Applying the Genre Analysis of a Narrative to the Teaching of English Language Learners

JOSHUA IDDINGS
Purdue University

LUCIANA C. DE OLIVEIRA
Purdue University

This article presents a genre analysis of a narrative to show how a focus on language can identify some important aspects of a text to highlight with English language learners (ELLs), especially those at intermediate to advanced levels of language proficiency in secondary or university English as a Second Language programs. We first outline a linguistic analysis methodology that can be used to increase language awareness of ELLs and their teachers. We use this methodology to conduct a genre analysis that includes a close look at the language used by the author to express the content of the text, the roles of participants within the text, and the text organization. We then identify what the analysis can show in order to suggest to teachers what they can discuss with their students to provide explicit genre instruction. The article includes questions that teachers can ask based on the language analysis and shows how such analysis can be applied to the teaching of ELLs.

This article outlines one linguistic analysis methodology which can be used to increase language awareness of both English Language Learners (ELLs) and their teachers, specifically in the area of writing pedagogy. We utilize Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to analyze a text and to inform suggestions for pedagogy which will come from our analysis. We provide a sample genre analysis of one popularly assigned academic text, the narrative, presenting aspects of this genre which we suggest teachers discuss with their students to provide explicit genre instruction. Finally, we discuss some implications for teaching.

Systemic Functional Linguistics is a well-developed and complex theory of language based originally in the work of Michael Halliday beginning in the mid- to late-1950s (e.g., Halliday, 1959). It is systemic because SFL scholars see language as a system of choices for making meaning (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) rather than seeing language as a set of structures which speakers and writers must manipulate subconsciously to form grammatical sentences—such as might be the case with approaches rooted in a more Chomskyan approach

to language (Halliday, 2007). SFL is functional because these linguists are concerned with how language is used to achieve goals in society (Eggins, 2004). Finally, it is a socio-cultural theory of language because scholars argue for viewing language as a socio-cultural phenomenon which should account for the ways in which language is shaped by particular societies or sub-societies such as academic disciplines (Martin & Rose, 2007). With these issues in mind, SFL scholars have set out to build a theory that can account for the many different ways in which societies use language to meet their needs. It is a complex theory because, as Halliday states, language is a complex phenomenon (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). From the beginning, scholars have set out to develop an "appliable" theory of language to help explain language use for educational purposes (Halliday, 2008). For the purposes of teaching writing, many SFL scholars have developed a genre approach to language (Eggins, 2004; Feez, 2002; Martin & Rose, 2007).

The number of publications concerning writing instruction (both L1 and L2) utilizing a genre approach has increased over the past several years (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Hyland, 2003, 2004, 2007; Johns, 2002; Macken-Horarik, 2002). Genre is defined within SFL as "staged, goal-oriented social processes" (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 8). A discussion and analysis at the lexico-grammatical level is a direct reflection of the genre choices being made. In other words, one cannot discuss genre without discussing grammatical features. Connecting a textual analysis to the lexico-grammatical level of language is what gives SFL the descriptive power to examine how specific language choices reflect rhetorical choices at the contextual level. This makes the approach more useful for writing analysis and ultimately any language-based instruction.

AN SFL GENRE APPROACH TO TEXT ANALYSIS

An SFL genre approach is rooted in Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) theoretical description of language. They write:

> A text is the product of ongoing selection in a very large network of systems—a system network. Systemic theory gets its name from the fact that the grammar of a language is represented in the form of system networks, not as an inventory of structures. Of course, structure is an essential part of the description; but it is interpreted as the outward form taken by systemic choices, not as the defining characteristic of language. A language is a resource for making meaning, and meaning resides in systemic patterns of choice. (p. 23)

They continue by stating, "the system of a language is instantiated in the form of text" (2004, p. 26). Since texts are instances of the systemic choices being made, we can work backwards from the text to discover the meaning choices

which have been made by writers and what function they might serve. In addition, we can discover here what meaning choices have been made over other possible choices.

