PART VII

Pedagogic contexts
34
EAP IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

Sally Humphrey

Introduction

While studies investigating English for academic purposes (EAP) have traditionally focussed on higher education contexts, there is growing recognition that the years of schooling, and particularly the middle years, are vital contexts for developing academic literacies (Freebody, Maton, & Martin, 2008). The concern for investigating middle years literacies can be associated with recognition that critical language patterns for meaning making in higher education contexts have their foundations in developments that typically occur during these years (Christie & Derewianka, 2008). For example, in the middle years, literacy practices become reliant on language beyond the ‘here and now of you and me’ (Macken-Horarik, 1996, p. 247) and increasingly responsive to specialized discipline goals. In common with the results of EAP research in tertiary contexts (Hood, 2010; Hyland, 2004; Wingate, 2012), learning English within school disciplines has been found to provide access not only to ‘high stakes’ literacies (Byrnes, 2013; Maton, 2013), but also to understandings of the way discipline knowledge, understandings and dispositions are developed (Freebody, 2013).

From the perspective of socio-cultural research, developing control of academic English is by no means automatic. There is a wealth of evidence to show that socio-cultural, economic, pedagogic and political constraints and opportunities have a significant impact on the development of academic language, as demonstrated in curriculum learning and performance on standardized measures of literacy (Caro, McDonald, & Willms, 2009; Teese & Lamb, 2009). From the perspective of students with English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), there is a danger of assuming academic language competence from evidence of fluency in everyday language, which may be learned quite rapidly in conversational contexts (Cummins, 2000; Gibbons, 2009).

To support EAL/D students and other marginalized groups to access and use academic English, educational researchers from a number of perspectives have called for literacies to be repositioned as central, and their multimodal affordances to be made ‘visible’ within subject pedagogy (Clark, 2014; Freebody, 2013; Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2003). Such visibility includes direct or ‘overt’ instruction for developing shared ‘metalanguages of design’ (Jewitt, 2008, p. 248). Metalanguages informed by systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) have been found to be particularly supportive for teachers, ‘in unpacking and sharing with students, the discourse practices and ways of viewing and communicating about the world that are characteristic of their academic disciplines’ (MacMahon, 2014, p. 13). Crucially, however, socio-cultural researchers argue that control of academic literacies alone cannot guarantee social success. Pedagogies must provide
support to challenge and transform the discourses which sustain inequities (Lea & Street, 2010; Rogers & Schaanen, 2013), and must be accompanied by ‘a complementary shift in the power distributions of other fields’ (Carrington & Luke, 1997, p. 109).

In this chapter, I review recent theory, research and practice that has responded to the above concerns of contemporary, middle years EAP educators. In its focus on pedagogies influenced by Australian and European theorists (Bernstein, 1990; Callaghan & Rothery, 1988; Fairclough, 2002; Fowler & Kress, 1979; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Lea & Street, 2010; Martin & Maton, 2013; Martin & Rose, 2007, 2008), the chapter complements Johns’ focus on changing standards and assessment in the US, and particularly on ‘expert consensus about the skills necessary for academic and professional success’ (Johns, this volume, p. 474).

Models of EAP in school settings

In contrast to higher education and pre-tertiary contexts, the field of EAP is rarely identified in schools through this nomenclature. Research and practice which falls within the scope of EAP can be identified in terms of its focus on: content area literacy (CAL); literacy across the curriculum (LAC); academic literacies and discipline literacies; content and language integrated learning (CLIL); and content-based instruction (CBI). These fields can be distinguished to some extent by the theories that underpin them; however, boundaries between EAP approaches are often not well defined, and teachers frequently draw on understandings and strategies from across traditions. A number of frameworks have been used to delineate EAP pedagogies in terms of informing theories, assumptions and practices (e.g. Fang, 2012; Lea & Street, 2010; Martin, 1999). Martin’s topological perspective, informed by social realist theories of Basil Bernstein (1990), allows for distinctions and fuzzy boundaries to be accounted for in theoretically principled ways. Two distinctions are particularly important in broadly situating relevant contemporary pedagogies. The first is the degree to which knowledge, including knowledge of textual features and practices, is made visible in models and teaching. The second is the degree to which the pedagogies account for context, including the socio-cultural context of the text and learners. Figure 34.1 shows these dimensions and the four types of pedagogy which they frame. Adaptations to Martin’s framework have been made to facilitate dialogue with contemporary critiques related to middle years EAP (e.g. Fang, 2012; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Lea & Street, 2010).

