HOW TO APPLY SFL IN CLASSROOM PRACTICE: AN EXAMPLE IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN THE USA

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ABSTRACT

In this article I examine a corpus of twenty essays written in English by twenty pre-university Mexican students who were part of a Bilingual Education program in USA in grade 12 during the academic year 2005-2006. I will describe the main errors found in students' essays. Each error will be illustrated and followed by a discussion on how that error can be addressed in classroom practice.

With this study I intend to demonstrate that having Systemic Functional Linguistics as a framework of analysis will be useful to evaluate students' writing and to reflect on the relationship between linguistic links across sentences and textual coherence. I will also point out that SFL has a crucial role in literacy since it concentrates on the production and analysis of texts in a given language.

Key words
Bilingual Education, literacy, writing, errors, Systemic Functional Grammar, context.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a functional grammarian, I am interested in the relationship between grammar and meaning and grammar and context. As de Sylva and Burns (1999: 34) point out: if we see language as functionally related to its context of use, "grammar is seen as determined by the kinds of discourses and texts that people need to produce for different purposes in different social contexts."

I will highlight the relationship between literacy, Genre Theory, Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter SFL) and effective writing (see Whittaker,

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O'Donnell, and McCabe, 2008; Unsworth, 2008). In *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, Halliday declares that the educational application of SFL is "[…] probably the broadest range of its applications; it includes experience in initial literacy, children's writing, language in secondary education, classroom discourse analysis, teaching of foreign languages, analysis of textbooks, error analysis, teaching of literature and teacher education". (Halliday, 1994)

SFL describes language in use because language is viewed as a resource for making meaning. For this reason, this theoretical model pays attention to how different structures construct meanings, and it focuses on authentic texts and their contexts of use. Systemic linguists do not separate language and society. Language is realized through text; this implies that texts do not have intrinsic meanings since meaning emerges according to the way texts are used in social contexts. The language chosen to express a particular meaning determines the way in which that meaning is perceived. Following Halliday (1978: 27), language is understood as 'meaning potential'- what the speaker can do or mean, which implies that out of the different choices that are possible in language, the speaker selects the most appropriate ones according to the communicative situation.

Looking at language from a SFL point of view, we understand how speakers express meaning through the exploitation of linguistic resources, and how these are motivated by contextual factors. Drawing upon this, L2 instruction should present the language to learners in a way that facilitates the understanding of the relations between the linguistic and the extralinguistic and at the same time encourages functional practice with the language. To illustrate this I am going to offer the following example from a student's essay in which she uses different adverbs and expressions to express modality in English, i.e., the student is aware of the importance of modality in persuasive text types and do not limit to use modal verbs:

> […] I am <u>absolutely</u> sure that you smoke because you work too hard. <u>I believe that</u> this is not the solution to your problem. You always said you did not like people who smoked. <u>I think you should stop smoking.</u> <u>It is certain</u> that it will affect your health in the future. <u>Researchers agree that</u> smoking <u>can</u> anticipate death. For this reason, <u>it is important that</u> you reduce the number of cigarettes you smoke. <u>I am sure that you will feel better.</u> […]

SFL has a crucial role in literacy since it concentrates on both the production and analysis of texts in a given language. It offers the tools for the analysis of grammatical features in written texts, such as: the different stages of texts, theme and rheme position, lexical choices (e.g. technical vocabulary, descriptive vocabulary, vocabulary of judgement or attitude), types of verbs, noun groups (including nominalization, extended noun groups), cohesion

(types of conjunctions, types of reference, substitution, ellipsis, lexical cohesion). When students are able to analyse these features, they can predict the context of the text and at the same time they learn to use these grammatical features in their written texts and improve their level of literacy. For example, when students are familiar with the main characteristics of expositions, they are able to produce the following argument:

Argument 3: I think the death penalty should be avoided because killing a human being can never be justified. Consequently, politicians should work on measures that highlight prevention. In this way, people whose behaviour is against the law have the opportunity to improve their attitude before they are sentenced to death.

