

- Thorne, S. L. (2003). Artifacts and cultures of use in intercultural communication. *Language Learning and Technology*, 7(2), 38–67.
- Thorne, S., Black, R., & Sykes, J. (2009). Second language use, socialization, and learning in Internet interest communities and online games. *Modern Language Journal*, 93, 802–21.

Systemic Functional Linguistic Approaches to Teaching English-Language Learners

MEG GEBHARD

This entry describes a sociocultural perspective on academic language development informed by Halliday's theory of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1996; New London Group, 1996). This perspective provides teachers with tools for supporting English-language learners (ELLs) in recognizing the difference between everyday and academic language and in teaching students how academic language functions in the disciplinary texts students are routinely required to read and write in schools (Martin & Rose, 2003, 2008; Hyland, 2004; Schleppegrell, 2004; Christie & Derewianka, 2008). Therefore, from an SFL perspective, the job of the ELL teacher is to heighten students' awareness of the importance of linguistic variation and broaden students' abilities to use language more expertly and critically across a variety of social, academic, and political contexts (Gebhard, Demers, & Castillo-Rosenthal, 2008; Gebhard, Willett, Jiménez Caicedo, & Piedra, 2010).

Language and Education in SFL

SFL was first applied to primary and secondary education during the 1980s as a way of teaching academic literacies to linguistically and culturally diverse students in Sydney, Australia. Educational linguists, such as Christie, Derewianka, Kress, Macken-Horarik, Martin, and Rothery, drew on SFL to support teachers in making the workings of school-based language practices, or genres, transparent and potentially transformative for students, especially students from nondominant communities (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). Despite important differences among SFL scholars, all share a sociocultural understanding of language and how academic literacies develop in schools that differs from behavioral and psycholinguistic orientations of language learning and teaching. An SFL perspective has three characteristics. First, academic language development is not understood in behavioral terms as a decontextualized process dependent upon students practicing a set of grammatical and rhetorical patterns. Nor do SFL scholars understand the ability of students to acquire academic language in purely psycholinguistic terms, which suggest humans have an innate capacity to develop language naturally in due course through oral interactions and engagement with texts. Rather, SFL scholars view language learning as a social process and language as a dynamic system of linguistic choices that students learn to use to accomplish a wide variety of social, academic, and political goals. From this perspective, teaching involves critically apprenticing ELLs to making more expert linguistic choices sensitive to the contexts in which they are interacting by exploring how language functions to construct relationships among participants (e.g., differences of familiarity and status),

convey meaning or ideas (e.g., everyday versus disciplinary conceptions of events), and organize the flow of information depending on whether interactions take place orally, in writing, or through computer-mediated modes. These three functions, which Halliday calls interpersonal, ideational, and textual, operate simultaneously and offer teachers and students a contextual basis for analyzing how language varies in relation to who is communicating with whom, what they are communicating about, and the modes through which they are interacting (Martin & Rose, 2003, 2008; Schleppegrell, 2004).

Second, SFL focuses on the range of linguistic choices available to culturally diverse students when they attempt to read and write academic genres such as narratives, descriptions, definitions, explanations, and arguments (Christie & Derewianka, 2008). From this perspective, the concept of linguistic choice operates simultaneously at the phonological, morphological, lexical, clause, rhetorical, and ideological levels, and reflects the degree to which students have been socialized into and wish to align themselves with valued ways of knowing and being at home, work, and school. As many studies have shown, schooled ways of using language, knowing, and being differ from everyday home and peer practices in significant ways (Heath, 1983). Based on their research with ELLs in the United States, Gebhard and her colleagues remark that these differences take on even more significance, as students are required to read and write about unfamiliar topics using technical language and drawing upon meaning-making resources that differ greatly from the language practices students use at home or with peers. As such, these researchers maintain that "one of the goals of SFL-based pedagogy is to make visible and explicit the workings of academic English and support students in becoming critically aware of the differences between everyday and disciplinary language practices" (Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007, p. 422).

Third, language variation is viewed as a political meaning-making resource that students can learn to use to position and reposition themselves in a rapidly changing world. As Luke (2000) makes clear, the work of the ELL teacher therefore is double-edged in that it:

is principally about building access to literate practices and discourse resources, about setting the enabling pedagogic conditions for students to use their existing and new discourse resources for exchange in the social fields where texts and discourses matter. These constitute the social semiotic "toolkit" that one puts to work in educational, occupational, and civic life. . . . Literacy education, then, is about access and inclusion, and potentially discrimination and exclusion. It is about setting the conditions for students to engage in textual relationships of power. (p. 449)

As described by the New London Group (1996), educators can do this kind of double-edged teaching by supporting students in critically analyzing and appropriating academic language to accomplish social, academic, and political tasks of relevance to them and their communities. They describe how teachers and students can accomplish this work through: (a) situated practice in using academic genres; (b) overt instruction in how to systematically analyze the linguistic features of genres and to develop a metalanguage for talking about how specific texts are constructed or "designed"; (c) critical framing to support students in standing back from what they are studying and viewing it critically in relation to its context; and (d) transformed practice, which puts academic language to work in other contexts (New London Group, 1996, p. 88). Using this approach, the goal of critical SFL pedagogy is not to canonize and reproduce academic language practices or to replace home and peer ways of using language. Rather, critical SFL works to acknowledge and value the multiple social and linguistic worlds to which students already belong and to support them in participating in and creating possible future worlds by expanding the meaning-making resources available to them.

