
Teacher Preparation for Linguistically Diverse Classrooms

A Resource for Teacher
Educators

Edited by
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In Memory of My Sister, April Diana Lucas Bolton

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Chapter 6

Systemic Functional Linguistics, Teachers' Professional Development, and ELLs' Academic Literacy Practices

Meg Gebhard, Jerri Willett, Juan Pablo Jiménez Caicedo, and Amy Piedra

Changing demographics, in combination with state and federal policies such as No Child Left Behind legislation, English-only mandates, and high-stakes testing practices, have placed new demands on all educators (e.g., August & Shanahan, 2006). In response, content-area teachers and teacher educators are asking fundamentally different questions about the nature of their work given the demand for all educators to meet the needs of an increasing number of English language learners (ELLs) and students who speak non-dominant varieties of English. The purpose of this chapter is to describe how a district-university partnership supported teachers in exploring how they can teach all of their students, including ELLs, to use content-based language in ways that value and build on what students already know and can do with language by introducing them to an approach to content-based literacy development based on the work of M.A.K. Halliday (1978, 1996) and using this approach to design, implement, and reflect on curriculum and instruction. To achieve this purpose, we begin by describing a district-university partnership called the ACCELA Alliance (Access to Critical Content and English Language Acquisition) and ways in which Halliday's theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) informs its work. Next, we illustrate the workings of this partnership by providing an ethnographic case study of the literacy practices enacted by a fourth-grade teacher and one of her students over the course of an academic year. We conclude by discussing the implications of this work for teachers' professional development.

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ACCELA is a professional development partnership between the University of Massachusetts and two urban school districts. Designed by faculty members in the Language, Literacy, and Culture Concentration (LLC),² this partnership was established in 2002 with federal funds to support in-service teachers, administrators, teacher educators, and researchers in understanding

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and responding to the combined influences of No Child Left Behind legislation, state-wide curriculum frameworks, high-stakes tests, mandated approaches to literacy instruction, and the passage of a state-wide English-only referendum. The broad goal of this partnership is to provide sustained and reciprocal professional development to all participants by engaging in collaborative and action-oriented research regarding the academic literacy development of ELLs in today's schools. In working toward this goal, the ACCELA Alliance has designed and implemented a number of institutional structures and practices, all of which focus on critically understanding the nature of teaching and learning in ACCELA teachers' classrooms.

First, ACCELA faculty developed an inquiry-based Master's degree program designed specifically for in-service classroom teachers working with large numbers of ELLs. Second, we created a weekly seminar for LLC doctoral students and faculty to support LLC doctoral students in acting as research assistants to ACCELA teachers. Third, we initiated the "ACCELA Dialogues," a local conference that provides a forum for school, district, and university administrators, Doctoral students, and faculty to explore more effective and equitable policies and practices for ELLs and their teachers.

The teachers who participate in ACCELA are in-service elementary and middle school teachers of Language Arts, Reading, Special Education, or ESL. All seek a graduate degree and some seek an additional state license in ESL and/or Reading. ACCELA courses are taught in the local schools by university faculty following district calendars. One course is offered each quarter so teachers can complete the program within three years. As part of this coursework, ACCELA teachers conduct inquiry projects in which they document and analyze their teaching practices in light of how these practices influence the learning of selected case study students. Data from these case studies inform discussions in courses and research seminars, which in turn inform the development of teachers' research projects. Doctoral students and faculty support teachers as they: develop research questions aligned with course objectives and connected to pressing local issues; analyze district, state, and national standards; design curriculum and instruction; collect and analyze student data (e.g., transcripts, writing samples, test scores); and present their research projects to colleagues in their districts, to other educators at national conferences, and in various publications (see www.umass.edu/accela).

ACCELA's practices are informed by a socio-cultural perspective of designing, implementing, and assessing standards-based instruction; a teacher-as-researcher stance to professional development; a functional view of language and language learning; and a recursive focus on issues concerning social justice and political forces influencing public education (Gebhard, Austin, Nieto, & Willett, 2002). Based on this framework, case study data are discussed by faculty and doctoral students in weekly seminars on campus to understand how the ACCELA curriculum is shaping teacher learning and to inform revisions in our teacher education program. For example, our analyses

revealed early on that, although most ACCELA teachers were capable users of academic language themselves, they were not adequately prepared to provide their students with explicit instruction and feedback in how content-based language operates within the disciplinary genres they routinely ask students to read and write (e.g., narratives, reports, explanations). Thus a significant change in the ACCELA program early in its development was the introduction of Halliday's theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and genre-based pedagogy to support the academic literacy development of ELLs.

Systemic Functional Linguistics and Academic Literacy Development

Despite important differences among researchers using Halliday's theories, all share a socio-cultural perspective of language and language learning (Halliday, 1978, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). From an SFL perspective, language is a dynamic system of linguistic choices that students learn to use to accomplish a wide variety of social, academic, and political goals in and out of school (New London Group, 1996). Therefore, from an SFL perspective, the job of the teacher is to broaden students' ability to use language more expertly across a variety of social and academic contexts to accomplish specific kinds of work. Teachers and students can explore the way language functions to enact relationships among participants, convey new meaning or ideas, and reflect the mode of communication (e.g., face-to-face, online, written). These three functions provide a basis for analyzing how texts vary in relation to who is communicating with whom, what they are communicating about, and the modes through which they are interacting (Christie & Martin, 1997; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993).