There are several important resulting theoretical aspects of SFL which an analyst (and thus a writing instructor) needs to consider. One is the genre, represented by the culturally expected structure of types of texts and the ways in which register variables are realized (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Another is register, which is represented by choices of field, tenor, and mode. The field concerns what the "language is being used to talk about." The tenor concerns the "role relationships [play] between the interactants." Finally, the mode concerns "the role language plays in the interaction," whether it's written or spoken (Eggins, 2004, p. 90). These three variables determine what SFL scholars call the three metafunctions in language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

Many discourse analysts have used this theory by looking at the three "metafunctions" in language: the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). These three metafunctions characterize the "resources of the lexico-grammar of every language" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 29). In other words, these three lines of meaning are realized as instances in the lexico-grammatical patterns which we see in a text. Thus, the analyst not only looks at the contextual factors behind a composition—genre and register in Martin & Rose's (2007) terms—but they also must key in on the language features which realize the specific registers and genres under consideration, viewing language from the roles they play across and within metafunctions.

The ideational metafunction determines the ways in which the clause represents the experiences an author/speaker expresses. Lexico-grammatically speaking, we are concerned here with the participants, typically expressed in nouns and nominal groups, who do some kinds of processes, typically expressed in verbs and verbal groups, under certain circumstances, typically expressed in prepositional and adverbial phrases. The interpersonal metafunction determines how a clause is represented as an exchange between speaker and listener. Lexico-grammatically, we analyze the text related to the presence or absence of the subject and finite elements of the clauses and in what order they occur with respect to one another. These are important because they determine the grammatical choice of the mood of a clause: either declarative, interrogative, or imperative. Finally, the textual metafunction determines how the clause is expressed as a message. Lexico-grammatically, we analyze the text related to the ways in which the themes are used in the clause.

Specific Aspects Of An SFL Analysis

For the purpose of analyzing data from which a teacher might draw their writing lessons, we discuss two specific focuses of language. At the level of context, we discuss important features of register and genre that teachers can highlight

in their instruction. At the level of language, we show some of the pertinent language features that teachers might discuss when explaining how effective writers compose a strong piece of writing. For writing instruction, the main purpose of these angles of analysis is to illuminate the language choices made by more proficient writers that may be troublesome for English Language Learners (ELLs). By looking at student writing through this lens, instructors can understand some of the challenges students may have in composing their own effective pieces. The following sections will focus on how teachers might specifically analyze texts and why such analyses will prove beneficial to their pedagogical agenda.

Genre, Register, and the Three Metafunctions

Since genre is a "staged, goal-oriented, social process" (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 8), it is pertinent that an analysis of genre discusses the many moves an author takes in order to achieve their goals with specific types of texts. While many academic genres have been described in SFL theory, we introduce here and example of one genre as an illustration of how a genre pedagogy can be deconstructed and taught in the classroom. We analyze a short narrative, "A Cultural Divorce," written by Elizabeth Wong[1] (Skwire & Skwire, 2005). The numbers added in front of each clause are used to indicate the clause number to which we refer in the analysis.

A Cultural Divorce

(1) It's still there, the Chinese school on Yale Street where my brother and I used to go. (2) Despite the new coat of paint and the high wire fence, the school I knew 10 years ago remains remarkably, stoically the same.

(3) Every day at 5 p.m., instead of playing with our fourth- and fifth-grade friends (4) or sneaking out to the empty lot (5) to hunt ghosts and animal bones, my brother and I had to go to Chinese school. (7) No amount of kicking, screaming, or pleading could dissuade my mother, (8) who was solidly determined to have us learn the language of our heritage.

(9) Forcibly, she walked us the seven long, hilly blocks from our home to school, (10) depositing our defiant, tearful faces before the stern principal. (11) My only memory of him is that he swayed on his heels like a palm tree, (12) and he always clasped his impatient twitching hands behind his back. (13) I recognized him as a repressed maniacal child killer, (14) and knew (15) that if we ever saw his hands we'd be in big trouble.

(16) We all sat in little chairs in an empty auditorium. (17) The room smelled like Chinese medicine, an imported

faraway mustiness. (18) Like ancient mothballs or dirty closets. (19) I hated the smell. (20) I favored crisp new scents. (21) Like the soft French perfume that my American teacher wore in public school.

(22) There was a stage far to the right, (23) flanked by an American flag and the flag of the Nationalist Republic of China, (24) which was also red, white and blue but not as pretty.