SFL-Based Pedagogies

SFL pedagogies have been used internationally for many years (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Hyland, 2004; Whittaker, McCabe, & O'Donnell, 2009). The most widely known teaching practice is the "curriculum cycle," developed in the 1980s by educational linguists in Australia (Macken-Horarik, 2002). This approach has three phases. Phase one is a planning phase. From an analysis of a disciplinary genre students are routinely asked to interpret and produce in school, teachers design a project that will teach ELLs new disciplinary knowledge and associated language practices simultaneously over the course of the instructional cycle. Phase two is the modeling phase. Teachers explicitly guide students in critically analyzing representative text types to provide ELLs with access to both content and genre knowledge. This involves discussion about how the author has structured his or her text to achieve a purpose in communicating to an audience and how the author has used key words, phrases, and grammatical constructions to convey the content of the text, or "field," to construct the intended voice, or "tenor," and to support the flow of information, or "mode" (Martin & Rose, 2008, p. 19). Last, phase three is the production phase. With support from teachers and peers, students draft, revise, and edit their own texts, independently attending to how their linguistic choices construct the subject matter, maintain text coherence, and reflect their voices as members of various discourse communities. During this process, teachers provide ELLs with graphic organizers, guidelines for revision, and opportunities for collaboration and feedback.

SFL Pedagogy in the United States

In the United States, as in other countries, educational reforms over the last decade have placed increasing demands on ELLs and their teachers. As a result, a number of applied linguists have drawn on SFL scholarship to help teachers support the academic literacies of ELLs and speakers of nondominant varieties of English, particularly in the context of high-stakes school reforms such as No Child Left Behind legislation and English-only mandates (Achugar, Schleppegrell, & Oteiza, 2007; Brišk & Zisselsberger, 2010; Gebhard et al., 2010). In California, for example, Schleppegrell and her colleagues collaborated with teachers to analyze the academic language demands placed on students by state curricular frameworks and aligned exams (Schleppegrell, 2003). They identified the genres California teachers were required to teach and students were required to read and write in school (e.g., recounts, narratives, responses to literature, summaries, descriptions, explanations, reports, arguments, and analytic essays). In addition, they made recommendations regarding how state frameworks could be revised and aligned to support all students, not just ELLs, in developing "pathways" to academic literacy across disciplines as they transitioned from elementary to secondary schools (2003, p. 20). These pathways center on developing students' (and teachers') metalinguistic awareness of genre and register features as students progress from reading and writing more everyday texts such as personal narratives, descriptions, and procedures to reading and writing more technical and grammatically denser texts in specific content areas, including, for example, scientific laboratory reports, mathematical proofs, explanations of historical events, and analyses of literature.

With regard to history, Schleppegrell and her colleagues developed professional development institutes called the California History Project (CHP). These institutes introduced teachers to SFL tools they could use to deconstruct the meaning of textbook passages and primary source documents. Achugar et al. (2007) report that teachers planned lessons that enabled more in-depth discussion and understanding of history using these tools. In summarizing the findings of their study, these researchers report that students made significant

gains on the California History-Social Science test (a standardized measure) and ELLs were among those who showed the greatest benefits (Achugar et al., 2007, p. 15).

In Massachusetts, Gebhard and her colleagues arrived at similar conclusions based on their work with elementary and middle school teachers (Gebhard et al., 2010). This project, the ACCELA Alliance (Access to Critical Content and English Language Acquisition), provides sustained and reciprocal professional development to teachers, teacher educators, and literacy researchers by engaging in collaborative investigations of the academic literacy development of nondominant students attending urban schools. These case studies use SFL to assist teachers in designing curricular interventions based on the "Curriculum Cycle," to support ELLs in negotiating the language demands of high-stakes exams and using academic genres to explore topics relevant to them and their communities. For example, second graders created a class blog to respond to each other's writing (Shin, Gebhard, & Seger, 2010); fourth graders analyzed genre features in Puerto Rican children's literature to write their own narratives (Gebhard et al., 2010); and fifth graders researched the benefits of recess to make an argument for reinstating recess in persuasive letters to their principal (Gebhard et al., 2007).

