An integrated language and content approach for history teachers

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Abstract

This article reports on a project that situates language teaching in the subject matter classroom, illustrating how a functional linguistics perspective can raise secondary school teachers’ awareness about the language challenges of their discipline and enable them to engage in discussion about language and content with their students. We report on the linguistic constructs that teachers without a background in language study were able to take up in analyzing passages from history textbooks, and show how this language awareness enables them to engage students in discussion of history content as they explore the meanings in texts written by historians. The integrated language and content approach we describe responds to recent calls for more situated and contextualized language teaching and illustrates a role that language teachers can adopt to contribute to the development of content-area teachers’ knowledge about language.

Keywords: Content-based instruction; Curriculum; Secondary school; Teacher education; History; Functional grammar; English for academic purposes

1. Introduction

Content-based instruction (CBI) is a major force in English as a Second Language (ESL) pedagogy today. The rationale for CBI rests on the notion that integrating language and content has pedagogic value, as the use of meaningful language will motivate students and enable content learning along with language learning (Davison & Williams, 2001). As Stoller (2004, p. 262) points out, the common rationale for content-based approaches is...
that CBI “provides a means for students to continue their academic development while also improving their language proficiency.” This article reports on work that offers new understandings of the relationship between language and content and the roles a language teacher can take on. Using language analysis to focus on content, and working with subject-area teachers, the EAP teacher can promote a focus on language in ways that uncover the varied meanings that any text presents. Instead of using content as a vehicle for teaching language, we use language as a means of teaching content.

Subject matter in schools is constructed in language that differs from the language we use to interact with each other in daily life (Schleppegrell, 2004). For students without opportunities to develop this language outside of school, the classroom needs to offer opportunities to learn how language participates in constructing knowledge in different subjects. History is a subject that presents challenges to students, and much of the challenge is linguistic. Secondary school history is presented in textbooks and primary source documents in dense and abstract language. To learn history, students have 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 interpretation that is an integral part of all historical reporting and is built into every text. These are difficult challenges for English language learners (ELLs).

Over the past five-years, we have worked with teachers and historians in the California History project to develop a “literacy in history” approach for in-service professional development in a context where virtually every classroom has ELLs but few teachers have backgrounds or training in ESL teaching. The approach we developed draws on a meaning-based theory of language, Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), a theory that does not separately address language and content, but instead sees language as the realization of meaning in context. Tools for language analysis based on this framework were developed by teachers in week-long summer institutes where they designed instructional units that used language analysis to focus on history content. Here we describe the language analysis tools and report on teachers’ responses to the approach. In addition, we cite evidence from an external evaluation of the professional development that demonstrates improvement in student performance associated with teachers’ participation in the institutes (Gargani, 2006).

The project we describe is not the typical EAP context. Rather than working from a content-based perspective in a language classroom, we report on a language-based perspective in a content classroom. Here, the role of the EAP specialist is to help history teachers understand the challenges of their discipline in linguistic terms through a functional approach to grammar that foregrounds meaning. Adopting this framework means that teachers maintain a focus on historical content while at the same time enabling their students to see how the content is constructed in the language choices of the historian (for earlier work in this framework see, e.g., Achugar & Schleppegrell, 2005; Schleppegrell, 2004, 2005; Schleppegrell & Achugar, 2003; Schleppegrell, Achugar, & Oteiza, 2004). This approach enables struggling readers to analyze how historians construct an interpretation in their linguistic choices, for example, in the way historical actors are represented, in identifying who is agentive in the sequence of events, and in recognizing how causes and outcomes have been construed. It also helps teachers recognize when their students...
misunderstand the text and helps them recognize when additional information about language and content is needed.

2. The linguistic challenges of history

We became involved in this project when approached by the project’s history teacher-leaders who had been providing professional development for history teachers for several years (see http://csmp.ucop.edu/chssp). Their focus had been on history content, but they reported that teachers were increasingly asking for strategies for working with the ELLs who are a growing proportion of California’s students.

