
The Grammar of History: Enhancing Content-Based Instruction Through a Functional Focus on Language

MARY J. SCHLEPPEGRELL

*University of California, Davis
Davis, California, United States*

MARIANA ACHUGAR

*Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States*

TERESA OTEÍZA

*Eastern Washington University
Cheney, Washington, United States*

In K-12 contexts, the teaching of English language learners (ELLs) has been greatly influenced by the theory and practice of content-based instruction (CBI). A focus on content can help students achieve grade-level standards in school subjects while they develop English proficiency, but CBI practices have focused primarily on vocabulary and the use of graphic organizers along with cooperative learning activities. This article reports the results of a project intended to enhance CBI through activities that focus on the role of language in constructing knowledge. The strategies we present are based on identification and analysis of the challenges presented by grade-level textbooks in middle school history classrooms. By engaging in functional linguistic analysis, ELLs and their teachers can deconstruct the language of their textbooks, enabling students to develop academic language by focusing on the meaning-making potential of the historian's language choices.

Content-based instruction (CBI) is an approach to teaching ESL that attempts to combine language with disciplinary learning, suggesting that teachers can build students' knowledge of grade-level concepts in content areas at the same time students are developing English proficiency. This article shows how CBI can be enriched through an understanding that language and content are never separate, that content in school contexts is always presented and assessed through language, and that as the difficulty of the concepts we want students to learn increases,

the language that construes those concepts also becomes more complex and distanced from ordinary uses of language. No language is ever taught in isolation from content. Even at beginning levels, when learners are working to gain interactional fluency in everyday uses of language, they are always also learning something else: how to greet someone, how to ask for something, how to tell about an event, how to enact a culture. The language of texts at higher levels of schooling is also always doing something, such as revealing how science is done, how history is constructed, or how narratives are told in a particular culture. But the way language does these things is quite different from the way it does ordinary interaction. It is not just that the words are different; the way the grammar is deployed and the grammatical choices that realize the texts of advanced literacy are different from the English language that students learn as they enact their daily lives (Schleppegrell, 2001, in press). To achieve advanced literacy and disciplinary knowledge, students need to be able to understand how language construes meanings in content-area texts and how the important meanings and concepts of school subjects are realized in language. In other words, disciplinary knowledge is not taught in isolation from language.

This article reports on a case study that explored history teaching at the middle school level. Through class observation, interviews with students, and analysis of texts, we identified the kinds of linguistic challenges students face in developing advanced literacy in an academic discipline. To extend beyond the approaches used in typical CBI, we describe the way that functional grammatical analysis helped to highlight the linguistic features that are problematic for students when they try to get meaning from history textbooks. Drawing on our experiences in conducting language awareness workshops for history teachers, we suggest some ways that teachers can help students focus on language as a means of achieving grade-appropriate understanding of history concepts. Such a focus on language provides students with tools for reflecting on how historians construe meanings, helping them develop critical language awareness.

CBI AND FOCUS ON LANGUAGE

CBI began to gain prominence in the 1980s in the United States when approaches were needed to promote simultaneous content and language learning for a growing number of English language learners (ELLs) in the schools. The basic notion behind CBI is that language should be taught in conjunction with the teaching of academic subject matter. Snow, Met, and Genesee (1989) suggest that it provides students with comprehensible input, opportunities for meaningful use of aca-

ademic language, and practice with the cognitively demanding, decontextualized language tasks required in academic learning. As is clear from the constructs that Snow et al. use, the work of Krashen (e.g., Krashen, 1982), in his notion of comprehensible input, and Cummins (e.g., Cummins, 1984), with his notions of cognitive demand and decontextualized language, were highly influential in the development of CBI. Modeled on the success of immersion programs, CBI has been promoted—through theme-based ESL-EFL, sheltered classes, and adjunct courses—as a way of providing contexts for teaching language through a focus on grade-appropriate content (see also Snow, 1998).

Typical recommendations for a CBI approach include focus on disciplinary vocabulary and use of a variety of learning and teaching strategies, especially visual aids and graphic organizers to make meanings clear (e.g., Chamot & O'Malley, 1987). Teachers are encouraged to help students comprehend and use the language structures and discourse features found in different subjects and to facilitate students' practice with academic tasks such as listening to explanations, reading for information, participating in academic discussions, and writing reports. This is a solid foundation on which to incorporate an explicit focus on how language is used in different subject areas to construe particular kinds of meanings.

But CBI recommendations typically deal only very generally with the linguistic issues related to instruction in different disciplines. Short (1994), for example, in making recommendations for CBI in social studies, suggests using materials and activities that “[make] the reading process more comprehensible through vocabulary previews, graphic organizers, and so forth” (p. 587). She also recommends that teachers use cooperative learning and hands-on activities. Her language-related recommendations include focusing on vocabulary and “explicitly teaching linguistic cues of text structure” (p. 587). Short's work is addressed primarily to students at beginning levels of language learning, and her major emphasis is on visual presentation of information to make materials more readily accessible to such learners, referring to Cummins's work in calling social studies “cognitively demanding and context reduced communication” (p. 585; see also Short, 1991, 1993; Short, Mahrer, Elfin, Liten-Tejada, & Montone, 1994).¹ Although such a focus may be useful for beginning students, for students who want to achieve grade-level standards, CBI needs to be enhanced through a greater focus on language itself to help students cope with the complexity of grade-level concepts.

¹ Other work on CBI in history teaching has relevance for higher education (Bernier, 1997; Srole, 1997) or the teaching of writing (McCarthy Young & Leinhardt, 1998).