(25) Although the emphasis at the school was mainly language—speaking, reading, writing— (26) the lessons always began with an exercise in politeness. (27) With the entrance of the teacher, (28) the best student would tap a bell (29) and everyone would get up, kowtow, (30) and chant, "Sing san ho," the phonetic for "How are you, teacher?"

(31) Being ten years old (32) I had better things to learn than ideographs copied painstakingly in lines that ran right to left from the tip of a moc but, a real ink pen that had to be held in an awkward way if blotches were to be avoided. (33) After all, I could do the multiplication tables, (34) name the satellites of Mars, (35) and write reports on Little Women and Black Beauty. (36) Nancy Drew, my favorite book heroine, never spoke Chinese.

(37) The language was a source of embarrassment. (38) More times than not, I had tried to disassociate myself from the nagging, loud voice that followed me wherever I wandered in the nearby American supermarket outside Chinatown. (39) The voice belonged to my grandmother, a fragile woman in her seventies who could outshout the best of the street vendors. (40) Her humor was raunchy, (41) her Chinese rhythmless, patternless. (42) It was quick, (43) it was loud, (44) it was unbeautiful. (45) It was not like the quiet, lilting romance of French or the gentle refinement of the American South. (46) Chinese sounded pedestrian. Public.

(47) In Chinatown, the comings and goings of hundreds of Chinese on their daily tasks sounded chaotic and frenzied. (48) I did not want (49) to be thought of as mad, as talking gibberish. (50) When I spoke English, (51) people nodded at me, (52) smiled sweetly, (53) said encouraging words. (54) Even the people in my culture would cluck (55) and say (56) that I'd do well in life. (57) "My, doesn't she move her lips fast," (58) they would say, (59) meaning (60) that I'd be able to keep up with the world outside Chinatown.

(61) My brother was even more fanatical than I about speaking English. (62) He was especially hard on my

mother, (63) criticizing her, often cruelly, for her pidgin speech—smatterings in Chinese scattered like chop suey in her conversation. (64) "It's not 'What it is,' Mom," (65) he'd say in exasperation. (66) "It's 'What is it, what is it, what is it!'" (67) Sometimes Mom would leave out an occasional "the" or "a," or perhaps a verb of being. (68) He would stop her in midsentence: (69) "Say it again, Mom. Say it right." (70) When he tripped over his own tongue, (71) he'd blame it on her: (72) "See, Mom, it's all your fault. You set a bad example."

(73) What infuriated my mother most was when my brother cornered her on her consonants, especially "r." (74) My father had played a cruel joke on Mom (75) by assigning her an American name that her tongue wouldn't allow her to say. (76) No matter how hard she tried, (77) "Ruth" always ended up "Luth" or "Roof."

(78) After two years of writing with a moc but and reciting words with multiples of meaning, (79) I finally was granted a cultural divorce. (80) I was permitted (81) to stop Chinese school.

(82) I thought of myself as multicultural. (83) I preferred tacos to egg rolls; (84) I enjoyed Cinco de Mayo more than Chinese New Year.

(85) At last, I was one of you; (86) I wasn't one of them.

(87) Sadly, I still am.

[1]Reprinted with permission by the Author, http://www.elizabethwong.net

A GENRE ANALYSIS OF "A CULTURAL DIVORCE"

We analyze a narrative for several reasons. First, as Martin and Rose (2007) point out, "stories are central in all cultures, in some form in almost every imaginable situation and stage of life" (p. 49). One type of story, as Martin and Rose define the term, is the narrative. Because narratives are a part of all cultures, it can be a good point of departure to initiate students into more higher-level, discipline-specific writing. Second, using narrative will allow teachers to develop a more explicit language about language—or metalanguage—which can be shared amongst the writing instructor and students. As students develop this metalanguage, they can exploit this foundation to move into more higher-level writing. Finally, practicing deconstruction of texts with a functional genre metalanguage will help students become independent analysts themselves, providing them with the ability to discern what types of features texts contain when they are confronted with a new writing genre.

