informed approaches to disciplinary and social literacy instruction need to incorporate students’ cultural, multimodal and linguistic repertoires (Brisk and Osssa Parra, Chapter “Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change”, this volume; Khote, Chapter “Translanguaging in Systemic Functional Linguistics: A Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy for Writing in Secondary Schools”, this volume; Potts and Moran 2013). Our critical takes on SFL theorize and illustrate the different ways that SFL supports multilingual students to have equitable access to twenty-first century disciplinary discourses.

This chapter begins by discussing the key tenets of SFL theory and SFL-informed genre instruction that contributing authors draw from in their studies; it also discusses different aspects of what we define as critical appropriations of SFL theory and praxis. In subsequent chapters, authors discuss their conceptual understandings of critical SFL and illustrate how their approach has been implemented and researched in K-16 classrooms. The final chapter of the book brings together the seminal features of SFL that have emerged across the different studies and discusses the challenges in implementing a critical SFL-informed literacy approach in schools and higher education contexts.

## 2 Systemic Functional Linguistics

Halliday conceptualized his approach to Systemic Functional Linguistics during the 1950s and early 1960s. His work was influenced in particular by his teacher at the University of London, J. R. Firth. The popularity of Firth's ideas gave rise to what was known as the "London School" of linguistics (Butler 1985). Because every social situation required a specific type of response, Firth (1957) felt individual speakers were necessarily constrained in how they addressed interlocutors. For a

**Table 1** Language in context

| ***Cultural context*** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Genre (purpose and audience)*** | | | |
| ***Register*** | *Field* | *Tenor* | *Mode* |
| ***Discourse semantics*** (Martin 2014) | ***Ideational*** | ***Interpersonal*** | ***Textual*** |
| | *Experiential* | *Negotiation* | *Identification* |
| | *Logical* | *Appraisal* | *Periodicity* |
| ***Lexico grammatical resources*** | ***Participants*** *(nominal phrases/ groups)* | ***Mood*** *in clause (declarative, interrogative, imperative).* | ***Cohesive devices*** *(reference, repetition, ellipsis)* |
| | ***Processes*** *(verbs)* | ***Modality*** *(type of modal verbs and adjuncts to express degrees of obligation, certainty)* | ***Theme and Rheme sequencing*** *(point of departure in clauses, linking among themes in subsequent clauses)* |
| | ***Circumstances*** *(prepositional phrases, adverbials)* | ***Polarity*** *(continuum of positive to negative)* | ***Clause combining*** *(e.g., conjunction)* |
| | ***Logical relations among clauses and sentences*** *(e.g., hypotaxis or parataxis)* | | |

particular context, a speaker needed to choose from a set of linguistic options to convey appropriate meaning. For example, when rowing a boat with a friend, language is used in ancillary ways (e.g. Give me the oar, you are drowning us!) as opposed to when arguing a death penalty case in a judicial court where language is usually the most important semiotic system to sway the jury (see Table 1; Eggins 2004; Firth 1957).

For Halliday (1996), the general context of culture and the specific context of situation of a speech event (e.g. type of talk when rowing a boat in rapid waters) were crucial components in meaning making (see Fig. 1). Halliday asked very specific questions about why language functioned in certain ways in specific contexts. Indeed, Halliday's original purpose in developing his linguistic theories in the 1950s was rooted in a desire to address questions such as how certain groups of people were discriminated against because of their language use (Christie 2007). What makes SFL distinctive from other linguistic theories, therefore, is that Halliday and other SFL theorists worked in response to issues in applied contexts (Christie and Unsworth 2000).

From a Hallidayan perspective, language provides members of discourse communities with a system of choices to communicate meaning (Halliday 1996; Halliday and Matthiesen 2004). The resources of language function as a network of interwoven systems, each of which has a choice point: "A system is a set of options with an entry condition: that is to say, a set of things of which one must be chosen (Halliday 1976, p. 3). Above, Fig. 1 (adapted from Halliday and Matthiesen 2004, p. 25) illustrates how SFL theorists perceive the different choices within the language stratal model as always embedded in context.

Each more abstract system above (e.g. cultural context) is realized linguistically through the strata below it. *The context of culture* (e.g., a historical event such as the

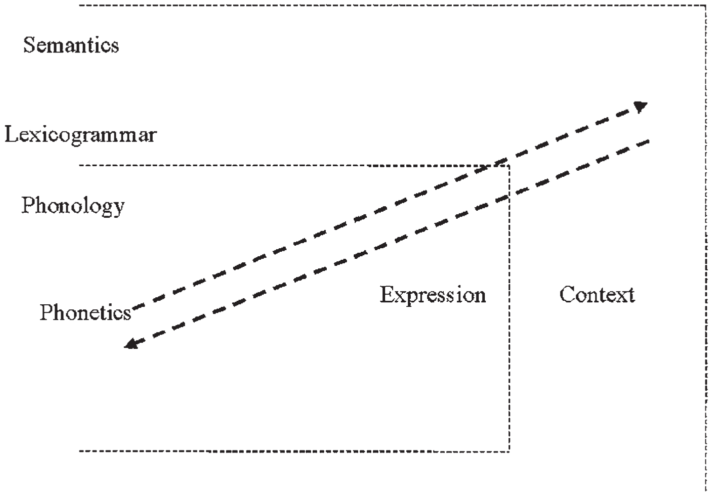

**Fig. 1** Language Strata in context

election of a despotic president in recent U.S. elections) is realized discursively through *semantics* in a text (i.e., the pattern of meanings); this in turn is realized through the *lexico grammatical choices* that are realized through the sounds and graphics at the physiological *expression level*. The following scenario illustrates the interdependence of context and text in Fig. 1. If a student is trying to understand what her teacher means by the term “text,” she needs to recognize the sounds on the *phonological-expression level*; she also needs to determine *on the lexico grammatical level* that the ‘text’ is functioning as a noun; on the *semantic level* she needs to interpret how the speaker is distinguishing between what a “text” and a “non-text” is; and at the level of culture, she needs to understand how the term “text” is being construed by the member of a particular discourse community. Meaning making potential, informed by these different strata, is always embedded in a cultural and situational context.

### 2.1 Register

When discussing how language is used to make meaning in a particular context of situation (i.e. what Hymes (1974) would refer to as a speech event), Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) identified three situational variables—*field, tenor, and mode*. When we meet colleagues in a meeting, for example, we usually have a topic to discuss (*the field*), a particular relationship with the people (*the tenor*) and a particular way of organizing the talk because it is face to face (*the mode*). These three variables are realized simultaneously in the *linguistic register* through an *ideational* representation of reality, an *interpersonal relationship* with the audience and subject matter, and a *textual* organization of the text (e.g., face-to-face versus written mode). Register, in sum, is defined as a “configuration of meanings that are typically associated with a particular situational configuration of field, tenor, and mode” (Halliday and Hasan 1989, p. 39). Halliday (1996) justified SFL’s exclusive focus on these particular register variables by stating that language itself is structured to simultaneously allow for the three types of meaning. The diagram above (Table 1), adapted from Martin (2014), Thompson (2004) and Schleppegrell (2004), provides a global summary of the different linguistic resources used to realize the three metafunctions.

As seen in Table 1, the three register metafunctions are realized simultaneously in a text through a pattern of semantic choices, which are realized through lexico grammatical resources such as participants and processes (i.e. nouns and verbs), modality and mood (e.g.,. declaratives versus imperatives) and cohesive devices (e.g., how clauses begin and end). Martin’s discourse semantics (e.g. Martin and Rose 2003) provided a fine tuned set of resources to explain how the patterns of meanings functioned in texts. For example, Martin (2014) explained how *appraisal* functions to “describe prosodies of evaluation in relation to genre and tenor” (p. 18). Similarly, Martin’s discourse semantic system provides a fine tuned metalanguage to discuss *texture* (e.g. cohesion through repetition) and *ideation* (e.g. what features as major and minor participants at clause or whole text level).

In an SFL-informed pedagogical design, teachers and students can investigate, for example, how and why a pattern of adverbials, nouns and verbs construct a particular evaluative stance in a text (e.g. *the bully marched angrily down the dark hall*). In several chapters of this volume, authors talk specifically about how their focus on the appraisal resources in literature or ideational resources in informational texts (e.g. use of nominalization and other noun group patterns) supported students in developing an emergent critical language awareness of how language is configured for ideological purposes (e.g., Khote; Schleppegrell and Moore; Simmons).

## 2.2 SFL-Based Genre Pedagogies

Genre, as conceptualized by Martin and Rose (2008), is characterized as a staged yet pliable meaning making process with specific discourse organization and configurations of language choices to communicate a particular purpose. In other words, it has both a relatively stable configuration of language choices and genre moves but also shifts according to context and social purpose. For example, presentation of a scientific study tends to have expected genre moves such as an orientation to the topic, description of the study and explanation of the findings. However, if the scientific study is presented to 5 year olds, the exposition and genre moves will tend to be completely different. The most common writing genres that children read and write in elementary school include different types of recounts, fictional narratives, procedures, reports, explanations, and expositions or arguments (Brisk and Ossa Para, Chapter "Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change", this volume).

Having a metafunctional perspective on genres can support disciplinary teachers and students in focusing on more than just the content or field of texts (Humphrey et al. 2010). To foster genre and register awareness and a systematic metalanguage, educational linguists in Sydney developed the *Teaching-to-Learning Cycle* (TLC) in the 1980s, as illustrated in Fig. 2 below. In so doing, they combined Halliday's theories of meaning making with Vygotsky's (1978) understanding of social interaction as a fundamental mediator in the learning of new concepts. Martin et al. (1987) felt that the importance of the cycle was not to implement some fixed model of teaching but to illustrate "ways in which interaction and guidance can be built into a writing program" (p. 69).

As Martin and Rose (2005) described it, the first phase in the TLC cycle, a *deconstruction phase*, involves developing learners' understanding of a new subject matter, or "field," and the context of the particular genres the students will read or write (e.g., Science Report, Narrative, Historical Account). In this phase, teacher and students generate this knowledge through experiential activities related to the topic and analysis of the patterns of linguistic choices and genre moves in mentor texts. In the second stage, *joint construction*, students are encouraged to write about the subject area

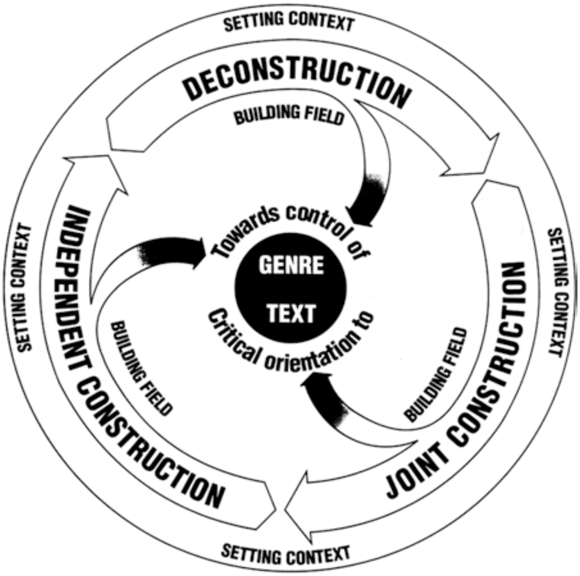
SETTING CONTEXT
DECONSTRUCTION
BUILDING FIELD
SETTING CONTEXT
JOINT CONSTRUCTION
BUILDING FIELD
SETTING CONTEXT
INDEPENDENT CONSTRUCTION
BUILDING FIELD
SETTING CONTEXT
Towards control of
GENRE
TEXT
Critical orientation to

**Fig. 2** Rothery and Stenglin's (1994) teaching and learning cycle

with active participation of their teacher and peers. In the final stage of the cycle, students apply their learning of how to develop their own ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings for specific academic genres through *independent writing*.

In several chapters in this volume (e.g. Khote, Ramirez, Simmons), the TLC is seen as an important component of fostering students' metalinguistic awareness from elementary to higher education contexts. Indeed, several contributors illustrate how pre-service teachers were trained to see how social semiotics (i.e. all modes that convey meaning including color, graphic design and verbiage) are used to construct the knowledge base of their discipline (Hasan 1996). Through this type of exposure, teachers may become invested in designing language-focused and instructional curricula that support the academic and social literacies of their bilingual learners (Fenwick et al. 2014; Gebhard et al. 2011 Schleppegrell 2012).

## 2.3 *Systemic Functional Linguistics and Teacher Education*

Recent research has highlighted a significant problem with mainstream teachers' lack of training in how to integrate language and literacy instruction effectively into disciplinary teaching (Gebhard et al. 2013; Macken-Horarik et al. 2011; Rose and Martin 2012). Functional linguists in Australia, and more recently in North America, suggest that integrating SFL into teacher professional development can have an important influence on advancing teachers' knowledge of language and in enhancing teachers' ability to design instruction that fosters academic literacy development of bilingual learners (Brisk 2014; Fenwick et al. 2014; Gebhard et al. 2013; Rose and Martin 2012). In focusing on Australia as a place of flourishing SFL praxis, Myhill et al. (2011) stated:

> In terms of introducing writers to the linguistic characteristics of different genres, Australia leads the way. The work of Beverly Derewianka and Frances Christie … represents a clear focus on developing writers and writing, with grammar used as a tool to illuminate their understanding of how texts work, and this work has been very influential in the primary English curriculum in England (p. 2).

A number of scholars in the United States in recent years have also adapted SFL and SFL-based pedagogies to support multilingual learners and their teachers in responding to new curriculum mandates and high stakes accountability (e.g., Achugar and Schleppegrell 2007; Achugar and Carpenter 2012; Aguirre-Muñoz et al. 2008; Brisk 2014; Colombi 2009; Schleppegrell and Go 2007; Gebhard et al. 2013; Harman 2013; de Oliveira 2011).

Gebhard et al. (2013) conducted a case study in a MA-TESOL program to explore how ten international candidates designed curriculum informed by SFL theories. Their findings indicate that the participants shifted from a decontextualized sentence-level, form-focused understanding of grammar to a functional understanding of lexico-grammatical and discourse semantic features of texts. Achugar et al. (2007) describe how they supported history teachers in an SFL-informed professional development initiative to see the connection between form and meaning in their disciplinary texts. For example, by investigating the distribution of sensing, doing and saying verbs in texts about slavery, the teachers began to see how African Americans were discursively constructed as passive and subservient to Whites in the school books.

SFL also helps support integration of students' cultural repertoires and academic literacy practices (Daniello 2014; Harman 2013; Harman and Simmons 2014; O'Halloran 2014; Paugh and Moran 2013; Ramirez 2014). Researchers have investigated how teachers use SFL-based pedagogy to support bilingual learners in a variety of academic literacy practices, such as the construction of blogs in elementary classrooms (Shin et al. 2010) and the composition of persuasive texts (Gebhard et al. 2007; Schulze 2011). Maria Brisk and teachers of the Boston Public Schools have investigated the potential of SFL to support bilingual learners in their academic writing (Brisk 2012, 2014; Brisk and DeRosa 2014; Brisk and Zisselberger 2011). They have explored the application of an SFL pedagogical approach to the teaching of report writing in primary grades. Integrating SFL into professional development supports development of teachers' awareness of text organization and the expected configuration of language resources of academic genres. This can result in students' producing texts with more emphasis on organization, audience awareness and textual cohesion.

## 2.4 *Systemic Functional Linguistics and Multimodal Designing*

Systemic Functional Theory, initially developed with a focus on linguistic meaning making, has expanded over time into an exploration of how an array of semiotic resources (visual, action, verbal) are used to make meaning. Halliday's construct of language as a social semiotic supported the subsequent expansion of Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA). Jewitt et al. (2016) described the approach as "concerned with the systematic organization of semiotic resources as tools for creating meaning in society" (p. 31). Similarly, Djonov (2007) describes SF-MDA as "an analytic practice which tests the application of the key principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics to the analysis of semiotic systems other than language and their interaction with each other and with language in semiosis" (p. 73). In other words, the theory of language has expanded into exploration of ever evolving semiotic modes used in social media and academia.

To support students in exploring and critiquing the current proliferation of modes and multimedia technologies, the New London Group (1996) conceptualized a pedagogy of multiliteracies that would engage students in understanding, re-mixing (i.e. creating) and critiquing semiotic systems such as color, sound, text and image for a variety of contexts, media, and communities (New London Group 1996; Kress 2003). Ajayi describes (2011) that when working with bilingual learners:

> Multimodal/multiliteracies pedagogy provides the conceptual space in which ESL pupils can expand their literacy practices by integrating different representational models, including languages, images, colors, and other non-textual features to mediate interpretations of texts." (p. 62)

Researchers on multiliteracy practices with bilingual learners have reported multiple gains (e.g., increased semiotic resources, non-linear ways of thinking, expanded audiences) from digital-mediated literacy practices (Lam and Warriner 2012). Two chapters in this volume explore the conceptual framework and implementation of multimodal designing (Potts, Shin). Potts and Shin discuss how bilingual writing as multimodal designing entailed drawing from multiple symbolic resources such as word, image, gesture, sound, and movement to make meaning (Jewitt and Kress 2003; Kress 2003; New London Group 1996; Shin and Cimasko 2008).

## *2.5 Register Variation and Equity*

One of Halliday's reasons for developing Systemic Functional Linguistics in the 1950s was to counteract the virulent linguicism on the part of language majority speakers (Christie 2007). Indeed, from early in his career (e.g. Halliday et al. 1964), Halliday saw institutional bias toward particular dialects and hybrid language practices as directly informed by a societal desire to marginalize the cultural identities of particular subgroups. Similarly, Hasan (1996) stated, "We not only use language to shape reality, but we use it also to defend that reality, against anyone whose alternative values might threaten ours" (p. 34). Social interaction, in other words, is not an innocent practice but is infused with the ideological biases of discourse communities.

Aligned with Halliday and Hasan's concerns about language variation inequity, the socially- and functionally-oriented theory of SFL conceptualizes language as a pliable configuration of paradigmatic and syntagmatic choices to enable meaning making in a range of academic and social contexts. In other words, the cultural and situational contexts inform how and what we include in our meaning making: speaking like a sociology professor when playing on a soccer team would be an inappropriate construal of the context. Halliday's model of language celebrates the "eco-social" nature of language that shifts to accommodate variation in social register and cultural context (Lukin et al. 2011, p. 18). In sum, the theory of SFL sees all language use as a complex configuration of linguistic choices and therefore, promotes register and language variation equity.

In multilingual contexts, meaning making potential emerges from all available semiotic resources (e.g. different linguistic repertoires, modes). Instead of viewing language as a bonded system, Halliday (1978) and Matthiessen et al. (2008) see them as open repertoires. For example, if a Mexican American group of students is speaking in English, they may shift to Spanish to highlight or invoke particular ideational or interpersonal meanings. The Spanish word 'retenes' (police check point) has a very urgent understanding for Latinx populations in the Southeast, which is invoked most strongly through use of the Spanish term (Harman and Khote 2017; Matthiessen et al. 2008; Matthiesen in press).

Aligned closely to SFL's theory of multilingual-meaning potential, pedagogies of translanguaging have recently received attention in multicultural education (Garcia 2009). Instead of using languages as separate semiotic systems, bilingual speakers are encouraged to mesh their two or more languages together to produce meaning in fluid and agentive ways (Canagarajah 2011, p. 401). In discussing their use of a critical take on SFL with bilingual learners, the authors in the second section of this volume focus on how their inclusion of translanguaging opened up classroom learning in dynamic ways (e.g., Brisk and Ossa Parra; Khote; and Ramirez). Indeed, Maria Brisk and Marcela Ossa Parra emphasize how monolingual teachers supported the approach in their SFL-informed literacy instruction.

## 3 Our Volume: Critical Take(s) on Systemic Functional Linguistics

SFL has been used as a teaching and analytic tool in supporting advanced proficiency in first and second language literacy from elementary to higher education contexts over the past 30 years (Byrnes 2006). Less research has conceptualized how SFL can be used to develop successful scaffolding of students' multiliteracies *along with* explicit incorporation and validation of their cultural and semiotic repertoires *along with* development of students' critical language awareness; such culturally sustaining approaches (Paris 2012) have been shown to afford learners with pivotal resources to appropriate and challenge dominant knowledge domains (e.g. Moll 2001; Morgan and Ramanthan 2005; Pennycook 2001). Our volume focuses on how a range of SFL researchers, mostly from the United States, chose to conceptualize their critical take(s) on SFL.

In this book authors take different stances on what they perceive to be the key elements of a Critical SFL Praxis. For that reason, the chapters have been divided into three sections: (1) Reflection Literacy and Critical Language Awareness; (2) Register Variation and Equity; and (3) Multimodal Designing.

### *3.1 Section One: Reflection Literacy and Critical Language Awareness*

From early in his career Halliday saw institutional bias toward particular dialects and languages as directly informed by a societal desire to marginalize the cultural identities of particular subgroups (Halliday et al. 1964). To counter such biases, Halliday (1978) believed that students' critical language awareness needed to be fostered through recognition and reflexive exploration of language in use. Similarly, Hasan (1996) believed that educators needed to foster reflection literacy among their students to engage them in understanding how they are positioned in society and how they can resist and critique this social positioning (Schleppegrell 2014).

Hasan (1996) discussed how reflection literacy supports teachers and students in seeing language as a pliable resource, used to enable configurations of meaning for different contexts and purposes (Schleppegrell and Moore, Chapter "Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School", this volume). Through a shared metalanguage and discussion of language in literature or social media, even small children can play with and investigate how particular patterns of semiotic resources construct highly valued or less valued characters or settings (Williams 2000). Importantly, critical language awareness for Hasan emerges from close semiotic analysis of texts rather than from just discussions of the content of a text. She (1996, 2011) also stresses the importance of creativity and re-design of available modes in reflection literacy.

The authors in the first section of this book use concepts of critical language awareness that align closely to Hasan's concept of reflection literacy. In a range of educational contexts, from elementary to higher education, all five chapters of the section focus primarily on the importance of providing students with an SFL-informed meta language that fosters their understanding of how to read, write and create semiotic texts in normative and resistant ways.

For instance, in the first chapter, Mary Schleppegrell and Jason Moore discuss how elementary school teachers in an SFL-informed professional development initiative designed language activities around text to engender reflection and critical language awareness among their multilingual learners. The authors discuss how the children learned to see language in stories and informational texts as informed by interpersonal and ideational choices that construe authorial perspective. For example, one of the teachers in their study used colors to create an attitude line on the whiteboard so children could physically mark down how the verbal processes and participants in the books were constructing the characters in negative or positive ways. They marked, for instance, the neutral position of the verb ‘say’ as opposed to the more negative use of the process ‘grumble.” With the use of a simple but SFL-informed metalanguage, the children began to see language as a resource to be configured for different communicative purposes. Importantly, their study shows how even in the early years of schooling, children can learn to recognize how they are being positioned by what they read and can present emergent critical perspectives about their context as they create and write. Indeed, for the authors an important corollary for the authors to students’ SFL metalanguage development is the importance of developing a classroom environment that supports children in writing and sharing their own perspectives on what they discuss and read. Through carefully crafted instruction, children are encouraged to appropriate and re-design ideological patterns of meaning in the texts they read and write.

In her chapter, Sally Humphrey discusses her longitudinal action research at a middle school that is highly multilingual and multicultural and where students come from backgrounds of low socioeconomic status. The author describes how her collaboration with teachers supported them in learning how to teach with an adaptive SFL toolkit. The teachers were especially invested in the initiative because the communities of their many Arabic students had been positioned in negative ways by media. Informed by Macken-Horarik’s (e.g. 1996) approach to literacy instruction across three cultural domains (everyday, specialized and reflective), the professional development initiative supported the teachers in designing language activities that made disciplinary texts more accessible to students. The focal teacher, with an applied linguistics researcher at her side, encouraged students to think about the knowledge domain of a particular semiotic activity based on four levels of text (whole, paragraph, sentence and word) and robust meta language (Schleppegrell 2013). With increasing understanding of the affordances of language to make meaning in different contexts and domains, students developed resources to read, write and challenge in persuasive genres across the curriculum.

In Amber Simmons’s action research case study of an advanced high school English Language Arts classroom, a diverse group of students were taught how to use SFL resources to analyze literary and social media texts. Dr. Simmons describes how she purposively designed the curriculum so that the students’ apprenticeship into discourse analysis started with *Harry Potter* (Rowling 1997), a novel that they loved to read. She then moved them into reading Shakespeare and, finally, supported them in reading and analyzing current social media articles such as President Obama’s speech in Cairo. The carefully crafted approach used SFL metalanguage (e.g. appraisal and ideational resources) and readings from cultural studies on gender and racial constructs in literature to foster their critical language awareness. Through immersion in discourse analysis and critical discussion, students expanded their semiotic and critical reasoning resources. As a result, their reading and creating of cultural studies articles and primary sources became more sophisticated and analytical.

Mariana Achugar and Brian Carpenter discuss reflection literacy within their critical SFL praxis for English language arts pre-service teachers. Their curriculum model fostered language awareness among pre-service teachers and equipped them with an *adaptive expertise* (Darling-Hammond 2006) to design curriculum and engage students in meaningful disciplinary activities. The authors demonstrate how the language activities in teacher education courses supported future teachers in using *grammar to think* with (Halliday 2002). Specifically, their talk and lesson design in the courses revolved around meaning making in everyday and specialized domains to show how particular paradigmatic choices function to include and exclude speakers of ratified and marginalized discourse communities. In sum, their approach encouraged future teachers and teacher educators to challenge, imagine and design change for their students in the current system of high stakes accountability and social inequity.

Luciana de Oliveira and Mary Avalos focus on how and why they have developed a critical SFL praxis that is incorporated across several courses in their teacher education program. Specifically, they supported teachers in developing an SFL-informed meta language to analyze and write texts from different disciplines. In addition, the teacher candidates were supported in developing a critical lens on equity and power. Through readings and classroom activities, they developed keen awareness of the need to validate students' languages, registers and cultures in the classroom (Avalos et al. 2015; de Oliveira and Schleppegrell 2015). In one example, the authors illustrate how a pre-service teacher in social studies designed a curriculum module in which students learned to deconstruct and co-construct an introduction to a historical report. The authors provide concrete and useful guidelines on how to implement a similar approach in teacher education.

## 3.2 Section Two: Register Variation and Equity

In recent years, harsh language and immigration policies such as abrupt deportation of family members have created hostile environments for multilingual[2] learners and their communities in the United States and other multicultural nations (Alexsaht-Snider et al. 2013). Indeed, high poverty school districts in the United States are pressured to adopt reductive literacy practices and curricular materials that teach to the standardized test and often ignore the cultural and linguistic interests of their diverse student populations (Molle et al. 2015). The consequences of such practices can be extremely negative for the academic, emotional and social trajectories of multilingual learners (Brisk and Ossa Parra, Chapter "Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change", this volume; Gutiérrez 2008; Hamann and Harklau 2010).

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[2] Multilingual learner is a term used in this book to include a range of populations: heritage learners, second language learners, code switchers among various dialects etc.

The contributors to the second section of this volume focus on how a culturally sustaining SFL praxis supports teachers in incorporating the language and cultural repertories of multilingual learners while also supporting them in meeting the rigorous demands of grade-level disciplinary literacies as mandated by national standards such as the Common Core Curriculum Standards (CCCS) in the United States. For example, in their chapter, Maria Brisk and Marcela Ossa Parra stress the importance of working to change the (often negative) attitudes of teachers toward bilingual education when under pressure from high stakes testing and other accountability measures. In a powerful longitudinal school-university partnership, the researchers worked with elementary school teachers and administrators of a school to support them in using a critical genre-based SFL writing practices across the curriculum. Through their partnership, specifically established to experiment with developing an SFL-informed writing pedagogy in inclusive and multilingual classrooms, emergent bilinguals consistently improved their English proficiency. The collaboration also fostered teacher's support of register shifting and translanguaging among their learners, thus creating a dynamic environment that acknowledged and supported the cultural and linguistic repertoires of the students.

Similarly, Nihal Khote discusses his longitudinal work as an ESL educator in a high school in the southeastern United States. Beleaguered by draconian immigration laws in their county and high poverty among immigrant communities, the multilingual students and teacher speak from the heart and in several languages about their lived experiences, fears and hopes related to immigration. In his exploration of the culturally sustaining SFL praxis that he developed with his students, he demonstrates powerfully how his students were supported in leveraging their sophisticated cognitive strategies in their third space school community. It is within this collective space that Dr. Khote and his students engaged in SFL-informed analysis of mentor texts and learned to build argumentation that they could adapt for other formal disciplinary contexts and to fight against oppression. When switching registers from more colloquial to formal contexts, they learned to build their texts with grammatical metaphor, tight cohesion and a salient rationale.

First generation students enrolled in high school and mature bilingual students who finished their education abroad are rarely part of sustained initiatives that support their access to higher education (Kanno and Harklau 2012). Indeed, they often experience university and college admission policies as unsurpassable barriers. In this higher education context, and with dedication to carefully crafted curriculum and teaching, Andrés Ramírez reports on a Reading to Learn (R2L) methodology (see Rose and Martin 2012) that he adapted for use with bilingual first-generation college freshmen. To enhance some of the features of the Sydney school genre based pedagogy, Rose and Marin (2012) proposed a highly explicit literacy approach that integrates reading and writing. The chapter explores how this integrated approach supported students to write, read and analyze highly privileged genres that they needed to appropriate for college. In particular, Dr. Ramirez provides the reader with a comprehensive description of how new college students were scaffolded into adopting close reading strategies, note taking and writing practices when engaged with the *Text Response* genre. The chapter's implications point to the need for a more longitudinal and developed academic support system for first generation bilingual college students.

### *3.3 Section Three: Systemic Functional Praxis and Multimodal Designing*

Informed by theories of multimodality (Jewitt 2008; Kress 2003; O'Halloran 2004), SFL researchers in recent years have analyzed the disciplinary representation of knowledge co-articulated through verbal, media and visual modes that elicits complex cognitive engagement from students (e.g., Jewitt 2008). The two chapters in the third section focus on critical multimodal awareness and the multimodal compositional designing of multilingual learners in K-12 schools.

In her conceptual paper, Diane Potts examines how critical praxis grounded in social semiotics (not only language as a meaning making system, but all modes including color, sounds and movement that function to make meaning in a particular social context) along with reflection literacy can be used to support transformative literacy practices among multilingual learners. Significantly, Dr. Potts focuses on critical social semiotic research that centers on societal and discursive creativity and change. Examples from *The Multiliteracy Project*, a Canadian research initiative, show how the researcher and a focal teacher developed a curricular unit and a shared semiotic meta language that supported students in thinking about and discussing the affordances and limitations of a variety of modes (e.g., color, shapes). The chapter discusses how this curricular approach supported students in making intertextual and inter-semiotic connections hitherto silenced by institutional regulations and constraints.

In a qualitative case study about multimodal compositional designing, Dong-shin Shin introduces us to the practices of Sonny, a sixth-grade bilingual student whose literacy development in English Language Arts was greatly enhanced by the affordances of digital technologies and the multiple modalities that the teacher made available to the students. Through analysis of several drafts of the student's multimodal composing process, the researcher highlights the power of instruction in supporting Sonny's awareness of how to build inter-semiotic relationships (e.g., sound, image, verbiage), in a *multimodal ensemble* appropriate to audience, context and purpose.

## 4 Conclusion

Our international contributors to this book provide a dynamic range of conceptual, reflective and empirical approaches to learning and teaching through a critical SFL praxis in the twenty-first century multicultural and multilingual world. When reading the different sections of the book, readers are encouraged to see how the different approaches to critical SFL praxis can be used in complementary and indeed cumulative ways to support teachers and teacher educators in designing curricular and action research studies in K-16 contexts. In the final chapter of the volume, the editor concludes by thinking across the different chapters in terms of the strengths and challenges of implementing a critical SFL-informed literacy approach in school and higher education contexts.

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# Part I
# Reflection Literacy and Critical Language Awareness

# Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School

**Mary Schleppegrell and Jason Moore**

**Abstract** In a design-based professional development initiative, language-focused activities supported by SFL metalanguage enabled primary school children who were learning English as an additional language to begin to develop awareness of themselves as readers in dialogue with authors and as readers positioned in particular ways by what they read. Professional development prepared their teachers to support discussion about interpersonal meaning in the language of stories and informational texts. By exploring, interpreting, and evaluating attitudes in texts, and then presenting their own views in writing, the children began to develop the critical and evaluative perspectives needed for success in secondary and tertiary contexts.

**Keywords** SFL metalanguage • English language arts • Science • Writing pedagogy

## 1 Introduction

Children are often put into a position of passivity as readers, and writing instruction can feel to them like a process of learning to create a particular script for the teacher. Students who are learning English while learning school subjects are especially vulnerable to teaching approaches that are not dialogic or that do not engage them as critical readers and writers. Even from the early years, and even for English learners, the pedagogies all children engage with need to recognize that all learners have points of view and that the texts they read have points of view, and that all students can be positioned as engaged and alert readers who can analyze text for its multiple meanings and can respond to text in unique and creative ways.

From the perspective of *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL), a key domain for developing critical language awareness is recognition of *interpersonal* meaning in the language choices made by authors and speakers. Interpersonal meanings enable speakers/writers to enact relationships with others and infuse their perspectives into

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the discourse they create at the same time that they present ideational meanings that construe experience. Recognizing interpersonal meaning in stories and recognizing an authorial voice and perspective in what they read across school subjects helps learners to become conscious about the voices that pervade the texts they read. Such awareness also enables learners to be more deliberate in their own language choices as they present their views and perspectives about what they read. In this chapter, we show that even students in elementary school can begin to develop these skills. We describe how we used the tools of SFL to engage teachers in learning more about the ways interpersonal meaning is infused into the texts read in English language arts and science in the elementary school, and we illustrate how teachers engaged their students in classroom discussion that analyzed interpersonal meaning in text.

We define emergent critical language awareness as the ability to recognize that text is an object that can be analyzed, that authors make choices in the language they use, and that authors have points of view that can be considered, engaged with, and responded to. Further, we argue that children's emergent critical language awareness is supported when they are engaged in writing in ways that enable them to develop and express their own points of view and argue for their own perspectives about what they read. In this chapter, we show how accomplishing these goals can be supported by metalanguage from SFL. We focus in particular on metalanguage that helped students interpret the attitudes of characters in literary texts for purposes of writing a character analysis, and that helped them recognize authorial perspectives in informational texts.

## 2 SFL and Critical Language Awareness

The socially-engaged theory of systemic functional linguistics offers tools that have been developed to support recognition of the relationship between language choices and the social contexts those choices shape. One of Halliday's goals in developing the theory was to explain the ways linguistic choices construct and shape society (e.g., Halliday 1975). His contributions to literacy education have built on the notion that "to be literate is not just to have mastered the written registers...but to be aware of their ideological force" (Halliday 1996, p. 366). The work of Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan has contributed greatly to our understanding of the role of language in education, and to ways of thinking about the development of critical language awareness. For Hasan, the goal of education is to:

> produce such habits of mind in human beings which enable them to appreciate the nature of a problem, to examine the merits and demerits of proposed solutions, so as to act … from a consideration of the quality of life in the community (Hasan 2011, p. 22).

This notion that education should lead to social action that contributes to society led Hasan (1996) to propose that literacy be thought of as having three levels of development that can be nurtured in school: *recognition* literacy that gives learners access to the code, *action* literacy that gives learners access to disciplinary discourses, and *reflection literacy* that prepares learners to see themselves as capable of producing new knowledge and not just learning what others present for them to take up. As Hasan points out, all learners get access to recognition literacy through work on phonics and reading comprehension. Action literacy can be nurtured through pedagogies that enable learners to engage with powerful discourses; for example, through genre-based pedagogies that help them learn how disciplinary discourses are structured. But to be agentive in shaping the world we live in, it is necessary to be able to contribute to the ways knowledge evolves. This means that reflection literacy needs to be made available to the full diversity of learners through pedagogical practices that subject text and received knowledge to analysis and reflection and that develop students' dispositions to question knowledge. As Hasan points out:

> To say that a community has many voices is to say that there are experiences of saying and meaning which differ from one social group to the next; this includes the possibility that the way a locution is evaluated in one segment of the community might be critically different from that in another. So it becomes important to ask whose point of view does the writing represent? Whose point of view is implied in which reading? It is from this kind of deeper understanding of what 'the' text means that we can move to explanation questions (Hasan 1996, p. 411).

Of course this is a high bar to set for classroom discussion, and our interest here is in considering some of the ways that children can begin to develop emergent aspects of this way of thinking about and responding to text.

Many researchers, including those in this volume, have used SFL to support the development of critical language awareness in classrooms at different levels and in contexts around the world, and studies from a range of classroom contexts report on how critical capacities can emerge even in young children as they engage in talk about text. This is especially important for second language learners. As Wallace (2003) points out, "[a]ll learners, whether reading in a first, second or other language, are, from the earliest stages, potentially both making meaning from texts, and engaging in critique" (p.3). Wallace (2008) notes that second language speakers have not always been enabled to develop identities as critical readers, and that this identity "has to be nurtured through dialogue with text and with others around the text, through discursive, exploratory talk" (p.13). The pedagogy she describes helps her adult students identify authorial voices, bring their own cultural background knowledge to the reading, and develop an orientation to reading that recognizes the potential for multiple interpretations, not all of which are equally legitimate. She points out that the SFL grammar "is essentially a social grammar" (Wallace 2003, p.30), well-suited to taking a critical perspective on text. Her pedagogical approach engages her students in analyzing *register,* using the metalanguage of *field, tenor, mode* and *ideational, interpersonal*, and *textual* meanings (defined in the introductory chapter and explored by several authors throughout this volume) to help them explore texts and read critically. (See Schleppegrell (2017) for a review of studies that used SFL metalanguage to engage students who are learning English as an additional language in analyzing text to understand the meanings being presented and to learn to make meanings themselves in what they say and write.)

This notion of exploring variation in the language encountered in different social contexts also underlies Williams' (2016) report on his work with diverse young learners and his implementation of activities toward development of reflection literacy in the early primary years. The teachers he worked with engaged first grade children in collecting examples of texts in different contexts and thinking about how different language choices in those contexts would have made different meanings. He shows how this gave young learners opportunities to reflect on the relationship between "contexts of language use and ways of saying and meaning" (p.341). Discussion of register choices was also a way into emergent steps toward reflection literacy in Paugh and Moran's (2013) study, which drew on SFL to study the ways 3rd grade children developed social awareness as they learned that language is "a tool that they could use for democratic participation in both classroom and neighborhood" (pp. 254–5). The goal was to enable the children to use their strong sense of their use of everyday language while also supporting them to develop a strong voice using academic language. The teachers engaged children in talk about register and genre to notice language choices when reading and to enrich their understanding about language choices they could make as they developed authoritative voices in science writing while working on a school garden. Gebhard et al. (2007) illustrate how children's critical awareness of differences between everyday and academic registers can be supported through a focus on language and purpose, and describe how this knowledge supported students in taking social action that was effective in prompting change (in this case, to get recess reinstated at their school). Their study shows the power of functional grammar for enabling emergent bilingual children to adopt authoritative ways of writing and learn the power of their language choices, as the teacher and children explored the ways published authors presented evidence for their points of view and addressed an audience in formal ways.

SFL-oriented pedagogies have also supported elementary school children in learning to see stories as "crafted object[s]" (French 2010, p.224), by using the metalanguage of SFL's functional grammar to talk about an author's language choices and how they present the meanings they do. Williams (2000) reports on how 6th grade students considered the meanings and effects of language patterns in a children's story, recognizing the ways the characters were positioned in gendered ways and engaging in critical reflection on their actions. SFL researchers often draw on the notion of *genre,* giving attention to genre features to support students' critical language awareness (e.g., de Oliveira and Iddings 2014; Gebhard and Harman 2011). To accomplish this, in connection with a focus on genre *stages*, researchers report a growing awareness of the need to explore language in detailed ways, helping students recognize the ways patterns in language present both 'content' and points of view. Gebhard et al. (2014) offer detailed examples of different ways the SFL grammar focused attention on language in a multicultural curriculum that supported English language learners in becoming more aware about language and about how texts are written in history and science. The study illustrates that the SFL grammar supported students in learning the disciplinary literacies of schooling even at early stages of second language development, providing a basis in action literacy on which more reflective perspectives could be developed. In the chapter by Potts (2017)

(Chap. 10, this volume), she reports on extensions of the SFL theory and metalanguage that engage elementary school students in multimodal critical literacy practices.

In examples from junior secondary ELA and science classrooms, Macken-Horarik (1996) describes practices that engaged students in reading and writing activities that used SFL metalanguage in strategic ways to support their ability to mount a critique. Harman and Simmons (2014) show how students in an upper level Advanced Placement English classroom learned to see the meaning-making being construed by language through use of SFL tools, and began to recognize how language was used ideologically. They learned to track grammatical participants in the novel they were reading to explore characters' development, and used appraisal tools to analyze the narrative in ways that enabled them to link claims in a critical essay about the novel to language in the novel itself.

Previous research, in sum, has demonstrated that by engaging children in talk about text and the language choices authors have made in writing those texts, teachers can help them begin to see that an author makes choices about wording that can be contrasted with other possible ways of wording to recognize how language varies from context to context. In addition, children can learn to think of themselves as readers who are in dialogue with the writer, considering, discussing and arguing about what a text means. To support such activities, professional education for teachers can be enhanced through SFL approaches that enable explicit attention to language and meaning. Woodward-Kron (2009), for example, reports on the ways attention to the linguistic features that construct analysis helped teacher education students in Australia evaluate theories and research, arguing and reasoning about them. Gebhard et al. (2008) describe an MATESOL program that used SFL tools to focus teachers on the *meanings* in bilingual students' texts, rather than just their infelicities. This focus enabled the teachers to come to deeper understandings about their students and the multilingual contexts in which the children lived and used language, and helped the teachers overcome concerns about whether use of the L1 would interfere with the children's English learning. The authors show how this critical meta-awareness enabled the teachers to challenge dominant views about language learners. Achugar and Carpenter (2017), in their contribution to this volume, bring an SFL critical focus to a pre-service teacher education context in ways that lay the basis for teachers' critical engagement with texts and meaning in context.

These examples in secondary and tertiary contexts suggest what some aspects of the trajectory for development of critical language awareness might entail. While younger children may not be positioned in the same ways to challenge and critique, they are capable of engaging with text in activities that support them in seeing text as a constructed object, recognizing meaning in language choices, recognizing points of view in text, and developing one's own point of view. In this chapter we illustrate the ways emergent steps toward critical literacy can be seen in our work with teachers of 2nd-5th grade English language learners, as we used the metalanguage of SFL to enable them to engage their students in talk about text and in writing in authoritative ways.

## 3 Context

Participants in our study were 23 second- through fifth-grade teachers and literacy coaches from five schools in a community in the United States where Arabic was widely spoken. Most of the children in the schools were of Middle Eastern origin and many had been classified as ELLs when they entered school. Those in our study had varying levels of L1 literacy and English language proficiency and represented different experiences: many were born in the U.S. to parents who had grown up in the community, while others were first- or second-generation immigrants.

We spent 3 years working with teachers in this context to enable them to support their students in talking about language in the texts they read in ways that supported meaningful interaction and learning. Through design-based research (DBR) (diSessa and Cobb 2004; Design-Based Research Collective 2003), our goal was to make the metalanguage of SFL functional grammar available to the teachers as a tool for exploring language and meaning (for other reports on the project see Moore 2014; Moore and Schleppegrell 2014; O'Hallaron 2014; O'Hallaron et al. 2015; Palincsar and Schleppegrell 2014, Schleppegrell 2013). DBR uses multiple iterations of creating, piloting, refining, and then implementing and studying new curricular innovations in authentic contexts of educational practice in order to build new instructional theory and to inform the 'grand theory' it explores (in this case, SFL). Our project began by engaging teachers in learning about SFL's functional grammar and using the metalanguage in the lessons they were already planning. Through this process teachers came to appreciate the potential of this work, but asked us to prepare lessons that would better guide them in using the metalanguage effectively to stimulate discussion about text and support them in writing instruction. We subsequently took this approach, and the project developed into the study of the enactment of four reading/writing units (two in ELA and two in science) through observation of teachers' implementation, discussions with them, analysis of children's work, and review of children's accomplishments. Here we report on some of the activities and the ways they evolved as teachers learned about functional grammar and implemented lessons that used the metalanguage to support children in reading challenging texts, talking about the language choices made by the authors of those texts, and writing in response to what they read. In this sense the work reported is not offering examples of dialogue and activities that we promote as accomplishing the goal of supporting critical language awareness, but instead shows some emergent steps toward that goal and highlights some challenges involved.

## 4 Critical Language Awareness in English Language Arts

The ELA curriculum of the elementary school and the literature children read in that context offer multiple opportunities for engaging students in discussion about authors' craft and the language choices that infuse meanings. Literature is especially well oriented to engaging children in talk about human experience, offering opportunities for learners to think critically and make sense of the world, escaping their own experiences to develop more common understanding of and empathy for others. But just empathizing is not the main purpose of reading and analyzing literature in ELA. In addition, students need to engage in a 'meta-task' of coming to understand how to arrive at interpretations that are defensible. This means that students need to learn how to evaluate the characters in the stories they read.

It is common in the primary school years for teachers to orient children toward personal responses to the stories they read; likewise our work began with personal response based on children's experience. In classroom talk about language and meaning, different interpretations can be put forward and accepted, giving students agency in presenting their own perspectives. But students also need to recognize the authorial voice in a text. One way of developing that awareness is by asking the question *how is this character presented?* What would it mean if the author had used somewhat different language to tell us what the character does, thinks, feels, and says? In this way, students can be engaged in interpretation and analysis of the stories they read (see also Simmons (2017), Chap. 4, this volume, for other examples of such interpretation and analysis).

The meaning-based metalanguage of SFL functional grammar supports critical language awareness by offering a means of being explicit about how language presents the knowledge to be learned and the perspectives of writers and speakers (Schleppegrell 2013). It provides tools for learners to explore the language of a text and prepare a response that makes a judgment about a character. In our work in ELA, the metalanguage of interpersonal meaning, as articulated in SFL's Appraisal framework through concepts of *polarity* and *force* (Martin and White 2005), supported development of critical language awareness. This enabled an author's language choices to be explicitly characterized as presenting *positive* or *negative* attitudes, and it enabled readers to evaluate the strength of attitudes through metalanguage that focused students on how *turned up* or *turned down* the attitudes were. In this way the SFL metalanguage offered opportunities for raising language awareness that could be linked to the purposes for which language was used and the goals of the writer. By abstracting from the actual wording to identify the kinds of meanings being made, the metalanguage enabled learners to recognize patterns in language and linguistic choices they could make in different contexts. In addition, this metalanguage supported teachers in being explicit about the demands of the curriculum; in this case, by writing about characters in a story through a genre that would be highly valued in this context.

We have previously reported on evidence of ways in which the functional metalanguage of Appraisal can support students to make interpretations of characters' attitudes in text (Moore and Schleppegrell 2014). Here we describe activities that used metalanguage to support students in formulating and articulating nuanced opinions in their writing and taking an evaluative stance toward a character in a text. The illustrative case presented here focuses on a unit of instruction that engaged students in reading and responding to Ofelia Dumas Lachtman's *Pepita Talks Twice / Pepita Habla Dos Veces* (1995), a story from the school's 4th grade reading program. Pepita is a young bilingual girl who grows frustrated with having to translate for her family members and neighbors when she'd rather spend time with her dog, Lobo. After she discovers that her brother had taught Lobo a new trick while she was delayed in getting home from school by all the translation demands, Pepita loses her temper and decides that she will only speak English from now on. She finds this change to be difficult and frustrating. One day, her decision is put to the test when Lobo chases a ball into the middle of the street, and is unresponsive to being called "Wolf." Pepita decides to speak Spanish, calls Lobo by his name and saves his life. After that, Pepita decides that being bilingual is a wonderful thing to be appreciated.

The goal of the instructional activities was to support students in writing a *character analysis,* a multi-paragraph responses to the prompt: *How do Pepita's feelings about speaking two languages change throughout the story? Does she handle the situations well?* Over the course of a four-day unit of instruction (each lesson approximately 60 min), the class first read the story aloud together, stopping to respond to events personally in writing, answering questions such as *What would you have done?* The teacher encouraged students to ask clarifying questions, ensuring that they understood the events of the story. Then the teacher and students engaged in activities that drew on SFL metalanguage to pay close attention to Pepita's feelings in the story.

These close reading activities called on concepts from the Appraisal framework, with terms and constructs modified for our context. One of these constructs was an "attitude line" on which the class tracked Pepita's changing emotions as the story unfolded (See Fig. 1). The attitude line was a simple representation used to represent attitudes on a polarity continuum (explained in more detail in Moore and Schleppegrell 2014), and in reading this story, there was particular emphasis on attitudes that were *implied* and not explicitly stated. For example, in the beginning of the story, Pepita's attitudes were presented through an abstract participant, a "grumble." This word occurred repeatedly to represent Pepita's growing frustration as she translated for her neighbors, with the language modifying the "grumble" changing in each instance. At first, Pepita helped neighbors "without a grumble," but eventually, a "grumble began." Over time, the "grumble grew," and "grew even larger" until it "grew so big it exploded." Teachers and students talked about each instance of the "grumble" and tracked how it changed throughout the story by writing the words about the grumble on the attitude line projected on the smartboard.

Several aspects of this conversation supported students' language awareness. In one classroom, the teacher, Ms. Salib, asked students about the first instance in the text, the first hint that Pepita was less than happy: "Everybody called on Pepita to talk for them in Spanish and English. And she did what they asked without a grumble." Ms. Salib asked students to identify where they thought there was attitude in these sentences, and which words they might write down on the attitude line. The first student to volunteer chose the words "without a grumble" and decided to place it on the line between positive and neutral. The teacher then asked for another volunteer, someone who put those words in a different place. Zaina walked to the

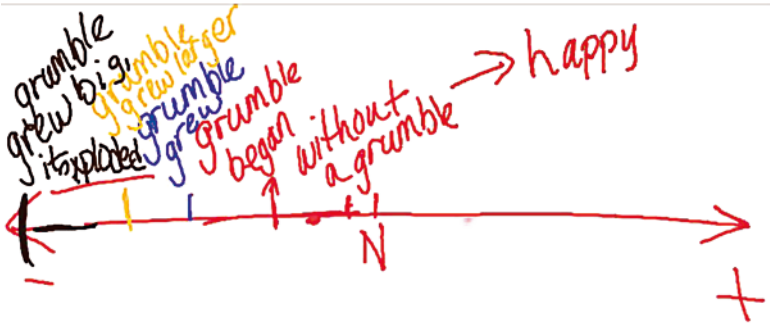

**Fig. 1** An example of the attitude line: placement of Pepita's *grumble*

smartboard and marked a location on the negative side of neutral on the continuum. In Excerpt 1 Ms. Salib prompted her for a rationale:

**Excerpt 1[1]:**

1. Ms. Salib: Ok. so in the negative part but closer to neutral. Ok. Why would you put *without a grumble* here?
2. Zaina: Because, um, she's getting uncomfortable but not like um THAT uncomfortable.
3. Ms. Salib: So why do you think she's getting uncomfortable when it says *without a grumble*?
4. Zaina: Because when people asked her to do things, she didn't mind but she started to … like, she was okay with it.

In turn 1, the teacher drew on the metalanguage of Appraisal (*negative, neutral*) to ask about the student's rationale for her placement of *without a grumble*. As Zaina offered her interpretation of the meaning of the language, her choice of "uncomfortable" softened the attitude in a way that aligned with her placement on the attitude line and also brought more precision to how Pepita felt in this moment. Zaina demonstrated awareness of her own language use in emphasizing this softened interpretation by saying "not like um THAT uncomfortable" (turn 2), making her own interpretation clear.

After the students had gathered and discussed each instance of the "grumble," they recorded it on the attitude line (Fig. 1).

As the conversation progressed, the teacher made important moves that heightened students' awareness about the ways language is making meaning in the text. The teacher encouraged them to step back and consider a larger trend. Ms. Salib posed the question, "What's happening here? Let's just stop for a moment

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[1] Transcription conventions:

| | |
|---|---|
| […] | Elided talk for classroom management |
| () | description of action |
| *Italics* | reading or quoting of language from the text |
| … | brief silence |

before we continue. What's happening with how Pepita is feeling?" One student responded, "She's getting like more mad and she's not getting ok with it." The teacher further prompted students to probe these ideas, and they noted that "Her grumble is growing" and that "Her feelings are turning up." (Note that expressing feelings as more negative is "turning up" the language in the negative direction.) This move to step back and look at the trend across the story heightened the students' awareness of how language is shaping meaning and developing the character as the story progresses. The teacher then asked students to identify and characterize the language that was conveying the attitude across most of the examples, using the SFL metalanguage they had used in previous work (i.e., *process, participant, circumstance*). After some back and forth, the students identified the grumble as a participant that is being amplified through its role in a process of growing (i.e., *grew*, *grew larger*).

This analysis laid the groundwork for supporting students' responses to the text, in which they now expressed text-based interpretations and evaluations, and not just the personal responses they had shared in their first reading. This set the conditions for the teacher to orient them to the genre of character analysis, its social purpose, its structure, and some of its language features. The SFL metalanguage of Appraisal supported students in emergent critical language awareness as they presented their own attitudes in nuanced ways, and the metalanguage of character analysis stages supported them to take an active, evaluative stance toward the character, the text, and the ideas it presented.

Writing a character analysis means presenting a new way of understanding Pepita, as students create new knowledge through their own writing. The social purpose of the character analysis genre, *to make a careful judgment about a character in order to learn more about the characters and ourselves*, establishes a particular interpersonal relationship between the student writer and the story's author and her characters, as the student is positioned as an agentive evaluator of the character. This evaluation is one of *judgment*, supported by close attention to language on the part of the student, not personal, emotional response. It is this orientation to thoughtful judgment that supports a critical response and contributes to developing students' emergent language awareness.

Both SFL-inspired stage labels and text-specific prompts supported students to organize and produce a written response (see Table 1). Of particular importance were the stage labels and descriptions that supported students in drawing on evidence to support the claims they would make about Pepita, as the *interpretation* and *evaluation* stage descriptions offered concrete strategies for students to develop their arguments and reasoning.

The Appraisal metalanguage supported students in making their own language choices both in their planning of discussions and in their writing. It was most evident in students' development and refinement of their claims as they collected and analyzed textual evidence. For example, after Ms. Salib had met with a student for a brief conference about his writing, she summarized his analysis and praised the way he revised his claim to better match his textual evidence. She described his decision-making process to the class, saying:

**Table 1** Stages of the character analysis genre

| Stage label | Purpose/function |
|---|---|
| Claim | The overall answer to the prompt and overview of your reason(s)[a] |
| Orientation to evidence | Gives information about what's going on in the story so the evidence will make sense to the reader |
| Evidence | Uses words from the story to prove your claim |
| Interpretation | TELLS what the author SHOWS in the story (especially feelings) |
| Evaluation | Judges the character based on prompt. This is your chance to explain the position you chose in the claim! |

[a] Through our design-based research, this definition was later deemed inadequate and was changed to "makes a careful judgment about the character and briefly gives a reason."

> In his claim, he put that *Pepita was tired*. And then he decided when he looked at his evidence, that if I just say *Pepita was tired* that doesn't really match my evidence because in his evidence he put that *her grumble exploded* so [he] turned it up by saying that *Pepita was REALLY REALLY tired of speaking two languages*. He felt that that matched his evidence better because his evidence was that *her grumble exploded*.

The student's understanding of *turning up* facilitated his revision of his claim as he evaluated the evidence he had chosen to support his ideas and strengthened his interpretation to match the notion of *exploding*. Using the metalanguage supported his recognition that there was a mismatch in the attitudes shown in the quote and his interpretive stance established in the claim, so he modified the language of the claim accordingly. This demonstrates a level of linguistic awareness that enables students to make thoughtful choices about the specific language they use as they write. Across the entire class set, students' written responses provide strong evidence of their emerging critical language awareness, as approximately half of the students' claims either modified the force of the attitudes or brought more precise focus to them (Moore 2014). Nada's text (Fig. 2) is an example of this emerging critical language awareness.

Throughout the text, Nada successfully engages with meaning in evaluative ways. She makes careful judgments about the character, which she defends with evidence from the text and her own elaborated reasons. Her evaluative lexis about the character ("nice and helpful person"; "handled it well;" "was helpful and kind") present her reasoned evaluations of Pepita. She is explicit about how the language of the text supported her ideas by quoting: "Her reactions tell me about what kind of person she is because when it says 'without a grumble.' So she is fine with helping people." Nada's explanation of how the language presents the character's attitudes supports her overall positive evaluative stance toward Pepita. The classroom discussion that raised awareness of how character attitudes are subtly presented in language provided a model for the critical-analytical stance Nada takes here and that all students need to develop as they read literature.

While our data offer support for using SFL as a tool for developing young children's emergent critical language awareness, bringing an explicitly critical lens to our work also underscored some significant missed opportunities in the lessons. For example, the reading lessons focused on the interpersonal relationships *within* the

In the story, “Pepita Talks Twice,” Pepita was a girl who spoke two languages; English and Spanish. Pepita would help traslate for everyone. At first Pepita felt not very happy about speaking two lagages, but towards the end Pepita felt relieved and glad because speaking two languges saved her dog’s life.

In the beggining Pepita fet not so happy about speaking two languges because she is not very mad about, and she is not very excited about it. Everyone called on Pepita to talk in two Languges for them. “She did what they asked without a grumble.” Pepita felt not so happy about helping people. But the people probebly felt that Pepita is very helpful. This shows Pepita handled it well because she was very helpful and kind. Her reactions tell me about what kind of person she is because when it says “without a grumble.” So she is fine with helping people. I know now that she is a nice and helpful person.

At the end Pepita was relieved and glad that she spoke two languges because Lobo was safe. Lobo was about to get hit by a car on the street but, Pepita called in Spanish and saved Lobo’s Life. “Pepita shut the gate firmly behind Lobo and hugged him.”Pepita felt glad and relieved. I know that because she hugged Lobo and said “I’m glad I talked twice.” This shows that Pepita did do the right thing because she decided to speak Spanish to save Lobo’s life.

Pepita felt not so happy and she was complaining about speaking two languges, but at the end she decided that it is a great thing to speak two languges. Pepita is a kind, smart, and helpful person.

**Fig. 2** Nada’s analysis of Pepita

story (between characters). However, these lessons also could have explicitly focused on the interpersonal relationship between the author of the story and the student readers. There were important questions that could have been asked in the context of the discussion of Pepita’s “grumble”; for example, the teacher could have asked *why* the author was turning up the language. They could have discussed how the author had hoped to affect her reader – and why. Students at this young age are capable of talking about how the author might be trying to make them feel or think, and for what purpose, as illustrated, for example, by Williams (2000). It is likely that these bilingual students might agree completely with the author’s implicit goal of advocating for multilingualism. But critical language awareness need not always be oppositional. Whether a student agrees with the themes or messages of a text or not, engaging in conversation about language choices and how they construe characters prepares students to "see through" language in other texts and discourse that may establish a more antagonistic or harmful message.

Though we have identified some missed opportunities in these conversations, we also recognize the value of this kind of work as foundational to students' emerging critical language awareness. Students could not engage in a conversation about what the author is trying to accomplish through the use of language without some discussion of what that language means and how it is constructing that meaning. They could not discuss why Pepita's attitudes are 'turned up/down' (or what those attitudes do/mean to the reader) without having had some careful conversation about how that meaning is made through the language of the text. And perhaps giving students an opportunity to establish an evaluative stance in relation to story's characters and their actions will prepare them to take a similar stance as they engage with new texts and the themes they present.

## 5 Critical Language Awareness in Science

A key issue in critical language awareness and the implementation of reflective literacy approaches is that students come to the classroom with different backgrounds that position them to be aware of different aspects of the lessons and activities they engage in. Not every child notices the same things or has the same reaction to texts or experiences. Hasan (2004) discusses this issue in the context of reflecting on how we make inferences, highlighting the role of social positioning in what we recognize as significant elements of a situation and how we figure out what practice it implies. She calls for a more 'multivocal' classroom, where teachers are able to hear students' perspectives and follow-up on student contributions with sincere efforts to enable alternative points of views to be expressed. It is this possibility for multiple voices to be heard and considered that is at the heart of the reflection literacy that critical language awareness can support.