Recent trends in L2 research suggest that a focus on form can be important for students' language development (see, e.g., articles in Doughty & Williams, 1998). This research stresses that focus on form should be done in ways that are not isolated from the communicative context, but researchers take different positions on whether the focus on form should be incidental (Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001) or through "structured input" (Van Patten, 2000), or should be reactive (Doughty & Williams) rather than proactive, through recognition and awareness focus lessons (Blyth, 2000). Focus-on-form approaches are typically not informed by a theory of language that is discourse and meaning based and instead view language acquisition as the accumulation of sets of structures and rules. The alternative view presented here, based on a functional theory of language, sees how the linguistic features of disciplinary texts construe particular kinds of meanings. This makes a focus on language central to the teaching of disciplinary content.

Functional linguists have developed significant knowledge about the linguistic features of history textbooks in different languages (e.g., Barnard, 2000; Coffin, 1997; Eggins, Wignell, & Martin, 1993; Martin, 2002; McNamara, 1989; Oteiza, 2003; Unsworth, 1999; Veel & Coffin, 1996). We draw on these analyses, along with our own analyses of California history textbooks, to extend CBI approaches beyond vocabulary, graphic organizers, and cooperative interaction to help students develop advanced literacy through a linguistic focus on language in context. Rather than making the content less difficult, we suggest that a functional text analysis can provide tools for helping students work with grade-level textbook material and at the same time develop critical language awareness.

In this project, we focused on ELLs at intermediate and advanced levels in mainstream history classrooms with the goal of designing tools that teachers could use with students to focus on language as a meaning-making resource. The challenges for L2 students in disciplinary learning become greater as they proceed through the school years, with particular difficulties typically emerging at the middle and secondary school levels. It is at this time that the kinds of texts students are expected to read and write become increasingly distanced from the ordinary language through which everyday life is lived, taking on features of vocabulary, grammar, and discourse structuring that are functional for the presentation of knowledge in various subject areas (Christie, 2002). The main goals of our study were to identify the linguistic challenges that ELLs encounter when learning history in mainstream classes and to design some pedagogical tools to enable content teachers to help students meet these challenges.

CASE STUDY: LEARNING LANGUAGE, LEARNING HISTORY

The pedagogical strategies presented here resulted from part of an ongoing longitudinal project in interaction with the California History-Social Science Project, where teachers collaborate to promote excellence in the teaching and learning of history and social science.² A current focus of the project is making grade-level history standards accessible to the many ELLs in California classrooms. The linguistic reality of California schools has changed dramatically in the past 2 decades, with more than 25% of all California public school children designated ELL. Many of these students are not themselves immigrants, but are U.S.-born children of immigrants who live in communities where they have little exposure to academic English outside of school. Many of these students are fluent in the spoken English needed for everyday interaction but have considerable difficulty working with the language of content-area textbooks.

Participants

Participants in the project were California middle school and secondary school history teachers who signed up for in-service summer institutes over a 3-year period, a total of 79 teachers. The teachers who registered for the institutes wanted tools to help ELLs and low-literacy students gain access to grade-level content at the same time they develop academic language. The teachers had no formal training in or knowledge of functional linguistics. Following the first summer institute, one of the participating teachers volunteered to provide access to her classroom over a 3-month period for focused observations and naturalistic inquiry into the challenges of teaching and learning history. This was a mainstream history class with 15% (4) of the 29 students identified as ELLs and with many others who were low-literacy students, some bilingual and some who spoke nonstandard varieties of English. Spanish was the most heavily represented language, but students also had Vietnamese and Punjabi as L1s.

² For more information about the California History-Social Science Project, see <http://csmc.ucop.edu/chssp/>

Procedures

The first summer's institute was 4 full days (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), with 14 participants. We presented some basic notions of text types and language focus but had not yet developed the strategies presented here for working with text. During the next academic year, we conducted focused observations and naturalistic inquiry in the middle school classroom over a 3-month period. We videotaped and analyzed a complete instructional unit and the context in which it took place and conducted a discourse analysis of the textbooks used at this level (Appleby, Brinkley, & McPherson, 2000; Armento et al., 1999; Stuckey & Kerrigan Salvucci, 2000). We also interviewed students and teachers and analyzed the California History Standards to identify the linguistic correlates of the content demands (expressed, for example, in expectations that students will analyze, discuss, or explain what they have learned).

Throughout the data collection and analysis stages new questions emerged that directed our attention to how students use written texts in accessing content. This led us to expand the institute in the second summer to 5 days, devoting mornings to presentation of the functional grammar strategies discussed here and asking the 27 participating teachers to apply the strategies in developing classroom activities during the afternoons. We learned from the challenges teachers faced in adopting these strategies and continued to solicit feedback during the following academic year. In the third summer, following trials of the approach presented in this article, we held an 8-day institute so that the 38 participating teachers would have time to develop complete instructional units using these tools. Through this recursive process of marshaling professional knowledge, working with teachers to apply insights about language, and analyzing data and history texts, we developed both a deeper understanding of the linguistic challenges of learning history and some specific instructional strategies that learners can use to get meaning through language analysis.

LINGUISTIC CHALLENGES OF LEARNING HISTORY

The linguistic challenges we focused on were primarily those of the textbook language, which students need to be able to read to understand history content. Of course, students also need to engage in experiences that enable them to talk about history, to engage with artifacts, and to explore new concepts through a variety of modes, all of which may help to provide access to background knowledge that students, especially ELLs, may not already have. The primary source of disciplinary knowl-

edge, however, is the history textbook, and therefore much of our effort to identify linguistic challenges was directed toward understanding the role of the textbook in history learning, as well as its language.