This example points out that students are able to use cohesive devices (reference, conjunction and lexical cohesion); they are also able to exploit the potential of appraisal or the language of evaluation to persuade the readers to agree with their arguments

SFL highlights the importance of writing effective texts that contain ideas consistent with the cultural conventions in which the text is written. In this way, writing will result in a coherent text. Since SFL concentrates on the analysis of written and spoken discourse and the corpus of study consists of written texts, it is essential that students know different tools to analyse written texts and become aware of the different genres or text types (recount, narrative, procedure, information report, explanation, etc.). Once students are confident with recognizing and producing text types, they can use them for different purposes, as Edelsky (1986: 1) points out:

"Research on the development of writing in bilingual education could help foster understanding of the relation between important aspects of first and second language acquisition and use. It could also provide a new lens, that of biliteracy, for looking at general and continuing concerns such as the relation between reading and writing or the effect of instruction on the acquisition of written language".

With these ideas in mind, I intend to show that the study of some of the main concepts related to SFL help students to increase their level of literacy. An exchange program between Spain and the United States gave me the opportunity to work as a bilingual teacher at Deming High School, New Mexico (USA) for a year. I taught Bilingual Language Arts to grades 10, 11 and 12, allowing me to work on the writing process from a SFL perspective, and I was able to observe different aspects related to written texts in English such as the importance of understanding the text as authentic product, as a way of communication; the importance of paragraph division to organise content; and the analysis of theme and rheme and information structure.

The study reported in this paper examines a corpus of twenty essays written in English by twenty pre-university Mexican students who were part

of a Bilingual Education program in USA in grade 12 during the academic year 2005-2006. Fourteen students were female and six were male**.** The corpus of essays was analysed so as to identify their characteristics and possible shortcomings as comprehensible and effective pieces of writing. The underlying premise is that students writing is improved if they become aware of the range of text types that they can consciously select during their social practices within a culture. The twenty essays were compulsory to get a final grade; they were collected at the end of the academic year, i.e., at the end of May. All the essays had at least five of the following errors (they will be discussed in section 2): register and appropriacy, problems related to vocabulary, subject-verb agreement, articles, word order and syntax, faulty reference and pronominalization, etc. Once I was aware of the main errors in students' texts, I prepared some drilling exercises to help them to correct their main errors (for further explanation see section 2).

Using SFL as the theoretical framework for the analysis of these texts enabled greatly enhanced insights into the text because it offers instruments to analyse aspects related to form (i.e. paragraph division) and content in any text, and it concentrates on the function or purpose of the text. SFL concentrates on the idea of choice, as Ragan (1989: 117) puts it: "A systemic perspective focuses on choice, a relevant perspective as ESL students are often unable to draw freely from the choices which exist in the English linguistic code for aligning language with the context in which it is used."

SFL pays attention to the contextualisation of the writing task because effective texts contain ideas consistent with the cultural conventions in which the text is written. For this reason, students need to be interested in the topic they are going to write about and they need to know something about the topic (hobbies, family, etc.). It is helpful to give students the opportunity of writing about things that they normally write in their mother tongue, such as postcards, notes, essays, journals, etc.

Following Martínez Lirola (2005: 76) we need to "to focus on the social contexts in which students wish to use language, and make sure that they can often identify these contexts themselves. It is important to discuss with students their experiences of various contexts and ask them to identify the texts which they need to engage with." This statement is connected with genre and Genre Theory, that is, the relationship between the structure and shape of texts in order to be effective in a particular context and to achieve the goals of a particular culture. As Martin (1997: 13) states: "As a level of context, genre represents the system of staged goal oriented social processes through which social subjects in a given culture live their lives." Genre Theory highlights that in teaching writing teachers need to pay attention not only to the processes of composing texts but also to the nature of texts that students write (Hammond and Derewianka, 2001: 187; Koutsantoni, 2007).

Genre Theory is a very suitable approach to establish a relationship between culture, society and language use because it focuses on the

relationship between texts and the context in which those texts occur. In this way, students become aware of the different genres they can use depending on their communicative purpose, the audience, and the level of formality. As Martínez Lirola (2006: 149) points out: "This is essential so that students can see how members of a culture use written texts as part of their social lives and they can conclude that the purpose of a genre determines its shape, i.e., its schematic structure."

This approach contrasts with the previous experiences of teaching writing I have had in New Mexico in the following ways: students were asked to produce texts without being exposed to good models of written texts. Students were not taught of the different genres or text types. The teaching of writing was focused on the formal aspects of the written text, which implied that the functional aspects were ignored. The idea of context and its relationship with the written text was neglected, i.e. students were not taught that the linguistic characteristics of a text help readers to predict the context of it.