Cognitive pedagogies where knowledge is visible or invisible

Much of the debate around language education in school contexts has traditionally concentrated on pedagogies which focus on the cognitive development of the individual learner. These pedagogies are distinguished in Figure 34.1 as more or less ‘visible’. In Bernstein’s (1990) terms, a visible pedagogy is one where the knowledge to be learned is made explicit, as are the rules of sequencing and criteria for assessment. In an invisible pedagogy, these aspects are left largely implicit and the teacher plays a facilitator rather than interventionist role.

In the contemporary middle years EAP context, more ‘visible’ cognitive pedagogies such as CAL and LAC include routines, mental procedures, knowledge and skills, which are deemed to be shared across curriculum areas (Fang, 2012, p. 103). One concern with such pedagogies, however, is the assumption that generic skills and strategies such as concept mapping, predicting and inferencing can be transferred ‘unproblematically from one context.
to another’ (Lea & Street, 2010, p. 368). A further concern is that making visible cognitive strategies still presupposes that students have knowledge of the textual features needed to comprehend and construct texts.

Cognitive approaches at the invisible end of the continuum, referred to in the literature as progressive, or authentic pedagogies (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012), often reference constructivist theories to support their focus on the learner and on centrality of language for learning. These pedagogies promote student-centred activities, including those developed around multimodal and digital technologies, which actively encourage the use of students’ own language (Bunch, 2006; May & Wright, 2007) and are oriented towards learner engagement and motivation rather than distinctive curriculum knowledge (Freebody, Maton, & Martin, 2008).

Critiques of constructivist approaches in EAP contexts have long been expressed by those concerned with discipline literacies and reducing educational inequities (Delpit, 1986; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012). Many secondary curriculum teachers argue that the focus on everyday language dilutes the academic content of the discipline (May & Wright, 2007), while others argue that the focus on the learner’s internal processes matches ‘the moral temper and cultural aspirations of white, middle-class children from households whose sensibilities are child-centred’ (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012). Despite the wealth of evidence that academic English is unlikely to be ‘picked up’ by EAL/D learners, however, prominent advocates of such pedagogies continue to maintain that written language does not need to be explicitly taught but will be most easily and meaningfully acquired by surrounding a child with books and giving them ‘fun things to do with books’ (Rosen, 2011).

**Socio-cultural approaches where knowledge is visible or invisible**

The term ‘socio-cultural’ is often used in the literature to refer to pedagogies, including some constructivist approaches, which acknowledge the influence of socio-cultural background on literacy practices and which value out-of-school uses of language (Fang, 2012). In the tertiary EAP literature, distinctions are drawn between socially oriented approaches in terms of ‘academic literacies’ and ‘academic socialisation’ (Lea & Street, 2010); but in school contexts, similar boundaries are difficult to draw. In this chapter, socio-cultural is used as an umbrella...
term for pedagogies informed, to varying extents, by critical and/or social-semiotic theories of text and context. Visibility in these pedagogies is interpreted as the degree to which the semiotic patterns that construe meaning in texts are foregrounded.

Critical literacies, including New Literacies, situated literacies and some forms of multiliteracies (Jewitt, 2008; New London Group, 1996) typically embrace everyday practices beyond schooling (Street, 2012), and foreground contextual features of texts rather than their semiotic construal. Critical literacies pedagogies are further distinguished from social semiotic approaches by the facilitator role typically taken by the teacher and by the focus on deconstruction, including attention to global institutional requirements beyond the subject (Lea & Street, 2010). Many researchers, however, perceive critical literacy as enhancing rather than replacing approaches that focus on skills and socialization (Cummins, 2000; Schleppegrell & Colombi, 2002), and acknowledge that the metalanguage provided by social semiotic models invigorates ‘critical literacies and multiliteracies in fundamental ways’ (Morgan & Ramanathan, 2005, p. 158).