History Textbooks

Textbooks are especially important in social studies instruction:

Social studies in general relies heavily on the textbook (and teacher's lecture) to present the bulk of the information students are expected to learn. . . . The amount of reading and writing in social studies classes surpasses that in most math or science classes, and the reading passages are long and filled with abstract concepts and unfamiliar schema that cannot be easily demonstrated. (Short, 1994, p. 591)

Textbooks have certain advantages for learning; students can take them home and study them, and they can be used to help students learn to read critically and develop strategies that can be transferred to other contexts.

Despite the central role textbooks play in history learning, researchers agree that they have significant shortcomings. Beck, McKeown, and Gromoll (1989) describe fifth-grade history texts that do not establish "clear, explanatory presentation of what the topic at hand is" (p. 139) and lack explanation of "relationships among ideas, motivations, and consequences" (p. 147). The texts also assume "an unrealistic variety and depth of background knowledge from target-age students," including knowledge of sophisticated and abstract concepts, and assume that students "can make inferences among events and ideas without much, if any, explanatory assistance" (p. 151). So even native speakers face challenges in reading grade-level textbooks.

In these history textbooks, information is often presented as a list of events that assumes the reader can make the necessary connections between them, without elaboration through more detail, comment, or example. Eighth-grade students noted this difficulty during our interviews with them. They all agreed that history textbooks are difficult and boring and attributed these characteristics to two main causes: the abstract words and the lack of explanation and details. They emphasized that the textbook does not offer an explanation of the events and is therefore difficult to follow. They made comments such as, "It is difficult to keep track. . . . There are only facts"; "facts, you don't understand the details"; "only facts, facts, facts . . . you get lost among too many facts"; "The authors need to put themselves in our position. . . . They don't explain everything."

Linguistic Analysis

Our analysis of eighth-grade California history textbooks attempted to identify the linguistic reasons for observations such as the one made by the students. We focused on the rhetorical structure of the chapters, grammatical analyses of sample sections, and task analyses of the thinking skills and writing sections. We found that students need to be able to work with text that is largely expository, focusing on “how things are” by telling about and explaining ideas and events, with biographies and narratives supporting and complementing the exposition. Although temporal organization is always present, the degree to which it is the main organizing tool varies according to the purpose of the text—whether it is a recount of events, a debate over ideas, or an explanation. This means that the features of the texts vary. For example, a chapter about the Constitution takes a different form than a chapter about the Civil War.

The findings of our discourse analysis correspond to the analysis by Eggins et al. (1993) of middle school history textbooks in Australia. They characterize the historical perspective students need to understand history as

a sense of time, a sense of cause-effect relationship, an understanding of the interaction of past and present, and an understanding that history is a dynamic relationship of people, place, and time in which some events can be judged to be more significant than others. (p. 75)

They point out, however, that when historians write history texts, they arrange, interpret, and generalize from facts and events. In so doing, rather than bringing events to life, “people are effaced, actions become things, and sequence in time is replaced by frozen setting in time” (p. 75). This is done through particular linguistic choices, and these choices are quite different from the language students use to talk about the events of everyday life.

Our analysis also benefited from Martin’s (1991) and Unsworth’s (1999) studies of Australian middle school history textbooks, which identified some key linguistic features that characterize historical discourse. These include nominalization, reasoning within the clause through choice of verbs, and ambiguous use of conjunctions. Each of these features presents major challenges to students unfamiliar with academic registers and makes it difficult to understand the meanings being constructed. Nominalizations represent information that has been introduced in verbs and whole clauses as nominal elements (noun phrases). Nominalizations can present a series of events as a single grammatical “participant” (*Reconstruction, Missouri Compromise*) and can

hide the human actors behind history by presenting them as generalized classes (*settlers, voters*). Reasoning within a clause through verbs rather than between clauses through conjunctions is another feature of history textbooks and one that results in very abstract texts. Cause-effect relations, for example, are typically expressed through verbs such as *established* and *resulted in* rather than through conjunctions such as *because* or *so* (Martin, p. 326).

When conjunctive resources are used in history texts, their meanings are often different from their typical meanings in everyday language, as they not only refer to relationships in the sequence of historical events being presented (external relationships) but also structure a text by linking the elements into a cohesive whole (internal relationships). Often the internal relationships are implicit rather than explicit, and sometimes they have to be understood as relating a sequence of clauses rather than single clauses, for example, when a new paragraph is introduced by the phrase *In this context*, referring back to what might be a long explanation of events. Conjunctions are also used in ways that are ambiguous, especially between temporal and conditional meanings.

In addition, history textbooks provide limited elaboration of the terms and events that are introduced. Often the meaning of technical terms is assumed rather than explained, and important terms are glossed with an appositive phrase rather than being fully defined. It is these patterns in history texts, rather than just isolated vocabulary, that make this language difficult. Thus the linguistic choices that authors make for expressing events and concepts in history result in challenges for readers.

Reading Challenges

The most problematic aspects of reading history include the identification of key events and participants and understanding the organizational features that give a text coherence (Beck et al., 1989; McKeown, Beck, Sinatra, & Loxterman, 1992). Beck et al. point out that explaining how the various elements of a historical situation fit together “is the key to making instructional content meaningful” (p. 112). This means that teachers must intervene to help students construct a coherent message and knowledge framework from texts.

Current research on reading comprehension indicates that grammatical knowledge, lexical access, and semantic proposition formation are ongoing processes that construct comprehension networks (see Alderson, 1993; Gernsbacher & Givon, 1995; Grabe, 2000). As Grabe notes, “The notion of grammatical structure as signaling mechanism for discourse processing is gaining greater influence” (p. 236). Linguistic knowledge and awareness of language structure are major foundations of fluent

reading. For L2 readers, knowledge and awareness of language is especially important, as “L2 readers experience a much more conscious awareness of how language works at both the syntactic and discourse levels. . . . They must spend much more time attending to formal aspects of the L2” (Grabe, p. 243).