Following Edelsky (2006: 165), our key beliefs about language and language learning in this article are the following:

"-Language is for making meanings, for accomplishing purposes".
- Written language is language; what is true for language in general is true for written language,
- The cuing system of language (phonology in oral, orthography in written language, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics) are interactive and interdependent,
- Language has the potential for multiple interpretations because language use always occurs in a situation, […]".

Before commenting on the main errors that were found in students' essays, it is important to point out that there are developmental sequences in the acquisition of syntax and morphology in the L1 and L2, as Ellis (1994: 78) makes clear with the examples on negative particles or interrogatives that he analyses in his book.

2. Main errors in students' texts and some applications of SFL to the analysis of texts as a way of increasing students' literacy

The following list of errors was prepared by correcting and observing students' essays: register and appropriacy, problems related to vocabulary, subject-verb agreement, articles, word order and syntax, faulty reference and pronominalization, etc. Observing these errors and correcting them was essential to provide students with feedback and to concentrate on some aspects of SFL that could help them to write better[1]. My intention using SFL should not be seen as a means to eradicate all errors I found in students'

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[1] By writing better I mean keeping in mind the main characteristics of each genre or text type.

essays but "as a means to encourage gradual but consistent improvement in accuracy over time, acquisition and application of linguistic knowledge, and development of effective self-editing strategies." (Ferris, 2002: 74)

Students wrote about things related to their personal life in the essays: what they did during the weekend, during the holidays, their hobbies and family life, etc. These personal accounts were written at home after I had explained in class the basic steps of the writing process.

The following list of errors is based on the most common problems I found in students' essays since they were found in at least ten of the twenty essays I analysed, i.e., fifty per cent of students had these problems. As I stated in the introduction, SFL has a very clear educational application, in Coffin's words (2001: 98): "Educational applications of SFL are generally designed to teach students how to operate in social contexts relevant to their educational, social and cultural needs." For this reason, after each error I offer an explanation on how I dealt with each of them in the classroom from a SFL perspective, which provides some pedagogical guidelines for the implementation of SFL for the teaching of writing in ESL contexts.

In the following paragraphs, I will refer to the following errors: register and appropriacy (2.1), problems related to vocabulary, particles and articles (2.2), difficulties with word order and syntax (2.3), and problems with faulty reference and pronominalization (2.4). In this section, I share Cahnmann's views of students' errors (2003: 196-197) "[…] as windows of opportunities to appreciate students' rich and varied linguistic backgrounds and the creative problem-solving strategies they utilize to negotiate monolingual literacy activities required of them in school."

2.1. <u>Register and appropriacy</u>: frequently, students were unable to use certain words in the appropriate register in the written language. For example, they tend to forget the word *please*, which is used quite often in English. It is also normal in adolescence to develop certain words that are normally used between teenagers to communicate with friends but they have to be conscious that they cannot use those words in that context, for example, it was common that students used the word super in their essays: *The party at Jim's place was super* (instead of great, excellent, etc., which would be more appropriate in written English).

To cope with these errors, teachers have to help students <u>become aware of the different contexts</u> surrounding them: the context of situation, the context of culture, etc., and they also have to teach students to create context in their written texts. When students understand context, they are much more likely to write effectively.

The context in which writing takes place needs to be considered for three main reasons (Edelsky, 2006: 67): "(1) learning written language in school (whether or not in a bilingual program) always happens in multiple co-occurring contexts; (2) each of these contexts has profound effects on writing

inside the classroom; and (3) the contexts are complex in ways that may not be immediately obvious".

The term context of culture was coined by the anthropologist Malinowski (1923), (1935). This context can be described as the sum of all the meanings it is possible to create in that particular culture. (Butt et al., 2000: 3)

Malinowski needed a term to refer to the whole environment of the text, including the situation in which the text was produced. In an article written in 1923, he coined the term context of situation to refer to the environment of the text.

The term context of situation refers to all those extra-linguistic factors that are present in the text in any way. As Butt *et al.* (2000: 3) declare: "Within the context of culture, speakers and writers use language in many more specific contexts or situations. Each of these is an inner context, which functional linguists call the context of situation."

Apart from being familiar with the different kinds of context, students should also <u>revise the variables of the context of situation: field, tenor and mode</u>. In this way we enable students to understand how these variables influence, and are influenced, by the context.