Finally, in the quadrant represented in Figure 34.1 as social semiotic, are practices which most immediately focus on opening up access to discourses of power through explicit teaching of text (see Hood, this volume, for a discussion of social semiotic approaches in higher education EAP). These include various genre traditions (Johns, 2002), and, particularly in school contexts, the so-called ‘Sydney school’ tradition, informed by theories of Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) and Martin (Martin & Rose, 2007, 2008). In this tradition, genre is defined as ‘a staged, goal oriented social process’ (Martin & Rose, 2008, p. 6); however, identification of the linguistic patterns of genres draws on SFL understandings of register to account for their relationship to their context of situation.

In addition to the numerous applications of Sydney school-genre approaches in Australia reviewed by Rose and Martin (2012), and increasingly in the US (Brisk, 2015; de Oliveira & Iddings, 2014; Gebhard & Harman, 2011; Schleppegrell & Colombi, 2002), genre and register theories have informed an increasing number of international innovations in middle years English teaching. Space does not allow these studies to be reviewed in depth; however, evidence of the global reach of early SFL-informed research in recent classroom applications and in some cases, broader school educational policy, can be found in Indonesia (Emilia, 2010); Great Britain (Clark, 2014; MacMahon, 2014; Walsh, 2006) and Europe (Llinares, Morton, & Whittaker, 2012; TeL4ELE, 2013); China and Hong Kong (Polias & Forey, 2014); South Africa (Kerfoot & Van Heerden, 2015); Canada (Mohan, Leung, & Davison, 2001); and within South America (Oteíza, 2003). This geographical reach, and the breadth of pedagogies developed, attests to the evolving design of SFL-informed models in response to particular contextual constraints and opportunities. For this reason, and to account also for the productive dialogue with complementary genre approaches (Johns, 2006, this volume) and multimodal literacies (see for example, Kalantzis & Cope, 2012), the umbrella term ‘social semiotic’ will be used to include approaches emanating from Sydney school-based research projects.

**Critiques and dialogue within early socio-cultural approaches**

Although there is wide acknowledgement within the socio-cultural research community of the value of SFL as a resource for interrogating and/or modelling language in context (Jewitt, 2008), pedagogies emerging from collaborations in and around Sydney during the 1980s and 1990s have received considerable criticism. Kalantzis & Cope (2012) provide an extensive overview of the debate around and within what they refer to as ‘functional
linguistic approaches’. Within the EAP literature, genre ‘schemas’ have been acknowledged as valuable stepping stones (Johns, 2008, p. 245); however, attempts to make SFL theories ‘accessible’ to teachers have frequently led to reified versions of its rich model of context and text (Walsh, 2006). SFL and related text-oriented approaches have therefore been most commonly associated with and critiqued as reductive practices of academic socialization (Lea & Street, 2010).

From a critical perspective, representations of genres have been challenged as ‘principally geared for doing intellectual work’ rather than as ‘always sites for contestation’ (Luke, 1996, p. 318). Kamler’s (1994, p. 17) evidence of a teacher’s attempt to teach a procedural genre through a text instructing readers how to turn ‘Girls into Concrete’ highlights the dangers of foregrounding linguistic readings without questioning the relationship between text and social context. SFL theorists themselves (e.g. Hasan, 1996) have argued that reflective elements of genre pedagogy, which encourage the production rather than reproduction of knowledge, need to be made more explicit. While genre-based pedagogies were conceived with the ‘faith’ that redistributing discursive resources ‘would involve recontextualizations by non-mainstream groups which would realign power’ (Martin, 1999, p. 124), EAL/D educators argue that simply reproducing genre structures ‘is not likely to close the achievement gap between speakers of dominant and non-dominant varieties of English’ (Gebhard & Harman, 2011, p. 46).

As will be discussed in the following section, more recent social semiotic pedagogies do indeed draw attention to the possibilities of innovation, redesign and subversion of genres (e.g. Kress, 2003; Martin, 1999, 2002). However, Martin (2002) argues that innovations such as mixed and hybrid genres can be problematic without sufficient understanding of the practices and elements involved; and subversive practices are not always rewarded or valued in the culture (Martin, 1999).