We found that teachers had few strategies for working with grade-level texts in ways that could provide ELLs with access to the meanings expressed in the history texts. In the following sections we present a set of tools for unpacking the dense and abstract language of history textbooks through analysis of the grammatical and lexical choices and the discursive strategies of the authors. The goal is to provide students with access to the meanings constructed in texts and to enable them to develop academic English while critically assessing the explanations of events and participants that constitute the discourse of history. Understanding the ways historians construct meaning helps students recognize the positions that the historians expect them to take in reading the text, giving them the choice to accept or resist these positionings.

GETTING MEANING THROUGH LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

Our collaboration with the teachers in the California History–Social Science Project led us to design pedagogical activities and teacher education workshops to develop the critical language awareness that students and teachers need to overcome the linguistic challenges of history textbooks. The design of these language awareness activities draws on the functional linguistic framework of Halliday (1994), which treats language as a network of systems through which each clause construes three different kinds of meaning: experiential meanings (what is happening), interpersonal meanings (what roles participants are playing), and textual meanings (how the information is organized). By looking at a text from each of these perspectives, students can answer the kinds of questions that teachers often ask about history texts: *who* is acting, *what* is happening, *when* and *where* the events took place, and *why* they are important (see, e.g., Short et al., 1994, p. 34). As finding this information depends on having strategies for getting meaning from a text, the functional linguistics approach helps students see how these meanings are construed and gives them strategies they can use to analyze how a historical explanation is constructed and presented (see also Schleppegrell & Achugar, 2003).

To develop and lead the activities presented here, the teacher selects a passage from the textbook that has important history content related to the grade-level standards. Then the teacher leads the students in analyzing the language choices the author has made in writing that

passage. By analyzing the lexical and grammatical features of a textbook passage, ELLs focus on the choices historians make in writing about history, on the way different meanings are presented, and on how important historical meanings are constructed. The grammatical characteristics of the discourse of history that make the text abstract and difficult to follow, such as nominalizations, choice of verbs and ways of reasoning, ambiguity of conjunctions and time reference, and lack of explicit explanations, become a focus of discussion as students analyze texts to unpack these meanings and understand the ambiguities. The following are four of the most important points for language analysis in the history class that we developed for working with middle school history texts.

Identifying Events

One of the difficulties history textbooks present to ELLs is how to identify the events that are relevant to grasping the historical content. Not every clause is about an event, so as a first step, students identify all the different kinds of things the text is doing by categorizing the verbs the historians use in the passage according to the types of meaning they construe. The verbs used in writing about history can be classified as *action* verbs such as *fight*, *defend*, *build*, *vote*, and so forth; *saying* and *thinking-feeling* verbs such as *said*, *expressed*, *suppose*, *like*, *resent*, and so forth; and *relating* verbs such as *is*, *have*, *is called*, and so forth. This categorization helps students understand when authors are writing about events (action verbs), when they are giving opinions or telling what others have said (thinking-feeling and saying verbs), and when they are giving background information (relating verbs).

As students undertake this analysis, they find that verbs are sometimes used in nonconventional ways or with metaphoric meanings, as we see in Examples 1 and 2, from a text about the Missouri Compromise (Appleby et al., 2000, pp. 437–438):

1. By 1819 the Missouri Territory *included* about 50,000 whites and 10,000 slaves.
2. The admission of a new state would *upset* that balance.

In 1, the verb *included* implies an action; this is the way most students are familiar with it in everyday use of the term (e.g., to be *included* in a game). In this text, however, *included* functions as a relating verb that establishes the situation in the Missouri Territory at the time of the Compromise debate. In 2, the verb *upset* is used metaphorically. These academic uses of verbs can make it hard for students to make sense of

what is happening in the text. Analyzing them in terms of semantic categories can help students identify the meanings that the specific text is highlighting.

Identifying Participants

Another difficulty ELLs face is identifying the participants involved in the events. Typically history textbooks present very few participants as individuals or people. Participants are represented on a continuum that moves from more concrete to more abstract terms (van Leeuwen, 1996). For example, human participants appear as

- categories identified in terms of classification (*antifederalists, authorities*)
- categories of interpersonal relations (*the founding fathers*)
- categories of functions (*the defendant, the publisher*)
- collectives (*Americans*)
- impersonal terms that imply a spatial objectification (*the House, Congress*)

From a functional grammar perspective, *participants* are noun phrases, including nominalizations (*the balance had been preserved*). At the more abstract end of the continuum are institutions (*the thriving cotton economy depended on slave labor*), things that are presented as acting independently of the people that produced them (*The Compromise also prohibited slavery in other American territories*), or ideas with no concrete referent (*rights, compromise*). Nonhuman participants appear in the text as events or inanimate objects that take the place of social actors. That is why it may be hard to find the *who* in history texts, because sometimes the *who* is a *what*. In some cases, embedded clauses appear as participants in other clauses (*Intentionally writing a lie that harms another is called libel*). These represent the most difficult type of language to unpack.

The presentation of participants as abstract entities sometimes hides who is really acting (Schleppegrell, 1997). But this way of organizing texts is useful for historians, as it allows priority to be given to the events, and at the same time it allows a lot of information to be packed into a few words. For example, if what the word *slavery* refers to (the economic system used by some people in the United States that forced African Americans to work for others without any pay or any individual rights) had to be spelled out each time it is used instead of using the word *slavery*, the text would be very long and it would be hard for the writer to get to the point. But these abstract terms need to be unpacked and discussed if students are to fully understand their meanings in context.