A brief example that reveals how SFL can support an analysis of academic language development comes from an interaction the first author, Meg, had with a sixth-grade girl regarding her science fair project. This student asked Meg for feedback on her investigation regarding which brand of bubble gum would yield the biggest bubble. This assignment was designed to teach students how to use the scientific method and the language of science. In reviewing this student's report, Meg drew the girl's attention to the last sentence that read, "So, in the end, we decided that Trident Sugarless Gum is best." Meg commented that scientists typically do not use "so" in their writing and they do not use language that suggests they decided the results of their experiments. Rather, part of understanding the scientific method is understanding that scientists try (and sometimes fail) to be more detached from the results of their experiments and to let the data "do the talking" (Lemke, 1990). Meg suggested the following alternative, "In conclusion, the data suggest that Trident Sugarless Gum is best for bubble-blowing." Interestingly, the student laughed out loud, almost fell out of her chair, and said, "There is no way I'm talking like that! What do you think I am, a geek!" This response suggests that she understood that linguistic choices

not only construct ideas (e.g., an understanding of the scientific method and the results of an experiment) and reflect modes of interacting (oral/everyday and written/formal), but also convey aspects of identity. In other words, she understood the meaning of the changes Meg suggested on multiple levels, but she was not willing to play around with her 12-year-old-girl voice by trying on a new, more "scientific" one.

This example also illustrates how SFL-based pedagogy focuses on expanding the range of linguistic choices available to students in performing essential school-based tasks such as writing laboratory reports, narrating events, providing definitions, writing descriptions, describing a process, or making an argument (Schleppegrell, 2004). From this perspective, linguistic choices are understood to operate at the word, sentence, and discourse levels, and to reflect the degree to which students have been socialized into and wish to align themselves with valued ways of knowing and being in school (Gee, 1996). As many studies have shown, schooled ways of using language, knowing, and being differ from everyday practices in significant ways (Heath, 1983). For ELLs and speakers of non-dominant varieties of English, these differences are even greater and take on even more significance as students are required to read and write about unfamiliar topics, use technical language that differs from home or peer meaning-making practices, and assume new, often uncomfortable or contradictory, identities (Dyson, 1993). As such, one of the main goals of ACCELA (and subsequently our on-campus program) has been to support teachers in critically apprenticing students to using academic language to accomplish meaningful cognitive, social, and political work while also valuing community ways of using language, knowing, and being (Nieto & Bode, 2008).

To describe how ACCELA supports teachers in using SFL and SFL-based pedagogy, this chapter looks at a case study that involves the genre of narrative. Despite the fact that narrative is one of the most commonly assigned types of text in school, and that the story is one of the most powerful mediums for capturing important social issues, many teachers lack an explicit awareness of how the organizational, grammatical, and lexical features work in the texts they assign, or how to teach novice readers and writers to play with these features in learning to write their own narratives in more able and compelling ways (Hyland, 2007). SFL scholarship can assist teachers in supporting their students in this task by providing insights into how narratives work (Derewianka, 1990; Knapp & Watkins, 2005).

Thus, in order to foster the incorporation of SFL pedagogy in the teaching of reading and writing narratives, ACCELA supports teachers in understanding the features typical of the narrative genre:

- An "orientation" in which the writer attempts to situate the reader in a particular time, place, or social context, and to introduce the main characters.

- A "sequence of events" or series of "complications," in which the characters confront an issue or set of issues and explore possible solutions to the problem(s) at hand. Through these events, the reader develops a deeper sense of who the characters are and how they have been shaped by their experiences.
- A "resolution" phase in which the characters come to terms (or not) with the problem at hand. This phase often shows how the characters have been changed (or not) by their experiences and may contain an evaluation or comment on the narrative as a whole.

With regard to grammatical and lexical features, narratives typically rely on the use of particular types of verbs. These types include: (1) material processes expressing concrete actions central to the plot (e.g., run, fight, arrest, rescue); (2) verbal processes communicating how characters express themselves (e.g., say, scream, whisper); (3) mental processes communicating how characters think or feel (e.g., think, decide, wonder); and (4) relational processes showing relationships among characters and events (e.g., is, have). Narratives rely on the past tense and the use of "temporal connectives" to communicate the sequences of events (e.g., one day, next, then, suddenly, in the end). They also rely on the use of "logical connectives" to express the purposes, causes, or effects of actions (e.g., because, although, so).

As a way of illustrating how ACCELA uses SFL theory and SFL-based pedagogies, we present below an ethnographic case study of how a teacher named Amy Piedra learned to use SFL to teach narratives to her students. At the time of the study, Amy was teaching fourth grade, and nearly all of her students were ELLs and could be described as struggling readers and writers. We focus on changes in Amy's teaching practices and how these changes influenced the narratives produced by an academically struggling ELL student named "Eloy." (The names of students, schools, and neighborhoods are pseudonyms.)

An Ethnographic Case Study of SFL in Practice

Context

Both Amy and Eloy lived in "Milltown," Massachusetts—a once-thriving industrial city that has suffered greatly as it has undergone dramatic economic and demographic changes in the last 50 years. It is now one of the poorest school districts serving the highest numbers of Latino students in the state. For example, three of four students live below the poverty line, identify as "Hispanic" and speak a language other than English at home (<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu>). Amy was born in Milltown to recent immigrants from Puerto Rico and moved back and forth between Milltown and Puerto Rico as a child. She lived in a Puerto Rican community called the "Flats" and attended Lincoln Elementary School as a girl. After graduating from Milltown High

School, she attended Milltown Community College and a local four-year state college where she earned a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education. After graduating in 2000, she worked as a daycare provider, a long-term substitute teacher, and an ESL/bilingual paraprofessional. In 2003 Amy applied and was accepted into the ACCELA program and in 2004 she was offered her first full-time position as a fourth-grade teacher at Lincoln. Through her ACCELA course work, Amy became acquainted with Meg Gebhard and Jerri Willett, the co-directors of ACCELA. She had also worked with Juan Pablo Jiménez Caicedo, a doctoral student who supported the data collection activities related to her course work. While Amy was enrolled in Jerri's course on content-based instruction for ELLs, Amy, Meg, and Juan Pablo agreed to collaborate on researching questions regarding Amy's teaching practices and how these practices influenced the way ELLs analyzed and wrote narratives over the course of the year. We focused on narratives because this genre forms the foundation of Language Arts curriculum frameworks in Massachusetts and in other states (Schleppgrell, 2003). Narratives were also the focus of the first unit Amy was required to teach in adhering to a mandated textbook series in her school. Given these factors, our collaboration centered on the following questions:

- Over the course of the academic school year, how did Amy's approach to designing and implementing instruction related to supporting students in interpreting and producing narratives change?
- Over the course of the academic school year, how did ELLs' ability to produce written narratives change?