In summary, despite real differences in informing theories of both language and pedagogy, complementarities between approaches have long been noted, particularly between social semiotic and critical literacies in Australia (Luke, 2000). Recent pressures and opportunities emanating from international curriculum development, research collaborations, policy imperatives and testing regimes have resulted in increased productive dialogue at the boundaries of traditions (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gebhard & Harman, 2011; Johns, 2002; Lea & Street, 2010). However, to address the contemporary issues of English for school curriculum learning, socio-cultural pedagogies need to be underpinned by knowledge of and attention to social semiotic affordances. It is to recent research in the social semiotic tradition that I now turn.

**Social semiotic developments in middle years EAP contexts**

Developments in social semiotic research and practice most relevant to contemporary contexts of EAP have included: work on distinguishing features of academic language; a sharpening focus towards cumulative learning within disciplines; and extensions of genre and register theories to include critical and multiliteracies perspectives. As will become clear in the overview to follow, research into these areas frequently overlaps and interfaces with research in the broader socio-cultural research. Much of this research has been enriched and in some cases enabled by productive dialogue between social semiotic theories and those from the sociology of education (e.g. Bernstein, 1990, 1999; Martin & Maton, 2013).
### Distinguishing features of academic language

Alongside the identification of key genres for learning, social semiotic researchers working closely with teachers in middle years contexts have drawn on genre and register theory to distinguish the ‘everyday’ social environment from the academic environment (Coffin, 2006; Macken-Horarik, 1996). A summary of linguistic features which these researchers argued need to be made visible for students to access curriculum learning is provided in Table 34.1.

Recognition of relationships within genre families has enabled researchers to account for the expanding repertoires of semiotic resources needed for curriculum learning (Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Coffin, 2006; Martin & Rose, 2008). Christie and Derewianka (2008) pay particular attention to the development of writing across the adolescent years, identifying a number of points of development towards more academically valued genres and registers in the context of curriculum learning. One pathway concerned with the evaluation of texts in subject English, for example, begins with personal response and review genres which privilege everyday observations and tastes and moves in the middle years to more generalized

### Table 34.1 Summary of contextual dimensions of everyday and educational contexts

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<th><strong>Everyday contexts</strong></th>
<th><strong>Academic contexts</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose (genre)</strong></td>
<td>Familiar everyday spoken genres</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• instruction, observation, anecdote, personal response, commentary, personal recount</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Institutionalized socially valued and socially valuable written genres</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• report, explanation, procedure, analytical exposition, discussion, narrative, historical recount</td>
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<td><strong>Subject matter (field)</strong></td>
<td>Understanding of personal issues disconnected from society at large</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• specific human participants</td>
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<td>• everyday lexis in simple nominal groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• action verbs</td>
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<td>Technicality bounded by academic disciplines; focus on issues of collective</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• generalized participants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• technical lexis, defined and classified in complex nominal groups</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• grammatical metaphor (science)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• relational, defining verbs</td>
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<td><strong>Reader relationship (tenor)</strong></td>
<td>Personal (evaluative)</td>
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<td>Strong solidarity</td>
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<td>Familiar roles – emoter</td>
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<td>• high frequency of personal pronouns</td>
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<td>• active voice</td>
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<td>• subjective personal modality &amp; attitudes</td>
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<td>• variety of mood choices (questions, statements, exclamations, commands)</td>
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<td>Impersonal (objective)</td>
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<td>Decrease in solidarity</td>
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<td>Expert roles – interpreter &amp; adjudicator</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• low frequency of personal pronouns</td>
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<td>• passive voice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• objective impersonal modality and attitudes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• statements – except in procedural texts</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Channel (mode)</strong></td>
<td>Spoken dialogue (concrete)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• low lexical density</td>
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<td>• high grammatical intricacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• variation in theme choice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>written monologue (abstract)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• high lexical density</td>
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<td>• low grammatical intricacy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• grammatical metaphor (science and humanities)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• clear progression of themes</td>
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EAP in school settings

...and abstract uses of language in character analyses and thematic interpretations. Emerging descriptions of semiotic resources led by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) have allowed for informed and often technical discussions of the ways in which multimodal texts such as film are constructed; however, the relative paucity of metalanguage related to verbal language continues to limit students’ capacity to discuss style and composition of literary texts (Christie & Derewianka, 2008, p. 67).