The History Project had sponsored workshops on what they called “general ESL strategies” such as cooperative learning, vocabulary instruction, use of graphic organizers, and other techniques, but they wanted to help teachers understand the particular challenges that history text presents to ELLs and other struggling readers. In other words, they wanted history-specific knowledge about language to help teachers work more effectively with ELLs.

Drawing on work done from an SFL perspective, we worked with the teacher-leaders to develop workshops on the language issues that challenge history students. Research that identified key genres of history and described their language features provided useful information about the typical patterns of history text (e.g., Coffin, 1997; Eggins, Wignell, & Martin, 1993; Martin, 2002; Unsworth, 1999, 2000; Veel & Coffin, 1996). The SFL approach puts the focus on content, helping teachers understand how language works to construct disciplinary knowledge. It offers a way of going beyond general reading strategies to tackle a history text and unpack meaning clause by clause.

We observed several history lessons in middle and secondary school classrooms to learn more about what teachers needed to help ELLs and other struggling readers participate fully. We saw that teachers had strategies for building background knowledge, for surveying a chapter by focusing on layout and visual features, and for using cooperative learning, graphic organizers and other helpful techniques. But when it came to actually reading text and getting meaning from print, teachers had few strategies to employ.

Any focus on language in history has to be oriented toward subject matter knowledge. What linguists can contribute to subject-matter teaching is a framework for deconstructing and unpacking the language so that students can begin to recognize the patterns through which the content is constructed in language. Three motifs that are strong in history discourse are the interaction of time and cause in the construction of a chronology of events, the use of abstraction to generalize from particular events, and the foregrounding and backgrounding of interpretation as the historian takes a more or less explicitly interpretive stance toward what is constructed in the text. History is about events through time and what brought them about or followed from them, and the fact that all events have multiple causes means that historians use language carefully when they are constructing explanations, often eliding agency to present events as a natural unfolding. Abstraction is an important tool for generalizing and constructing interpretation, and the historian uses different linguistic strategies to make interpretation appear more or less explicit or more or less naturalized through the narrative of events.

Our goal was to help teachers understand how language works in history in this construction of time, cause, agency, abstraction, and interpretation. The point is not to just use history text to teach language, but to show how a functional approach allows for a
simultaneous focus on the meanings that are made (the “content”) and the language through which the meanings are realized, enabling us to recognize what it is about the language of history that challenges students. The result was that teachers were able to use linguistic tools and text analysis to engage in rich conversation with students about a text by recognizing how it constructs meanings of different kinds.

3. Teaching history through a functional focus on language

We collaborated with the teacher-leaders in the development of workshops that focused on the literacy challenges of the history curriculum. These workshops were presented to middle and secondary school history teachers over several summers. As applied linguists, we identified patterns in historical texts and developed language-focused strategies to help history teachers understand the linguistic challenges presented by history discourse. Over time we discovered the ways of talking about language that teachers found most accessible and identified the linguistic constructs that teachers most readily adopted in their own teaching. This article presents those constructs and describes the kind of focus on content that they promote.

The task that engaged history teachers during the summer institutes was the development of an instructional unit with a number of components. All history teaching in California secondary schools has to be based on the adopted standards (California Department of Education, 2001), so we wanted teachers to be able to work with texts that they chose to address standards important to them. The point is to work toward a teaching goal, using analysis of a text to further the teachers’ pedagogical aims. The unit development process began with the selection of a standard. Teachers then designed units of study that incorporated language analysis to highlight the key concepts in their content curriculum. For each standard the teacher chose a related segment of the textbook and developed a guiding question and thesis that would focus their analysis and discussion. Then they engaged in a grammatical deconstruction of the text, first to learn more about it themselves, and then to design activities that could engage their students in seeing the multiple meanings embedded in the text. We focus here for reasons of space on the text deconstruction process, noting that the full instructional units the teachers developed included more than just these activities, and that teachers used more than just one short text to address the standard.