Four Aspects of Genre in Narratives

In her article concerning the implementation of a genre approach to writing, Macken-Horarik (2002, p. 22) identifies four important aspects of texts which are essential in a dialogue about genre:

1. Social Purpose
2. Social Location
3. Schematic Structure
4. Schematic Stage Description

For narratives, we can discuss each of these important genre concepts. The following is a general description of narratives as a genre:

1. Social purpose: Entertains and instructs via reflection on experience. Deals with problematic events which individuals have to resolve for better or worse.
2. Social location: Narratives are found across all aspects of cultural life, in novels, short stories, movies, sit-coms, and radio dramas. They are important in subjects such as English.
3. Schematic structure: [Orientation ^ (Complication.Evaluation) ^ Resolution ^ (Coda)][1]
4. **Orientation**: provides relevant information about the character's situation;
   Complication: introduces one or more problems for characters to solve;
   Evaluation: highlights the significance of the events for characters;
   Resolution: sorts out the problems for better or worse;
   Coda: often refers back to the theme of the first stage and makes an overall statement about the text. In written narratives, the coda often creates a sense of finality by its circular return to the starting point of the narrative.
   (adapted from Macken-Horarik, 2002, and Eggins, 2004)

This discussion begins with a description of the social purpose, social location, schematic structure, and a basic overview of the content of each of the structures in "A Cultural Divorce." The social purpose of this narrative is to explain the experience of the narrator growing up and being forced to attend Chinese school on the weekends. The narrator encounters a number of problematic events including the fact that she believes attending Chinese school takes away from her relationships with friends. She reveals the embarrassment that the Chinese language gives her when she hears the spoken Chinese/

English of her grandmother and mother. Finally, she presents the shame that she ultimately has in reflecting that she never learned to speak Chinese as a child (p. 22). The schematic structure of "A Cultural Divorce" can be represented as,

Orientation ^ Complication1 ^ Complication2 ^ Resolution2 ^ Complication3 ^ Resolution3 ^ Complication4 ^ Resolution4 ^ Complication5 ^ Resolution5 ^ Evaluation ^ Coda

A brief description of each stage in this text is included below.

1. Orientation: Where the author introduces the reader to the setting and characters.
2. Complication1: Where the reader learns that the narrator was forced to learn Chinese by her mother.
3. Complication2: Where the reader learns about an incident with the narrator's very stern principal.
4. Resolution2: Where the author acknowledges the principal and gives her perception of the principal.
5. Complication3: Where the reader learns of how the narrator dislikes the school's auditorium.
6. Resolution3: Where the narrator reacts to the horrible auditorium.
7. Complication4: Where the narrator laments the Chinese learning process.
8. Resolution4: Where the narrator reacts to her Chinese learning process by comparing it to her other subject area learning in English.
9. Complication5: Where the narrator expresses how Chinese sounded "ugly and pedestrian."
10. Resolution5: Where the narrator and her brother react to Chinese by describing the beauty of English as they see it.
11. Evaluation: Where the narrator expresses her attitudes toward Complications 1-5.
12. Coda: Where the author creates a sense of finality by circularly revisiting the problem implied in Complication1.

After a brief discussion of the stages in the text, teachers and students can explore how the text is constructed. We divide our analysis into the three metafunctions described in SFL.

Field and the Ideational Metafunction

We can examine the ways in which the register variable, field, is realized in the text. As previously mentioned, the field determines what the author wants to talk

about in a given text. The field is realized by the ideational metafunction, where analysts can determine what participants (typically nouns) are undergoing certain processes (typically verbs) under certain circumstances (typically adverbs or prepositional phrases). In other words, the ideational metafunction represents the *who-is-doing-what-to-whom* meaning in the text. An ideational analysis typically begins with a discussion of the processes in each clause, as these processes determine the types of participants which can be chosen by a writer.

In SFL, there are six categories of processes recognized: the material, relational, mental, verbal, behavioral, and existential (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Material processes are what many traditional grammarians refer to as "action" verbs. These processes can choose an actor and a goal. Relational processes are often realized as "be" verbs. Mental processes are verbs which represent processes of the mind. Verbal processes are those that can be spoken. Behavioral processes are similar to material ones in that they represent actions, but they are also related to mental processes in that they represent emotions which are acted upon. Finally, existential processes are typically realized by "be" verbs, but unlike relational processes, they merely denote that some entity exists. Existential processes also typically choose the lexical item "there" as the subject (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

In this narrative, there are several types of processes realized. In fact, we would argue that much of the genre burden is determined by the author's language choices within the ideational metafunction. The following is a brief description of how different types of processes are used in each of the genre stages.