Eloy lived in the "Flats" of Milltown with his older brother, sister, mother, and aunt, all of whom he reported spoke mostly Spanish. He had a slight frame when compared to many of the other boys in his class, but made his presence known through his easy-going, light-hearted manner (despite often writing about weighty topics). He was rarely absent from school and participated actively in discussions, often chiming in with expressions that seemed to belong to another time (e.g., *that's the ticket, now you're talking*). Eloy had received bilingual instruction at Lincoln for grades K-3. In fourth grade, as a result of a statewide English-only mandate, he began receiving instruction in English despite the fact that his English proficiency was still limited. For example, he struggled to manage the English tense system in his speech and writing. In addition, as is typical of language learner discourse, it was often difficult to follow the thread of his ideas over longer stretches of talk without a good deal of negotiation, as he often relied on his audience to play a very active role in constructing meaning with him. In his discourse, he often searched for a word or a phrase and interrupted the flow of his talk to find alternatives. While, like all language learners, he had creative ways of using the linguistic resources at his disposal to construct new meanings, some struc-

tural, grammatical, and lexical aspects of this oral narrative were difficult to follow. These aspects of both Eloy's oral and written texts, not at all unusual for an ELL or an emergent reader/writer, provide a baseline "snapshot" for analyzing how his ability to produce narratives changed over the course of the year in the context of Amy's classroom. To present our analysis, we look at Amy's curricular and instructional practices and examine how these practices influenced Eloy's textual practices. Given the limits of this chapter, we focus specifically on units one and three.

Changes in Teaching and Writing Practices Over an Academic Year

Fall 2004: Amy and Eloy Follow the Script

In September, when we met with Amy to discuss how she was approaching Language Arts instruction, she made it clear that she did not have much room in her day to implement "ACCELA ideas" and that she wasn't sure her classroom was going to be a place where we could do "any interesting research." This response was one faculty and doctoral students working with ACCELA teachers were hearing a lot. When we followed up on the issue in the weekly ACCELA seminar, teachers reported that they were required to adhere faithfully to a mandated textbook series and follow scripted lesson plans aligned to the state standards and exams. Teachers added that in some schools multicultural trade books and bilingual materials were being "thrown out." Amy echoed many of these concerns, adding that she did not think the mandated textbook materials were designed for ELLs and certainly not for bilingual, multicultural students of color living in urban areas. She described the first unit she was required to teach, which focused on the genre of "personal narratives." The main text students were required to read and analyze was a chapter from *Addie Across the Prairie* by Laurie Lawlor. This story, set in the Midwest in the 1800s, describes the adventures of a nine-year-old girl who must protect herself and her brother when a fire breaks out on their farm. Amy did not feel this book "represented" her students. She also talked about how much she missed having access to sets of multicultural trade books that were available the year before when she was a classroom aide. She felt so strongly about this that she bought single copies of many of these books and decided to use them as short "read-alouds" in conjunction with the mandated readings.

Despite her willingness to depart from the prescribed curriculum, Amy still did not have the leeway she needed to experiment with using SFL-based pedagogy to support emergent readers and writers like Eloy. The first unit she was mandated to teach required that she introduce students to the "key features" of the genre of "personal narratives" as stipulated by the textbook. Somewhat erroneously, from an SFL perspective, this list indicates that

personal narratives are about an "interesting event or experience in the writer's life"; use the pronouns "I" and "me"; "flow" from beginning, to middle, to end; provide "details"; and use "vivid words." As will become evident in an analysis of how Amy and her students worked with these key features, the list did more to constrain than support them in developing a deeper understanding of the features of narratives and in producing coherent texts.

From her ACCELA coursework, Amy was aware that children develop the ability to produce narratives with an identifiable setting, characters, a plot sequence, and a thematic moment. Also, in a class discussion of the prescribed list of key features, many of her students stated that narratives have "settings," have "characters," use descriptive words related to the "five senses," and have "a narrator." However, over the course of this discussion, driven by the teacher's manual, Amy did not take up these valid contributions. Rather, with the teaching script in her hand at all times, she continued to reformulate her questions regarding what constitutes a personal narrative until she received responses that matched the features stipulated by the textbook authors. As a result, the interaction became less a discussion and more a protracted guessing game that left students, in Amy's words, feeling "antsy," and her feeling that she had done "a really bad job." Figure 6.1 shows part of this interaction, with Amy working to get students to say the next feature on the list related to the use of the pronouns *I* and *me*. This interaction became increasingly tense as Amy worked to lead them to this specific response and discounted or did not take up other responses that were both valid and provocative (e.g., the topic of "voice," writing "your way of thinking").

As a result of Amy's adherence to the script, this interaction nearly collapsed under the weight of her trying to "ventriloquate" the voices of the authors of the teacher's manual rather than attempting to author her own professional one (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 299).

