

Learning History, Learning Academic Language

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Overview

- Learning academic language in the history classroom
- How functional language analysis can support learning history
- Connecting language and meaning

Challenges for English language learners in school

- Learning language
- Learning through language
- Learning about language

(Halliday, 2004)

Functional language analysis

- Developed in Australia based on the work of linguist Michael Halliday
- Looks at the language choices an author makes
- Provides tools for talking about how language makes meaning in history

Supporting academic language development

- Interaction in meaningful contexts of language use
- Explicit focus on how language works
- Engaging deeply with “content”

Language and “content”

- Content is constructed mainly in language
- Each subject has its own ways of using language
- Analyzing and talking about language can help students see how meaning is constructed in English in different subjects

Providing tools for teachers

- A meaning-based language for talking about how language makes meaning in history
- Going beyond vocabulary and general literacy strategies to focus on history discourse
- Helping history teachers support academic language development

Challenges of learning history

- History is constructed in language
- The language that constructs it is *academic language*, densely packed with multiple meanings
- Many students are unprepared to read and write academic language

Goals of functional language analysis

- To engage students in conversation about a history text
- To identify the author's interpretations and judgments
- To help students recognize different patterns of language in history text

Connecting language and meaning

Identify *processes, participants, circumstances*

The *Missouri Compromise* passed in 1820

Process: ***passed***

Participants: ***the Missouri Compromise***

Circumstance: ***In 1820***

The *Missouri Compromise* Goals of this analysis

- To understand the central issues in the events leading to the Missouri Compromise
- To recognize the different historical points of view on these events
- To recognize how the historian has organized this text to develop information about the *Missouri Compromise*

Asking three questions

- What's going on in the text?
- What is the author's perspective?
- How is the text organized?

What's going on in the text?

- *Action* processes construct events and participants in them
- *Thinking/saying* processes construct perspectives introduced by the author
- *Describing/defining* processes construct background and judgment

The Missouri Compromise text – 1st paragraph
 Action process *Describing/defining* process

The Missouri Compromise

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 [permit]**. 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.



The Missouri Compromise text – 2nd paragraph
 Action process *Thinking/feeling* process

In addition, the North and the South, with their different economic systems, **were competing for** new lands in the western territories. At the same time, a growing number of Northerners **wanted** to restrict or ban slavery. Southerners, even those who **disliked** slavery, **opposed** these antislavery efforts. They **resented** the interference by outsiders in Southerner's affairs. These differences between the North and the South **grew into** **sectionalism**—an exaggerated loyalty to a particular region of the country.



What is the author's perspective?

- Who is represented as having agency in this text?
- Whose words and thoughts are reported?



Actors and Receivers

<i>Actors</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Receiver/goal</i>
Missouri settlers	had brought	enslaved African Americans
Missouri	applied to	Congress
Its constitution	allowed	slavery
11 states in the Union	permitted	slavery
11 [states]	did not [permit]	[slavery]
The admission of a new state	would upset	that balance
The North and the South	were competing for	new lands in the western territories
These differences between the North and the South	grew into	sectionalism



Thinkers and their Thoughts

<i>Thinker/Senser</i>	<i>Thinking/feeling process</i>	<i>What is thought or felt</i>
A growing number of Northerners	wanted	to restrict or ban slavery
Southerners	opposed	these anti-slavery efforts
even those who	disliked	slavery
They	resented	the interference by outsiders in Southerners' affairs



How is the text organized?

The Missouri Compromise

Many Missouri settlers with them. **By 1819** the Missouri Territory included 10,000 slaves. **When** Missouri applied to Congress as a state ... allowed slavery. **In 1819**, 11 states in the Union permitted slavery and 11 did not [permit]. The Senate.....**was therefore** evenly balanced**In addition**, the North and the South, were competing..... **At the same time**, a growing number of Northerners wanted to restrict ...This proposal, known as the *Missouri Compromise*, passed **in 1820**. It preserved the balancedebate in Congress over slavery.



Seeing patterns in language

- *Time* and *cause* are constructed in *circumstances*, *connectors*, and other language resources
- Grammatical participants in the text are introduced and then ‘tracked’ with *referrers*, constructed in pronouns, demonstratives, synonyms

Tracking development of ideas

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.*

Answering the three questions

- What’s going on in the text?
 - What processes, participants, and circumstances are represented?
- What is the author’s perspective?
 - Who has the power to act on others in this text?
 - Whose thoughts, feelings, and words are presented?
- How is the text organized?
 - How are time and cause constructed?
 - How is information introduced and tracked?

Does it work?

- External evaluation of CHP (Gargani + Co.)
- School districts with high levels of poverty, low achievers, and English language learners
- Students of participating eighth grade teachers compared with students of non-participating teachers (experimental and quasi-experimental design)
- Significant effects on student achievement: CST in social science, English language arts, writing assessment

Learning history, learning academic language

- With support, ELLs can engage with grade-appropriate content and learn academic language
- Talking about the language makes history accessible
- Providing teachers with a language for talking about language gives them powerful tools for engaging students in talk about meaning in history

References for further reading

- Coffin, C. (2006). *Historical Discourse: The language of time, cause, and evaluation*. London: Continuum.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (2004). Three aspects of children's language development: Learning language, learning through language, learning about language (1980). In J. Webster (Ed.), *The Language of Early Childhood* (Vol. 4, pp. 308-326). London: Continuum.
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- Schleppegrell, M. J., & de Oliveira, L. C. (2006). An integrated language and content approach for history teachers. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5(4), 254-268.