In the orientation stage (clauses 1-2), the author provides the setting and an introduction to the characters, characterized by the choice of relational clauses, as in *It's still there, the Chinese school on Yale Street where my brother and I used to go* and *Despite the new coat of paint and the high wire fence, the school I knew 10 years ago <u>remains</u> remarkably, stoically the same.* This is typical of description where an author wants to give some attributes of certain carriers of that attribute. Clauses 3-8 represent the first complication in the story where we learn that the author was forced to learn Chinese as a young child. This stage contains material, verbs of action—*playing, seeking, to hunt, had to go*—and behavioral—*dissuade, learn*—processes, or verbs that represent actions but also represent emotions which are acted upon. These are the types of processes we would expect when something becomes complicated in real life. We might not be allowed to do certain activities, and people might be trying to persuade us to do certain activities. These are the types of processes that Wong chooses when describing the complications in her life at the time.

The next stage involves another complication (clauses 9-12), this time with her stern principal. This stage, again, contains mostly material clauses expressing activities the author was forced to perform or activities the principal did that annoyed the narrator. This stage is then resolved (resolution clauses

13-15) as Wong acknowledges and perceives her principal, where the author most often uses mental processes . She has resolved these issues in her mind (or has at least attempted to).

We then encounter another complication (clauses 16-19) where the narrator describes her dislike of the school auditorium. Here we are presented with several different processes: first, a material process describing the fact that the author "*sat* in little chairs;" second, the author describes that the room "*smelled* like Chinese medicine;" and finally, the author "*hated* the smell." The author then presents a resolution (clauses 20-24) of sorts by describing the sights and smells from her American school which she actually enjoys. This stage contains mental—*favored*—and relational—*was, flanked, was*—processes, or verbs of *being* and *having*.

Then, the next genre stage is another complication (clauses 25-32) where the author describes her problems with the way Chinese school is actually conducted. This stage contains relational clauses describing the emphasis of the curriculum, material processes explaining what students had to do, and verbal processes characterizing what they had to *chant* during the school day. Again, this stage is resolved (resolution clauses 33-36) from the author's viewpoint with a description of the great aspects of her United States school. Here she describes all the great things she got to do through the use of material processes at her school. She is resolving issues here by her actions doing things.

The next stage is another complication (clauses 37-46) where the author tells us about her dislike for the way the Chinese language sounds. We are presented with a list of those aspects she hates presented as mostly relational clauses containing carriers of certain attributes. Again, the lexico-grammar directly reflects the social purposes which the author is considering. The narrator resolves (resolution clauses 47-77) her hatred of Chinese by presenting the reader with a description of English as a beautiful language compared to Chinese. She describes English as a language that when she uses (material) it, she is greeted (behavioral) with reactions of acceptance and beauty when she speaks (verbal). She then describes her mother's lack of skills in speaking English (verbal) and how she could not move (material) her lips and articulate (material) the sounds very well.

The final two stages are one evaluation (clauses 78-84) and a final coda (clauses 85-87). The evaluation stage consists of mostly mental and material clauses. The author discusses her feelings about being multicultural and that she *was granted* a cultural divorce. This evaluation is a general response, commenting on the previous complications. These two processes set up the opposition that we see in the final coda where the author implies to the reader that she no longer relates to her own culture and that she is devastated that this is the case. She is acting and thinking as seen in the material clause (*granted* and *stop*) and the mental clause (*thought*) that ultimately make it difficult and sad that she can no longer relate (relational) to her culture. The last clauses

of this text *(85) At last, I was one of you; (86) I wasn't one of them;(87)* and *Sadly, I still am* show the author's coda which often refers back to the theme of the first stage and makes an overall statement about the text, creating a sense of finality by its circular return to the starting point of the narrative. In these clauses, the main participant is "I" and the main process used is a relational process in different tenses – *was/wasn't* in Simple Past tense and *am* in Simple Present tense. Clause 85 is used to contrast with clause 86 through the use of the processes *was* and *wasn't* as well as the use of *one of you* and *one of them*. The pronoun *you* refers to Americans and the pronoun *them* refers to Chinese. The use of the adverb *sadly* in the last clause of the text shows how the author feels at the present time about still being "one of you." Again, we see lexico-grammatical choices mimicking the world view that the author is developing with her story, but in the last clause of the text the author shows that she feels sad about her transformation. As can be seen from the above description, different process choices reflect different stages in the genre that serve different functions.