In this section we describe activities that teachers and students undertook in reading science texts that helped us begin to see how teachers can respond to multiple perspectives in the classroom. We had seen that while in ELA, curriculum materials and activities typically promote talk about language and what it means (even if not always with a critical angle), it is less frequent that language becomes a focus of discussion in other subjects. Our approach in bringing a critical perspective to reading science text was to introduce the notion of "author attitude" in science texts (O'Hallaron et al. 2015),[2] building on what the children had learned about characters' attitudes, reported above. Our goal was to help teachers and students recognize that all texts present authors' attitudes and perspectives, that this is accomplished through language choices, and that those choices put readers in dialogue with an author, allowing readers to bring their own judgments to what they read.

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[2] As we discuss below, we came to see that the notion of author "attitude" did not fully support the orientation we wanted to introduce, and we have subsequently been using the notion of author "perspective" for this purpose, as our design-based research process illuminated differences in the attitudinal metalanguage useful for talking about character attitudes and the metalanguage in focus in talking about the ways authors of science texts infuse their perspectives. However, in this report we continue to use "author attitude" as we report on the ways this expression generated classroom discussion.

In addition to the metalanguage introduced to explore characters' attitudes, for this purpose we also flagged other linguistic resources for interpersonal meaning and perspective-taking that were relevant for recognizing authorial perspective in science text. This is challenging linguistic territory, as the grammatical choices that present "author attitude" are quite varied. They include choice of grammatical *person* (whether an author speaks directly to the reader, using *you,* or whether the author includes the reader in statements with *we,* for example), how authors use interpersonal adjuncts such as *interestingly* or *unfortunately,* and the ways particular word choices infuse attitudinal meanings into a text. In the professional development session that introduced this way of talking about science text, we discovered that teachers were surprised to be asked to focus on authors' attitudes in informational texts, as they had considered that informational texts are mainly "facts" and would not include what they called "opinions." As they engaged in activities focused on interpersonal meaning in reading science, teachers began to recognize the language features that put writers in dialogue with readers and present attitudes and perspectives about what is written.

We exemplify this here through an example from a 4th grade teacher, Ms. Youssef, herself an immigrant. She characterizes herself as "an English language learner," and often translates the classroom language into Arabic to support newcomers. The children in her classroom range across levels of English language proficiency as established in the state assessment. The class has begun a unit on electricity, and Ms. Youssef is working from a lesson plan that she was introduced to in a professional development session with other teachers in the project. Ms. Youssef is a teacher we learned much from, as she always took time to think about the goals of the lessons and adapt them to what she knew about her students. Her teaching approach was highly structured, with a review of activity goals a prominent part of the introduction and conclusion of each lesson. Children moved often from one activity structure to another, with lots of group work and discussion at their tables. Whole class discussions were authoritatively guided by the teacher, with a clear focus on the goals to be achieved. However, Ms. Youssef was also consistent in validating the contributions of all students, which was a valuable facet of her teaching style.

In the excerpt presented here, the class is reading a text about the historical development of understanding about electricity. In their ELA lessons in the prior months, students had read stories and worked with the attitude line as discussed above, where they had explored the value and strength of the attitudes of characters, as presented by authors of literary texts. In this lesson Ms. Youssef tells them that they will read an informational text and then explore the attitudes presented by the author. The class discusses the difference between informational texts and fiction, bringing out the point that informational texts are about facts that we can learn from, but that reading them is challenging and they will have to revisit the text several times to understand it well. After reading the text and talking about some word meanings, the teacher, guided by the lesson plan, draws their attention to the ways the author refers to the reader, using *you* to address them. The children recognize that the author does that because she is talking to them, as readers.

The text segment under discussion (introductory paragraphs to a longer text):

> You flip a switch and a room that was in total darkness becomes bright as day. You press a button and a machine that was completely still whirrs into action. Every day we experience the wonder of electricity and give it very little thought. But the story of how electricity was invented is a very interesting story; one that is filled with clever thinking, good fortune, and even cheating!
>
> Electricity was first discovered about 2500 years ago. Amber is the hard fossilized sap from trees. The Greek scientist Thales of Miletus noticed that if a piece of amber was rubbed with a cloth it attracted straw or feathers. Interestingly, the word "electricity" comes from the Greek word for amber – "electron." Today, we would call what Thales noticed, "static electricity."
>
> You have probably experienced static electricity when you took off a wool hat and your hair stood up! Or, perhaps you walked across a carpeted room and, when you touched a doorknob, you experienced a sudden "zap"! To understand this phenomenon, we need to learn what stuff is made of.

Ms. Youssef tells the students that authors sometimes "have attitudes in their words" and asks them to work at their tables to identify any attitude words in the text they read and circle them. She gives them a few minutes for this task. Keep in mind that these are students who have already had practice engaging in the discussion of the attitudes of characters in the stories they read in ELA. Excerpt 2 shows how the teacher launched the discussion.

**Excerpt 2:**

1. Ms. Youssef: Now we said, attitudes. Authors sometimes use certain words to reflect their thinking, their feelings, and how do they view, or their opinion about something. So in this selection the author used certain words to send a message for us, to show us an attitude. What do you think some of the words that you think they show attitude? […] Khalid?
2. Khalil: Clever thinking.
3. Ms. Youssef: Clever thinking […] OK, clever thinking. So I go back (reads) *one that is filled with clever thinking*. Do you agree with him and why?
4. Jafar: because *clever thinking* …
5. Ms. Youssef: Do you agree with him it's a word of attitude?
6. Jafar: Yes
7. Ms. Youssef: Why?
8. Jafar: Because when you think it's like a …
9. Ms. Youssef: Let me ask you this: is it a positive or a negative attitude? Class.
10. Students: Positive/Because it's clever.
11. Ms. Youssef: Positive. It is a positive. So when I tell you you are clever that's a positive thing (asks Jafar to place the words *clever thinking* on the attitude line).

We see that the class begins this activity by modeling it on what they have done in talking about literary texts, identifying an attitude as positive or negative and then placing it on the attitude line. This was not part of the lesson plan the research team had developed; we had not intended that the attitude line would be used to discuss this notion of perspective in science, and other teachers in our project did not take this approach. As we see below, the perspectives of writers of science texts do not always lend themselves to placement on the attitude line, as they are not always expressions that can be characterized as positive/negative or turned up/down. (This is one of the reasons we no longer refer to this as author "attitude" in science; see footnote 3.)

Excerpt 2 gives a good picture of Ms. Youssef's style and her ways of interacting with her students. In turn 3 we see her typical practice of following a student's contribution by having the class return to the text to check the context of the wording, and then asking other students if they agree or disagree with the contribution, and why. This disposition of the teacher, to ask for students' responses to each other, is obviously of great value in enabling children to offer different perspectives and viewpoints. As she elicits the expressions that the children had identified in their group discussions, she also maintains an authoritative role as arbiter of what counts as attitude and what does not. For example, following Excerpt 2, Amina suggests that *darkness* expresses attitude. Ms. Youssef asks her to explain, and her explanation is that you can be scared if you are in the dark. The teacher acknowledges that "the feeling in a dark room is not an enjoyable one," but tells the children that in the text "the room was dark," and so *darkness* in this case is not an expression of attitude, but instead a fact in the explanation. Asking Amina to explain respects and acknowledges that she has a reason for identifying a segment even if the teacher did not expect it to be chosen and does not accept it as a relevant example.

Excerpt 3, continuing from Excerpt 2, illustrates how the teacher responds to another unexpected contribution:

**Excerpt 3:**

12. Ms. Youssef: Ok, what else? Yes.
13. Nadia: *Very little thought*
14. Ms. Youssef: *Very little thought*? hmm, where is that?
15. Nadia: In the third line
16. Ms. Youssef: Third line. Read to me.
17. Nadia: *Every day we experience the wonder of electricity and give it [very little thought.*
18. Ms. Youssef: *[Very little thought.* Tell me why you think there is attitude in here.
19. Nadia: Because *very* is a word that makes the attitude go up.
20. Ms. Youssef: Okay, what is going up here? You can help her. She's saying this chunk here is showing attitude. OK. The *very* turns up sometimes the attitude. But where is the attitude here, Nadia, I still don't see it. Help me. … To whom is the author talking?
21. Students: To us/To everyone

22. Ms. Youssef: Where? Where? Where does it show he is talking to us? (rereading along with students): *Every day*
[*WE*
23. Students: [*Every! Every day we.*
24. Ms. Youssef: [*We! We*. Ok. *WE* do what?
25. Students and Teacher read: *Experience the wonder of electricity*.
26. Ms. Youssef: Right now we are experiencing the wonder of electricity, Promethean, the lights, uh, computers, Elmo. Okay? But. (Reading)
*And give it [very little thought.*
27. Students: [*very little thought*.
28. Ms. Youssef: So what do you think the attitude … Is there an attitude? I don't think there is an attitude. But I can see your point. I think that what you are trying to tell me is the author is blaming us for not thinking and appreciating deep. So, it might be, it might be an attitude, very little. Would that be positive or negative though?
29. Students: Negative
30. Ms. Youssef: Negative. Nadia.
31. Nadia: And it's a turned up word.

Ms. Youssef recognizes that not every point of view is equally valid, and so works to position the views expressed in service of the lesson's goal. When Nadia proposes adding *very little thought* to the list of wordings that present attitudes, the teacher follows her practice of acknowledging and respecting the suggestion and having the child read the line from the text: *Every day we experience the wonder of electricity and give it very little thought.* It is important to note here that the materials Ms. Youssef is working with do not identify *we… give it very little thought* as an expression of author attitude.[3] At turn 18 she asks Nadia why she thinks there is attitude in *very little thought*, and Nadia's response, that "*very* is a word that makes the attitude go up," again evokes the kind of dialogue the children had been having about literature, where they focused on resources from the Appraisal framework, recognizing when attitudes are intensified or 'turned up.' Ms. Youssef, in turn 20, asks the other students to help her understand Nadia's point, acknowledging that the *very* can turn up attitudes, but not recognizing where attitude is expressed there. In asking the students to help her, the teacher goes back to the point that the author is talking to them, the readers, and has the children identify where the text shows the author is talking to them. The students identify the phrase *every day we* and Ms. Youssef has them expand this phrase and read the whole clause (22–25).

Ms. Youssef's language at turn 26 thoughtfully considers what *experience the wonder of electricity* means, naming various technologies in the classroom run by electricity and rereading the sentence from the text. She poses the question "is there an attitude?" and answers the question in the negative, but goes on to say "But I can see your point" (28). And in her next statement she summarizes one way of thinking about the author's attitude in making that statement: that "the author is blaming us for not thinking and appreciating deep", acknowledging that this is what Nadia is "trying to tell" her. In the end Nadia comes back to the point that this is a "turned up word," maintaining her position on the question (see Symons 2015, for more discussion of this episode).

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[3] Again, an example of the ways we learned through the design-based research by seeing the challenges that teachers confronted in their first work with the lessons. We subsequently did add these author's representations of an imagined reader's experiences to the list of language resources that present authorial perspective (O'Hallaron et al. 2015).

While this lesson helped us refine our understanding about the resources we needed to include in our presentation of how authors infuse their perspectives into science texts, our observation of Ms. Youssef also helped us recognize aspects of the pedagogical approach that is needed to sustain and encourage students' engagement in critique and recognition of how they are being positioned by what they read. First, the teacher is open to diverse viewpoints. The interaction is not a search for right answers, but instead is a true exploration of a new idea, that authors of science texts may express "attitudes" (perspectives) as they write about science, and that being aware of and recognizing the perspectives can be helpful to reading, understanding, and evaluating what is written. Teachers need to be open to hearing unexpected responses and to exploring with students what has prompted those responses, treating each with respect. At the same time, this does not mean that every response is equally valued in its contribution to the ongoing learning. As we saw in the case of one student's proposal that *darkness* presented a negative attitude, a teacher does need to be confident about the goals of the lesson and what counts as an appropriate answer in order to move toward a lesson objective while still fostering critical language awareness. With the learning goal in mind, teachers can be explicit about their analysis of students' ideas, not merely accepting everyone's contribution as equal, but instead, making the students' contributions a public text to be analyzed critically as well, as the teacher offers her analysis of students' ideas and elicits other students' analysis of each other's ideas.

Nadia and her group identified an instance of "author attitude" that positions readers as thinking in similar ways, when in fact not everyone does experience and react to the world in the same ways. But in the moment to moment flow of classroom discourse, it is not always easy for a teacher to recognize when a student is bringing something new and valid to the conversation, and not every teacher in our project was as thoughtful and open to exploring children's contributions as Ms. Youssef. Even Ms. Youssef did not fully grasp or engage with the ways the authorial perspective was presented in Nadia's example, although in the next professional development session, she did report on this event and acknowledged that as she thought more about it, she could see that it made sense. To develop critical language awareness, children need to engage in open exploration of language and meaning, as children in our diverse and multicultural classrooms will inevitably have different senses of what is meant, and discussion of those differences can be valuable learning opportunities for all.

## 6 Summary

We have shown how children who are learning English as an additional language can engage, even in the early grades, in recognizing the attitudes of characters in a story and developing an interpersonal stance toward that character as they take a position in writing. In reading informational texts, we have shown that these children can recognize and discuss meaning in the language that engages interpersonally with a reader. We propose that these are emergent steps toward developing reflection literacy and critical language awareness. In both examples, the children are shown to be highly capable, when enabled through the SFL metalanguage to focus on particular kinds of meanings (character attitudes; author attitudes). We have also shown that teachers need particular dispositions toward engaging with students' contributions and need to employ participant structures that encourage those contributions.

## 7 Conclusions and Implications

Being critical is often thought to mean only being "emancipatory, difference-oriented and oppositional" (Wallace 1999), but the first steps toward a critical perspective have to begin with the ability to read a text thoughtfully, understand what is read, and evaluate the meanings it presents. Being critical also crucially involves being aware that different perspectives are possible and that the language choices we make are meaningful and consequential for what others understand from what we say and write.

Hasan's notion of reflection literacy – the idea that students need to learn to talk about language and its meaning potential as a means of interrogating the texts they read so that they develop the resources to challenge and construct knowledge – means establishing dialogue about different ways of making meaning and supporting the participation of all students in that dialogue to develop their sense that they can engage with meanings in discourse and contribute their own meanings in response. Supporting critical language awareness calls for teachers to hear the views of all children with openness and following through with discussion that respects different perspectives. It is such dialogue that can eventually support students in the social action that the critical perspectives engender.

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# ‘We Can Speak to the World’: Applying Meta-linguistic Knowledge for Specialized and Reflexive Literacies

**Sally Humphrey**

**Abstract** This chapter reports on the work of one teacher and her students in an urban multicultural high school as they applied their growing knowledge of language to access and deconstruct discourses of power across rhetorical contexts. Informed by Australian models of Critical SFL praxis (Martin JR, Rose D, Genre relations: mapping culture. London, Equinox, 2008; Macken-Horarik M, Literacy and learning across the curriculum: towards a model of register from secondary school teachers. In R Hasan, G Williams (eds) Literacy in society. London, Longman, pp 232–278, 1996a; Macken-Horarik M, Construing the invisible: specialised literacy practices in Junior Secondary English. Dissertation, University of Sydney, 1996b), as well as by international research in literacy education and sociology (Bernstein B, Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: theory, research, critique. London, Taylor & Francis, 1996; Maton K, Knowledge and Knowers: towards a realist sociology of education. London, Routledge, 2014; Rose D, Martin JR, Learning to write, reading to learn: Genre, knowledge and pedagogy in the Sydney school. Sheffield, Equinox, 2012; Schleppegrell M, The language of schooling: a functional linguistics perspective. Mahwah, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004; Schleppegrell M, The role of meta-language in supporting academic language development. Language Learning 63(1):153–170. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9922.2012.00742.x., 2013), the chapter focuses on the crucial role of meta-language in expanding the critical social literacies of socio-economically and linguistically marginalized adolescent students.

**Keywords** Critical social literacies • Systemic functional linguistics • Genre pedagogy • Discourse semantics • Appraisal

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## 1 Introduction

The development of critical literacy is seen as fundamental to twenty-first century literacy pedagogies in contemporary international educational policy and research (Avila and Zacher Pandya 2012; Luke 2012). In Australia, research also continues to show that socio-cultural, economic, linguistic and political constraints impact many students in gaining access to academically valued literacies (Teese and Lamb 2009; Caro et al. 2009). This ongoing social inequity has fueled renewed interest in critical practices characterized as redistributive social justice (Fraser 1997), which foreground 'the more equal distribution and achievement of literacy practices' (Luke 2012, p. 5). Informing much of this practice is the semiotic theory of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), which is widely acknowledged as a resource for interrogating and/or modeling language in context (Jewitt 2008), and for invigorating 'critical literacies and multiliteracies in fundamental ways' (Morgan and Ramanathan 2005, p. 158).

In Australia, critical takes on SFL-informed genre pedagogies have come to be known as critical social literacy (CSL) pedagogies (Christie 1991). CSL approaches are concerned predominantly with how to support culturally and linguistically marginalized students towards control of the genres needed to participate fully in academic and civic life. This chapter, along with several in this volume (e.g. de Oliveira and Avalos, Brisk and Ossa Parra, Khote) draws on the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC), an influential genre-based model for writing designed by Rothery and colleagues (Callaghan and Rothery 1988; Rothery and Stenglin 1995). It was informed by research on oral language learning, which showed that parents and other caregivers constantly model and expand children's linguistic repertoires (Halliday 1993; Painter 2000). While other chapters focus in the TLC across contexts, including the primary level and teacher development, this chapter focuses on a version of the TLC designed for secondary contexts of learning, which extends the goal of the instructional cycle to include a critical orientation to disciplinary knowledge and discourse. To achieve this goal, it moves through three main steps that focus in each step on context and genre: Deconstruction, Joint Construction and Independent Construction.

Crucial to building and applying specialized and reflective knowledge through the TLC is a metalanguage, i.e. a language to talk with students and colleagues about language and how it is used (Hammond and Miller 2015; Jones and Chen 2012; Love 2010; Schleppegrell 2013). Such a metalanguage includes linguistic terminology as well as a language for connecting linguistic selections to their context (de Silva Joyce and Feez 2012). Further, for the purpose of redistributing discursive resources to marginalized groups (Martin 1999), a metalanguage needs to empower students to evaluate the impact of linguistic choices on particular audiences. Such a metalanguage can enable students to take an active and critical role as readers and thus see writing as more than 'a process of learning to create a particular script for the teacher' (Schleppegrell and Moore, Chapter "Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School", this volume).

In supporting students through the three steps of the TLC, teachers can avail of SFL metalanguage to help explain both the discursive features of genres (e.g. modality use in persuasive essays) and also the effects of these features on an audience in a particular context. In using an SFL-informed metalanguage and the TLC, CSL educators support students in appropriating powerful uses of language in disciplinary, critical and transformative ways (Macken-Horarik 1996a, b; Humphrey and Macnaught 2016; Macken-Horarik and Morgan 2011). Because of their success in schools, the Australian CSL pedagogies have generated a wave of interest in critical SFL praxis internationally (e.g., Achugar et al. 2007; Brisk 2015; Byrnes 2006; Coffin 2006; Gebhard et al. 2008; Harman and Simmons 2014; Schleppegrell 2004, 2013).

Despite evidence of the success of CSL, however, there is growing recognition that teachers need to have significant expertise to engage students productively in critical literacy practices for the twenty-first century. This expertise includes: knowledge of students’ existing cultural and linguistic resources; knowledge of the expanded literacy repertoire needed to productively engage with high stakes curriculum and assessment tasks; and knowledge of how to mediate specialized curriculum content in ways accessible to all learners. In this chapter I report on the implementation of CSL pedagogy in one Australian secondary school serving a population of students from low SES and multilingual backgrounds. Building on the foundational work provided in previous reports of this project (Humphrey 2013, 2015; Humphrey and Macnaught 2016), I focus on the role of a shared metalanguage that supported students to compose in a range of disciplinary and high stakes genres and engage in reflexive analysis of academic and civic discourse.

## 2 Research Context

The case study in this paper is part of a longitudinal design-based intervention with all teachers of an urban multicultural secondary school in Australia. Over ninety seven percent of students at this school, referred to here as Metro, come from language backgrounds other than English, and the school receives substantial government funding due to the high proportion of students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds. Research in Australia and elsewhere has shown that the cognitive strengths of multilingual students position them well to achieve in schooling (Cummins 2000; Thomson et al. 2013). However, because of higher academic literacy demands in the middle and secondary school years, those learning English as an additional language (EAL/D) and those from low SES backgrounds may face particular challenges. EAL/D learners, for instance, who interact fluently with peers and teachers in the oral mode are often assumed to have already developed curriculum literacy capabilities by their teachers and may not be provided with opportunities to learn and practice the specialized academic language which is needed to access and compose discipline texts (Christie 2012; Schleppegrell 2013).

Teachers at Metro reported that prior to the intervention, most of their EAL/D students were well able to demonstrate curriculum learning in the oral mode and to engage in considered and well-reasoned discussion of issues in their broader communities. However, they were less confident in curriculum writing tasks and performed poorly in the persuasive writing task of the standardized National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy, (NAPLAN), a test given to all Year 7 and Year 9 students in Australia. A particular concern of a number of teachers was that students whose NAPLAN scores in persuasive writing in Year 7 were relatively high, and whose curriculum writing was of a relatively high standard, showed little growth on the NAPLAN measures in the subsequent 2 years. One important aim of our Metro project, Embedding Literacies in the Key Learning Areas (ELK), therefore was to support EAL/D students within mainstream subject classes to develop a sufficiently powerful literacy repertoire for high stakes assessment contexts.

A CSL focus within subject English was also motivated by teachers' concern to incorporate students' civic literacy repertoires into the curriculum (Humphrey 2010). This concern was most immediately occasioned by riots involving some students at the school in response to the opening of an anti-Islam film in city cinemas. Teachers were invested in supporting their many Arabic students in the school to develop a powerful rhetorical and discursive repertoire to speak back to this display of racism, through what Muslim community leaders called 'the route of rationality, education and negotiation' (Yasmeen 2012).

To support the development of teachers' expertise, our focus in the ELK project was to provide SFL-informed professional development learning to the teacher community. This included whole school and faculty-based workshops, as well as collaborative program development and team teaching opportunities with school-based and academic mentors. Although not all teachers were in a position to take up team teaching opportunities on a regular basis, Sarah, the focal teacher of curriculum English in this paper, was fully committed to extending her own knowledge and welcomed me and other mentors and researchers into the classroom on a regular basis to model instructional methods, to team-teach, and to regularly record and provide feedback on classroom interactions.

Previous reports of the ELK project have discussed design principles of the ELK project (e.g. Humphrey and Robinson 2012; Humphrey 2013, 2015) and findings of growth in standardized and curriculum writing in Sarah's multilingual classroom over the first, 18-month stage (Humphrey and Macnaught 2016). For example, in the NAPLAN writing assessment, Sarah's class achieved significantly higher growth than expected from Year 7-Year 9. In fact, the growth reached almost twice that of students from schools of similar demographic profiles in the state. As illustrated in our previous report, this growth, and similar growth found in reading and writing for curriculum assessment can be attributed to a large degree to the scaffolding practices of their teachers and by effective use of SFL-informed metalanguage in instruction.

This chapter explores how Sarah, with the help of academic mentors, built and used a metalanguage with her students across 2 years of subject English, both to respond productively to the pressures of a high stakes testing regime and to engage confidently in critical analysis of a range of persuasive texts.

## 3 Foundational Understandings

The design and implementation of the ELK project was informed by social semiotic and pedagogical models inspired by SFL and by complementary perspectives from critical literacy and social realist theories (Bernstein 1996; Maton 2014).

### *3.1 SFL Metalanguage for Enacting Critical Social Literacies*

Systemic functional linguistics provides teachers like Sarah in the ELK project with abundant resources for supporting students’ critical social literacies. Persuasive texts which enact multiple roles and perspectives and which are produced for unfamiliar audiences are particularly important contexts for developing such resources. Genres such as exposition, known also as argument (Brisk 2015), have been found to be highly valued both for demonstrating high stakes specialized writing and for critique (Martin 1985; Coffin 2006). Resources for composing expositions have been described by SFL theorists in terms of their overall purpose and structure; register variables of tenor and field; and the particular linguistic features that realize these variables. For example, the analytical exposition genre, a type of persuasive genre valued for demonstrating knowledge across a number of curriculum areas, functions to negotiate propositions about the way things are (Iedema 1997). In composing this genre, students are expected to take up an authoritative tenor, as expert, in relation to an expert audience (typically a teacher or marker).

When writing effective analytical expositions, students need to develop a coordinated sequence of logical arguments to support their main points. The SFL model provides descriptions of logical connections that afford students and teachers with metalanguage to think about how to expand ideas *between* clauses through conjunctions (e.g. because), and to expand ideas *within* clauses through verbs and nouns (e.g. causes, the cause). To develop the analytical structure, multiple individual arguments need to relate logically as ‘parts’ (e.g. impacts, reasons, consequences) to the ‘whole’ text. The way of grouping and relating these parts builds on Kress & Van Leeuwen’s visual grammar and has been conceptualized in school contexts as an analytical framework (Humphrey 2013). Figure 1 shows a simple analytical framework developed to support students to break down the negative impacts of mobile phone use on children into topic areas, in response to a question ‘*Are mobile phones dangerous for children?*’

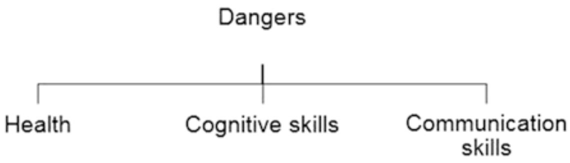


**Fig. 1** Analytical framework to show part/whole relations between topics

In crafting written analytical texts, students need to learn how to combine logical and experiential meanings with textual choices at a discourse semantic level to foreground key information for the reader. For example, in the outline view of an analytical exposition developed from the framework shown in Fig. 1, the Macro-Theme functions to signal how the information is logically grouped in the opening stage with Macro-New functioning to summarize this information in the final stage. The Macro-Theme is related to subsequent Hyper-Themes of each paragraph, which in rhetorical theories are referred to as topic sentences. Crucially, the signaling work of these higher level or MacroTheme and New choices requires ideas to be condensed so that they can be referred to across the text. Abstract nouns are very important for this rhetorical function, including nouns that are formed from other parts of speech through the process of nominalization (e.g. *emit* [verb] -*emission* [noun]). Abstract nouns are italicized in Text 1, which was used to support student understanding of how to develop cohesion in their persuasive texts.

**Text 1**
Outline view of analytical exposition showing higher level Theme choices.
*Macro-Theme*

- Mobile phones can have a negative *impact* on children's *health* and lead to *a decrease* in children's *ability* to think and communicate.

*Hyper-Themes*

- The most important *danger* of mobile phones to children's *health* concerns *the emission* of *radiation*, which could lead to cancer.
- It is also possible that *use* of mobile phones could have *an effect* on children's *ability* to think and concentrate.
- In addition to *the effects* on cognitive *skills*, scientists have also raised *concerns* about *the impact* of mobile phones on *the communication skills* of children and teenagers.

*Macro-New*

- *the evidence* above suggests that *concerns* about the *effects* on *health* as well as *the effects* on children's *thinking* and communicative *skills* need to be taken seriously.

Analytical frameworks can inform linguistically robust graphic organizers to support reading as well as to plan writing. Brisk and Ossa Parra in this volume also describe the use of SFL informed graphic organizers by teachers in deconstructing temporally structured recount genres.

In addition to supporting student understanding of textual organization and its connection to the logical and experiential meanings of a written text, SFL metalanguage proved crucial for talking about interpersonal meanings to teachers and students at Metro. Specifically, the discourse semantic system of Appraisal provided language to discuss and interpret how explicit and implicit values in a text construe ideological positioning. Appraisal consists of three systems: Attitude, Graduation

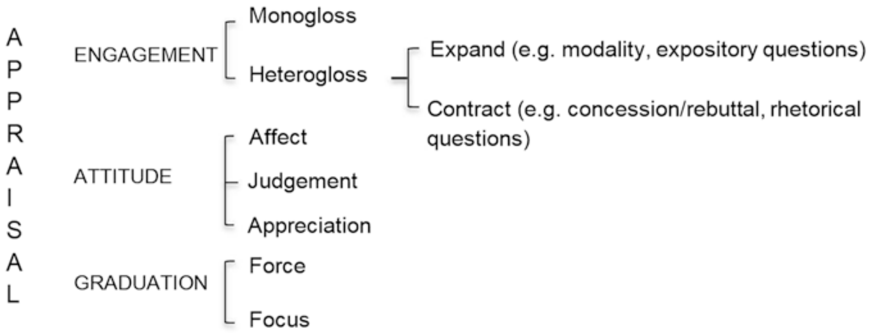

APPRAISAL
ENGAGEMENT
Monogloss
Heterogloss
Expand (e.g. modality, expository questions)
Contract (e.g. concession/rebuttal, rhetorical questions)
ATTITUDE
Affect
Judgement
Appreciation
GRADUATION
Force
Focus

**Fig. 2** Appraisal systems (Adapted from Martin and White 2005)

and Engagement, which are shown in Fig. 2. This figure is adapted from Martin and White's (2005) overview to include the more delicate systems of Engagement, informing the textual analysis that Sarah and her students conducted (i.e. systems of 'Expand' and 'Contract').

Schleppegrell and Moore (Chapter "Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School", this volume) report on teachers' use of Attitude and Graduation systems to develop children's' critical language awareness in the context of response to literature. Choices from these systems are also crucial for developing strong persuasive arguments; however, it was the Engagement system that became an increasingly important source of metalanguage for teachers and students at Metro. The Engagement system includes resources that are termed 'dialogic' because they are concerned with how diverse perspectives, including the writer's perspectives, are brought into the text. Heteroglossic choices provide options for engaging with these perspectives: through expanding space for dialogue via resources such as modality; or through contracting dialogic space via resources such as concession/rebuttal structures and some forms of rhetorical questions. A concession/rebuttal structure, which is more technically known as counter expectancy (Martin and White 2005), is shown in the following example.

> *While mobile phones have many important functions*, the use of these devices by children needs to be monitored.

In this example, the concession is made through the italicized concessive clause, which initially expands dialogic space, and the following independent clause, which functions to rebut or 'defeat' the expanding clause and thus to position the audience to the writer's own view. The SFL-informed metalanguage to describe the work of language systems such as Appraisal provides teachers and students with a visible way of naming and playing with an orchestration of voices in their argumentative writing. Such linguistic dexterity can support adolescents in participating 'most agentively in their social and economic futures (Hull and Stornaiuolo 2010, p. 85). Through the ELK initiative at Metro, Sarah and her students were supported to see and appropriate patterns within the Engagement system when deconstructing texts as well as when jointly and independently writing.

### 3.1.1 Expanding SFL Models of Context for Critical Social Literacy

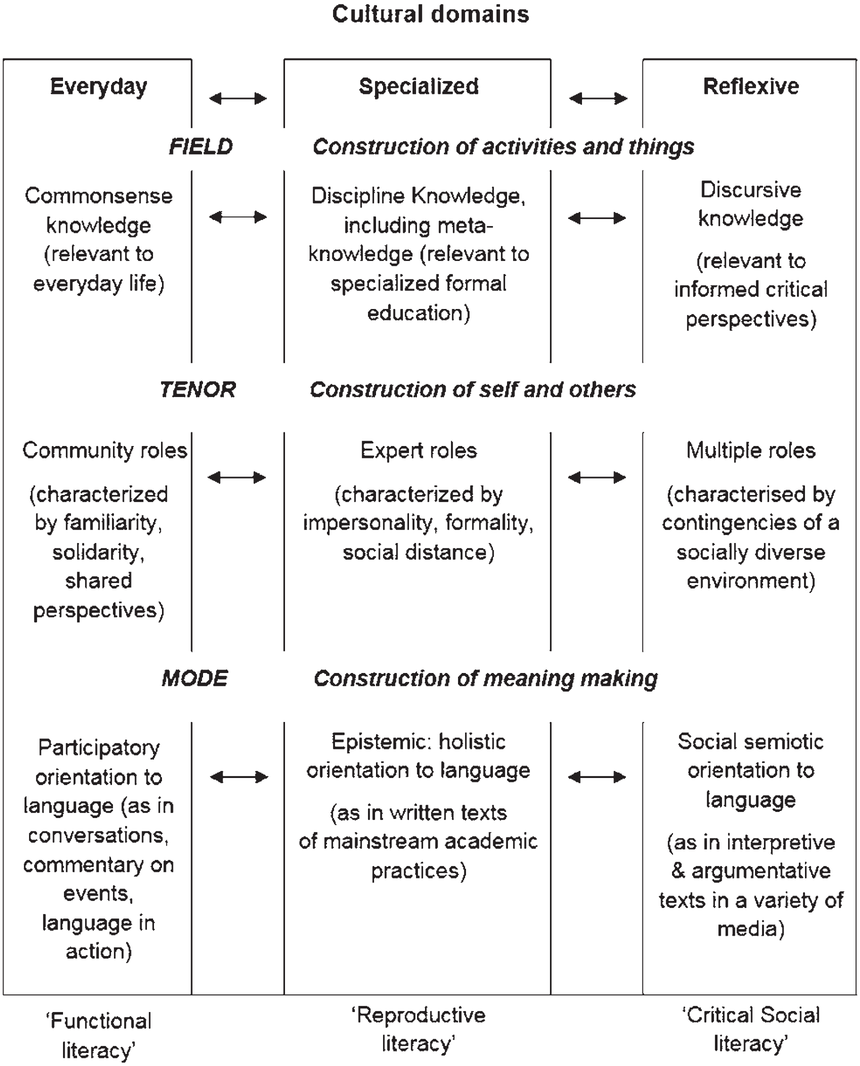
A further feature of SFL-informed CSL is its focus on innovation, redesign and subversion of genres (e.g. Kress 2003; Martin 1999, 2002). To support Metro teachers in the ELK initiative in moving towards these practices, we drew from Macken-Horarik's (1996a) expanded SFL model of academic register that includes three cultural domains: everyday, specialized and reflexive. These domains can be characterized in terms of the different kinds of learning and literacy that they afford (e.g. functional, reproductive, critical); and, in semiotic terms as particular privileged clusterings of social purposes, social activities, social relationships and semiotic functions. The term 'reflexive' is drawn from linguistics and refers to semiotic activity that turns specialized and everyday knowledges in on themselves. Figure 3 is an adapted version of Macken-Horarik's model, incorporating relevant understandings from the two versions she has designed (Macken-Horarik 1996a, b).

In our project, an important feature of Macken-Horarik's model illustrated in Fig. 3 is that critical literacies in the reflexive domain develop from a cumulative knowledge building. This develops through interaction with the specialized language and knowledge of the discipline as opposed to developing directly from everyday uses of language. In other words, students need to grapple with new disciplinary concepts before they can move to reflexive processes about the concepts. Such a relationship is also inferred between Hasan's (1996) 'action' and 'reflection' literacy that is discussed by Schleppegrell & Moore in Chapter "Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School", this volume.

## *3.2 Critical and Social Realist Perspectives*

The developmental pathway to critical social literacies proposed by Macken-Horarik is supported by critical and civic literacy research involving EAL/D learners, as well as through productive dialogue with social realist studies of learners from low SES backgrounds (e.g. Bernstein 1990).

A number of new literacy theorists argue that a critical pedagogy needs to be embedded in young peoples' 'own modes of responding to and producing all manner of texts and artifacts' (Millard 2006, p. 251). While linguistic and rhetorical patterns associated with the everyday domain have been found to assist students to build specialized knowledge in a range of discipline contexts (Maton 2013) and to provide a powerful voice for EAL/D students to participate in community based activism (Humphrey 2010), there is a growing body of research that highlights the dominance of everyday language and dilution of specialized discourse in EAL/D and low SES classrooms (Darling-Hammond 2006; Freebody 2010). Such reductive literacies limit students' communicative repertoire to the 'here and now of me and you' (Macken-Horarik 2014, p. 10).



**Cultural domains**

| | Everyday | | Specialized | | Reflexive |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **FIELD** | ***Construction of activities and things*** | | | | |
| | Commonsense knowledge (relevant to everyday life) | ↔ | Discipline Knowledge, including meta-knowledge (relevant to specialized formal education) | ↔ | Discursive knowledge<br>(relevant to informed critical perspectives) |
| **TENOR** | ***Construction of self and others*** | | | | |
| | Community roles<br>(characterized by familiarity, solidarity, shared perspectives) | ↔ | Expert roles<br>(characterized by impersonality, formality, social distance) | ↔ | Multiple roles<br>(characterised by contingencies of a socially diverse environment) |
| **MODE** | ***Construction of meaning making*** | | | | |
| | Participatory orientation to language (as in conversations, commentary on events, language in action) | ↔ | Epistemic: holistic orientation to language<br>(as in written texts of mainstream academic practices) | ↔ | Social semiotic orientation to language<br>(as in interpretive & argumentative texts in a variety of media) |
| | 'Functional literacy' | | 'Reproductive literacy' | | 'Critical Social literacy' |

**Fig. 3** Articulating features of three domains (Adapted from Macken-Horarik 1996a, b)

Bernstein's (1996) studies of the speech patterns and habits of children from lower and higher SES backgrounds provide particularly valuable insights into the consequences of pedagogies that do not attend sufficiently to specialized forms of literacy. Bernstein found that, when confronted with school-based tasks, children from low SES backgrounds in his studies did not typically reach for the more specialized linguistic resources they may have developed in their discipline learning. His research, and the extensive SFL research which has supported it (e.g. Hasan 2009), indicated that language patterns valued in texts for school learning were more evident in the literacy habits of families from higher SES backgrounds. This suggests that children from low SES backgrounds may not expect to use these patterns when confronted with tasks that did not explicitly require them to do so. Interestingly, in Bernstein's studies, children from higher SES backgrounds who were considered 'lower ability' still typically paused and considered the demands of questions more often than the children from lower SES backgrounds. Bernstein's research has been represented as promoting a view of children from low SES backgrounds as deficient. However his findings in fact open space for considering how the invisible practices of middle-class oriented 'authentic pedagogies' (Kalantzis and Cope 2012), and the decontextualized assessment tasks which are ubiquitous in high stakes standardized literacy tests limit opportunities for low SES students to achieve. Bernstein's studies delineated how low SES students were well able to use specialized language patterns and thus to access and demonstrate curriculum learning when the expectations and success criteria of tasks were made explicit to them.

Recent collaborative studies among social realist and SFL researchers (Martin 2013; Maton 2013) have drawn on Bernstein's theory of knowledge structure to conceptualize the building of specialized literacies and cumulative knowledge. These researchers found that with low SES and EAL/D students, teachers' classroom talk was marked by repeated waves of concrete examples and simplified explanations to unpack abstract and technical concepts. There was far less talk to support students to repack these concepts to create 'high stakes' texts that showed their 'mastery of pedagogic subjects' (Maton 2013, p. 9). Maton's (2013) metaphor of semantic waves describes classroom activity which builds cumulative knowledge by firstly moving 'down the wave', i.e. unpacking 'high stakes' dense and abstract language before moving once more 'up the wave' to support students to 'repack' understandings in the specialized language of the discipline (see also Ramírez, Chapter "Paraphrastic Academic Writing: Entry Point for First Generation Advanced Bilingual College Students", this volume, for discussion of semantic waves). Our ELK initiative supported students' semiotic understanding through the SFL-informed professional development with the teachers. Analysis of Sarah's critical SFL praxis with her 8/9 English class over 2 years provides further evidence of this pathway in action.

## 4 Data Collection and Analysis

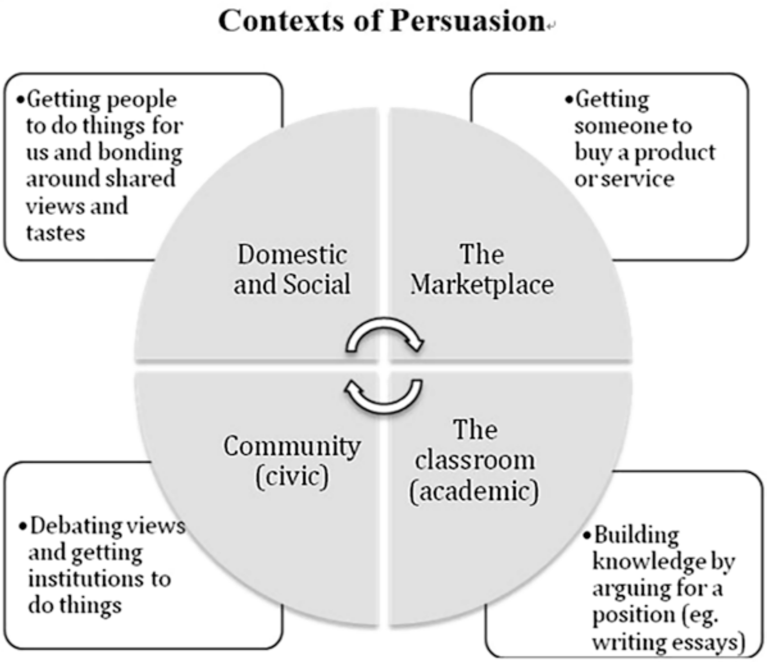
Data used to analyze the development of CSL in Class 8/9 English was collected across four 6–10 week teaching and learning cycles from Feb 2012-Nov 2013. Each instructional cycle focused on a particular rhetorical sphere and style of persuasive writing, complementing the focus on narrative and text response genres in other units across the two academic years. Sarah, in collaboration with colleagues and academic mentors, carefully designed the cycles to integrate content from English curriculum strands of language, literacy and literature, to include topics of interest and cultural relevance to the students and to promote critical engagement with a range of literary genres and modes. From a linguistic perspective, the selection of units of work responded to the need to explore a range of empowering genres as well as different fields, modes and tenor relationships relevant to subject English.

To report on the use of metalanguage by the teacher and students, we recorded and analyzed classroom dialogue from five English curriculum lessons across these four teaching and learning units. We also analyzed recordings of two small group discussions between the researcher and one group of six students who Sarah identified as high achieving, and thus, as discussed earlier, of particular concern to teachers. While all students in the class engaged in teacher-guided small group analysis within the scheduled deconstruction steps of the teaching learning cycle, texts selected for analysis by the extension group included an extended repertoire of linguistic resources. Analysis of a recorded interview with these six students was also conducted to provide students’ perspective on their learning in relation to the instructional practices implemented in the project.

As in the study by Humphrey and Macnaught (2016), close qualitative analysis of metalanguage in classroom talk attended to identification of functional terminology and to the ways in which the teacher related linguistic patterns to the more abstract meanings of text and context (Schleppegrell 2013; Ellis 2006). In the following sections examples of this analysis are provided to describe how Sarah drew on SFL’s metalinguistic resources to introduce and apply language for composing and evaluating texts, including evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of writers’ rhetorical choices.

## 5 Findings

Findings from the analysis of data from Sarah’s 8/9 English class over the first 2 years of the ELK project revealed a significant expansion of students’ repertoires for engaging in CSL. While practices and language related to the everyday, specialized and reflexive domains of learning were woven into each unit and in fact each lesson, a major finding of the project was the shift over time from a focus on building specialized knowledge of ‘how texts work’, to applying that knowledge reflexively to inform critical perspectives. This shift was accompanied by significant growth in all students’ control of a range of persuasive genres and a growing confidence to express their views. Before exploring this shift, I will provide an overview of the relevant fields of study across the 2 years, including the relationship of the texts selected for study to their contexts of use.



Contexts of Persuasion

- Getting people to do things for us and bonding around shared views and tastes

- Getting someone to buy a product or service

Domestic and Social

The Marketplace

Community (civic)

The classroom (academic)

- Debating views and getting institutions to do things

- Building knowledge by arguing for a position (eg. writing essays)

**Fig. 4** Classroom slide showing contexts of Persuasion

## *5.1 Establishing Curriculum and Cultural Contexts*

To explore with students the multiple contexts of persuasive discourse within the English curriculum, we expanded on SFL models of cultural context (e.g. Humphrey 2013; Macken-Horarik 1996a, b; McCormack 2004) to include four rhetorical spheres. Figure 4 shows a classroom slide, used throughout the instructional cycles, to contextualize the curricular goals and open discussion about the diverse social purposes, audiences and modes that would be realized through the teaching and learning activities related to persuasive discourse.

In addition to analyzing and composing a range of literary and response texts in English curriculum units across the 2 years, Year 8/9 English explored a range of persuasive texts within the academic, civic and marketplace spheres. Units designed for this exploration, including their contexts of use and literacy goals, were:

- *Survival* (Using media reports to argue for a position). Activities: reading/viewing survival news stories and writing analytical exposition in response to prompt '*Whose responsibility is it to rescue risk takers?*'.
- *Persuade Me!* (Persuading people to take action in the civic sphere). Activities: viewing and reading transcripts of political speeches; composing an extended persuasive text to present as a speech on an issue of importance in local community.

- *Selling the Hard to Sell* (Persuading people to buy in the Marketplace). Activities: viewing/reading image/text relationships in digital and print advertisements; composing a print media advertisement with problem/solution structure (verbal text and image).
- *Preparing for NAPLAN persuasion* (Persuading for high stakes school assessment). Activities: analyzing marking criteria and models; test practice with a variety of prompts representative of this test.

Sarah, like other teachers at Metro, used a variety of print and digital texts to support students’ specialized and reflexive literacies across these units. These included examples of the genre targeted for writing, called model texts, that were typically composed by student writers, teachers themselves, or published sources in a range of media. SFL’s metalanguage supported students to engage in critical as well as positive evaluation of the selected texts.

Criteria for selecting model texts focused on the value and relevance of the genre and register to high stakes discipline learning and the socio-cultural context, experience and interests of the learner groups. Texts that deployed a linguistic repertoire beyond that already evident in the independent writing of the students were critical for building a robust and applicable metalanguage toolkit.

## 5.2 Working with Persuasion in the Specialized Domain

The concept of the specialized domain was introduced to students in Year 8/9 English as the domain of building knowledge, including a knowledge of language to achieve in school and broader academic life. Writing in the specialized domain was therefore oriented towards genres that were most useful for building and demonstrating curriculum knowledge, such as the analytical exposition (e.g. Coffin 2006; Schleppegrell 2004; Love and Humphrey 2012).

The first of the persuasive writing units, *Survival*, provided a valuable context for the teacher to introduce foundational metalanguage for building students’ understandings of analytical expositions. Students explored high profile news reports of contemporary disaster and survival stories in a range of media. While at first the students were interested primarily in the dramatic events of the disaster and rescue, their interest soon moved to issues such as risk taking and roles and responsibilities of those involved in rescue operations. Students participated passionately in discussion on the topic and negotiated the prompt question for one of their written assignments, *Should we rescue risk takers?*

An analysis of students’ writing prior to the unit revealed that most were already familiar with the typical structure of the analytical exposition genre through Position, Arguments and Reinforcement stages. In the deconstruction step of the Teaching and Learning Cycle, Sarah built on their previous rhetorical knowledge to introduce important linguistic understandings about the logical development of ideas within the Arguments stage. As illustrated in the notetaking outline shown in

**Table 1** Note-taking outline revealing analytical framework

| *Analytical Framework for note-taking* | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Arguments* | Evidence to support | Evidence against |
| Taxpayer responsibility | | |
| Individual responsibility | | |

Table 1, Sarah led the class in grouping the responsibilities of rescuing risk takers into those related to the different 'stakeholders' of taxpayer or individual adventurer. This task was supported by the metalanguage analytic framework discussed earlier in the chapter (see Fig. 1).

In subsequent instructional cycles, the shared metalanguage of the analytical framework enabled Sarah and the academic mentor working with her to make visible the complex relationships that are privileged in analytical exposition. Crucially, it also enabled talk about interactions among linguistic features (e.g., Macro and Hyper-Theme and abstract nouns and paragraphs), which are critical in co-articulating these relationships in expositions. For example, in the excerpt below from the 2nd of the four persuasion units, *Persuade Me!* Sarah (T) and the mentor (M) drew on this metalanguage to provide feedback and guidance on one student's draft of the Position stage of a persuasive speech. Each student had volunteered to read their texts aloud, confident that the feedback they received would go beyond correction of errors and provide support in composing their final draft. The metalanguage developed with the class from the Survival unit is italicized throughout the excerpt, including the functional 'bridging' metalanguage used throughout the school to talk about SFL's concept of Theme (e.g. '*preview'* [Macro-Theme] and '*sentence starter'* [Clause Theme]).

**Text 2**
Class discussion of student's draft persuasive text.

S1: Good morning teachers and students of Metro high school. Today I am raising an important issue as a member of the community and as a student at Metro high school and that is, teachers not trying anymore at school. I will provide you with compelling arguments that will persuade you.

M: This is where we do our *text preview*, remember? We are telling the audience upfront what argument we are going to use. You have built your *analytical framework*, you know what arguments that you are going to use and you've actually labeled those arguments as *abstract nouns*, haven't you. So it might be health, it might be lack of time, it might be educational benefits. You've got those abstract concepts as packages that hold your arguments. Later on you are going to *unpack* them, in your arguments, but just now you have to *preview* them. Tell your audience what you are going to argue later. A good *sentence starter* for this is going from what you said before, where you said you were going to provide compelling arguments. Just spell them out. List them! These arguments concern…lack of time.

S 2: Is this still in the first *paragraph*?

M: Yes, still in the first *paragraph*.

T: Depending on your *analytical framework* will depend on who it concerns… Selem is doing global warming. So ‘these arguments concern the local community, Australia as a nation and worldwide’. So you are *previewing* to your audience that ‘hey, each one of those *paragraphs* is going to develop one of those ideas’. So let’s do that now. Just one sentence.

At this stage of the lesson, the academic mentor dominates the classroom talk. However, Sarah also incorporates metalanguage that students already knew to elaborate on the linguistic functions. Through the SFL-informed professional training, Sarah was able to provide further examples of topics that might form an analytical framework based on her knowledge of another students’ draft (Salem). She was able to make the crucial point that the linguistic choices depend upon the context (e.g. *who it concerns, your audience*).

### 5.2.1 Using the Metalanguage to Demystify Assessment Criteria

By far the most intense work for Sarah and her students in the specialized domain occurred in the last of the four units: *Preparing for NAPLAN persuasion*. Their choosing to focus on NAPLAN preparation was not surprising in light of the pervasive pressure at Metro to prepare students for this high stakes test. Indeed, teachers and researchers at Metro (who were exposed to Bernstein’s research on language variation equity and social class in the ELK initiative) understood the challenges faced by high poverty and/or linguistically marginalized students in responding to the decontextualized persuasive writing prompts typical of NAPLAN. As reported in Humphrey and Macnaught (2016), teachers across all faculties were concerned to share with students the success criteria of highly valued responses to NAPLAN and to provide opportunities for students to use these resources in responding to practice prompts and also to achieve curriculum learning goals.

At least one of Sarah’s Year 9 English classes was spent systematically ‘teaching to the test’ by assessing student drafts of NAPLAN practice tests against the marking criteria provided to teachers. While the marking criteria produced by the Australian assessment authority (ACARA 2011) included functional metalanguage, the SFL metalanguage developed through the ELK project enabled Sarah to provide targeted advice to students and, crucially, to discuss how the linguistic features related to particular contexts, thus building transferable knowledge.

For example, in the NAPLAN marking guide (ACARA 2011), the following criteria were provided for the top bands under the category of ‘ideas’:

- ideas may include benefits to the whole group (more than just personal); reflection on the wider world/ universal issues
- ideas may be elaborated by, e.g.- a range of issues both for and against the stated position; a refutation of other positions or opinions; explaining cause and effect

As is evident in the following excerpt, Sarah was able to be explicit about the types of ideas expected (reasons) and to relate them to the structure of analytical framework introduced in the *Survival* unit. The metalanguage in her feedback and guidance to students was informed by Macken-Horarik's linguistic perspective on cultural domains (*everyday domains, everyday experience; the here and the now*); and also by Maton's semantic wave metaphor, which was introduced to teachers in professional learning workshops. Sarah used this metaphor with her students as a shorthand to highlight textual movement towards abstract, general and technical ideas that was to be found in successful sample student writing for the high stakes tests. Text 3 below shows how Sarah talked with her class about the shift from an everyday to specialized register,

**Text 3**

Teacher's deconstruction of NAPLAN marking guidelines

T: So what are ideas? What are our ideas? Yesterday, when we looked at cars should be banned we needed unpack that, we needed to have ideas to talk about. We used the analytical framework to come up with our reasons. They're our ideas. So, all this is asking for is 'Can you have ideas and can the ideas not be about your limited everyday experiences of the here and the now and at school. Can you try and talk about ideas that are bit more generalized and deal with society a little bit more'? Yesterday, we could've talked about 'cars should be banned because my mum needs to drive me to school every day'. That's your everyday experience so let's reshape that into an idea like 'Cars should be banned because of the devastating environmental effects'. So, it's about 'taking it up the wave', right, remember we used that? Taking it up the wave.

As evidenced by Sarah's talk in Text 3, the students were supported in taking their writing up the semantic wave, moving into a more specialized discussion of issues. In the context of high stakes testing, this pedagogical approach supported the students in drawing more effectively from their existing repertoire of language resources to meet the expectations of the NAPLAN task, even when faced with challenging prompts that could have led them to produce underdeveloped responses. Sarah's students completed the NAPLAN test in May, 2013, as Year 9 students. As reported in Section 6.2 and more extensively in Humphrey and Macnaught (2016), Sarah's class achieved significantly higher annual growth than the normal trend at Metro from Year 7-Year 9.

In a follow up focus group interview with one of the research team who had not worked directly with the class, students reported that the analysis of model texts and guided writing/rewriting activities such as those described above were the most valuable in developing their confidence in high stakes writing assessment such as NAPLAN tests. In the next section I will briefly discuss the expanded range of linguistic knowledge and metalanguage used to engage students in more focused reflexive practices within whole class and small group extension activities.

## *5.3 Moving into the Reflexive Domain*

Although the ELK project was initiated to support marginalized students to access and produce high stakes literacies of the specialized domain, analysis of teaching and learning interactions also indicate that the shared metalanguage supported them to participate in critical analysis within the reflexive domain. While it is not possible to identify a clear line between building specialized knowledge and using that knowledge reflexively in students’ talk, two clear shifts were identified.

The first shift towards reflexivity is evident in classroom interactions in which students not only used functional terminology to identify linguistic resources and talk about the effect of language patterns in their own or others’ writing but also to engage in discussion of the effectiveness of the rhetorical choices. This use expanded the scope of metalanguage to include its evaluative as well as its explanatory function. An example of such use is shown in the excerpt from one whole class discussion (Text 4). In this excerpt the teacher and students assessed what type of language in a text was used to establish a relationship with the reader. The metalanguage they used was informed by SFL’s Appraisal resources of expand and contract (Martin and White 2005). These dialogic functions are referred to with bridging metalanguage of ‘opening and closing the door to other voices’ (see Humphrey 2013; Humphrey and Macnaught 2016 for a full discussion of these resources and how they were introduced to students).

**Text 4**
Class discussion of analytical exposition – mobile phones

T: Remember yesterday we looked at that, starting with a rhetorical question. It reminded me of the discussion you had... when we started the paragraph with a rhetorical question and Saleh wanted to *shut it down* straight away.
S1 (Saleh, to S2): What a rhetorical question does is, it asks the reader the question to make....
S3: Make them think about it...
S2: Ponder.
S1: Yeah, to ponder but at the same time while you ask the question, you want to direct their thoughts in a certain…direction. So you don’t want to be too broad.
S3: You can still ask a question without answering it!
S2: See I think this is too broad. “Are mobile phones a problem?” See our other ones were very direct in what we were asking them.
M: I think what you’ve brought up is a very good point but there are two kinds of rhetorical questions.
S3: You said that yesterday. The first type is just like *slamming the door shut* on them and the second type is just like *leaving the seed* in their mind, let them think about it. But I personally think that that is stronger.

In this excerpt the students exhibit a great deal of confidence in using the metalanguage to explain the rhetorical effect of language resources. In the opening moves, S1 and S3 explain the effect of rhetorical questions to a student (S2) who had been absent from the previous discussion. This student was then able to seamlessly join in the analysis of the text, with which all students were familiar. Students also showed great confidence in evaluating the effect of a rhetorical question (e.g. *I think this is too broad*) and this confidence was maintained even when the mentor reminded them of a distinction in the function of rhetorical questions. S3 acknowledges the difference but then asserts his own personal opinion – (*But I personally think that that is stronger)* - an opinion informed, I would argue, by the extensive work that Sarah, the academic mentor and students spent supporting students in the specialized domain.

A further example of such reflexivity is evident in a small group discussion between a group of six higher performing students and the mentor. This extension activity was held during normal class time and occurred while other groups of students were also engaged in collaborative text analysis with the teacher. Deconstruction focused on a range of 'expert' civic and academic persuasive texts, which were composed in a range of rhetorical styles. One such text '*Can one piece of literature change the world?* was an essay written by a high achieving student who was 2 years older than the students in Sarah's class. The introduction to this essay, shown as Text 5, was read aloud by a student in the group.

**Text 5**
Introduction to senior student's essay

Can one piece of literature change the world? … Literature has many forms and can do many things. It can make us cry, make us laugh, it can let us escape to a fantasy or awaken us from the illusions we had of the world around us, it lets us learn and understand the actions and values of our ancestors and share our own ideas with the generations to come, but can it change the world? Can simple words written down change the way the world works and thinks? History shows us that the answer is yes.

Analysis of Metro students' talk with the mentor showed their growing interest in the rhetorical effect of linguistic choices and their confidence in evaluating that impact. When asked to give their opinion of the introduction, for example, one student responded with *'I'm quite intimidated by this…'*, to which the mentor replied, reassuringly, *'I think the writer wants you to be intimidated by that…'*.

In other instances, students, teachers and mentors struggled because of their lack of a shared metalanguage. At one point, for example, the mentor drew students' attention to the writer's use of grammatical parallelism, which is broadly understood by contemporary rhetorical theorists (e.g. Partington 2003) as a series of repeated structures (e.g. *It can make us cry, make us laugh, let us escape from a fantasy or let us awaken.*). This figure of speech was not included in the metalanguage 'toolkits' of ELK professional learning workshops, despite its crucial role in political and civic discourse (Partington 2003).

**Text 6**

Discussion of the impact of rhetorical resources

M: What's interesting is the next, okay. Look at this. 'Literature has many forms and can do many things', so they are now establishing that literature is broader than just fiction. 'It can make us cry, make us laugh, let us escape from a fantasy or let us awaken us from the illusions we might have from the world around us'. So what is she doing there?

S1: Concession?

M: Not yet. It's not concession, it's what you were talking about before S1.

S2: Power of three

M: Yeah that's right, the listing. That kind of building up of evidence just through the same grammatical form 'It can do this, it can do that, it can do that.' It's really quite a powerful strategy.

This excerpt illustrates some of the challenges of working with texts that use language patterns beyond those of the more controlled classroom models. Expanding students' literacy repertoire to civic sphere persuasion requires use of an expanded metalanguage, including rhetorical descriptions that are currently not sufficiently described in SFL models. Finding a shared and accessible terminology to talk with students about this meaning making is crucial in supporting them move beyond 'formulaic' patterns of persuasion and in engaging productively in critical analysis.

Despite the difficulty with terminology, however, the students began to talk among themselves about grammatical parallelism and its rhetorical effect in other texts they read in class. One text (see Text 7 below) that the students analyzed was an impromptu speech by a middle year student for a public speaking competition on the topic of 'No Surrender'. The relevant excerpts from the speech, which functioned to persuade the audience to do something about global warming, are provided in Text 7.

**Text 7**

Impromptu persuasive speech

There is absolutely no way we can surrender to global warming. ….