Also contributing greatly to understandings of language and context have been theoretical developments within SFL at the level of discourse semantics (Lemke, 1998; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005). Discourse systems of ideation (field), appraisal (tenor), periodicity and conjunction (mode) have been particularly useful in distinguishing meanings ‘above the clause’ in academic discourse. In the context of historical argument, Coffin (2000, pp. 13–14) draws attention to the role of interactions of choices from interpersonal and textual systems in creating and strengthening mini-deductions at the ends of paragraphs, thereby building the overall position prosodically across the text. For example, the following excerpt from the closing generalization of an argument is placed in the textually prominent position known as ‘hyper-New’, and includes a number of evaluative resources from the discourse semantic system of appraisal to strengthen the argument. Appraisal resources include attitudinal vocabulary from the more objective category of social valuation (i.e. significant), amplifying choice from the graduation system (i.e. very) and an endorsing verb (i.e. showed) from the system of engagement, which contracts space for alternate perspectives.

This was very significant because firstly it showed that the other nations accepted Germany as a country.

Research and application of such patterns has contributed to growing understandings of discipline literacies and critical and multimodal literacy practices in middle years EAP contexts.

**Discipline literacies**

While social semiotic research and practice has long been conducted in the context of particular curriculum areas, the characterization of discipline literacies (Fang & Coatam, 2013) or disciplinarity (Martin, 2013) is comparatively recent. Increased research in this area recognizes that greater understanding of the specialized discourse patterns, knowledge structures and habits of mind will enhance support for discipline learning (Fang & Coatam, 2013, p. 628).

A discipline literacies perspective sees literacy as ‘an essential aspect of disciplinary practice, rather than a set of strategies or tools brought in to the disciplines to improve reading and writing of subject matter texts’ (Moje, 2008, p. 99). Successful application of discipline literacies depends on teachers’ understandings of knowledge building in their subject area, as well as how particular discipline identities are constructed semiotically.

Conceptual research into discipline literacies and pedagogies has built on the work of Sydney-based researchers (Halliday & Martin, 1993; Kalantzis & Wignell, 1988) within projects such as Write it Right. This research, which is well documented in the literature (Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012), has since been drawn on by international scholars to investigate an increasing number of areas related to EAP in the middle and secondary years of schooling. Recognizing the limitations of generic cognitive reading strategies in providing access to ‘high stakes’ discipline knowledge (Carnegie Corporation...
of New York & CIRCLE, 2003, p. 2), a particular research focus has been on exploring classroom interactions involved in effective scaffolding of reading (Rose & Martin, 2012). A recent major European project, Teacher Learning for European Literacy Education (TeL4ELE), involving teachers from Sweden, Denmark, Scotland, Portugal and Spain and led by Australian researchers David Rose and Claire Acedo, has found a significant positive impact of a genre-based professional learning programme on students’ learning (TeL4ELE, 2013).

While discipline research has included a wide range of discipline areas, it is the subjects of English, history and science which have provided the most fertile ground for ongoing explorations of distinctive discourse patterns and for ways of talking about those patterns in meaningful ways. In school English, Macken-Horarik, Love and Unsworth (2011) have focussed on the effect of the study of grammar (or grammatics) on teachers’ and students’ knowledge and know-how, and on students’ written and multimodal compositions. Through their project, Good Enough Grammatics, teachers across multiple sites have been introduced to a robust and multi-dimensional model for examining grammatics of narrative, persuasion and text response – including multimodal representations. Humphrey (2013) has adapted metasemiotic frameworks developed in higher education contexts (Humphrey et al., 2010) as ‘4×4 literacy toolkits’ to support teachers to consider resources pertinent to their discipline context across language levels and metafunctions. A growing number of empirical studies (Clark, 2014; Macken-Horarik, Love, & Unsworth, 2011; Schleppegrell, 2013) attest to the effectiveness of an SFL-informed metalanguage on students’ writing, both for curriculum learning and for high-stakes testing.

Developments within SFL theory have also allowed for an expansion of research in the areas of science and history. In addition to the extensive research by US scholars informed by projects such as Write it Right and the California History Project (CHP) (Schleppegrell & de Oliveira, 2006), international researchers have drawn on SFL to better understand the scaffolding needed by EAL/D and bilingual students. In science education, for example, Mohan and Slater (2006) break down teaching steps of a lesson sequence, bringing to teachers’ attention the linguistic resources involved in constructing knowledge and engaging in practical scientific experience. Linguistic resources at stake in this sequence included definitions and technical terms to introduce the topic; relations of comparison and cause and effect to build scientific taxonomies and link properties logically; and carefully constructed lexical chains to enable students to apply theoretical knowledge to practice.

