

# Explicit Language Instruction: Developing Writers' Metalinguistic Awareness to Facilitate Transfer

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*ABSTRACT: Responding to a lack of attention to language in transfer pedagogies, this study examines the potential effects that direct language-level instruction has on the metalinguistic awareness of students who were enrolled in stretch and corequisite courses at two four-year, public universities. Informed by a functional view of language, the instruction made explicit the connections between conventional language-level features and the related socio-rhetorical practices of academic discourse and provided metalanguage for students to describe these connections. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participating students to determine the extent to which the metalanguage from the instruction aided their ability to articulate their awareness of these connections. The findings suggest that the instruction cultivates a metalanguage that helps students verbalize their metalinguistic awareness. When considering the role that such awareness has on the transfer process, these findings indicate that functional language-based instruction can prepare students to transfer their writing strategies across contexts.*

*KEYWORDS: corequisite; explicit instruction; functional grammar; metacognition; stretch; transfer*

Students' difficulty in successfully transferring their writing strategies is often attributed to the common practice of instructing students in general writing skills, an approach that some suggest is counterproductive by encouraging an overly simplified view of "academic writing" and thus leading to the misapplication of strategies or "negative transfer" (Yancey et al. *Writing Across Contexts* 55). Common curricular interventions designed to facilitate students' successful transfer, Writing About Writing (WAW) and Teaching for Transfer (TFT), focus instruction instead on inquiries within writing studies by making "what we know about writing" the primary "subject" (Wardle "Mutt Genres" 784). Proponents believe that such an approach—in its rejection of the (mis)conception that "academic writing" is "generally

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universal”—aids in “developing a rhetorical awareness necessary for transfer” by providing key rhetorical terms as a metalanguage to encourage students’ metacognition (Downs and Wardle 554; Yancey et al. “Teaching for Transfer” 273). Research suggests that when transfer pedagogies, including WAW and TFT, are applied in basic writing courses such instruction improves students’ metacognitive processes which, in turn, facilitates students’ ability to transfer their writing strategies across contexts (Blaauw-Hara et al.; Bird; Moore).

Research also suggests, however, that students often have difficulty reflecting on the kinds of choices that writers make at the sentence level to, for example, engage competing viewpoints from source texts or appropriately express conviction based on the genre and context or what we might describe as language-level choices, which present additional barriers to transfer (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 174; Moore 190; Yancey et al., *Writing Across Contexts* 17, 34). This difficulty can, in part, be attributed to the lack of attention to language, not only in transfer pedagogies, but also in post-secondary writing instruction more broadly since the socio-rhetorical focus of this instruction often precludes explicit instruction in the language-level features that characterize genres and likewise students’ awareness of these characteristic features (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 18–19; Gere et al., *Developing Writers* 9–10; Moore 181). This lack of language-level instruction presents a gap in transfer pedagogies as it relates to developing students’ metalinguistic awareness, that is, their ability to understand the ways in which language-level patterns relate to textual-level rhetorical strategies and how such relations construct meaning. Developing metalinguistic awareness, particularly for basic writers, is essential to guiding their successful transfer given that these students often lack a repertoire of metalanguage or “metatalk” for describing discourse strategies at the sentence-level (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 173–174; Ferris and Eckstein 336–337; Moore 178; Yancey et al., *Writing Across Contexts* 16–17).

In this study, I seek to expand the ways transfer pedagogies might facilitate basic writers’ transfer through direct language-level instruction. Specifically, I examined how direct language-level instruction informed by a functional view of grammar can potentially assist students’ successful transfer by giving them a metalanguage for navigating discourse at the sentence level. A common approach to demystify the conventional language features of academic discourse for non-native speakers of English (Aull *First-Year University Writing* 10; Hardy et al. 17; Moore 197; Peele, et al. 53), functional grammar provides a view of language that connects language-level features to macro-rhetorical strategies and thus offers the potential to develop students’

awareness of the interrelations between language forms and meaning by giving students a metalanguage to describe these interrelations.

Potentially adding to the curricular interventions that aid students' successful transfer, I set out to examine what such direct language-level instruction might afford in developing students' rhetorical and metalinguistic awareness. I was guided primarily by the following question: To what extent, if any, does direct instruction in functional grammar help basic writers develop metalinguistic awareness and a repertoire of metalanguage to verbalize and reflect on their academic literacy practices so they might successfully transfer these practices to other contexts? To answer this question, I aimed to answer the following, more specific questions:

- a. What metalanguage do basic writers use to discuss and reflect on their academic literacy practices after receiving instruction in functional grammar? Does this metalanguage help them develop metalinguistic awareness, that is, an ability to understand the relationship between the conventional language patterns of academic discourse and the socio-rhetorical practices underlying these patterns?
- b. How might direct instruction in functional grammar affect these students' potential to transfer their writing strategies across contexts?