We can't just surrender and we can't ignore the problem. We can all help to solve the problem.

At home we can do something. Simple solutions. Turn off a light when you don't need it. Use a jacket instead of a heater. The election is next week. Vote for someone who you think won't surrender and will help to do something to stop global warming.

As Australia, as this nation, we need to do something. Sign the Kyoto Protocol. Cut down on carbon emissions and stop using dirty brown coal. Invest in greener sources of energy, such as wind power and solar energy.

As a world, as planet earth we need to do something. We can't surrender. We need to work together and help others to get the resources they need. In a crisis time like this, when global warming is such a huge problem, there is no way we can simply surrender.

In the discussion that followed, the mentor initiated analysis of the text through drawing attention to its analytical framework; even without an agreed upon terminology for identifying the rhetorical technique of parallelism, students were able to articulate the effect.

**Text 8**
Further discussion on effects of rhetorical resources

M: I thought what was really interesting here was her structure. Even though she has got an analytical framework, she's organized it around what we can do to stop global warming. ...Just look at that second paragraph – 'We can't just surrender and we can't ignore the problem. We can all help to solve the problem'. Now look, at each paragraph after that. 'At home we can do something!'

S.1: I see a gradual escalation from home to Australia as a nation to the world.

M: Look at the way, at home we can do something. That's a simple sentence, isn't it? 'As an Australian. As this nation, we need to do something'. She's repeated, she's rephrased it as 'As this nation'.

S3: It's repetition. In year 1 and year 2 and 3 we were taught don't use repetition. But now that we are older, we can use it, it's a tool that we know how to use.

M: Yeah. Notice what she does at the beginning of the sentence. She uses these sentence starters 'At home …As Australia…. As a world, as planet earth' to sort of alert us to her structure that she's got. That is quite an effective way of designing your sentences to do that rhetorical work, to do that escalating work at the front of the sentence. It hits you in the face doesn't it?

S1: Yeah and straight away, when you get this message of like, we can do something at home, we can do something…. When it gets to 'at home' I think of a few, and then when I get to 'Australia' I think of millions and when I get to 'the world', I think of billions. And so she's saying that as individuals, we can all do something to help.

This excerpt shows clear evidence of reflexivity, not least in S3's observation that the instruction he was provided in Year 2 and 3 was no longer sufficient. Indeed, in his observation he explicitly recognized and celebrated the empowerment of a linguistic resource (i.e. *it's a tool that we know how to use*). From a broader perspective on knowledge, the excerpt also provides evidence that the focus on language patterns within texts can open space for deeper comprehension of content. In the final comment, S1 worked through the message unfolding within the text, a message that was made more visible through earlier discussion of grammatical parallelism and Theme (sentence starters). Such findings from our ELK initiative can offer reassurance to content area teachers who are often concerned that a focus on language and literacy comes at the expense of disciplinary knowledge.

After more analysis of the rhetorical moves made in Text 7 and other texts in this deconstruction activity, the discussion returned to the rhetorical impact of the Position statement shown in Text 5 above. One student drew on his knowledge of both the resources of Expand and Contract and of the graduating effect of the parallelism to comment on its overall impact of this stage.

> *You are really taking them along and you go through the door and then just slam it on them.*

The ability of the student to extend the metaphor of 'opening and closing the door' indicates that this concept was understood and fully 'owned' by the student. As discussed in Humphrey and Macnaught (2016), analysis of 8/9 English students' writing in curriculum English over the first 18 months of the project revealed that the increased use of dialogic resources, including concession/rebuttal sequences, was an area of particular growth in students' literacy repertoire.

While the scope of this chapter does not allow for a discussion of findings about the students' engagement with the teaching and learning activities across all four of the units, responses such as those provided in the excerpt from one focus group interview below (Text 9) indicate that some students felt invested and empowered in the critical SFL praxis.

**Text 9**
Excerpt from focus group interview

*I: After all that you've done, are you more confident, and I've heard it here today, are you more confident in using the metalanguage in the classroom?*
*S1: When we know it, we feel like we can go out and speak to the world!*
*S2: But it's different, 'cause when someone gives us a question we can use it now.*
*S1: We have an understanding of the concepts.*

Not only did these students appreciate the empowering effect of the metalanguage for their specialized learning goals, but also for their civic literacy practices ('*we feel we can go out and speak to the world*!').

It needs to be said that these same focus group participants also reported that the instruction was at times overly repetitive and shared that they were more engaged when the 'expert' mentor participated in text analysis. This indicates a recognition by students that their full engagement in specialized and reflexive literacy practices depends upon the expanded metalinguistic knowledge of those who teach them. As with the teachers in Brisk and Osso Parra's study (Chapter "Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change", this volume), the teachers at Metro did not relinquish their responsibility to support their students' language development and continue to systematically build and share their knowledge through ongoing professional learning.

## 6 Conclusion

As discussed above, students' development of critical social literacies at Metro was informed to a great extent by their learning and appropriation of an expanded linguistic repertoire and metalanguage in the specialized domain of learning. SFL resources provided the students and their teacher with a shared metalanguage that they created to identify structural and functional linguistic patterns; explain the effect of these features in particular contexts; and confidently evaluate these linguistic effects from their own reader positions. In the professional development work at Metro and the academic mentoring of interested teachers, metalanguage was used systematically to make visible the rhetorical patterns in English curriculum texts over four units of work, including those produced in high stakes academic and civic spheres. Teachers like Sarah, invested in this SFL approach, were able to show students how to write and analyze the linguistic patterns in high stakes persuasive assessment tasks.

Practices such as ‘teaching to the test’ can be associated with the more reductive practices of genre-pedagogy, perhaps contributing to conserving rather than changing power relationships that marginalize learners from low SES and EAL/D backgrounds. However, the critical SFL praxis of the ELK project challenged Sarah and her colleagues also to integrate teaching and learning from the reflexive domain. Despite the challenges of working with texts with more diverse rhetorical repertoires, findings from the study indicate that students developed more reflexivity, including critical analysis. Our future research will include explorations of classroom practices that blurred the boundary between these domains of learning, including the role of ‘everyday’ situations and language patterns in building understandings of specialized and critical knowledge.

While developing metalinguistic knowledge has required a great commitment from already overstretched teachers, they have been supported by ongoing faculty-based professional learning with academic mentors and support in selecting and developing key resources needed to investigate and construct texts in particular learning contexts. Teachers at Metro, however, recognized that their students had been marginalized by teaching and assessment practices where expectations were not made visible, and further recognized that SFL metalanguage and the scaffolding teaching and learning cycle provided them with resources to redress this inequity. As more professional learning opportunities and resources become available to teachers at Metro and elsewhere over time, we expect that they will take a leading role in developing metalinguistic toolkits for the full range of specialized, critical and transformative literacy work of the curriculum, including those which require multi-semiotic affordances.

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# Student Use of SFL Resources on Fantasy, Canonical, and Non-fiction Texts: Critical Literacy in the High School ELA Classroom

**Amber M. Simmons**

**Abstract** This chapter explores how Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in an upper high school English Language Arts classroom (ELA) supported students in recognizing how language patterns in texts positions people to think and behave in particular ways. SFL resources also deepened students' language awareness as well as their writing on high stakes tests. The chapter provides educators with an example of how to use the resources of SFL with students to recognize and analyze critical issues in narrative, drama, and nonfiction texts.

**Keywords** Systemic functional linguistics • Critical discourse analysis • Secondary English education • Critical language awareness • Language instruction • Critical literacy

## 1 Introduction

Australian researcher Kristina Love (2006) accurately critiqued U.S. educators when she stated that we do not encourage "students in identifying how the language choices of a range of texts convey a particular ideological stance, and how such choices influence reader's attitude" (p. 218). Indeed, critical textual analysis in high school contexts is very rarely part of English literature or other courses. As Humphrey suggests in "'We Can Speak to the World': Applying Meta-Linguistic Knowledge for Specialized and Reflexive Literacies", of this volume, this may be because of the need for expertise in critical literacy practices. Instead there is a view of language as a vehicle of transmission. In high stakes tests, for example, students are primed to respond to factual questions but not to see how the language used is informing how those facts are constituted within discourse. Viewing language as a dynamic process to support critical literacy and expose hegemonic constructs within texts has not been fully explored as a way of teaching language in American

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classrooms (see Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010). High stakes testing has placed more and more emphasis on factual knowledge and less emphasis on critical inquiry. Students have little practice in thinking about issues of language and power because they are most often primed only to understand the story of the text, the meaning of the words and not the meaning behind them (Cranny-Francis 1996).

To illustrate how educators can integrate critical language awareness into high school curricula in the United States, this chapter will explore how a carefully crafted curriculum informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) supported students in availing of SFL resources to critique how language is used in the world around them. This chapter, part of a larger ethnographic study (see Simmons 2012), illustrates how students were offered an English Language Arts (ELA) education that provided them with "a study of language that is inseparable from the study of life" (Hymes 1977, p. 169). As earlier chapters have offered a comprehensive definition of SFL, in this chapter I simply remind readers that Halliday's (1985/1994) systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is a functional grammar that focuses on how language is designed and used; it subscribes to the idea that "grammar should not be seen as a stand-alone set of rules and definitions, but rather as a 'force of expression' within genre" (Knapp and Watkins 2005, p. 40). Through development of a metalanguage in their SFL-informed instruction, students appropriate and become critically aware of the patterns of meaning making that construct ideological stances in texts (Harman and Simmons 2014; Schleppegrell 2013).

As a veteran high school teacher, I see a definite need for development of critical language awareness (CLA) in U.S. classrooms. From a longitudinal perspective, through critical SFL students can learn to take part in "emancipatory discourse which contributes to the transformation of existing orders of discourse" (Fairclough 1989, p. 243). At a more immediate level, CLA fosters a sense of agency among students because they are equipped to challenge existing orders of discourse and even create alternative epistemologies (e.g. gender and racial categories). As Ivanic and Simpson (1992) discussed, a classroom focused on critical awareness has to *recognize* that the privileging of particular genres and language use marginalizes subgroups of society (e.g. Spanglish speakers), and that language variation is connected to social identity construction. As a result, the teacher needs to teach students *how to use* language to "look after their own interests and maintain their identity" (p. 315). This can be done by turning awareness into action by supporting students in: (1) challenging the view that the Standard American English (SAE) variety is better than any other and demanding to have a preferred variety respected; (2) gaining awareness of how some groups dominate others by silencing them; (3) rejecting the role of the "ideal reader" and learning to critically question texts; and (4) recognizing the power relations at work when entering into different discourse communities (Janks and Ivanic 1992, pp. 315–323). Such CLA assignments are enhanced through SFL instruction.

Informed by a larger ethnographic study (see Simmons 2012), the chapter builds off previous studies to further investigate how instructional use of SFL analytic resources can heighten the critical language awareness of secondary-level students in the English content area. This awareness is fostered when students analyze the ways in which authors use linguistic patterns to manipulate a particular audience. Specifically, the chapter discusses how students conducted analyses of appraisal, identification, and modality on J. K Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Shakespeare's *Othello*, and Obama's speech at Cairo (see Martin and Rose 2003). In other words, I explore if and how the pedagogical initiative supported students in deconstructing the specific lexico-grammar and discourse semantics of narrative, drama, and non-fiction texts. The study investigated: how the instructional use of SFL analytic resources support secondary-level students in recognizing how language positions people to think and behave in specific ways; how critical language awareness of students deepened over time; and how this deepening awareness was reflected in students' writing and discourse.

## 2 Conceptual Framework

My role in this study was that of participant observer. As teacher of the research subjects, I was immersed in the setting, affecting and being affected by daily interactions. I chose participant observation as a research method because I was interested in "a range of dimensions of the social world" (Mason 2004, p. 85), meaning I wanted to collect data from multiple data sources including interviews, conversations, written responses. However, I also wanted to be active in the construction of curricular materials and as a participant in classroom dialogue and interactions. Like other researchers, I found carrying out this method to be personal, intimate, and extremely rewarding (Coffey 1999). However, as Mason (2004) warned, it was also exhausting. I was responsible for "observing, participating, interrogating, listening, communicating, as well as a range of other forms of being, doing and thinking" (p. 87). Further information about data collection is provided in the methods section of this chapter, but here I note that I was also responsible for creating the curriculum, recording observations, and conducting interviews. Because of my dual role as participant-observer, I had insight into my own behaviors and motives as well as those of my participants, but because of the role I played, like any participant-observer study, the results presented are based on my interpretation and analysis of events (Yin 2009) despite the fact that my interpretations were grounded in textual evidence, participant quotes, and discourse analysis methods.

From February 2012 to May 2012, I collected data from three Advanced Placement (AP) language and composition classes that I taught during the 2011–2012 school year. Over that time period, I conducted 244 h of participatory observation. During that period of time, I used a critical SFL approach in all classroom assignments, dialogue, and projects. After obtaining written permission from both parents and students, I began collecting all student work including SFL practice, projects, and academic essays, and started recording all classroom dialogue related to critical SFL. Furthermore, I selected seven focal students from those who volunteered to represent not only the diversity of my student body, but also the majority of student experiences utilizing SFL and conducting CDA.

In an effort to better foster critical awareness among my students, my theoretical lens for my curriculum framework blended key concepts of the critical theorist Paulo Freire (1986) with those of critical discourse analyst Norman Fairclough (1995). The pedagogical design was informed by my blending of Fairclough and Freire's stages of critical analysis and development, guiding students through Fairclough's (1989, 1992) stages: description, interpretation, and explanation in order to denaturalize and problematize language, ending with what Freire called "conscientization," making students systematically aware of the social effects of language choices. Both were influenced by many of the same theorists (Habermas, Gramsci, and Marx) and advocated for the same goal: emancipatory education. Since Fairclough's (1995) first and foremost aim is to promote critical goals, I aligned him with Freire's goal of intellectual emancipation, allowing for a curriculum that supported instruction based on questioning, dialogue, and respect.

The theoretical framework provided me with the rationale and approach to develop a year-long curriculum. In the current study, I show how this approach encouraged students to evaluate language use in literary and informational texts. Through the use of "explicit scaffolding, students learn to see language as a pliable repertoire of choices that can be used to accomplish a variety of social and political purposes in different contexts" (Harman 2008, p. 8). By blending the ideas of Freire, Fairclough, and Halliday in my pedagogical design, I was able to encourage learners to "take control of their own language development" (Wennerstrom 2003, p. 3) while also becoming "more critically aware of the social structure and ideologies of the culture or community that produced the discourse" (Wennerstrom 2003, p. 11) through dialogue and language analysis. As I have been immersed in this type of pedagogical initiative over the past 4 years, it is clear to me how students' appropriation of critical textual practices heightens their meta-awareness of language and power issues.

## 3 Systemic Functional Linguistics

As the editor and the contributors to this volume discuss SFL in each of their chapters, I simply provide the definitions and resources of SFL that informed the action research in my English Language Arts classroom. As previously stated, Halliday's (1985/1994) definition of SFL focused on a "natural" grammar that concentrated on how language is designed and used. Halliday used the concept of register to articulate how a stretch of discourse in a particular cultural and situational context simultaneously reveals the ideas (field), mood (tenor), and organization (mode) of an interaction among language users. Language, in other words, provides us a configuration of ideational, interpersonal and textual resources for different social and academic purposes. While all three metafunctions are interwoven and work in tandem, bringing meaning to each other, my study deals specifically with the interpersonal metafunction working within the register dimension of tenor. Therefore, I forgo an in-depth discussion of the ideational and textual metafunctions and the various types of analyses that can be utilized to investigate those discourse systems in order to focus on analyses of the interpersonal metafunction.

The interpersonal resources in SFL help us to see how language and grammar position subjects (and readers) in particular ways and contexts (Fang and Schleppegrell 2010). Macken-Horarik (2009) believed that the interpersonal function makes readers question point of view and "how the text positions us to see, feel, judge, and appreciate what happens" (p. 64). By analyzing the interpersonal meanings in a range of texts, students can learn how to question language choices and see how particular linguistic patterns are used to construe ideological meanings. As shown by Schleppegrell and Moore in Chapter "Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School", this volume, focusing on the interpersonal metafunction in elementary school made students aware of the "authorial voice," allowing them to interpret how characters were being presented and to express more readily their own point of view about what they read. While in elementary school they simplified the analysis methods to make this possible, in high school, I maintained the complexity of the analysis methods and instead scaffolded the complexity of texts. Analysis methods used to determine authors' interpersonal choices included (a) appraisal analysis, (b) identification analysis and (c) modality analysis. In the following section, I provide a brief definition and explanation of each of these SFL resources as illustrated by moments from my study.

**Appraisal Analysis** In previous studies (see Harman and Simmons 2014; Simmons 2012), I found Jim Martin's appraisal system to be an effective resource in helping readers evaluate the interpersonal choices of authors. According to Martin and Rose (2003), appraisal is "concerned with evaluation: the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and ways in which values are sourced and the readers aligned" (p. 22). It supports analysis of how authors use language to express and manipulate feelings and emotions. The appraisal system "offers one linguistic system that allows us to track patterns of attitudinal choices in interactions" (Love 2006, p. 224). An appraisal analysis focuses on three specific attitudes: affect, judgment, and appreciation. Affect deals with emotions that can be stated directly (e.g. *I admire her.*) or indirectly (e.g. *She looked up at her adoringly.*). Judgment shows our personal and moral admiration or criticism of people (e.g. capacity, tenacity). This can also be stated directly (e.g. *She was insulting.*), or be implied (e.g. *She thought she was better than him.*). Appreciation looks at how things (objects, settings, appearances, abstract ideas, etc.) are portrayed in a positive (e.g. *It was a very humorous thought.*) or negative (e.g. *It was an extremely malicious comment.*) light through the use of adjectives or attitudinally amplified words (e.g. "very" and "extremely" from previous examples).

Performing an appraisal analysis supports critical literacy in that it helps readers see how authors position readers and manipulate our feelings. This can cause us, as readers, to feel one way or another about ourselves or about the topic/people on which the narrator or speaker is focused. However, this "manipulation" is not always used to marginalize people; it can also be used to show positive power relationships and reveal how language is being used to show compassion and to empower. In the excerpt below, students jointly constructed the following appraisal analysis with teacher support on "The Mirror of Erised" from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1997, pp. 212–213). This analysis highlights how Rowling uses certain linguistic choices to make readers feel a particular way about her characters (the key of analysis is the following: Affect is in **bold**; Judgment is underlined; Appreciation is in *italics*).

> 'So -- back again, Harry.' Harry felt as though **his insides had turned to ice**. He looked behind him. Sitting on one of the desks by the wall was none other than Albus Dumbledore. Harry must have walked straight past him, so **desperate** to get to the mirror he hadn't noticed him.' -- I didn't see you, sir.' 'Strange how nearsighted being invisible can make you,' said Dumbledore, and Harry was **relieved** to see that he was **smiling**. 'So,' said Dumbledore, **slipping off the desk to sit on the floor with Harry**, 'you, *like hundreds before you*, have discovered the *delights* of the Mirror of Erised.' 'I didn't know it was called that, Sir.' 'But I expect you've realized by now what it does.'

As illustrated above, analysis of affect shows that Harry's initial emotional reaction was one of fear as indicated by the indirect affect "his insides turned to ice." The fact that Dumbledore was "smiling" indirectly shows that Dumbledore is not angry at Harry. The direct affect word "relieved" expresses Harry's dismissal of fear.

An appraisal analysis of this excerpt also indicates a positive power relationship between Harry and Professor Dumbledore. Dumbledore "sits on the floor with Harry" indirectly showing his attempt to equalize himself with Harry. However, there is a clear teacher/student relationship here as seen in the judgments when Harry calls Dumbledore "Sir" as a sign of respect. The affect words also serve to show that Harry, although he feels isolated and different from other wizards, isn't so different after all in how the Mirror of Erised affects him. "Like hundreds before [him]," Harry has been consumed by the "delights" the mirror reflects. Dumbledore uses this as a teachable moment, as indicated by his gentle inquiries concerning Harry's current knowledge about the mirror. Dumbledore undertakes an assumed attempt to expand his understanding, and also points out the perils of living in dreams. As shown through an appraisal analysis, readers are encouraged to view Dumbledore as a trusted and respected mentor.

**Identification Analysis** An identification analysis tracks participants in the text and examines power relationships and feeling between characters (Martin and Rose 2003). By tracking participants to determine how participants are referenced and by whom, the reader can examine how a particular character or group of people is perceived by the author, other characters, or society in general. An identification analysis of the previous passage can tell the reader about the character's position in the wizarding society (See Table 1).

The numbers provided in Table 1 show how many times the participant was tracked by that particular identifier. This identification analysis further shows Rowling's intention of using this scene to foreshadow the positive power relationship that will develop throughout the series between Harry and Dumbledore. It is clear that Harry respects Dumbledore as he calls him "Sir," yet Rowling's choice to

**Table 1** Identification analysis of *Harry Potter* Excerpt

| Harry | | Dumbledore | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Name | # | Name | # |
| Harry | 5 | I | 1 |
| He | 2 | Dumbledore | 2 |
| You/your | 4 | Sir | 2 |
| His | 1 | Albus Dumbledore | 1 |
| Him | 1 | Him | 2 |
| I | 2 | He | 1 |
| | | You | 1 |

have Dumbledore use Harry's first name instead of calling him Mr. Potter like the other professors at Hogwarts shows a developing intimacy between the teacher and student. Also, the fact that Harry's name is mentioned five times and the pronoun "you" in reference to Harry is used four times shows that this scene is guiding readers to focus on Dumbledore's instructional lesson to Harry, where what he learns about the mirror is the major outcome.

**Modality Analysis** Modality represents a speaker's "judgment of the probabilities, or the obligations, involved in what he is saying" (Halliday 1985/1994, p. 73). Modality can reveal how much we like or dislike something, agree or disagree, or how badly we desire something. While modal operators number in the tens of thousands in written and spoken discourse, in my instruction I focused on Halliday's (1985/1994, p. 363) polarity scale of high, medium, and low verbs to make discourse analysis tools more accessible to my emergent discourse analysts/students. The following are some of the examples that were used:

> High modality: must, ought, need, has, is (e.g. He **mus**t leave!)
> Medium: will, would, shall, could (e.g. She **would** understand.)
> Low: may, might, can, could (e.g. They **may** fight about that.)

Once students were sensitized into seeing how modality could scale up and down a stretch of prose, they were able to see specifically how these resources made appraisal possible. With these tools in hand, they were able to analyze for more complex modal choices such as hedging, probability, and absolute terms. The data excerpt below, jointly analyzed by students with teacher support, provides an example of how a modality analysis of the previous passage (Rowling 1997, pp. 212–213) can reveal the degrees of emotion and knowledge of the characters: (Key for below: modal verbs in bold.)

> 'So -- back again, Harry.' Harry felt as though his insides had turned to ice. He looked behind him. Sitting on one of the desks by the wall was none other than Albus Dumbledore. Harry **must have** walked straight past him, so desperate to get to the mirror he **hadn't** noticed him. '-- I **didn't** see you, sir.' 'Strange how nearsighted being invisible **can** make you,' said Dumbledore, and Harry was relieved to see that he was smiling.'So,' said Dumbledore, slipping off the desk to sit on the floor with Harry, 'you, like hundreds before you, **have** discovered the delights of the Mirror of Erised.' 'I **didn't** know it was called that, Sir.' 'But I **expect** you've realized by now what it does.'

Just by looking at the bolded modal verbs, readers can determine that this passage involves profound emotions due to the use of high modality verbs. It positions Dumbledore as the authoritative teacher as indicated by his having high expectations (as indicated by the high modal "expect") of Harry. Dumbledore is established as a sympathetic, gentle and caring teacher when he states, 'Strange how near-sighted being invisible **can** make you.' His use of low modality keeps the question from seeming threatening. Harry is also positioned as the student through his ignorance indicated by high modal phrases such as "hadn't noticed," "didn't see," or "didn't know," showing how much he has yet to learn. The modality analysis of this passage reiterates the positive mentor/mentee relationship with Dumbledore's high expectations and gentle questioning and Harry's admission of his lack of knowledge, but desire to learn, about the wizarding world and magic in general.

## 4 Methodology

### *4.1 Research Context*

This study took place over a four-month period in a suburban public high school in the Southeast of the United States. The action research study involved three sections of Advanced Placement (AP) language and composition classes for a total of 60 students. Out of these 60 students, there were 41 females and 19 males, meaning males were outnumbered in each class two to one which does not represent the 50–50 male to female ratio of the school. The racial demographics of my students were 40% minority, with nine African American students, 11 students who identified as Asian American, four Latina/o American students, and 36 European American students. The participants generally represented the norms of the high school in that they identified themselves as middle class and were accustomed to using the English-dominant norms of academic discourse. Similar to all high school teachers in public education contexts, I was directly influenced by exams and organizational standards (such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)/International Reading Association (IRA) standards, and College Board Advanced Placement (AP)) in my curriculum development and implementation.

Therefore, when I decided to incorporate critical SFL into my classroom, I had to consider how it could be implemented so as to cover the required standards and meet the expectations of the CCSS, NCTE/IRA, and College Board. In 2009, the United States government encouraged states to adopt the CCSS, claiming that lack of standardization was causing a decrease in college and career readiness. The AP language and composition exam, which consists of multiple choice questions related to reading passages and three essay questions, is considered high stakes because the student's score (1–5) determines if the student receives college credit for the course.

AP language and composition standards set by the College Board emphasize expository, analytical, and argumentative writing and focus on rhetorical choices and the connection between grammar and style.

### *4.2 Data Collection and Analysis*

My teacher action research study combined participant observation and discourse analysis methods to explore how 60 of my students appropriated SFL linguistic tools to critically question language use in various texts. Data collection methods included field notes, classroom supplementary materials, students' written work, projects, and SFL practice as well as reflections, family dialogue journals, audio-taped student presentations, and audio-taped classroom discussions. In addition, a verbal protocol analysis was used on seven focal students, five girls and two boys, representative of my student body. I worked alongside my students as they learned how to conduct an SFL appraisal analysis, identification analysis, and modality analysis. In addition, I observed students' engagement with various genres as they used their new language analysis tools, and I employed discourse analysis methods to code and find evidence of: students' developing critical consciousness, enhanced language awareness, confidence utilizing SFL tools, and improvements in their language use.

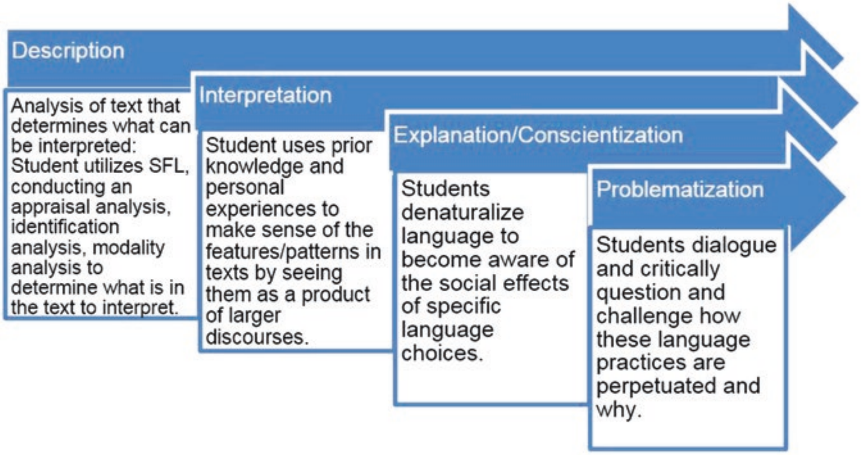
While analyzing data for how SFL assisted in developing students' critical consciousness, I coded students' work, their protocol analyses, and discussions; I also took note of how discourse analysis helped students recognize and discuss critical themes. When analyzing these themes, I focused on how students' understanding of the interpersonal metafunction assisted them in deepening critical awareness. Furthermore, I conducted a discourse analysis on students' academic writing to investigate whether discourse analysis instruction supported an expanded set of linguistic repertoires, and if and how students used their new language analysis tools to answer Advanced Placement (AP) exam questions regarding authors' use of language.

## 5 Pedagogical Context

Informed by a critical perspective on literacy and language (Fairclough 1989, 1992; Freire 1986) the purpose of my curricular design was to encourage middle and high socio-economic students to investigate how language can negatively affect members of society. To accomplish this aim, I used Bruner's (1963, 1968) spiraling method when introducing texts and resources of SFL. A spiral curriculum structures information so that complex ideas are first introduced in a simplified manner and grow in complication as they are re-visited and taught again at increasing levels of difficulty, eventually leading students to independent problem solving. Through this type of slow scaffolding, students began to use their newly acquired discourse analytic resources to evaluate not only the ideologies in literary texts but also in contemporary texts that were informed by similar middle class ideological premises as the students' own texts. Figure 1 below shows how my pedagogical approach was also informed by SFL literacy research and praxis (Macken-Horarik 1998, 2003; Rothery and Stenglin 1994, 2000), and my pedagogical cycle was modeled after Rothery and Stenglin's (1994) teaching and learning cycle (TLC).

Furthermore, many of the charts that students used in coding texts were derived from Humphrey et al. (2011). Figure 2 below shows how this cycle was implemented in my classroom.

Students went through the phases of deconstruction with teacher and peer support in the form of teacher modeling, whole class coding, and analysis on practice passages. Joint construction was achieved with group projects in which students



Description

Analysis of text that determines what can be interpreted: Student utilizes SFL, conducting an appraisal analysis, identification analysis, modality analysis to determine what is in the text to interpret.

Interpretation

Student uses prior knowledge and personal experiences to make sense of the features/patterns in texts by seeing them as a product of larger discourses.

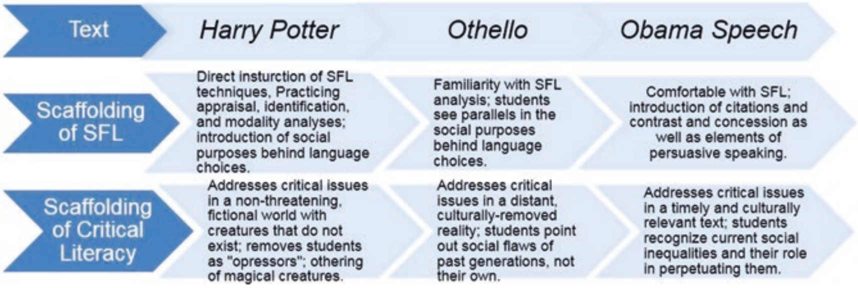
Explanation/Conscientization

Students denaturalize language to become aware of the social effects of specific language choices.

Problematization

Students dialogue and critically question and challenge how these language practices are perpetuated and why.

**Fig. 1** Scaffolding of SFL and critical literacy by text



| Text | *Harry Potter* | *Othello* | *Obama Speech* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Scaffolding of SFL | Direct insturction of SFL techniques, Practicing appraisal, identification, and modality analyses; introduction of social purposes behind language choices. | Familiarity with SFL analysis; students see parallels in the social purposes behind language choices. | Comfortable with SFL; introduction of citations and contrast and concession as well as elements of persuasive speaking. |
| Scaffolding of Critical Literacy | Addresses critical issues in a non-threatening, fictional world with creatures that do not exist; removes students as "opressors"; othering of magical creatures. | Addresses critical issues in a distant, culturally-removed reality; students point out social flaws of past generations, not their own. | Addresses critical issues in a timely and culturally relevant text; students recognize current social inequalities and their role in perpetuating them. |

**Fig. 2** Cycle of curriculum assignments per text

performed appraisal, identification, and modality analyses on large passages of fantasy, fiction, and nonfiction texts, and presented their analysis by engaging the class in dialogue. Independent construction was accomplished when students used what they learned from their language study to write AP exam textual analysis essays (Rothery and Stenglin 1994). The final goal of Rothery and Stenglin's (1994) learning cycle was to support students in developing a critical orientation to the text. The findings presented below show how students obtained a critical orientation through their ability to use SFL analysis tools to question the purposes behind specific language choices.

## 6 Findings

This chapter covers two major findings of the study as they relate to underlying questions set out in the introduction to this study. First, analysis of the data showed that the critical SFL instructional framework supported the critical questioning and evaluation of language by providing students with the metalanguage and analysis tools to find linguistic evidence to support claims. Second, student awareness deepened over time and presented itself in student academic writing and dialogue, and that this awareness has continued to develop after the students graduated from high school.

### *6.1 Critical Questioning of Language Using Discourse Analysis*

Most students were able to use the results of their appraisal, identification, and modality analyses to question the social purposes behind specific language choices in *Harry Potter*, *Othello*, and Obama's Speech in Cairo.

For the *Harry Potter* project, students were asked to choose an article addressing a critical issue in the novel (e.g. racism, classism, sexism) and perform an SFL analysis of excerpts from the text to assess whether Rowling's language supported or disproved the secondary source author's claims about the novel. In the following example, focal students Grace, an outgoing, European American red-head, and Isabelle, a popular self-proclaimed "Army brat," analyzed excerpts from the novel to see if their discourse analysis of linguistic patterns supported Elaine Ostry's (2003) claims in "Accepting Mudbloods: The Ambivalent Social Vision of J.K. Rowling's Fairy Tales." The article is generally critical of Rowling's "color-blind attitude" (p. 94) and her perpetuation of "stereotypes of the fairy tale" (p. 95). The students performed an appraisal analysis of a passage where Draco Malfoy described the character Hagrid, a half-giant, and therefore non-human magical creature (Key for below: affect is in **bold**; judgment is underlined; appreciation is in *italics*):

> 'Yes, exactly. I heard he's *a sort* of **savage**—lives in a hut on the school grounds and every now and then he gets **drunk**, tries to do magic, and ends up setting fire to his bed.' (Rowling 1997, p. 78)

When explaining their analysis, the students stated that they coded the words "savage" and "drunk" as both affect and judgment words. They claimed that they were affect words because of the negative emotions of fear and disgust that are connoted with the words. They also stated that these were direct judgment words, showing Malfoy's criticism of Hagrid and anyone who associated with him. The girls further explained that they viewed the words "hut," "tries," and "ends up" to be implied judgments because they supported the picture of Hagrid as a "savage" and focused on Malfoy's belief that Hagrid was not worthy of magical ability because he was unable to perform it like the trained students and teachers of Hogwarts. The amplification of the word "savage" with the appreciation "sort of" does further injustice to Hagrid. The students claimed that he did not even receive the respect of being called a "whole" of anything—his existence is diminished. Malfoy stated that he is "sort of a savage" which showed his ignorance and lack of interest in determining the truth about Hagrid, his life, history, and magical ability.

Grace and Isabelle's appraisal analysis, to their chagrin as they were hoping to find otherwise, did support Ostry's criticism of Rowling that she supports the stereotypes of fairy tales. In this passage, the stereotype is of giants (and other "non-magical" creatures such as merpeople, goblins, house elves, etc.), as being ignorant and animalistic. However, the students pointed out that throughout the series, Hagrid was supportive and "a good friend of Harry's" which goes against the stereotype "in a way," but that there was nothing *they found* in the text where an appraisal analysis provided a counterclaim to this portrayal of Hagrid. In fact, the students pointed out that there was no reason why Hagrid needed to live in a hut—he could have lived in the castle with everyone else. Placing him outside the "civilized" castle further supports Rowling's intention of othering him in a negative way. Here, SFL analysis did not show any authorial intent of encouraging readers to sympathize with Hagrid, but instead, revealed a harmful stereotype.

Using appraisal analysis, students were able to question a critic's claim by analyzing the primary text. Because of their love of the text and the author, the students hoped to find that the critic was wrong and that Rowling did not support stereotypes. However, after assessing Rowling's language regarding a subjugated magical creature, students found that Ostry was correct in her criticism. In this case, SFL allowed students to look past their own biases as Harry Potter lovers and analyze the language which led to further critical questioning of Rowling's intentions behind isolating and othering Hagrid.

For students' *Othello* (Shakespeare 2002) project, each group was assigned one act of the play to conduct an appraisal analysis, identification analysis, and modality analysis. Students were to create a handout and present their findings to the whole class. The example below looks at the identification analysis of Clara's group on Act I. Clara, another focal student, was a bright-eyed daughter of Nigerian immigrants. Clara's group focused on the power relationships between the characters, finding

**Table 2** Excerpt from students' *Othello* Project: identification analysis

| Identification analysis: |
|---|
| Iago: In Act 1, Iago refers to himself as "I" 49 different times, which shows he is authoritative in his speech, and also that whenever he speaks it usually pertains to himself or what he wants others to do for him. |
| Roderigo: Roderigo also focuses on himself and what he wants, much like Iago, which is represented by his use of "I" 12 times in Act 1. Also, Roderigo uses "we" about five times in the act to highlight the importance of his dependence upon the relationship that he and Iago share. |
| Brabantio: Brabantio is often referred to as "sir" or "signor" (16 times within the act), therefore this shows that he has a high rank in society, and he serves as a well-respected man. In Act 1, he uses the pronoun "you" 16 times when referring to Roderigo and Iago, which shows that he lacks respect for the two characters. |
| Othello: Othello is given numerous names within the act. He is referred to as a "Barbary horse", "black ram", "gondolier", "thief", and "an abuser of the world, which all characterize him in a derogatory and secluded manner. Othello is referred to as "the Moor" seven times in the first scene alone, which emphasizes the importance of his race, and how this characterization of color sets him apart from the rest of the characters in the play. The use of "I" by Othello represents his authoritative presence. |
| Desdemona: Within the first act, Desdemona is often referred to as "she" or "daughter". The lack of the use of her name shows that there was a patriarchal society set in the play. The lack of use of Desdemona's name makes her seem less important or an afterthought when compared to the male characters. |
| Duke: The duke is often referred to as "the duke" or "he", which shows that the characters respect his power and authority |

that their identification analysis revealed which characters were respected more than others. For example, their handout (See Table 2) stated that "Roderigo uses 'we' about 5 times in the act to highlight the importance and his dependence upon the relationship that he and Iago share" and that "Brabantio is often referred to as 'sir' or 'signor'; therefore, this shows that he has high rank in society, and he serves as a well-respected man." Similarly, they stated that "Othello is referred to as 'the moor' seven times in the first scene alone, which emphasizes the importance of his race, and how this characterization of color sets him apart from the rest of the characters in the play" and "within the first act, Desdemona is often referred to as 'she' or 'daughter.' The lack of the use of her name shows that there was a patriarchal society in the play."

When presenting their results, Clara's group led a discussion on the social implications of Shakespeare's chosen identifiers. Students recognized that the purpose of calling Othello "the Moor" was to separate or "other" him because of his race. Two students, Miguel and Michelle, both of Hispanic descent, explained how they identified with Othello.

Miguel: I think this whole thing about the Moor and calling somebody by their name I think is more of attacking the race and making them a representative of their entire race. And so by calling Othello 'the Moor,' it is like making Othello represent all black people.

Amber: And how do you think that makes him feel? I mean can you imagine speaking for an entire race of people? Has anyone ever felt like they've been in a position like that before? Like being the only girl in the group of boys and feeling like everything that you said was a representation of what girls think? Or Hispanics or African-Americans or whatever the situation?

Miguel: Yeah. When I was in preschool, I was the only Hispanic kid in my class

Amber: Was there a sense of pressure that came with that?

Miguel: Yeah, there was a sense of it, but it's something that you get accustomed to.

Michelle: Yeah, I would say that it's kind of like labeling him one thing. It's probably not just a Moor. It's like calling all Hispanics 'Mexican.' You do that to somebody who was not Mexican. I mean it's not offending any Mexicans, it's just that there are other countries in South America that people originate from.

Miguel: Has anyone ever heard someone call the Spanish language 'Mexican'?

Michelle: Yes! I've heard people call Chinese 'Asian' too.

Miguel: Yeah, I mean there are different dialects of Spanish depending on where you'refrom, like, in certain areas of Mexico the Spanish there is different.

Michelle: Yeah, it's like European English and then American English.

Blaire: Yeah, but going back to Othello feeling like his talking for everybody, I feel like the more Iago called him 'the Moor' the more pressure it put on him. Because he knew he'd find a flaw, and you know you have one if someone keeps calling it out over and over. It was to break down Othello and by emphasizing his flaws, I think it's speeding up the process instead of calling him by his name which doesn't really do anything. (*Othello* discussion, March 9, 2012)

In this portion of the discussion, two Hispanic students, Miguel and Michelle, verbalized their understanding that calling Othello "the moor" othered Othello by making him feel like the sole representative of his race. Based on Miguel's observation, I probed for more explanation asking the class if anyone had experienced something similar to Othello's racial othering. It was no surprise, based on his comment, that Miguel did have such an experience. Michelle also shared her experience of being called Mexican when she was, in fact, Central American. Moving the conversation to language, they pointed out people's lack of knowledge about the Spanish language and its varying dialects. While the two Hispanic students shared this conversation, the rest of the class listened to their experiences. In a dialogic move, Blaire related Miguel and Michelle's experiences with race back to *Othello*. Her move showed how SFL identification analysis led to critical dialogue about the ramifications of language use that others someone because of a perceived social identity. In this case, students who occupied different spaces were able to explore their experiences and teach each other (Aronowitz 1998).

In the Obama project students were asked to conduct an SFL analysis on a portion of Obama's Speech in Cairo (The New York Times 2009), provide copies of the analysis charts for the class, and interpret and explain their findings. In this speech, Obama addresses a range of issues from religious differences to economic development and everything in-between. I selected this event because a modality analysis would support students in seeing how modality was used to construct the persuasive nature of the speech and also how Obama and through him, the West, sees itself as powerful and able to make demands on the Middle East.

Sandi, a quiet and reflective focal student, wrote a reflection on her group's analysis of modality (see below for the group analysis) and highlighted how Obama's use of modality assisted in his persuasive goal to make arguments by laying out the facts of "how it is." She stated, "His high modality usage makes his argument very persuasive. However, I think he exaggerates when it comes to laying out the facts of 'how it is' because he uses words like 'every,' 'all,' 'always,' and 'no single' to assume that *everyone* thinks and acts in the same way, but that is not the case." Below are the excerpts from the speech to which Sandi refers (the modals she identified are bolded):

> I do so recognizing that change **cannot** happen overnight. I **know** there's been **a lot** of publicity about this speech, but **no single** speech **ca**n eradicate years of mistrust, nor **can** I answer in the time that I **have** this afternoon **all** the complex questions that brought us to this point…We were founded upon the ideal that **al**l are created equal, and we **have** shed blood and struggled for centuries to give meaning to those words – within our borders, and around the world. We are shaped by every culture, drawn from **every** end of the Earth, and dedicated to a simple concept: E pluribus unum – "Out of many, one."…I also **know** that Islam has **always** been a part of America's story. The first nation to recognize my country was Morocco. (The New York Times, June 4, 2009)

Not only was Sandi able to pick out the authoritative language in her analysis chart (e.g. high modality and high force), she was also able to question its intention and validity. She pointed out that just because President Obama (aka the West) feels a particular way about something, it does not mean that all cultures agree. Instead, it is just Obama speaking as though this is so. Sandi also pointed out that Obama's use of high modality created an "all or nothing" mentality. She vocalized that "he is really sure in what he says about what America is and what their goals are." In response, her classmate, Tyler, explained that by doing this, Obama insinuates that everyone else's goals should be aligned with America's. Tyler said, "I think that a lot of what he showed me is kind of going with his role and how his focus would want to be most on including as many people as possible. He …. he is trying to include the rest of the world which is difficult because these are people we've had a conflict with." Clara agreed when she added "he's saying that it's not just the United States that needs to take action but the entire world should take action."

Through these comments, it is clear that the students were able to recognize Obama's persuasive intentions behind his use of high modality. While not all people and cultures may agree with his methods or plans, his use of absolute nouns such as "everyone" and "all" persuade people to align their thinking with his in order to be a part of the majority or humanity. His modal verbs such as "must," "will," and "know" suggest that the desires of the West will be fulfilled because such predictions leave no room for choice. They indicate that the West has the power to honestly persuade, or intimidate, others to agree. Through their modality analysis, students were able to see the "warning signs" that Obama might be exaggerating his argument through his use of absolute terms, and in turn, they could question the validity of his argument and the persuasive methods of the West. It is my hope as their teacher that as they demonstrated in their analysis of Obama's speech, these students will continue to question people in positions of power when hearing them use absolute terms.

## *6.2 Use of SFL in Student Academic Writing and Developing Language Awareness*

Another significant finding was that the students' developing language awareness was reflected in their writing. For example, some of them engaged in SFL analyses to answer AP exam writing prompts which I created to prepare them for state tests regarding authors' use of language. One example of their appropriation of SFL analyses outside our staged analysis of the Rowling, Shakespeare, and Obama texts was when they responded to a textual analysis prompt about a passage from Shadd Cary's (1854) editorial supporting the need for an abolitionist newspaper. I chose this prompt as a final writing assignment because it provided students with opportunities to make critical comments and use their SFL skills to critique the linguistic resources that made the essay persuasive.

Specifically, the Shadd Cary passage prompt asked students to "Read the passage carefully, considering the circumstances in which it was written. Then, in a carefully written essay, analyze the techniques Mary Ann Shadd Cary uses to establish the necessity of her newspaper" (College Board 2008, p. 23). In responding, Grace and Clara used SFL analysis tools to provide evidence of how Shadd Cary's linguistic patterns supported her writing purpose. In other words, enhanced meta-awareness was evident in my analysis of the students' writing (Christie and Macken-Horarik 2007). Recognizing that Shadd Cary chose plural pronouns for a rhetorical purpose, for example, many students chose to conduct an identification analysis to use as evidence for their claims. For example, Grace used the results of her identification analysis as proof that this choice was made on purpose:

> After conducting an identification analysis on this passage, it was discovered that Cary uses many plural pronouns. She uses 'we' 23 times, 'our' fourteen times, 'us' ten times and 'ourselves' two times. She uses these pronouns to elicit a 'we are all in this together' effect. She simply shows the power of her group, and how determined they are to make a change. According to her, they cannot be stopped.

Grace's identification analysis provided her with the empirical evidence necessary to show that this is a pattern in Shadd Cary's writing, therefore making it worthy of analysis and questioning.

During this final activity, after a semester long process, it became clear to me that students were beginning to transfer their understanding of SFL to other texts and contexts. Without prompting, about 80% of the students used specific SFL analysis tools to show how Shadd Cary manipulated her audience and exuded power through her use of the plural pronoun "we." They showed that similar to how Obama spoke for America when using "we," Shadd Cary did the same for the Freeman community. The fact that students used systematic analysis of the lexico-grammatical resources in the abolitionist essay to bolster claims they made supports my findings about student appropriation of SFL.

My analysis and comparison of students' bi-weekly writing practice for the AP exam, before and after the intervention, showed that students applied their knowledge of modality, identification, and appraisal to strengthen their arguments. For example, elements of our language study are present in Sandi's essay on animal testing. Her thesis statement read:

> Some sources may argue that animal testing is disrespectful to animals—a form of racism to a species different from their own. However, these sources are extremely biased in their opinions. They may consider morals and the suffering of animals, however they disregard the suffering of their own human race.

By comparing Sandi's application of appropriate modality, strong affect, judgment, and appreciation words in her animal testing essay written in 2012 with earlier essays in 2011, analysis revealed that as time progressed she increasingly used SFL to enhance the persuasiveness of her writing. In this way, Sandi recognized and valued persuasive writing language features (such as concession and contrast) and appropriated them in her own writing (Macken-Horarik 2006; Schleppegrell 2011). This finding also supports previous research from Harman's SFL-informed studies (2008, 2013) that concluded that familiarity with the functionality of language leads to improved writing and Humphrey et al. (2011):

> Students who can draw on resources such as modality, contrast and concession are better able to negotiate deliberate relationships with their listeners; and that those who have knowledge of how attitude is encoded, both implicitly and explicitly, are better able to read and create more analytical texts whose evaluations are more nuanced. (p. 159)

Finally, I present evidence from my continuing correspondence with several students who have graduated from the school, that their interest and use of a critical SFL approach is still developing, and that students are applying their knowledge outside of my classroom. After the study concluded, I received multiple emails from students who were involved in this curricular intervention informing me of how they were able to apply their SFL knowledge and analysis methods to their college classes and lives. For example, Clara wrote the following:

> We recently turned in our first essay in English, and I wrote about *The Declaration of Independence*, Frederick Douglass' "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?", as well as Whitney Houston's rendition of the national anthem. It was really interesting because while reading Douglass' speech, I would catch highly modal verbs or phrases, so it reminded me of your class and the work we did. (Clara, email communication, October 10, 2012)

Other students wrote, "I already blew my professor's mind with my knowing of SFL analysis" (Mary, email communication, September 11, 2012); and "I feel like my writing technique improved so much during your class because you taught me how to dissect passages on a whole new level. I've even impressed some of my professors by looking at things with SFL, it's practically ingrained in my conscience!" (Eve, email communication, September 6, 2012). Their emails serve to show how their use of SFL analysis tools have not been constrained to my classroom and that they have continued to apply them to their lives, both academic and personal.

## 7 Implications and Conclusion

Martin (2000) stated that “not much progress has been made with bringing discourse analysis and register analysis into schools by way of mediating and connection between grammatical meaning and genre” and that the next step in the development of a functional language curriculum is addressing “the problem of constructing functional grammar, discourse analysis, and register analysis as tools for teachers and students to use when relating language to the social, whether as part of literacy programs, or as subject-specific learning across the curriculum” (p. 120). This study has several implications for educators and scholars, like Martin, who are actively seeking ways of constructing a curriculum that focuses on the relationship between language and society.

For example, like other chapters in this volume, this study showed how students were capable and willing to learn and use a metalanguage to discuss the social implications of language choices. The SFL resources provided students with grounding for their critical observations, allowing them to revisit the language to check to see if their interpretation of the social meaning of language was correct in a specific instance. In addition, students’ SFL coding of textual patterns grounded our classroom dialogue in language analysis, keeping discussion focused on the critical questioning of the social effect of language choices and leaving little room for debate or off topic discussion that often defeats the critical goals of dialogue.

Finally, while fostering critical language awareness among students was a personal goal for my classroom instruction, the study demonstrates that students found SFL valuable when engaging in textual analysis on standardized tests, suggesting that adding a critical SFL approach to the ELA curriculum does not require the reinvention of the wheel. Instead, it is a much needed spoke that can help support the implementation of Common Core mandates and strict AP standards. Furthermore, there is nothing to suggest that this type of curriculum should be reserved for AP and gifted students. I look forward to seeing and implementing further work in this arena; researchers could adapt methods presented in this study in a variety of classrooms, making a critical SFL framework a part of mainstream ELA education so that students of all abilities and grade levels can reap the benefits of rich language analysis.

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# Critical SFL Praxis Principles in English Language Arts Education: Engaging Pre-service Teachers in Reflective Practice

**Mariana Achugar and Brian D. Carpenter**

**Abstract** This chapter describes a critical SFL praxis approach for English Language Arts pre-service teacher education that focuses on the development of conceptual tools to foster productive disciplinary engagement. Teachers need to develop an adaptive expertise to guide their decisions in the classroom. The appropriation of conceptual tools contributes to the development of adaptive expertise required by responsive teachers in multilingual classrooms. We present examples of the educational experience of pre-service teachers to illustrate how in these activities learners "use grammar to think" (Halliday MAK, On grammar and grammatics. In: Webster J (ed) On grammar: volume 1: the collected works of M.A.K Halliday. London, Continuum, pp 384–417, 2002 ). These activities incorporate the analysis, reflection, abstract conceptualization and application of authentic language use, *grammar in the wild*. Pre-service teachers see critical SFL conceptual tools in action and engage in analysis through supportive activities with expert facilitation. The conclusion provides an outline of the research project exploring the continuation of this teacher education during the practicum experience.

**Keywords** SFL critical praxis • English Language Arts • Grammar • Conceptual tools • Pre-service teacher education

## 1 Introduction

Research focusing on teacher quality, preparation, recruitment, and retention in the United States (e.g. Borko et al. 2008; Darling-Hammond and Youngs 2002; Tellez and Waxman 2005) suggests that most teachers and administrators have not been prepared to work with multilingual learners or to meet the demands of national standards. Recent statistics also document the academic underperformance of

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language minorities, (APA 2012), the under preparedness of students to read complex texts, and the high number of new teachers leaving the profession. The studies, indeed, present a problem and provide an opportunity for researchers to help understand and transform this situation. Most of this research also states that to improve the quality of instruction a major area of influence is pre-service teacher preparation. To enhance teacher quality there needs to be a systemic approach to the problem that provides long-term guidance and support to pre-service and in-service teachers (American College Testing 2006).

Teachers need to develop "adaptive expertise" (Darling-Hammond 2006) that will guide their decisions in the classroom and support their continued improvement. For this, they need conceptual tools that allow them to interpret their teaching-learning environment in new ways. Appropriation of conceptual tools contributes to development of the adaptive expertise required by responsive teacher professionals (Nocon and Robinson 2014, p. 93), which is becoming even more necessary as more districts begin adjusting their curricula to address the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Our aim is to provide ways to think about language and opportunities to design environments (Brown 1992) that foster productive disciplinary engagement in English Language Arts (Engle and Conant 2002) in multilingual classrooms and result in teacher development.

As of 2015, 43 states, the District of Columbia and four territories have adopted the CCSS for English Language Arts (ELA). The CCSS asks that students demonstrate independence "apply[ing] knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style when reading or listening" (p. 54) and to "adapt their communication in relation to audience, task, purpose, and discipline" (p. 7). This "knowledge of language" is very similar to the development of shared metalanguage, which Humphrey works with in her chapter in this volume. Further, the CCSS approaches language as understanding choices and in particular "general academic and domain-specific words and phrases" (p. 8). This focus on academic language, choice, and context aligns with a functional approach to language (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). As the Common Core continues to gain traction in schools, the need for educating pre-service teachers who can aid students in gaining "general academic and domain specific" language will increase.

However, to transform education it is not enough to prepare pre-service teachers for schooling in the image of existing standards of education, but instead to transform current practices and encourage reflective literacy skills for teachers and students alike. The first step in this process was the redesign of a course entitled *English Language Studies for Teachers*. In this course, we[1] propose fashioning a critical functional approach to language education by providing an educational experience for pre-service teachers that fosters their development of conceptual tools that they need to design critical language awareness instruction. In this educational experience, pre-service teachers can experience the type of education that they learn about in courses and become active participants in the construction of the learning environments. In this process, teacher educators/researchers collaborate with pre-service teachers to design pedagogies and reflect on youth's critical language development, where in-service teachers can then make teaching choices similar to the choices shown in Schleppegrell and Moore's work in this volume. 'Using grammar to think' (Halliday 2002) can be an entry point to provide pre-service teachers tools and experiences to engage in critical analysis of language. For pre-service teachers this allows for a focus on how the grammatical and lexical choices in texts are informed by the author's worldview. A critical language analysis focused on choices allows learners to situate understanding in grammar and meaning making potentials. To make sense of this approach, Elmore (2000 in McConachie and Apodaca 2010) discusses how teachers need to see these tools in action, and engage with this critical analysis through supportive invitations as well as with expert facilitation.

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[1] Both researchers have extensive experience in working with both pre and in-service teachers, in History, English Language Arts, and ESOL classrooms.

Our approach to critical systemic functional linguistics (SFL) praxis focuses on the explicit discussion of power issues in the context of a meaning based grammar instruction. The explicit conversations and conscious reflections about how meanings are made in contextualized ways allow us not only to provide access to metalinguistic tools to think about how meaning making resources operate, but also to highlight the unequal distribution of these resources. The next step in this process includes the design of activities that make motives, actions, and tools visible to relate language use to how it functions in the community. Finally, a meta-reflective space among the participants is fostered so we can explore how learning about language, and learning language can support learning about the world.

In the following sections, we describe the theoretical framework and guiding principles informing our work. Then, we present an example of an ongoing instance of critical SFL praxis in a teacher education grammar course in the United States and identify future areas for research and practice.

## 2 SCT and SFL: Teaching, Learning and Language in Context

In SFL, language is viewed as a social semiotic system, a meaning making resource with which we construct and refract the world (Hasan 1996a). This dialectic relationship between language and society is conceptualized as *register*, or the variation of language according to situation. Situational contexts are linguistically constructed through the correlative choices of lexico-semantic wordings that represent reality, enact social relations and organize information. This variation of language according to the situation occurs at two levels: one is related to the social activity and the other has to do with access users have to different registers because of differences in social position (Hasan 1996a). Meaning is refracted through social positioning; the unequal distribution of knowledge and language is connected to experiences people have which shape not only their possibilities to produce meaning but also their understanding of situations and ways of meaning (Hasan 2004).

A language system is a meaning potential that is validated by a community. Through its linguistic practices, its beliefs and through inter-subjectivity, a community validates formed meanings that are legitimized by other members of the community. This community valuing system suspends disbelief and takes as "natural" that which has been socially constructed. In the words of Hasan:

> This suspension of disbelief towards the linguistically shaped reality is capable of being disturbed only to the extent that within the language also lies the possibility of raising questions, of constructing arguments, of demanding proofs. For today's truths to turn into tomorrow's untruths, there has to be a conversation. (1996a, p. 23)

To make visible how language construes and reproduces particular social meanings and structures, we need to have a theory of learning that acknowledges the importance of human work in constructing the social. This particular view of language is directly related to socio-cultural theories (SCT) of learning that conceptualize it as apprenticeship into cultural activity systems. This means that learning as situated in a cultural activity system highlights the social and inter-subjective nature of *how* we learn (process) and *what* we can learn (content). Different forms of participation in communities socialize us into cultures, and language has a key role in this process.

The socialization process involves a push and pull between maintenance and reproduction of a community's practices and their change. From this perspective, it is possible to transform dominant meaning making practices and explore their history in relation to social actors involved in them. As Fairclough (1989) has pointed out, the teaching and learning of discursive practices can be approached from a critical stance that challenges naturalized ways of meaning and inquires about the history of particular practices in relation to power differences.

To transform current language education practice, to prepare pre-service teachers for the challenges of a changing educational context, and to contribute to students' critical language development, teachers and students need to create a systemic approach that deals with the interconnectedness and interrelated nature of these phenomena. Tsoukas and Hatch (2001 in Engeström 2014, p. 120) argue that complexity is not only a feature of the systems we study, but also the manner in which we organize our thinking about those systems. And while most research in education focuses on selective facets of these issues, we propose to explore them as parts of an integrated system from a cultural historical activity theory perspective (Engeström, et al. 1999; Rogoff 1990), in which activity and thought are linked through historical situated and social mediated activity.

In our teacher education work, we also take a socio-cultural approach to learning where development is conceptualized as a qualitative change in participation and an understanding that results from guided participation in a cultural activity (Rogoff 1990). This theory also foregrounds the importance of mediating tools –such as language– in the learning process, and provides a framework to document how concepts are appropriated in a particular setting. An important characteristic of this socio-cultural theory is that it acknowledges the agentive role of participants, including novice ones, in the transformation of an activity during the socialization process. This means that, in this socialization process for both researchers and teachers, the work of participants re-contextualizes and re-signifies the activity and its meanings.

In our work, we focus on introducing pre-service teachers to key conceptual tools and pedagogical strategies that can contribute to the improvement of critical language awareness in the ELA classroom. Based on guiding principles derived from previous research (Achugar and Carpenter 2012; Carpenter et al. 2015; Christie and Derewianka 2008; Gebhard 2010; Macken-Horarik et al. 2015; Schleppegrell 2004), critical language awareness lessons were designed to introduce pre-service teachers to core concepts about language from a functional perspective that can be applied to solving practical classroom based problems such as designing lessons, and to provide opportunities for students' critical engagement with texts. Our aim is to directly impact language teaching and learning while advancing the researchers and pre-service teachers' understanding of critical language development. We focus on the development of specialized academic language in ELA courses, in particular grammar as a tool for critical text analysis. The development of these meaning making practices involves student participation in activities that provide contextualized opportunities to use language in discipline-valued ways to meet the goal of constructing specialized knowledge about grammar (Achugar and Carpenter 2014, p. 4), while creating opportunities for reflection and questioning of these practices in connection to power differences and legitimacy in particular social groups.