The textbook's list also did little to support Eloy in improving his ability to write a more coherent and developed narrative. Despite his high level of engagement, his first attempt to write a narrative following this lesson functioned more like an expository text. This draft, which was about a karate class, opened with the narrative marker *One day*, but then moved to explaining the different kinds of "moves" he was learning rather than an event or series of events related to his experiences learning karate (e.g., *hand punch, hold punch*). Nonetheless, he diligently used the textbook's list to confirm, erroneously, that he had written a well-formed personal narrative. For example, in reviewing his draft, he confirmed with confidence that the text was about an interesting event in his life and that he had used the pronouns *I* and *me*. In addition, he indicated that his text had a beginning, middle, and end by writing these words on the margins of his paper and concluded that he had given details and used vivid words (e.g., types of punches, reference to blood). Nonetheless, this first draft still had problems because he did not establish a central event or sequence of events as is typical of a narrative text.

1. **Amy:** When you write, when you're a narrator, okay, you tell a story by using what?
2. **Student:** Your voice
3. **Jesus:** Memories!
4. **Amy:** No, memories are (inaudible) now
5. **Jesus:** You're listening ... I mean your letters
6. **Students:** (Inaudible)
7. **Amy:** Stop shouting out and think about it, raise your hands (pause). By using what Ramon?
8. **Ramon:** (Inaudible)
9. **Amy:** No! to describe you as a character in your narrative, in your personal narrative, what are you using?
10. **Student:** Your way, your way of thinking, you ...
11. **Amy:** How do you describe your character?
12. **Eveliz:** By yourself
13. **Amy:** Okay, by yourself, Okay, but what pronouns do you use to describe yourself in the story?
There are 19 turns-at-talk about characters as Amy reads a section of a story called *Come on, Rain!* This section includes the use of the pronouns *I* and *me*.
14. **Amy:** Yes, her Mamma says "Is it ... is it thunder outside Tessie?" That's how we know her name, but throughout the whole book, do we say "Tessie steps out into the rain, Tessie went to go get her xx ... Tessie." No, she is telling the story, so she is using two pronouns. What are they?
15. **Karina:** She and um ... um Tessie!
16. **Jaime:** I and her
17. **Amy:** I and ...
18. **Jaime:** Her!
19. **Amy:** No! I and ME, who said ME? I and Me
The interaction continues until Amy has been able to generate the required list of features.

Figure 6.1 Classroom transcript, Unit 1, Fall 2004.

Moreover, the prescribed list did little to highlight what the problem in his text might be or what he might do to address it. For example, the textbook did not provide Amy or her students with guidance in how to make the kinds of linguistic choices expert writers use to help their writing "flow" from "beginning, middle, to end." From an SFL perspective, this list did not draw Amy's and her students' attention to the fact that written narratives, unlike oral stories, typically do not connect new ideas with the word "and." Rather, written narratives typically connect ideas temporally and create "flow" by using words such as *next*, *then*, *suddenly*, *after that*, *in the end*, and *even now*.

In working on his second draft, Eloy did not develop the topic of learning karate, but initiated a new one about his mother buying two unruly Chihuahuas (see Figure 6.2).

Although Eloy established an orientation and provided a sequence of events, his text still lacked a resolution regarding the dogs and/or a comment on the experience as a whole. Hypothetically, with instruction, he might have concluded by writing, "Wow, am I glad those dogs are gone!" or "Now, we have a