Tenor and the Interpersonal Metafunction

One can study the tenor expressed in the text through the use of the interpersonal metafunction in language. As mentioned above, the tenor is concerned with how relationships and attitudes are negotiated between people within a text (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). One can determine the different types of mood structures chosen within a text to examine the relationships that are established between narrator and reader. Some texts express a conversational relationship through the use of interrogatives between characters or participants. Other texts might show power hierarchies through the expression of imperative commands for the reader to perform (e.g., recipes). Still others might merely express their relationship with the reader as one where the reader only listens and receives information through the use of declaratives (e.g., scientific journal articles). This pattern of declaratives is the predominate one throughout "A Cultural Divorce."

There are many aspects of the interpersonal metafunction which can be examined in this narrative. Here, there is only one main/matrix clause that is not declarative, which is an imperative clause where the narrator's brother demands the mother to repeat her incorrect English sentences. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the narrator is merely giving us what she would consider to be the facts of her life. This is not a negotiable story where we are to question what has happened to the narrator. We are expected to see the narrator as the victim stating to us how she has been victimized by United States' culture. Furthermore, this narrative is personal to the narrator in every sense of the word. This is her story and she tells it in a structure that centers herself and her family in explicit subject position throughout. When the narrative does include the one imperative, it is spoken by her brother to her mother which puts the narrator in a

more positive light to the reader, as the narrator is not the character bossing the mother. The narrator never includes clauses in the interrogative mood. In other words, she is relaying her story to the reader, not asking the reader to question her actions. It's not *her* actions that should be questioned anyway, but those of the people who force her to go to Chinese school.

In addition to the choice in mood, the narrator also provides her own comments and judgments of the events in the story through the use of modal and polar adjuncts to denote the different stages in the genre. These adjuncts are most often included within the orientation, complication, and coda stages. She uses adjuncts of usuality (also known as adverbs of frequency in traditional grammar) to characterize the Chinese school as a constant nuisance in her life: exercise was "always" occurring, Nancy Drew "never" spoke Chinese, and the narrator is "still" like us, the readers, not learning Chinese and being completely disconnected from her culture. By usuality, we mean that Wong comments about how often or usual these occurrences were. With this in mind, one can see that the discussion of mood reveals additional delicate lexico-grammatical choices which signal the different stages in the genre.

Mode and the Textual Metafunction

The textual metafunction is responsible for realizing the mode of texts. An analysis of the clausal themes—the first part of a clause--and rhemes—everything after the theme-- and their patterns, as well as cohesive devices used in the text, helps teachers and students understand how the text realizes this level of meaning. In SFL, the theme is defined as "the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that which locates and orients the clause within its context" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 64). Thus, we can consider the theme to represent what each clause, and thus the text, is about. The rheme is the rest of the clause which is not the theme.

The cohesive devices used in this story are relatively simple. For example, the author most often uses the word "and" as a connector. Generally the themes of each clause are the subject of the clause, as in *it* (clause 1), *he* (clause 12), *the room* (clause 17), and *the language* (clause 37). Some organizational and contrastive strategies are reflected through the use of cohesive devices as in *and* (clauses 12 and 14), *after all* (clause 33), and *even* (clause 54). Characters are often referred to by name or description and then later given pronouns as reference devices such as *who* (clause 8), *I* (clauses 13, 14, 19, and 20), and *her* (clauses 39, 40 and 41) throughout the rest of the text.

The majority of themes in this text utilize the subject as the main actor. However, sometimes other themes are included for contrast and temporal positioning such as *when I spoke English* (clause 50) and *every day at 5 p.m.* (clause 3) respectively. These types of themes are typical of narratives in general. Narratives are mainly concerned with events in which people are involved and

are reflected in chronological order or denoted by the physical location of the characters. This is shown in the thematic choices being made here by Wong. Narratives are entertaining stories about people and the events which take place in snapshots of their lives. This is exactly what is reflected as the departure point for the clauses in this narrative.

HOW CAN WE USE THIS TEXT WITH ELLS?