We have synthesized the following guiding principles grounded in a functional approach to language and a socio-cultural view of learning-teaching and development:

- Critical language awareness in ELA needs to address simultaneously language as a meaning making resource potential and how social contexts condition the value of different meaning making resources.
- Making visible the ways in which a functional metalanguage is used in ELA provides teachers and students with tools to engage in 'disciplinary reading, writing and talk'.
- Engagement in practices such as close reading, rereading, inferencing, contextualization, exploration of ideas across texts, and meaning-based grammatical analysis contribute to the development of critical textual understanding.
- Teachers apprentice students into disciplinary habits of thinking by giving them opportunities to engage in text analysis providing scaffolding through inquiry, direct instruction, models and coaching.
- Teachers' learning about disciplinary concepts and tools is developed within an apprenticeship model grounded in current curricular needs.

In the following sections, we present an illustration of what this approach looks like in the classroom and then describe how this type of practice can become part of a teacher development trajectory by extending the work to the pre-service practicum experience.

## 3 Principles for Critical SFL Praxis in a Grammar Course

To make sense of this approach, teachers and pre-service teachers have to create ways of seeing it in action. Having a concrete experience with the concept within an activity, reflecting on it, abstracting or generalizing from experience and applying it to a new situation are discrete moments in the teaching-learning cycle of the experiential approach (Kolb 1984; Dewey 1938). The key to modeling the type of approach we want to see in school classrooms is to include a moment of praxis. This means that teacher education programs need to provide a space for teachers to experience lessons where critical language awareness and functional metalanguage are used to understand how meanings are made while reflecting on how particular interests and ideologies are embedded in texts with the goal to inform social action.

The following classroom examples come from a pre-service teacher education course that meets once a week for 3 h titled *English Language Studies for Teachers*. It is a core class in the requirements for ELA certification for a large public university in Pennsylvania. The course is comprised of juniors and seniors who are generally at the end of the class requirements and will be proceeding to their student teaching assignments within the next academic year. This grammar class has as one of its goals "effective grammar and language instruction aligned with scientifically-based research about language" where instruction is "inquiry-based and fosters multiple perspectives."

The following examples come from lessons conducted during the first 4 weeks of the focus class. There are multiple intended learning outcomes for these lessons, but we specially expect pre-service teachers to learn the following:

- Language is the way it is because of the functions it serves.
- Language use is a process of making meaning by choosing. Meaning is made by making choices from the community's reservoir (the system's potential).
- Description of language includes not only structure to understand its function in the clause (syntagmatic perspective); but also the analysis of the choices in relation to the system (paradigmatic perspective). In making a choice from a linguistic system, what someone writes or says gets its meaning by being seen (interpreted) against the background of what could have been meant (said or written) in that context but was not (Eggins 1994, p. 22).
- Language use occurs in context (situation and culture): A text is an instance of language and a situation is an instance of culture. The description of language needs to be placed in its social context.
- Language choices do not have the same value and meaning in society or for different social groups. Linguistic variation has ideological and power implications.

The course is organized around preparing teachers to work with "real life" language use and not only 'rules' or "proper language use". As a result, each lesson begins with an experiential activity where students analyze *Grammar in the wild*. This activity is designed to allow the teacher and students to bring examples of language that represent current usage or explore language choices they encounter outside the class. One of the pedagogical goals of this activity is to help the class' participants work with and understand how everyday language choices and academic language choices differ structurally, functionally, and in terms of their social value.

## *3.1 Constructing an Adaptive Expertise: Key Functional Language Concepts*

The scaffolded introduction to key functional linguistics concepts such as social semiotics, metafunctions, and register support the development of an adaptive expertise that teachers use to think *about* and *with* language in terms of meaning making in 'real life'. In this subsection, we provide illustrative activities of how we work with teachers to introduce these complex concepts in meaningful ways.

### 3.1.1 Grammar in the Wild I

The first activity to demonstrate and set up *Grammar in the wild* was based on a sign from the university's coffee shop, which reads: "Where the food is". Using a photograph of the sign, the teacher projects the text on the document camera (Fig. 1).

Dr. Carpenter, the teacher, starts the lesson by noting that the text "where the food is" is accompanied by a map showing the places on campus to eat. Then the class is asked to explain what the speech function is, whether it is an offer, a question, or a command. The class agrees that it is an offer giving information to the reader. Then, the group is asked about the function of "where" in that clause. Commentaries make reference to the fact that, generally, first position and capitalized words serve as the head of a question, but later on they point out that, in this case,

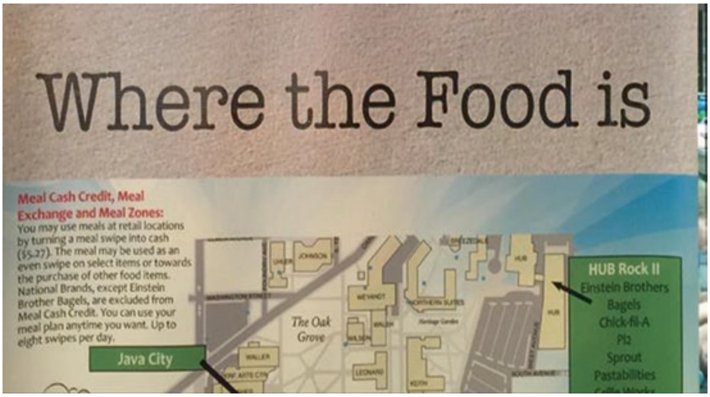
Where the Food is
Meal Cash Credit, Meal Exchange and Meal Zones:
You may use meals at retail locations by turning a meal swipe into cash ($5.27). The meal may be used as an even swipe on select items or towards the purchase of other food items. National Brands, except Einstein Brother Bagels, are excluded from Meal Cash Credit. You can use your meal plan anytime you want. Up to eight swipes per day.
Java City
JOHNSON
WASHINGTON STREET
The Oak Grove
WEYANDT
NORTHERN SUITES
WALLER
LEONARD
KEITH
HUB
SOUTH AVENUE
HUB Rock II
Einstein Brothers Bagels
Chick-fil-A
Pi2
Sprout
Pastabilities

**Fig. 1** Grammar in the wild activity

"where" is not a question. Others point out that the "is" is not in the interrogative position either, as in "Where is the food?" Then the class is asked to provide an alternative word to replace "where" without changing the core meaning of the clause. The class comes up with "the place" or "places" as alternative wordings with similar meaning. These noun phrases contain different types of words but serve the same function in the clause.

The discussion moves on to a short presentation about how, in order to understand how language works, we need to focus on more than identifying isolated parts of speech or looking at relations between words at the clause level (in a linear way); we also need to consider the other potential choices that could have been made in the same context. This paradigmatic framing contributes a focus on meaning as choices and as a part of a system. The main point of this activity is to reflect and abstract, from this example of authentic language use, how a functional approach to grammar can explain choices and meaning in relation to context and language potential. This short activity is designed to serve as an entry point into functional grammar and ways of thinking about language use as meaning making. In other words, the class, teacher and students alike, have an opportunity to practice making alternative choices which may or may not affect meaning; thus, creating a space where meaning potential can be discussed and evidenced with "real" language choices .

### 3.1.2 Experiential Learning: Social Semiotics and the Three Metafunctions

The following experiential activity aims to introduce students to the concept of metafunctions while recycling the previously introduced concept of language as social semiotic. These concepts build on the idea of language use as making meaning by making choices and provide a more delicate distinction of the types of meanings that are made through language: ideational, interpersonal and textual. In addition, our aim was to create an opportunity to experience how the meaning potential is substantiated in particular choices and how the meaning of a particular instance of language choice needs to be interpreted in relation to other possible meanings. Furthermore, this experiential activity demonstrates how the resources of the community are not the same as those of the individual, highlighting that we can all expand our meaning making repertoire. As described above, the experiential learning cycle begins with active experimentation where learners participate in a concrete experience. Then it continues with a reflection moment, followed by an abstraction that distills the significance of the experience and finally an application of that abstraction to a new context.

This activity involves understanding perspective in texts and audience. ELA teachers often ask students to consider audience in their reading and writing of texts. In this activity, the teacher instructs students to observe and take notes of what they see. They are told they will have to share their sentences. The teacher then proceeds to pick up a book from his desk and walks to the other end of the room, where it is placed on a different desk. When the action has finished, and the students have completed writing their sentences volunteers are asked to write them on the blackboard. In this particular instance, the students produce the following sentences: "The professor carried a book and placed it on the table"; "Brian picks up a book and drops it on a table"; "Dr. Carpenter picked up a book and placed it on the table"; and "The book was moved from the computer stand to the table". The teacher asks some guiding questions to support the reflection and analysis process. For example, "How are these sentences different?"; and "What are some specific word choices that are different across these examples?" The students quickly point out how the person doing the action is represented by different choices: "the professor", "Brian", and "Dr. Carpenter". They also note how verbs are different, and one student mentions that the determiners in the noun phrases are also different ("a table" and "the table"). The teacher then proceeds to begin the abstraction stage, where the class starts to consider what these different choices mean in terms of how language works. This abstraction process is directed by guiding students to notice the different types of meanings that are constructed: representation of experience, enactment of social relationships, and the organization of information. The discussion also highlights the importance of a paradigmatic focus to understand the significance of linguistic choices in context beyond "grammatical slots" or syntax.

The discussion is expanded, asking the class to consider whether what occurred or the experience itself is being represented in the same way. The students discuss how the lexical choices of "book" and "table" seem to show what the experience is about or include movement of a book by someone. When the students ask if the experience is happening in the past or now, they note that the verbs carry different tenses, which allows the discussion to focus on how time of representation of the event is a choice available to the meaning maker. In one example, "picked up" represents a completed action in the past, whereas the "picks up" and "drops" is representing as an ongoing or present choice. This exercise makes it clear to the students how our choice to represent reality through processes is open to variation even within the small event of putting a book in a different spot.

Next the students are asked to consider inserting different choices for the subject of the sentence, which is consistent across the sentences. And while all the provided examples are active voice, the grammatical subject choice changes across the sentences and the terms of reference, "Dr. Carpenter" or "Brian", for example, highlight differences in the social relationships being constructed in the choices. The class is asked to consider what these different choices mean. Students pick up on a power difference with the choice of "Dr. Carpenter" or "the professor" which both reveal a certain type of power structure. Both examples, they say, show how there is a difference between the writer and the subject of the sentence because the choice of "professor" probably means there are students around. The choice, they point out, of "Dr. Carpenter" helps to show deference or respect whereas, "Brian" helps to show familiarity and closeness with the person doing the action. This focus on the interpersonal demonstrates concretely how social relationships are encoded and enacted in our language choices. The professor points out the similarity in the point of departure choices ("Dr. Carpenter", "Brian", and "the professor") across the examples. There is also a different relation with the context as expressed through the choice of determiners “the table” vs. “a table” which imply that the audience shares a context to retrieve the referent or is familiar with it or not.

Reflections on the meaning of these choices are used to introduce the concept of metafunctions as three basic types of meanings that are simultaneously constructed in the grammar of the clause. The activity also helps highlight how a paradigmatic focus on language places an emphasis on choice and the variety of potential meanings that can be made in context. The configuration of choices in a clause realizes different ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. However, students are advised that the different types of meanings (ideational, interpersonal and textual) are realized by particular grammatical systems. For example, choices in processes, participants and circumstances will result in different representations of events. Variations in the mood system (e.g. declarative, interrogative, command) will enact different social relations. Or differences in the point of departure of a clause (i.e. Theme) will result in different organization of information.

This activity needs the direction of the teacher to begin to explore power, for instance. The difference in the choice of “Brian” versus “Dr. Carpenter” is a choice most students and teachers have spent little time considering. This classroom activity provides a chance to see expertise in action, by noting that there is even a difference in the choices, and by practicing the explanation for the difference by both teacher and student. This apprenticeship into the role of language expert is explicit in this activity and needs to be supported through the variety of courses in which pre-service teachers participate.

### 3.1.3 Grammar in the Wild II

The last example in this section comes from a *Grammar in the wild* activity addressing language variation in terms of register and dialect (Halliday 1964). For this activity, the professor writes the following sentence on the board, “The money will go to my cat who needs fed”, which he explains was found on a sign next to a musician busking on a neighborhood sidewalk. The sentence is written on the board with the guiding question, “What are some grammatical ideas we can discuss in this example?” An answer that rises above them all is, “Western Pennsylvania”. And when asked to explain her response, the student says that there is a particular grammatical choice in the sentence that indicates that the writer, the busker in this case, is from Western Pennsylvania. Given that not all of the students are from this part of the state, the professor asks the student to explain herself, and she points out that the choice to use “needs fed” is particular to the Western part of the state, but maybe more particularly to the Pittsburgh region. She explains that, in Pittsburgh, one particular choice is to use “needs” with the base form or the infinitive without “to”. The student is able to rightly note that a particular change in grammatical structure occurs in this region, even if her marking of “‘fed’ as the base form” is in fact the past participle of “feed”. This “needs” plus past participle is a commonly used example of a marker of Pittsburghese (Johnstone 2013), although it is a feature also present in Scotch-Irish and in other dialects of the central Midwest. Next the professor asks whether the sign is unintelligible to the other readers. No one in the class mentions that the choices interfere with meaning, but some express their dislike of the choice, or their consternation with the writer for subjecting them to Pittsburghese. This leads to a discussion of linguistic variation in relation to identity: language varies according to the user's history and thus can be associated with a particular group membership, and certain ways of using language index stigmatized identities.

As a follow-up to this discussion of identity, the professor questions the original choice. He asks, "To what extent do you think this choice would be valued in schooling?" To which the majority of the students exclaim that it would not be a very valued choice in most schooling contexts, but they acknowledge that the choice makes the intended meaning. Here, the conversation focuses on how the choices we make in everyday life, generally, make meaning with listeners or readers, but also how these choices also may not be valued in a different context such as a schooling context. The discussion focuses on who has the power to decide which choices are appropriate or inappropriate for particular contexts.

The end of the conversation is a *step back*, which allows the class to reflect on the choice of the particular activity and what it means for the class' learning. This then allows the teacher an explicit moment to mark the *Grammar in the wild* example as one chosen to highlight variation in choice depending on users' group membership, and that the "needs fed" could in fact be perceived by some as a stigmatized marker or not valued as an appropriate choice in an academic setting. The reason why these particular non-standard varieties need to be "championed" lies in the social divisions hidden behind 'fashions of speaking' (Hasan 1996c). The fashions of speaking that count as 'appropriate' or as an index of success are the ones that the socio-economic institutions of middle classes help to maintain and legitimize. In the classroom context, questions such as the following galvanize reflection among future teachers: What is our role as language teachers when encountering variation in language use? Is it enough to claim all ways of making meaning are legitimate? How can power differences between ways of speaking be addressed in the classroom?

Each of these activities is designed to allow the students an opportunity to see language in action and to engage with and use the concepts outlined earlier. The final step of the experiential cycle, application, is realized through work done in class: designing lessons using the concepts learned in the course.

This last step provides the pre-service teacher with a particular learning environment where they can apply some of the ideas on their own and test them in practice. This component of the cycle is carried out at both the micro level with small activities planned in class and with collaboration with others, to make use of a community's shared understanding. In addition, it is carried out at the macro level with a final project, which asks students to create lessons for use in their classrooms, which highlight the ideas presented in class.

### 3.1.4 Extending the Concepts to New Situations

The final curricular module of the course asks the students to create grammar lessons focusing on grammatical choices based on real texts. The lessons are designed by a group of two peers who then implement them in their classroom, and write up a reflection on the engagement, rigor, and potential usefulness of the lessons. The students are asked to consider "Context of Culture, Context of Situation, Genre, Register, Metafunction and Grammatical Choices" as they create their lessons. While we cannot hope to present the 24 plus lessons the students created, we will present examples that are representative of the types of work the students produced.

First, each group selected excerpts from valued English Language Arts texts such as *The Scarlet Letter, To Kill a Mockingbird,* and *East of Eden*, to name just a few. These choices help ground the work in texts that are both complex and familiar to students. All but two of the 15 lessons framed the text under examination as a series of choices. The directions asked hypothetical students, for example, to find passive verb constructions, note the clauses they occur in, change them into active, and reflect in writing on the question, "Does the meaning change? Why or why not?" In another lesson, students were asked to "underline the modal verb forms and change out the modals with other modals and write a few sentences about how or if meaning changes." This focus on the paradigmatic nature of grammatical choices is a class theme that resonates throughout the lessons. The lessons ask potential students to not only understand and note form, but to also then focus on the choices available to the original author, and to try to uncover how the author's particular choice functions in the text presented by juxtaposing other possible choices available within the system. In performing these types of interactions around and with texts, the student practices mirror the disciplinary work that literary interpreters do when they engage with texts. Though a few activities in a few lessons also reduced the student role to simply identifying parts of speech.

A second feature that was present in a majority of the pre-service teacher lessons was a focus on using metalanguage as a part of the work. For example, potential students were asked to locate the "grammatical subject" or "finite verb" in a sentence or to explain whether a particular clause was a fragment or grammatically coherent. Another lesson asked the students to "highlight five clauses and identify the subject and predicate in the matrix", which is Craig Hancock's (2005) term for the main clause in simple, complex, or compound sentences. Students were directed to explore "the mood of the sentence" and label whether they were "declarative, interrogative, imperative [or] subjunctive" and then to "think about different genres" and "what [do these choices] say about the genre of this excerpt?" Another lesson noted, "we studied in chapter 6 'Transitivity: Clause as representation'" and it asked students to "locate the verb in the verb phrase and then tell us what type of process and meaning that the verb convey[s] in the clause." Such lessons begin to ask students to engage with metafunctions through their structural realizations and provide both teacher and student with a language to talk about language.

This language about language is necessary in the work of examining choices and engaging in interaction around the interpersonal or ideational positioning that our language choices enable. And while any explicit questions about the power relations exhibited in the texts is missing from these lesson plans, the groundwork seems to have been laid for the discussions to at least begin. As these teachers move out to their internships and student teaching in the next semester, they will have a small bank of potential lessons to implement in their teaching situations. But more than that, they have directly experienced a set of concepts that constitute a critical functional view of and form to work with language in context. Each of these teachers has different university mentors, but the ones that continue with the teacher of this course have, as a part of their mutually constructed repertoire, a mutually shared way of talking about and approaching work with texts and writing in the ELA classroom. The interactions which will occur in their secondary ELA classrooms can be grounded in this critical SFL praxis approach. This series of experiences will hopefully contribute to the development of an "adaptive expertise" that is based on basic concepts about language as a meaning making resource, which will guide and support their decisions in the classroom.

## 4 Discussions and Implications

Engaging in practices that construct knowledge and understanding in reflective ways makes visible our active participation in the construction of our world. For example, exploring the meaning of grammatical choices in the *Grammar in the wild* activities can provide linguistic evidence for the development of arguments to challenge the unequal distribution and valuing of non-standard or non-dominant ways of making meaning. These arguments can in turn inform the design of language lessons where learners engage in a grammatical analysis that serves meaning making and enables a critical understanding of our world. The collaborative exploration of linguistic practices that contribute to cultural and social reproduction and change requires continued reflection and planning. The main goal in such critical language praxis is to question the social and theoretical conditions of possibility that make these discursive practices and their function possible (Bourdieu 2006). Inquiry into the mode of production and circulation of discourses through time provides a systematic approach and analytic strategies to work with texts and their interpretation to inform future action.

### *4.1 Reflection*

The reflective approach to the analysis of meaning making enables language users to understand their role in the reproduction of discursive practices, which construct unequal social organizations of spaces. As Hasan (1996c) states,

> we not only use language to shape reality, but we use it also to defend that reality against anyone whose alternative values might threaten ours. But, if language can be used to defend a reality, then by the same token, it can be used to examine the very reality created by it. Such examination is not to be found in habitual thinking and behavior. It can only arise by the disturbance of daily habits and communal beliefs. (p. 34)

Understanding that individual-to-individual interaction constitutes part of a larger relation among groups to which the pre-service teachers belong makes visible to them the processes through which the use of language is involved in our construction of society. Social relations are embodied in particular linguistic and cultural practices that have to do with historical trajectories, which are key to constructing a sense of self as agent. The analysis of the dialectical relationship between language and society transforms ELA teaching-learning into a political space where we explore the construction of inequality through language and the representation of social inequality in language.

## 4.2 The Importance of a Theory of Language

Socio-semiotic theory of language foregrounds the connections between language and society; according to Halliday (2002) meanings are created in contexts of function. Language constitutes social processes and the social order transforms experience into meaning: knowledge. But language also enacts social processes and social order through meanings: constituting action. The integration of knowledge and action transforms events into information. “Every instance of semiotic practice – every act of meaning– involves both talking about the world and acting on those who are in it” (Halliday 2002, p. 391). This view of language comes with a particular ‘logic of grammar’ that enables us to explore the meaning potential (system) in relation to the acts of meaning (instance), linking the community’s semiotic resources to the individual’s language choices. Cultures have semiotic styles (Hasan 1996b) and these include not only ways of saying, but also ways of doing and being. However, cultures are not homogenous and neither are their semantic styles or ways of meaning. “Different ways of saying reveal different orientation to orders of relevance –their examination shows how the semantic universe of two communities may not be identical” (Hasan 1996b, p. 240). Developing a sensitivity or awareness to differences in ways of saying and ways of meaning across and within cultures can foster an appreciation of the ‘other’. These different ways of saying are different ways of meaning; they make different meanings (Hasan 1996b). Exploring why these differences exist and how they came to be can help us understand the different value and use they have in particular contexts.

This focus and time commitment to detailed work with and around texts to understand *what* meanings are made, *how* those meanings are made and *whose* interests they serve can also be justified from a socio-cultural perspective. Knowledge that learners have worked to understand is a type that will be available to them to build on in the future (Resnick 2010). A teacher education program where pre-service teachers actively reuse knowledge on a regular basis provides opportunities for deep learning. This approach to teaching and learning requires that we work together to enact and design teaching experiences that evidence critical disciplinary thinking (Resnick 2010). This approach integrates habits of thinking and content knowledge that re-intellectualize teaching.

## 4.3 Praxis

The SFL critical praxis approach provides an entry point to think about teacher education and systemic change in a useful way. By targeting different planes of teacher education/learning simultaneously, systemic change has more possibilities to occur. These different planes of action include:

- Providing pre-service teachers with an opportunity to experience, as learners, the conceptual tools and pedagogical approach to SFL critical praxis.
- Collaborative design of lessons with teacher and peers using conceptual tools to solve a practical problem (designing disciplinary literacy lessons) during the semester.
- Enculturation of pre-service teachers into core conceptual tools and practical strategies within the school context.
- Establishment of teacher learning communities including pre-service teachers, and teacher educators/researchers during the practicum period.
- Investigation of students' disciplinary literacy development at the end of each semester.

The following figure illustrates the iterative cycles for producing systemic change and productive disciplinary engagement (Fig. 2).

In this approach, research and practice cannot be separated. The teacher becomes a researcher of his/her own practice and works in collaboration with others to understand the impact of practice on learning and to inform future teaching-learning practices. Documenting this experience can bridge the traditional divide between research and practice to integrate them as praxis. This praxis approach incorporates "practitioners, who are actors in an intervention, and performers (among other persons) in empirical data, which are gathered ethnographically, in the context of daily practice" (Engeström 2014, p. 120). Reflective teaching and action research become part of the regular practice of teachers making the transformation of education part of everyday teaching practice.

## 4.4 Further Research

As part of a research agenda emerging from this approach to teaching-learning, the researchers will be exploring the following questions:

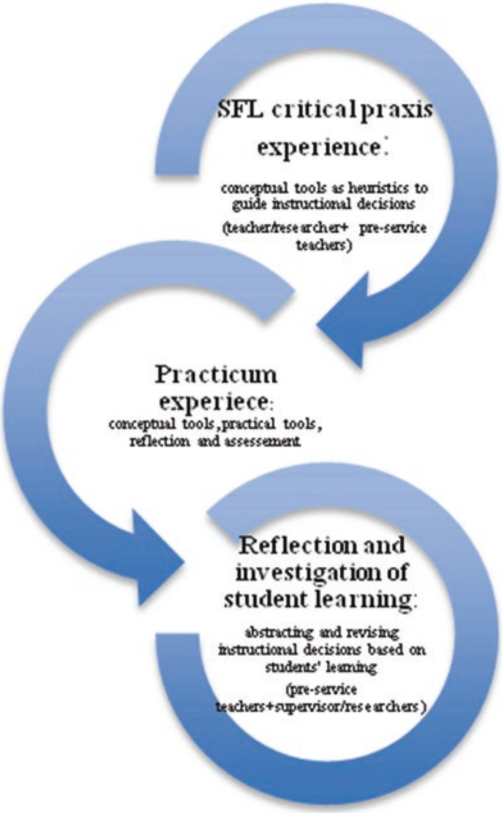
SFL critical praxis experience:
conceptual tools as heuristics to guide instructional decisions
(teacher/researcher+ pre-service teachers)
Practicum experiece:
conceptual tools, practical tools, reflection and assessement
Reflection and investigation of student learning:
abstracting and revising instructional decisions based on students' learning
(pre-service teachers+supervisor/researchers)

**Fig. 2** SFL praxis systemic change process

1. How does an integrated systemic approach to teacher preparation and development affect teacher learning and student learning?
2. To what extent does prolonged and sustained engagement with a functional approach to disciplinary literacy during the teacher training cycle affect the training cycle, classroom decisions, and teacher development of student teachers and mentor teachers?
3. What is the impact of a functional approach to teaching ELA disciplinary literacy on students' reading, writing and talk in the discipline?

We are currently documenting how the design and apprenticeship into teaching and learning that we have described here is appropriated by reflective practitioners in their everyday practices; those who have been socialized into concepts, metalanguage and practices that view language as a key resource in making meanings and shaping our worlds. To do so, we will track changes in the pre-service teachers' understanding and use of grammar as a way to critically engage with texts, and we will analyze teachers' shifts in language awareness and assessment (Macken-Horarik et al. 2015). We hope to provide empirical support for contextually relevant functional approach to grammar and language analysis that can contribute to the development of critical understandings of how language construes and reflects our cultures and societies.

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# Critical SFL Praxis Among Teacher Candidates: Using Systemic Functional Linguistics in K-12 Teacher Education

**Luciana C. de Oliveira and Mary A. Avalos**

**Abstract** Drawing on examples of how two teacher educators have developed a critical SFL approach to teacher education, this chapter discusses specific principles of critical SFL to guide analysis of texts in the content areas and planning instruction that integrates these principles. It shows how we have prepared elementary and secondary teachers to use CSFL to plan instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students, especially English language learners. The chapter concludes by providing some reflections on this process and a few guidelines for teacher educators to integrate this approach into teacher education programs.

**Keywords** Critical systemic functional linguistics • Principles of CSFL • English Language learners • K-12 Teacher education • Elementary teachers • Secondary teachers • Planning instruction

## 1 Introduction

During a time when the number of immigrants are increasing (Migration Policy Institute 2015), teacher educators have developed critical language pedagogies based on systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to support teacher candidates' move beyond deficit views of immigrant students and prepare them to focus on critical issues for this student population (e.g. Harman and Simmons 2014). This approach promotes teachers' appropriation of a "critical SFL praxis" that they can use in their own classrooms to support students in learning and challenging academic discourses. A critical SFL approach is important for all teachers, including non-specialist mainstream content area teachers, because it provides them with adaptive expertise (Darling-Hammond 2006) to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students, including emergent bilinguals (EBs) (Lucas and Grinberg 2008). Research shows that teacher education programs need to be more systematic in explicitly

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addressing linguistic diversity by thoughtfully integrating linguistic and cultural knowledge across courses, rather than using an add-on approach through which additional courses are added to the curriculum (Athanases and de Oliveira 2011; Bunch 2013; Galguera 2011; Lucas and Grinberg 2008).

This chapter presents examples of how two teacher educators developed a critical SFL approach to elementary and secondary teacher education to support teaching and learning of culturally and linguistically diverse students. We show how we have integrated this approach to teach teachers to analyze the discourse of different content areas, explore the shifts between everyday and academic registers and plan lessons that address language and content. Importantly, the emphasis is on validating the cultural and linguistic resources of students while also supporting their access to grade-level disciplinary literacies, and on uncovering the hidden assumptions and cultural values in the curriculum (see Avalos et al. 2015; de Oliveira and Schleppegrell 2015). We discuss specific principles of critical SFL that supports analysis of texts in the content areas and planning instruction that integrates these principles. We conclude by providing some reflections on this process and a few guidelines for teacher educators to integrate this approach into teacher education programs.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

Subject matter in schools is constructed in language that differs in significant ways from the language we use to interact with each other in daily life (de Oliveira and Schleppegrell 2015; Schleppegrell 2004). The classroom is a key place to offer opportunities to learn how language participates in constructing knowledge in different subject areas, especially for students without opportunities to develop this language outside of school. When learning in schools, students are simultaneously learning subject matter and the language that construes it. Teachers, therefore, must have a dual focus on planning for content learning and also providing students with access to the language of content texts. This is a tall order for many teachers, who may need support in seeing the role of language in disciplinary learning. In order to meet the challenges of this reality, teachers are advised to adopt pedagogical approaches that foreground the role of language in learning, including critical language awareness (Carpenter et al. 2015). Critical language awareness approaches, for example, emphasize how linguistic practices shape and are shaped by social relationships of power and highlight language as a significant aspect in learning content while drawing on discourses of power (Achugar and Carpenter, Chap. 5, this volume; Gee 2002; MacDonald and Molle 2015).

As the previous chapters illustrate, critical language pedagogies based on systemic functional linguistics (SFL) support teachers in focusing on socio cultural issues most pertinent for immigrant students (Harman and Simmons 2014; Khote, Chap. 8, this volume) and to accomplish disciplinary learning goals (Carpenter et al. 2015). A critical SFL approach draws on what Halliday (1993) describes as the three forms of language learning in school: *learning language* – first language or second language development, *learning through language* – learning content through language, and *learning about language* -learning about how language is used through the use of a metalanguage. *Learning about language* is often neglected in schooling (de Oliveira and Schleppegrell 2015) but is a key aspect of critical SFL, as it requires teachers to develop their own conscious knowledge of the power of using language in different ways. In addition, it requires teachers to develop a *metalanguage*, a language to talk about language, so they can discuss how knowledge is constructed in language in their content areas.

Critical SFL draws on systemic functional linguistics as a framework for analyzing how particular language choices construct the meanings within a text and how social contexts influence textual realizations (de Oliveira and Schleppegrell 2015; Halliday and Mathiessen 2004). SFL offers a pedagogical tool for teachers to analyze with students the network of lexico grammatical choices in a text that realize ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings. Through development of a metalanguage, in other words, students learn to read and write through the language and in the language of grade-appropriate curricular materials (Schleppegrell 2013).

## 3 Principles of Critical SFL to Guide Analysis and Planning

The critical SFL (CSFL) approach we developed in our teacher education courses is informed by SFL-informed projects conducted in Australia over the past several decades (e.g. Christie and Derewianka 2008; Derewianka 1991; Martin and Rose 2007; Rose and Martin 2012). Our approach adopts a similar perspective to these SFL linguists on language and content teaching and learning, but adapts it to the U.S. context by adding a focus on critical language pedagogies that emphasize how linguistic practices shape and are shaped by social relationships of power. This section shows the principles that inform our work.

**Principle 1: Language and Content Cannot Be Separated**
Content cannot be separated from the language used to express it. This enables us to recognize in research and teaching how disciplinary learning in school is dependent on language. Language is not the only means through which learning occurs, but it is certainly the most important element of learning, as *learning language* and *learning through language* occur simultaneously (Halliday 1993).

**Principle 2: Disciplinary Knowledge and Information Is Condensed Through Complex Clause Structures, Different from Students' Everyday Language**
Academic language constructs disciplinary knowledge in complex clause structures. Academic language, or the "language that stands in contrast to the everyday informal speech that students use outside the classroom environment" (Bailey and Butler 2002, p. 7) is difficult for all students; however, children are at different places in acquiring academic language, depending on how their home literacy practices align with school-based literacies (Cazden 1988; Heath 1983). The kind of

language students learn at school is different from ordinary language for communicative purposes (Schleppegrell 2004). In order for teacher and students to understand how disciplinary knowledge is constructed through academic language, they must know how to identify and use these complex clause structures. For example, academic language used to represent and teach subject matter dissociates actors from actions with the construction of "things" through the use of nominalization, a resource used in many academic and scientific genres (Halliday and Martin 1993; Martin 1993; Schleppegrell 2004; Unsworth 1999). Nominalization refers to the expression as a noun or nominal group of what would in everyday language be presented as a verb, an adjective, or a conjunction. Such grammatical metaphors are typical of academic discourse.

### Principle 3: Developing a Meaning-Based Metalanguage Enables Teachers to Recognize How Meanings Are Construed in Different Content Areas and How Power Is Expressed in Language

When teachers develop specific ways to talk about the interconnection of content and language with students, both groups can engage in analyzing the ways language is powerful in constructing knowledge and discussing how they can also participate in that construction (de Athanases and de Oliveira 2011; de Oliveira and Schleppegrell 2015). For example, Mr. Delgado, a history teacher in our project, used a graphic to help his students understand meronomy (Fig. 2), or *how introductory paragraphs generally begin with more global ideas, but narrow in scope across the following sentences to a specific thesis statement*. Meronomy, once visualized, described, and modeled with a mentor text, became the classroom term used to refer to this text structure, which was much more succinct and efficient than using its definition (in italics above). This also enables teachers to encourage a reflective attitude on the part of students and to help them recognize how language choices create meanings of different kinds, and the power of different choices (see also Harman, Chap. 1, this volume). Mr. Delgado also developed a chart for synonymy (Fig. 3), which supported students' use of synonyms while writing and helped them understand the importance of varying vocabulary to reduce repetition. By providing engaging activities that enable EBs to interact and build on their language resources, additional language resources are created via socialization into a community of learners around academic texts (Schleppegrell 2013). Thus, teachers can focus on how concepts are presented and developed, and give students tools for learning from other texts.

### Principle 4: A Genre-Based Approach to Writing Instruction Provides Guidance Through Interaction in the Context of Shared Experience

The notion of *guidance through interaction in the context of shared experience* (de Oliveira and Lan 2014; Rose and Martin 2012) based on an SFL genre-based approach is the driving force behind a "Teaching-Learning Cycle" (Martin and Rose 2005; Rothery 1996; Fig. 1). As discussed in previous chapters, the TLC can be recursive and repeated as students become more familiar with specific genres. The notion of building field at all phases is key. Building field refers to students' development of their knowledge of the content and context of particular texts. Students

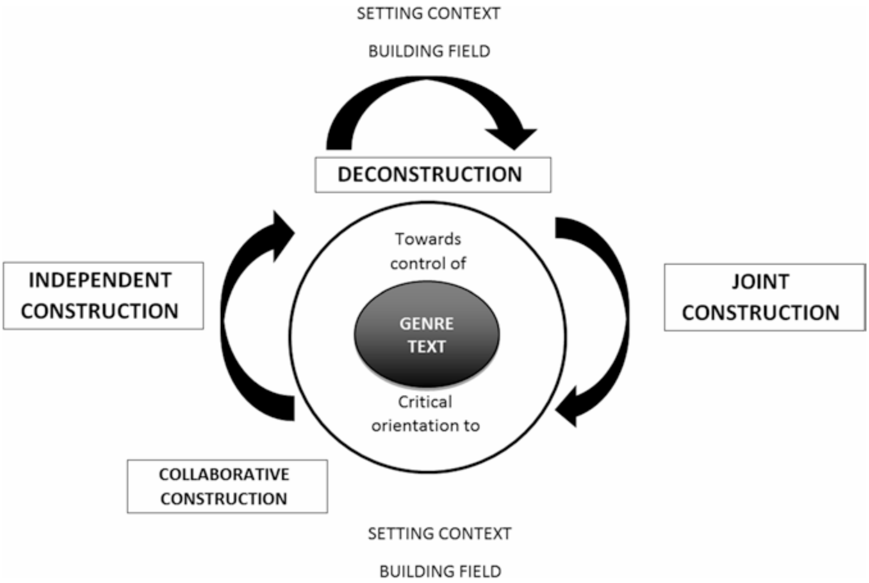

SETTING CONTEXT
BUILDING FIELD
DECONSTRUCTION
Towards
control of
GENRE
TEXT
Critical
orientation to
INDEPENDENT
CONSTRUCTION
JOINT
CONSTRUCTION
COLLABORATIVE
CONSTRUCTION
SETTING CONTEXT
BUILDING FIELD

**Fig. 1** Teaching/Learning cycle (Based on Martin and Rose 2005, p. 252; Rothery 1996, p. 103)

also build a critical orientation to text by not just learning about the genre but by being critical of its usage. Whichever phase is introduced first, the teaching-learning cycle aims to provide students with teacher interaction, guidance, and support as they go through these three phases.

**Principle 5: Disciplinary practicEs of Subject Areas Guide Instruction**
Different disciplines present unique challenges to students and teachers, and much of the challenge is semiotic (Avalos et al. 2015; de Oliveira 2013; Moschkovich 2010; Schleppegrell 2007). For instance, at the secondary level, history and other areas of the social studies are presented in textbooks and primary source documents in dense and abstract language. To learn history, students have to be able to read difficult texts, engage in discussion of complex issues, and write in ways that present their judgments and perspectives at the same time they report on what they have learned. Students need to be able not only to understand sequences of events and the roles historical participants played in those events, but also to recognize the authorial interpretation, which is an integral part of all historical reporting (de Oliveira 2010). One way to engage students with texts and social studies content is to use a disciplinary approach to teaching (Wineburg 1999); however, a disciplinary approach to teaching history requires critical thinking and reasoning (Massey 2015). In particular, a disciplinary approach asks students to use sourcing (evaluating the source's author or creator as credible or not credible), contextualizing (situating the source or document in time and place), and corroboration (systematically reviewing the sources to be sure they agree), which are important disciplinary skills for

learning history. Although typically these tasks are difficult for EBs, teachers may use SFL to understand and explicitly teach how language is used to make meaning in history and social studies texts, as well as to provide meaningful writing instruction when using the Teaching/Learning Cycle (Rothery 1996; Martin and Rose 2005). Doing so will ultimately provide the semiotic support needed to prepare and support EBs in sourcing, contextualizing, and corroborating.

### *3.1 The Principles in Action: An Example from Social Studies*

We now use examples from a graduate level Social Studies Methods course for secondary teachers who are pursuing a Master's degree in education to show how these principles have guided our work in teacher education. The focus for the course is the teaching and learning of literacies for social studies, while simultaneously focusing on social studies content knowledge. This example comes from Mary Avalos' collaboration with a co-instructor whose courses focus on social studies methods; both instructors are responsible for teaching social studies methods and they spend time planning each session together to incorporate literacy instruction within the teaching of the content, grounded in a disciplinary approach (Massey 2015; Wineburg 1999). This dual focus represents the principle that language and content are inseparable, which is reiterated throughout the course (Principle 1). The Master's program also includes a secondary reading course that utilizes applied linguistics, with SFL highlighted as a tool to assist with close reading in all subject areas.

Enrolled in both courses during the same semester, in-service teachers learn about SFL (i.e., functions of grammar, text structures, language features that make texts complex) and how to analyze texts in the reading course; in the Social Studies Methods course, they learn methods to assist them with applying SFL constructs to their teaching practice. In the reading course, teachers learn how to identify language features that make texts complex, specifically grammatical metaphor (e.g., nominalizations), elaboration, and Theme/New progression, and how these language features make academic language different from everyday language. In the Social Studies methods course, these SFL constructs are used to analyze disciplinary texts. In both courses, teachers are developing a meaning-based metalanguage that enables them to recognize disciplinary meanings in texts, and to identify relationships of power expressed through language (Principle 3). The metalanguage that the teachers subsequently develop with their students may or may not be the same as the SFL technical terms used in their graduate classes, but what is important is that EBs are given a metalanguage to talk about language (de Oliveira and Schleppegrell 2015; Schleppegrell 2013). This meta awareness of language organization and features empowers them to discuss and understand how meaning is created in academic texts.

In the Social Studies Methods course, teachers become familiar with the Teaching and Learning Cycle and use it to plan a lesson that incorporates a focus on SFL metalanguage and lexico grammatical features (e.g. nominalization) to support students in gaining disciplinary understanding through interactive conversations and shared experiences (Principle 4; see also Brisk and Ossa Parra, Chap. 7, this volume). When they are working on their curricular design through use of the TLC, Mary works closely with the teachers as they develop learning objectives related to building the field or knowledge of content, deconstruction, co-construction and independent construction of text, as well as selection of mentor texts and assessment criteria. Disciplinary practices, such as sourcing, contextualizing, and corroboration, are required practices within the lesson plan (Principle 5). Teachers are required to implement the lesson (i.e., carry out and teach the lesson plan) in at least one period with students, and share a five-minute video clip of their teaching with the class. Among other things, they are also required to submit masked student work samples at varying levels of proficiency (i.e., students above, at, or below grade level expectations) and write an extensive reflection on the lesson to identify how or if the lesson met all of the students' needs, and what might be done differently in the future to improve the lesson and better meet their students' learning needs.

An excerpt from a focal teacher's lesson is used in this section to illustrate how teachers enact and incorporate SFL in their social studies planning; specifically, in this instance, to teach students how to write introductory paragraphs for an essay assignment in a 9th grade history classroom. At the time Mr. Elias Delgado (pseudonym) enrolled in the methods course, he was a second-year teacher with a temporary state teaching certificate in the area of secondary social studies. Mr. Delgado taught in a large, urban Title I high school with 91% of students qualifying for the federal free/reduced lunch program. The high school serves high numbers of English learners (63%) that contribute to a culturally diverse student body of primarily Haitian immigrants with a growing Hispanic population; it is known locally to be a challenging teaching context. Despite these challenges, Mr. Delgado was very dedicated to his students and the teaching profession. In class, a great deal of time was spent discussing how best to make connections with students in such challenging contexts, not only to engage them with learning the content, but also to improve their academic literacies. The focal lesson (outlined in Table 1) was spread over three 90-min periods in two classes (periods 1 and 3), following a block schedule.

The next sections of the chapter will focus on Mr. Delgado's lesson's Day Three: Deconstruction and Co-Construction of Essay Introduction. When Mary conferred with Mr. Delgado during the lesson planning stage, he mentioned that his students had many difficulties with writing, including repetitive word usage. He also noted that students showed limited use of connectives across their texts. Therefore, Mr. Delgado decided to focus on the following three types of elaboration in text structure: meronymy (a constituent part of or a member of something), synonymy (alternative wording), and text connectives (transitional words and phrases that connect and relate sentences and paragraphs) in his explicit writing instruction.

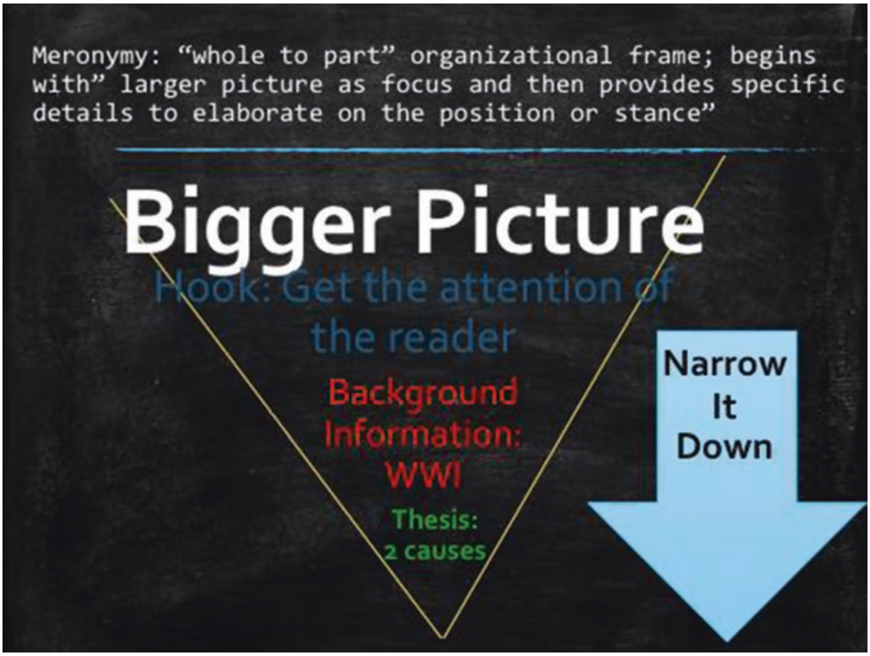
**Table 1** Overview of Mr. Delgado's History Lesson

| | |
|---|---|
| Problem to be investigated? | |
| *What were the underlying causes of World War I?* | |
| Content standards | |
| *Analyze the causes of World war I including the formation of European alliances and the roles of imperialism, nationalism, and militarism.* | |
| Mentor text | |
| *WWI and its underlying causes* | |
| Reading and writing standards | |
| Reading | *Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.* |
| Writing | *Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.* |
| How will you engage your students with the topic? | |
| *Students will be given seven strips of paper with reasons that nations go to war. They must list them in order of importance based on their opinion. The strips will have the following printed on them: Money/wealth; ideologies (i.e., democracy, communism); land (i.e., competition for additional land or to reclaim land lost previously); personal grudges (i.e., assassinations); religion (i.e., Christianity, Islam); military; other:* _________________. | |
| *Teacher will facilitate a discussion by asking groups to share their order of the reasons listed, including any "other" that were discussed.* | |
| Day one: Building the field | |
| *The teacher provided document based questions (the DBQ project©) with corresponding documents entitled, "what was the underlying cause of World war I?"and monitored each group, assisting as needed to complete the assigned DBQs. Mr. Delgado worked about 25 min with each group, but more time was spent with the students needing support.* | |
| Day two: Assessing understanding and pre-writing | |
| *With teacher assistance to define each reason, students completed a graphic organizer to identify the reasons for WWI, according to the DBQs completed during day one.* | |
| Day three: Deconstruction and co-construction of essay introduction | |
| *Teacher read the introduction of the mentor text, "WWI and its Underlying Causes" to deconstruct the structure and content of the paragraph. A visual was provided to help students understand meronomy as applied to the structure of an introductory paragraph (*Fig. 2*).* | |
| *Students were then asked to identify other information that could be added to the introduction from their previous days' discussions to provide more information for the reader.* | |
| *Teacher and students co-constructed additions to the introduction based on the brainstorming.* | |
| *Teacher provided a table to list ways of saying specific words or phrases differently (synonymy and connectives) to assist students with varying language across the text (*Fig. 3*). With student input, teacher added to the table. Additional changes were made to the co-constructed introduction to model the use of synonymy and connectives when revising texts.* | |
| *Students began writing their essay's introductory paragraphs independently.* | |

### 3.1.1 Deconstruction and Co-construction of Essay Introduction

Mr. Delgado began day three's lesson by providing a visual for an introductory paragraph's text structure using meronomy to illustrate the whole-to-part focus, as illustrated in Fig. 2 below. Using the projected visual, he engaged students in a discussion about the essay introduction and what they noticed about its structure. The visual he created helped students see that the introductory paragraph began with a broad focus on the topic to "hook" the reader's interest and provide some overarching background knowledge, and eventually narrowed down the focus of the paragraph to a thesis statement. The thesis statement specifically addressed the exact content of the essay, which for this assignment was to identify two underlying causes of World War I. He then projected part of a mentor text's introductory paragraph and read it aloud with his students, having them identify the sentences that provided the "hook," background information, and thesis statement. Continuing on, Mr. Delgado stated that they were going to revise the introduction to improve it. He introduced synonymy to help students understand the reason for including other ways of saying World War I in the introduction. A table was created to brainstorm and list synonyms for key technical vocabulary related to the topic (see Fig. 2 below).

Under Mr. Delgado's guidance, the class provided input to revise the projected introduction, including inserting ways of saying World War I, and adding important



Meronymy: "whole to part" organizational frame; begins with" larger picture as focus and then provides specific details to elaborate on the position or stance"

Bigger Picture

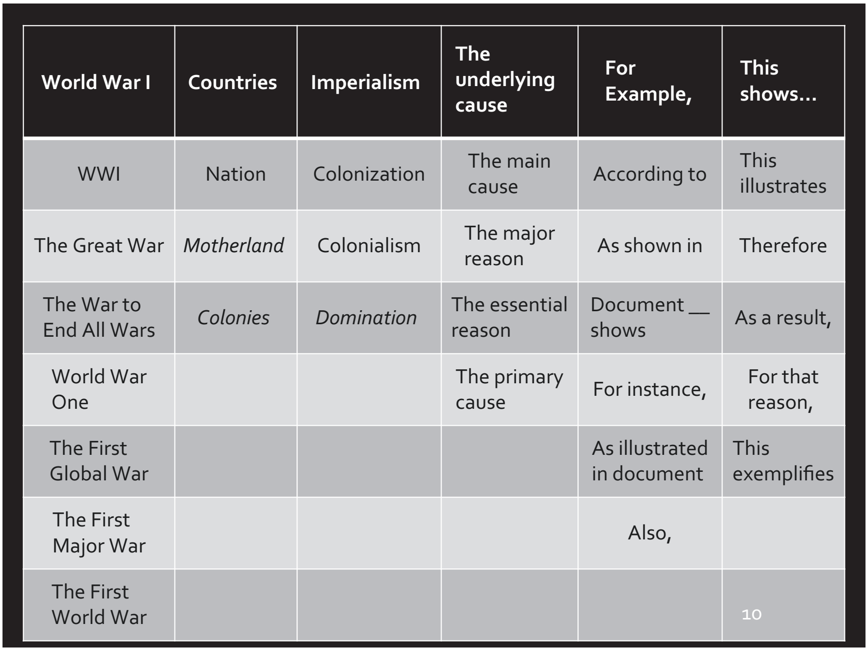
Hook: Get the attention of the reader

Background Information: WWI

Thesis: 2 causes

Narrow It Down

Fig. 2 Visual for meronomy to illustrate structure of introductory paragraph



| World War I | Countries | Imperialism | The underlying cause | For Example, | This shows… |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WWI | Nation | Colonization | The main cause | According to | This illustrates |
| The Great War | *Motherland* | Colonialism | The major reason | As shown in | Therefore |
| The War to End All Wars | *Colonies* | *Domination* | The essential reason | Document __ shows | As a result, |
| World War One | | | The primary cause | For instance, | For that reason, |
| The First Global War | | | | As illustrated in document | This exemplifies |
| The First Major War | | | | Also, | |
| The First World War | | | | | |

Fig. 3 Synonymy and connectives table

but missing background information about the war based on what they read during days one and two (i.e., dates, number of soldiers killed and injured, assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand). Alternative connectives were also listed to give students a variety of ways to connect ideas across the paragraph (Fig. 3). The synonymy and text connectives served to reduce the repetitiveness of the introductory paragraph. Once the projected text had been revised, Mr. Delgado asked the students to write their own essay introductions independently, referring to the visual for meronomy as a reminder to begin broadly and narrow down to their thesis statement. He also referred them to the synonymy and connectives table as a resource for varying their language choices.

### 3.1.2 Teacher Reflection and Student Response

Mr. Delgado's reflection on the written lesson demonstrates the affordances and challenges of using his adapted approach of the Teaching/Learning Cycle (Martin and Rose 2005; Rothery 1996). He reflected how he had never seen his students so engaged with a writing assignment. Typically, his students were "inhibited" and "not responsive to writing" during history class because he felt as if they had trouble "translating their ideas to paper." Mr. Delgado also wrote in his reflection that the co-construction of text "allowed them to see and experience how an introduction should be written." Additionally, the co-construction served to "review important information about World War I" so that students got right to work and "felt more confident about their own writing." Moreover, the lesson "gave them [the students] the confidence to continue writing" without "second-guessing themselves…practicing with me allowed them to write better introductions." Further, "by completing the introduction, students had a start on the outline for the rest of their paper" and better understood what content needed to be included in their essay.

There were also many challenges that Mr. Delgado wrote about in his reflections, including the overwhelming impact of school testing and some tragic events that took place at the school during the curricular module. Testing had just ended so students were exhausted, and two students who attended the school had been killed as a result of violence in separate incidents, creating an "altered mood" schoolwide. He also noted limited time to edit students' introductions as another large obstacle. While many of the students were able to complete the essay, their language was at times inappropriate for the genre. As Mr. Delgado wrote, "they [the students] used colloquial language, which is something they struggle with. I would have liked to spend more time on…diction and word choice by deconstructing and co-constructing a student sample." Another challenge noted was the students' difficulty with determining how much information was enough to include in the introduction. The students wanted to include too many little details rather than the big ideas in their introductions; however, Mr. Delgado acknowledged that with more explicit instruction using mentor texts and successful writing experiences, his students would learn how to determine relevant information to include. Finally, while the students were very engaged with writing their introductions, those who usually struggled became less engaged as they continued on to the subsequent paragraphs. Mr. Delgado hypothesized that it was because the class did not participate in any co-construction of body paragraphs or conclusions. To address this, in the future he would like to co-construct an entire essay, paragraph by paragraph, gradually releasing students to write independently as they learned more about the structure and language needed to communicate in certain genres.

A few days after the lesson, Mr. Delgado individually asked a few of his students what they thought about co-constructing the introduction and using that approach to learn about writing in history. The three students overwhelmingly agreed that they benefitted from the details provided by Mr. Delgado about writing an introduction—the process was "broken down" for them so that it was clear what should go into an introduction, and "it was explained more than in other classes." It was "easy to understand" and "we knew what to write"; "You [teacher] gave us a picture in our heads." Students also commented that they learned how the introduction sets up the rest of the paper. One student helped other students in his group with their introductions and commented, "It [the process] got easier as I helped more students." All of them said they would like to have more instruction using co-construction before writing. Mr. Delgado stated he might change the lesson by working with smaller groups of students to co-construct the introduction so that more would participate and provide input, and he would also be able to guide them, as needed with language choice in a smaller group. He also mentioned it was not easy to make a decision about what genre or SFL feature to use in this introductory lesson for his students—there were other features (i.e., Theme/Rheme) that he would like to teach.

## 4 Reflections and Guidelines for Teacher Educators to Integrate Critical SFL

As teacher educators, we believe it important to integrate a critical SFL approach into our undergraduate and graduate courses and engage pre-service and in-service teachers as well as future teacher educators in analysis of language features that make disciplinary content difficult for students, especially English language learners. The principles we developed, described in this chapter, provided ways to make the approach more accessible to teachers.

Based on years of reflection on teacher uptake of critical SFL in our teaching graduate methods courses, we have developed a few guidelines. First, even though the approach is modeled and taught during our graduate courses just as the teachers' students may experience the lesson, we have found that teachers need plenty of time before becoming comfortable using CSFL in their own classrooms. In our experience, teachers and teacher education students can become overwhelmed with the intricacies of SFL theory; it helps to teach practical applications separately, yet in close communication with the CSFL theory-oriented instructor, so that theory and practice can be addressed in tandem. Our task as CSFL researchers and teacher educators is to continue to reflect on the best sequencing of teaching and learning expectations across courses to assist our students in learning the approach and its applications. Importantly, more research is needed on the depth of knowledge needed by teachers to make CSFL an effective approach for EBs' second language literacy learning (for some discussion on this, see Daniello 2014; Gebhard and Harman 2011; de Oliveira and Schleppegrell 2015; Hodgson-Drysdale 2016). In addition, if a course focuses on SFL as a discourse analytic framework, it helps if educators discuss what a critical lens adds to the framework and to examine how CSFL can be used as a pedagogical approach in K-12 classrooms. The metalanguage that teachers are able to develop for talking about language choices in texts plays a key role in this process. While this involves developing a certain degree of technicality, when teachers move beyond their first resistance to the complexity of the theory and see their own students' ability to take on that technicality, teachers are empowered to learn more and therefore do more in their classrooms.

Second, planning the lessons one-on-one with the teachers using a flexible but structured framework has proven to make a difference with how successful the lesson is in the classroom. A good amount of time, for example, was spent with Mr. Delgado in creating a plan that could be implemented in a "failing" school with strict "instructional focus calendars" where content coverage often trumps depth of instruction. Spending multiple days on the same content objectives is typically frowned upon in

Mr. Delgado's school and district, even though there are literacy standards and objectives for content area classrooms. Providing space for the teacher educator to have a one-to-one lesson planning session with Mr. Delgado to review students' writing samples helped to tease out instructional needs and propose possible approaches to using the structured framework and follow the teaching/learning cycle. We propose a similar pattern for teacher education instructors who plan to implement CSFL in their classes.

It is also important to remember that flexibility with how teachers actually implement CSFL is highly important as teachers will apply the theory differently, depending on the school context and especially when there is little teacher autonomy in classrooms. Mr. Delgado focused on deconstructing and co-constructing the essay introduction rather than the entire mentor text. This turned out to be a wise choice as it kept him and his students from becoming overwhelmed, while at the same time developed his understanding of teaching content and writing in a new and different way. Our approach to working with teachers, therefore, helps them see how a lesson would work out in practice and scaffolds the process for them. In planning to implement CSFL in teacher education, we suggest a similar approach so teachers know possible ways to best sequence their activities.

Overall, our intent in this chapter was to provide examples of how SFL theory and practice can be incorporated into teacher education so that multilingual learners and their teachers can develop a shared linguistic fund of knowledge that supports them in analyzing, appropriating, and at times challenging the disciplinary knowledge domains.

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# Part II
# Register Variation and Equity

# Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change

**María Estela Brisk and Marcela Ossa Parra**

**Abstract** This chapter discusses how a sustained collaboration among a principal, researchers and teachers supported a shift in the monolingual culture of an elementary school. Specifically, the study explores how a longitudinal professional development initiative supported monolingual teachers in developing effective writing instruction for emergent bilingual learners. Data was collected through participant-observation during the literacy block of three teachers who had emergent bilinguals in their classroom. Drawing on grounded theory, videotape transcripts and field notes were analyzed to characterize teachers' practices, and their emergent bilingual students' participation. Findings point to the ways in which their SFL-informed writing approach with its Teaching and Learning Cycle resulted in full participation of emergent bilinguals and the use of hybrid language practices in previously English-only classroom environments.

**Keywords** Systemic Functional Linguistics • Teaching and Learning Cycle • Translanguaging • Mainstream Classrooms • Emergent Bilinguals

## 1 Introduction

Schools in the United States and in other immigrant-receiving countries around the globe are experiencing large increases in student populations that speak a language other than the dominant school language (Valdés and Castellón 2011). Most classroom teachers do not share languages with their linguistically diverse students and have limited preparation to provide the kind of instruction needed by emergent bilinguals (EBs) (i.e. students still in the process of developing English) to succeed in schools (Lucas and Villegas 2011). Some states (California, Florida, and Massachusetts) have included competencies to teach English language learners (ELLs) as part of the requirements for all licensures. These competencies focus

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mostly on instructional strategies and neglect specifics on how to integrate language to content instruction. In addition, they do not include any suggestions on how to take advantage of students' native languages (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2015; California Commission on Teacher Credentialing 2011; Florida Department of Education 2011).

Bilingual students often find English-only medium classes extremely challenging, especially if they are EBs. Like all students, EBs need content and language-rich education to learn and develop in an academic environment. However, this access to the curriculum eludes them if they cannot fully participate in the classroom context. Supporting EBs' full participation in English-medium classes can happen under contextual conditions that promote equality (de Jong 2011). The purpose of this study is to highlight how pedagogy informed by systemic functional linguistics (SFL) fostered a culturally and linguistically rich elementary school context for EBs.

The chapter starts by describing the theories grounding the approach to our study of the SFL-informed writing practices that were brought to a multilingual school in the Northeast of the United States. It then reviews the literature in relation to the education of bilingual learners in mainstream classrooms and their hybrid language practices in such classrooms. A description of the context and research methods follows. The results describe SFL-informed teacher strategies and levels of student participation. The ensuing discussion argues that the theories informing practice were instrumental in supporting EBs to function successfully in mainstream classrooms.

## 2 Systemic Functional Linguistics and Multilingual Contexts

As discussed throughout this volume, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) views language as a semiotic resource to make meaning in context (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004). Language users make choices given the contexts of culture and of situation. The context of culture defines the genres and the context of situation defines the register (see introductory chapter for an elaboration on this). In the case of multilingual contexts, the choice also involves specific language repertoires.