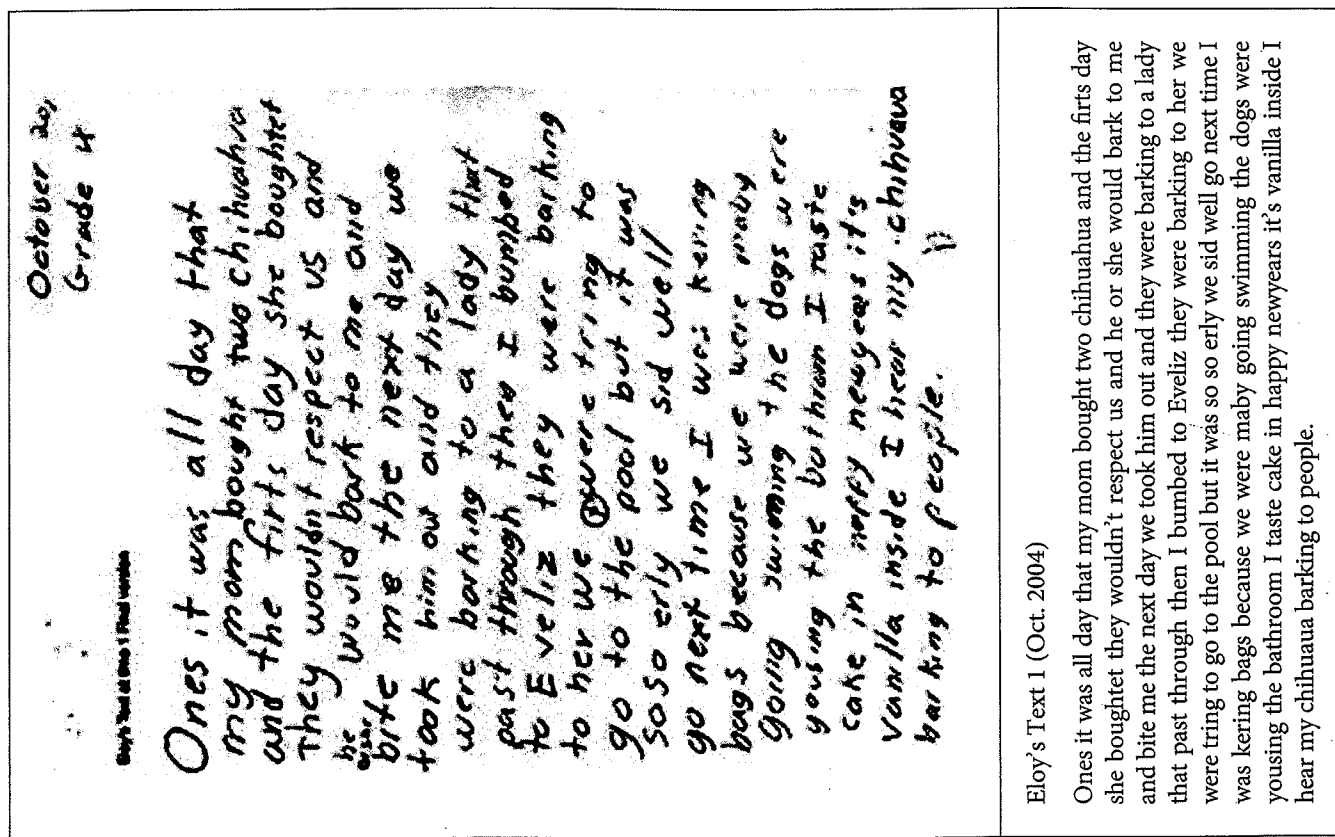


Figure 6.2 Eloy's Final Draft of Dog Story, Unit 1, Fall 2004.

pit bull and I like him better," which in his oral reading he added. Rather, the narrative became incoherent as the text moved from describing how hard it was to walk two barking dogs while simultaneously carrying bags full of swimsuits and towels, to making a statement about the taste of a vanilla cake on New Year's.

In an end-of-the-unit interview with Eloy about this final draft, which he had edited with a peer (i.e., they attended to several unconventional spellings and looked up "Chihuahua" in the dictionary), he recognized that the "cake part" of his text was confusing and described how he might fix it, saying, "I will take that [the part about the cake] out and then keep going with the Chihuahuas." This interview provides evidence that Eloy had a meta-awareness of narrative structures, an awareness that might have led him to make more substantive revisions if the textbook had guided him in that direction or if Amy had had more knowledge and had felt more able to challenge the textbook's conception of the key genre features of a personal narrative. In addition, it is clear that Eloy also had a meta-awareness of textual aspects of his written work. For example, he commented that his text could be improved if it was punctuated and had illustrations.

In reflecting on the unit as a whole, Amy re-iterated her frustration with the mandated materials, the students' texts, and her inability to provide students with instruction that would "move them along as writers." In response to this frustration, for the second unit, and in the context of completing additional coursework, she delved deeper into the literature regarding the use of multicultural children's literature and SFL-based pedagogies to support the academic literacies of linguistically and culturally diverse students. She assigned a portion of the novel *My Name is Maria Isabel* by Alma Flor Ada, which explores issues of language and identity through the experiences of a young Puerto Rican girl whose teacher renames her Mary out of convenience. Amy was introduced to this novel in a course focusing on children's literature and the Puerto Rican experience. In designing this second unit, Amy followed a "backward design" approach (Wiggins & McTighe, 2004) to establish the main content and language goals of the unit and how she was going to provide students with both conceptual and linguistic scaffolding and would assess their final projects—an approach introduced by Jerri in the course Teaching Content for Language Development. Drawing on her ACCELA coursework, Amy assigned her students a unit project that required them to write a narrative about their names by drawing on insights from the Ada novel and focused on their developing understanding of the structural and linguistic features of narratives. Although Amy felt that the changes she implemented in unit two had benefited her students, she still expressed frustration with the quality of her students' narratives. In informal interviews, she recognized that she still was unclear about how to use SFL to design instruction, provide feedback, and assess students' writing. As the following analysis of unit three makes clear, Amy's third attempt at using SFL proved to be much more productive.

May 2005: Amy and Eloy Author Their Own Words

For unit three, Amy continued to strike a balance between adhering to the textbook and introducing students to multicultural children's literature. She also continued to hone her understanding of the linguistic features of written narratives and SFL pedagogy. She was supported in these activities by her continued participation in ACCELA courses and conversations with Meg and Juan Pablo. For example, we re-read parts of Kamberelis' 1999 article on children's knowledge of genres and talked more explicitly about how she was going to scaffold and assess students' developing knowledge of the linguistic features of narratives. In planning this unit, which centered on supporting students in writing a "narrative about a family story," Amy had five goals (as indicated in her unit plans and in an email to the course instructor).

First, she was committed to providing students with access to literature that might resonate with their experiences as Puerto Rican youth living in urban communities. She chose to focus the unit on another text to which she had been introduced during ACCELA coursework—*Grandma's Record* by Eric Velasquez, an autobiography that describes the author's introduction to the sounds and steps of merengue and conga during summers he spent in his grandmother's apartment in Spanish Harlem. Second, Amy wanted to engage students in a linguistic analysis of the language used by Velasquez in constructing his text—especially how he used language to establish setting, create characters, develop the plot, and explore themes related to family. Third, she wanted to support students in using "temporal" and "logical connectives" in revising their narratives to make their texts more coherent. Fourth, as part of an assignment for a seminar on Systemic Functional Linguistics for Teachers, she wanted to make students more aware of the linguistic differences between oral and written ways of telling stories without losing "their voice." Last, she wanted to continue to model her own writing process and provide students with exemplar texts she had written.