Similar to the finding of the California History Project, ACCELA case studies suggest that teachers developed a deeper understanding of both disciplinary content knowledge and associated language practices, both of which are essential components of teachers' knowledge base. The data also reflect that ACCELA's approach aided teachers in negotiating the imposition of scripted approaches to instruction and the language demands of high-stakes testing while making space for students to read and write about topics that mattered to them and their communities, and that SFL pedagogy supported emergent ELL writers in analyzing and producing more coherent and autonomous texts reflective of written as opposed to oral discourse.

Conclusion

In sum, research over the last three decades suggests that SFL pedagogies have the potential to support ELLs and their teachers in recognizing the difference between everyday and academic language and in teaching students how academic language functions in the disciplinary texts students are required to read and write across content areas. Moreover, recent studies conducted in the United States demonstrate that the use of SFL pedagogy can support teachers and ELLs in critically negotiating the demands of school reforms and to appropriate academic language to accomplish social action in and outside of school.

SEE ALSO: Genre and Discourse Analysis in Language for Specific Purposes; Halliday, M. A. K.; Systemic Functional Linguistics; Writing and Genre Studies

References

- Achugar, M., Schleppegrell, M., & Oteiza, T. (2007). Engaging teachers in language analysis: A functional linguistics approach to reflective literacy. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 6(2), 8-24.
- Brisk, M., & Zisselsberger, M. (2010). "We've let them in on the secret": Using SFL theory to improve the teaching of writing to bilingual learners. In T. Lucas (Ed.), *Teacher preparation for linguistically diverse classrooms* (pp. 111-26). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Christie, F., & Derewianka, B. (2008). *School discourse: Learning to write across the years of schooling*. London, England: Continuum.
- Cope, W., & Kalantzis, M. (1993). *The powers of literacy: A genre approach to teaching literacy*. London, England: Falmer.

- Gebhard, M., Demers, J., & Castillo-Rosenthal, Z. (2008). Teachers as critical text analysts: L2 literacies and teachers' work in the context of high-stakes school reform. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 17(4), 274–91.
- Gebhard, M., Harman, R., & Seger, W. (2007). Reclaiming recess in urban schools: The potential of systemic functional linguistics for ELLs and their teachers. *Language Arts*, 84(5), 419–30.
- Gebhard, M., Willett, J., Jiménez Caicedo, J., & Piedra, A. (2010). Systemic functional linguistics, teachers' professional development, and ELLs' academic literacy practices. In T. Lucas (Ed.), *Teacher preparation for linguistically diverse classrooms* (pp. 99–110). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1996). Literacy and linguistics: A functional perspective. In R. Hasan & G. Williams (Eds.), *Literacy in society* (pp. 339–76). London, England: Longman.
- Heath, S. (1983). *Ways with words*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Hyland, K. (2004). *Genre and second language writing*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Luke, A. (2000). Critical literacy in Australia: A matter of context and standpoint. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 43(5), 448–61.
- Macken-Horarik, M. (2002). "Something to shoot for": A systemic functional approach to teaching genre in the secondary schools. In A. Johns (Ed.), *Genre in the classroom* (pp. 17–42). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2003). *Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause*. London, England: Continuum.
- Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2008). *Genre relations: Mapping culture*. London, England: Equinox.
- New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social features. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60–92.
- Schleppegrell, M. (2003). *Grammar for writing: Academic language and the ELD standards*. Santa Barbara: University of California's Linguistic Minorities Research Institute.
- Schleppegrell, M. (2004). *The language of schooling: A functional linguistics perspective*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Shin, D. S., Gebhard, M., & Seger, M. (2010). Weblogs and English language learners' academic literacy development: Expanding audiences, expanding identities. In S. Rilling & M. Dantas-Whitney (Eds.), *Authenticity in the classroom and beyond* (pp. 99–111). Alexandria, VA: TESOL.
- Whittaker, R., McCabe, A., & O'Donnell, M. (2009). *Advances in language education*. London, England: Continuum.

Suggested Readings

- Derewianka, B. (1990). *Exploring how texts work*. Sydney, Australia: Primary English Teaching Association.
- Knapp, P., & Watkins, M. (2005). *Genre, text, grammar: A functional linguistics perspective*. Sydney, Australia: UNSW Press.
- Schleppegrell, M. (2005). *Helping content area teachers work with academic language: Promoting English language learners' literacy in history*. Santa Barbara: University of California's Linguistic Minorities Research Institute.

Systemic Functional Linguistics

JENNIFER HERRIMAN

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL; <http://www.isfla.org/Systemics/index.html>) was founded in the 1960s by M. A. K. Halliday; who developed the theory between the 1930s and 1950s from the work of J. R. Firth and his colleagues in London, among others (Halliday,