Field refers to what is taking place, to the nature of the social action, and to the objectives why we use language in a determined situation: "what is it that the participants are engaged in, in which the language figures as some essential component?" (Halliday, 1989: 12).

Tenor makes reference to the participants that take part in communication, to the roles and social positions that participants have: "what kind of role relationship obtains among the participants, including permanent and temporary relationships of one kind or another, both the types of speech role that they are taking on in the dialogue and the whole cluster of socially significant relationships in which they are involved?" (Halliday, 1989: 12).

Mode refers to the role that language plays, to what participants expect language to do for them in that situation: the symbolic organization of text, its function in context, including the channel (if it is written or oral or a combination of both) and also its rhetorical component, i.e., if we are able to persuade, teach, state, etc. through the text.

Being aware of the types of context and the variables of the context of situation helps students to be able to adapt any text to different contexts and situations. This implies a selection of the appropriate lexico-grammatical choices depending on the subject matter and the text type. Students have to develop the ability to adapt the text to different audiences depending on their cultural and situational background. One of our roles as teachers is to remind our students that they need to co-operate with their intended readers and to point out the importance of interaction in writing. In Hyland's words (2000: 18-19): "In sum, the notion of writer-reader interaction provides a framework for studying texts in terms of how knowledge comes to be socially constructed by writers acting as members of social groups. It offers an explanation for the

ways writers frame their understandings of the world and how they attempt to persuade others of these understandings."

Apart from this, students need to know the different linguistic choices which construct degrees of formality in written texts and the different patterns of sequencing such as problem-solution or general-particular. In this way students get to know the structure, the social purpose and lexico-grammatical features of different text types.

Students should study nominalisation as an important resource for creating abstract and technical terms in written language and for condensing information in texts; this is the process of turning words that are not normally nouns (i.e., verbs, conjunctions, adjectives, and adverbs) into nouns, for example:

It is important to develop your ideas in a logical way is more formal if it is nominalised as *the logical development of ideas is very important.*

After the SFL instruction, students were familiar with grammatical metaphor, and were able to transform examples such as: *We walked in the evening near the castle to the beach* in examples such as the following: *Our evening walk near the castle took us to the beach,* which is more formal.

By working explicitly with field, tenor and mode variables, we "vary the major features of the contexts or writing in terms of genres, purposes, and audiences to allow students to respond to situational variables of field, tenor, and mode". (Ragan, 1989: 118)

2.2. Analysis of the texts highlighted other errors that prevented students from seeing the written text as an authentic product.

Firstly, there were many problems related to vocabulary such as false friends: students have to be aware that there are certain words that are similar in form to words in their own language but the meaning is very different, for example "library" does not mean "librería" in Spanish ("librería" means "bookshop"); "in front of" does not mean "en frente de" ("en frente de" means "opposite to"), "constipate" does not mean "constiparse" ("constiparse" means "to get a cold"), etc.

Secondly, the omission of words is also common, as the auxiliary in the present perfect, particles[2] in phrasal verbs, omission of *-ing*: "I gone to the party" instead of "I have gone to the party", "I can not give smoking" instead of "I can not give up smoking", "I look forward to hear from you" instead of "I look forward to hearing from you", etc.

Thirdly, I have found students have difficulties with subject-verb agreement: it is quite frequent to find a plural subject with a verb in singular or vice versa i.e., a singular subject with a verb in plural, as we can see in the following two examples.

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[2] By particles I understand prepositions or adverbs included to form a phrasal verb.

Along the beach was several small boats that had been washed ashore (were)

The lack of logic in his arguments never cease to surprise me (ceases)

Apart from the errors mentioned in the previous paragraphs, there were many problems with the use of <u>articles</u> because students did not distinguish when they needed to use them. For this reason, examples such as the following are frequent: *The life can be hard.* In this example students forget that abstract uncountable nouns normally take the zero article when referring generally. However, they also have trouble using the definite article with abstract uncountable nouns when talking about a specific example, as in happens in: *Knowledge which he gained in business helped him organise other ventures.* Students do not use the definite article in this sentence in which they are talking about a specific knowledge, i.e. *the one learned in business*.

When the teacher uses authentic texts as models for writing and the students are asked to write for authentic purposes, the teacher is able to work more effectively in the correction of such errors. Using SFL in the classroom highlights that the written text should be a purposeful communication and that the goal is to create interaction through the written message.