In history, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid’s Content and Language Integrated Learning (UAM-CLIL) research project (Llinares, Morton, & Whittaker, 2012) has been designed to respond to the need for information on content and language integrated learning, or CLIL. A particularly interesting feature of the corpus collected for this project is the secondary spoken and written sub-corpus, following the same students throughout the four years of obligatory secondary education in History classes. Like Coffin (2006), these researchers have found that the interpersonal function of language is central to development of historical language and knowledge. The blurring of boundaries between critical and social semiotic research in history is evident particularly in South American and Asian scholarship (Barnard, 2000; Oteíza, 2003). Oteíza, for example, shows how evaluative resources of appraisal – working with lexico-grammatical resources – obscure arguments related to contested historical events and, crucially, omit the knowledge needed to objectively evaluate these events.

In recent years, understandings of the nature of discipline literacies and appropriate pedagogies for supporting access to those literacies have been further enriched through the development of legitimation code theory (LCT), which builds on many areas of Bernstein’s...
social realist theories (Maton, 2013). Current large-scale research involving scholars from LCT, SFL and ethnomethodology (Freebody, Maton, & Martin, 2008; Martin & Maton, 2013) has explored the social and semiotic implications of cumulative knowledge building in history and science. One premise of this work is that it is in the exploration of literacies that school work is best understood, particularly in the secondary years of schooling. The project, Disciplinarity, Knowledge and Schooling (DISKS), focussed on Year 8 and Year 11 classrooms, and led to the design of what promises to be a powerful theoretical and practical frame, called ‘semantic waves’ (Maton, 2013).

The concept of ‘semantic waves’, including ‘semantic density’ and ‘semantic gravity’, describes the way cumulative knowledge building is enacted by effective teachers. Using the metaphor of surfing a wave, waves are ‘caught’ in classroom discourse through teachers and students engaging with specialized discipline concepts, which are packed in (typically written) text as decontextualized condensed meanings. Riding ‘down the wave’, concepts are unpacked to relatively simplified contextualized meanings in classroom discussion through explanation and examples. Crucial to cumulative knowledge building, however, is the move back ‘up the wave’ to support students to repack meanings into the condensed forms which will allow relationships to be made with broader discipline concepts. Martin (2013) introduces key linguistic means for riding semantic waves in discipline specific text, using a practical metalanguage of ‘the power trio’. The trio includes power words (technical terms), power grammar (grammatical metaphor) and power composition (discourse semantic resources of periodicity). Martin relates the concept of power composition to organizational features referred to in American composition studies as ‘a rhetorical sandwich’ or ‘hamburger writing’.

In addition to confirming the centrality of grammatical metaphor for cumulative knowledge building in both disciplines, an interesting finding of this work has been recognition that technicality is far more prominent in History than originally recognized in early analysis. For example, Martin (2013, p. 30) points to the relatively technical divisions of history into periods, societies and archeological sites, and the condensed technical meanings achieved by ‘-isms’ such as capitalism and communism. These terms may be organized into taxonomies; however, these taxonomies are typically less well developed and precise than those in biology and can, therefore, be used more flexibly. Adding to the semantic loading of ‘isms’ is that they typically also include evaluative meanings and may be ideologically contested. According to Martin (2013, p. 34), explicit unpacking of the multiple meanings of technical terms, followed by teacher-led support for students to use the terms to explain and evaluate historical phenomena, is a more efficient way of building cumulative knowledge than what he terms ‘guess what’s in my head’ classroom questioning routines prevalent in much classroom discourse.