History textbooks at all levels have a mix of text types, presented in a series of short sections, each with its own sub-head that itself often has functional variation within it, as the historians move from recounting events to accounting for events and on to explaining them; interspersed with description and other genres (Martin, 2002). Choosing a particular passage and deconstructing its language features provides more than an abstract focus on language as students explore the different patterns of language that construct texts of different types. By focusing on the language, we can show students patterns in the ways historians present historical events and interpret them. This encourages conversation in the classroom about how the text is structured, and what is included and what is left out of the textbook; about who is represented and how, and who is not; and about the points of view that are constructed and the kind of interpretation the historian is presenting. The patterns of meaning are functional for presenting the events and interpretation that is the discourse of history.
The goal is to provide teachers with ways of talking about language that enable them to focus on the history content at the same time that they offer students opportunities to develop academic language proficiency. What is of interest to applied linguists in this process were the language features that teachers readily took up in discussions with students. The summer institutes introduced them to notions of *sentence constituents* and the meaning relationships between the parts of a sentence (see also Schleppegrell & Achugar, 2003; Schleppegrell et al., 2004), to *complex nominal groups* and the multiple meanings they present, to *time markers and connectors* that structure a text, and the use of *reference* to build cohesion. These linguistic notions help reveal meaning in the language of history, and even teachers who were previously unfamiliar with grammatical terminology were able to learn and use these concepts to help students understand history textbook passages. We will illustrate each of these linguistic notions in turn, using an example from a 10th grade text about the Industrial Revolution. Using the strategies described below, history teachers learned to use linguistic analysis to engage students in talking about the historical events and participants that the texts presented.

*Example text (from Beck, Black, Krieger, Naylor, & Shabaka, 2003, p. 266)*

*California History-Social Science Standard that this text addresses*: 10.3 Students analyze the effects of the Industrial Revolution in England, France, Germany, Japan, and the United States.

**Worldwide impact of industrialization**

The Industrial Revolution shifted the world balance of power. It promoted competition between industrialized nations and increased poverty in less developed nations.

**Rise of global inequality**

Industrialization widened the gap between industrialized and non-industrialized countries, even while it strengthened their economic ties. To keep factories running and workers fed, industrialized countries required a steady supply of raw materials from less developed lands. In turn, industrialized countries viewed poor countries as markets for their manufactured products. A large inequality developed between the industrialized West and the rest of the world.

Britain led in exploiting its overseas colonies for resources and markets. Soon other European countries, the United States, Russia, and Japan followed Britain’s lead, seizing colonies for their economic resources. Imperialism, the policy of extending one country’s rule over many other lands, gave even more power and wealth to these already wealthy nations. Imperialism was born out of the cycle of industrialization, the development of new markets around the world, and the need for resources to supply the factories of Europe.
This passage is typical of one common pattern in history textbooks, an explicit explanation (see Veel and Coffin (1996) for discussion of other text types). The first two sentences, before the subheading, provide a kind of précis of the point to be made in the explanation that follows. The main generalization comes in the first sentence: The Industrial Revolution shifted the world balance of power, where the historian gives a brief summary of what will then be presented in the next paragraphs. Following this paragraph, the sub-head, Rise of Global Inequality, summarizes and foreshadows the main point of this sub-section (the paragraph in fact ends with a sentence about the large inequality that developed). The text then goes on in the next paragraph to name the industrialized nations (Britain, other European countries, the US, Russia, Japan) that seized colonies, and ends with a definition of imperialism and a recap of the points developed in the chapter.

3.1. Linguistic notions in the integrated approach

In order to help teachers talk with students about how the language constructs a complex and dense passage like this one, we introduced them to some linguistic constructs that enable a focus on the meanings that the historian has embedded in this text. Teachers learned to divide sentences into their constituents and identify the meaning relationships among the constituents, to unpack the sometimes hidden meanings in complex nominal groups, to recognize how connectors and time phrases help structure a text, and to identify the chains of reference devices that are used to make cohesive links. By engaging in this as a group during the summer institutes, and then applying the same tools to analysis of passages relevant to their own classroom contexts, teachers learned how to guide their students to see the relevance of the language choices of the historian. The following sections take up each of the linguistic constructs in turn.