The writing practices of a culture are characterized by recurrent forms of texts used for specific purposes with specific discourse organization and language features. These are called *genres* (Martin and Rose 2008). The purpose of each genre differs and is achieved through the stages or text structure and language use. The most common writing genres in elementary school include different types of recounts, fictional narratives, procedures, reports, explanations, and expositions or arguments.

The register and its corresponding three metafunctions of language (experiential, interpersonal and textual) have more immediate impact on language choice. In the context of a given situation, field (the choice of topic), tenor (relation between language user and audience), and mode (oral, written, or multimodal) influence the configuration of language choices (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004; Thompson

2004). For example, producing a report on snakes in the form of a PowerPoint for an adult audience demands different language choices than trying to orally persuade a friend to share her candy.

In multilingual contexts, choice also includes specific languages. The register (field, tenor, and mode) influences bilinguals' decision to use one or the other language, or both. Depending on their lived experiences, bilinguals may feel more comfortable using a particular language given the topic or context (Hopewell 2011). Bilinguals, especially children, tend to speak the language(s) according to their audience's proficiency, and depending on their education they may or may not be able to use one or more of their languages for reading and writing. Thus, from an SFL perspective, choice of language(s) depends largely on proficiency on the part of the language users and their audience. However, bilinguals also are sensitive to the policies and patterns of language use in particular environments. Fantini (1985), for example, reports that upon arrival to the United States, his son started code-switching at home as he acquired English. However, at school he remained silent because he perceived that, unlike his home where both Spanish and English were used, only English was the language of the school environment and he could not communicate just in English. In sum, language use restrictions impact what bilinguals do.

## 3 Monolingual Teachers of Emergent Bilingual Learners

Mainstream teachers often feel they do not have adequate preparation to address the needs of their linguistically diverse students, especially within the current high-stakes testing culture. Their perceptions of linguistic and cultural diversity and their eagerness to incorporate diverse students into their classrooms is dependent on a multitude of factors, such as formal preparation on how to work with bilingual learners, experiences with other languages and cultures, their own personal characteristics, and educational and ethnic background (García-Nevarez et al. 2005; Karabenick and Noda 2004; Lee and Oxelson 2006; Walker et al. 2004; Youngs and Youngs 2001).

When teachers feel challenged and unsupported, they may be unwilling to welcome bilingual learners as full members of their classes, resulting in lowered expectations and opportunities for students to engage in robust language interactions essential for language development (Sharkey and Layzer 2000; Karabenick and Noda 2004; Lee and Oxelson 2006; Lucas et al. 2008; Penfield 1987; Walker et al. 2004; Youngs and Youngs 2001). Teachers' lowered expectations and reduced language demands often restrict the language development of bilingual learners and make them feel isolated and hidden. In sum, because bilingual learners already feel minoritized in school by English-only language policies, the negative attitude and reductive pedagogies of their teachers can have a strong impact on their language learning, academic achievement, educational opportunities, and consequently their lives in school (Dooly 2005; García-Nevarez et al. 2005; Salas et al. 2005; Youngs and Youngs 2001).

The last decade has seen an emergence of research interest in what teachers need to know and do to better serve the increasing number of emergent bilingual learners in public school classrooms. Researchers have recommended specific knowledge and skills needed by teachers to effectively work with bilingual learners, such as knowledge about their students (Brisk 2006; Lucas and Villegas 2011), and about second language acquisition and classroom language demands (Lucas and Villegas 2011; Wong-Fillmore and Snow 2002), especially the language of particular disciplines or disciplinary linguistic knowledge (Turkan et al. 2014). Teachers should also know strategies to facilitate language development and access to the curriculum (Bunch et al. 2014; Lucas and Villegas 2011). In addition, Coady et al. (2015) argue that bilingual learners should not be marginalized and their needs should be "addressed through systematic and planned instruction" (p. 22).

## 4 Hybrid Discourse and Translanguaging Practices in English-Medium Classes

Sociocultural (SCT) theories of second language acquisition have contributed important new understandings about how teachers can better serve emergent bilingual learners in English-medium classrooms. From a sociocultural perspective, second language acquisition is viewed as developing optimally from a situated social practice where learners with different expertise levels in the language actively participate in purposeful and meaningful activities (van Lier and Walqui 2012). As in SFL theory, the focus is on how people choose from a configuration of language choices as they participate in social practices. SCT and SFL insights on how language is used in classrooms, in other words, support practices where teachers open up implementational spaces (Hornberger 2005) that enable bilingual students to flexibly use their different languages and dialects to participate in classroom meaning making activities (García 2014).

Hybrid discourse practices, defined as the juxtaposition of "forms of talk, social interaction, and material practices from many different social and cultural worlds" (Kamberelis 2001, p. 86), characterize language practices in which people use their multiple linguistic resources to engage in meaning making. When evoked in pedagogical contexts, such practices enable students to appropriate new and unfamiliar discourses by integrating them with more familiar domains from everyday life and public media. These practices bridge connections between authoritative academic discourses, external to the individual and difficult to understand, and internally persuasive discourses that constitute the individual's primary ways of thinking, talking and acting (Bakhtin 1981; Kamberelis 2001). The notion of hybrid discourse practices is consistent with Halliday's theory of social register, given that SFL conceptualizes language use as a fluid process that shifts according to the needs, repertoires and interests of participants in a particular social context (Lukin et al. 2008).

In multilingual contexts these hybrid discourse practices involve the flexible use of different languages. Translanguaging, one such language practice, is defined as "flexible language practices that contradict monolingual language policies and ideologies… and help negotiate multilingual and multicultural identities" (Hornberger and Link 2012, p. 264). This adds another layer to Halliday's theory of social register, since bilinguals' choices also involve movement between languages. Translanguaging theory conceptualizes bilingualism as a dynamic process in which a bilingual's language practices are complex and interrelated (García and Wei 2014). Instead of conceiving bilinguals' languages as two separated entities, these are conceived as multilingual meaning making potential in dynamic interaction. In the process of acquiring a second language, multilingual learners use their current knowledge and language practices to appropriate the new ways of knowing and languaging entailed in the language that they are learning. Translanguaging enables students to actively participate in new literacy practices by using all of their linguistic resources, and validates students' meaning making practices and their bilingual identities.

The three chapters in this section of the book center around the concept that hybrid discourse practices, translanguaging, and SFL provide useful constructs to inform instruction aimed at bridging divides between home and school registers (Heugh 2015). While hybrid discourse practices and translanguaging support students' use of multiple linguistic resources to develop new language practices in school, SFL provides a metalanguage to support students in figuring out how school language works. These combined perspectives decenter academic language as the only valid register in academic contexts, since they open up implementational spaces for heteroglossic language practices (Flores and Shissel 2014), and raise awareness of how context informs language choice (See Khote, this volume, for another example of how SFL supports heteroglossic language practices).

Research on everyday language practices within academic contexts reveals that, despite English-only policies, teachers and students create spaces for flexible language use. Emergent bilingual children draw on all of their linguistic repertoires to make sense of the curriculum (García and Wei 2014; Link 2011; Soltero-Gonzalez 2009). They blend English and native languages, home and school registers, and formal and informal knowledge to make sense of the curriculum (Manyak 2002). Usually teachers in charge of English-only classrooms do not discourage their students from using their home languages and discourses. However, their approach to their students' translanguaging practices may range from tacitly accepting them as a scaffold to acquire English (Soltero-González 2009; Link 2011), to actively encouraging student use of their native language to support bilingualism and biliteracy development (Manyak 2002, 2006). This latter approach implies resisting English-only policy mandates, which is usually a lonely effort (Flores and Shissel 2014; Manyak 2004, 2006).

Even in classroom contexts where English is the sole medium of instruction, it is possible to create classroom environments that encourage students to use their native languages as a learning resource. Manyak's (2006) ethnographic study of two first grade multilingual classrooms in California illustrates how English-Spanish bilingual teachers promoted hybrid literacy practices that enabled students to systematically blend Spanish and English, despite the English-only policy mandates.

Biliteracy development was supported by providing books in both languages, and by allowing children to select the language they would use during writer's workshop. Furthermore, this biliterate classroom environment stimulated children to engage in acts of translation that provided comprehensible input for lower English proficient students, and supported the development of their identities as competent language users who move swiftly between languages (Manyak 2004).

To highlight optimal translanguaging environments for bilinguals, Soltero-Gonzalez (2009) proposed the following guiding principles for supporting translanguaging: (1) recognizing diversity and hybrid practices as valuable learning resources; (2) establishing different participation structures that support student collaboration and support; (3) developing a curriculum that integrates multiple literacies and multimodal texts; and (4) promoting an intellectually challenging learning environment that nurtures the development of students' linguistic repertoires. These are principles that may be integrated into elementary teacher education programs, and that connect closely to SFL approaches to teaching literacy.

## 5 The Present Study

This study is part of a larger 7-year study of a professional development (PD) program in which a school-university partnership has been established to develop a genre-based, SFL-informed English writing pedagogy (Brisk 2015; Derewianka and Jones 2012; Martin and Rose 2008; Rose and Martin 2012). The present study took place during the last two years of this initiative (2013–2014 and 2014–2015). By this time, teachers had achieved expertise in SFL writing pedagogy and had developed awareness of the crucial role of language in teaching and learning any disciplinary discourse. The purpose of this current study was to document how the enactment of genre writing pedagogy supported teachers in creating practices that facilitated EBs' participation in their classrooms. Specifically, it sought to investigate the different language and writing practices in which teachers engaged their students during their writing instruction. The following research questions guided this study:

- Which practices did teachers use in upper elementary mainstream classrooms?
- How did EBs participate in these classrooms?

### *5.1 Context of the Study*

Russell Elementary School (also known as "the Russell"), a multilingual school in Massachusetts, has a student population of 58% Latino, 26% Black (including Cape Verdeans and Haitians), 10% Asian, and 6% White. Regarding language proficiency, 51% of the students are considered English Language Learners with emergent levels of bilingualism (ELLs), 15% are fluent bilinguals and 34% are monolingual English speakers. Because of the elimination of bilingual education in Massachusetts in 2002, schools have replaced bilingual programs with Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) classrooms, where students are taught in English using second language teaching techniques. When the program started, all teachers used English for instruction as required by law. Only a couple of the Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) teachers who were Spanish/English bilinguals used Spanish to support instruction. One of the mainstream teachers, Ed, who worked as a science teacher at the time, allowed a newcomer student from Guatemala to write her lab reports in Spanish and then he helped her translate them to English.

When the partnership started, the teachers were unfamiliar with SFL and their writing instruction was limited and mostly up to individual teachers. Over 7 years, however, all grade teachers introduced genres of writing to the students that inform disciplinary texts in English language arts, science, and social studies (e.g. science reports, narratives, expositions). Currently, all teachers teach genre writing on a daily basis in connection to a variety of disciplines. They plan the writing calendar as a whole school and work cooperatively within each grade level and in some cases across grade levels (Daniello 2014). Since the genres of schooling were new to all students, all students, regardless of their English proficiency, received the new writing instruction.

To prepare teachers to implement genre-based pedagogy, the principal investigator (the first author of this paper) annually conducted a two-day summer institute for the whole staff and met monthly with grade-level teacher teams to present the theory, discuss strategies for implementation, and discuss student work. In addition, a team of doctoral students visited the classrooms weekly to observe and informally support the teachers and students. Over time, the Boston College (BC) team worked with all of the teachers to develop writing content that included attention to purpose, text structure, and language demands of the genres and register.

During the PDs teachers were also made familiar with the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC), an approach to writing instruction that apprentices students to writing through four stages: developing content knowledge; *deconstruction* of text to analyze how authors write particular genres; *joint construction* of text by teacher and students to demonstrate how to write in and among genre stages; and finally, independent construction of text by students (Rothery 1996). Further description of the TLC can be found in the introductory chapter. The teachers made adaptations to this cycle to better serve their highly multilingual classrooms, adding group or pair writing as an alternative to individual writing, using the cycle to work on each genre stage at a time (e.g. orientation in a narrative), and using individual conferences to foster understanding of planning and writing in the new genre (Brisk 2015) (See Schleppegrell & Moore, this volume, for another example of SFL-informed PD in elementary school contexts).

Because of the limited number of incoming beginner ELLs in the school, and the improvement of the language instruction among mainstream teachers, in 2012 the principal decided to eliminate the SEI classes in grades 3–5 designated specifically for EBs and integrate them into the mainstream classroom. This policy decision went against district regulations that require EBs to be enrolled in SEI classrooms or at minimum receive 90 minutes of segregated instruction in language and literacy (The United States Department of Justice 2011). As a result of the administrative change in policy, the BC team switched the focus of study to the emergent bilingual students in grades 3–5 mainstream classrooms. The BC team investigated the performance of students at the Russell classified as ELLs to determine the impact of the SFL-informed instruction within the new inclusive classroom environment. The results showed that ELLs consistently improved in all English language skills: the median growth percentile of all students at the Russell was higher than the district and the state and the school earned a Level 1 rating (highest) from the State Department of Education in compliance with federal mandates.

Given these positive results, in this chapter we report on what specific strategies the teachers carried out in classrooms with EBs and how the students participated in these classroom activities. The goal is to further understand the improved performance of students and the impact of SFL-informed instruction in developing teacher knowledge to work with EBs.

## *5.2 Methods*

### 5.2.1 Participants

Three teachers, Michelle and Ed, who taught third grade, and Beverly, who taught fifth grade, participated in this study. Michelle and Ed had been part of the PD program during the 7 years it had lasted, while Beverly joined the program in year three. All of the teachers were English monolinguals. Some had limited knowledge of Spanish. These teachers were selected because they had EBs in their mainstream classrooms. For the purpose of this study, EBs were defined as students classified at the beginning of the school year in English language development levels 1 or 2, as measured by the ACCESS test.

The ACCESS is a large-scale English language proficiency assessment developed by the WIDA consortium. It measures all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) for all grade levels. Schools use it to assign an English language development level for emergent bilinguals (WIDA 2017). English language development Level 1 is defined as *entering,* indicating that students are becoming familiar with vocabulary through use of pictorial, sensory or graphic representations, and with one-step commands, directions, simple statements and yes/no questions. In Level 2, defined as *beginning,* students have developed a general language related to the content areas, and understand short sentences.

Four Spanish-English emergent bilinguals participated in the study. Daisy and Nydia were observed in year 2013–2014 in Michelle and Ed's classrooms, respectively. These girls were classified as level 1 in their English Language development at the beginning of the school year. Daisy was outgoing and outspoken, and participated in whole class discussions speaking in either Spanish or English. In contrast, Nydia was quiet and reserved, and did not use Spanish in whole group discussions, but instead remained silent or participated in English. Both girls used Spanish when they worked in small groups. Daisy tended to get distracted and a bit impatient when she did not understand her teacher's instructions, and would seek help to clarify instructions, while Nydia stayed quiet or worked hard trying to figure the instructions out by herself. When working in groups Elena, an advanced level 3 student, supported Nydia. Both Daisy and Nydia wrote their texts in English by the time they were observed. By the end of the school year both of them had advanced to level 3 in their English language development.

During 2014–2015 Yanneris and Lucas were observed in Ed and Beverly's classrooms, respectively. Yanneris was classified as a level 2, while Lucas was a level 1. As in the previous year these students had contrasting personalities. Yanneris was a very quiet girl whose speech was barely audible, while Lucas was an outgoing boy who actively contributed his ideas in Spanish during small group and whole group discussions. He was anxious to be recognized as a valuable member of his classroom community. Although Yanneris was quiet, she always appeared present and focused on the different instructional activities. She wrote her texts in English, while Lucas wrote them in Spanish. By the end of the school year, Yanneris advanced over a level and a half in her English language development, and Lucas' overall score in the ACCESS test was 1.9, moving him almost one whole level.

### 5.2.2 Procedures

Data was collected through participant observation in the teachers' classrooms. The observers (authors of this chapter) were Spanish-English bilinguals, and were engaged by the teachers and the students in the learning activities, since they could provide support to EBs in accessing the curriculum. We observed classes between seven and nine times during the literacy block, especially when writing was being taught. During 2013–2014, the observations took place in the spring semester, and during 2014–2015 they took place in the fall semester. We had the opportunity to observe different genres being taught during these two observation periods (i.e. report, autobiography, biography, and argument). We audio and video-recorded the lessons, took detailed field notes, and photographed charts with directions, collaborative work, and graphic organizers. We collected samples of each of the focal students' writing.

As part of the larger study all grade 3–5 teachers participated in a focus group at the end of their 7th year to discuss their perspectives on what happened over time that improved their ability to work with EBs. The teachers talked for close to one hour, sharing ideas with limited prompting. This focus group was audiotaped and transcribed.

### 5.2.3 Data Sources

A variety of data was analyzed to characterize how the participant teachers enacted genre-based SFL informed English writing pedagogy and created bilingual learning environments for their bilingual students. These data sources were: audio and video recordings and their transcriptions, field notes, photographs of teachers' charts and bulletin boards, students' writing samples, and the transcription of the teacher focus group held at the end of the year. The focus group included all grades 3–5 teachers in the project. We also collected students' scores in the state exams and the special exam given to EBs. These scores were available in the school and state website (Massachusetts Department of Education 2015).

### 5.2.4 Analytic Procedure

We drew on grounded theory (Charmaz 2005) to inform data coding. Both of us read the field notes and transcripts of the observations several times, and coded for use of Spanish by students and adults in the classroom, use of English by EBs, content of disciplines and of writing included in instruction, and strategies teachers used to teach the content. Student participation was coded with respect to actions taken by students within whole class and small group instruction and the language used by students during interactions. As we progressed in the analysis we established the following general categories to characterize the teacher's instruction and how their EBs responded to this instruction: (1) explicit instruction informed by SFL, which included content, genre and contextualized language instruction; (2) instructional strategies informed by the TLC, which included deconstruction and joint construction of text: and (3) facilitation of emergent bilingual students' participation, which included creation of bilingual classroom environments, strategic use of fluent bilinguals, and seeking support from experienced adults. Finally, in order to characterize teachers' perspectives about their writing instruction, the transcript from the focus groups was coded for themes that emerged from the conversation.

## 6 Results

Teachers used a number of strategies to facilitate EBs classroom participation and learning. These strategies clustered around using SFL based genre theory to inform the content of writing and the TLC to inform the approach to instruction. In addition, teachers created classroom environments that facilitated EBs' participation in the learning activities, thus avoiding marginalization.

## *6.1 Explicit Instruction Informed by SFL*

SFL provided teachers with an integrated language and content approach to writing instruction. They created robust units of instruction, giving students access to curricular content as well as the ability to express ideas through written language. During the focus group meeting, teachers shared that SFL had provided them with the knowledge of what to teach, thus allowing them to set expectations for all their students and with the determination to work very hard to help all students reach those expectations. Teachers pointed out the aspects of the project that allowed them to successfully instruct students, including their EBs:

- "Making the process explicit has helped a lot. Students always know what they are doing. If they are confused they let the teacher know and do it again until they get it." (Pat, 4 & 5th grade teacher, focus group).
- "I think definitely breaking down each genre by the features and the characteristics of the genre has helped, and then discussing appropriate language that goes in each genre. I think before we started working together, you know, we didn't really teach what each genre was, so the kids didn't really know what was expected of them. So there is a very strong and specific purpose for each genre, and the use of language always strengthens that." (Cheryl, 4th & 5th grade teacher, focus group).
- "When you first start writing a specific genre, you spend a lot of time with the mentor text, pulling it apart, and picking up the language that the authors are using so the kids are building a vocabulary as they go forward in their own writing, that they have like a base." (Rosemary, 4th grade teacher, focus group).
- "It's a culturally responsive pedagogy for different cultures. ESL is so decontextualized. It has nothing to do with content. When ELL's are a part of this, language is so specific it is the only reason why we have students whose writing is higher than their speaking. It is because that metacognition is built in their brain." (Linda, ESL teacher, focus group)
- "I think that I've always been one that models a lot, maybe over-model sometimes. I think that just having the list of all the things in the genres that we have in the black binder. I look at it all the time. You know just having all those little things to look at, it reminds me that we need to for example, this is fictional narrative, so it's all about dialogues. You know just modeling everything explicitly, just one day at a time. I think that some things students will get when they're looking at a book, but some things they must be taught, straight up. I think that is something that helps me: explicit modeling." (Ed, 3rd grade teacher, focus group)

## 6.2 Content Instruction

Writing instruction was embedded in content instruction because, in SFL theory, language and content cannot be separated. Content needs language to express ideas and language needs content to provide an authentic learning context. Therefore, teachers connected teaching of writing with instruction in a discipline, whatever they deemed most appropriate. For example, Michelle and Ed connected biography instruction with their social studies curriculum, and Beverly taught argumentative writing as part of the Declaration of Human Rights Unit, a topic in their new reading series.

To facilitate students' building of the field, the teachers also taught students research strategies. For example, while writing autobiographies, Ed taught his students how to do research. He guided them in the process of formulating interview questions that would enable them to gather rich information about their lives. He worked with the whole class, but to ensure that they knew what to do, he worked jointly with the students to demonstrate the task, and then during individual or group work he checked on his emergent bilingual student to ensure that she understood what to do.

Ed taught students how to collect information from their parents to include in their autobiography time lines, yet in one curricular unit he felt the information they had provided was not in depth enough. He gathered the students on the rug to discuss how they could achieve more detailed descriptions of these events. He engaged them in joint revision of one of their peer's timelines, which he copied on chart paper so that everyone could see it; he asked students to propose specific questions that this student could ask his mother to enhance the description of the important events in his life. In other words, Ed used the TLC joint construction to support them in expanding their linguistic repertoires.

Ed also supported individual students in learning how to appropriate the genre moves. He went to Yanneris's table to ensure that she understood the instructions. Since she seemed confused, he helped her locate the different materials that she needed to do in her work. He revised the timeline with her, and noticed that she had not written her life events in chronological order. He explained to her that she needed to start with her birth, and to consider other details.

T: Yanneris, do you understand what to do? Where is your timeline? (She shows something to him). No, that's your questions from the story. Right now we're working on writing, so I need your notebook. (She shows him the notebook). Yes, right there. Okay, so where's your very first event? Right here. "When I was --- years old the first word I said was 'mom'". So that would be the first event. What goes here? When you were…?

Y: Born.

T: When you were born. So make sure that is the first event and then keep going.

After this interaction, the researcher repeated in Spanish some of the questions that Ed and her peers had proposed during their whole group discussion; this supported Yanneris in thinking about what she could ask her mother to add more information to her timeline.

## *6.3 Genre Instruction*

Informed by SFL theory, in these classrooms the whole text was the unit of instruction instead of isolated sentences. Genres were chosen as the organizing principle for the writing curriculum because each genre has a different purpose, text structure or stages, and the function of specific aspects of language tends to be genre-specific. The purpose defines the genre, and each genre is characterized by stages that, when followed, help accomplish the purpose. For example, to introduce students to biographies, Ed focused his first lesson on the purpose and stages of the genre, including the introduction and record of events. He specifically taught students to expand on each major event. Later in the unit he introduced them to ways they could construct a conclusion that summarizes a person's significance.

During the first lesson Ed gathered students on the rug around him and wrote down on chart paper as he introduced the unit:

- Biography
- Purpose: to tell about the life of another person
- How do authors choose whom to write about?

The students discussed in groups and then gave responses to the question. Ed listened and reinforced, repaired, summarized, and wrote their ideas below the question. During this activity, Nydia sat in the middle and engaged in discussion with the small group of English speakers next to her. She raised her hand to volunteer:

N: because…
T: full sentence. Authors choose to write about a person because…
N: Authors choose to write about a person because it inspired them.
T: Inspired them. What does that mean?

Nydia could not respond. The students in her group helped out at the teacher's prompting and other groups offered additional ideas. When the teacher felt they had enough, he encouraged the student to copy the ideas from the chart paper into their notebooks. Nydia immediately followed the direction.

Next, Ed directed his students to analyze a biography he had given each group to determine what went at the beginning. Students worked in groups of four. Ed assigned Nydia to a group that included two other bilinguals.

Students identified the type of information that they found in the first couple of pages of the sample biography, i.e. information contained in the orientation of a biography. After the groups had worked on their own, Ed gathered them on the rug to share what they had found in their analysis. The students aptly pointed out that the beginning of a biography included the person's name, where and when they were born, and in the case of Rosa Park's biography, some of the historical background important to her life story. Ed's discussions and collaborative information gathering fostered students' understanding of the biographical genre.

## 6.4 *Language Instruction in Context*

SFL theory promotes viewing language for its function as a meaning making resource. Teachers provided ample language learning opportunities by encouraging student discussions and embedding vocabulary instruction throughout their lessons. In discussing the writing that they co-constructed with their students, teachers also highlighted the text, sentence, and word level structures. In other words, they fostered use of a meta language that would support the students in discussing and critiquing their own and other texts (Schleppegrell 2013).

For example, Ed gathered his students on the rug and proposed the following discussion question, which was also posted on chart paper in front of the class: "What are some of the extraordinary things that children have to do [to attend to school]?" Before starting the discussion, he asked his students about the meaning of extraordinary. One student said it meant not regular, and Ed used this definition to explain the morphological components of this word.

T: Now, [student name] said that it means "not regular." And that's true because if you look at this part of the word here, ordinary means happens all the time, everyday… Everybody, ordinary.

Students: Ordinary.

T: Now when you put "extra" in front of a word, it … more than. So this is more than ordinary… but also could mean amazing.

In this example Ed modeled morphological problem solving strategies, showing how root and affix knowledge could be used to figure out the meaning of a word. Through prepared and spontaneous activities Ed and the other teachers involved their students in noticing and appropriating language.

## 6.5 *Explicit Instruction Informed by the TLC*

All the teachers used elements of the TLC in their instruction. They developed their students' content knowledge to build, prepare and improve their writing. In addition, they deconstructed mentor texts to show how experienced writers handle different aspects of the genre, and they jointly constructed and revised writing with their students to make them experts. Finally, they had students working in pairs or groups, even when producing their own individual work.

## 6.6 *Deconstruction of Texts*

Teachers identified short sample texts to show different aspects of the genres. To guide students through text deconstruction, Michelle used graphic organizers. As the students began to learn how to write biographies they were taught the purpose of biographies, the elements of an orientation or introduction to a biography, the stages in general and in particular how to write the record of events by learning how to do timelines. For example, Michelle gave her students a graphic organizer with the stages of a biography where they could enter information. Before directing them to do the research, she demonstrated how to do it. She wrote sentences on the Smartboard and used a graphic organizer on chart paper to mark where each sentence belonged. Daisy raised her hand and responded in Spanish. The teacher asked her to come up to the board and point at the place in the graphic organizer.

In deconstructing text with the students, the teacher used multimodal and embodied activities that supported student understanding of how language functions to build blocks in a genre.

## *6.7 Joint Construction*

The TLC approach to genre recommends that teachers write with their students, eliciting the ideas and language from their students but negotiating with them to produce texts with the intended purpose and meaning. For example, in Beverly's class, before students wrote their individual arguments they jointly constructed two other arguments. The first one was a burning issue in the school: The principal had decided to convert the cafeteria space into a place for students to play sports and carry out physical education, while the meals were served in the classroom. A number of students supported this policy while others wanted the cafeteria back. Beverly brainstormed reasons for the two claims together with the whole class, listing them on chart paper, then assigned groups to research evidence for each reason. The resulting paragraphs were added to the chart paper. After this, Beverly revised both written arguments with the whole class and hung the two finished arguments outside the classroom to share with the whole school. Following the same process, the class jointly constructed arguments on whether college athletes should get paid.

These teachers also applied this idea to the revision process. Ed consistently used joint revision to guide students on improving their writing. For example, as the students were getting ready to produce posters as their final biography products, he suggested that they the needed to revise and complete the information in the timeline to be inserted on their posters. Before asking the students to work independently, Ed modeled what students had to do by projecting on the screen an emergent bilingual student's first entry: *Nelson Mandela was born on July 18th in a tiny village in Africa*. He engaged the whole class in making additions to the text with him.

Ed: What is this person missing in that sentence? Did they tell us who?
Students: Yes.
Ed: Did they say what happened?
Student: Yes.
Ed: Yes, so what happened?
Student: The person was born.

Ed: Yes, the person was born. So we have who and what, what about when? Did this person tell me when that person was born? When was Nelson Mandela born?
Student: July 18th.
Ed: July 18th 2014?
Student: No.
Ed: So my suggestion to this person would be that you need to write, born on July 18th, 1918. So who, what, when. What's the next one?
Student: Where.
Ed: What about where?
Student: In a tiny village in Africa.
Ed: Now that's sort of where, but what would you ask that person?
Student: Which tiny village?

After this he directed the class to work on their timelines. As the students revised their pieces, he went around the room conferencing with each one.

Although Nydia understood the directions, she still had some difficulty with content itself. The researcher helped her compare the two 2008 boxes to choose the one with more complete information. Together they also reviewed her source book to check that her entries in the timeline were accurate.

## *6.8 Facilitating Emergent Bilingual Students' Participation*

Teachers used a number of strategies to encourage participation from emergent bilingual learners. Besides explicit instruction and rich exposure to content materials of different levels of difficulty, the most prevalent strategy was taking advantage of the bilingualism in the community. They tapped on the expertise of bilingual adults and children, used Spanish resources, and fostered free use of the languages to share knowledge. Above all they were relentless in ensuring that emergent bilingual students were provided with full instructional resources. For example, during the introduction to the unit on biography, Daisy, Michelle's student, did not understand what she was supposed to do, so Michelle approached her and explained that she needed to find out what a biography was. When Daisy still did not show understanding, Michelle brought a Google translator to go over the instructions. She also gave Daisy a sample biography at the level Daisy could read. Daisy went to work and wrote, "Obama is a president of the United States. He is important," showing that Daisy was still confused on the assignment. Instead of defining biographies, she wrote something related to the content of Obama's biography. Nevertheless, Michelle found a way to incorporate Daisy's ideas. As the class shared their notes, Michelle wrote down their ideas about the purpose of biographies on the Smartboard. When Daisy shared her sentence, Michelle said, "Good job. What did she say? Important, a biography is usually about an important person."

## *6.9 Creating Bilingual Classroom Environments*

Only Ed had some knowledge of Spanish from his education. However, all three teachers fostered the use of Spanish to enhance instruction and emergent bilingual students' participation.

For example, Michelle allowed students to choose the language of communication both in whole class and small group interactions. This freedom of language choice enabled Daisy to interact freely in Spanish to express her ideas, while Michelle supported Daisy when she chose to communicate in English. At the beginning of the year Daisy wrote in Spanish, and Michelle put the product through a translator and used it for conferencing with Daisy. Michelle also wrote her comments and put them through the translation program to support their discussions. Toward the last quarter of the year, Daisy wrote in English with support from one of her classmates.

Although Daisy sometimes got frustrated when trying to use or understand interactions in English, she never felt marginalized. For example, after 4 weeks of research, instruction, and writing, students in Michelle's class had just finished writing animal reports in the form of picture books. Michelle gathered the whole class to discuss their impressions about their reports. Different students raised their hands and offered comments. Daisy gave a comment in Spanish which one of her classmates quickly translated, and the conversation continued seamlessly. A little later in the discussion, Daisy stood close to Michelle and whispered a comment in English, Michelle asked for everybody's attention and asked Daisy to repeat her comment out loud, which she did. Michelle picked up Daisy's comment and continued the discussion.

Beverly regularly allowed Lucas to share his work with the whole class. Lucas did all his research and writing in Spanish. For example, after small group discussions on whether it was acceptable to disobey unfair laws prompted by the study of Nelson Mandela's life, Beverly convened the group on the rug, and students shared their conclusions. She asked Lucas to read his conclusion in Spanish, and asked Nelson to translate it for the rest of the group:

Lucas: *Está bien desobedecer las leyes del Apartheid porque son muy injustas y porque va en contra de la ley más grande: ley de los derechos humanos.* [It is okay to disobey Apartheid laws because they are very unfair and were against a biggest law of all: the human rights law].
T: Okay. So Nelson can you tell us what Lucas said?
Researcher: (to Lucas) *Nelson va a traducir para ti.* [Nelson will translate for you].
Nelson: He says that it's okay to disobey unfair laws because they are very unfair, and that they go against the biggest law of all, the Human Rights Law. It's kinda like article 1.
T: Article 1, a-ha. Is that about right?
Marcela: Perfect.
T: Perfect. Awesome. Thank you, Nelson. Okay. Who else?

Lucas was excited to share his position with his peers. He asked the researcher to translate what his peers said since he was interested in knowing who agreed and who disagreed with him.

## *6.10 Strategic use of Fluent Bilinguals*

Teachers engaged bilingual adults and children in supporting their work with EB students. All classes in the school included Spanish English bilingual students with different levels of proficiency in the languages. Teachers strategically paired or grouped the students to allow EBs full participation. Students in these groups used both languages to figure out and accomplish tasks as well as exchange ideas.

Although teachers counted on the support of bilingual students fluent in English, they still felt personal responsibility for emergent bilinguals. For example, to support students in doing research for their biographies, Michelle made worksheets with the graphic organizer and gave one to each student. Daisy worked with Kaila looking at facts about the life of Barack Obama. They discussed in Spanish what they were doing. To look for information on the significance of what Obama had accomplished in his life, they decided to consult the Internet using an iPad. Kaila spotted a site with "Obama's Top 50 Accomplishments" and tried to get information. The writing was for an adult level, lexically dense and with no illustrations. Daisy became very frustrated because she could not read it. Sensing what was happening, Michelle approached the pair and pointed out that it was too difficult for them to read. She spotted a more accessible source. The two students worked together finding information. They carried out the discussion on what they were going to write amongst themselves in Spanish. However, they wrote their notes in the graphic organizer in English.

Teachers frequently approached the groups to check on comprehension and take advantage of the bilingual interactions to communicate and find out about the contributions of the EBs. Ed also drew on his limited knowledge of Spanish to share in the conversation.

Beverly always showed interest in what Lucas had to say and took advantage of fluent bilinguals, including one of the researchers, to facilitate communication either in small groups or whole class activities. For example, after her students had read the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and viewed a video on this topic, Beverly asked them to brainstorm the rights that they considered humans should have. She prompted them to think about human rights in the context of their lives, and their families' lives, and encouraged them to list their ideas. Students used a t-chart to list the rights on the left column, and the reasons for listing them on the right column. The researcher translated Beverly's instructions for him, and told him he could write his list in Spanish.

Beverly walked around the different tables to support students in their individual writing. She came to Lucas's table, and asked the researcher to tell her what he was writing. Lucas was happy to be able to communicate his ideas to his teacher. The researcher translated the rights that Lucas had written in Spanish to English and spelled the words in English for him to write below the Spanish version.

Later in the lesson Beverly asked the students to group again, directing a few of the fluent bilinguals to work with Lucas:

T: If can I have Nestor, Wilson, and other Spanish speakers, can I have at least two of you speak with Lucas? Cause he has some really great rights that he wrote. So if you can speak with him that would be great. Okay?
Student reads Lucas's work in English: Right to life, right to love, right to…
Martha: *Todos los seres humanos tienen derecho a ser tratados igual.* [All human beings have the right to be treated the same].

Lucas added "all humans have the right to be treated the same" to his list, copying from Martha's notes. He further explained that even if people were poor they deserved good treatment. Beverly asked the group to share the rights they had listed. She asked Lucas to share:

T: Lucas, tell me yours.
Researcher : *Di uno de los derechos que tu escribiste.* [Say one of the rights that you wrote]
Lucas: *¿Que lo escriba?* [Do I write it?]
Researcher: *Que lo digas.* [Say it]
Lucas : Eh. *Todos los seres humanos tenemos derecho a la vida.* [All human beings have the right to life].
T (to researcher): Can you write it in Spanish for me, please and then I'll write it in English. So when he looks at this he can see it.
T (to all students): *Derecho a la vida.* [Right to life]. Can you say that?
Students in chorus: Derecho a la vida [Right to life].

## *6.11 Seeking Support from Other Experienced Adults*

Learning in English was as challenging for the emergent bilinguals as teaching was for the teachers who did not know Spanish. During the focus group Beverly talked about these challenges:

> I was just as uncomfortable as Lucas was. I can't speak Spanish, and he can't speak English, so we both had challenges. We just had to make it work. So in that position you just do what you have to do, and you call the troops in, and you ask everyone for help.

As a result, these teachers sought some support from the ESL teacher assigned to the early grades where there were lots of newcomers, and also from the researchers, who were fluent in Spanish. However, the teachers never relinquished their own responsibility to educate their bilingual learners and often spent time just with them to improve their English.

Beverly was especially concerned with Lucas because he had only arrived in 5th grade and so would only have 1 year in the school. During writing time, Beverly drew on the resources of the bilingual researcher in the classroom not only to collect data but also to support Lucas. For example, to begin the research on a topic to write a new argument, Beverly directed students to read an article in *Time for Kids* in which the question whether college athletes should be paid was posed. Beverly asked students to discuss in their groups what questions they could ask to learn more about this issue. They came up with questions such as: “What percentage of college athletes make it to the pros? What percentage don’t make? [sic] Why don’t college athletes make it to the pros?” After sharing these questions, she passed iPads to each group for students to search for answers to these questions. Lucas did not have the argument organizer that his group had started completing in a previous lesson, so he borrowed a notebook from a peer and copied it. One of his peers used the Google translator to help Lucas translate the graphic organizer. After Lucas finished copying the graphic organizer, the researcher helped him translate the evidence that his group had found. Later on she supported Lucas in writing his final draft in Spanish. Before he started writing she suggested that he should think about the audience, for example his family in the Dominican Republic, and the issue that he was addressing in his essay. Lucas used his notes to write his thesis, reasons, and evidence. The researcher reminded him to divide his text in paragraphs and gave him sentence starters for his paragraphs. After he finished writing he illustrated his essay.

In sum, a combination of clear content provided by SFL meta language, explicit instruction inspired by the TLC, and full utilization of all language resources available in the classroom context supported the teachers’ efforts to educate their EBs in their classroom. The experience was not devoid of frustrations, yet all the students, including the EBs, produced the type of work that was expected in the class.

All students produced writing at the end of the units that reflected the purpose and stages of the genre. Lucas, who wrote his argument in Spanish, also demonstrated the ability to include a claim, reasons and evidence. He aptly used grammatical features to make his argument authoritative, as encouraged by his teacher. The products looked the same as other students in the class, except for the shorter amount of text. Daisy’s illustrated pages in her report included just one or two sentences while Nydia’s poster on Obama included a timeline with shorter captions and less information than her colleagues’. However, the products’ appearance was comparable, adding to the sense that these students were full members of their classroom community.

## 7 Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore how English writing instruction informed by genre-based SFL pedagogy supported emergent bilinguals in English medium classrooms, specifically which practices facilitated these students’ participation in classroom activities and learning. A long-term professional development emerging from a university-school partnership was instrumental in bringing change to the approach to writing (See Fig. 1).

Teachers were presented with an approach to teaching writing for the whole school. From the start it was assumed that all teachers and all students were going to be part of this program innovation. It was never suggested that EBs would be an exception and would not be able to participate because of their language proficiency. This approach provided teachers with specific resources drawn from the SFL description of the characteristics of genres. Teachers also learned the features of the TLC, which positioned teachers as writing instructors, and promoted collaboration. The professional development gave teachers the tools they needed to develop students' writing in a variety of genres connected with content area instruction. Their instruction reflected teachers' acquired knowledge of SFL and the TLC embedded in teachers' own background knowledge.

The result of the professional development initiative was that classrooms exhibited unique hybrid practices that focused on the purpose, stages, and language of genres with strong emphasis on apprenticing students to writing. Over time, teach-

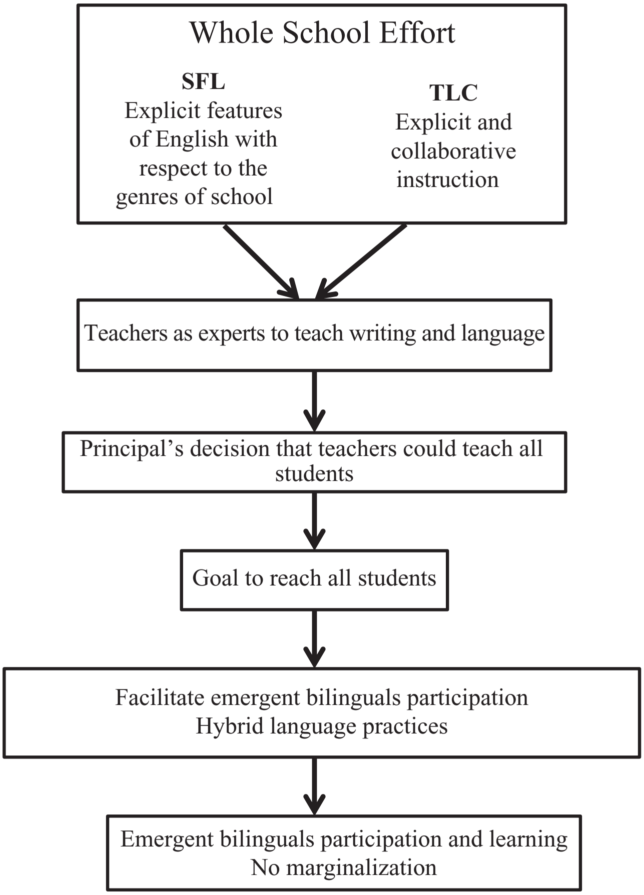
Whole School Effort
SFL
Explicit features of English with respect to the genres of school
TLC
Explicit and collaborative instruction
Teachers as experts to teach writing and language
Principal's decision that teachers could teach all students
Goal to reach all students
Facilitate emergent bilinguals participation
Hybrid language practices
Emergent bilinguals participation and learning
No marginalization

**Fig. 1** Model of change

ers' expertise and confidence was affirmed by their students' progress. This proven capacity prompted the principal's decision to integrate emergent bilinguals into grades 3–5 classrooms, challenging teachers to raise their expectations. In focus group interviews, teachers expressed their belief that SFL theory had taught them what to teach and that the TLC had given them the tools to be explicit, allowing them to have high expectations of all students. Given the collaborative nature of their classroom communities, it was only natural that the teachers realized that the fully bilingual students would be great collaborators with the newcomers. However, the teachers also continued to consider the EBs their responsibility, constantly checking and supporting their learning, thus avoiding the adultification of fluent bilingual students into teacher's roles (Gebhard 2005).

Hybrid practices organically emerged in these classrooms. Teachers found that use of Spanish supported their effort to teach EBs. Teachers also took advantage of iPads to use translating programs, as well as finding resources in Spanish to support their EBs' research. They also took advantage of Spanish-speaking researchers. Thus, use of Spanish expanded to the whole class.

All of these efforts resulted in full participation of emergent bilinguals in the classrooms, in small group and whole classroom settings, as well as their keeping up with their colleagues to produce similar written work. Students' personalities shaped the nature of this participation: those with more open personalities like Daisy and Lucas asserted themselves more than the quieter Nydia and Yanneris. However, they all learned and progressed. Figure 1 below highlights the longitudinal and institutional factors that informed cultural changes in writing instruction for emergent bilingual and indeed all learners in the school.

Quality bilingual education provides an ideal educational environment for students who enter schools fluent in a language other than the language used in schools as a medium of instruction. However, the reality of schools throughout the world and in the United States is that they use one language as the medium of instruction. In some states in the United States, including the one where this study took place, bilingual education is highly restricted or not allowed. In this chapter we reported on one such school where teachers created context that welcomed bilingualism and supported emergent bilingual students' learning in an English-medium school context.

In this school, SFL provided the content for instruction that was beneficial for EBs for its emphasis on language, the TLC guided the instructional approach that develops knowledge and confidence in students to attempt their own writing, and a bilingual classroom environment gave voice to students that would have remained silent waiting for English proficiency to develop. As reported by Khote (this volume), SFL informed instruction with the added space for translanguaging further supports EB learners. In addition, strong and sustained leadership, a high number of bilingual students, including fluent bilinguals, and a long term sustained professional development were important features of the school context where the practices described in the findings took place.

This study demonstrates that a critical SFL informed writing instruction enables English-medium schools to educate EBs. Without instruction in the two languages, students cannot be expected to develop full biliteracy. However, allowing and encouraging students to use all their linguistic repertoires to function in schools still has benefits, which coupled with robust instruction and supportive practices, allow for EBs to develop English while accessing the same curriculum as all students.

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# Translanguaging in Systemic Functional Linguistics: A Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy for Writing in Secondary Schools

**Nihal Khote**

**Abstract** Bilingualism is often perceived as a deficit in English only classrooms. Multilingual students, however, have sophisticated cognitive strategies that can be leveraged in school contexts. This chapter investigates how SFL genre pedagogy and translanguaging can function as integral resources in a culturally sustaining instructional framework to support the meaning-making practices of high school bilingual learners in persuasive writing. Findings from the study show that when immersed in this culturally sustaining framework, students successfully learned how patterns of academic language (e.g. grammatical metaphors) function in expository texts to build arguments and challenge dominant worldviews.

**Keywords** Systemic functional linguistics • Culturally sustaining SFL • Translanguaging • Emergent bilinguals • Persuasive writing

## 1 Introduction

As a multilingual[1] immigrant educator of color, my focus in the past 10 years of teaching in U.S. public schools has been to push back against a history of exclusion and marginalization of immigrant learners who struggle in monoglossic, English-only settings (see Flores and Schissel 2014). The main thrust of current subtractive ideologies is to replace students' home languages with the standardized national language, which is English in the United States (Valenzuela 1999). Along with experiencing erasure of their cultural and linguistic repertoires, emergent bilingual learners are typically unfamiliar with the complex language demands across content areas in secondary schooling because instruction tends to be highly implicit (Bunch 2006; Cummins and Man 2007). Educational statistics, indeed, show high achievement

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[1] I am fluent in English and Spanish and also speak three Indian languages: Hindi, Marathi, and Gujarati.

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gaps in literacy, lower high school graduation rates, and limited access to postsecondary education for this immigrant population (National Center for Education Statistics 2010). There is an urgent need for research that describes the process of supporting diverse learners in communicative and literacy tasks that move them towards linguistic and cultural equity and that support their emotional and social wellbeing.

This chapter chronicles how SFL-informed genre pedagogy and García's (2009) notion of *translanguaging* functioned as integral resources in a culturally sustaining pedagogical framework to support emergent bilingual learners (Ladson-Billings 1995; Nieto and Bode 2008; Paris and Alim 2014). García suggests that the language repertoires of bilingual learners should be seen as a single dynamic semiotic system and not two or more separate and bounded languages. She proposes that English-only educational contexts disregard bilingual learners' ability to mobilize diverse semiotic resources to communicate meanings. Other similar lines of research on bilingualism suggest that, in translanguaging, bilinguals interact and creatively assemble diverse linguistic repertoires that index particular cultural affiliations and evaluations that validate their communities and worlds (Creese and Blackledge, 2010; García and Li 2014). These scholars seem to agree that tapping into these multilingual repertoires is an academic advantage and also an issue of social and linguistic equity (Martínez-Roldán and Fránquiz 2009; Moll et al. 2015). This chapter describes how translanguaging *in* SFL opens new avenues for a culturally sustaining pedagogy to counter deficit approaches that "eradicate the linguistic, literate, and cultural practices" of minority students' communities (Paris 2012, p. 93), while also providing bilingual learners access to mainstream school culture and standards-mandated knowledge.

Below is an example of the value of translanguaging as a learning resource in a sample interaction from my sheltered 10th grade ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) language arts class in the year 2013–2014. In this lesson, the students were deconstructing how writers use reporting verbs (e. g., *suggests, states, demonstrates*) to make claims in persuasive essays. The students[2]- Domingo (D), Sofia (S), and Veronica (V) – responded to my (NK) questions about a graph that depicts End-of-course Test (EOCT) scores in the district.

### TRANSCRIPT 1

NK: So Figure 2 shows scores of ESOL students in the EOCT tests. What reporting verb could I use?
D: Displays?
R: *Evaluar también*. [Evaluates also.]
NK: Evaluates *también*. *Depende del caso*. [Evaluates also. Depends on the case.] You can say displays, evaluates or what else?
V: Summarizes?

This exchange illustrates how students' multilingual repertoires offer valuable linguistic reservoirs that have not been accorded their worth in traditional monolingual English-only settings (Flores and Schissel 2014). In translanguaging, Rosa, one of the students, responded in Spanish (*“evaluar también”*) to execute her academic and meaning-making needs. Rosa was in the 10th grade in her native school in Monterrey, Mexico, when her parents brought her to the United States. In my rural Georgia school district, she was identified as an English Learner (EL) and sent back to the ninth grade, ironically due to her ‘lack’ of English language proficiency. In predominantly monolingual, English-only contexts, the cultural and bilingual literacies of students like Rosa have largely been ignored in classroom discourse, depriving them of drawing from invaluable linguistic resources that would support their learning.

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[2] All names are pseudonyms.

In the current study, students applied concepts from Halliday’s (1993) systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to understand how texts communicate disciplinary meanings and convey ideologies. García’s (2009) translanguaging provided the theoretical framework to enact a culturally sustaining language pedagogy with emergent bilingual learners (Harman and Khote 2015; Kramsch 2009). This approach consisted of working with bilingual students like Veronica and Rosa to create a living “multivoicedness” (Bakhtin 1981, p. 279), a dialogic space that fostered multiple readings in texts rooted in diverse affiliations to different social groups. The SFL based language instruction provided students with the resources to express these orientations in a trusting space that valued their bilingualism as productive resources for creativity, community-building, and transformative teaching (Kramsch 2009; Janks 2005; Martínez-Roldán and Fránquiz 2009).

The next sections chronicle the planning, design, and co-construction of a culturally sustaining SFL unit. The focus of this unit was on researching and writing persuasively on the issue of undocumented immigration in the United States. I explore how an SFL pedagogical cycle of teaching and learning and a bicultural and dialogic “translanguaging space” (Li 2011) incorporated students’ cultural and linguistic repertoires and lived experiences as immigrants in this country; and how the students responded to the culturally sustaining SFL-based instruction as they learned to use linguistic resources like nominalization, modal verbs, and abstract nouns to purposefully control author’s tone and voice and discursive context and ideologies in their written texts. The findings section of the paper shows how the systematic language instruction pedagogy that was academically challenging and culturally responsive to the lives of the students supported bilingual learners in developing an authorial voice and critical language awareness when reading and writing persuasive texts in secondary school contexts.

## 2 SFL Theory and Praxis: Persuasive Writing as a Genre of Power

Michael Halliday’s SFL theory is based on a functional view of language, whereby a text both determines and is determined by its context (Halliday and Mathiessen 2004). Contextualized language use means that speakers and writers make lexical choices that vary according to the purpose and audience The selection of grammatical resources constitute the particular 'register' of language that communicates three interrelated situational meanings (field, tenor and mode). For example, in their written essays, my students made different choices of participants (e.g. *immigrants, Republicans, voters*), processes (e.g. *protest, deport, work*) and circumstances (e.g. *in the factory, at school, in ESOL for 7 seven years*) to communicate field and ideational meanings; the choices of mood (e.g. declarative vs. imperative), modality (e.g. use of modal auxiliaries like *would, may*), self-reference through pronouns (e.g. *I, you*) and nominalizations (e.g., *deported* changes to *deportation*) to reflect the tenor, tone and interpersonal relationships between author and audience; choices involving cohesion (e.g. transition words, connectors) and structural devices (e.g. active vs. passive voice, human vs. abstract subjects, clause structures and nominalization) to construe the mode and textual meanings in the text.

Working in Australia, SFL scholars Martin and Rothery (1980) examined register shifts in genres across subject areas to build a classification of 'foundation' genres of school (e.g., procedure, report, explanation, exposition and discussion) differentiated by how these genres use language to communicate their different purposes of engaging, informing, or evaluating.

In language arts classes, for example, the discussion genre or the persuasive essay is a 'genre of power' because of its high-stakes privileged nature in determining students' college-worthy potential. Schools all over the United States test students' ability to express ideas (field), control voice and tone (tenor), and organize claims coherently (mode) in persuasive essays (genre) in assessments like the Georgia Milestones Test. The assessments are de facto gateways to advancing career prospects and eventually future prosperity after schooling. In this scenario, mastering the discussion genre is a matter of social equity, a decisive step that may open or close access to universities that advance students' career options and economic prospects (Janks 2002). However, in the rush to teach the control of language and dominant disciplinary ways of making meaning, educators need to take care to incorporate students' own linguistic cultures and codes and diverse meaning making resources.

One of the critiques of SFL praxis is that it has mainly focused on developing proficiency in dominant genres and language use, albeit with the higher goal of opening students' access to better economic opportunities and career prospects (Cope and Kalantzis 1993; Gebhard and Harman 2011; Lankshear and Knobel 2000). In other words, SFL praxis needs to avoid perpetuating the same inequalities that it intends to rectify (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Delpit 1988).

## 2.1 Critical SFL: Culturally Sustaining Praxis

As articulated in Ruth Harman's introductory chapter, Halliday's original goal in developing SFL was to rectify the unequal participation in the learning experiences of working-class and middle-class children (Bernstein 2000; Hasan 1996; Rose and

Martin 2012). SFL conceptualizes language not simply as a collection of grammatical rules, but as ‘a resource for making meaning’ (Halliday and Hasan 1985); through these resources students negotiate, shape and re-interpret themselves and the world. Hence a culturally sustaining SFL needs to support students at two levels: by fostering reflexive frames and orientations on the world and by expanding students’ linguistic tool-kit to express these views in context-appropriate ways. This conception requires a dialogic discursive environment that engages students in multiple readings of texts as a pedagogical strategy; it also requires a cultural framework that fosters opportunities for minoritized students to transgress dominant spaces and fill them with vigorous expressions of their lived experiences and subjugated histories. In other words, the curriculum needs to draw on culturally diverse and differing perspectives that disrupt dominant narratives.

In this scenario, the purpose for applying SFL concepts in deconstructing and analyzing texts and ‘academic’ genres is not a subtractive goal because the critical intent is to repopulate them with the subaltern voice (Spivak 1988). The process of learning is that of expanding the bilingual tool-kit to incorporate new contextualized ‘academic’ varieties of language. In addition, the critical goal of SFL is usurping dominant mediums and communicating hitherto silenced perspectives and views. Academic genres like discussion and the persuasive essay become vessels of power when used to counter deficit discourses about certain subgroups in society and to develop ‘resistant’ modes of reading and writing (Macken-Horarik 1998).

A culturally sustaining SFL does not view school and home literacies as binaries in opposition to each other; instead, it acknowledges that both linguistic codes are different ways to communicate *context-specific* meanings (Halliday 1994; Halliday and Hasan 1989). Halliday validates both home and academic ways of meaning making in pointing to how language varies contextually, hence reconciling the cultural/academic binary. What is important is allowing community knowledge and meanings *into* academic spaces- developing a permeable curriculum that encourages voices representing the home and community (Dyson 1993, 2003; Gutierrez 2008). The work of introducing the subaltern presence is done through translanguaging.

In culturally sustaining SFL and translanguaging pedagogies, students appropriate dominant language forms and structures, using SFL concepts in “constructing *our* space within and against *their* place, of speaking *our* meaning with *their* language’ (de Certeau 1984). Here, SFL assumes a critical lens (see Harman and Simmons 2014) when enacted in an awareness of the larger social and political situatedness of the discursive contexts of texts being analyzed and produced in the classroom (Fairclough 1989, 1992). In culturally sustaining SFL, then, the project of teaching writing assumes a political thrust whereby the ‘official’ production of genre literacy is reconciled with community literacies to cultivate subjugated subaltern knowledge and the silenced voices of bilingual learners. In our culturally sustaining SFL praxis, my students and I found the ‘power-tools’ to realize this vision.

## 3 Research Site and Participants

In 2013, Latinos in my school district in rural Georgia comprised 43% of the blue-collar families who worked in the local carpet mills. Of the 1348 students enrolled in D.D. High School, 58% were White, 40% were Latino, 1% African American, and 1% belonged to other races. My ESOL department consisted of a total of 110 English learners, henceforth called bilingual learners, served by 5 certified ESOL teachers, including myself, in sheltered[3] ESOL classrooms (3 grades levels of language arts, 9th grade biology, algebra support and social studies). As ESOL teachers, our main responsibility was exiting students from ESOL and transitioning them to mainstream content classes.

The classroom site for this action research study was a 10th grade sheltered language arts classroom that consisted of 13 bilingual learners of intermediate English language proficiency (3 Vietnamese, 2 Guatemalans, and 8 Mexican students). Many were naturalized citizens of the United States who had been in ESOL settings for 10 years, categorized by Menken and others as “Long Term English Language Learners” (LTELLs) (Menken 2008; Menken and Kleyn 2010). Research on LTELLs often focuses on subtractive educational contexts (Valenzuela 1999) that aim to replace students’ home languages and cultures with American culture and English. These settings typically produce bilingual students who can communicate fairly well in English when communicating orally with friends in their social circles. However, they tend to have limited academic literacy in both their heritage language and English. For example, the focal student in this chapter, Veronica, was enrolled in ESOL in kindergarten and continued in ESOL settings through high school because she could not pass the exit tests. She was enrolled in my class in the 10th grade after 10 years in ESOL. There is a stigma attached to LTELLS in ESOL and students like Veronica are often alienated and unmotivated in these settings. As a result, they are frequently disciplined due to rebellious behavior. A more alarming outcome is the persistent achievement gap of 25 points between Hispanic and White students (National Center of Educational Statistics 2010) in high school completion rates and the relatively low numbers of bilingual learners in postsecondary education (Kanno and Cromley 2013), warning signs of the dearth of effective language pedagogies and supports for bilingual learners. This situation points to a systematic disregard of bilingual students’ rich and diverse language learning potential and abilities, relegating them to deficit identities (Valenzuela 1999) and pigeon-holing them into lower academic tracks (Callahan et al. 2010; Harklau 2000).

D.D, the region where I taught, has been referred to as part of the “New Latino Diaspora” (Wortham et al. 2002), the recent trend of Latino families to settle in areas that traditionally have not been home to Latinos (e. g., North Carolina, Maine, Georgia) and where work in agriculture and poultry farms is freely available. The sudden “Latinization” of schools (Irizarry 2011) has led to an anti-Latino backlash, notwithstanding the vibrant economic and social contributions of this new immigrant community. In 2013, my city implemented Arizona-like anti-immigration policies including the passing of section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), which gives local law enforcement the power to deport undocumented immigrants. As many families had been directly impacted by this legislation, the Latino community and many of my students lived in constant fear. In this sociopolitical context, a mere grammatical and functional focus to textual analyses was not enough. Language and content objectives needed to be aligned with students’ interests in a process of exploring how academic language normalize political worldviews and how it could be leveraged to voice students’ voices on immigrant rights and social equity instead.

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[3] In a sheltered classroom or scheduled class time, bilingual students at the middle and high school levels receive language assistance and/or content instruction in a class composed only of ELs, different from push-in models that place ELs in mainstream classes with an ESOL teacher as support.

### *3.1 Aligning Students’ Interests*

I developed an SFL-based expository writing unit that focused on the discussion genre because its argumentative language and purpose serve to communicate students’ social and political goals on relevant sociocultural issues (Hillocks 2010; Martin 1989; Rothery 1989). Also, the unit aligned with the emphasis on expository language analysis and control of argumentation required by the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (www.gadoe.org 2016) that specify that students need to learn to deploy a “formal, objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing” (ELACC9-10 W1-d).

In her genre-based research in Australian classrooms, Rothery (1989) proposes that teacher and students jointly select an issue or topic that is relevant to students’ lives. The topic of immigration and the DREAM[4] Act was relevant to my students since many either had family members who had been deported due to the strict immigration policies of the district or were anticipating the opportunity to obtain legal immigration status. The sociocultural framing of the unit was important as it provided high motivation and interest in reading and writing about the ongoing immigration debate in the country. Informed by Rothery’s Teaching/Learning cycle (see diagram in Ruth Harman’s introductory chapter), the curricular module guided students through the phases of deconstruction of knowledge of field (the immigration policy debate) and language (construing a formal and authoritative tone); joint construction in the teaching cycle involved scaffolding students’ processes as they jointly wrote texts with me that modeled target language structures in sample genre essays; and independent construction where students applied their learning in independent writing.