An example of how Amy united these five goals in classroom practice is evident in the following classroom interaction (see Figure 6.3). In this example, Amy led the class in a discussion of how temporal connectives in *Grandma's Records* functioned "to move the story along." Similar to the routines she established at the beginning of the year, she stood next to a dry-erase easel with a marker in her hand as students sat on the rug in a circle. Each student had a highlighter and typed copy of the text of *Grandma's Records*. Previously, Amy had instructed them to highlight all of the "plot sequence words" and report their lists back to the whole class. The words the class had generated were posted on a sheet of butcher paper, which was clipped to the easel (e.g., *every year, other times, sometimes, next, whenever, then, one day, while, after, the next day, all day, all of a sudden, over the next days and weeks, as I got older, even now*). Following the topic prescribed in the mandated text-

1. **Amy:** Okay, here Eric Velasquez used these words to move the sequence of events along. To tell us there were many events that happened throughout the summer. Okay? (Amy reads aloud from the list of words they just generated. Most students joined her in an *impromptu* choral recitation of these words)
2. **Amy and students:** Every year, other times, sometimes, next, whenever, then, one day, while, after, the next day, all day, all of the sudden
3. **Eloy:** Suddenly,
4. **Amy:** Suddenly, okay, over the next days and weeks, and as I got older, or even now.
5. **Eloy:** Even now.
6. **Amy:** Now the story, as the story goes on (flips the butcher paper up to reveal a triangle. At the base is the word "plot" and at the top is the word "climax" as directed by the teacher's manual) Eric Velasquez wrote about the setting (writes the word setting on the bottom left of the triangle). He introduced us to the setting when we first read it, throughout the book he talks about characters (writes characters above setting). But it starts with every year, every year (writes every year on left leg of the triangle) this is how the story going. Sometimes (writes sometimes) ... other times we danced ... Okay. Um, ONE DAY (writes one day) they got a visitor and WHILE (writes while) they were eating dessert, they got two tickets. Okay? Now they are on the way to the concert. Then SUDDENLY (writes suddenly at the top of the triangle by the word climax) BOOM! The concert went off! (circles the top point of the triangle). So that is like our climax ... they are at a concert ... for the first time ... and then suddenly when the lights went dark! (spreads arms wide)
7. **Mark:** //Everybody got (XXXX)//
8. **Amy:** When the grandma got sung to, Okay.
9. **Amy:** (Pointing to the word suddenly) Boom the climax ... Then it starts to calm down, then we are like, after the show,
10. **Mark:** The same day
11. **Amy:** (Softer voice) We found out ... over the next weeks (writes over the next weeks) as I got older (writes as I got older) and even now (writes even now). Notice how that happens? (Moves her hand up the left leg, to the top, and down the right leg of the triangle).
12. **Students:** Yeah!
13. **Mark:** A pyramid.
14. **Amy:** That was like our PLOT. This is like a sequence of events. And he uses these words to moves us along in the story (finger hits each word up and down the pyramid as she speaks).

Figure 6.3 Classroom transcript, Unit 3, Spring 2005.

book, Amy provided students with a mini-lesson in how these words and phrases could also be mapped on to the structure of a narrative.

This transcript reveals how Amy supported all students, including ELLs, in analyzing the linguistic choices expert writers make in constructing the plot structure of a written narrative. Amy used this same routine to support students in analyzing how authors use language to establish the setting, develop characters, and convey thematic elements. For example, using their highlighters, the class made lists and analyzed the words and phrases Velasquez used to

describe the setting (e.g., “*el barrio*” versus “Spanish Harlem,” or “neighborhood”; “Grandma’s apartment” versus “*abuela’s* apartment”); the characters (describing himself as a “homebody” and his grandmother as “nervous on the subway”); the presence or absence of dialogue written in Spanish or varieties of Spanish; reasons for providing or not providing a translation of dialogue written in Spanish for non-Spanish-speakers; and the theme (e.g., family).

As the class began to write their own narratives, Amy provided them with two additional texts to analyze. The first text was one she had written about the boyhood adventures of her fiancé and his brother on a snowy day. The second text was written by Mrs. Rodriguez, a paraprofessional who frequently asked Amy for help with assignments for her adult ESL class. Mrs. Rodriguez' text related the story of when she was held responsible for her younger brother eating a cake intended for a family celebration of her first communion. Following the same routine as illustrated in Figure 6.3, Amy provided the students with highlighters and typed copies of these two additional texts. Next, she asked them to identify how she and Mrs. Rodriguez used words and phrases to establish the setting (e.g., *North Village on a snowy day*; *Grandma cooking in the kitchen*); to develop characters through description and the use of dialogue; to support the plot structure (*then the impossible happened, all of a sudden*); and to convey themes (e.g., *family responsibility*). Once the students had practiced analyzing and cataloging the words and phrases used by expert writers, they turned their attention to analyzing their own drafts. With highlighters in hand, they identified how they used words and phrases to establish the setting, develop characters through description and the use of dialogue, support the plot structure, and convey themes. If students noticed that their drafts lacked these linguistic features, they were encouraged to appropriate the language of more expert writers in developing their subsequent drafts.

As instructed, Eloy used this procedure to analyze his third draft of a narrative called *Church Dance* (see Figure 6.4). This text recounted the events associated with his sister and aunt getting arrested for fighting at a church dance. He identified the setting as *the church*; listed the characters as *his brother, sister, aunt, and the cops*; and described the sequence of events as *focusing on his sister and aunt getting arrested*. Although he did not indicate it on the worksheet, his draft included a resolution (i.e., *My sister came back from juvenile jail*) and an evaluation or coda (*We did a picnic now we are happy she's back*).

In his near-final typed draft shown in Figure 6.4, he attended to unconventional spellings (e.g., *punhed/punched*), difficulties in indicating tense (e.g., *my sister still beginning to fight*), the need for punctuation, and writing dialogue. While falling short of producing a fully developed narrative, Eloy did provide his readers with a simple, relatively coherent recount of an event he was invested in sharing. This investment was evident in the degree to which, relative to his other texts, he made linguistic choices to ensure his peers could read his text without a lot of face-to-face negotiation. Eloy's narrative included a brief orientation (e.g., *Ones my brother, sister and I were at the church dance*): a

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church dances

Once my brother, sister and I were at the church dance. It was time to leave. The church dance ended at 11:45 P.M. up the stairs and we went to see a fight. But I didn't know that my sister was the one that was going to fight. My sister went to the corner of Ninety Nine cents there were cops in the church dance. My sister said trying to fight her aunt was in a party near where my sister was fighting so my aunt saw her jump over the cop punched him and then they got arrested. They went behind the police car and they sat in the back seat of the police car. My background was from the living room police station. Inside to back the window of the police car. The police drove them to the cops car. My brother and I followed them running they went to the police station. Then the next morning the cops said you need 40 dollars to take her out so we did. I was kind of happy but my sister didn't come out of Juvenile Jail the next morning. My sister came back from Juvenile Jail I was so happy. I hug her she hug me back I took her home it was the happiest day. We did a picnic now we are happy she's back.