3.1.1. Sentence constituents and their meaning relationships

Table 1 shows how this text can be broken down into its clauses, and each clause into its constituent parts, focusing first on identifying and lining up the verbs and verb phrases that construct the grammatical processes. The Hallidayan functional terminology fits well in the history context, and teachers readily take up the notion of identifying the process that is central to the clause, the grammatical participants, constructed in nominal groups, and the grammatical circumstances, constructed in prepositional phrases and adverbial adjuncts. Because the focus is on the larger constituents in the clause, and not on individual words, the sentence is broken into meaning-based elements that fit well with the history teacher’s focus on what happened, who did it and to whom, and under what circumstances? Without knowing a lot about grammar, and with a little practice and guidance, teachers can learn to identify these functional constituents and help students also recognize them as they engage in discussion about the text from a meaning-based perspective.

In analyzing this text, the processes in each clause can be aligned, as illustrated in Table 1, to reveal the kind of text the historian has constructed through identification of the different process types in the text. The notion of different kinds of processes, including Action, Saying, Thinking/Feeling, and Describing/Defining, based again, with some modifications, on Halliday’s framework, provides a basis for recognizing some distinct patterns in history textbooks, where, for example, historians use Action processes to construct chronologies, Saying and Thinking/Feeling processes to construct historical debates or discussions, and Defining/Describing processes to construct description and
explanation. In this text, we can recognize that the first five processes are *Action* processes, and that they construct *causal* relationships, where something is causing something else to happen.

Breaking the clauses into their constituent parts provides a visual interpretation of the text that gives insights into its meaning. The next step is to look at who is *acting* in these clauses. In *action* processes, the key participant is the *actor*. When we focus on how the historian is representing the *actor* in each clause, we see that the main *actor* is an abstraction, *The Industrial Revolution* or *Industrialization*. The historian uses these *nominalizations* to distill what has already been explained in the text so that it can be evaluated; in this case, so the results of industrialization can be presented. This is a common strategy in history textbooks, and here the nominalization stands for the whole process of the Industrial Revolution that was presented in the prior text. The historian has made this the point of departure for this text, in the first position in the clause, so that information about the outcomes of this process can be presented. Seeing the *actors* in the text lined up in a column stimulates discussion about how the historian has attributed agency, and helps the reader recognize how abstract actors like *The Industrial Revolution* enable the construction of generalization and interpretation.

In a text like this one, with *action* processes and *actors* engaged in them, a focus on the grammatical *participants* and *circumstances* that follow the process in each clause brings the main points of the passage into focus. In Table 1 we see that the *participants* and *circumstances* that follow the verbs show clearly what the historian is claiming about what industrialization brought about, and reveal the comparison of the effects of industrialization on the industrialized and non-industrialized countries that is the main motif of this text. The point of the text as a whole, to explain the shift in the *balance* introduced in the first sentence, is constructed in the series of clauses that move between outcomes for *industrialized nations* and *less developed nations* (also referred to as *countries, lands; the industrialized West and the rest of the world*, etc.), with *competition, poverty, and the gap* as results. Teachers report that students discuss with animation the insights that they glean in looking at a text in this way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connector</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Circumstance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The</td>
<td>Industrial Revolution</td>
<td>Shifted</td>
<td>the world balance of power</td>
<td>between industrialized nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
<td>It</td>
<td>promoted</td>
<td>competition</td>
<td>in less developed nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>industrialization</td>
<td>increased</td>
<td>poverty</td>
<td>between industrialized and non-industrialized countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>even while</td>
<td>it</td>
<td>widened</td>
<td>the gap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
<td>industrialized countries</td>
<td>strengthened</td>
<td>their economic ties.</td>
<td>Factories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In turn,</td>
<td>industrialized countries</td>
<td>To keep running</td>
<td>&lt;…&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A large inequality</td>
<td>developed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
Example of process/participant analysis
After working with students on a short passage related to the causes and effects of the American Revolution, for example, one tenth grade teacher, in a focus group discussion about the project, reported on her use of what she calls the sentence chunking strategy:

[it] enabled them to further understand how democracy developed, the process of democracy, because they understood why the colonists were upset, how the colonists reacted against King George and how King George reacted against them…it really put the participants in center stage, acting and reacting with one another

As we see, the functional grammar vocabulary articulates well with content in history, and teachers and students can readily relate the grammatical processes and participants to the historical processes and participants, using the linguistics to analyze and unpack meaning in difficult text.

3.1.2. Time markers/connectors

Many history textbook passages are organized explicitly as passage through time, and where this is the case, students can use the temporal phrases to develop timelines that lay out the sequence of events. In this text, as Table 1 shows, while there are no explicit dates or time phrases, connectors such as and, even while, and in turn suggest passage through time as well as concession and cause. The clause introduced by even while, for example, sets up the notion of strengthened economic ties that is then explicated in the next series of clauses. The analysis reveals that the explanation is constructed from the perspective of the industrialized countries, which require raw material from the less developed lands that they see as markets. The connector in turn constructs the conflation of time and cause that is a key feature of history textbooks. Teachers and students can become aware of the ways historians use these language features, gaining understanding about how academic language uses connectors that scaffold the rhetoric of the historian’s argument at the same time they suggest actual passage of time.

3.1.3. Complex nominal groups

In summarizing the meaning of imperialism, the historian uses abstractions constructed in complex nominal groups such as the policy of extending one country’s rule over many other lands; the cycle of industrialization; the development of new markets around the world; and the need for resources to supply the factories of Europe. Abstractions constructed in complex nominal groups typically summarize what has already been presented in the text. Teachers can help students make connections between different parts of the discourse by linking the abstractions with what was already presented in the text or previous paragraphs within the same textbook chapter or unit. Teachers remark on the insights they gain into their students’ understanding when they ask them to unpack these complex nominal elements by trying to specify precisely, and in more “everyday” language, the information they present.

For example, one high school teacher had students analyze the complex nominal groups used by the American President Truman and the Japanese Premier Suzuki in speeches they gave during World War II. An excerpt from the worksheet she prepared for the students is provided in Fig. 1. She reported:

We really analyzed the biases that both sides offered, and it was an amazing comparison, and taking apart those complex noun groups was particularly difficult because of the language, …but students really had fun because they could use words
Guiding Question- How do these documents enable us to understand more clearly the different beliefs of the Japanese and Americans during World War II?

Complex Noun Groups- Besides those listed below, identify two more complex noun groups from each text. Write them on the back of this page and be prepared to explain them.

“an enemy defended by vast distances and animated by desperate fanaticism”
(Truman, lines 9-10)
1. Who is the enemy?
2. Why is it ‘defended by vast distances’? Why is this defense important?
3. What does it mean to be ‘animated by desperate fanaticism’?
4. What is Truman’s intention in using these words to describe the ‘enemy’?

“The unswerving loyalty and heroism and the undying exploits of our men”
(Suzuki, line 9)
5. What does it mean to have ‘unswerving loyalty’?
6. About what kind of ‘undying exploits’ do you think Suzuki was talking?
7. For what purpose does Suzuki speak about the soldiers?

“our national policy as proclaimed by the Emperor Meiji”
(Suzuki, lines 21-22)
8. About what ‘national policy’ is Suzuki speaking?
9. Why does Suzuki add ‘as proclaimed by the Emperor Meiji’ when speaking about national policy?