Based on sociocultural perspectives of language as a mediating tool for literacy (Vygotsky 1978), Rothery (1996) designed the teaching cycle to explicitly scaffold students in the control and use of target genres that were typically excluded from the language curriculum of the primary and secondary schools of in Sydney, Australia. She demonstrated how novice members of a cultural group can be apprenticed into expressing their views and perspectives in ways similar to more expert members of that culture through iterative cycles of increasing complexity (e.g. Christie and Derewianka 2008).

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[4] DREAM (acronym for Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act is an American legislative proposal for undocumented immigrants in the United States that would first grant conditional residency. See www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/111/hr1751 for more details.

Using this framework in our ESOL/ELA classroom, the students and I jointly deconstructed sample persuasive essays, analyzing how authors used grammatical resources like nominalization, that is changing verbs to nouns (e.g., *realized* to *realization*), modal verbs (e. g., *could, may, would*), and abstract nouns (e. g., *solution, impact, issue*) to express their views in authoritative, subjective or formal ways.

To support my students in reaching grade-level mastery of the argumentative genre and a conceptual understanding of current immigration policies, I applied the Teaching/ Learning cycle to my instructional design and implementation. In the first phase of the learning cycle, students in my class built knowledge of the field (e.g., readings about the complexities of national immigration policy) and also analyzed how language was used in mentor texts to make claims that construed an authoritative or subjective tone. In the joint construction stage, students and I wrote and reflected on specific language functions like *Removing the I* and S*ounding Objective and Formal in Writing*. Together we co-constructed texts that reflected an awareness of audience and purpose. In the final stage, students independently wrote an essay debating the pros and cons of the immigration policy, construing an appropriate authorial tone that effectively communicated their claims and expressed their lived experiences of how immigration policy affected their lives.

The culturally sustaining approach that framed my pedagogical design meant that the goals of the curriculum were twofold: to foster critical reflection among students through exploration of immigration policy and to engage them in SFL analysis of texts. Students shared their views on immigration in the class and discussed the impact of immigration policies on their families, while SFL supported their academic goals in their *community of practice* (Lave and Wenger 1991).

## 4 Deconstruction Phase: Building Field and Critical Literacy

In multicultural classrooms, third space theorists explore how the cultural spaces students inhabit can be brought together in the classroom (Gutiérrez et al. 1999; Moje et al. 2004). In a third space classroom the authoritative nature of academic discourses is challenged through articulated disjuncture of in and out-of-school knowledge of learners (Moje et al. 2004). For example, in my class, students' out-of-school lived experiences and knowledge of the issue of immigration shaped the ways they made and produced discursive meanings (Moll et al. 2005). Reading on immigration policy and exploring their perspectives on the impact of these policies in a third space was the first step in the deconstruction phase of the cycle.

**Table 1** Articles on immigration policy

| Title of article | Retrieved from web address |
|---|---|
| Strengthening our country through comprehensive immigration reform | New Democrat Coalition (2013) |
| Republican party on immigration | OnTheIssues (n.d) |
| Should America maintain or increase the level of legal immigration? | Messerli (2012) |
| Partisan divide remains on how to tackle immigration | Helderman (2013) |

Initially, students were immersed in building knowledge of field (i.e. the subject matter with all the necessary language and perspectives on immigration policy). This entailed finding intersections between their lived experiences and dominant narratives on immigration in social media texts; and also it entailed scrutinizing sample discussion genre texts for 'hidden' linguistic features such as the social purpose and the rhetorical structure of the text (issue, arguments for, arguments against, and recommendations). Students delved into domain-specific concepts and the complexities of immigration policy and decision-making at the national level. A few key sources from online news articles and official party opinion pieces were selected to facilitate and focus the discussion on deconstructing dominant narratives. Table 1 outlines some of the articles that were selected to cover the main views (Republican and Democratic) on the topic.

As students read the articles, they jointly noted and analyzed the information on the national immigration debate that was later collated on the Smart board. They organized the ideas by using headings, summarizing the different views and discussing the politics behind the stated positions of the different political parties. For better comprehension of the topic, we exchanged views on the ideological differences in a divided Congress and discussed technical terms that were important to build knowledge of field, like "Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act", "H2A and B Visas" "E-verify" and "amnesty". The process of building field in our class discussions also brought to the fore diverse ideological orientations of students, an important feature of culturally sustaining SFL as seen in the following interaction:

**TRANSCRIPT 2: Rosa (R), Veronica (V), and Jose (J)**

R: Mister, did you hear the news? *No van a dar papeles a los Mexicanos*. [There will not give visas to Mexicans.]

NK: Yes, can you tell me about the problem with the guest worker program in the Senate?

V: The workers don't go back.

R: *No pueden regresar* [They can't return]

J: *Si me voy a Mexico, tu crees que voy a regresar?* [If I go to Mexico, do you think I will return?]

NK: The Democrats want a guest worker program, but the Republicans want to stop more undocumented workers coming in.

J: *Ya deben de unir Mexico con Estados Unidos*! [They should unite Mexico and United States!]

In a third space contact zone (Gutiérrez 2008), building field (topic) implies an articulation of ideologies and views in an integrated bilingual repertoire, challenging and re-shaping discourses in references to intersections and divergence between particular community affiliations and political interests. In the above discussion, Veronica reproduced dominant notions that the guest worker program does not work because the undocumented workers do not return to the home country after their visas had expired ("The workers don't go back"). Rosa defended the undocumented workers in Spanish implying that they cannot return (*"No pueden regresar")*, while Jose also responded in Spanish that he would not return if he left for Mexico. In the end of the exchange, Jose declared that Mexico and United States might as well form a single united nation in a facile attempt to bring closure to a seemingly unresolvable situation.

Many different positions are represented in this short multilingual interaction, reflecting the complexity of choices that immigrants face: knowingly breaking the law, returning to a hopeless situation in the home country, or enduring the challenges of living as an 'illegal alien'. Bilingual speakers typically code-switch or use two or alternating "codes within one conversational episode" (Auer 1998, p. 1), to communicate "special local kinds of social voices" (Koven 2001, p. 528) and intersections between language and identity (e.g. Auer 2002; Heller 1995; Woolard 1998, 2004); in translanguaging, multiple linguistic codes relay diverse ideological orientations and perspectives that have largely been silenced in academic contexts. These affiliations are expressed in fluid and spontaneous ways that mark a "sense of the interconnectedness of language, learning, and culture" (Gutiérrez et al., p. 369).

At a discursive level, the process of building field took on the work of scrutinizing how language situates people in ideological ways. Students confronted terms like "alien", "illegals" and "undocumented" and discussed the criminalization of immigrants. In sharing and thinking about their lived experiences, they began to make initial forays into critical thinking and building reflexive knowledge (Macken-Horarik 1996, 1998), as illustrated in Transcript 3 below:

**TRANSCRIPT 3: Nihal (NK), Roberto (R), Sofia (S), Veronica (V)**

R: But some people complain that "the illegals" are working for less pay.
NK: Yes, that is true… who is really paying the price?
R: Us. Yes, everybody wants those cheap vegetables and they pay very little… even in construction.
NK: You cannot have cheap tomatoes and also call them aliens and criminals.
V: They stop us on the road…in the *retenes* [check-points]. Yeah, that's how my dad got deported.

The transcript sample above illustrates how the fluidity of multilingual spaces unearth unpredictable orientations. The use of the word "*retenes*", the local code for police checkpoints, is informed by the students' cultural reservoirs of memory and experience, thus connecting local and distant worlds. Veronica spoke about the day her father was caught "in the *retenes*" and later deported; Roberto described how he felt "strange" when on vacation in Mexico; and Sofia discussed her inability to connect with her grandmother from "back home". Veronica, Rosa, and Jose all had parents who were undocumented and their personal stake in the topic provoked a richly layered school-home contact zone. The discussions on immigration rights brought to the fore the hardships and challenges that students' families faced, experiences that are rarely shared publicly in official domains of school. The Vietnamese female students, Anh and Mai, also contributed important insights on their unjust work experiences in a local nail salon:

**TRANSCRIPT 4: Nihal (NK), Mai, Anh, Roberto (R), Sofia (S)**

NK: So how many nails do you paint in one day?
MAI: Uhh, depend. Like in summer you do a lot, maybe in a day, twenty. Yeah, but right now, maybe five.
NK: Oh, five only.
MAI: I remember one day; I didn't have no customer. Yes, whole day, I just sat there. Whole day no customer and no money. And she make me work.
NK: How did she make you work? That doesn't make sense.
ANH: They will make you do everything… cleaning, sweeping, whatever. But they don't pay for that. They only pay for the nail jobs.
NK: How much do you make?
MAI: About 150 on weekend but about 50 in the weekdays…
R: Oh, that's too little!
S: Cheap labor!
R: You're getting exploited!
S: *Igual como nosotros*! [Just like us!]

Once again in the classroom discussion, community perspectives came to the fore. The usually quiet and withdrawn Vietnamese students shared their experiences as immigrants and the Latino students responded heatedly ("You're getting exploited!") and (*Igual cómo nosotros*! [Just like us!]). The Latino students realized that in spite of cultural differences, both groups shared the experience of exploitation and a sense of social powerlessness in their work options due to exploitative pay structures. In sharing everyday local experiences in third space, students built reflexive knowledge on how immigrants of all races (not only Latinos) were being exploited because of their immigrant status, creating a community of learners (Lave and Wenger 1991) in which students' worlds, languages, and interests were aligned with the academic curriculum.

As students built reflexive knowledge, the next phase of culturally sustaining SFL was to deconstruct disciplinary discourse and support students in expanding their language repertoires.

## *4.1 Deconstruction Phase: Expanding Language Repertoires*

Most high school students face challenges in coping with the increased demands of language typical of school assignments across the content areas (Bunch 2006, 2009; Lucas and Villegas 2011; Zwiers 2007). The language and knowledge of secondary schooling is abstract, requiring students to distill observations and analyses from nature and social experience (Fang and Schleppegrell 2008). This so-called academic language packs technical lexis and concepts in complex hierarchical clausal relations elaborated by noun phrases, relative clauses, and prepositional phrases (Fang et al. 2006; Schleppergrell 2004). In language arts, the persuasive essay is used as the pervasive assessment of language proficiency; students are expected to demonstrate control of vocabulary, voice, and discourse conventions in arguing claims justified by valid reasons and examples (Hao and Humphrey 2012; Hyland 2013).

During this study, in a district-wide written assessment of all 10th graders, students were required to write a persuasive essay arguing for or against banning the use of cellphones in indoor public spaces. On examining the students' written essays, it was clear that my students were unfamiliar with the lexical and grammatical features of the argumentation genre. The first paragraph of Veronica's essay illustrates how most of the bilingual students constructed the oral register. Her whole essay is represented below without any corrections.

> First, cellphones should be banned *because* there is a time and place for that. Let's say **you** go to the movies *and* there was **someone** talking on the phone out loud. **I** assure **you** everybody would get mad. **You** can use your cell phone ones out of that area, *but* once **you're** on that privately owned area they should get powered off. Many **people** enjoy having good time without cellphones, *so* why should **someone** go and ruin the moment? **You** can always talk out of those places *but* again there is a time and place for all that and privately owned places.
>
> My second reason why **I** agree that **we** should ban cell phones is *because* it's annoying when people really talk loud. It's really rude *and* people don't understand that **no ones** wants to know about **her** life. For example, if **there** at the movies *and* **someon**e gets a phone call *and* **they** start talking really loud **everyone** will be getting mad.
>
> Now in days **people** get annoyed really easily *so* why talk loud and get them mad? Most of all it's really rude *because* **they** can't do that if **your** there talking really loud. Have respect for other people.

Veronica's essay contained chained finite clauses (underlined) joined by conjunctions (italicized); and generic lexical choices represented by the use of simple pronouns and participants (highlighted in bold). She and the other students wrote as they spoke; that is, they deployed an informal register to communicate their ideas, addressing the reader in direct and subjective ways (questions, commands). On receiving low scores for their essay, Veronica and the other students expressed the need to expand their linguistic repertoires. The deconstruction phase of the SFL module focused on making language choices in purposeful ways and being aware of how register is informed by the expectations of the genre and social purpose of the text. To support student understanding of the pliability of language, I designed various mini-units that targeted how written expository language structures communicate functions like reasoning, author/reader distance, causality, and authoritative tone in different ways than oral informal registers.

## *4.2 Constructing a Formal Authoritative Tone*

In jointly deconstructing how the students wrote these essays, the students began to recognize their tendency to address readers in direct and informal ways. The interactional voice relied heavily on pronominal subjects (I, you, we, her) that made exophoric references to people and things outside the text, as if engaging in email, texting, or some other ongoing conversation based on shared assumptions with the reader about situational issues (Martin 1989):

> ***You*** *can use your cell phone ones out of that area, but once* ***your*** *on that privately owned area they should get powered off*

Expository writing for academic purposes, on the other hand, tends to construe arguments in a detached and impersonal tone and students analyzed grammatical patterns in their own writing that did not reflect the appropriate tone. They pointed out lexical choices in affect, modality and amplification (Schleppergrell and Go 2007) that construed an emotionally charged and involved tone:

> *if they['re] at the movies and someone gets a phone call and they start talking really loud everyone will be getting mad*

They identified adjectives and adverbials such as "really rude" and "really loud" and discussed how they were typically used in social interactions to heighten emotions and engage participants in overt and direct ways. We explored how Veronica's essay as a sample student text used direct questions and a conversational tone to engage the reader in an intimate way.

> *Many people enjoy having good time without cellphones, so why should someone go and ruin the moment?*

Through the analysis and discussion, students began to realize that they had agency in deciding what register variables to use in realizing their communicative purposes.

## *4.3 Writing Cohesively*

While examining their writing, students also highlighted how they established cohesion in their oral-like texts. They saw how causality, for example, was realized by structuring sentences through clausal chains of the same rank or relation of dependency, and connecting them with simple conjunctions like "and", "but", "because", and "if" (also see the underlined conjunctions in Veronica's full text above):

> *if they['re] at the movies and someone gets a phone call and they start talking really loud everyone will be getting mad.*

In Veronica's text, simple clauses were strung together by conjunctions to realize causal relations. Martin (1989) describes how the grammatical resource of "setting up two separate clauses and marking the causal relation between them with a conjunction is the commonest way of reasoning in spoken language" (Martin 1989, p. 18). To support a code switching from an informal to more formal tenor in argumentative writing, we analyzed academic essays. Students also practiced the codeswitching of informal to formal register in their everyday language by expressing through noun phrases with abstract nouns such as "cause" and "reason" and verbal groups like "due to", "leads to" and "results in," as illustrated in the examples below in Table 2.

Students discussed how their use of abstract nouns enabled them to put more information into the clause, especially with use of expanded noun phrases comprising prepositional phrases and relative clauses. They compared their everyday language structures with 'academic' language, highlighting the simple clauses in their texts and reviewing how they sounded like spoken language, not appropriate for achieving a persuasive purpose in a high stakes formal academic context.

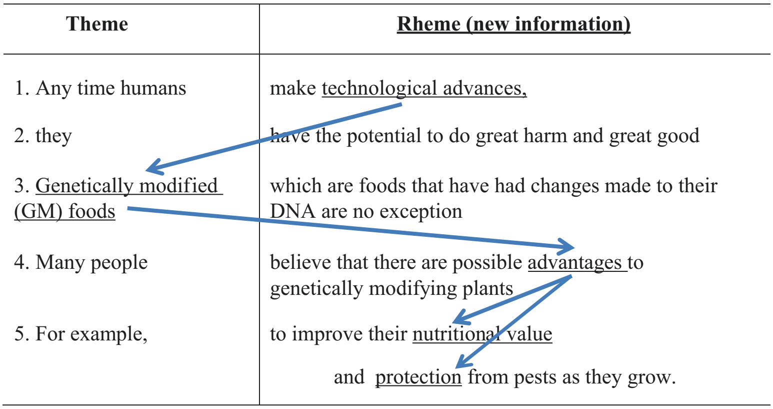
To support the students' understanding of cohesion, I also introduced them to SFL meta language related to the function of Theme/ Rheme (i.e. the point of departure and the rest of the clause) and showed them how published authors in some of our class readings used particular cohesive patterns of Theme/Rheme. Theme introduces an idea and Rheme adds new information to expand and build on theme, in progressive conceptual links that structure a text from clause to clause. Different from the notion of *topic*, Theme and Rheme are realized by nouns, adverbs, prepositional phrases, or similar functional resources. Students began to see how their analysis of Theme/Rheme links uncovered the organizational strategy and development of ideas in an expository text. For example, during their analysis of the sample essay *Genetically Modified Foods* (Bunting et al., 2012), students identified the individual clauses and then pointed out how Theme and Rheme built cohesion and unity in the writing as illustrated in Table 3.

**Table 2** Student code-switching among registers

| | |
|---|---|
| Informal register (uses conjunction) | *Many girls drop out of school* **because** *they get pregnant at a young age* |
| Formal register (uses noun phrases) | *Teenage pregnancies are an important cause of the high dropout rate of girls in high schools* |
| Dense language (add relative clause) | *Teenage pregnancies that are increasing every year are an important cause of the high dropout rate of girls in high schools* |

**Table 3** Eliminating personal pronouns

| Informal register | Formal register |
|---|---|
| When **you** have too many young kids who are overweight, then **we** should be worried as a society | The increasing epidemic of obesity is a cause for great concern in our society |



| **Theme** | **Rheme (new information)** |
|---|---|
| 1. Any time humans | make technological advances, |
| 2. they | have the potential to do great harm and great good |
| 3. Genetically modified (GM) foods | which are foods that have had changes made to their DNA are no exception |
| 4. Many people | believe that there are possible advantages to genetically modifying plants |
| 5. For example, | to improve their nutritional value |
| | and protection from pests as they grow. |

**Fig. 1** Mapping of theme/rheme cohesion

Analyzing the zig-zagging Theme/Rheme structure of the text, as illustrated in Fig. 1, enabled the students to mark how writers deploy abstract nouns to elaborate and develop concepts from clause to clause. An interview with Veronica during the study made it clear that teachers had never exposed her before to the concept of grammatical resources functioning to realize a tightly knit cohesive text.

## 5 Joint Construction: How to Remove the "I" from Academic Writing

Students were immersed in discipline appropriate language and in thinking critically about making language choices appropriate to genre, register, and social purpose of the writing. They began writing short texts that focused on specific language functions like *How to Remove the 'I'*, or construing a formal tone. One key resource that I shared with students was nominalization. SFL theorists and literacy researchers have studied the significance of nominalizations in academic discourse and noted how it plays an important role in constructing a formal tenor, typical of written discourse (Christie 2002; de Oliveira 2011; Fang et al. 2006; Martin 1993; Schleppegrell 2004; Unsworth 2000). Halliday (1989) described nominalization as a form of grammatical metaphor that occurs when a verbal group "*because I am concerned*" is expressed as a noun or noun phrase as in "*a cause for great concern.*" Schleppegrell (2006) highlighted how nominalization functions to realize a distant and impersonal tone in scientific and historical texts. She described how writers use dense technical lexis in declarative sentences to construe a voice that elides the author's agency in the experiment and foregrounds the experimental context. A subdued voice is also appropriate to expository texts and persuasive argumentation in writing.

Students worked with a range of grammatical resources that establish a continuum of interrelationships with the audience. For example, the examples below show how subtle changes in language and the use of nominalization construe a range of expression from a more personal to objective tone:

| | |
|---|---|
| *I am concerned about…* | subjective personal tone. |
| *my concern for….* | More distant but personal tone |
| *a cause for great concern* | objective, authoritative tone |

In a discussion genre, the social purpose of the argument is to persuade the reader into social action. If, for example, students were required to write about a burning social issue like immigration rights, it would be appropriate for them to overtly express an opinion or even to address the reader directly utilizing personal pronouns as in:

> *I am concerned that our politicians are not working together to fix our broken immigration system.*

However, in other academic varieties of writing, agency is elided and subjectivity toned down, if not completely hidden. By explicitly focusing on the different processes of rendering a text more personal or more impersonal, students began to see how linguistic form and function strategically constructed meanings and controlled the interpersonal relationship with the reader, across different genres. Through daily practice in the use of nominalization, students began deconstructing and appropriating the seemingly objective voice of expository writing.

As students progressed, I introduced another way of hiding agency and subjectivity in a text: removing the participant from Theme position (at the beginning of the sentence), writing in the passive voice, or writing in the third person. A transcription of this discussion (edited for space) is presented below:

**TRANSCRIPT 5: Nihal (NK), Jose (J), Veronica (V), Domingo (D)**

NK: Veronica, can you give me an example of a fact, any fact – about the population or about Mexico. Give me a fact.
J: Mexico is full of zetas.
NK: What? I believe that Mexico has what?
J: *No nada solo zetas*. [No, nothing, only zetas.]
V: *Dile*! [Tell him!] (laughs)
NK: OK. How would you express that as an opinion?
V: I think that….
NK: Good! (writes on the board). I *think that Mexico is full of gangs*.
J: Yeah!
NK: OK? But I want to remove the "I". So how do I do it? I would say: It is certain that Mexico has a lot of gangs.
D: Oh yeah!
NK: You remove the "I". So now it seems very objective. Or you can say: It is clear that Mexico has a lot of gangs. It is evident that Mexico has a lot of gangs.

V: It is obvious…
NK: It is OBVIOUS that Mexico has a lot of gangs. All these are used very often in essays.

As evidenced in the transcript above, we engaged in explicit discussion about the function of grammatical resources in sample texts for joint construction. As students began to experiment with removing the 'I', it became clear to them that, though agency is disguised, the writer's opinions are still actively present in the statements. At a later stage, they worked on eliminating subject pronouns and replacing them with abstract entities (nominalizations) or abstract qualities in expanded noun groups in Theme (subject) position as underlined in the sample text below:

> *The increasing epidemic of obesity in our youth should be a cause for great concern in our society.*

After a few weeks of practicing the transition to using generalized participants (e. g., *humans, people*), abstract entities (e. g., *genetically modified foods, nutritional value*) and nominalizations (e. g., *advantages, exception, harm, good*), students began to see differences between informal writing and conventional written structures of argumentation. In daily warm up activities, they practiced shunting between registers and grappling with how to construe a formal tone and writerly distance from the issues at hand (Fang et al. 2006; Hyland 2002). Being exposed to formal writing resources and working with functional aspects of language, provided them important insights into understanding the elision of subject pronouns or addressing the reader in direct and personal ways. Some of our daily play with these concepts is demonstrated by the example in Table 3:

In the above sample, the subject pronouns "you" and "we" in Theme position in the two clauses of the informal register are subsumed into a single clause with expanded noun phrases ("*the increasing epidemic of obesity*" and "*a cause for great concern in our society*"). Removing the 'I' was an important step for students in realizing how to construe "spatial and interpersonal distance" (Eggins 2004, p. 53).

Towards the end of the joint construction phase, students also played with modal verbs to construe a subdued and dialogical voice (Martin 1989) that allows readers a space to differ with the authorial voice. To clarify their understanding of how modality is used in this way, students highlighted how the author used modal verbs in our readings:

> *While there appear to be advantages to this technological advance*
> *There are some scientists who tend to question the safety of these foods for human consumption*

I also pointed out how to use adjectives to soften or enforce the authorial voice:

> *There are possible advantages to genetically modifying plants.*
> *They have the potential to do great* harm *and great good*

Eliminating personal pronouns (e. g., *I*, *you*, and *us*) and using abstract participants, modal verbs ("appear", "tend to") and adjectives of degree ("possible") lends an impersonal, thus, seemingly objective tone to the claim. In effect, agency is hidden and subjectivity is disguised. Through the deconstruction and joint construction stages of our Teaching/ Learning cycle, the students began to see how the genre of persuasion in academic and formal purposes was realized through a specific configuration of lexico grammatical and discourse semantic resources that were very different, though in no way superior, to those we use in everyday arguments about the same topic.

## 6 Independent Construction Writing

After their deconstruction and joint construction of texts, students were developing a higher level of understanding of how form and function interrelate in written texts. Most of them were able to navigate the linguistically and cognitively complex texts that they were expected to read and write in 10th grade. In the final stage of the writing process, the students independently wrote a persuasive essay on immigration and its effects on families without legal documentation or status. The sample text below shows the introduction to Veronica's second persuasive essay (see Veronica's earlier essay to contrast the writing before and after the curriculum cycle):

> *Wealthy nations such as the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom will always attract immigrants that are in search for a better life.* ***The problem is*** *that many immigrants do not follow the proper rules, therefore there are many illegals crossing the borders.* *It is evident* *that there will be positive and negative* ***impacts****. The United States Immigration Reform is specifically targeting the problem of 12 to 20 million undocumented workers in the United States. President Obama has made it clear from the beginning that the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act is a* **priority**. *It seems* *that Democrats and Republicans have been discussing this* **issue** *for years.* ***Meanwhile*** *immigrants are suffering the* ***consequences*** *of their* ***indecision***. *It is certain* *that they need to find a* ***solution*** *to this problem.*

It is clear that Veronica has progressed considerably in her writing. Her introductory paragraph shows an increased sense of order, organization, and coherence. Veronica's lexical choices to realize tenor show almost no overt traces of concrete participants, with an elision of first person pronouns. Instead, her essay is full of abstract participants like "the problem", "positive and negative impacts", "priority", "issue", and "consequences" and nominalizations like "indecision" and "solution" that serve to accentuate a formal tone and writerly distance informed by her ideological stance on the issue. The different drafts of Veronica's written essay highlight how she transitioned from informal register to a more controlled authoritative voice. Table 4 below tracks the changes that she made in her original text as her lexical choices parallel a move from oral to a formal and distant register:

Veronica transitioned from the informal "I believe" to deploying generalized participants ("immigrants") and abstract nouns ("consequences", "issue") and nominalizations ("indecision"), Her linguistic choices reflect her knowledge of shunting between registers. Veronica attributed opinions to other sources ("immigrants are suffering") and used passive constructions, mainly deploying the third

**Table 4** Shunting registers – transitioning tenor and field values

| | Veronica's text in transition | Cline of language use | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | language use | Tenor (stance) | Field (participants) |
| 1. | *I believe that politicians make laws but they do not think about us, the immigrants* | Oral language | Overt/subjective | Local/concrete |
| 2. | *Democrats and Republicans have been discussing the immigration issue for years but the immigrants are suffering* | | | |
| 3. | *It seems that Democrats and Republicans have been discussing this issue for years. Meanwhile immigrants are suffering the consequences of their indecision* | Academic language | Formal distant | Abstract generalized |

person impersonal "it" formation ("it seems that"). The nominalizations (in bold) and proper transitions (underlined) also build logical relations at the clausal level to construct her argument in a rational and cohesive manner.

> *Meanwhile immigrants are suffering the* ***consequences*** *of their* ***indecision****.*

In addition, abstract participants like "nations", "immigrants", and "reform" reinforce the objective and formal tone of the text. The informal tone that she used in her earlier writing has been replaced with a distant, but authoritative tone. Indeed, her expanded repertoire of choices shifts agency away from any one person but instead places culpability squarely on the political parties. Her move to contrast the indecision of the parties with the plight of the immigrants who are "suffering the consequences of their indecision" strengthens her position. Overall, Veronica's writing demonstrates a critical awareness of the value and power of language choices and a keen perception of the expectations of the genre of persuasive writing required by the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards. In addition, it highlights how she developed a strong authoritative voice on the issue of immigration through our readings in class, sharing of lived experiences and critical textual analysis. The use of translanguaging opened up a third space for Veronica and her classmates to draw from home, youth and transnational repertoires to make meaning. Within this space, the Teaching/ Learning cycle supported them in expanding their repertoires for a larger range of contexts and audiences.

## 7 Discussion and Implications

This chapter has chronicled the implementation of culturally sustaining SFL praxis that used the full range of "*multiple discursive practices* in which bilinguals engage in order to *make sense of their bilingual worlds*" (García 2009, p. 45, original emphasis). We now discuss the implications of the study, especially related to teaching writing in secondary sheltered language learning contexts.

## *7.1 Building Field and Critical Literacy*

This study is similar to several other SFL studies that emphasize an explicit focus on the functional role of grammatical resources (like abstract nouns, nominalizations, and modal verbs) that can apprentice students into realizing disciplinary language objectives like construing an appropriate register for argumentation and writing cohesive texts (Brisk and Zisselsberger 2010; Christie and Macken-Horarik 2007; Coffin 2006; Gebhard et al. 2007; Fang and Schleppegrell 2010). What separates this study from others that it links literacy and SFL-based language learning to students' lives in a third space contact zone where translanguaging, text analyses, language instruction, and cultural knowledge are used to achieve the larger goal of supporting students' political and social goals. The goal of critical reading and exploring social issues is to initiate students into contesting ideologies and disrupting dominant narratives. Veronica and the others in her class reflected and shared insights and lived experiences related to the impact of immigration policies on their families and they built reflexive knowledge frames on the topic in a community of learners. The language learning process enabled them to leverage and expand their bilingual resources and language potential. Veronica's increasing control of discipline-specific language structures like nominalization, abstract noun phrases, modal verbs, and passive voice, for example, afforded her agency to realize political goals in her writing.

In sum, this study foregrounds the need to situate literacy and SFL instruction in a cultural frame where meanings are negotiated, dialogic, and aligned to the writer's social and political purposes (Byrnes 2013). In this third space of literacy, students leverage emic perspectives and express untapped culturally embedded meanings (Gutiérrez 2008) that are realized and communicated through SFL-based learning. Here, language learning is a political act and the process of writing for academic purposes becomes a transformative process. It is then that SFL realizes its original critical intent of advancing equity in education while also realizing the academic mandates of a standards-based classroom (Delpit 1995).

## *7.2 The Classroom as a Culturally Sustaining Contact Zone*

This conception of culturally sustaining SFL praxis embraces the epistemology of dynamic bilingualism, modeling how language, culture, and language pedagogy can be implemented as language-learning resources in the classroom. Its dialogic nature affords a safe space for students to adopt their multilingual repertoires for learning while they also negotiate knowledge frames and ways of being in the world. From a sociocultural view, culturally sustaining SFL transforms a multicultural classroom of bilingual learners into a culturally sustaining contact zone in its goal of building bridges between students' language practices and the language practices desired in formal school settings. Translanguaging *in* SFL includes the full range of linguistic performances of multilingual language users "by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance, and making it into a lived experience" (Li 2011, p. 1223). The implication of this paradigm is that language teachers need to make conscious choices in defining the parameters of the discursive space in the classroom.

Cultural framing and functional metalanguage language instruction should be planned in incremental steps with persistent support and continual one-on-one feedback on students' written texts through the teaching cycle. This is all the more urgent with the renewed focus of language demand, syntax, and discourse in Common Core Georgia Performance Standards and edTPA, the final assessment of teachers in pre-service programs across the nation (see AACTE 2016).

## 8 Conclusion

Kramsch's (2009) conception of critical culture describes very aptly the importance of a culturally sustaining SFL praxis, whereby students appropriate dominant language forms and structures and apply the concepts of SFL in "constructing *our* space within and against *their* place, of speaking *our* meaning with *their* language" (de Certeau 1984, p. 18, as quoted in Kramsch 2009). In this, the act of literacy takes on a critical stance as students leverage their culturally and linguistically rich repertoires and deconstruct dominant narratives in official curricular spaces.

To conclude, this study expands on other 'critical' work of SFL scholars in the United States (e.g., Harman and Khote 2015; Harman and Simmons 2014). It harnesses the intuitive communicative strategies of multilingual students in classroom contexts, developing ways of using their dynamic translanguaging as a teachable pedagogic resource and a scaffold for expanding and building on their language repertoires (Canagarajah 2011; Creese and Blackledge 2010). Several of the students in my multilingual classroom developed stronger literacy practices as a result of our culturally sustaining SFL praxis. Indeed, after spending several years in Sheltered English instruction, Veronica exited the ESOL classroom after the 10th grade in my class, passed the Georgia Graduation Test in Writing and the 11th grade American Literature test on her first attempt, and graduated high school the following year.

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# Paraphrastic Academic Writing: Entry Point for First Generation Advanced Bilingual College Students

**Andrés Ramírez**

**Abstract** The implementation of Reading to Learn (R2L) methodology for first generation college freshmen who are bilingual learners is reviewed. The paper details how this integrated genre-based approach informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) supported students in an advanced English as a Second Language (ESL) course to develop linguistic awareness and writing competencies in genres highly valued in college courses. The paper also addresses the programmatic needs and rights of advanced bilinguals, a vastly understudied and underrepresented population in US colleges and universities.

**Keywords** Reading to Learn • ESL • Genre-based pedagogy • College writing • English Language Learners • Systemic Functional Linguistics

## 1 Introduction

Linguistically diverse students are the fastest growing subgroup in the K-12 public school population in the United States; they may also turn out to be the highest growing subgroup in higher education (Padolsky 2004). Their transition to college, however, and if and how they are supported by secondary school and other factors, is an under-researched area in the field of second language learning (Oropeza et al. 2010). Specifically, first generation students enrolled in high school or slightly older students who finished their education abroad and are still learning English have not been the focus of sustained initiatives (Kanno and Harklau 2012). For many of these students, university and college admission policies present an unsurpassable barrier even when educators and others describe these students as capable, highly literate,

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mature and academically talented multilingual learners with high potential to succeed in college.

To support this student population, Project ExCEL (Excellence in College for English Learners) was established in the fall semester of 2013 at Rhode Island College, a mid-size urban liberal arts college in the heart of Providence, Rhode Island. Its aim was to build and maintain a social architecture of intellectual excellence and inclusion for talented advanced bilingual students who otherwise might not have been eligible for regular college admission. Project ExCEL was especially necessary because many academically talented students lacked the requisite mainstream college English preparatory courses for admission.

In close partnership with high school counselors in the area, Project ExCEL began operation with a cohort of 7 accomplished bilinguals with established success in academic subjects. The faculty of the Project provided the students with culturally and linguistically responsive advising and academic support to ensure that they would be able to continue on their path to excellence in college. The ethnicities of the cohort were representative of high school and general demographics of the city. Five were Latins@s (Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Colombia), one was from Haiti, and one was from Cape Verde. The Haitian and the Cape Verdean students had a working knowledge of Spanish as a result of sustained contact with Spanish, having graduated from a predominantly Hispanic high school. This kind of linguistic affinity with students made it possible to have recurrent instances of bilingual interactions (see Khote, chapter "Translanguaging in Systemic Functional Linguistics: A Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy for Writing in Secondary Schools", this volume) or what Brisk and Ossa Parra (Chapter, "Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change", this volume) call translanguaging practices that not only supported but valued student's linguistic repertoires. Three of the students had graduated from the college's English as a Second Language (ESL) program and had finished high school in their native countries. The other four students had just graduated from local high schools, where they had studied for no more than 3 years after relocating from another country. The instructor of the course is also the author of this chapter, Andrés Ramírez. The focus of the course was on an integrated approach to reading and writing (Freire 1998), which was implemented through genre-based reading comprehension instruction and essay development informed by the Reading to Learn (henceforth R2L) pedagogy as outlined by Rose and Martin (2012) in their book *Learning to Write, Reading to Learn*.

This chapter describes how students responded to a critical SFL-informed instruction of a highly necessary genre for college success, the Text Response genre (detailed below). The next section discusses the concept of academic genre as a mediator of student's academic success; and is followed by an exploration of the relevant theoretical foundations of Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth SFL) in relation to the R2L approach.

## 2 Genre as Mediator Between "Reading the World and Reading the Word"

In addition to the common pressures and challenges that other non-traditional students face when entering college (NCES 2002), language minority students are called to engage in the highly demanding task of acquiring what for some may be completely new content in a language they are still in the process of learning. Such a situation is illustrated in the following excerpt in which one ExCEL student describes her experiences of writing her very first writing assignment in college in the fall of 2013. The assignment was to summarize the life of Frederick Douglas, a historical figure whom she had never encountered in school literature before.

> My first assignment was a summary. "Learning to read and ride [*sic*]" by Frederick Douglas; this lecture [*meaning reading*] cost me so much effort to understand. This is written with uncommon words. After a long time reading and asking to a different class instructor the definition of those "big words," I finally understood the essence of that chapter of Douglas's life. Very motivated I wrote the summary, with the idea that it would be the best summary of all this class, and also that this summary would meet the expectation of the professor; I gave it to her, feeling satisfied. One week later I received my paper back. How it surprised me: I got the lowest grade of all class. The feedback said: "your ideas are unclear," "you have many spelling errors," "your summary do [*sic*] not make sense," and "the conclusion is unconcluded." It was my worst experience writing.

As illustrated in the student's comments above, she had to grapple not only with a semantic overload in the text (e.g. *the big words*) and her lack of knowledge of key American historical figures; but she also needed to understand that the assignment prompt was asking her to interpret the reading instead of just summarizing it. The student's problem came not only from her own misunderstanding but the fact that instructors interchangeably would call this type of Text Response genre *a reading reflection*, *summary*, *reading response*, and the even looser term: *essay*. A second related problem was that neither the instructors nor the students understood the unique and complex language demands of a text response: indeed, students reported that when their classmates were trying to clarify the expectations of the written assignment, the word 'summary' was widely used by their instructors. Added to these problems was the fact that many teachers, understandably, assumed that their students had already developed foundational understanding of language and literacy skills and therefore overlooked the need to explicitly teach highly used college genres such as text response.

Although it is understandable that instructors would expect college students to be able to produce high quality texts, it is not acceptable that they expect freshmen students, regardless of their first language, to write one kind of genre (text responses) when they in fact are eliciting a different one (summary). Succeeding in college presupposes critical competence in the genres that may realize such success. As Freire (1998) points out, "without reading and writing it is impossible to study, seek to know, to learn the subjectivity of objects, to critically recognize an object's reason for being" (p. 24). An SFL perspective on genre pedagogies in the ExCEL Project supported course participants to engage in critical ways with the readings.

### 2.1 From Systemic-Functional Linguistics to Reading to Learn Pedagogy

As previous chapters have demonstrated, SFL has been emerging in recent years as a powerful alternative to traditional grammar teaching in US mainstream and ESL classrooms (de Oliveira and Iddings 2014). Researchers who work in SFL not only hold the view that language is a social construct, but also maintain that language itself is structured because of what it seeks to accomplish. Within SFL education circles, the concept of genre has carried with it a foundational instructional sequence called the **Teaching-Learning Cycle** (TLC), originally proposed by Rothery (e.g., 1996), and illustrated in previous chapters. The TLC is designed to guide students to write successfully, using models of target genres. Instructional sequences such as the TLC have been termed 'curriculum genres' (Christie 1997), while the written texts they are designed to teach, such as text responses, are known as 'knowledge genres' (Rose 2015; Rose and Martin 2012).The development of Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy has extended and refined the curriculum genres available to teachers, using an analysis of learning tasks known as 'scaffolding learning cycles'. R2L extends the concept of embedded literacy from genre pedagogy to integrate the teaching of reading and writing across the curriculum in all levels of school and beyond (Rose and Martin 2012, p. 133). It offers teachers a set of curriculum genres designed so that all students in a class a) engage with academic texts that are well beyond their independent reading capacities, b) interrogate passages of text with detailed comprehension c) recognize language choice patterns in the text and appropriate these language resources into their own writing, and d) create texts with effective organization and language patterns to achieve their purposes" (Rose in press). The process seeks to support students' deep understanding of new readings by starting at the macro level of the text. The beginning of instruction supports discussion of the broader strata of social context and genre while the next phase supports students through instruction on the genre stages, micro analysis of the sentence structure, and thematic patterns developed in texts.

At its core, the R2L approach (and this is true about genre-based pedagogy as well) distinguishes everyday or commonsense knowledge from educational or uncommonsense knowledge (Bernstein 2000). As such, R2L approaches teaching as involving a repeated pattern of recontextualization (Bernstein 2000); that is, a process of 'unpacking' knowledge into context-dependent and simplified meanings to then repack this knowledge back into the relatively abstract and condensed knowledge students must demonstrate in educational assessments and other academic situations. Such discursive movement up and down the semantic continua is colloquially referred to as "elevator talk" by educational linguists associated with SFL and is technically defined as "cumulative modality" by Legitimation Code Theory[1] (LCT) (Maton 2011).

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[1] LCT began as a framework to explore knowledge and education. Based primarily on theories of Bernstein and Bourdieu, it integrates insights across sociology, SFL, literature and other disciplines.

### 2.2 R2L Pedagogical Sequences

The scaffolding reading program set forth by R2L, and implemented in our project ExCEL, simplifies the process of reading through three interrelated scaffolding learning cycles that are strongly informed by Halliday's (1978) and Martin's (1992) models of language in social contexts. The approach also is informed by genre and register theory, and by observations of parent-child interactions around reading in the home (Martin and Rose 2005). The first cycle in this macro-micro sequence, "Preparing for Reading", provides students with an understanding of the key elements in a text before starting to read. To understand a text, the first step for students is to recognize its genre and field (what the text is about), and to have enough experience to interpret the field as it unfolds through the text. This is done by giving students a brief step-by-step summary of what happens in the text, in terms they can all understand. This technique involves more than 'what the text is about', but is an overview of how the field unfolds through the structuring of the genre and the lexico-grammatical resources.

In terms of second language development, the importance of this deconstruction stage in R2L pedagogy is amplified for bilingual learners as it supports cross-linguistic connections (not readily available to monolingual students), thereby encouraging students to engage in translanguaging practices as discussed by Brisk and Ossa Para and Khote in previous chapters. One important principle arising from research in systemic typology, indeed, is that languages differ more at lower ranks (i.e., word rank) and tend to be more congruent at higher ranks (i.e., clauses, genre) as reported in Caffarel et al. (2004, p. 8). Because the students in ExCEL had demonstrated competence as advanced text producers and consumers in their first language, cross-linguistic meaning potential for these bilinguals was amplified at the higher rank levels of genre and register.

In R2L pedagogies, text analysis at a global level focuses on the structures and meanings of whole texts (the discourse-semantics strata in Martin 2000). The purposeful and thorough preview of the text gives students a map of how the text will unfold, which enables them to follow without struggling to understand. It then serves as the basis for interpreting the details of the text and developing a familiarity with the sequence of genre phases. This preview of the genre can reduce the semiotic load for all students, including those who are still developing English. In the case of emergent to advanced bilingual students, much of this pre-existing knowledge is encoded in their native language, making it important to pay special attention to developing rich, linguistically-responsive pedagogical sequences that are likely to motivate the transfer of concepts originally acquired in the first language.

The strategies in the second part of the pedagogical cycle, called *Detailed Reading,* guide students to focus on the pattern of language and structural choices in the text and to borrow these patterns for their own writing of similar genres. The linguistic patterns in the source reading, in other words, support students in learning how to write the sequences of the focus genre. Student borrowing and re-design of the source text is often first executed in paraphrastic form, meaning that the writer adopts the organization of an entire text, or portions of it, or even individual paragraphs and sentences, as a pattern to express their own thoughts and ideas. When rewriting, students are encouraged to explicitly appropriate language resources of accomplished authors for their own writing (see Harman 2013 for SFL focus on intertextual writing with students).

The final stage in the R2L cycle, *Sentence Making* consists of intensive strategies to support students in noticing and playing with sentence structure through word group manipulation, letter-sound correspondence, spelling and other micro-linguistic features of focal curriculum texts. This sentence-level manipulation provides students with an understanding of how lexico-grammatical patterns function in the curriculum texts to realize specialized meanings in a disciplinary discourse. This ‘top-down’ teaching sequence is described as a curriculum macro-genre (Rose 2015, Rose in press, Rose and Martin 2012). It starts with the overall field of a text, then previews the phases in which the field unfolds through the text, and may be followed with paragraph-by-paragraph reading. It then focuses on patterns of meaning within and between sentences, and then on individual words and the syllables, letter patterns and sounds that express them. Each step in the sequence provides a meaningful context for the next. Rose and Martin (2012) provide a succinct explanation of the sequence of literacy activities:

> *Preparing for Reading* first focuses on the context (field and genre), then previews the phases in which the text unfolds, and may be followed with paragraph-by-paragraph reading. In *Detailed Reading* each sentence is prepared and read, and each word group is identified. *Sentence Making* and *Spelling* then extend the focus down to individual words and the syllables, letter patterns and sounds that express them. (p. 214)

R2L pedagogies require teachers and students to engage intensely with the focal texts and with each other, a process which has been described as “guidance through interaction in the context of shared experience” (Rose and Martin 2012, p. 58). To deconstruct and construct disciplinary texts in the instructional sequences of R2L, teachers need to be well prepared and willing to teach and facilitate student understanding in intense and highly systematic ways. Indeed, the teacher needs to be versed in the disciplinary subject and its language demands and to serve as an authoritative guide for the students so that students are made aware of key language and structural choices through explicit instruction; and to gradually release responsibility over to the students as they are apprenticed into repacking knowledge into the decontextualized and condensed semiotic discourse expected in high academic settings.

## 3 Reading-to-Learn Approach in the College ESL Class

Informed by Halliday’s (1978) construct of register and context of situation and Martin’s (2000) development of genre, members of the Sydney School of Genre, which includes the designers of the R2L methodology, have promoted a genre-based pedagogy since the 1980’s. Such SFL instruction is informed by a social justice vision that promotes a visibly explicit pedagogy (Bernstein 2000). Its aim is to make the specialized nature of academic genres and registers of power accessible to all, and particularly to linguistic minorities underrepresented in academic circles. Research in K-12 contexts, however, has pointed out a lack of linguistics training among pre-service and in-service teachers (Gebhard and Harman 2011). Similarly, higher education faculty need support in gaining language awareness that they can use in their coursework to support not only linguistically diverse students but mainstream students as well.

The focus of the next section illustrates how text analysis guided students to become aware of the difference between the so-called *summaries* they were to write and teachers expectations. Additionally, it shows how they began to appropriate such tools in their own writing as responsibility was released from the teacher and passed on to students. The genre-based R2L pedagogical progression was instrumental in providing students with a solid foundation of academic text structure and development that increased their ability as writers of specific college-related genres.

## *3.1 Summaries as Scaffolds for Text Responses*

One of the most important characteristics of purposeful genre-based instruction is its cumulative nature (Maton 2011). This, too, is highlighted in the Project ExCEL approach, as classroom instruction about summaries also provided students with skills for writings text responses genres, as these include summaries of text elements. The goal of the teaching sequence, or curriculum macro-genre, was for all students to write effective text responses. The activities first guided students to read source texts and write summaries, and then use this experience as a platform for writing more difficult text responses.

Unlike summaries, which recapitulate what a text says, a text response demands much more from writers, focusing on how and what the author wrote in the text. Three main types of text response in academic contexts are reviews, which describe and evaluate a text, interpretations, which evaluate and interpret the messages or themes of a text, and challenges, which deconstruct the messages of a text and challenge them (Martin and Rose 2008; Rose and Martin 2012; Rothery 1996).

The fact that summaries demand less from writers than text responses does not mean that summaries are not important. Quite the contrary, as was the case for the multilingual students in this study, mastery of basic genres significantly contributes to their heightened control of more complex genres. As a consequence, the course was structured around a progression of complementary genres or genre families (Martin and Rose 2008) so that the most basic genre studied would serve as the foundation or scaffold for a more demanding genre. Just as narrative genres include description and explanatory genres as part of obligatory rhetorical moves, text responses require a good command of summaries in order to describe the text.

Because students in this classroom already had a good understanding of how to control the language of summaries so as to avoid an overtly evaluative stance, they could be apprenticed into using this essential skill when composing text responses. Their familiarity with writing summaries was enhanced through principled genre-based talk that first highlighted the rhetorical structure of summaries and second called their attention to their choice of reporting verbs and how, even when they might have revealed an evaluative stance, they did so in a way that was more objective and congruent with the expectations of academic writing.

In the first step in the sequence, a model summary was prepared and read with students. As this was a short text, the whole text was then studied closely using Detailed Reading, followed by a discussion of its rhetorical structuring (see Brisk and Ossa, chapter "Chapter, "Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change", this volume- for examples at the elementary level of how the whole text and not isolated sentences was the unit of instruction). Table 1 shows this structuring. The summary follows the stages of the original text "Big Box Stores Are Bad for Main Street" (Hacker 2011). The genre is an exposition, in which the writer presents a position (Thesis), argues for it (Arguments) and restates the position (Restatement).

Detailed Reading focused particularly on reporting verbs which, in this case, minimize the expression of the writer's personal attitude toward the presentation of the matter in question. This can be seen through the choice of verbs such as argue, explain, assert, and conclude, in italics above. Table 2 below details the talk of the teacher about the model summary text during the *Detailed Reading*. The middle column represents the sequence of sub steps as outlined in Rose and Martin (2012). The discussion is designed to engage and affirm every student, by asking them in turn to identify wordings in the text. It consists of a series of 'scaffolded learning cycles' in which the teacher guides students to identify wordings in each sentence, and elaborates by discussing their meanings. Each cycle is marked by horizontal lines.

In Detailed Reading, the teacher ensures that all students are continually successful and affirmed. One student is asked to say the identified wording, but all students do each task successfully. The experience of success and affirmation prepares stu-

**Table 1** Model summary with rhetorical stages

| | |
|---|---|
| **Thesis** | In her essay "Big Box Stores Are Bad for Main Street," Betsy Taylor argues that chain stores harm communities by taking the life out of downtown shopping districts. |
| **Argument** | **Argument 1** |
| | Explaining that a community's "soul" is more important than low prices or consumer convenience, she argues that small businesses are better than stores like Wal-Mart, target, and Home Depot because they emphasize personal interactions and don't place demands on a community's resources. |
| | **Argument 2** |
| | Taylor asserts that big-box stores are successful because "we've become a nation of hyper-consumers," although the convenience of shopping in these stores comes at the expense of benefits to the community. |
| **Restatement** | She concludes by suggesting that it's not "anti-American" to oppose big-box stores because the damage they inflict on downtown shopping districts extends to America itself. |

**Table 2** Reconstructed classroom interaction during the Detailed Reading stage

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Teacher | Prepare | The first sentence identifies the text to be summarized, the author of the text, and what the author is arguing in the text. *In her essay "Big Box Stores Are Bad for Main Street," Betsy Taylor argues that chain stores harm communities by taking the life out of downtown shopping districts.* |
| | Focus | Can you see the essay's title? Diana? |
| Student | Identify | *Big Box Stores Are Bad for Main Street* |
| | Affirm | Yes |
| Teacher | Direct | Let's highlight *Big Box Stores Are Bad for Main Street* |
| | Elaborate | Does anyone know what *Main Street* means? |
| Student | Propose | Where the stores are? |
| Teacher | Affirm | That's right |
| | Elaborate | Small towns have a main street where all the stores are. |
| Teacher | Focus | Who is the author of the article? Edgardo? |
| Student | Identify | Betsy Taylor |
| Teacher | Affirm | Yes. |
| | Direct | Let's highlight *Betsy Taylor* |
| Teacher | Focus | Ok. So what is the author of the summary saying about what Betsy Taylor is doing? [Pointing to a student who raised her hand] |
| Student | Identify | *Argues* |
| Teacher | Direct | Let's highlight *argues* |
| | Elaborate | The word *argues* tells us that there is more than one opinion about the topic. It tells us that Betsy Taylor is just presenting her own opinion. |
| Teacher | Focus | So what is Betsy Taylor arguing according to the author of the summary? Eliana? |
| Student | Identify | *Chain stores harm communities* |
| | Affirm | Exactly right. |
| Teacher | Direct | Let's highlight *chain stores harm communities* |
| Teacher | Focus | And how do chain stores harm communities? |
| Student | Identify | *Taking the life out of downtown shopping districts* |
| | Affirm | Yes. |
| Teacher | Direct | Highlight the whole lot, *taking the life out of downtown shopping districts* |
| | Elaborate | *Downtown shopping districts* are the same as *Main Street*. The life is taken out of them when the small stores close down. |

dents for elaborating moves, that extend understanding. These may involve the teacher explaining new concepts, or asking the students for their own knowledge. In this lesson, *Detailed Reading* continued until all of the model text had been discussed, analyzed, and understood. The activity focused students on particular choices and cohesive devices as the text progressed, directed them to highlight specific key words or groups of words, and was elaborated as necessary. Once the text was analyzed exhaustively in this fashion, a series of parallel activities that extended over a period of more than 2 weeks of instruction (a total of 5 two hour sessions) followed. Students were assigned to also read short selections from Atwan's (2013)

*America Now*, a book used for class discussions of the culture and mores of the United States.

Following these readings, the next curriculum genre was Joint Construction. Joint Construction is prepared by deconstructing the rhetorical structure of model texts, and then using the same structure to jointly construct a new text. The teacher and the students collaboratively deconstructed the rhetorical structure of the *America Now* (Atwan 2013) texts, and jointly wrote summaries based on the linguistic patterns in the Big Box Stores summary. Special focus was placed on expanding the choice of the reporting verbs to indicate neutral polarity so that an objective tone could be maintained.

Following Joint Constructions, each student was asked to write a summary individually. The individual summaries were all available to be viewed by members of the class so that they could contrast the language choices at each stage of their summary with those of their classmates and that of the model summary. As a wrap up, the class co-constructed the following list of things they had learned:

Their guidelines for writing a summary were the following:

- In the first sentence, mention the title of the text, the name of the author, and the author's thesis or the visual's central point.
- Maintain a neutral tone; be objective.
- Use the third-person point of view and the present tense: "Taylor argues.. .."
- Keep your focus on the text. Don't state the author's ideas as if they were your own.
- Put all or most of your summary in your own words; if you borrow a phrase or a sentence from the text, put it in quotation marks and give the page number in parentheses.
- Limit yourself to presenting the text's key points.
- Be concise; make every word count.

The genre-based principle of 'guidance through interaction in the context of a shared experience' culminated during the closing stage of this curriculum macro genre, through discussion of the student-produced sets of linguistic choices for each of the summary stages in a collaborative writing. Once the students had discussed the range of language choices that inform each stage of a summary, they individually summarized one of four articles included in a section of the *America Now* series on technology and education. Analysis of the student summaries showed that most of them appropriated discourse patterns from the mentor texts that we had read and analyzed at length. The principled rewriting supported them in using language resources that had been configured by accomplished authors in their summaries. Once the students understood and appropriated the linguistic features to realize the stages of the summary genre, we began to study the genre of text responses.

## *3.2 Scaffolding Text* Response Genres

Once the work on the summary genre was solidified, the task became one of focusing more strongly on the evaluative language that is highly important in text responses. When analyzing summaries, we had already begun discussing the discourse semantics of appraisal and especially how evaluation was realized through a scale of language resources (e.g. modal verbs and charged or neutral lexis) (Martin and White 2005). The concept of lexical choices representing attitude was later expanded when writing text responses, which call for evaluative stances realized through stronger or weaker force of lexes and across the semantic continua of positive or negative polarity.

The familiar topic of the 'Big Box Stores' was once again used. At this stage, the entire original texts were read together. Students could now focus on the nuances and challenges of identifying and appropriating patterns of evaluative language without the added distraction of having to also gain knowledge of the topic or field of the text. This not only reduced the semiotic load for students, but also provided a familiar ground for them and freed instructional time that could be devoted exclusively to highlighting linguistic devices that demonstrate attitude toward a topic while maintaining an academic tone. At this stage, the concept of how to represent attitudes along a semantic scale was reviewed through discussion of the neutral verbs in summaries and further illuminated by revisiting the mentor summary model texts that displayed strong positive or negative polarity.

A model text response was designed and used to scaffold understanding of the genre sequences and evaluative stance in text responses, adapted from a writer's reference book (Hacker and Sommers 2011) and reproduced in Table 3. This genre is known as a critical response. According to Martin and Rose (2008), the staging of this genre begins with a text Evaluation, followed by a text Deconstruction, and finishes with a Challenge. The Evaluation suggests the possibility of challenge, the Deconstruction reveals how the message is constructed, and finally the Challenge denaturalizes the message. These stages and phases are labelled to the right in Table 3. Messages and challenges are underlined in the text. Each challenge is signaled by a thematic clause, marked in bold.

A modified version of the text above without the side annotations was distributed to students, and the same text was also displayed on a projector. Students were prepared for reading by explicit explanation of the challenge genre and by reaching the conclusion that made clear that the author's evaluation of the text was not favorable. While reading, students were asked to identify the linguistic choices that showed the author's negative attitude toward the text. Adapting Moore and Schleppegrell's (2014) "Attitude line", a horizontal line was drawn on the board under the title "Evaluation Line" (a reproduction of the format is displayed in Fig. 1). The line was labeled on the left side with the word "negative," the center with the word "neutral," and the right with the word "positive." As an example, some of the neutral reporting verbs used during the summary's genre instruction, such as argue, mention, and use,

**Table 3** Model text interpretation

| | |
|---|---|
| Rethinking Big-Box Stores In her essay “Big Box Stores Are Bad for Main Street,” Betsy Taylor focuses not on the economic effects of large chain stores but on the effects these stores have on the “soul” of America. | *Stages and phases* |
| She argues that stores like Home Depot, Target, and Wal-Mart are bad for America because they draw people out of downtown shopping districts and cause them to focus exclusively on consumption. | *Evaluation text statement* |
| In contrast, she believes that small businesses are good for America because they provide personal attention, foster community interaction, and make each city unique. | *preview messages* |
| **But Taylor’s argument is ultimately unconvincing** because it is based on nostalgia—on idealized images of a quaint Main Street—rather than on the roles that businesses play in consumers’ lives and communities. By ignoring the more complex, economically driven relationships between large chain stores and their communities, Taylor incorrectly assumes that simply getting rid of big-box stores would have a positive effect on America’s communities. | *preview challenges* |
| Taylor’s use of colorful language reveals that she has a nostalgic view of American society and does not understand economic realities. | *Deconstruction topic* |
| In her first paragraph, Taylor refers to a big-box store as a “25-acre slab of concrete with a 100,000 square foot box of stuff” that “lands on a town,” evoking images of a monolithic monster crushing the American way of life. | *message 1* |
| **But her assessment oversimplifies a complex issue.** Taylor does not consider that many downtown business districts failed long before chain stores moved in, when factories and mills closed and workers lost their jobs. In cities with struggling economies, big-box stores can actually provide much-needed jobs. | *challenge* |
| Similarly, while Taylor blames big-box stores for harming local economies by asking for tax breaks, free roads, and other perks, she doesn’t acknowledge that these stores also enter into economic partnerships with the surrounding communities by offering financial benefits to schools and hospitals. Taylor’s assumption that shopping in small businesses is always better for the customer also seems driven by nostalgia for an old-fashioned Main Street rather than by the facts. | *message 2* |
| **While she may be right** that many small businesses offer personal service and are responsive to customer complaints, she does not consider that many customers appreciate the service at big-box stores. Just as customer service is better at some small businesses than at others, it is impossible to | *challenge* |

| | |
|---|---|
| generalize about service at all big-box stores. | |
| For example, customers depend on the lenient return policies and the wide variety of products at stores like Target and Home Depot. | |
| Taylor blames big-box stores for encouraging American “hyper-consumerism,” but she oversimplifies by equating big-box stores with bad values and small businesses with good values. | message 3 |
| Like her other points, this claim ignores the economic and social realities of American society today. | challenge |
| Big-box stores do not force Americans to buy more. By offering lower prices in a convenient setting, however, they allow consumers to save time and purchase goods they might not be able to afford from small businesses. | Challenge review challenges |
| The existence of more small businesses would not change what most Americans can afford, nor would it reduce their desire to buy affordable merchandise. | |
| Taylor may be right that some big-box stores have a negative impact on communities and that small businesses offer certain advantages. | denaturalizing |
| But she ignores the economic conditions that support big-box stores as well as the fact that Main Street was in decline before the big-box store arrived. | |
| Getting rid of big-box stores will not bring back a simpler America populated by thriving, unique Main Streets; in reality, Main Street will not survive if consumers cannot afford to shop there. | conclusion |

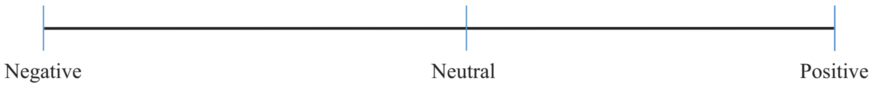

**Fig. 1** Evaluation line

were placed next to the “neutral” part of the line. Students offered other appropriate examples such as acknowledge and explain.