Church Dance

Ones my brother, sister and I were at the church dance. It was time to leave. The church dance ended at 11:45 P.M. up the stairs and we went to see a fight. But I didn't know that my sister was the one that was going to fight. My sister went to the corner of Ninety Nine cents there were cops in the church dance. My sister still began to fight, my aunt was at a party near were my sister was fighting. My aunt saw her and my aunt jumped at the cop punched him and then they got arrested! They went inside the police car. They sat in the back seat of the police car. The police drove them to the police station. My brother and I tried to brake the window of the cops car. They left and we followed them running. They went to the police station. Then the next morning the police said "you need 40 dollars to take her out" so we did. I was kind of happy but my sister didn't come out of juvenile jail. My sister came back from juvenile jail I was so happy. I hug her she hug me back I took her home it was the happiest day. We did a picnic now we are happy she's back.

Figure 6.4 Eloy's Third Draft of Church Dance Story, May Unit.

complication and sequence of events (e.g., *we went to see a fight. But I didn't know that my sister was the one that was going to fight*); a resolution (e.g., *My sister came back from juvenile jail*); and an evaluative comment that shifts from the narrative past to the present and brings the story to a close (e.g., *now we are happy she's back*). In addition, he exhibited greater control over a more written as opposed to oral register when compared to the narrative he produced during unit one. For example, this text shows greater control of the narrative past (e.g., *ended, went, saw, jumped, punched, sat, drove, left, followed, said, did*) and ability to use temporal connectives to support the plot structure (*Ones, then the next morning, now*). More striking, he initiated far fewer clauses with "and." Equally significant is his ability to use adverbial and adjectival clauses to pack more information into single clauses while also managing more complex aspects of tense (e.g., *But I didn't know that my sister was the one that was going to fight; my aunt was at a party near w[h]ere my sister was fighting*). Last, while he did not make use of paragraphs to signal moves in his narrative, he did make greater and more varied use of punctuation to support readers in pausing between clauses and in reading with intonation (e.g., periods, exclamation mark, quotations). In an end-of-the-unit interview, Eloy commented specifically on the function of punctuation in written texts. Pointing to an earlier draft, he said: "Right here was [*pointing to draft*] and this story was, I had to change stuff because I never put periods here and I keep talking and talking and talking, without no period, without no breathing."

In line with an SFL perspective of language learning, Eloy's work and comments indicate that over the course of the year he was developing not only an understanding of narrative as a specific genre, but also an understanding of the differences between oral and written registers and the function of punctuation in realizing these differences. For example, rather than reciting a rule such as "a period goes at the end of a sentence," he described using periods as a way to support his audience in reading his text.

In reflecting on this curricular unit, Amy also talked in SFL terms about how, in the future, she would support students in writing more developed orientations to situate the reader in a particular time, place, or social context, and to introduce the main characters. She described how she would teach students to notice how authors use language to open their narratives, introduce their characters, and write dialogue. With reference to students' texts, she pointed out that they tended to overuse the verbal process "said" and that they could learn to expand the choices available to them by making lists of how published authors use verbs to reveal how characters feel and express themselves. She also talked about how she would support ELLs in learning to combine simple sentences into compound ones as a way of supporting them in writing more varied and complex sentence structures. Last, Amy commented that an illuminating moment for her was how writing and analyzing her own texts with students made her much more aware of the linguistic features of narratives in a way that she could transform into concrete teaching

practices. She also remarked on the ease with which her students, including ELLs, became "text analysts."

These insights were ones she shared with her ACCELA colleagues and her principal at a presentation of her work at the end of the year during one of the ACCELA Dialogues, emphasizing in her final slide that *Kids CAN analyze text*. While not all ACCELA teachers were as successful as Amy in exploring the potential of SFL in their classrooms (a few resisted it entirely), many found her approach to teaching both content and language compelling and began to explore how they could support ELLs in analyzing and appropriating the linguistic features of academic genres in their classrooms. In fact, Amy's work was used with later cohorts of teachers in ACCELA and in our on-campus program. In addition to benefitting from the growing expertise of faculty and doctoral students in using SFL in teacher education, later cohorts drew on Amy's example of how to use SFL-based pedagogy as they designed units of study focusing on such diverse topics and text types as recounts written by second graders for classmates and family members through a class blog (Shin, Gebhard, & Seger, in press); multicultural fairy tales written by third graders; bilingual poetry by fourth graders; published research regarding the benefits of recess read by fifth graders who then wrote persuasive letters to their principal to get their recess reinstated (Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007); and a writer's notebook modeled after the work of Tupac Shakur written by eighth graders. Collectively, what is striking about many of these projects is how ACCELA teachers used their developing understanding of SFL-based pedagogy to support not just ELLs, but *all* students in learning new academic concepts and literacy practices. In addition, these projects supported students in attempting to meet state standards while simultaneously making a space in the curriculum for students to read, write, and take action about topics that were culturally and politically relevant to them and their families.