Adjective Analysis- In the chart below, write some words that President Truman and Premier Suzuki use to describe the two warring sides. Write the definitions of at least two words from each section of the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President Truman’s Speech</th>
<th>Premier Suzuki’s Speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Allies</td>
<td>Description of the Allies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Axis Powers</td>
<td>Description of the Axis Powers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. How does President Truman portray the Japanese? How does Emperor Suzuki portray the Americans? Why do you think they chose such strong language?
11. How do both men portray their own countries? What is the purpose of such a portrayal?

Fig. 1. World War II primary source document analysis: The speeches of Truman and Suzuki.¹

like brute and arrogant and idiocy and those were built into the complex noun groups built into the speech, and they were able to take apart those and figure out what Truman was trying to say, what the Japanese were trying to say, and understand the bias of both sides during WWII, the racism of both sides during WWII.

Teachers are motivated to engage in linguistic analysis with their students when they recognize that focus on language gives students a greater understanding of the meanings embedded in the text. In particular, the focus on attitudinal meanings, the ‘bias’ that is inevitably constructed in interpretations of historical events, can be highlighted and discussed when students pay careful attention the meanings in the language choices made by historians.

¹We thank Katie Durham for permission to use this example.
3.1.4. Reference devices

Finally, we found that teachers can learn to identify and help their students see the role of the pronouns, synonyms, and other reference devices that construct chains of meaning as a text evolves, structuring the flow of information in a text cohesively. Reference devices are words that stand for other words in a text. There are different kinds of reference devices: some that refer back (anaphoric reference) to a noun or noun group used in a previous clause and some that refer forward (cataphoric reference) to a noun or noun group appearing in the next clause. Pronouns (e.g., *itself*, *its*, *they*) or demonstratives (e.g., *this*, *that*, *these*, *those*) are examples of these. Another common reference device, substitutes, are synonyms that appear together with other referrers or as single words that stand for a concept that has been or will be introduced. In our example text, the phrase *their economic ties* links back (with *their*) to the *countries* in the prior text, but also points forward to the discussion of *economic ties* that is developed in the next sentences about the relationship between industrialized and non-industrialized countries. Students can learn to recognize this role of synonyms in building lexical cohesion. In the example text, the noun groups *non-industrialized countries*, *less developed lands*, and *poor countries* are used as synonyms for *less developed nations*, which appears in the first paragraph of the text. These synonyms may cause a lot of difficulty to students who are unaware of their textual role.

Fig. 2 is an explanation of reference devices that was used in the workshops, and Fig. 3 provides a visual presentation of the links between reference devices and referents in our example text. Teachers and students can create visual presentations like this to reveal the complexity of the chains of referents and links between them.

Ellipsis is another aspect of this identification of referents, as the elided *actors* in the process *increased poverty* and in the nonfinite clause beginning with *To keep* have to be recognized for the text to be understood. Teachers report that ELLs often misconstrue the referents of cohesive devices in history texts, and both the analysis of clause constituents and the analysis of reference devices help students recognize when the historian is making such links.

3.2. Summary

We have illustrated how tools for deconstructing text can be taken up by content teachers and used to scaffold students’ understanding of disciplinary language. In moving from their analysis of the text to preparing activities for students, teachers have found it useful to ask students to identify the grammatical *processes, participants*, and *circumstances*, to see the meanings in *time markers* and *connectors*, to unpack *complex nominal groups*, and to link cohesive devices (*referrers* and *synonyms*) to their referents, recovering participants that are elided by the historian. Students and teachers focus on these language features by creating charts that provide graphic representations of the clause constituents, and then move through the text clause by clause in interactive discussion as they unpack the text and explore the meanings constructed by the historian. As they do this, teachers raise questions that engage students in grade-level discussion of important history content. Teachers report that both ELLs and other students in their classes enjoy and benefit from this activity. For struggling readers, it slows down the pace of reading in a way that enables them to participate, even when their language proficiency and reading skills lag behind grade level. And for more proficient readers, the careful analysis of text enables them to see meanings that they might otherwise read over. For all
students, this approach enables participation in conversation about historical content that teachers find engaging and fruitful.