Developing theories and practices of critical and multiliteracies
Extensions to genre and register theories in the middle years context have allowed for more visible practices of critical literacies in teaching, and for the affordances of modes beyond verbal language to be fully accounted for in academic discourse. From the perspective of genre, topological perspectives have drawn attention to the ‘fuzzy boundaries’ between genres and led to the positing of a category of genre family (Martin, 2002), with regions of ‘family resemblances’. This work, which also relates to Bakhtin’s (1953/1986, p. 82) theorizing of relationships between primary and secondary genres and the associated concept of macrogenre (Rose & Martin, 2012), has allowed for considerations of reader positioning.
and genre appropriation and recontextualization to be considered when assigning texts to
texts (Martin & Rose, 2008). Genre, thus, remains a powerful resource for making visible
the patterns of meaning in the extended and so called ‘mixed’ or ‘hybrid’ texts in secondary
contexts (Martin, 2002).

From the perspective of register, work begun by Macken-Horarik (1996) has led
to expanded models which account not only for the shift from everyday to specialized
curriculum domains foregrounded in early models of academic register, but also shifts
from the specialized to the critical or ‘reflexive’ domain. In contrast to many socio-cultural
models of critical literacy, however, the powerful resources needed to enact critical literacies
are seen in Macken-Horarik’s model as dependent on the cumulative knowledge building
which occurs in the specialized domain rather than interfacing directly with everyday uses
of language. Macken-Horarik (1996; Macken-Horarik & Morgan, 2011) demonstrates the
careful choices made by teachers to build foundational knowledge, including knowledge of
primary genres and specialized language, to enable such reflexivity. For example, developing
semiotic knowledge of how nominalization and appraisal can work both to create ‘reasoned’
argument and to efface the source of the message and the identity of the writer has greatly
enhanced pedagogic applications of critical literacy (Ivanic, 1998; Martin, 1995). However,
the current paucity of foundational knowledge of language in school contexts continues to
challenge teachers wishing to incorporate critical literacies.

Models of visual literacy and multimodality developed by Kress and Van Leeuwen have
also been recontextualized for professional learning and classroom application to explore
image–text relationships in school contexts (Callow, 2013; Unsworth, 2006), including
symbolic notations in mathematics (O’Halloran, 2015). In ongoing study of multiliteracies,
multimodal and digital resources affordances, Unsworth has included an explicit focus on
building semiotic resources within the mode dimension and included analysis of shifts in the
relationships between teachers and students to enable students to problematize and critique
their learning. In one example of classroom practice, Unsworth (2008) demonstrates how
teachers motivated explicit teaching of semiotic resources by engaging students with a
critical comparison of versions of a story in print and digital formats. Using readily available
multimedia authoring technologies, which are designed to develop knowledge of effects
such as camera angles, students are enabled to use their metacommunicative knowledge to
engage in creative transformations of the story in 3D mode.

A crucial contribution of both critical literacies and social realist researchers has been
critiques of broader educational discourses in perpetuating unequal distributions of power
(Bernstein, 1999; Rose, 2005). Recent critiques relevant to the EAP context include those
of high-stakes testing regimes, which influence the provision and evaluation of language
curricula, and which often focus on the development of decontextualized basic skills
(Comber & Nixon, 2014). Unsworth (2014), too, has drawn on semiotic accounts of image
and language interactions to interpret national tests of literacy in Australia, and has pointed
to ways in which they could be made more responsive to school based reading materials.

Conclusion

As with genre and broader socio-cultural pedagogies developed internationally in the late
twentieth century, more recent social semiotic approaches to critical, multimodal and
discipline literacy knowledges and practices have provided teachers with valuable resources
to address the literacy demands of curriculum area learning, particularly in providing access
to the privileged discourses of disciplines. Resources developed from systemic functional
linguistics and multimodal discourse analysis have enabled teachers and students to build the necessary metasemiotic knowledge to reconfigure everyday experience to access the valued genres and registers of school curricula, as well as to challenge and transform discourses of school and other institutions. Social semiotic approaches have thus supported the empowerment of many groups of students previously marginalized from powerful discourses by invisible pedagogies and left 'stranded' in the everyday domain of learning (Macken-Horarik, 1996). The challenge for social semiotic pedagogies, particularly in the present climate of high stakes standardized testing, is to ensure that access to specialized discourses provides a visible pathway to realignments of power.

Further reading

Gebhard & Harman (2011); Johns (2002); Rose & Martin (2012); Whittiker, O’Donnell, & McCabe (2006)

Related chapters

15 Systemic functional linguistics and EAP
35 The Common Core in the United States

References