Students were directed to draw the same line in their notebooks and highlight the linguistic choices that demonstrated the author’s attitude toward the text. As the text response was critical of the original text, students generated lines that were considerably skewed toward the negative side. The student-produced attitude lines were clear and unequivocal visual indicators that they understood how specific lexical choices showed evaluative stance. At this point, the class proceeded with a read aloud of the text.

Students were directed to stop the read aloud any time they found a word or group of words that was part of their own evaluation line. Once their contribution was acknowledged and accepted by the whole group, the contributing student would come to the board to add the word or group of words to the original evaluation line and the rest of students were directed to add or modify it on their own list. Without exception, all students contributed to the board's evaluation line and participated avidly in the discussion.

As students were guided to read the text again out loud and discuss linguistic choices which showed negative polarity, they also began to identify obvious negative polarity choices in the text such as "ignore" (lines 11, 40, and 49), "does not consider" (lines 25 and 32), and "blames" (lines 24 and 37). They also pointed out longer stretches of sentence patterns that embedded more complex ways of expressing negative polarity that had not been initially captured in their individual evaluative lines. Students identified sentences starting with the conjunction "But" as indicative of negative polarity (sentences in lines 8, 38 and 48). They also identified interrupted constructions such as "focuses not on…. but on…" (lines 1–2), "based on…rather than on…" (lines 9–10) and "seems driven by…. rather than" (lines 29–30). The students also pointed out lexical choices that would be located on the cline of low to high intensity in the appraisal theory scale of appreciation such as "idealized" (line 9) and "unconvincing" (line 8), and that this latter adjective was moved even farther into negative polarity by the intensifying adverb "ultimately" (line 9) that precedes it.

Our fine-tuned level of principled talk around texts was later complemented with a look at the text as a whole which focused on the way the author built her claims. The same model text interpretation reproduced above was once again distributed but this time with the generic stages highlighted in the margins (*evaluation, synopsis, reaffirmation*). The rhetorical stages and different themes noted in the margin supported students in gaining awareness of the rhetorical stages of a text interpretation, and also how the messages are expressed and then reaffirmed. The annotation also provided further evidence of the purposeful orchestration of language devices that accomplished authors used to express evaluation, attitude and emotion. Students were prompted to look at the patterns of polarity of the text as a whole through an exercise that called them to highlight verbs with different polarities in different colors (alternatively they could circle, underline, or enclose in parentheses). The directions also asked students to look for appraisal patterns within and across each of the rhetorical stages. This exercise was demanding and, after much hesitation, one student mentioned that the first part of the text seemed to be written in a neutral voice.

After asking the whole class about what linguistic choices would back up this assertion, another student questioned the first speaker's assessment, given the fact that although the author starts with the verb "focus" (line 1) which oftentimes is associated with neutral reporting. The text is indeed stating that the original author did not focus on what was important (economic effects, line 2) and instead focused on other less important issues (the "soul" of America, line 3). The first student agreed with this assessment but in addition offered the verbs "argue" (line 3) and "believe" (line 6) as evidence to bolster her initial point. She then paused for a moment and noted that the verb "believe" denoted an attitude on the part of the author, but she could not express why. Another student interjected at this time and said that the choice of "believe" meant the author was stating an opinion, rather than a fact. Such dynamic discussion led students to see and acknowledge the importance of assessing the language in text responses.

Students were then asked to extend their incipient understanding of the evaluation realized in subtle and explicit language choices. They were asked to a) look for opinion-like language as opposed to more factual language and b) assign the opinion-like or factual language to each of the two authors -the primary author of the text and the author of the text response). In addition to assigning more opinion-like language to the primary author, students noted that the author of the text response used much more neutral polarity at the beginning of her response (*Evaluation stage*), negative polarity toward the middle (*Deconstruction stage*) and positive polarity at the end *(Challenge stage*). In other words, as the writing progressed, the author shifted the focus from simply disarming the original arguments into advancing her own counterarguments by using, among other instruments, positive polarity.

Following this deconstruction of a model text response, the class jointly constructed a response to the text "*Tuning in to Dropping Out*" (Taborrok 2013), before being asked write a text response on their own. This article was part of a section in the course textbook (Atwan 2013) exploring the question, "Does College Still Matter?" Two of these articles presented a favorable view on attaining a college degree while the other two questioned its worthiness. This topic was chosen because, as freshmen in college, students certainly already believed that obtaining a college degree is a worthy endeavor. This particular article was chosen because students would have strong opinions and stakes to counter the arguments in the article. For this reason, students were called to co-construct a text interpretation that would run counter to the main arguments in this article.

As already described, challenge responses demand not only a good grasp of the main arguments of the article but also demand a critical stance toward these arguments in writing. To facilitate this process, the first paragraph of the challenge to "Big Box Stores Are Bad for Main Street" was read in detail, focusing on the author's stance toward the arguments of the text. Once again, as with the discussion utilized the attitude line to highlight the way the author made use of specific verbs to subtly express her reservations about the main arguments of the original article as well as the words and expressions that signaled the logical progression of the argument. After this Detailed Reading, the first individual assignment for this section was to write a new paragraph following the same language patterns, but changing the text to *Tuning in to Dropping Out*. This activity is known as Rewriting in in the R2L methodology, focusing on appropriating language resources from Detailed Reading passages.

After copying and distributing the student-produced paragraphs in class, the instructor facilitated a discussion focused on which ideas in the Tuning into Dropping Out article were weaker and thus susceptible to argument. The overall strategy was to highlight how analysis could reveal Tabarrok's arguments as less objective, and instead based on his own biases, feelings, and opinions. Discussion led to the idea that, since the author was a professor of economics and therefore an authority in this field, it was difficult (if not impossible) to dispute him on economic grounds. One of the students shared that, in order to gather ways to compromise Tabarrok's argument, she had accessed the same article online and read comments from other readers who provided criticisms to his points. She used these comments to suggest that his point of subsidizing only STEM careers and not humanities on the basis of pragmatism was discriminatory against humanities. As ideas were discussed and acknowledged, students were encouraged to pick up the marker and write on the board while other students aided them in thinking of key points that could be used to counteract Tabarrok's points. A sample of these many points are included below:

- Subsidizing only STEM careers could be read as discriminatory against humanities (arts, literature etc.).
- Humans above all are social beings and need interaction and social skills as a basis for innovation.
- In the era of globalization we need not only the skills in STEM but we need skills to communicate with others in their language. This requires highly skilled STEM bilingual professionals.

During this discussion, students once again took a highly active role as they wrote their ideas on the board. The individual texts produced by students formed a rich learner's corpus that was then made available to all. This collection provided a complex but useful resource that students relied on and creatively scrutinized to jointly construct another response to Tabarrok's. This text is reproduced as Table 4 below.

At the level of stages and phrases, we can see that the text contains the expected elements of a challenge response, including previews of the messages and challenges in the Evaluation, messages and challenges in the Deconstruction, and a concluding Challenge stage. Language patterns also emulate those of the mentor text. Some examples are the clauses that signal challenges "However, Tabarrok's argument is ultimately unsustainable", "Tabarrok's use of sweeping generalizations", "But Tabarrok's assessment oversimplifies a complex issue". Also recognizable are paraphrastic lexical patterns in the choice of verbs that appropriately show negative polarity as the text progresses. Some examples are "argues" line 2, "believes" line 5, "assumes" line 13, "oversimplifies," and "does not consider" line 22. After completion of this jointly constructed challenge response, students were asked to complete an individual challenge response over the next two classes, basing their work on the jointly constructed text 4, and the original "Big Box" challenge response, text 3. Analysis of these completed individual texts highlight how the carefully crafted R2L cycle supported students in developing awareness of the audience and appropriate linguistic choices for this academic genre.

## 4 Full Release of Responsibility

During the same week in which students were producing the text above, they also had to take a mid-term exam prepared by the instructor of the course. This exam called them to demonstrate their ability to produce high quality texts on their own

**Table 4** Co-constructed paraphrastic text response

| | |
|---|---|
| In his article "Tuning in to dropping out," Alex Tabarrok, associate professor of economics at George Mason University, argues that graduates in the humanities (arts, psychology, journalism, sociology, dance, and English) should not be subsidized in their studies at all because they are less likely to create the kinds of innovations that drive economic growth. In contrast, he believes that subsidizing students in fields with potentially large spillovers, such as microbiology, chemical engineering, and computer science will have an irrefutable positive impact on the economy. | Evaluation<br>Preview messages |
| **However, Tabarrok's argument is ultimately unsustainable** because it is based on a narrow perspective on economic growth – One that focuses exclusively on increasing subsidies for students on stem (science, technology, engineering, math) – Rather than on decidedly supporting the proper funding of all students in higher education. By ignoring the large and damaging budget cuts to public higher education (where the great majority of students get their degrees in the US) have underwent during the last decades, Tabarrok incorrectly assumes that the problem lies within institutions of higher education themselves. | Deconstruction<br>Message 1<br>Challenge |
| **Tabarrok's use of sweeping generalizations** about college reveals that he has a constricted view of humanity in general and economic growth in particular. In the introduction to his article and without citing any source, Tabarrok has no problem in claiming that despite our "obsessive focus on a college degree…more than half of all humanities graduates end up in jobs that don't require college degrees, and those graduates don't get a big income boost from having gone to college," evoking images of a wave of college graduates that instead of contributing to the economy are sucking it dry with the subsidies they receive. | Message 2 |
| **But Tabarrok's assessment oversimplifies a complex issue**. He does not consider the crucial historic contribution of the humanities and of polymaths - persons whose expertise spans a significant number of different subject areas - to the development of modern civilization nor he consider the high importance of a highly educated population (in any major) to any nation. Indeed, without the contribution of classic and renaissance thinkers in the humanities, most notably philosophy, STEM careers would not be as developed as they are today. One just has to look briefly to the lives and contributions to the humanities and the sciences of polymaths such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Galileo Galilei, Nicolaus Copernicus, Francis Bacon or Michael Servetus to understand why these geniuses lived by ideal that people should embrace all knowledge and develop their capacities as fully as possible. | Challenge |
| Like his other points, Tabarrok chooses to ignore the large economic contribution to the economic health of towns and cities and instead blames humanities for harming local economies by asking for subsidies and other perks. Tabarrok claims that "our obsessive focus on college schooling has blinded us to basic truths." Indeed, his obsession with narrowing down to STEM careers without regard to the foundation of it all, the humanities, has him walking stubbornly through life like a horse on blinders. | Challenge |

within a restricted time period. This two-hour individual mid-term exam asked them to read and summarize the 1500+ word Op-Ed entitled: “Social Media: Friend or Foe” (Smith 2013). This Op-Ed was chosen because it handled the same content area that students had been required to read and discuss in class. The sample student summary is reproduced as Table 5, exactly as it was written for the midterm exam. However, it is analyzed in Table 5 to show how the student has appropriated the text structuring and language features from the texts that were read and written in the teaching sequence. Reporting verbs are underlined and other appraisals are in italics.

As was the case with the co-constructed text response, the independent summary follows the rhetorical stages of the model summaries in the teaching sequence. This is also evident in the sentence structure (i.e., reporting verb + noun or noun phrase; or reporting verb + clause). Perhaps more importantly because of what it means for cumulative instruction, the paraphrastic texture of the summary above is revealed in the student’s independent choice of reporting verbs (in bold) that appropriately express neutral attitude along a continuum of a high to low intensity, along with the rich variety of appraisals in italics. Indeed, this student text provides further testimony that instructional backing supports student borrowing and eventual appropriation of these linguistic resources.

**Table 5** Independent text under exam conditions

| | |
|---|---|
| In the article “Op-Ed: Social media: friend or foe?” Kyle Smith, a digital Journalist expertise in Travel, Government, Religion, Social media and Personal finance, argues how social networking *can be a tool for enhancing or hindering* our daily communication with other people. | Thesis |
| Smith mentions that *due to the ease and accessibility* of social networking services (SNSs), social networking is *quickly becoming the most common activity* for today’s children and teens and that people make *such an extensive use* of social media to communicate to each other that *sometimes they forget those who are closest* physically. | Arguments<br>argument1 |
| He acknowledges that SNSs *help people communicate easily* across distance as they make communicating easier, *but we pay the high price of limiting our interactions* to the virtual world. | |
| Smith points out that there is *evidence to suggest* that SNSs are *not suitable for sustaining intimate relationships*, and furthermore that the *amount of time* spent communicating via SNSs within an intimate interpersonal relationship *does not correlate with the quality* of the relationship. | Argument2 |
| Smith uses this line of thought to suggest that SNSs have *little constructive purpose* within intimate relationships other than its use of networking to connect the two users, prior to becoming intimate. | |
| Kyle Smith concludes by saying that *it is important not to overgeneralize with broad statements* relating to communication modalities and their *perceived characteristics or usefulness*. | Restatement |

## 5 Conclusion

In this study, the principled talk around text exchanges that are typical of R2L pedagogies were applied effectively in a population (college ESL students) and context (USA) that have not been a prominent focus in R2L research and practice. R2L has mostly been used in lower and upper primary and secondary settings outside of the United States (Rose 2015). As shown in this chapter, R2L techniques provided effective initial support for students facing new or familiar genres. The discussions, text structure awareness, and paraphrastic appropriation activities illustrated in this chapter proved to be essential scaffolds for the well-written co-constructed and independent texts produced by students in the ESL class. Through the SFL-informed approach to teaching reading and writing in Project ExCel, we were able to support our talented advanced bilingual students in transitioning successfully and seamlessly to other college courses.

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# Part III
# Multimodal Designing

# Critical Praxis, Design and Reflection Literacy: A Lesson in Multimodality

**Diane Potts**

**Abstract** In this chapter, I explore a critical praxis grounded in social semiotics that is distinct from the traditions of critical literacy in a) its emphasis on the capacity to create and b) its explicit attention to the range of semiotic resources with which we communicate. Drawing on the concept of *design* put forward by The New London Group and on the concept of *reflection literacy* as described by Hasan, I put forward the tenets of such a praxis before illustrating the ideas using classroom data from a national SSHRC-funded study of multiliterate pedagogies. The examples powerfully demonstrate students' capacity to engage with and remake sophisticated meanings not only to achieve sanctioned curricular goals, but also for purposes they have charted independently.

**Keywords** Multimodality • Critical praxis • Multiliteracies • Mediation • Social semiotics • Reflection literacy

## 1 Introduction

A critical praxis expands learners' capacity to create. This central tenet is sometimes lost in educational literature on critical orientations to literacy/ies and learning, and in ensuing discussions regarding text analysis, reader positioning, and/or the realization and use of power. Yet research in this tradition shares an underlying interest in change, a change that is qualitatively different from either developing students' disciplinary knowledge or fostering civic engagement. In the field of critical literacy, it is change that can "…engage students in the analysis and reconstruction of social fields" (Luke 2000, p. 451); it is also change that serves an overtly political enterprise with "an explicit aim of the critique and transformation of dominant ideologies, cultures and economies, and institutions and political systems" (Luke 2012, p. 5). Significantly, though, while a critical literacy perspective

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emphasizes macro social concerns, the change for which it advocates can only occur in an instance of creating – in an unfolding conversation, the selection of a word or image for a text, and/or a reflection on experience.[1] It is change that begins when possibilities offered by a context are reimagined and/or reconstrued by an individual. Thus, the imagined social change of critical orientations to literacy/ies is necessarily a simultaneous change of a different sort, a change in an individual's capacity to create. That change in one's capacity requires expanding what Matthiessen (2009) has referred to as *personalized meaning potential,* the semiotic resources with which an individual makes meaning of their world (Potts and Moran 2013).

It is the capacity to create which centers this chapter, part of a larger project exploring recontextualization as a knowledge practice. Complementing other work in this volume that draws on systemic functional linguistics (SFL), I examine the potential for apprenticing students in the production of knowledge through a critical praxis grounded in social semiotics and in Hasan's (1996, 2005) concept of *reflection literacy* (see Sect. 3). I begin by identifying two challenges that knowledge societies create for the project of critique: the ongoing instabilities of globalizing societies and the changing nature of texts. Next, I evaluate how those challenges are addressed by the concept of design set out by the New London Group (1996) and more particularly by Kress (2000, 2010) before exploring the complementarity of design, practices of design and practices of reflection literacy for orchestrating a critical praxis. I follow this theoretical discussion with a practical classroom example that focuses on two lessons in multimodality conducted with ethnically and linguistically diverse elementary students. To close, I reflect on the Language Arts projects produced by two English as an additional language (EAL) students after these lessons, and consider practical questions of a critical praxis grounded in reflection literacy.

## 2 The Project of Critique

For much of their documented history, classroom practices of critical literacy have focused on the written word. In no small part, this is because writing holds a powerful place in social activity. As objects, written texts carry the accorded authority of religious and sacramental texts, legal precedents, and textbooks, all of which play a pivotal role in the ways that major social institutions exercise power and influence. From an historical perspective on literacy, the literate person, one who exercises mastery over powerful and privileged texts, accrues status because of their association with such works. Alternatively, writing can be viewed not as a possession of a social elite, but endemic to the functioning of everyday life (Barton and

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[1] Kress strongly prefers the term *multimodal ensemble* to *text* as it more accurately reflects the semiotic construction of contemporary communication. In this chapter, I have continued to use the term *text*, but not without reservations.

Hamilton 2000). Viewed this way, writing is a lens through which we can examine how people go about their lives, how they make meaning of their worlds, and how they simultaneously create resources and artifacts that carry meaning forward to be taken up by others. From this perspective as well, writing is a powerful positioning device and the capacity to critically examine how practices and texts replicate, reinforce and/or redistribute power is important to fulfilling the emancipatory aim of education.

Despite the potential contribution that teaching critical analysis of written texts can make to the aforementioned goals, rapid changes in contemporary communication linked to evolving technologies, shifting patterns of globalization, and alterations in the distribution of political and economic power disrupt the historical function of critique. Critique is an instrument of change, and traditionally texts are unpacked in conjunction with efforts to destabilize unjust, ill-functioning and/or unbalanced social mechanisms that disproportionately benefit a select few. Crucially, critique has existed in a symbiotic relationship with a stable object – an institution, practice or other form of social organization – to which it responds. But in the face of constant change, it becomes increasingly difficult to find something solid to push back against: it is more difficult for 'critical' analysis to perform its historical task of destabilizing the stability of existing power (Kress 2000, p. 160).

How can we understand the challenges facing the traditional project of critique? Commentary on American university admission practices provides a useful illustration. Such practices are again under fire for provoking destructive levels of stress in high school students while failing to meaningfully distinguish between applicants (Bruni 2016). The public press is not alone in demanding change, and the report *Turning the Tide* (Harvard 2016), signed and endorsed by powerful and respected academics, is a self-reflective call for action which (a) condemns the existing emphasis on individual achievement over social good, (b) recognizes that lower income youths' contributions to family well-being are often overlooked, and (c) demands greater emphasis on ethical engagement. The report is a thoughtful piece that addresses many concerns raised by educators working with low-income immigrants and refugees. But how does it function as critique? What change does it seek? Nominally, it is a call for admittance practices to contribute to a more just, caring society. Practically, it argues for changes in admittance criteria. But would asking for evidence of ethical decision-making in daily life, emphasizing "meaningful, sustained community service," and giving preference to applicants whose recommendations contain target adjectives affect who gains admittance to elite educational institutions? Would it disrupt the advantages accorded legacy scholars and/or those with access to consultants, counselors and tutors to assist with admissions processes? Those with sufficient economic and social capital will adjust to new criteria, just as they have adjusted to previous changes: flexibility is one of the benefits afforded by capital.

That flexibility speaks to Kress' point that critique has more difficulty destabilizing existing power distributions in periods of continuous change. Targets for critique are less easily identified and are constantly adapting in ways that benefit individuals already resourced for change. For educators, this raises questions on how we engage students in working with powerful texts. How can a critical praxis function in contemporary society such that our students are able to effect change in their own lives and the larger society? How might we explain to students the purpose and function of critically engaging with texts? While the emancipatory aim of critical praxis remains the same, the pedagogy requires rethinking: more than merely assisting students in gaining access to privileged discourses, a contemporary critical praxis must apprentice them in the communicative flexibility needed to confront the shifting face of power.

The second question regarding the project of critique relates to the focus on language. Language no longer carries a vastly disproportionate share of meaning in contemporary texts, and this holds true whether one examines the diagrams, schematics and charts in scholarly science journals, the prominence of images in Instagram, Snapchat and other social media texts, or the multimodal journalism of mainstream and ‘new’ new media (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996/2006). Visual literacy’s inclusion in curriculum documents and assessments acknowledges this change, and teachers have long had students examine images in advertisements. But visuals are only one aspect of this redistribution of meaning: pedagogic tools for analyzing non-linguistic dimensions of texts are often rudimentary, and language still receives a disproportionate emphasis. In order to appreciate how meaning is rarefied in contemporary communication, critical analysis must extend beyond the written – or spoken – word. Importantly, it must begin with the premise that communication is multimodal and that language functions in conjunction with other modal resources to create meaning.

These are not small challenges, not for citizens concerned with social change and not for teachers who must prepare students for unknowable futures but who are evaluated on narrowly-focused accountability measures. Yet the project of critique is more important because it is difficult: it makes little sense to leave learners unsupported in confronting the challenges described above. Further, the traditional work of critical literacy, the practice(s) of adopting a critical perspective in the daily life of classroom literacy events, is not distinct from the work of understanding, interpreting and creating academic texts. To critique, one must learn how power functions in texts and discourse; to create, one must not only understand but also develop control over the semiotic resources in which genres and registers are realized (Janks 2000). Addressing the larger social aims that accompany critical perspectives – shared economic and social opportunities, common experiences of justice, the right to cultural, religious and artistic expression that neither impedes nor is impeded by those whose interests are different from our own – requires addressing the changing demands of contemporary communication, but it also requires understanding that success rests on expanding students’ capacity as meaning-makers.

## 3 Concepts for Pedagogy

How might a critical praxis grounded in social semiotics address such challenges? To start, social semiotics begins with the understanding that language and other resources (i.e. gesture, color, vocal quality) take on meaning through use in communication, and that these meanings are reshaped and remade in each instance of exchange (Halliday 1978; Kress 2010). It is the social that is primary – it is in the social realm that meaning is made. It is also the social world that places constraints on the resources and meaning potential available to an individual in any given circumstance, constraints that are explicitly and/or implicitly imposed by the particular ways in which power is exercised in the moment and in the larger culture. The limits that educational settings place on students' use of their plurilingual resources and the extent to which learners' internalize 'rules' on when and how those resources can be used is one example of how learners' meaning potential is frequently constrained by the exercise of institutional power. So social semiotics, with its attention to "how people regulate the use of semiotic resources" (van Leeuwen 2005, p. xi), is a form of inquiry well-suited to the project of critical praxis for it provides a means of reflecting on the dynamics of the meaning-making process.

But for this particular chapter, I limit myself to two concepts associated with social semiotic theories of meaning-making, *design* and *reflection literacy*, which informed the lessons I describe in Sect. 5. I address each in turn in this section.

### *3.1 Design*

The concept of design has informed social semiotic theories of multimodality almost from their onset and is foregrounded in the work of the New London Group (1996) on multiliterate pedagogies. In what they term a programmatic manifesto, one which has had substantial impact on literacies theory in the English-speaking world, *multiliteracies* is used to denote not only print literacies but also literacies of the multiplying channels and media of contemporary communication; it is also used to signify not just the expansion of modes but also the cultural and linguistic diversity now equally characteristic of mundane and privileged registers. Within this perspective, design is both the process and product of meaning-making: it is the resources and patterns on which the user draws and the semiotic activity in which those patterns are employed. And in each instance of use, meaning is transformed at the same time it is reproduced.

**Resources and Patterns** *Design* is an overarching concept that encompasses meanings realized in texts *and* the meaning-making process. Put simply, designs are the resources and patterns available for creating texts. They are socially constructed and include the larger patterns of genres and registers that exist within and beyond the classroom. They also encompass social practices for sharing ideas, providing feedback and amending an answer. However, as will be seen in the discussion of *reflection literacy* (Sect. 3.2), designs also exist within smaller units of meaning making. Examining designs in a classroom might include looking at how the choice of tense, aspect and/or modality alters the meaning being communicated, how the placement of an object on a page affects how it is understood, and how the first words one utters in a discussion shape what the listener subsequently understands. Discussing designs with learners involves sensitizing them to available resources and their affordances, including the plurilingual resources learners bring to the classroom. Crucially, the emphasis is on meaning: designs are explained in terms of their meaning potential.

The concept of design emphasizes transformation and this is central to understanding how critical praxis grounded in social semiotics might work. In the tradition of critique, effort is required to introduce change into a stable system; with design, effort is made to create temporary stability within a ceaselessly shifting context (Kress 2000). Each text's creator selects from the available designs to craft their own, unique meaning. The resulting text 'fixes' meaning at a moment in time and becomes a stable reference that others may take up and redesign in their own communication (Kress 2010). In other words, the text adds newly remade designs to the flow of meaning, and has the potential to alter the trajectory of the flow by acting as a reference point. This focus on creating a future, in contrast to critique's traditional focus on altering a past, inexorably concentrates students' attention on assembly and production. Existing texts are examined not so much for critique as for understanding the resources they provide.

## 3.2 Designing and Reflection Literacy

Designing is the 'doing' of design. A critical praxis recognizes that designing – or semiotic activity – is simultaneously an instance of meaning-making and the crafting of a semiotic context. This statement, which again draws on the concept of design put forward by the New London Group (1996) and Kress (2000, 2010) but also Halliday's longstanding work on social semiotics (1978) and in educational linguistics (1988/2007), requires some unpacking. As Hasan (2004) has pointed out, our interactions are a continuous semiotic flow that mediates our understanding of the world. The context for these interactions is itself a set of semiotic options, a space that offers a range of materials and designs that are selected from and drawn upon in interaction. When educators create lessons and units, they are designing contexts for future interactions: they are orchestrating designs or available meanings which they and their students can draw upon in their work in the classroom. In turn, the work within those contexts will be further acts of design. Thus, planning for critical praxis is (at a minimum) a threefold act of meaning: it entails the meanings that the teacher is making for themselves while planning; it is the assembling of available designs as a context for future interactions; and it requires envisioning how available designs might be orchestrated and/or taken up in interaction with and among students in a future context.

This leaves the question, “What, exactly, will students be asked to do?” What does designing for a critical praxis grounded in social semiotics require of teachers and students? Such a critical praxis has already been described as sharing critical literacy’s interest in ideologies, institutions, and economic and political systems, but different in that it foregrounds learners’ personalized meaning potential and emphasizes the future trajectory of designs. But what does that mean for classrooms and how is it accomplished?

Here is where Hasan’s concept of reflection literacy becomes invaluable. For Hasan, the purpose of pedagogic action is to engage learners in the production of knowledge (Hasan 1996, 2005; Williams in press). Consistent with the work of the New London Group, this is not an invocation of individual originality or personal voice, but a claim to the right of all citizens to participate in the continuing evolution of the larger social order. Such participation requires contributing to collective knowledge, offering and evaluating evidence linked to a range of alternative perspectives, and engaging in public decision-making. In other words, it involves participating in the design of texts, and developing the studied reflexivity to assess available designs and their potential for reassembling meaning. The attention to detail implied by the concept of design compliments Hasan’s (2011) call for the ability:

> …to interrogate the wording and meaning of any utterance – why these words, what meanings are ascribed to them, how do they differ from the use of the word elsewhere, what do they achieve by the way they are used, contributing to whose loss and to whose benefit? (p. 229).

Hasan argues that one’s capacity for engagement in social transformation expands through understanding how lexicogrammatical resources are patterned and used to create, alter and maintain contexts. The corollary is that in a world where meaning is increasingly distributed across a range of semiotic resources and modalities, such understanding must be extended to the patterns and systems of those resources as well (Early et al. 2015; Kress 2000; van Leeuwen 2005). Thus, if designing is a practice of selecting from available designs – the blueprints, materials, and patterns of use, if you will – to create new meaning, reflection literacy is the capacity to critique how designs serve their users’ interests. Together, they provide a powerful foundation for a critical praxis.

### *3.3 Application to Pedagogy*

A critical praxis that builds on the concepts of design and reflection literacy leads to subtle but important shifts in the day-to-day planning and organizing of teaching. It is important to see these as shifts and not radical changes, and readers are likely to recognize similarities with their own practices. Yet attention to the integral relationship between semiotic resources and the production of knowledge, to the designs and processes of designing meaning, requires small but crucial transformations to praxis.

One shift is how a critical semiotic praxis alters criteria for selecting materials and resources – the available designs – for lessons and units. A critical praxis, whether or not it is grounded in social semiotics, engages students with the world as it presented to them, often through critique of curricular documents and textbooks. However, design requires the understanding and capacity to put semiotic resources to use. Before that capacity can be developed, learners must first *recognize* the resources available to them. *Recognition*, as Bezemer and Kress (2016) argue, is "the task of making what is currently unnoticeable noticeable, what is inaudible audible and what is invisible visible" (p. 5). Thus materials in a critical semiotic praxis are selected to support students in *recognizing* a resource. In Sects. 5.1 and 5.2, I describe how these decisions were made for the multimodality lessons, but it is important to note that the lessons also helped us as educators identify resources that students possessed but of which we were previously unaware. In a critical praxis grounded in social semiotics, there is no presumption of mutual recognition. There is always the potential for each to learn from the other.

It is also important to highlight the similarities and differences between our attempts at a critical semiotic praxis and other pedagogies situated within social semiotics. The pedagogy put forward by the New London Group recognizes the need for overt instruction, but is more ambiguous in addressing systems of semiotic resources (Cope and Kalantzis 2009; New London Group 1996). In contrast, the genre pedagogies associated with the Sydney School of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), primarily though not exclusively focused on textual organization, pay close attention to how linguistic resources are deployed. These genre pedagogies share a common process that moves from text deconstruction to independent construction, and aim to draw students' attention to the features of text types (Martin 2009; Rose and Martin 2012). However, such pedagogies address production of relatively stable texts for which the goal is clearly defined. They do not apprentice students "to independently critique relationships between norms of knowledge and norms of discourse through a deep understanding of the function of language in knowledge reproduction and production" (Williams in press). Nor do such pedagogies support students in establishing independent purpose(s) for their communication or in evaluating and assessing designs (linguistic and otherwise) that can further their goals. In adopting a critical praxis grounded in social semiotics, choices of materials and resources need to support learners in developing a critical stance to the relations between designs and meaning, an essential attribute of *reflection literacy*. Without this critical stance, the pedagogic practices risk failing to foster the flexibility required in contemporary communication.

A further shift in planning and organization relates to the range of designs made available to students through the selection of texts and materials. For two important reasons, a critical praxis grounded in social semiotics engages students with the world as offered beyond the classroom; that is, it engages students with designs – patterns in texts, registers and/or genres – other than what is offered in textbooks and formal curricula. First, the pace with which digitization continues to contribute to the transformation of communication exacerbates the lag between the development of sanctioned curriculum materials and the patterns of knowledge production beyond school. This requires rethinking how non-curricular designs might be incorporated into classroom practice so that students engage in the participatory practices of contemporary knowledge work.

But there is also another longstanding reason for going beyond textbooks and formal curricula. Subject or disciplinary knowledge is remade for pedagogic purposes: it is selected, sequenced and recombined to create the discourses we recognize as school. This recontextualization is an essential and inevitable dimension of educational processes, for young children cannot "do" science (for example) as a particle physicist can. But these processes of recontextualization embed knowledge in a set of regulatory relations that sanction what is problematized and what is assumed, how voices are foregrounded and/or ellipsed, how knowledge claims are positioned and warranted, and who can question whom (Bernstein 1990; Hasan 1996). Disciplinary knowledge is distanced from its site of production and the careful hedging and uncertainty that is typical of scientific literature is remade into fact-like assertions about the world. Equally if not more important, the bases on which complex notions of justice, of community and of social value are negotiated and regularized, and the voices of less powerful communities obscured. Speaking from the South African context, Zipin et al. (2015) argue for attention to the *"who/what/when"* of curriculum selection and for "dialogue and activity in which learners engage wider social worlds in intellectual-*cum*-ethical ways" (p. 33). The careful curation of non-curricular designs cracks open the sometimes seamless knowledge of textbooks and school materials, allowing reflection on the moral as well as intellectual relations of designs and meaning.

That particular form of reflection, one that attends to the function of language and other semiotic resources in the re/production of knowledge, requires a language for design, a metalanguage for shared reflection and inquiry. Hasan and the New London Group assign significant weight to a functioning metalanguage for a conceptual language enables individuals to step back from specific examples and classify the patterns they observe. However, classification is not the goal and the mere presence of metalanguage in classroom interaction and activities is not a marker of individuals' expanded meaning potential (Schleppegrell 2013). Rather, metalanguage affords learners the capacity to analyze the *functions* of designs/patterns of semiotic resources: it enables students to explain how patterns of semiotic resources and patterns of meaning are related. Students cannot engage in the reflection practices for which Hasan and the New London Group advocate without a conceptual metalanguage for design.

Attention (a) to recognition of the range of available designs and (b) to the metalanguage required for reflection literacy are subtle but nonetheless significant features in planning and organizing a critical praxis grounded in social semiotics. In the remainder of this chapter, I offer an example of praxis, one that was co-planned with a teacher with whom I have a longstanding research relationship.

## 4 The Design Context

> Every design process unfolds within a unique situation: a complex and dynamic reality. A designer always acts in response to that reality…the real nature of design is to work within limited time and resources to do the best that is possible (Nelson and Stolterman 2012, p. 99).

What follows is an illustration of a critical praxis grounded in social semiotics. It takes the form of two lessons in multimodality that were incorporated into a Grade 6–7 Language Arts unit. In the strictest sense, it is not an application of the ideas and concepts I have discussed for these were evolving when the lessons were taught (see Sect. 5). However, the lessons were informed by the theories set out above, and were one test of their classroom utility. I begin this illustration by describing the multiple layers of the lessons' context – academic research project, classroom and teaching unit – because design is by definition a practice at the intersection of pragmatic limits and theoretical possibilities, and because context contributes to the available designs. I then set out the lessons' priorities before describing the materials created for the lessons, key moments in the lessons' orchestration, and two exemplars of student work created in the week following the lessons. From there, I reflect on the lessons' contribution to students' personalized meaning potential and the implications for continued research.

### *4.1 The Research Project*

The lessons described in this chapter were developed within the context of *The Multiliteracy Project* (see http://multiliteracies.ca), a Canadian research initiative that examined how contemporary conceptions of literacies have impacted pedagogic practice. The seven-year collaboration funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) brought together major research universities, school districts, a professional teachers' organization, and non-profit organizations, all of who conceived of literacy as a social practice. Recognizing that practices are unambiguously linked to particular historical, cultural and political settings in which they are situated, the collaboration focused on the shifting literacies of globalized, technologically-mediated societies, including but by no means limited to (a) the continued place of traditional print literacies, (b) the demands of digitalized, richly multimodal texts and textual practices, and (c) the promise and challenge of classroom diversity. Most importantly, the project explored how the theorized benefits of a multiliteracies pedagogy translated into classroom learning practices.

The Vancouver School Board, the second largest school district in the Province of British Columbia, was a major collaborator in the research. The Board has a history of innovation in English language education, of prioritizing social justice issues, and of participating in leading edge research in social and emotional learning. In researching multiliterate, multilingual pedagogies against a background of changing educational demands, that history was a major contribution to the project. The teachers involved in this work were master teachers, experienced mentors and leaders who were recognized by their peers and school leadership as making a difference in learners' lives. Very few, however, were familiar with SFL and/or social semiotics.

Preliminary case studies of teachers' praxis identified a number of strengths that cut across student age groups, language histories and socioeconomic profiles. At the same time, classroom practices failed to capitalize on the meaning potential of students' home languages in furthering academic achievement, despite teachers explicitly communicating the value they attached to students' linguistic and cultural heritage and despite students' involvement in authoring a range of identity texts. In addition, although students produced sophisticated texts, there was a notable lack of metalanguage for discussing semiotic resources. Both issues became priorities for the lessons in multimodality.

### *4.2 The School*

Sir Matthew Begbie Elementary, located on the east side of Vancouver, had several teachers participating in *The Multiliteracy Project*. Begbie is and was a school sitting at a nexus of urban communities that range from the poorest in Canada to those facing rapid gentrification and rising home prices. At the time of this research, the vast majority of students came from working class families and parents were frequently employees at small factories, cooks in sushi restaurants, clerks in shops and businesses, and equipment operators.

MJ Moran, who teaches at Matthew Begbie, is someone with whom I have researched and collaborated for an extended period of time. MJ, as she is known to students, had taught a Grade 6–7 combined class for several years. The students whom she taught Grade 6 remained in her class for Grade 7, which allowed MJ to create a dynamic of apprenticeship and mentoring across and within grade levels. Of the 27 students who participated in the lessons in multimodality, more than 70% had a home language other than English and the language groups included Cantonese, Vietnamese, Spanish and Tagalog. Three students had designations for special learning needs other than English as a Second Language (ESL).[2] Because the neighborhood was relatively stable, I knew several of the students' older and/or younger siblings through my work in the school over the years, and some children had been research subjects in earlier years.

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[2] At the time, the Province of British Columbia used the designation English as a Second Language (ESL) to identify students for whom schools received additional funding.

## 4.3 The Teaching Unit

The lessons in multimodality were taught toward the end of a Language Arts unit on the novel *Zack* by William Bell (1999). MJ designed the unit as a novel study, the second which students had undertaken that year. (For a description of the selected novel and how it was taught, see Moran n.d.-a, n.d.-b). For the purpose of this chapter, the most important point is how MJ adapted the familiar classroom activity "read-write-draw." In each lesson, MJ would read aloud a chapter of the novel. Then at periodic intervals throughout each chapter, she would stop reading and guide students through a sequence of talk-draw-talk-write. Each sequence began with a one-minute discussion among three students, triads that worked together for 1 month and which were "intentionally organized to support all learners" (Moran n.d.-c). Particularly in early lessons, MJ modeled reflective questions in a think-aloud of her own reading process. This strategy helped to scaffold students' reflections on what they had heard, in wondering about what had and might happen, in identifying connections with their own lives, and in interrogating emotional responses to events in the story. Crucially, the questions opened possibilities for discussion instead of assessing comprehension, although they also provided MJ with vital information on students' progress. (Note: Moran's web-based account of her practice includes videos of the students' interactions as well as extensive examples of their work, *Multiliteracy Project.*)

After 1 min of discussion, students were told, "Draw!" At that point, they had 2 min to represent their developing ideas in an image. This was followed by a second one-minute conversation to "Talk about it" (Moran n.d.-b), after which students had 3 min to write. Again, students had relative freedom in their choice of topics, with one important restriction: they were not to rewrite the story but to write what they were thinking and/or where the discussions had taken them.

The students progressed through the novel in this fashion for nearly 6 weeks. Because the study of literature in elementary classrooms is intended to foster a love of reading as well as instigate discussion of the human condition, the pacing of chapters was relatively leisurely. However, the discussions were intense. There were no graded assignments, but students were often asked to reflect on their learning. At the end of the novel, students were given 1 week to create a project that responded to the prompt; "Show what you know" and projects were shared in a carousel activity. It was just before work began on the projects that the lessons in multimodality were conducted.

The novel study built on established classroom practices of individual and collective reflection, of wonder, and of sharing knowledge, and drew on the students' well-established metalanguage for reflecting on learning processes. These were resources and practices that we would reuse in the lessons in multimodality.

## 5 A Critical Praxis: Lessons in Multimodality

### *5.1 Setting the Priorities*

> Diane and I had previously discussed how the students naturally represented their understanding using modalities when preparing projects, and that possibly with direct instruction and opportunity to develop this natural tendency their projects might extend themselves even further. Teacher's accounts of practice. Moran (n.d.-d).

As a researcher in MJ's classroom, I held a privileged position, privileged because I had the time and freedom to observe, to follow my own interests, and to ask questions that did not always link to the lesson objectives. In watching this process of talk-draw-talk-write over several years, I was struck by the focus that time limits created, by the contribution of peer conversations to the increasing depth and range in students' thinking, and by the extent to which remaking meaning across modes contributed to understanding. All three types of practices are well-documented in language and literacy research as contributing to the success of students for whom English is an additional language. However, there were unrealized opportunities. Though the pattern of talk-draw-talk-write entails translating meaning across modes, the students appeared largely unaware of the relationship between modes and meaning. Additionally, although students frequently reflected on their learning and learning practices throughout the novel study, there was less attention given to the novelist's linguistic choices or to the students' choices as they made and remade their understandings of the text. Quite simply, the necessary metalanguage for *reflection literacy* was not developing in tandem with other aspects of students' academic literacies practices, and that gap in current practice became the impetus for lessons in multimodality (see also similar findings in Shin, this volume).

As MJ alluded in her web-based account, we had frequently discussed how a conceptual language for meaning making – a metalanguage – might expand students' meaning potential. Over the length of my involvement in this classroom, I had previously taught short sequences of lessons to test out ideas being developed by the research team. This Language Arts unit provided another opportunity, and MJ and I identified two periods of roughly 90 min each when I could work with the 11- and 12-year-old students. The objectives for the lessons evolved from our discussions and what I had observed:

- Semiotic resources/modes – The lessons would transform students' existing, here-and-now understanding of materials (paper, color, etc.) to a theoretically informed concept of modes and their affordances, and how they functioned in meaning making.[3]
- Metalanguage – The lessons would provide a metalanguage for evaluating modal choices that included but was not limited to speaking and writing.

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[3] The lessons employed the concept of mode put forward by the New London Group (1996). In more recent writing, Kress (2010) puts forward more delicate distinctions between semiotic resource, mode and modal ensemble.

- Multilingualism – The lessons aimed to situate language*s* within the array of resources available to students. In other words, students were to be supported in seeing their languages as available designs for furthering their learning.

## *5.2 Selecting Available Designs*

The process of orchestrating a critical praxis grounded in social semiotics includes selecting from, juxtaposing and sequencing available designs. For these lessons, the materials needed to support students' analyses of modal affordances such that students' capacity to select and transform designs for their own purposes was expanded. Three sets of resources were created: a slideshow, three handouts and the raw materials for an assemblage that would be co-created with students in the second lesson. The first two are discussed in this section while the assemblage is discussed in the context of the designing.

The slideshow, which consisted exclusively of images, was the backbone of a series of classroom activities as well as a resource for designing. The images were sequenced according to their purpose.

- The first slides were screenshots of images from online news stories and used in activities focused on modal affordances and the communicative purposes behind modal selections.
- The second series of slides were taken from multiple sources and showed writing in less familiar combinations with other modes (ex. Seattle Public Library's walls and floors; visualizations of data). These slides were primarily used to support students in reimagining how modes might be recombined.
- The third set of slides displayed images from museum installations. These were included to support students' reflections on juxtaposing modes, but were less targeted at writing.
- The final slides were taken from books accompanying art exhibitions, including an exhibit organized around the work of Bruno Latour. These extended the concept of space as a semiotic resource, but also illustrated differences in texts' interactivity.

As illustrated above, the slideshow could and was designed to be *read* in multiple ways. First, slides were selected and sequenced for orchestrating classroom discussions, discussions that would support students' reflections and developing conceptual understanding. Second, individual slides performed as available designs for students' projects. Finally, the slideshow complemented other resources developed for the lessons, with its modal affordances – projected screen size, color, etc. – functioning to realize unique contributions to meaning. Thus, it provided a further model for reflection. Overall, the slideshow was designed to function as a contextual resource that could be taken up or ignored in the process of designing.

Two slides require particular attention because of the powerful ways they were used by students. One was a visual from the exhibit "Making things public:

Atmospheres of democracy," which centered on Latour's sociology of knowledge (Latour and Weibel 2005). Ethnographies of the production of scientific knowledge underpin much of Latour's oeuvre, and the exhibit and accompanying book highlight debates and uncertainties behind the seeming sanctity of dominant ideas. In the exhibit, artists and writers sought to unveil these debates in unique and powerful ways. One large installation was a board with the following question across the top, "Which is more important: the correct decision or the correct process?" One side was marked "decision" and the other "process," creating a continuum for responses. To the main installation's right, a small display, much like those in a post office, offered viewers a selection of post-it notes. Viewers were invited to respond to the prompt by posting a written response along the continuum. The exhibit was included in the lesson's slideshow because it drew attention to interactivity as a dimension of design, and because consistent with the priorities outlined by Hasan, it highlighted the social nature of knowledge.

The second set of images of immediate relevance was from a Museum of London exhibit. For this exhibit, immigrants were invited to write imaginary postcards to people in their country of origin that expressed their thoughts and feelings about immigrating. The postcards were written in the immigrants' mother tongues but translated into English, and non-immigrant English citizens were invited to write responses. English and non-English versions in a range of languages were used to bring language*s* into discussions of multimodality.

The handouts' design also targeted multiple objectives. They functioned as available design and modeled the semiotic affordances of writing (fonts, font sizes and weights, text direction, etc.) and space (line, white space, layout). They also offered a metalanguage for design and while not comprehensive (i.e. they did not include a definition of the five modes set out by The New London Group[4]), they reinforced concepts targeted in classroom activities: working definitions of mode, media and affordance and a system for classifying texts by the degree and nature of the reader involvement complemented designs targeted for recognition in the slideshow. Again, the key point is how the materials could be orchestrated to engage students in practices of reflection literacy. Handouts were simultaneously available designs and explicit instruction in how meaning is realized within and across modes. They intentionally modeled the ideas being taught and reinforced conceptual language. While the prompt for the students' project was relatively open-ended, the place of explicit instruction in supporting critical reflection was key to these lessons' contribution.

### 5.3 Redesigning as Critical Praxis

To support students in creating – in contrast to critiquing – knowledge, a critical praxis grounded in reflection literacy balances a fine line. Designs are analyzed as resources for redesign and not as models for replication. Yet simultaneously, students must be sensitized to the tension between power and agency in the production of any given text, and to the constraints on choice experienced by the less powerful (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996/2006). For the research project, the lessons provided opportunities to test possibilities for such a praxis: we had not yet seen a conceptual language for semiotic resources combined with creative opportunities for text production in the researched classrooms. The metaphor of orchestration was useful for imagining how resources would be drawn into processes of designing.

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[4] The concept of mode continues to be refined by language and literacies scholars; however, these lessons were based on the work of the New London Group.

To illustrate how the lessons unfolded, I will describe how the third material resource, the assemblage, was created and reflected upon. The assemblage's material construction was simple. Before class, five colored squares were hung from the ceiling to form a rough circle, with several feet separating each square. Hanging from each square were lengths of wool, each strand reaching 2–3 ft above the floor. Each strand matched the color of the square from which it hung (see Fig. 1) and each color represented one of the modes (linguistic, visual, spatial, audio, gestural) set out by the New London Group (1996). At the beginning of the second class, the student triads, the working groups of three, were given cardboard cards with five holes punched in them. After a brief review of the previous lesson, groups were asked to brainstorm examples of multimodal texts, to write each example on a separate card, and to identify the modes it used "to mean" (see next paragraph). After an initial brainstorm, examples were discussed as a class. Then groups were given several more minutes to continue their discussion. At that point, a representative

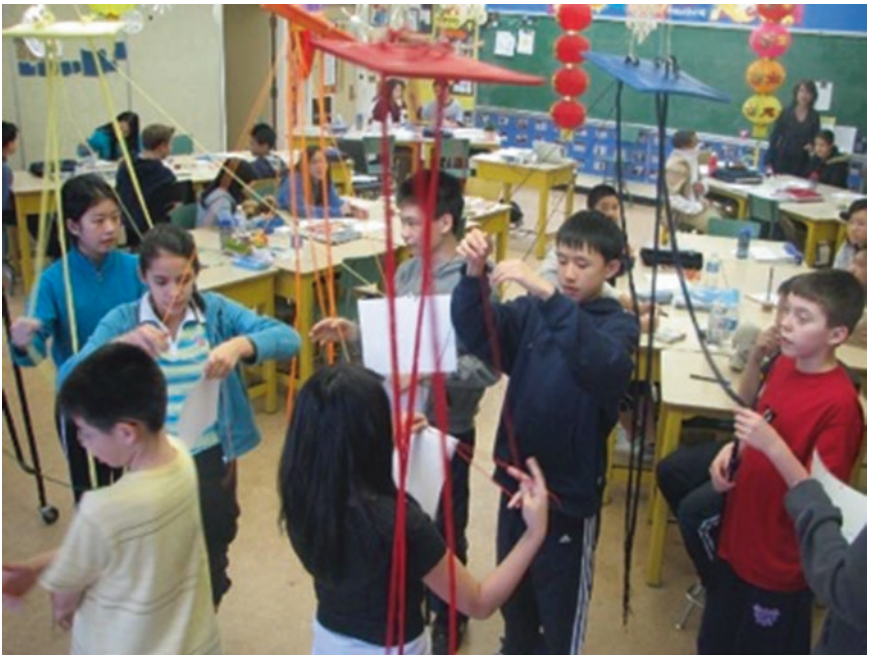

**Fig. 1** Creating the assemblage

from each group collected their cards and added them to the assemblage by tying each to the relevant modes. For example, movies rely on all five modes, so a card for movies was added by tying five strands of wool, one of each color, to the card. A comic book uses three modes – linguistic, visual and spatial – and would be tied into the assemblage using three strands of wool representing those three modes. No repetition was allowed. Groups could continue brainstorming while cards were being added. Then we discussed what had been created.

Designing responds to the possibilities and limitations of the immediate context and the assemblage was developed in response to a question posed toward the end of the first class:

> If the intelligences are how you understand something, you can't understand something unless it's presented in front of you and if that's the case if it's presented to you why can't you present it yourself and call it a mode?

The first lesson's activities had successfully engaged students in rich discussions about the affordances of modes, rationales for selection of modes, and (to a lesser extent) the concept of design. Interestingly, the handouts' heading, "Everything means," began to function as a touchstone. In the context of classroom discussion, the nominal *meaning* was being transformed into the process *mean,* and "How does it (a mode/resource) mean?" and "How do you mean?" became (a) questions about the semiotic resources offered by a mode and (b) a student's design choices, including their choice of modes. Students were beginning to *recognize* semiotic resources in ways that had not previously been apparent; *recognition* made it possible to highlight the choices open to students, which in turn provided a foundation for increased *flexibility*.

However, my final step in the lesson was a step too far. In grasping that modes meant differently – that there was no equivalency in meaning across modes – the door was opened to introducing Halliday's seminal point that meaning does not precede the text. But however close students were to the cusp of this understanding – and by implication that meaning is socially produced – it was not close enough. It was clear to MJ and to me that no matter how earnestly students were attending to the lesson, I had lost them. To consolidate the successes and assess where to begin the next lesson, we used an activity in which students wrote an anonymous question on a post-it note, and I then responded to the questions. Most were quickly dealt with, but the question above required thought. The assemblage was the response.

Watching students add to the assemblage was exciting. The first suggestions were more conservative and more tentative, but the energy in the room built as students debated within and across groups what could mean and how it meant. A discussion about the image of roses stands out, not least because Kress has used the same object (2010). The group who put forward the idea argued that roses could communicate a range of thoughts and feelings, and that color, number and size all contributed to meaning. That led to a discussion of which colors were associated with what purpose and in what culture, whether roses could mean if the person giving and the one receiving didn't share a common understanding of color's significance, and whose meaning counts in such circumstances. All this was sophisticated material for 11 and 12 year olds, but they were making the ideas their own.

The specifics of the discussion are important, but more important is what they indicated about the students' evolving thinking. The concepts of modes and affordances were becoming resources for analysis and decision-making. Simultaneously, "everything means" took on greater significance as students became increasingly aware that textual choices were never innocent of purpose. For at least some of the students, this appeared to be accompanied by a growing realization of the very point that had been beyond their grasp in the previous lesson, that the meanings communicated by multimodal texts were meanings particular to the modes and designs employed. The materiality of the assemblage was leading to an understanding of how meaning is created, and the activity became a further design for reflection.

It was into this context that I introduced the discussion of languages, which MJ and I have described elsewhere (Potts and Moran 2013). Multilingualism does not easily fit into the concept of modes put forward by the New London Group; however, it was possible within the lesson to position languages as an additional resource. Using the materials from the Museum of London, I asked the two Spanish speakers in the class, one from Guatemala and one from the Dominican Republic, to read aloud the Spanish postcard. I then asked them to compare the meanings with the English version and to identify any differences. They found none. Adapting my questions, I asked if they felt the same when they read the English and Spanish versions. To that I received an emphatic "No!" However, the two students had difficulty explaining the nature of the difference, and that difficulty intrigued their classmates. Thus, the notion that languages could signify differently was established.

## 5.4 *The Redesigned*

A critical praxis grounded in social semiotics prioritizes expansion of learners' meaning potential and their capacity to create; the two lessons in multimodality were injected into an established teaching unit to test the possibilities of such pedagogies in the practical realities of a classroom. The potential of our praxis is best assessed by examining subsequent student work, and for this chapter I have selected two projects created by EAL students who typically received marks of C and B.

Matthew's project focused on a specific scene from the novel in which the main character, the teenager Zack, was alone and asleep in his truck at a highway rest stop midway into his journey from Ontario, Canada to Louisiana. As illustrated in Fig. 2, it consisted of three distinct phases: a heading, eight cartoon panels and one blank panel. The question "Is this what cops do?" appeared above the cartoon panels in which he drew a sequence of events in which police awaken and rough up Zack, certain that a teenager in a truck with foreign license plates is involved in suspicious activities. For Zack, whose father is Jewish and mother is black, it was a first encounter with a particular form of institutional racism.

The novel contained many provoking scenes, but MJ recalled Matthew being particularly invested in this one. During class, Matthew had argued that the author's

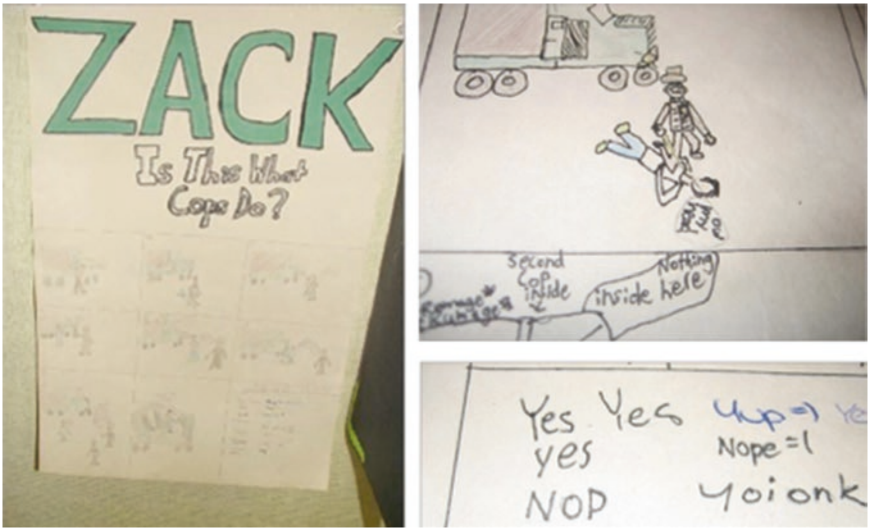

**Fig. 2** Matthew's project

depiction of police behavior was inaccurate, and he remained dissatisfied when the discussion ended. Though the lesson occurred more than a month before students prepared their projects, the issue had obviously remained with him, and he used his project as an invitation to continue the discussion. As students rotated between projects during the carousel session, he posed his question, engaged peers with his question, and asked them to write their answer in the blank poster panel.

Matthew's project remade the design of the Latour-inspired exhibit to create a forum for continued debate. He did not use post-it notes (although a peer did), but did reuse the idea of posing a polar question and of a poster functioning as a co-authored text. Other classroom designs also made their way into his poster. For example, the layout reflected MJ's practices for read-write-draw, which had included having students fold a piece of paper to create a two-column, cartoon-like grid: Matthew's layout and drawings mirror aspects of this activity. The interactivity of his project is also notable, as it marked a shift from his prior projects. Consistent with the aims of a critical praxis grounded in social semiotics, his use of available designs allowed him to reopen a debate that institutional processes – the timetabling and pacing of lessons – had ended prematurely for him. Further, he presented the scene as open to interpretation, evidence that he perceived issues of justice as open to ongoing debate. Certainly there were other factors leading to this stance, not least established classroom practices of small group work and discussion. But though his point-of-view may seem untenable to some educators, particularly in a post-Ferguson world, his agentive use of available designs for his own purpose suggests that the lessons in multimodality had contributed to his capacity to create.

Kristina's project was more personal, but gave evidence of similar development in her understanding of modes and their semiotic potential. Indeed, her post-project

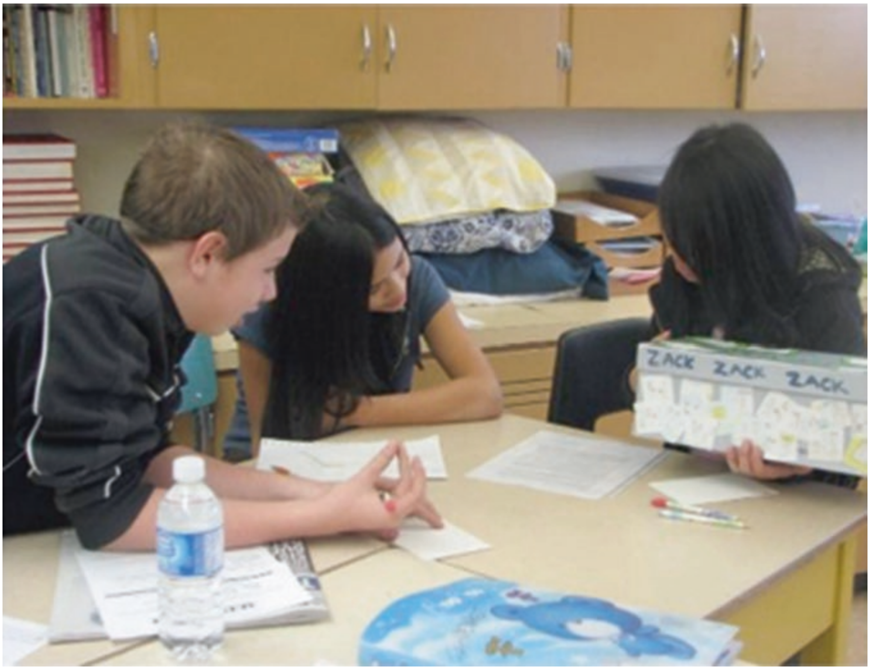

**Fig. 3** Kristina's project

reflection stated that she had "learned different modes and media and information I need to make a project that had meaning." Her project took the form of a box, which she covered with small drawings of key scenes from the novel and corresponding quotes. The quotes were also translated into Tagalog (see Fig. 3). Alongside her box, she placed a one-page reflective essay in which she described her process for creating her project and explained how she experienced key scenes differently when working in Tagalog. In her presentation, she invited peers to choose one of the hand-drawn scenes, to reflect in their other language, and to write whether they experienced the scene differently as a result. Her box had an opening at one end and students added their reflections to her box for her to consider and share.

The complex mediational processes of these actions are addressed in the earlier article; here, I am interested in the impact of a critical praxis that draws on notions of design. As with Matthew's project, one sees clear evidence of use of available designs. For example, in using Tagalog to explore the emotional impact of key scenes, Kristina continues a line of questioning pursued in the lessons. Like Matthew, her drawings are comparable to those created during the read-write-draw activity and they perform a similar function in communicating and supporting her understanding of the novel, although her essay suggests that she extended their function to assisting with translation. Again similar to Matthew, she adopted a design with a high degree of interactivity. Yet Kristina's project has a distinctly different purpose, for where Matthew's project invited continued debate, Kristina's offered an opportunity for personal reflection. Additionally, though she draws on some of the same designs and was addressing the same audience, she is less concerned with the novel per se and more focused on how readers' responses to fiction are shaped and influenced. Importantly, whereas Matthew's project presupposes the existence of a range of viewpoints, Kristina's probes the origins of difference. Thus, one sees in Kristina's project a dawning awareness of the relation between language and the production of knowledge.