History is interpretation, and in order to interpret, the historian has to generalize. The historian also wants to show the multiplicity of causes that are at stake in any explanation of historical events, and often cannot attribute agency to particular social actors. These pressures on historians can be seen in predictable patterns in history textbooks, where generalized actors or abstractions are presented as bringing about events, with passage through time and causality constructed in similar language resources. The process of text

Reference devices are words that stand for other words in a text. There are different kinds of reference devices: some that refer back (anaphoric reference) to a noun or noun group used in a previous clause and some that refer forward (cataphoric reference) to a noun or noun group appearing in the next clause. Here are some common reference devices used in texts:

- **REFERRERS** refer back to a noun used in a previous clause or refer forward to a noun or noun group appearing in the next clause.
  Referrers can be **PRONOUNS** such as *itself, its, they* or **DEMONSTRATIVES**, for example, *this, that, these, those.*

- **SUBSTITUTES** are synonyms that appear together with other referrers or as single words that stand for a concept that has been or will be introduced (if substitutes are not used, the text becomes very repetitive). Substitutes may appear together with referrers such as in the following sentence:

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By 1650, many western European nations were working to improve their economies, spurred on by a new theory called mercantilism. This economic theory was meant to increase a nation’s wealth and thus boost its power.
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*From text book: America: Pathways to the Present p. 23*

**their** is a pronoun that refers back to many western European nations.

**This** is a demonstrative and **economic theory** is a substitute for **mercantilism**.

**its** is a pronoun that refers back to nation’s wealth.

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Fig. 2. Handout on reference devices.
Worldwide Impact of Industrialization

The Industrial Revolution shifted the world balance of power. It promoted competition between industrialized nations and increased poverty in less developed nations.

Rise of Global Inequality

Industrialization widened the gap between industrialized and non-industrialized countries, even while it strengthened their economic ties. To keep factories running and workers fed, industrialized countries required a steady supply of raw materials from less developed lands. In turn, industrialized countries viewed poor countries as markets for their manufactured products. A large inequality developed between the industrialized West and the rest of the world.

Britain led in exploiting its overseas colonies for resources and markets. Soon other European countries, the United States, Russia, and Japan followed Britain’s lead, seizing colonies for their economic resources. Imperialism, the policy of extending one country’s rule over many other lands, gave even more power and wealth to these already wealthy nations.

Imperialism was born out of the cycle of industrialization, the development of new markets around the world, and the need for resources to supply the factories of Europe.

N.B. Reference devices are in bold and what they link to is underlined.

Fig. 3. Reference devices and what they link to.

deconstruction and discussion about meaning helps readers see how the historian has constructed the passage, focusing on the key language features that are important in writing history. The key motifs of time and cause, abstraction and generalization, and the construction of agency and causality are features that teachers and students can look for in the language choices of the historian.

The resources we have been describing here have robust distribution in history textbooks (Coffin, 2006; Martin, 2002), as they help the historian do the things we see this historian doing: interpreting abstractly, conceding, putting time and cause together, and attributing agency. While each text draws on a different set of language resources, the motifs are repeated over and over again, and teachers report that students quickly begin to see patterns and to comment on the historian’s choices as they go on to read new material. They also report that at first it takes time to develop expertise in these strategies, but their students’ positive responses to the activities and their enjoyment of the attention to language motivate the teachers to become more adept in seeing the patterns in the text. Over time, they find it easier to prepare the classroom activities, as the approach foregrounds the historical knowledge that teachers want students to develop.

Applied linguists and EAP teachers can play a special role in this work with content teachers. EAP teachers can promote a focus on language in ways that reveal and uncover
the varied meanings that any text presents by collaborating with content teachers to select language features that students might find challenging and to use language analysis to focus on content. Such collaboration between language and content specialists is a fundamental aspect of this work. EAP teachers who work in pull-out ESL classes can work with content teachers to select grade-level text passages to focus on with students. In the content-based ESL class, the approach can be used with ELLs to deconstruct important texts and help students see how meaning is constructed in language in history texts, helping ELLs develop language proficiency, reading skills, and historical knowledge.