Identifying the Relationship Between Participants and Events

Once students identify the types of verbs and the grammatical participants in each clause, they learn to identify the roles the participants play in different kinds of clause structures. For example, clauses with action verbs show *who* is acting upon *whom*, clauses with saying-thinking verbs present *sayers* or *experiencers* with different points of view, and clauses with relating verbs establish background or description. By finding the nominal elements (noun phrases) that appear as subjects and objects of the different types of verbs, students can see the different roles represented by these grammatical participants and the messages they are presenting (*who* they are, *what* they are doing or saying, and *how* they stand on an issue).

For example, analyzing participants in clauses with action verbs reveals the different power relations between participants in historical events. Example 3 is a paragraph from the Missouri Compromise text (Appleby et al., 2000) followed by an analysis in Figure 1 that shows who is acting (*agents* or doers of the actions) and who is being acted upon (*receivers* of the actions) to illuminate the meanings constructed by the action processes in the text.

3. Many Missouri settlers had brought enslaved African Americans into the territory with them. By 1819 the Missouri Territory included about 50,000 whites and 10,000 slaves. When Missouri applied to Congress for admission as a state, its constitution allowed slavery.

In 1819, 11 states in the Union permitted slavery and 11 did not. The Senate—with two members from each state—was therefore evenly balanced between slave and free states. The admission of a new state would upset that balance. (pp. 437–438)

FIGURE 1

Agent (doer of the action)	Action	Receiver of the action
Missouri settlers	had brought	enslaved African Americans
Missouri	applied to	Congress
Its constitution	allowed	slavery
Eleven states in the Union	permitted	slavery
Eleven [states]	did not [permit]	[slavery]
The admission of a new state	would upset	that balance

Looking at the agents and the receivers of the actions, students identify the goings on in this passage, developing an understanding of what the nominalization *balance* stands for and what is in balance, as a way of understanding the basis of the Missouri Compromise. In addition, students are asked to reflect on *who* the agents are. As they see that African Americans and slavery are not presented as agents in this text, students recognize that the historians' language choices shape what we learn about history.

This analysis of actors and actions focuses on the events in a passage. The different points of view presented in a text, on the other hand, can be made visible by identifying the experiencers-sayers and messages in the clauses with verbs of thinking-feeling and saying. A text with a preponderance of thinking-saying verbs often constructs a historical debate. An example of such a text is one on Reconstruction after the Civil War (Appleby et al., 2000). This text is presented in Example 4.

4. People in all parts of the nation agreed that the devastated Southern economy and society needed rebuilding. They disagreed bitterly, however, over how to accomplish this. This period of rebuilding is called *Reconstruction*. This term also refers to the various plans for accomplishing the rebuilding.

Lincoln's Plan

President Lincoln offered the first plan for accepting the Southern states back into the Union. In December 1863, during the Civil War, the president announced what came to be known as the Ten Percent Plan. When 10 percent of the voters of a state took the oath of loyalty to the Union, the state could form a new government and adopt a new constitution that had to ban slavery.

Lincoln wanted to encourage Southerners who supported the Union to take charge of the state governments. He believed that punishing the South would serve no useful purpose and would only delay healing a torn nation.

The president offered *amnesty*—a pardon—to all white Southerners, except Confederate leaders, who were willing to swear loyalty to the Union. Lincoln also supported granting the right to vote to African Americans who were educated or had served in the Union army. He would not force the Southern states to give rights held by white Americans to African Americans.

In 1864 three states that the Union army occupied—Louisiana, Arkansas, and Tennessee—established governments under Lincoln's plan. These states then became caught in a struggle between the president and Congress when Congress refused to seat the states' representatives.

A Rival Plan

A group of Republicans in Congress considered Lincoln's plan too mild. They argued that Congress, not the president, should control Reconstruction policy. Because these Republicans favored a tougher and more *radical*, or extreme, approach to Reconstruction, they were called Radical Republicans. A leading Radical Republican, Thaddeus Stevens, declared that Southern institutions "must be broken up and relaid, or all our blood and treasure have been spent in vain." (p. 495–596)

Figure 2 presents the grammatical participants in clauses of thinking, feeling, and saying: the sayers or experiencers and the messages. The messages are nouns or noun clauses that present the positions of the sayers or experiencers on the issues in the Reconstruction text (Appleby et al., 2000). The analysis in Figure 2 helps students answer questions about whose views are presented in the text, what those views are, and whether they are in agreement or disagreement. Discussion about these

FIGURE 2
Points of View in the Reconstruction Text

Participant (sayer or experiencer of thoughts-feelings)	Thinking, feeling, or saying verb	Message
People in all parts of the nation	agreed	that the devastated Southern economy and society needed rebuilding
They [people in all parts of the nation]	disagreed	how to accomplish this
The president	announced	what came to be known as the Ten Percent Plan
Lincoln	wanted	to encourage Southerners who supported the Union to take charge of the state governments
He [Lincoln]	believed	that punishing the South would serve no useful purpose and would only delay healing a torn nation
A group of Republicans in Congress	considered	Lincoln's plan too mild
They [a group of Republicans]	argued	that Congress, not the president, should control Reconstruction policy
These Republicans	avored	a tougher and more radical, or extreme, approach to Reconstruction
A leading Radical Republican, Thaddeus Stevens	declared	that Southern institutions "must be broken up and relaid, or all our blood and treasure have been spent in vain"

questions demonstrates to students that the textbook authors are making choices about whose views are presented and whose views are absent from the historical discourse. This kind of analysis also requires that students identify the antecedents of pronominal referents or fill in elided forms in clauses such as “I did not,” an activity that may reveal interesting misunderstandings and helps students see the forms language takes and how it functions in such texts.