## 6 Discussion and Conclusion

I began this chapter by setting out a critical praxis grounded in social semiotics that is distinct from the tradition of critical literacy in its emphasis on personalized meaning potential. It draws heavily on the concept of design put forward by Kress and the New London Group and on the practices of reflection literacy sketched by Hasan, both of which center on supporting learners' capacity to create. The multimodality lessons illustrate students' power to engage with and remake available designs not only for achieving sanctioned curricular goals, though this is furthered by such work, but also for the purposes they have charted independently. Meaning is made and remade as semiotic choices are expanded, and the redesigned becomes an available design for peers and others.

The last point is crucial to a critical praxis grounded in social semiotics. It is not just that a student's capacity to mean has expanded, though this is hardly a 'just.' But in remaking meaning, individuals contributed to the knowledge available to their peers. During the week students prepared their projects, MJ observed students quietly walk to the back of the classroom to stand in front of the assemblage before returning to their seats to continue their work. The Spanish-speaking students' efforts to explain differences in their responses to two texts led Kristina to reflect on the value of her own linguistic resources. Kristina and Matthew designed projects that invited their peers to discuss issues and concerns of perceived common interest and of significant social importance, and in doing so provided additional opportunities for learning. In remaking available designs, the students were reshaping the context for future interactions and contributing to collective knowledge. Their work was emblematic of the work of a critical praxis.

I write this recognizing that the context for the lessons in multimodality was unique. They were taught by a researcher involved in a longstanding collaboration among teachers, a school board and a university, and while MJ was unfamiliar with social semiotics, her praxis included well-developed routines for engaging learners in shared reflection. I was able to build on my knowledge of those practices in my teaching and the lesson's success undoubtedly links to these factors as well as the lessons' design. Still, the conceptual power of social semiotics and its capacity to explain the dynamics *and* systems of meaning-making coupled with the concept of design espoused by the New London Group cannot be overstated.

And yet there are many questions. Some relate to the selection and sequencing of metalanguage and how its development might be built up across the grade levels. There are questions regarding the necessary knowledge base required for the design of such pedagogies, the ways in which practices of reflection and conceptual development intersect with practices of lifelong learning supported by master teachers such as MJ. There are challenges with the still-rudimentary language for addressing the inherent multimodality of communication, and uncertainties related to the particularities for such a critical praxis. Finally, there is the ever-present need to attend to the demands of formal education systems as well as the more emancipatory aims of education.

But questions are not barriers; questions are guides for developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of what learners can achieve with support and guidance. The highly diverse learners in MJ's class were and are students whose profiles cause hand wringing in many educational jurisdictions. Matthew's and Kristina's projects, completed in a week during which they juggled a regular curricular load, warrants continued research into a critical praxis that supports students' capacity to contribute to as well as learn from established knowledge. It is evidence of young people's potential to comprehend the function of language and other semiotic resources in the production and reproduction of knowledge.

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# Multimodal Mediation and Argumentative Writing: A Case Study of a Multilingual Learner's Metalanguage Awareness Development

**Dong-shin Shin**

**Abstract** This case study investigates the designing processes of the argumentative multimodal writing of a sixth grade bilingual student in an English language arts class. Drawing on social semiotics, it looks at how one student appropriated the semiotic affordances available in multimodal writing with digital technologies and how multimodal writing practices shaped his argumentative writing process and metalanguage development. Findings show that the student's developing awareness of metafunctions and metalanguages of various semiotic modes and intermodal relations allowed him to realize the register of argument (i.e., that there should be a memorial for the victims of Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting tragedy) in his text.

**Keywords** Social semiotics • Multimodal writing • Metalanguage • Bilingual learners

## 1 Introduction

Studies of the out-of-school literacy practices in K-12 classrooms learners report that digital technologies can elicit changes in how emergent bilingual learners interpret and create modes, authorship, genres, and time and space in texts (Gee and Hayes 2011; Lam and Warriner 2012; Stewart 2014; Yi 2007); and research has also shown that these kind of digital textual practices support L2 language development, allowing for use of expanded semiotic resources as well as a wide variety of rhetorical goals and audiences (Gee and Hayes 2011). Compared to the abundant literature on language learners' out-of-school literacy practices, little is known about their uses of social media in school. This lack of focus is closely associated with the traditional privileging of school-based literacies like writing over others that involve

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image, sound, color, and video for communication and higher-level mental development (Shanahan 2013; Smagorinsky 1995). However, the recent and ever-growing dominance of digital technologies as communication and representation media in our everyday lives along with the expansion of multimodal communication have spurred teachers to incorporate digital technologies into their curriculum and instruction. More teachers have started to expand their views of literacy by supporting students in developing their ability to make meanings with multimodal resources available in digital technologies.

Studies have shown that teachers, even from very early elementary grades, incorporate digital literacy practices in their curriculum while fostering their school-based academic language and literacy development (Atkinson and Swaggerty 2011; Gebhard et al. 2011; Shanahan 2013; Shin 2014; Toohey et al. 2015). For example, Gebhard et al. (2011) show how a second grade teacher in a U.S. urban elementary school incorporated blogs into her writing curriculum and instruction of English language arts (ELA) to support young children's understanding of how to negotiate diverse social and political goals in learning school-based academic genres. Their study demonstrates that the varied purposes and audiences available in a new medium provided an expanded semiotic potential for young bilingual learners' writing. Similarly, Shanahan's study (2013) explores how a fifth grade teacher's multimodal composing instruction supported or not her students' conceptual understanding of acid rain. Shanahan found that the teacher's lack of knowledge and experience with multimodal writing prevented the students from strategically appropriating affordances of multimedia-based writing for composing multimodal texts. Considering these varied findings, studies are needed that investigate digital literacy practices in school settings, to better inform teachers of possibilities and challenges of multimodal writing that use digital technologies.

To contribute to the literature on in-school use of social media, this current study investigates how and if a sixth grade teacher's use of the online multimedia platforms Edmodo and Glogster supported students in learning to construct multimodal argumentative essays. Specifically, it examines how new multimodal writing supported or not multilingual learners' academic literacy development and critical language awareness for various language use.

## 2 Writing as Design

The current research is based on a social semiotics perspective to multimodal writing that considers communication as meaning making with two or more semiotic systems (e.g., linguistic, audio, visual, spatial) (Bezemer and Kress 2008; Jewitt and Kress 2003; Kress 2003, 2005, 2010; Kress and van Leeuwen 2001; van Leeuwen 2003, 2005), and meaning-making resources are known as semiotic modes and communication channels as mediums. *Mode* can be defined as a meaning-making resource that includes processes such as writing, sound, images, layout, and videos while *medium* is any technology that carries modal resources for communication.

From this perspective, writing is conceptualized as a designing resource to make meaning with different semiotic modes for one's communicative goal. In the current technological era, students communicate through a variety of media; from emailing and texting to social networking tools (e.g., blog, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, wiki, YouTube). Each medium has different semiotic resources and the modes are used distinctively in fulfilling social cultural practices. For example, font size, paragraph indentation, and alignment are crucial modes in the medium of email, while sound and action in video recordings are crucial in the medium of YouTube. These media are embedded in particular socially defined contexts of communication, reflecting the norms of the social groups in which they are used.

Considering the social norms that are attached to use of media, the affordances of multimodal composition represent not only an author's representational intention but also an author's perception of configured audiences, in the contexts of a cultural practice of writing. In addition, all employed modes interact with one another to create a culturally specific meaning that is not available from these discrete resources in isolation. A newly co-created meaning is grounded in the *synesthetic semiosis* of multimodal authoring processes (Kress 2003; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). That is, semiotic modes do not create meanings as separate autonomous meaning-making resources nor are they employed disjointedly. For academic writing, writers need to master "not only the role played by the mode of representation as a design element but also the effects of both the absence and the existence of design elements on readers' responses to the multimodal text" (Shin and Cimasko 2008, p. 378). Such an understanding involves an awareness of how intermodal relationships construct meaning as a multimodal ensemble, rather than just linking two different modes (see Liu and O'Halloran 2009, p. 369 for meanings across modes).

## 3 Metafunctions: Linguistic, Visual, and Aural

Semiotic resources are different yet interconnected sign systems for making meaning. Developing meta semiotic awareness of sign use involves building an understanding of the complex interrelationships of sign systems, meanings, and context. Inter-semiotic meanings and the functions across semiotic modes will change according to contexts of culture and situation.

Informed by SFL theory of register variables and context (Halliday 1994; see Harman, this volume; Martin 1984), Kress and van Leeuwen conceptualized similar semiotic metafunctions for analysis of the visual mode and its communicational grammar: *representational, interactive, and compositional* (1996). The *representational* function deals with how visual resources construct ideas in communication. The *interactive* function relates to how interpersonal and evaluative meanings are constructed and how the visual resources give, demand or exchange information or services (see Eggins 2004, pp. 183–184 for interactional roles in language use). The visual resources, which may resemble images from the natural/real world, use high degrees of modality related to credibility. *Compositional* function explains how a text is organized in its synthesis of different modes, and its meaning-making involves the layout, placement, and relative salience of the pictures and text. For learners in multimodal composing, they need to become aware that configuration of resources in multimodal designing (e.g. images, color and text in a commercial) are constrained by the cultural expectations of configured audiences and genres. In other words, agentive use of modes needs to be conciliated with awareness of contextual purposes.

In defining how relationships among modes (e.g. image and text) create ideational meaning, Unsworth (2006) introduces three types of relations across modes —*concurrence*, *complementarity*, and *connection. Concurrence* across modes explains how one mode specifies or describes the meaning of the other without adding any new information. It takes the forms of explication, exposition, equivalence, or homospatiality (see Daly and Unsworth 2011, pp. 61–63 for examples of concurrence relations between images and language). *Complementarity* is a term used to explain how a new element is added by either text or image in relation to augmentation, distribution, and divergence. Finally, *connection* explains how quoting or reporting speech and thoughts is inscribed within the intermodal links, and how conjunctive relations of time, place, and cause are conveyed.

To support understanding of the functions across and within semiotic modes, learners need to become aware of how their configuration functions to realize field, tenor and mode. In terms of the interpersonal meaning, realistic images may demand a response from the viewer through the gaze of a represented participant or may implicitly demand a response because of the lack of eye contact of the represented participant (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). The images evoke feelings, co-articulate attitude with verbiage (Martin 2002), and convey the modality of truth or credibility through use of real images representing the natural world. For compositional meanings, visual images tend to construe the ideal and real structure by arranging abstract, general information at the top and concrete, specific information at the bottom. In case of the electronic media, the size and position of a text block on the screen construct a spatial relationship between image and text to emphasize different aspects of the image on the screen (Jewitt 2002). As such, as the visual mode in multimodal composition, images construe their modal meanings and intermodal meanings in interconnected relations with other modes.

Although research has often focused on multimodal visual and verbal texts, sound as a semiotic resource in a multimodal text can be an important component. It can be understood as a schema with four-part elements—vocal delivery, music, special effects, and silence (see McKee 2006, p. 337 for constituents of sound schema as semiotic mode). Speech as a semiotic resource in multimodal composition adds different interpersonal meanings to the content and style of a speech depending on its vocal delivery. The elements for vocal delivery concern nonverbal resources such as tension, roughness, breathiness, loudness, pitch, tone, and vibrato. Similar to the subtle elements of the appraisal system in SFL (e.g. graduation, force and focus in Martin and Rose 2003), the vibrations, tones and density of the sounds are called upon to function as important semiotic resources for forming culturally oriented meanings of voices (van Leeuwen 1999). Another key element in the analytical framework of sound as semiotic mode that is relevant to the current study is music. The interpretation of music is made within several planes: sensuous (e.g., voice, tone, loudness), expressive (e.g., evoked feelings), and musical (e.g., rhythm, melody) (McKee 2006). These categories overlap, simultaneously operating in making meanings of the music.

In sum, multimodal writing is a co-articulation of different modes for communicative goals. This paper explores a focal child's multimodal designing process and developing metalanguage awareness; on his understandings of semiotic and intersemiotic functions in designing multiple modes.

## 4 Methodology

### *4.1 Context*

This study was conducted in a sixth grade classroom of the Liberty Elementary School,[1] located in a rural area in the northeast of the United States. The school serves students from the third to the sixth grade. A significant portion of the students were from economically challenging backgrounds, as indicated by the fact that 27% of students of the Liberty School qualified for free and reduced price lunch during the school year when the current study was conducted. The school made their annual yearly progress goals in English Language Arts, Mathematics and Science for all of their students for three years prior to the study.

The Liberty School's English Language Arts (ELA) instruction followed the state-mandated curriculum framework that directly aligns with the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers 2010). Its curriculum maintained writing workshops drawing on Lucy Calkins' (2010) writing workshop model for intermediate grades and the 6 + 1 Writing Traits.[2] The school also provided a literacy club with reading specialists before and after regular instruction to promote students' literacy skills as one of its extracurricular activities. Many teachers held extra support sessions for striving students to improve academic literacies in content areas at least two or three times a week. In terms of computer technologies, the school had a computer lab with 35 computers that all of the classrooms could sign up and use for their instructional activities throughout the academic year.

This study took place in a sixth grade inclusive classroom (i.e. integration of ESOL, special needs and mainstream students) that had eighteen students ranging from eleven to twelve years old. The class was composed of nine girls and nine boys.

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[1] The names of the school, student, and teacher in this paper are pseudonyms.

[2] Spandel and Stiggins (1990) developed this method outlining how teachers could teach students "specific criteria and for writing" and "perceptions of their writing skills." The six traits include ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Later, publication is added, which becomes 6 + 1 traits.

Four of the students were classified as students with disabilities and had Individual Education Plan (IEPs) and one student was a bilingual learner. The daily routine of the sixth grade classroom started with individual morning work including literacy and mathematics activities, followed by regular daily classes for a range of content areas such as mathematics, ELA, science and social studies. The ELA block in which I conducted this study lasted for two hours and fifteen minutes, and consisted of vocabulary, spelling, read aloud, guided reading, independent reading, and writing lessons. The classroom had a large class library that had ample books organized by subject. The class had six computers and six IPads that they used in many learning activities across content areas throughout the day. This classroom was equipped with a SmartBoard where the classroom teacher delivered the majority of lessons and an Elmo, a document camera that the teacher used to display papers and student work.

### 4.2 Participants

The classroom teacher, Julia Hunt, was a second year teacher working on her Master's degree at a college nearby. She was interested in instructional technologies and, particularly, using Web 2.0 technologies in literacy activities for her students. Ms. Hunt took courses with me, a teacher educator in her Master's program. In one of these courses, she conducted a project that incorporated Web 2.0 technologies into the ELA curriculum, and invited me to her classroom so that I could provide support for curriculum research she was conducting.

The focal child for this study was Sonny, an eleven-year old Laotian bilingual boy whose family immigrated into the states when he was a toddler. He spoke Laotian with family members at home, and learned and used English as a school language. Sonny was a social and active student who enjoyed playing football and computers games. He was academically successful and achieved advanced proficiencies in mathematics. He loved engaging in digital literacy practices, having access to up-to-date computer devices and Internet in and out of school. For instance, he often typed his grandfather's stories for him and played digital games with his family and friends. Sonny enjoyed any school project where he could work on the computer and use Internet resources. In addition to being a bilingual English learner who needed improvement in ELA (i.e., writing) compared to his advanced achievement in mathematics, his interest in digital literacies led me to select Sonny as a focal student for the study.

### 4.3 Curriculum Unit

The study was based on a curricular unit of argumentative writing for English language arts curriculum, as mandated by the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School

Officers 2010). According to the CCSS writing standards, sixth graders are expected to "[w]rite arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence" (p. nd). Argument writers initiate an argumentative text with a thesis followed by background information concerning the debated issue, and evidence to support or disprove the thesis. Writers conclude the text with restatement of the thesis. In legal, academic and formal social contexts, the register of argumentation tends to use a higher density of lexico-grammatical resources that express values (e.g., good, bad), judgments (e.g., hasty, slow), comparisons (e.g., similar, comparable), and contrasts (e.g., different, disparate); the passive voice with logical conjunctions and nominalizations may also be used to seem more objective (Martin and Rose 2008; Schleppegrell 2004). To teach the genre, Ms. Hunt designed a curricular unit on writing an argumentative letter to the president in which students selected their own topics about changing America into a better country; studied related information, and wrote their argument with supporting claims and evidence.

Ms. Hunt turned the argumentative curricular unit into a multimodal writing project through use of multimedia authoring tools and online resources. Through use of these media, she aimed to validate students' out-of-school literacy practices and to support their development of semiotic competence of various meaning-making resources. The class had been using various technologies including Web 2.0 technologies (e.g., Edmodo, Glogster) in reading and writing activities across content areas. For instance, right before the current study project, students created brochures about Greece in social studies classes using Microsoft Publisher, and PowerPoint slides on Planets in science classes. In Ms. Hunt's multimodal argumentative writing unit, the teacher used Edmodo, a web-based platform that supports students in connecting, sharing ideas, and collaborative learning; and Glogster, an online platform that provides multimedia resources for digital composition and interactive learning to enable students to both write and publish texts. The teacher provided students with mini-lessons on how to sign up to key aspects of Edmodo's interface including Notifications, Reply, and Turn-in functions. To help students' use of Glogster, she provided mini-lessons and a handout that students could use later, which allowed the students to add contents (e.g., text, image, song) to their pages without problems.

Adopting an SFL-informed genre pedagogy (Feez 1998; Rothery 1996), Ms. Hunt created mini lessons on the language features needed in argumentative writing; and taught students how to write a multimodal argumentative letter through a teaching-learning cycle that she developed, drawing from both the school writing workshop approach (Calkins 2010) and the work by SFL scholars that she had read in her graduate courses (Gebhard and Harman 2011; Harman 2013; Unsworth 2006; Schleppegrell and Go 2007). The cycle involved the following stages:

**Orientation and Modeling** Ms. Hunt oriented the students to the purpose and function of the argument by discussing with them the features of mentor argumentative texts from books and the Internet. In addition, the class did a close reading activity (e.g., Presidents are just like us, President Obama's Back to School Speech). For instance, students read an informational text about Rosa Parks' bus boycott and posted their answers to an argumentative prompt, drawing on evidence from the text in Edmodo. After completing answers, the students took a poll about the how their textual evidence provided good support for their answer to the questions. Overall, the classroom teacher focused on building a shared context for learning while simultaneously familiarizing students with new technologies for multimodal text production.

**Deconstruction and Joint Construction** Ms. Hunt further supported multimodal argument writing through a class activity where students created a multimodal argument for or against year-round schooling in Glogster. Her joint construction of the projects supported students in seeing how the semiotic resources available in Glogster, including linguistic and non-linguistic resources, could be used to realize the ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings of their arguments. To enhance students' understanding of the force of intermodal meanings across various modes, she showed how image and word interacted together in creating ideational and interpersonal meanings through co-elaborating, complementing, and connecting relationships. To align with students' previous learning with the writing workshop and the 6 + 1 traits, she also used such meta linguistic terms as "ideas", "voice", and "organization" respectively for ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings to foster students' metalanguage awareness.

**Independent Writing** Once they had spent time thinking and jointly constructing an ensemble of multimodal and linguistic resources to build arguments, Ms. Hunt requested that students begin writing their argumentative letter to the President on their selected topics for changing America. After brainstorming and composing a first draft in their writers' notebooks, they completed their text using Microsoft Word on the computers or Pages on an IPad. While writing their drafts, the students exchanged ideas about selected topics with peers in Edmodo to develop a deeper, more critical understanding of their topics. When the students finished their drafts, they exchanged feedback on each other's texts in Edmodo about how various modes were orchestrated into each multimodal ensemble. The classroom teacher also conducted group conferences with the students to check on their progress in writing and provided feedback on their letters throughout the writing processes via face-to-face and Edmodo.

**Publishing** The students published their multimodal Glogster texts in Edmodo and made comments on each other's work, in addition to sending the letters to the President. In doing so, they were encouraged to critically reflect on their own textual practices. The students' letters and Glogster texts were later posted on the school district website.

## 4.4 Data Collection and Analysis

I collected multiple domains of data over the course of a semester to make a thick description of participants' multimodal writing processes (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Dyson 2003). The data collected included student's written texts, Glogster postings, field notes about classroom interactions, interview data, and instructional materials. Student's written texts and Glogster postings were the primary sources for examining student writing process, while field notes, interview data, and instructional materials furnished supplementary data for contextual information about student's designing processes. Drawing on a case study model (Merriam 2009), I conducted a textual analysis of a focal student's texts and Glogster postings with a backdrop of the face-to-face and Edmodo classroom interactions. As stated before, the analytical framework that I developed was grounded in a social semiotic perspective of writing as design and multimodality (Jewitt and Kress 2003; Unsworth 2006). Employing a constant comparative analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1998), I analyzed the collected data and coded it for modes, intermodal relationships, rhetorical choices, and evaluative stance. The unit of analysis was the context of production and creation of the different drafts of Sonny's work: that included exploration of the instruction, discussions and drafts of his multimodal text. The exploration allowed me to understand Sonny's orchestration of multimodal resources and intermodal awareness across time.

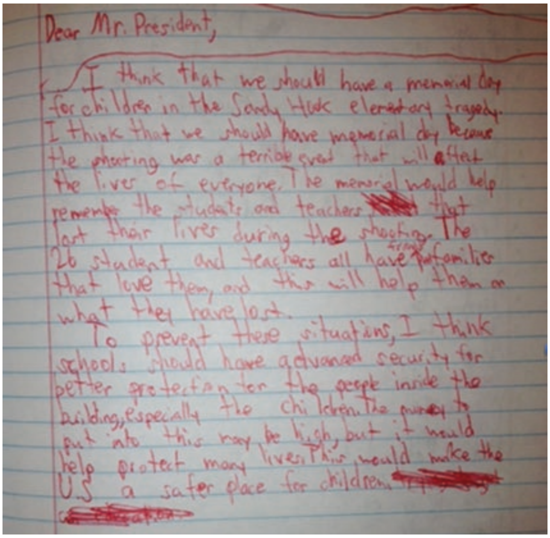
## 5 Findings

### *5.1 Appropriation of Semiotic Affordances in Digital Technologies*

Among the modes available in Glogster, Sonny selected image, text, and sound in designing his multimodal argumentative letter with use of images and texts as primary semiotic resources. He first brainstormed various possible topics (e.g., shorter school days, longer specials, no homework, no reading, getting your car, longer recess). While Sonny was finalizing his topic (i.e., shorter school days) for his letter, Ms. Hunt co-constructed an argumentative letter about having year-round schooling with the students to orient them to argument writing.

During the writing unit, there was a funeral service for two firefighters who lost their lives in a shooting tragedy in a neighboring town. The shooting occurred ten days after the Sandy Hook elementary school tragedy, and Ms. Hunt had a class discussion on public safety regarding gun violence and protection at school. The discussion led Sonny to change his topic and write a letter arguing for a day for commemorating the victims of the Sandy Hook elementary school tragedy and for more funding for protection at school. Drawing on the class discussion, Sonny composed his first draft mainly using linguistic mode, as seen in the Fig. 1.

To make ideational meaning, Sonny drew from class discussion on the Sandy Hook tragedy. His intertextual appropriation of the class discussion led the argument letter to have two theses: creating a Memorial Day for the children in the Sandy Hook tragedy and providing better security and protection for children. In mediating his letter into a multimodal text through Glogster, Sonny narrowed down



Dear Mr. President,

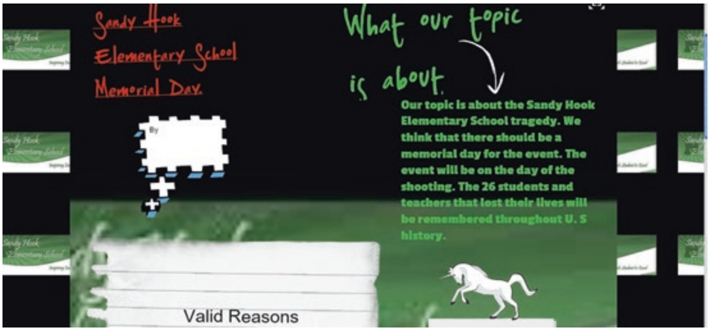
I think that we should have a memorial day for children in the Sandy Hook elementary tragedy. I think that we should have memorial day because the shooting was a terrible event that will affect the lives of everyone. The memorial would help remember the students and teachers that lost their lives during the shooting. The 26 student and teachers all have friends and families that love them, and this will help them on what they have lost.

To prevent these situations, I think schools should have advanced security for better protection for the people inside the building, especially the children. The money to put into this may be high, but it would help protect many lives. This would make the US a safer place for children.

**Fig. 1** Initial handwritten letter

the theme of his letter to arguing for a Memorial Day. As seen in Fig. 2, he outlined his argument by mainly employing visual and linguistic modes such as vivid color and verbal descriptors.

Sonny first added a background color and a design with a logo of the school that he found on the Sandy Hook school homepage. The black background color enacted a somber mood while the school logo contributed to the main ideational meaning. He outlined key components of the argumentative letter including a title, thesis, and rationale for their claims along with the author's name. After searching for information about the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting and victims online, he selected key ideas from his research for his letter. To make visual interconnections in the text, he colored the thesis statement in green to be consistent with the school's logo color and the title of the text in red as a core part of the main thesis. In other words, he deliberately connected verbal and visual modes to highlight the overall



Our topic is about the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy. We think that there should be a memorial day for the event. The event will be on the day of the shooting. The 26 students and teachers that lost their lives will be remembered throughout U. S history.

Our topic is about the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy. We think that there should be a memorial day for the event. The event will be on the day the shooting. The 26 students and teachers that lost their lives will be remembered throughout U.S. history.

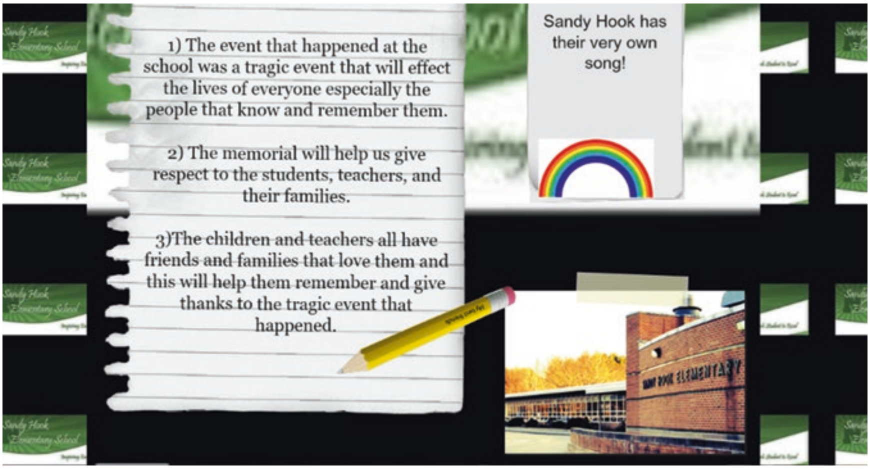
**Fig. 2** First draft of Glogster letter

cohesion of his multimodal text. I could see in my discussions with him that he was making deliberate choices, indicating an emergent semiotic awareness.

In his design of the first draft (Fig. 2), Sonny replaced an image of a hot dog that he had initially chosen as a way of amusing readers with an image of a white horse, to honor the victims. Considering the seriousness of the message to the President, he explained that the images should evoke a reverential sentiment, and that the white horse construed the appropriate interpersonal meaning that he intended to represent. In terms of textual meaning, the spread logos on the screen and the stark title in red on the top left created intense compositional meanings. Regarding visual grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006), the modal ensemble of the black color, the Sandy Hook logo, and an image of a white horse clearly calls on readers to commemorate the children solemnly while engaging with the verbal thesis statement.

After setting up the layout of the text, Sonny added the reasons for having a Memorial Day by drawing on what he had written in the initial hand-written letter. Sonny's redesign of the first Glogster text (see Fig. 1) also involved adding a new aural mode (i.e., song) and omitting some of the verbal elements (e.g., his name, details of Sandy Hook shooting). Overall, he synthesized semiotic resources into a multimodal ensemble. Figure 3 below shows his redesigned second Glogster text:

In this version, Sonny used appraisal resources to explicitly point to the tragic nature of the event. Aligned with the expansion of modes and more evaluative language, Sonny placed a link to a song from the Sandy Hook school site that plays in the background; he also replaced the white horse image with a picture of the school. These visual and audio elements which directly resemble and represent a real image of Sandy Hook school reinforce the credibility and coherence of the text



1) The event that happened at the school was a tragic event that will effect the lives of everyone especially the people that know and remember them.

2) The memorial will help us give respect to the students, teachers, and their families.

3)The children and teachers all have friends and families that love them and this will help them remember and give thanks to the tragic event that happened.

Sandy Hook has their very own song!

**Fig. 3** Second draft of Glogster letter

(Unsworth 2006). To obtain readers'/viewers' attention and to engage their curiosity, Sonny added a text "Sandy Hook has their very own song!" on the top of the rainbow icon for playing music. The added image and song convey the information in a direct and accessible way, in comparison to his earlier use of the white horse image that could lead to multiple connotations and interpretations. The employed modes were laid out on the screen with text on the left and non-linguistic modes on the right following the traditional writing arrangement; he constructed coherent compositional meanings with semiotic resources that blended together through similar semiotic saliences.

## *5.2 Design and Rhetorical Decisions*

The most salient rhetorical decisions that Sonny made relate to his developing semiotic awareness of how modes and language function in the context of designing multimodal argumentative texts. That is, his clear awareness of experiential and interpersonal functions and meanings of the letter led Sonny to make appropriate semiotic choices and rhetorical decision.

The dialogues between Sonny and his peer at the computer lab while composing the first draft of his letter show his rhetorical decision process:

> Sonny was searching images for his text and found an image of a hot dog on the web. Michael looked at Sonny's search while working on his own letter next to Sonny.
> Michael: Cool. Put it.
> Sonny: Yeah. It's fun. (Smiling)
> Michael: That's really fun.
> Sonny inserted the hot dog image, and a few minutes later he started to search for images again. He found an image of a white horse, and replaced the hot dog image with it. (Field Notes on February 22, 2013)

The dialogue and actions above show Sonny's initial decision to construct an amusing and casual relationship with readers, as both Sonny and his peer expressed the intention of entertaining audiences. Later, Sonny changed the image and reconstructed the interpersonal meaning of his letter. In an informal interview with me about this image resource change, he expressed that if he had kept the hot dog image, "They will know I'm goofing around." This explanation shows that he wanted to present the argument in a serious way and to address the audiences in a formal manner.

The knowledge that Sonny was developing of the function of semiotic resources continued to shape his semiotic and rhetorical choices throughout the designing processes. He received feedback for his drafting and revision from his peers and the teacher in Edmodo (e.g., "When do you think this memorial should be?"; "Why would this be important for all of America?"). In this way the two multimedia programs, Edmodo and Glogster, provided Sonny and the other students with an expansion of semiotic choices to enhance their ways of creating text. In his second draft, for example, Sonny responded to some of the critique from his peers and teacher in Edmodo by expanding on his verbal text; he also drew on other modal resources from Glogster to enhance the multi semiotic nature of the letter: he inserted the Sandy Hook song to convey a stronger collaborative tone to his artifact, employing the school song. In addition, he replaced the white horse image with an image of the school building. In an interview with me about this change, he explained that the readers would interpret the white horse image differently from his intended meaning, saying "I like the white horse, but some people won't like it". This explanation demonstrates his understanding of the force of interpersonal semiotic choices; his intention to address audiences in a solemn way guided his semiotic choices and rhetorical decision.

### 5.2.1 Intermodal Meanings and Relations

The modal resources that Sonny employed in his letter included text, image, color, and sound. These resources interact with each other to construe ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings of the text. The modal resources that generate intersemiotic meanings could be categorized into the typology of text-image, text-sound, and image-sound relations. The following section presents how textual, visual, and aural resources construed intermodal meanings.

**Text-Image Relation** The linguistic and visual texts that Sonny employed co-construct meanings in that an image of Sandy Hook and its logo enhance the meaning of the linguistic modes. In addition, the modes relate to each other by construing ideational meaning, as the school image and logo show the place where the tragedy occurred. The written text starts with the point of departure "The event that happened at the school" in the first sentence without providing further specific information about the location of the school. The verbal mode is spatially and ideationally connected to the image. The dark black background enhances the solemnness of the text, showing a complementary relationship of text and image for ideational meaning construction. Regarding interpersonal meaning, the employment of the dark background functions as an attitudinal intensifier to the emotion conveyed in the linguistic text. In terms of textual meaning, the text follows multimodal compositional grammar of text image that provides given information on the left and new information is placed on the right (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). As such, the text and the image construe the ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings in various relationships such as augmentation and connection (Unsworth 2006).

**Text-Sound Relation** Among the four-element schema of sound as a semiotic resource in a multimodal text, music is the primary sound element in Sonny's letter. Upon opening Sonny's letter on Glogster, the reader/listener/viewer becomes engaged with children singing the Sandy Hook song in a chorus to a guitar melody. The music of the song engages the listener/viewer of Sonny's text on the sensuous plane through the sound quality, and intensity of the sound; on the expressive plane that elicits feelings through the sound; and on the musical plane through the rhythm, tempo, and pitch (McKee 2006). On the expressive plane, the song in isolation is cheerful and hopeful with children singing about their hard work and their fun learning experiences in Sandy Hook as seen in the lyrics below:

Three cheers for the green and the white,
And Sandy Hook School forever.
Think you can, work hard,
Get smart, and be kind.
Sandy Hook Elementary
A very special place to be.
We'll have lots of fun and we'll know,
We'll do our best, our very best,
To learn and grow.

The force of Sonny's overall composition emerges from the juxtaposition of the cheerful lyrics and rhythm of the song to the somber verbal argument in a complementary relationship of divergence (Unsworth 2006, p. 62). With the inclusion of the song, the artifact forces the viewer to consider the lives the children could have lived without the tragedy when deciding about having a Memorial Day or not. As such, the intermodal relationship between the linguistic text and music adds another layer of ideational and interpersonal meanings to the letter.

**Image-Sound Relation** The images of the Sandy Hook logo and the school building show an ideational concurrence with the school song. In a concurrence relationship, these semiotic resources represent a form of redundancy across modes; however, they are not a simple inter-modal repetition of meaning. Each of the semiotic resources provides different information about the school—name of the school, the school building, and the school song sung by its students. From the intersemiosis of the visual and aural resources, the total meaning of these parts is "more than adding up the meaning made by each independent modality" (Fei 2004, p. 225). This semiotic expansion is comparable to the homospatiality (see an example of a "visual image of the smoke emitted by the campfire" on Fei 2004, p. 240) that describes reinforced meanings construed through disparate elements but within the same spatial entity (Unsworth 2006; O'Halloran 2004). The intermodal relationship in Sonny's text highlights how two different modes multiply meanings, even though co-occurring in a spatially bonded homogenous entity (Fei 2004). The Sandy Hook logo, song, and building picture in the multimodal text collectively compel readers/listeners to commemorate the victims with an intensified solemnness, which increases the legitimacy of his argument for a memorial.

## 6 Conclusion and Implications

The study investigated the designing process of an argumentative multimodal letter of a sixth grade bilingual student in an English language arts class. It focused on the semiotic modal choices, intermodal relationships, and semiotic and rhetorical decisions that the focal student made in a multimodal compositional curricular unit. The findings show that the student Sonny was able to produce a multimodal ensemble that employed linguistic, visual, and aural modes and semiotic choices that were appropriate to the purpose and audience; he distributed ideational meanings of the letter across linguistic and visual modes with growing understanding of the intersemiotic relationship. In sum, because Sonny was given instruction and permission to draw from an expanded repertoire of media and modes for multimodal designing, he developed an embodied understanding of how to employ various semiotic modes and intermodal relations.

Although Sonny showed sophisticated knowledge of modes and intermodal relations in his multimodal writing, my analysis of his process and products reveal that Sonny could develop his semiotic competence in expanded ways. This section discusses the key features of Sonny's semiotic competence development as well as the additional multimodal instruction that could deepen his meta-semiotic awareness.

Sonny's initial choice of semiotic modes for his multimodal composition mainly focused on linguistic and visual modes among available modes in the new medium Glogster. Although he was oriented to all the available modes in the medium by Ms. Hunt, the linguistic and visual modes provided more affordances for Sonny than other modes (e.g., movie, size, spatial relation, shape). This confirms that our past habitual use of media and modes can determine how we avail of the new, showing that "new media has dimensions of old media within" (Leander 2009, p. 163). Similarly, his previous school writing, mostly written with paper and pencil, privileged linguistic resources as the primary carriers of information and visual modes as an interactive hook. Sonny's design process demonstrated the "old wine in a new bottle" issue that uses traditional compositional norms with new media (Shanahan 2013, p. 223). For instance, when he inserted images of a hot dog and a white horse image, his intention was to use the images as resources for entertaining readers and grabbing their attention or for illustrating the emotion that the linguistic text intended to construe, rather than as an ideational meaning function. Sonny could have benefitted from explicit instruction to bridge the gap between new and old ways of using media in multimodal composing (see Potts, this volume).

Another prominent feature of Sonny's designing process relates to his constructing of intermodal meanings across linguistic and visual modes. Drawing on intermodal relations such as concurrence and complementarity, he distributed meanings across modes. Sonny showed a developing awareness of how intermodal meanings function across modes, as he started to utilize images to create ideational meanings in the text. Instructional scaffolding that focuses on the intersemiosis of various sign systems and intermodal relations would support Sonny in continuing to develop nuanced understandings of how to represent and communicate multiple meanings in multimodal composition.

In conclusion, explicit instruction on multimodal writing should provide opportunities for students not only to engage with a variety of media of communication, but also to appropriate modal and intermodal affordances of semiotic resources for various purposes of multimodal writing. That kind of instruction would foster the development of multilingual students' metalanguage for multimodal meaning-making processes and composition. In addition, it would support students in representing and communicating ideas in a strategic way with various semiotic systems. Such semiotic competence allows students to develop critical awareness of semiosis in the increasingly multilingual and multimodal communications of the current era.

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# Bringing It All Together: Critical Take(s) on Systemic Functional Linguistics

**Ruth Harman**

**Abstract** This chapter discusses the strengths and challenges of implementing the critical takes on SFL articulated in this volume. The major strengths across the studies relate to their shared focus on a systematic SFL metalanguage, critical orientation to teaching and researching and use of a robust pedagogical design that supports multilingual students and teachers in investigating and critiquing how semiotic choices realize knowledge for specific audiences, purposes and contexts. A common and significant challenge is the lack of institutional and systematic support for longitudinal implementations of SFL-based instruction and research. Implications include the need for administrators and policy makers to be invited into the discussion about critical SFL-informed disciplinary approaches; and for more studies to be conducted on dialogic SFL-informed classroom instruction across the curriculum and across institutions.

**Keywords** Systemic functional linguistics • Critical discourse analysis • Language instruction • Critical literacy

## 1 Introduction

In recent years, harsh immigration policies (which, for example, permit the abrupt deportation of family members) have created hostile environments for multilingual[1] learners and their communities in the United States and other heterogeneous nations across the globe (Allexsaht-Snider et al. 2013). In addition, high poverty school districts in the United States are pressured to adopt reductive literacy practices and curricula materials that teach to high stakes tests with very little focus on the cultural and linguistic interests of immigrant students (Molle et al. 2015). The consequences of reductive literacy practices and anti-immigration discourses can be very

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[1] Multilingual learner is a term used in this book to include a range of populations: heritage learners, second language learners, code switchers among various dialects etc.

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negative for the academic, emotional and social trajectories of multilingual learners (Brisk and Ossa Parra, chapter "Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change", this volume; Gutiérrez 2008). The purpose of this volume, therefore, has been to explore how SFL educators theorize and implement critical approaches that support multilingual students in appropriating and challenging normative discourses of schooling. This final chapter provides an overview of the connections among the approaches espoused by the researchers and ends with a discussion of the implications of the book for future research and teaching.

## 2 Strengths of Critical SFL

The critical takes on SFL in this volume range from implicit to highly explicit instructional focus on the intersections of language, identity and power. However, the studies share key tenets. Critical language awareness is defined in several of the studies as a resource that supports learners in appropriating and challenging normative discourses of schooling. Critical SFL instruction is seen as a robust approach to support students at any academic level in developing meta awareness of how semiotic choices function as moveable objects which can be configured to make meaning for particular audiences and purposes. A huge strength in each study is that researchers and teachers show a shared and highly invested commitment to (1) ensuring students are not manipulated and minoritized by institutional discourses; (2) validating their funds of knowledge and supporting them in appropriating disciplinary knowledge that support their academic and future trajectories; and (3) apprenticing them in moving beyond reproduction of knowledge into creative remixing for their own purposes. All of the studies, in essence, see a critical SFL praxis as a powerful resource for multilingual students to stand up for their rights and education (Humphrey 2010; Humphrey et al. 2010).

The ten studies explore ways of demonstrating the power, tensions and efficacy of using SFL theories of social semiotics within a culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris 2012). What may be characterized as a tension or challenge in one chapter becomes a source of creativity in another. For example, Diane Potts sees the most important function of CSFL as expanding learners' capacity to create, not merely to critique. Mary Schleppegrell and Jason Moore, on the other hand, focus on developing a thoughtful reading practice with young children that encourages them to understand and evaluate the patterns of meanings in a story. In time this careful reading and discussion process leads them to emergent critical language awareness, even at very young ages. Both studies contribute complementary elements of Hasan's (1996) reflection literacy. Hasan carefully pointed out the necessity of providing students with a deep understanding of how language functions to create meaning across the three meta functions; and the importance of moving them to creative re-designing of knowledge. Indeed, as Potts and Schleppegrell and Moore point out in different ways, it is in creating that we contribute agentively to civic society and knowledge generation.

Another key strength and point of dialogue across chapters is the immersion of students in the ways of knowing, understanding and articulating disciplinary discourses. This contrasts with a tendency for mainstream and language teachers to dilute academic discourse when working with emergent bilingual learners. Maton (2013) described this common simplifying process as moving *down the semantic wave*. What teachers tend to neglect is to jointly construct disciplinary texts with students so they can move *up and down the semantic wave* from everyday to more abstract and dense articulation of disciplinary knowledge. Without a move into more abstract ways of reasoning and arguing, students may remain fossilized in reading and writing at a more elementary school level (Christie 2005). Developing students' knowledge in the disciplines and in a critical social literacies practice is the focus of Sally Humphrey's study with multilingual students in an Australian middle school. The author explores how the collaboration between educational linguists and teachers supported bilingual students in developing specialized knowledge that they could use to critique the authoritative texts and policies of school and society.

Similarly, the two teacher/researchers Andrés Ramírez and Amber Simmons focus on how the act of systematically supporting upper level high school students and undergraduate students through the Teaching/Learning Cycle and SFL instruction in reading, writing and analysis of high stakes genres and registers increased engagement, accomplishment and the ability to critique. Through Simmons' carefully crafted pedagogical approach students began to see how claims in cultural studies articles about literature they were reading could be validated or refuted by analyzing the discourse semantics of the primary texts and thus to understand that ideological viewpoints shape the patterns of language in a text. In Andres Ramirez's undergraduate course, the Reading to Learn (Rose and Martin 2012) approach engaged the highly invested bilingual students in moving up and down the semantic wave by deconstructing and jointly constructing complex academic genres that they were expected to know in college courses.

Other researchers focus on how a critical take on SFL means embedding the Teaching/Learning cycle in a third space pedagogy. Within a dialogic space, Nihal Khote explains in his chapter, bilingual learners feel encouraged to resist negative social positioning and to expand willingly their semiotic repertoires. Dong-shin Shin discusses the high investment level of emergent bilingual students when engaged in multimodal writing that affords them expanded use of new digital technologies and integration of their lived experiences. It is within a dynamic and dialogic space that students in her study develop metalinguistic awareness of how a range of modes can be used to realize the genre of argumentation.

Across the studies, researchers, teachers and their students develop and employ a variety of metalanguages, each suited to the students' background, to particular classroom culture and to content area needs. These examples often show that uptake of technical language isn't necessary; specialized language, like the phrase *the contraction of dialogic space*, empowers highly focused discussion of the system of appraisal; for Humphrey's classroom the colloquial phrase, *opening and slamming* *the door shut,* was enough to enable students to identify and speak on engagement within the system of appraisal, thus showing that shared terminology, be it technical or colloquial, can suffice. However, if metalanguage is employed systematically across genres and content areas, it can broaden student thinking on how the construction of knowledge varies across these disciplines, how variances in language patterns relate to specific genres, and thus how to appropriate these linguistic resources effectively in their own talk and writing (Schleppegrell 2013). For example, discussions of "Removing the I" are applicable in both instruction on argumentative writing for English courses and in dissecting a chapter of a history textbook. Using the same metalanguage in classrooms across the curriculum enable students to see how this pattern is shared across disciplines and to consider *why* these moves are employed in both realms. Schleppegrell and Fang (2008) discuss in depth the differences between the languages of history, math, and science texts and how SFL metalanguage can be used across disciplines. Readers of this volume might also benefit from reflecting on how the metalanguage of one study might be applied in the context of another if they are considering adopting a systematic metalanguage for their own classrooms.

In their work with pre-service language teachers, Mariana Achugar and Brian Carpenter stress the dangers of perpetuating a failed system if one just blindly continues to use the existing standards and understandings of normative teacher education. They share their conceptual tools for designing critical language awareness instruction and argue for more coherence across courses in teacher preparation programs. Luciana de Oliveira and Mary Avalos grapple with the difficulties of simultaneously preparing pre service teachers for the realities of the classroom and developing their understanding of how language works. They discuss how they developed a new metalanguage to engage students in critique and in creating their own praxis within the short time span available to them. They acknowledge the need for more research focused on teachers' resistance to learning a new metalanguage and how to work with teachers to implement CSFL in classrooms where there is little teacher autonomy.

Pertaining to the need for robust collaboration among administrators, researchers and teachers, most of the chapters include an ongoing reflexive commentary about the tensions that guide the participants toward thoughtful transformation rather than resignation when plans don't work as theorized. In the studies, a shared principle of practice is that the teachers and students who work alongside the researchers are positioned as collaborators; indeed, their understandings and knowledge are seen as crucial entities in moving a classroom from use of reproductive pedagogies into transformative learning communities. Nowhere is the power of collaboration among administrators, teachers and university researchers better demonstrated and extended than in the Maria Brisk and Ossa Para study, which answers back to the view that schools have become failed systems; a view that Mariana Achugar and Brian Carpenter represent explicitly and which is implied, if not stated, by many other authors in this volume. Through their administrator-supported collaboration, which included all teachers and the principal in the school and researchers from the university, emergent bilinguals consistently improved their English language proficiency, earning them the highest rating in the State. In addition, the study reports that not only was SFL and TLC beneficial for emergent bilinguals, but also that strong and sustained leadership and collaborative professional development enabled them to work with productive tensions and gradually transform the learning culture in the school.

While the Brisk and Ossa Parra study stands out for its longitudinal collaboration, the participants in every chapter, across educational levels, roles and contexts show high dedication and an ethics of caring (Noddings 1984): they explore how students develop critical and reflection literacies that position them as designers of their learning. In the case of teachers/researchers, Khote, Ramirez and Simmons show a high investment and great expertise in leveraging student interests and needs in a highly successful pedagogical design for their students. In all three cases, the relationships that they had already developed in their schools and communities were the solid bricks on which their critical SFL instruction was built. Similarly, Sally Humphrey's long-term relationship and involvement in the middle school in Sydney supported her in energizing teachers and students to become invested in the labor-intensive work of analyzing and appropriating the discourse semantics of powerful persuasive writing. Overall, as Gebhard and (2011) highlighted in their overview of SFL-informed pedagogies, it is through contextualized, relational and cross curricular endeavors that students' voices, needs and access to social equity in schools can be realized.

For those who question the critical orientation of SFL-informed pedagogies, the authors counter that is it through language and other semiotic systems that people are marginalized and that it is crucial that everyone is given the resources to see clearly how they are discursively positioned and how they can challenge their social positioning (Hasan 2011). The pedagogical examples in each chapter focus on how students can be supported to gain access to disciplinary knowledge by developing their awareness about how language works in texts they read, write and view. Educators do this by exploring texts with students to show how points of view, marginalization, bias and positioning in fiction and non-fiction texts, both written and multimodal, are created through a configuration of semiotic choices. Importantly, most of the studies also show how students learn to use, appreciate and expand their own meaning-making resources to express their own views, persuade others, take social action and critique discourses that marginalize them.

## 3 Limitations

Given the current focus on text complexity and disciplinary literacies as articulated most recently in the Common Core State Standards (2016), critical takes on SFL can be used to foster understanding of how language and other semiotic systems function to construct knowledge; and how this understanding can generate new creative insights and critique of the status quo. However, as highlighted by Mariana Achugar and Brian Carpenter and many others in this book, transforming classroom pedagogies from reductive teaching-to-the-test approaches into rigorous and critical literacy approaches is not at all an easy task, especially under the current climate of high teacher accountability and lack of autonomy.

Without including more administrators and education policy makers in our development of critical SFL-informed instruction and in our discussions about the need to shift the current regime of schooling into more creative and agentive spaces, the critical practices espoused in this book have little chance of moving from isolated school instances to more systemic practices. The ACCELA Alliance in Massachusetts provides a good example of how relationships and alliances across time can make our work successful: it developed an on-site Master's degree programs with inquiry-based collaborative and critical literacy courses for in-service teachers. By working in the schools with teachers, students and administrators, it was possible to develop critical and dialogic approaches to teaching/learning in the school district. As Anderson and Shattuck (2012) emphasized,

> the researcher often is not knowledgeable of the complexities of the culture, technology, objectives, and politics of an operating educational system to effectively create and measure the impact of an intervention. Thus, a partnership is developed that negotiates the study from initial problem identification, through literature review, to intervention design and construction, implementation, assessment, and to the creation and publication of theoretical and design principles. (p. 17)

In successful critical SFL-informed work in schools, we emphasize the need to work very closely and collaboratively with a multilayered network of school stakeholders from the very beginning of the project (Harman 2007).

## 4 Implications

The ever-increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in public school classrooms in recent decades necessitates a radical change in how teacher education and teaching is conceptualized and implemented across the United States (Gunderson 2007; de Jong and Harper 2008). Indeed, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), adopted by 46 states, require teachers to be responsible for the disciplinary language and literacy development of all their students. Disciplinary literacy in the twenty-first century means access and understanding of multiple semiotic systems (sound, color, graphics, verbiage). Mainstream teachers need to see themselves as both multi semiotic and disciplinary teachers (see Zygouris-Coe 2012).

As Oliveira and Avalos (Chapter "Critical SFL Praxis Among Teacher Candidates: Using Systemic Functional Linguistics in K-12 Teacher Education", this volume) highlight, teacher educators need to support teacher candidates in thinking about how to support the multimodal disciplinary understandings of students through critical SFL practices. They also need to think about supporting students through fluid translanguaging (García and Li, 2014) and register shunting practices; through use of the TLC and related SFL-informed instruction to support disciplinary knowledge development; and through exploitation of all available semiotic resources and embodied inquiry to support conceptual understanding of complex new subject matter. Cammarata (2016) stressed how " inquiry – the act of questioning and the relentless search for answers to important questions that require deeper forms of thinking - is a core feature of human lifelong learning experience" (p. 124) Indeed, especially with K-12 students, building the field in the TLC through inquiry supports their engagement in multi semiotic resources to make meaning of complex concepts (e.g. Mary Schleppegrell and Jason Moore's use of a physical appraisal board to enquire with young children into the ideological nature of literary texts; Amber Simmon's critical inquiry about gender and race with her upper level students).

Other implications from the current studies highlight the importance of the critical use of SFL as a mediating resource for children and adults in noticing and learning about language (e.g., Vygotsky 1978; Williams 2000). Language not only serves as a tool to communicate but also importantly functions as, "a device to think and feel with, as well as a device with which to signal and negotiate social identity" (Gee 1990, p. 78). For example, the studies underline the importance of connecting discipline instruction with explicit instruction of expected and available semiotic resources to support students' creative appropriation and critique of these resources (Halliday 1971; Hasan 1971, 1985). In learning how to interpret the connection between context and use of evaluative patterns in a text, for example, students learn to see language as a repertoire of choices used to achieve social and political purposes. As Toolan (1988) said about an SFL analysis of literary narratives,

> We rapidly obtain a preliminary picture of who is agentive, who is affected, whether characters are doers or thinkers, whether instruments and forces in the world dominate in the representation. (Toolan 1988, p.115)

In addition, the tight connections between the theories and teaching of SFL highlight the importance of seeing SFL as a combined pedagogical and analytic resource. It can be used to explore the multi semiotic and rhetorical parameters of texts in academic and social disciplines; at the same time this research can support ever evolving dialogic pedagogies that incorporate the expansion of modes and modalities. With emergent bilingual learners, multimodal pedagogy has improved their reading comprehension (Early & Marshall, 2008), fostered critical reasoning and problem solving (Lotherington, Holland, Sotoudeh and Zentena 2008; Potts and Moran 2013), and equipped them with substantial knowledge about a range of written genres (Adoniou, 2013; Vasudevan, Schultz and Bateman 2010).

However, the design approach to multimodality described by Diane Potts and Dong-shin Shin in this volume is still not at all part of school standard practices in most public schools in Canada or the United States. Thus we need to continue to research how our evolving understanding of social semiotics and the expanded resources of multiple modes can be integrated into a culturally sustaining SFL framework which positions learners as agentive negotiators of meaning as opposed to static, passive students in school desks.

## 5 Discussion

Gebhard and Harman (2011) suggested a need for a paradigm shift in language education, stating that teachers should encourage students to "critically unpack how academic language works in the genres they routinely ask their students to read and write in school; expand the range of linguistic choices available to students in communicating for particular purposes and audiences" (p. 46). Similarly, Kramsch (1993) proposed that language learning be rethought as "the acquisition of new forms of discourse to construct meaning" (p. 4) rather than the acquisition of particular set of skills that the more traditional view of language and content instruction fosters.

This requires reconsidering a traditional focus on written and verbal modes, and the need to expand to the range of meaning-making resources that learners now use in communicative and academic events. Early et al. (2015) stated, "the understanding may require rethinking the design of images and graphics in beginners' textbooks; the structure of visual prompts for tasks targeting fluency, accuracy, and/or complexity; and the textual conventions related to use of images and illustrations that are taught in academic writing classes" (p. 452). Hafner (2014) addressed the practices of remixing to simultaneously analyze students' new forms of textual production and questions about cultural understandings. In poetry, for example, authors can move out of their comfort zone and use embodied performance of text. Educators can think of meaningful and embodied engagement with texts that validate the use of semiotic resources in formal learning environments. As critical educators have highlighted, students who learn to appropriate discourse to serve their socio political, academic and cultural interests are more likely to gain power in dominant discourse communities (Fairclough 1995; Halliday and Hasan 1989).

Indeed, as Ajayi (2012) stated, "studies of ESL students' literacy practices have shown that learners are not uncritical consumers of cultural models… they have the ability to consciously reflect, contest, critique, affirm or reject messages as they take the position of active meaning-makers" (p. 65). Early et al. (2015) also mentioned that, "issues of privilege, social justice, and educational equality have deeply concerned language educators adopting a more expansive understanding of communication" (p. 450). Following this trend of researchers in England (e.g., Kress, 1997; Kress et al., 2005; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), Bhattacharya et al. (2007) illustrated how texts in three similar postcolonial high school English classrooms were reconstructed to serve individual, state, and global institutions, which in turn "opens up many questions of pedagogy in the multimodal textual environment of the classroom: the relations between learners, pedagogy and text, teacher agency, and how texts are redesigned in multimodal interaction" (p. 484). Advocating this point, Norton and Toohey's (2011) stated that multimodal texts can help validate students' cultures, literacies, and identities.

Based on the findings and theoretical tenets across this volume, we suggest the following guidelines when developing or implementing a critical SFL praxis in higher education or in K-16 contexts:

*Developing a Third Space* (see Khote, chapter "Translanguaging in Systemic Functional Linguistics: A Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy for Writing in Secondary Schools", this volume) SFL-informed literacy instruction needs to integrate students' literacies, languages, and semiotic use and interests in the learning and teaching process. Within this ideological context, SFL becomes a powerful instrument to support multilingual learners in appropriating and resisting dominant language structures and genres while voicing their lived experiences and collective meanings (Harman and Khote 2017).

*Importance of Metalanguage* Through an ethnographic understanding of school contexts and the discourse of teachers and students in that space, educators can develop an organic metalanguage with learners that is informed by SFL theory and that supports access and collaboration in dynamic ways (e.g., Nihal Khote's use of the terms "Removing the I"). (See Gebhard et al. 2013; Fang 2013; Macken-Horarik, Love and Unsworth 2011; Schleppegrell 2013).

*Go Slowly* We propose that those invested in using critical SFL-informed approaches undertake professional development initiatives and collaboration with teachers in slow and systematic ways (Brisk 2014). Expect to spend several years developing the approach with target teachers and students. SFL work with teachers needs to be conducted in longitudinal ways as opposed to through discrete professional development workshops. Through immersion in one concept such as appraisal, teachers and students may begin to see and apply the approach to other texts and contexts. This is evidenced in the work of Mary Schleppegrell and her colleagues with the California History Project and in Michigan, the work of Gebhard and her colleagues with the ACCELA Alliance in Amherst Massachusetts, the work of Maria Brisk and colleagues with bilingual teachers in Boston Massachusetts and the work of Ruth Harman and colleagues in Georgia (see for example, Brisk and Ossa Parra, chapter "Mainstream Classrooms as Engaging Spaces for Emergent Bilinguals: SFL Theory, Catalyst for Change", this volume; Gebhard et al. 2010; Harman and Khote 2017; Schleppegrell and Moore, chapter "Linguistic Tools for Supporting Emergent Critical Language Awareness in the Elementary School", this volume). These teams of researchers have spent extensive periods of time working with teacher educators, teachers and K-12 students developing their critical SFL approach to collaborative professional development. Longitudinal and cross-curricular continuity of instruction is necessary.

## 6 Conclusion

Providing language learners with explicit knowledge of cultural norms and semiotic configurations in academic and social literacies supports their participation across contexts in our twenty-first century, where creativity, critical awareness and autonomy are expected from team players in increasingly discursive ways (Gibbons

2002). According to the national Common Core guidelines for English learners, teachers in content areas need to design activities that support all learners in accessing and participating in grade-level coursework. As Gibbons (2006) highlighted, this awareness does not come from reductive literacy practices that dilute texts and discourses for emergent bilingual learners. Instead, awareness needs to be fostered through multimodal inquiry practices that sustain student interest and that highlight discourse and knowledge generation. In other words, *all* teachers in our multilingual and multicultural twenty-first century need to afford students with the cultural and linguistic scaffolding and opportunities to write, read and remix in a range of registers and contexts. Through this exposure, bilingual learners become versatile agentive players in their first, second and third languages and dialects (see Harman 2013).

From a critical perspective, we believe that language and other semiotic modes are crucial and material components in the literacy practices of our current hyper technical and global era (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Gee et al. 1998). As educators and researchers, we need to be aware that if bilingual and bidialectal learners fail in producing ‘appropriate’ linguistic forms and rhetorical structures across the curriculum, it is because the school system has failed them. To address issues of semiotic and social marginalization in educational settings, critical applied linguists and practitioners see critical SFL as a resource that can be used to develop rich literacy pedagogies and learning. Together we create new possibilities and knowledge with our students by drawing on *all* available semiotic, multilingual and cultural resources.

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