This integrated approach to language and content, providing a language for talking about how the historian has constructed a particular text to interpret historical events, can be a powerful tool for raising teachers’ awareness about the challenges of learning history and can enable them to contribute more effectively to the language development of ELLs in their mainstream classes. Hundreds of teachers across California have been introduced to this approach over the past several years, and many report that students who have been offered opportunities to understand the role of language in constructing historical knowledge benefit from this both in their better understanding of what they read and in producing more effective texts when they write. Other evidence also supports these claims. In a program impact evaluation of this work conducted by an outside evaluator and designed as a quasi-experiment, students whose teachers had participated in the literacy strategy workshops made significantly greater gains on the California History-Social Science test (a standardized measure) than students whose teachers had not participated in the workshops (Gargani, 2006). ELLs were among those who show great benefits from the approach. In addition, students in classrooms with project teachers also performed better on a history essay writing task in which students had to develop a thesis and support it with evidence and analysis (Schleppegrell, Gargani, Berman, de Oliveira, & McTygue, 2006), aspects of writing that were supported in the professional development by explicit focus on the language of history. We believe that the close reading and deconstruction of texts helps students learn more history, and that it also enables them to write with greater authority about historical events.

4. Discussion

The terms language, content, and integration are typically broadly defined and expressed very generally in discussion of CBI (Davison & Williams, 2001). Often it is recommended that a focus on form and meaning be balanced, indicating that form and meaning are seen as aspects of language that can be addressed separately, with the content considered a means of selecting appropriate, authentic, or motivating language instruction. We suggest here that by putting the language focus into the content classroom, with a functional focus on the meanings construed in the language, we transcend the form/meaning dichotomy and enable teachers to simultaneously focus on form and meaning by seeing how the language choices of the historian construct meaning in history.

As the CBI approach spreads beyond the North American and Australian contexts, with important recent work done in the European Community and Africa (Stoller, 2004), a focus on content through language rather than on language through content can be a means through which EAP instruction can be accomplished in an “ecological” (Garner & Borg, 2005) framework. Garner and Borg argue, and we agree, that CBI approaches need more than authentic texts, genre-based rules, discipline-specific vocabulary, and ‘naturalistic’
communicative acts or exchanges. Garner & Borg criticize a linguistics that has been concerned mainly with rules, and highlight the need to focus on communication instead. In the setting we have described, the approach they recommend, based on notions of holistic, dynamic, interactive, and situated learning, is naturally implemented. The language system is defined by its actual manifestation in the language through which history is constructed, and the focus is on “complex wholes and systems,…diversity, interaction, process, and complexity,” rather than systems of abstract rules and relations (Garner and Borg, 2005, p. 121). The context is always part of the interaction, and language skills are not learned in isolation from their contexts of use.

A CBI approach that situates the language learning in the content classroom depends on the development of the content teacher’s understanding of language. EAP instructors take on a different role in such contexts, enabling teachers to use language to teach content, rather than using content to teach language. Instead of facing the EAP dilemma of finding relevant content to further language development goals, this approach focuses on enabling teachers to foreground the language as a way into the content. In this contextualized approach, talking about language is talking about content. Focus on language in the content classroom can also lead to advances in assessment that link subject matter teaching and academic language in the way called for by Bailey and Butler (2002).

We have shown how revising the notion of content-based learning through a functional theory of language allows for a simultaneous focus on the meanings that are made (the “content”) and the language through which the meanings are realized. We have described a text analysis process, based on functional linguistic theory, that illustrates how clause and discourse level analysis of the language that constructs history enables the teacher to engage students in grade-level discussion of important history content, even when the students’ language proficiency and reading skills lag behind grade level. By taking meaning as primary and using language analysis to uncover meaning, this approach is a powerful tool for raising teachers’ awareness about the challenges of learning history, and enables them to more effectively contribute to the language development of all learners.

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References


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