Summary and Implications

This chapter has analyzed how an ACCELA teacher learned to use SFL-based pedagogy to teach her fourth graders, most of whom were ELLs, to analyze literary texts and write narratives of their own over the course of an academic year. This study focused on analyzing changes in the teacher's instructional practices as mediated by her participation in ACCELA, and how these changes influenced the literacy practices of emergent ELL readers and writers. This analysis reveals that the teacher, Amy, gained a deeper understanding of the structural, lexical, and grammatical features of narratives, a fundamental genre within the Language Arts curriculum. She also developed a more sophisticated understanding of how to incorporate SFL-based pedagogy in her work with ELLs as a way of teaching them disciplinary knowledge and supporting their academic literacy development. She did this by teaching students to analyze the linguistic features of multicultural children's literature and to

appropriate the textual practices of more-expert writers, particularly bilingual/bicultural Puerto Rican ones. The analysis also shows that emergent readers and writers, like Eloy, developed a greater ability to use words and phrases to signal essential genre moves found in narratives (e.g., use of lexical-grammatical words and phrases to construe the orientation, the sequence of events, and the resolution), and to shift from an oral to a written register (e.g., less use of *and* to initiate clauses and more use of conventional punctuation and spelling, the narrative past, and more complex clause structures). Finally, the analysis shows that Amy's critical use of SFL tools opened up a discursive space that allowed her to author her own teaching materials and to support students in authoring themselves as capable readers of literature and as writers of their own narratives. Over the year, these practices legitimated the use of multicultural children's literature and the display of bicultural identities while supporting the academic literacy development of ELLs.

The findings from this case study, in combination with the scholarship of other researchers, suggest a number of ways teacher educators can explore the potential of SFL in their work with pre- and in-service teachers (Brisk & Zisselsberger, this volume; Gebhard, Demers, & Castillo-Rosenthal, 2008; Gebhard et al., 2007; Gibbons, 2002; Schleppegrell, 2003, 2004, 2005; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007; Shin et al., in press). First, teacher educators can design a program of study that supports pre- and in-service teachers in developing a greater and more critical understanding of how language works in the texts they routinely ask their students to read and write by drawing on SFL scholarship. For example, teacher educators can develop a program that supports their candidates in: (1) analyzing state curricular frameworks and identifying the genres that are essential to their discipline; (2) analyzing the linguistic features of these discipline-specific text types; and (3) designing curricula, instruction, and assessment tools that explicitly attend to and support the development of both disciplinary knowledge and disciplinary literacy practices.

Second, this study illustrates that it is important for coursework to support teachers in critically engaging with state curricular frameworks as well as other state and federal mandates (e.g., English-only mandates, high-stakes testing practices, scripted lesson materials). In ACCELA, this engagement involves supporting teachers in coupling standards-based instruction with an SFL perspective of academic literacy development and a multicultural perspective of education (e.g., Nieto & Bode, 2008). Naturally, engaging in this three-pronged approach to professional development takes time and can be very challenging. However, teachers like Amy, who initially rejected SFL and was apprehensive about replacing required readings with multicultural ones, began to document that her students were less resistant, more engaged, and produced higher quality work when they were supported in working toward state standards by analyzing literature that resonated with them and their communities.

Last, this study suggests that teachers are more likely to develop a critical understanding of school reforms, SFL, and multicultural education if they

engage in collaborative and sustained analyses of classroom data (e.g., video clips, curricular materials, transcripts, students' texts). This aspect of ACCELA underscores the importance of teachers, teacher educators, and researchers participating in joint research activities. As leading analysts of teachers' professional development have long argued, joint research projects can support the professional development of teachers and faculty as well as contribute to the production of new knowledge, practices, and policies in local schools and in the field of education more broadly defined (Darling Hammond, 1994).

Notes

1. The ACCELA Alliance (Access to Critical Content and English Language Acquisition) is a federally funded professional development partnership between the University of Massachusetts and two urban school districts in Massachusetts. This study also received support from the Healey Foundation.
2. Faculty from the University of Massachusetts who have been involved in designing and implementing the ACCELA Alliance include Theresa Austin, Francis Bangou, Costanza Eggers-Pierola, Meg Gebhard, Sonia Nieto, Pat Paugh, Fatima Pirbhai-Ilich, and Jerri Willett.

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Chapter 7

“We’ve Let Them in on the Secret”

Using SFL Theory to Improve the Teaching of Writing to Bilingual Learners

María Estela Brisk and Margarita Zisselsberger

Bilingual learners represent a growing population in Massachusetts classrooms, with a 13% increase in the last ten years. Approximately 50,000 students in Massachusetts, speaking 112 languages, were identified as limited English proficient in 2006 (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2006). In addition, Massachusetts is one of a number of states that passed legislation eliminating most forms of bilingual education, the only exception being two-way programs. This restrictive language policy, coupled with the barrage of standards and test requirements mandated to ensure accountability under the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), has placed an increasing strain on schools with large numbers of students acquiring English as a new language. In Massachusetts, as in other states, language policies that place bilingual students in mainstream classrooms increasingly create a context that generalizes the linguistic and cultural needs of bilingual learners, thereby operating under the assumption “that effective instruction for [English language learners] is little more than good teaching practices for a diverse group of native English speakers” (Harper & de Jong, 2005, p. 55). As a result of this assumption, the specific linguistic and cultural features of school writing remain invisible to those acquiring English as an additional language since most teachers do not explicitly teach those features to native English speakers.

Bilingual learners need to acquire the second language in addition to literacy and content knowledge (Bernhardt, 1991) to competently perform in the academic registers required of mainstream monolingual classrooms. If the specific teaching of language is ignored, students develop a dialect that allows them to cope with everyday communicative challenges (Fillmore & Snow, 2000), but “when lexical and grammatical development does not keep pace with school expectations, students are unable to meet the reading and writing demands of disciplinary learning” (Schleppegrell, 2004, p. 80). However, little is known about best practices for writing instruction for bilingual learners (Fitzgerald, 2006).