Analysis of clauses with relating verbs is intended to help students focus on information presented by the historians as background. Sometimes historians choose to represent events without relating them to an agent or previous event that caused them to happen. For example, the introduction to the Reconstruction text begins with a description of the state of the South at the end of the Civil War, as we see in Example 5:

5. The war had left the South with enormous problems. Most of the major fighting had taken place in the South. Towns and cities were in ruin, plantations burned, and roads, bridges, and railroads destroyed.

More than 258,000 Confederate soldiers had died in the war, and illness and wounds weakened thousands more. Many Southern families faced the task of rebuilding their lives with few resources and without the help of adult males. (p. 495)

The text presents the situation of the South as a given, without attributing responsibility for the problems the South faced. The grammatical analysis helps students recognize this as a way of “naturalizing” events. Relating verbs such as *were* as well as grammatical resources that hide or obscure agency are relevant for this. Events are presented as just happening (*soldiers had died*); or as having been done by an unidentified agent, through the resources of passive voice (*roads, bridges, and railroads were destroyed*); or as having been done by an agent that is a nonhuman actor (*The war had left the South with enormous problems*). In addition, background information in this reading is presented by using the past perfect tense to introduce events prior to the time that is the central focus (*Most of the major fighting had taken place in the South*).³ Through these grammatical resources, the historians set the scene for a discussion of Reconstruction after the Civil War.

This approach to text analysis, identifying the types of verbs and then analyzing each type in terms of the participants in that kind of process, is intended to help students uncover the meanings in a textbook passage.

³ History texts often alternate between retelling events from the point of view of the moment of speaking (e.g., using simple present tense) and from the point of view of a recollection (e.g., using simple past or past perfect). They also use realis and irrealis mood to present different historical participants’ views of events. These and other features not dealt with here in detail also contribute to the complexity of history discourse.

Analyzing action processes helps students identify who is acting and who is being acted upon. By analyzing agent and recipient or beneficiary roles, students get clear evidence about who has the power to influence another social actor. By analyzing the grammatical participants in saying, feeling, and thinking processes, students identify whose views are presented and what those views are. Identifying relating verbs and other resources for description helps students see what is presented by the historian as “the way things are,” as background to the events.⁴

Identifying How Information Is Organized

To facilitate students’ understanding of the relationships between events (*when* and *why* events occurred), a textual analysis of some discursive features can provide clues about how information is organized and arguments are structured. To recognize the type of connection established between the events, students identify how historians have linked the various elements in the text, analyzing the verbs used to indicate causality and temporal relations and the conjunctions and connectors that mark time, cause, condition, or other relationships. Texts have different organizational features, so the tools used to analyze them need to be flexible enough to bring out the meanings related to the specific content that is in focus in a particular text. The charts and graphic organizers that teachers often use typically assume that all texts are the same (for example, by asking students to look for a problem and solution). Teachers and students need tools for analyzing the organizational structure of different kinds of texts to get at key meanings. Because every text has its own features, these tools need to be flexible enough to bring out the meanings related to the specific content that is in focus in a particular text.

Because the argumentation is developed mainly through temporal phrases and verbs and less frequently through conjunctions that provide explicit semantic connections, students are faced with a text that reasons very differently from everyday language, with fewer overt markers of the developing argument. Subordinate clauses of various types often implicitly incorporate explanations and elaboration in ways that are unfamiliar to students. It is also common to find elaboration through enumeration of facts, causes, factors, characteristics, and so forth. Few of the overt or explicit signals of the semantic relationships between clauses available in English syntax are provided to help students unpack dense information.

⁴ This type of analysis corresponds to *transitivity* analysis in systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1994).

Often verbs that imply a semantic relationship are used instead of explicit conjunctions (e.g., *continue*, *result*, *cause*).

Movement through time and causality (*when* and *why*) are the two major organizational approaches in history texts, but conditional, adversative, and other relations also construct particular kinds of explanations and arguments. Temporal connectors often construe relationships of condition or causality rather than precise time references, as in Examples 6, 7, and 8, from a text about the Constitution (Stuckey & Kerrigan Salvucci, 2000).

6. When the vice president is absent, the president pro tempore, usually the longest serving senator of the majority party, leads the senate. (p. 261)

When is functioning in this case as an *if* that signals a condition for the president pro tempore to lead the senate.

7. After Congress passes a law, federal agencies and departments usually determine how to put it into effect. (p. 263)

Here *after* has no specific time reference, but is helping to construct the explanation of a procedure. Similarly, in 8, multiple temporal references collaborate to set the context for a legal procedure.

8. During a time of national emergency the president may call a congressional meeting after the regular session has already ended. (p. 260)

As these examples show, students need to distinguish between the temporal references that build a real-time chronology in the text (*in 1961*, *in 1984* . . .) and the temporal references that help to construct an explanation or description of a process such as how the three powers established in the Constitution work.

Verbs and clause structure can also incorporate the notion of development over time and help to construct an argument or explanation. For example, in the Constitution text (Stuckey & Kerrigan Salvucci, 2000), the verb *become* functions in two types of clauses: one that presents happenings in real time, as in 9, and one that presents processes or procedures relevant to the Constitution, where no real time is relevant, as in 10 and 11.