Teachers can highlight several different aspects of this text with ELLs. The SFL analysis showed how the narrative is structured and the language is used to express certain meanings. Teachers can select from the analysis what they want to present to their students. Above all, we want to show how an SFL analysis can help teachers identify some important meanings presented in the text.

Because of its language level, this text would be most appropriate for the secondary level or university level. Some questions that teachers can ask students about this text include:

1. How does the author construct a contrastive relationship between "China" and the "United States"?
2. The entire text up until the last line shows the author's preference for what she has experienced in the U.S. Find at least three sentences that show this preference and explain your selection.
3. Why was the language "a source of embarrassment" for the author? How can you tell? Use examples from the language used in the text to justify your answer.
4. Carefully examine the Complication stages throughout the text. What is the center of each stage? In other words, what does the author's discussion focus on?
5. The author uses the words "finally" and "a cultural divorce" in the sentence *After two years of writing with a **moc but** and reciting words with multiples of meaning, I finally was granted a cultural divorce.*
   Why do you think the author used these words and what did she want to show? Why? Connect your answers to other parts of the text.
6. The last clauses of this text
   (85) At last, I was one of you; (86) I wasn't one of them.
   (87) Sadly, I still am.
   show the author's coda which often refers back to the theme of the first stage and makes an overall statement about the text, creating a sense of finality by its circular return to the starting point of the narrative. In these clauses, the main participant is "I" and the main process used is a relational process in

different tenses: *was/wasn't* in Simple Past tense and *am* in Simple Present tense.

    a) What is the contrast being created in these clauses? Consider clause 85 in contrast with clause 86 and both 85 and 86 in contrast with 87.

    b) How does the adverb "sadly" in clause 87 function in the text?

These questions connect some points that have been brought up in the analysis with the language being used in the text. Of course these are just some ideas for questions. Teachers will know what is best for their students and other important aspects of the text to emphasize with students. Teachers can also include "connecting to the text" questions – or questions that ask students to relate to the ideas of the text. For example, a question such as *Have you ever felt anything similar to any aspect of what is discussed in the text? How?* would help students to make connections between their experiences and the experiences expressed by the author of the text.

WHAT CAN AN SFL ANALYSIS DO FOR US?

Many theorists and practitioners have successfully integrated SFL analysis to texts and elaborated on its usefulness. Many theorists and practitioners have successfully analyzed texts using SFL and have expressed the usefulness of their analyses for the teaching of multiple genres. Ultimately, these analyses bring to the foreground challenges students may face when expected to use academic language in schools (Bloor, 1996; de Oliveira, 2010, 2011; Martin, 1991; Schleppegrell, 2004; Veel, 1997). In some respects, learning academic language is like learning a foreign language, even if the students are taught in their own home language. Academic language can be vastly different than the home language used by many students, especially those who are English Language Learners (ELLs). Being able to identify challenges of academic language can allow for more educational opportunities for those students struggling to read or write at the appropriate level. In addition, scholars have identified many of the linguistic challenges of academic language across the many disciplines of schooling (Iddings, 2008; Martin, 1991; Schleppegrell, 2004; Veel, 1997). SFL analyses allow practitioners and teacher educators to focus on the academic language of schooling. Writing teachers can make part of their scaffolding efforts a focus on how multiple genres and registers work. With SFL, this focus becomes a focus on language, in addition to a focus on the context, purpose, and audience for each particular piece of writing. This ultimately promotes a more democratic process in school classrooms as more

students attain access to the challenging language of academia (Feez, 2002; Rose, 2005, 2006). This is especially true in the case of ELLs who have likely not acquired such language sitting at the dinner table in their home. Explicitly discussing the linguistic aspects of different genres, such as those provided in this article, helps students successfully grasp the academic language they need and enhances their likelihood of success (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2008; Schleppegrell, 2004).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Josh Iddings is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction specializing in Literacy and Language Education in Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. He currently teaches at the Oral English Proficiency Program, a training course for international graduate students desiring teaching assistant positions across many different disciplines. His research interests include first and second language writing, genre studies, Appalachian studies and systemic functional linguistics.

