

Improving Graduate Student Writing Production: A functional approach

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How would you describe the
quality of your students' writing?

Discuss with your neighbor
what makes you say this.

Background for this inquiry

- Pedagogical Grammar Class
 - Systemic Functional Linguistics Toolbox
- TESL Graduate Student Research Writing
 - Lack connection on macro- and micro-levels, listing
 - Stance
- Young & Nguyen (2002) - Social construction of disciplinary knowledge
 - Academic writing uses a wide range of expressions of relationship; precise but harder to comprehend
 - How novices are socialized into disciplinary discourse via the textbook and classroom discourse

What are the features of genres do student writers need to use?

Systemic Functional Grammar Toolbox (Larsen-Freeman, Schleppegrell)

- Complexity
 - Clause structure
 - Nominalization
 - Strings of PPs
- Cohesion
 - Reference
 - Logical Connectors
 - Lexical Cohesion
- Coherence
 - Theme-Rheme (end weight)
 - Tense-Aspect (texture)
- Level of objectivity
 - Voice
 - Hedging
 - Modality
 - Mood

Methods of socialization

- I commonly use Melanie's Strategy
 - I rewrite, advisee analyzes my rewrite and then revises
- Chose the initial 2 paragraphs of the introduction
- Using the comments, I usually explain what I do, and ask them to do the same in their writing

So this time:

- Student to apply the tools from the toolbox to the difference between his 2 paragraphs and my 2 paragraphs, and
- Decide what would be more helpful to his writing
- [Example text](#)

Student findings

I think I would benefit most from adjusting my theme-rheme-theme structure to the common pattern of development in texts. This pattern says that new information should be first introduced in the rheme of one clause, then treated as given information in the theme of a subsequent clause (found on page 70 of the Diane Larsen-Freeman Grammmaring book). Additionally, I would also benefit from choosing words that parallel with previous word choices. I should also add more continuative cohesive adverbials, and substitute lengthy lists with subordinating clauses.

My analysis methods

- Chose the first paragraph that had corresponding content in both drafts
- Did an analysis of the 4 points chosen by the student
 - Theme-rheme structure (subjects/objects)
 - Lexical cohesion
 - Logical connectors
 - Coordinators/subordinators, PPs, initial AdvPs
 - Subordinating/embedding

Theme-Rheme 1 – Draft 1

Theme	Rheme/object participant
Many studies	this perception
Bilingualism	proficiency
Peal and Lambert	influences bilingualism has on cognition
Using modern technological methods, Bialystok	proof of bilingual increased brain function
Considering the linguistic worries, Bae (2007) and de Jong and Howard (2009)	bilingualism / linguistic development
Thomas and Collier (2002)	academic achievement/ linguistic development
In response to the need for high intelligence, researchers Cummins and Swain (1986)	bilingual programs/intelligence
Many researchers	cultural pluralism/social interaction
Despite these findings, the common perception of bilingual education	unsuccessful development

Rewrite – Theme-Rheme 2

Theme	Rheme/object participant
Many studies	bilingual education
These studies	methodology
Using modern neuroimaging technology, Bialystok	proof of bilingual increased brain function
In terms of linguistic development, Bae (2007) and de Jong and Howard (2009)	addressing many concerns
Other concerns	academic success
This academic success	facilitated in an additive bilingual program
All of these studies	suggested that bilingualism...

Rewrite – Repetition/Reiteration 1 & 2

Repetition	Reiteration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bilingual 8 • monolingual 3 • linguistic 3 • development 3 • intelligence 3 • research 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • benefit, influence, develop, contribute, facilitate, appreciation, heightened sense, success • cognition, brain function, cognitive faculties, intelligence, academic achievement, educate • assessment, methods, examination, test, design, control tasks • demonstrate, correlate, proof, determine, found • linguistic development, proficiency • research, study

Repetition	Reiteration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bilingual 7 • academic 5 • linguistic 3 • achievement 3 • facilitate 3 • studies 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • benefits, effectiveness, achievement, success, offer, facilitate, influence, additive • brain function, cognitive • methodology, technology, control tasks • provide proof, determine • linguistic development, acquisition • investigate, research, examine

Rewrite – Logical Connectors

Logical connectors 1

- And – 2 (VP + VP)
- Furthermore
- Much later,
- Despite these findings,
- In response to the need...,
- Considering the linguistic worries..,

Logical connectors 2

- Not only, but also (complement + complement)
- However,
- For example,
- Prior to and since 1986,
- In terms of linguistic development,
- Unlike previously mentioned research,
- Using modern neuroimaging technology,

Rewrite – Subordination/Embedding

Complexity 1

- Sentences – 9 (all complex)
- Total dependent clauses - 9
 - Complements – 6
 - Relative clauses – 3
 - Adverbial subordinates - 3

Complexity - 2

- Sentences – 7 (all complex)
- Total dependent clauses - 9
 - Complements – 4
 - Relative clause – 5
 - Adverbial subordinates - 3

Findings

The student was able to:

- Apply a functional grammar analysis to his own writing
- Compare that with an analysis of instructor revision
- Apply the differences found there to his own writing
- Socialization into academic writing for the discipline appeared to have occurred