9. Geraldine Ferraro became the first woman on the ticket of a major political party when she ran as the Democratic nominee for vice president in 1984. (p. 262)

10. To become president, one must be a native-born U.S. citizen, at least 35 years old, and have been a resident of the United States for at least 14 years. (p. 262)

11. If the president dies, resigns, or is removed from office, the vice president becomes president. (p. 262)

Although *become* always construes a meaning that involves change over time, the way it is used in this text, co-occurring with particular reasoning patterns, also enables it to contribute to the conditional relationships that this text foregrounds. In 10, for example, *become* is used in infinitive form in initial position in the clause, helping to establish the consequence of the conditions that follow. In 11, *become* occurs in a main clause expressing the consequence of the *if* clause in this explanation of a procedure. *Become* is a frequent and productive verb in constructing a history account, due to its contribution both to temporal meaning (the passing of time) and to the construal of consequences in particular grammatical patterns.

One purpose of the Constitution text is to show differences in the Constitution between the past, when it was drafted in 1787, and the form it currently takes. For this reason it has several vague references to time (*today, in recent years, when, after*), as well as specific dates that refer to key moments in the establishment, ratification, and amendments to the Constitution (*in 1867, in 1961, in 1984*). While learning about the functions, restrictions, possibilities, and conditions stipulated in the Constitution, students can use both the specific temporal references and the vague references to understand how the Constitution has changed over time as well as to learn about figures who have participated in these changes at specific moments.

Students can also learn that conjunctions are signals of the organization of the content the text is emphasizing and the way the events and participants are presented. For example, an effective way to deconstruct the Constitution text is through an analysis that highlights the frequent use of adversative conjunctions (14 of the 23 conjunctions in this text are adversatives). Examples are 12, 13, and 14 (Stuckey & Kerrigan Salvucci, 2000).

12. However, in recent years, candidates have become more diverse, with African Americans such as Shirley Chisholm and Jesse Jackson seeking the presidency. (p. 262)
13. Despite their differences, the executive and legislative branches must cooperate for the system to work. (p. 262)
14. Although Congress passes laws, the president can influence legislation by encouraging members to approve or reject certain bills. (p. 262)

Prior to 12, the text is discussing the presidency, and notes that “all presidents have been white men.” The adversative *however* introduces the

recent diversity in candidates. *Despite* and *although* are other adversative conjunctions that construct the alternatives and concessions that are common in this text because they help to construe the constrictions, limitations, specifications, and possibilities that the Constitution has experienced over time.

As we have seen, in history textbooks conjunctions are not always used with precision. Often they are ambiguous in their meaning, open to more than one interpretation of the relationship between the clauses. We can see this phenomenon in the way *then* is often used, as in 15 (Examples 15–17 are from the Reconstruction text [Appleby et al., 2000]):

15. These states then became caught in a struggle between the president and Congress when Congress refused to seat the states' representatives. (p. 496)

In 15, *then* is used to express result or causality; as a synonym of *as a result* or *as a consequence*. In 16, on the other hand, *then* is used to construe the temporal organization of events; as a synonym of *later on* or *from that moment on* (*Later on Congress began to create its own plan*).

16. Congress voted to deny seats to representatives from any state reconstructed under Lincoln's plan. Then Congress began to create its own plan. (p. 496)

Only then is used to indicate a conditional relationship between events. In 17, it is used as a synonym of *if* plus previous information (e.g., *If this [the adoption of a constitution that abolished slavery] happened, a state could be readmitted to the Union*).

17. Finally, the convention had to adopt a new state constitution that abolished slavery. Only then could a state be readmitted to the Union. (p. 496)

Many history texts are not organized as chronological sequencing or cause-effect arguments (Kress, 1989). Although temporal organization is obviously an implicit feature of much history discourse, many textbook passages are organized in ways that downplay the chronological telling of events. Often texts are built around a debate in a particular time setting (organized around confronting ideas or ideologies), so that the reader encounters only vague temporal references combined with a high frequency of adversative conjunctions and verbs that signal differences among ideas and thoughts. Looking at the verbs and conjunctions can help students identify organizational patterns that are not cause-effect or chronological.

Using Linguistic Analysis in the Classroom

The process of doing a grammatical analysis of history textbooks helps students get at the meanings at the same time that it focuses them on the lexical, grammatical, and discursive choices that make these texts dense and abstract. This linguistic approach would be prohibitively time consuming to do with the entire textbook. The texts that are selected for analysis should present important historical concepts, and teachers need to be clear about the goals of the analysis to help students identify the grammatical features that will bring out relevant meanings. The linguistic features to analyze can be identified by considering what kinds of questions the selected text answers and how it is organized. Figure 3 provides a series of questions that can guide teachers in identifying a language focus appropriate to the specific content that they want to work with in particular texts.

Many texts present a series of historical events, so identifying action verbs helps students see the progression of history as the historians have constructed it. Analyzing the agents and receivers of actions helps them think about power relationships in those events. Analyzing saying and thinking-feeling verbs along with the messages in those clauses helps

FIGURE 3
Questions to Guide a Linguistic Analysis of History Texts

Questions to answer	Relevant language focus
What historical events are presented?	Identify action verbs
Who are the main participants in the events?	Analyze agents and receivers of actions
Who is quoted or cited in this text?	Identify saying verbs
What does the historian comment on in this text?	Identify thinking-feeling verbs
Whose opinions or views are presented?	Analyze sayers or experiencers of saying or thinking-feeling verbs
What are their views?	Analyze messages in saying or thinking-feeling clauses
Are these views in agreement or disagreement?	Analyze relationship between sayers-experiencers and messages in saying or thinking-feeling clauses
What background information is provided?	Identify relating and happening verbs, passive voice, nonhuman participants
How is information organized in this text?	Analyze connectors, conjunctions, temporal phrases, and verbs that express cause or movement over time

them focus on the different points of view that are presented and whether those views are in agreement or disagreement. Where the text presents background information or description, students can identify the relating and happening verbs, passive voice, and nonhuman participants that construct things as they are. Students analyze how information is organized in the text by looking at the connectors, conjunctions, temporal phrases, and verbs that express cause or movement over time. All of these text features function together, simultaneously, to construct a text's meanings. It is through multiple approaches to the text and multiple ways of looking at events, participants, and organizational strategies that ELLs gain a clear sense of the messages that the particular text constructs.