<div align="right">Inquiries should be directed to iddings@purdue.edu</div>

Luciana C. de Oliveira is Associate Professor of Literacy & Language Education and Director of the English Language Learning licensure program in the Dept of Curriculum & Instruction at Purdue University. Her research focuses on issues related to teaching English language learners (ELLs) at the K-12 level, including the role of language in learning the content areas and teacher preparation for ELLs. Her work has appeared in *Teachers College Record*, *Journal of Teacher Education*, *Journal of English for Specific Purposes, English Education, The History Teacher*, and other books and journals.

<div align="right">Inquiries should be directed to ldeolive@purdue.edu</div>

REFERENCES

Bloor, M. (1996). Academic writing in computer science. In E. Ventola & A. Mauranen (Eds.), *Academic Writing: Intercultural and Textual Issues* (pp. 59-87). Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co.

Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (1993). Introduction: How a genre approach to literacy can transform the way writing is taught. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *The powers of literacy: A genre approach to teaching writing* (pp. 1-21). Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

de Oliveira, L. C. (2010). Nouns in history: Packaging information, expanding explanations, and structuring reasoning. *The History Teacher*, *43*(2), 191-203.

de Oliveira, L. C. (2011). *Knowing and writing school history: The language of students' expository writing and teachers' expectations*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Eggins, S. (2004). *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics* (2nd ed.). New York: Continuum.

Fang, Z., & Schleppegrell, M. J. (2008). *Reading in secondary content areas: A language-based pedagogy*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Feez, S. (2002). Heritage and innovation in second language education. In A. M. Johns (Ed.), *Genre in the classroom: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 43-69). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1959). *The language of the Chinese "Secret history of the Mongols."* Oxford: Blackwell.

Halliday, M. A. K. (2004). Three aspects of children's language development: Learning language, learning through language, learning about language. In J. J. Webster (Ed.), *The language of early childhood* (pp. 308-326). New York: Continuum.

Halliday, M. A. K. (2007). A "linguistic approach" to the teaching of the mother tongue? In J. J. Webster (Ed.), *Language and education* (pp. 35-48). New York: Continuum.

Halliday, M. A. K. (2008). Working with meaning: Towards an appliable linguistics. In J. J. Webster (Ed.), *Meaning in context: Implementing intelligent applications of language studies* (pp. 7-23). New York: Continuum.

Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar* (3rd ed.). London: Arnold.

Hyland, K. (2003). Genre-based pedagogies: A social response to process. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 12*(1), 17-29.

Hyland, K. (2004). *Genre and second language writing*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Hyland, K. (2007). Genre pedagogy: Language, literacy and L2 writing instruction. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 16*(3), 148-164.

Iddings, J. G. (2008). A functional analysis of English humanities and biochemistry writing with respect to teaching university composition. *Novitas ROYAL, 2*(1), 60-87.

Johns, A. M. (Ed.). (2002). *Genre in the classroom: Multiple perspectives* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Johns, A. M. (2002). Introduction. In A. M. Johns (Ed.), *Genre in the classroom: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 17-42). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Macken-Horarik, M. (2002). "Something to shoot for": A systemic functional approach to teaching genre in secondary school science. In A. M. Johns (Ed.), *Genre in the classroom: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 17-42). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Martin, J. R. (1991). Nominalization in science and humanities: Distilling knowledge and scaffolding text. In E. Ventola (Ed.), *Functional and systemic linguistics: Approaches and uses,* 307-337.

Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2007). *Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause*. London: Continuum.

Rose, D. (2005). Democratising the classroom: A literacy pedagogy for the new generation. *Journal of Education, 37*. Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal, 127-164.

Schleppegrell, M. J. (2004). *The language of schooling: A functional linguistic perspective*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Skwire, S. E., & Skwire, D. (2005). *Writing with a thesis: A rhetoric and reader* (9th ed., pp. 56-58). New York: Thomson and Wadsworth.

Veel, R. (1997). Learning how to mean—scientifically speaking: Apprenticeship into scientific discourse in the secondary school. In F. Christie & J. R. Martin (Eds.), *Genre and institutions: Social processes in the workplace and school* (pp. 161-195). London: Continuum.

ENDNOTES

[1] Here, these symbols have different meanings. The symbol "[ ]" encloses the entire genre stage sequence. The symbol "^" means *followed by*. The symbol "." means *one or the other*. Finally, the symbol "( )" means the stage is optional.