My purpose as teacher in the bilingual program was to insure that students saw <u>writing as a way of communication</u>. Throughout the academic year I emphasized the writing process. Students were used to being given a topic and immediately start writing about it, without reflecting on the topic. The first step to correcting the habit of writing without reflecting was presenting the stages of the writing process: pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing. The aim was to convince students that it is in the drafting and revising stages that they can pay attention to errors related to vocabulary, particles, subject-verb agreement and articles because in many cases a revision implies self-correction.

By doing so, the students were able to understand the creation of writing is a process, not a product, and that writing good texts needs some degree of organization and planning, i.e. planning is linked to thinking about the cultural and situational context of the writing. For this reason, I wanted students to be aware that without following the process it was impossible to obtain a good product because both process and product must be taken into account: it is unreasonable to eliminate one or the other.

It is important to emphasize the idea that when we write we have to interact with the reader. Writers share with the reader the information that they have (the 'information gap'). This is what we do in real life: we share the information we have with other people. That is the reason why students need to know the different interactive resources since it is largely through texts that individuals collaborate with others. In this sense, students have to realize that

when they create a text they have power because they can do things with their texts, or in Halliday's words (1978: 27): "Language, […] is a potential: it is what the speaker can do".

Students were asked to analyse the social purpose of different texts so that they discover that different text types occur in order to achieve different goals or social purposes. In this way, students are provided with appropriate contextualized writing experiences that allow them to see what the different stages in every text type are, how the grammar of written language works and how grammatical features cluster in particular text types. Butt et al. (2000: 10-13) offer the following division of text types:

Recount
Narrative
Procedure
Information report
Explanation
Exposition
Discussion

2.3 Sometimes the <u>main problems in written communication are connected with</u> <u>word order and syntax</u> because students tend to write following the syntactic order that they find in their mother tongue or are not familiarised with the main syntactic patterns of the English language. This means that they have to know that English is a SVO language but they also have to be aware of structures such as cleft sentences, existential sentences, etc., in which the order SVO has certain modifications.

One of the main difficulties related to word order has to do with the position of adverbials:

And I was that cold morning of November in a wonderful and rough countryside with my father.

They were all the week planning my surprise party.[…] *I was absolutely excited and I hardly could believe that my best friend was there.*

In a similar way, students have problems with inversion as the following examples point out:

But not only I was fascinated by the things I saw but also by the people: they offer you all they have. […]

Then I decided to go towards him and ask him why he had given me that lighter, but when we were face to face I could not talk, I could not even see and neither he could.

The concepts of <u>theme and rheme and information structure</u> are connected with word order. Sometimes there was new information in the wrong position (at the beginning of the sentence) as we can see in these examples:

A variety of programs in leisure time for young people are taking place in order to solve the problem of leisure time at week-ends. (This might be an effective sentence if the purpose is to emphasize the variety of programs, rather than the solving of a problem)

A lot of people from Africa and South America are coming to work in the shops of the city, where the new information is right at the beginning of the sentence.

With examples like these I could explain to students that the theme coincides normally with 'known information' and 'new information' is to be found in the rheme.

To avoid these problems teachers have to help students to be aware of the structure of texts at different levels
<u>Theme/Rheme patterns</u>
<u>Information structure (given/new)</u>

This analysis offers the possibility of studying the effect that marked themes have in texts and the importance of thematic progression patterns to organise the information in a text (Continuous or 'constant', Linear or 'zig-zag' pattern and Split Rheme pattern).

An analysis of theme requires an examination of the text as a whole. Then students see how in good writing new information is often introduced at the end of one sentence and referred to at the beginning of the next.

I wanted to point out the importance of the principles of 'end-focus' and 'end-weight', i.e. last is more important and the heavier part of the structure is normally at the end of the sentence as we can see in extrapositions: *It is nice to have friends at home,* in which the real subject of the sentence (*to have friends at home)* is extraposed to accomplish the principle of end-weigh because of being a long subject.

2.4 There were also difficulties with <u>faulty reference and pronominalization</u> in examples such as the following ones in which there is no agreement between the pronoun and the word it refers to, or it is not clear what the reference of the pronoun is. These examples show that students did not keep in mind that pronouns must agree in number with their antecedents, or that the antecedent of a pronoun must be clearly understood.