These activities are being used by students and teachers in the school where we conducted the study. Preliminary reports suggest that they are stimulating content-focused discussion of history concepts. In our observations, we found that ELLs appeared to be gaining access to grade-level texts while developing an awareness of the power of language to construct events, present points of view, and organize information in ways that explain or argue. The larger impact on students' language development is under study.

CONCLUSIONS

The central goal of CBI is to give L2 learners opportunities to work on grade-level standards so that they are not left behind in academic subject areas while they are learning English. Advanced literacy development for learners requires that teachers understand the specific textual demands of a discipline so that they can help students gain control of the language through which the discipline presents information and argues about interpretations.

The Language of History

History provides a particularly good example of discipline-specific literacy demands because it is constructed through texts that cannot easily be experienced hands-on. History teachers therefore rely heavily on the textbook or other written texts. Working with grade-level textual material is a way of recognizing the cognitive development students already have in middle or secondary school and challenging them with complex concepts and meaningful grade-level work. The tools for analysis of history texts that we have presented can be used to deconstruct

explanations to see that the logical relationships between causes and effects may not always be transparent in history textbooks and that cause-effect relationships are not the only kind of organizational strategy historians use. Historical arguments are hidden through nominalizations and through logical relations of causality that are realized in very different ways than they are in everyday language.

Work with the textbook is crucially important in learning history, and McKeown et al. (1992) have shown that just background knowledge is not enough to make sense of textbooks. Nor can history textbooks be translated into everyday language, because if they are translated into more concrete language to make them easier, they can become reduced to insignificant facts or content that does not encompass the complexity of grade-level subject matter. Instead, students need to learn the differences between everyday language and academic language (Bernstein, 1990). In doing so, students are also developing a more general reflective capacity that may be applicable to other subject areas as well. Students' reflection about history, with a focus on language, allows them to answer questions about the text in more precise ways. Questions such as "What historical events are presented? How are they presented? From what perspective? Who are the main participants in the events? What voices are present and what voices are absent from the text? Why is the text organized in the way it is, and what does this tell us about the views that the historians are emphasizing?" reveal that language serves as a tool for explaining the experiences represented in the text.

Learning history requires much more than just reading the textbook. Students need to engage in a variety of activities, using both everyday language and academic language, if they are to gain control of the discourse through which history is told. Grammatical analysis is not sufficient for students to learn to use these discourse features in their own writing or to master the disciplinary content. Other sources can be consulted for more extensive suggestions about ways that a linguistic approach to texts themselves can be an important part of an overall strategy to help students learn academic English at the same time they are building their knowledge of history. For example, Mohan, Leung, and Davison (2001) draw on various contexts for ESL teaching to argue that students need help building their metalinguistic awareness through activities that are contextualized within broader curricular approaches (see also Mohan, 1986). Gibbons (2002) also suggests ways of contextualizing a focus on functional grammar within a broader curriculum framework.

Theory for CBI Practice

These approaches to disciplinary language, like ours, draw on a theory of language that perceives how content is construed through language and how language realizes particular perspectives and points of view. This perspective focuses on analysis of texts, looking at language not as a set of words and structures but as a set of choices from the grammatical systems of English that draw meaning from the situations in which they are produced, the forms they take, and the relationships they establish between speakers-writers and readers-listeners, as well as from the ideas they construe (content).

Because language is inseparable from social contexts and always makes meanings relevant to particular situations and cultures, we are not integrating language and content. Language and content are already integrated. What is needed is a means of helping students see how linguistic choices construe content meanings. Davison and Williams (2001) suggest that

although content can be a basis for the organisation of language and cultural elements at the level of the unit of work, mainstream subject content alone, no matter how accessible or interesting, is not sufficient to provide a properly developed ESL curriculum. (p. 64)

A focus on language itself is required if we are to help students gain control of the language through which content is constructed.

Students at middle school and above are interested in engaging with complex concepts and subject matter; we need to help them develop the linguistic repertoire that will make reading and writing this subject matter possible. The ELLs in our study manifested a great interest in studying history, but they need to be challenged. They can clearly do more than read short narrative texts or create simple graphic organizers to display basic notions. We would therefore argue that CBI in advanced literacy contexts needs to be informed by a functional grammatical analysis, as grammatical and discourse analysis become essential tools for helping students get meaning from grade-level texts. The tools for linguistic analysis are “precisely the resource which enables learners to develop the means of reflecting on language” (Williams & Hasan, 1996, p. xviii). This capacity for reflection is an important aspect of developing critical thinking and higher level knowledge.

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THE AUTHORS

Mary J. Schleppegrell is associate professor of linguistics and chair of the Graduate Group in Linguistics at the University of California, Davis. Her research interests include applications of functional grammar and the development of L2 writing in various content areas. Her recent book, *The Language of Schooling*, describes the linguistic features of academic language.

Mariana Achugar is assistant professor of second language acquisition and Spanish in the Department of Modern Languages at Carnegie Mellon University. Her research interests include educational linguistics and academic language development in bilingual contexts.

Teresa Oteíza is assistant professor at Eastern Washington University in the department of Modern Languages and Literatures. Her research interests include critical discourse analysis, educational linguistics, academic language development in bilingual contexts, and systemic functional linguistics.

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