If everybody who had come to the meeting had brought their report with them, the meeting would have gone a lot more smoothly.

Many of the students explained his situation to me personally.

Mary told Paula she had to read Plato's Republic ('she' can refer to Mary or Paula).

Paul saw his friend as he was walking across the campus ('he' can refer to Paul or his friend).

To avoid these errors, I found very useful to introduce students to concepts that can help them to write better, such as the different cohesive devices introduced by Halliday and Hasan (1976): reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. It is important that students are familiar with endophoric and exophoric references and see them as relationships of cohesion which help to define the structure of a text. Endophoric reference (endophora) is a relationship of cohesion which helps to define the structure of a text. It is divided into anaphoric, involving reference to preceding text, and cataphoric types, referring to succeeding text. On the other hand, exophoric reference (exophora) is the type of reference that establishes relationships between an item in the text and something outside the text itself, in the context of utterance. This term refers to all those extra-linguistic factors which have some bearing on the text itself. It requires direct reference to the extralinguistic situation accompanying an utterance, e.g. *there, that, her.*

After analysing students' errors, I used drilling exercises in the classroom so that students could work on the grammatical points that needed further practice. This practice was at sentence level; then, students were expected to apply this knowledge to their writing. After this, I selected several paragraphs from their essays so that they could practice what they have learned in the drills at paragraph level. Finally, students were exposed to complete texts in which there were also errors so that they could correct them at text level. My intention with these classroom practices was that students were aware of the importance of the selection of the appropriate lexico-grammatical choices depending on the subject matter and the text type. In this way, students were able to analyse texts critically and were aware of the different types of texts, the linguistic characteristics of each type and the different resources they had to write good and effective texts.

3. CONCLUSIONS

SFL is an effective theoretical framework for helping students to improve their writing for several reasons:

In the first place, when teachers use SFL to inform their teaching they ensure students become aware of the different genres they can use depending on their communicative purpose, the audience, the level of formality, etc. In this way students see how members of a culture use written texts as part of their social lives and can conclude that the purpose of a genre determines its shape, i.e., its schematic structure. Genre theory also helps students to develop

understanding of the language they are learning and helps them to use it effectively.

Secondly, SFL focuses on the relationship between texts and the context in which those texts occur, and offers tools for the analysis of texts. In this way we can see an educational application of this discipline since it teaches students to produce oral and written texts in social contexts depending on their social needs.

Next, it is important that students keep in mind that they can understand a culture by paying attention to all texts that are produced in that culture. This discipline helps students to learn that texts cannot be considered autonomously because they always go together with historical, social, or other factors.

Apart from this, students become aware of the different meaning potentials (all the choices that can be made) inside a culture, and exhibit varied degrees of control over the meaning potential of English because we give them the opportunity of using this language in different situations, always taking into consideration the different contexts. In other words, SFL can help students to understand the relationships between language use, culture and society. Moreover, students will observe that language use is crucial in shaping the different types of context in which it is used. Having SFL as a framework gives us the opportunity of analysing students' texts and judging their appropriateness and adequacy according to the text type they belong to and to the context in which they are written.

A SFL approach is suitable for the interpretation of 'text and context' and 'language learning and development'. I have applied SFL to the analysis of texts in order to help students to write better or more easily, and I did this in the language class as this is the place where individuals can experiment with communication. Having SFL as a framework to analyse students' texts, allowed me to pay attention to the importance of the organisation of information at text level, and to see the text as a social product reflecting the social context in which it is written since there is a connection between form and meaning.

In the ESL and EFL classroom, it is essential to emphasize that language is a tool and it is necessary to learn to use it because language is always connected with communication and opportunities to work, travel or discovering other cultures, in other words, language is a resource that can be used in different ways depending on what we want to achieve in a particular context. For this reason it is very important that students are aware of the different cohesive devices, types of context and variables of the context of situation, the concepts of theme and rheme and information structure.

The revision of the writing process is also relevant so that students see that the structure of the text needs to be planned in advance and that this structure and the lexico-grammatical choices are not random because they depend on the subject matter and the text type.

Effective writing requires a number of things such as a careful choice of vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and sentence structures to create a style which is appropriate to the subject matter and the eventual readers; a high degree of organization in the development of ideas and information; the use of complex grammatical devices for focus and emphasis, etc. I have successfully used SFL to teach these features and to make students aware of the importance of context in academic writing.

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