To answer these questions, I analyzed data derived from seven sections of basic writing modeled on the stretch and corequisite designs as implemented at two four-year, public universities located in Northeast Ohio. Theoretically grounded in M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the lessons in functional grammar offer a linguistic approach to transfer instruction. They are designed to develop students' metalinguistic awareness by emphasizing how conventional language-level features function in relation to the socio-rhetorical practices valued in academic contexts (Peele et al. 52; Rose and Martin 235–303). By emphasizing these relations, the lessons differ from traditional, decontextualized grammar instruction, which focuses on the identification of the formal features of language with minimal consideration for how these features construct meaning in social contexts (Fearn and Farnan 64; MacDonald 610; Moore 178–179). I set out to examine the effect this instruction had on developing basic writers' potential to transfer by conducting semi-structured interviews with 14 students who were enrolled in the seven experimental courses of basic writing and thus

received instruction in functional grammar over the course of a 16-week semester. My analysis of interviews with these 14 students suggests that students who receive instruction in functional grammar develop a repertoire of functional metalanguage which, in turn, cultivates a metalinguistic awareness conducive to transfer. Based on these findings, I argue that language-level instruction informed by functional linguistics can effectively prepare basic writers to transfer writing strategies across contexts.

### **THE TRANSFER QUESTION AND LANGUAGE-LEVEL INSTRUCTION**

Research in educational psychology finds that explicit instruction is critical for facilitating reflection and, in turn, learners' ability to transfer (Perkins and Salomon 24). Given these findings, engaging students in reflective, metacognitive tasks has become a fundamental practice not only in transfer pedagogies, but also in postsecondary writing instruction generally (Gere et al., *Developing Writers* 9–10; Reiff and Bawarshi 315; Yancey et al., *Writing Across Contexts* 32–33). A related instructional practice—one necessary for engaging students in metacognitive tasks—is developing students' metalanguage particularly with the consideration that, as Kathleen Yancey et al. observe, first-year students often lack a repertoire of language to “describe key concepts in writing, such as genre” (*Writing Across Contexts* 34). These two strategies for facilitating students' metacognition—including explicit instruction and developing a common metalanguage—have been foundational to the curricula of pedagogies designed to develop students' transfer, such as TFT and WAW.

In their TFT framework, Yancey et al. advocate for explicit instruction in the key rhetorical terms central to their transfer curriculum's metalanguage. These terms range from “audience, genre, and rhetorical situation,” which students are introduced to at the outset of the course, to “exigence, critical analysis, [and] discourse community” in later units (*Writing Across Contexts* 57). These terms, according to Yancey et al., are introduced to help students reflect on their prior knowledge and formulate a theory of writing, a written assignment that culminates the TFT curriculum (*Writing Across Contexts* 97–98). Anne Beaufort also advocates explicit instruction in genres and their social functions. The metalanguage for such instruction includes the terms that comprise Beaufort's model of writing expertise, namely discourse community knowledge, subject matter knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, and writing process knowledge (149–151). Explicit instruction in these terms,

according to Beaufort, can be a means for students' transfer to be "cued, primed, and guided" by serving as "mental grippers" for students as they reflect on "general domains of [writing] knowledge," which they can then apply in the "local circumstances" of specific rhetorical situations (151). These approaches have shown to enhance students' ability to reflect on their writing choices by developing a metalanguage around socio-rhetorical concepts, such as audience and genre (Yancey et al. "Teaching for Transfer"). With this focus on the social, contextual factors of writing, these approaches have not, however, adequately integrated a set of terms for developing students' metalinguistic awareness, that is, their ability to reflect on how these socio-rhetorical concepts are embodied in the language-level features of texts (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 174; Brown 129; Moore 197).

Research suggests that functionally informed approaches to language-level instruction can improve students' metalinguistic awareness, particularly among basic writers. For example, Miriam Moore's findings from a study examining the metalanguage used in reading journals by 19 first-year undergraduates—13 of whom were dual enrolled in a corequisite section of a WAW course—suggest that instruction in functional grammar can help students develop a metalanguage for describing how language-level choices realize "genre moves such as concessions or rebuttals" (191, 187–188). Debra Myhill and Ruth Newman, likewise, found that a functional approach to language instruction, one that utilizes metalanguage or "metatalk," "supports learners' capacity to engage in metalinguistic discussion about writing" by providing tools for "critical reflection" on "writerly choices" (187) and helping to develop "knowledge about the relationship between meaning, form and function" (179). Studies examining functionally informed language instruction have similarly indicated improvement in the quality of students' writing. Leif Fearn and Nancy Farnan, for instance, examined the effects that instruction in functional grammar had on the quality of writing by a group of tenth graders (63) and compared this functional approach to the effects of instruction in traditional grammar that a group of control students received (64, 68–69). While the experimental groups' performance on the objective assessment of a cloze test was equal to that of the control group, the experimental group's scores on the holistic assessment of their writing surpassed that of the control group's performance. From this finding, Fearn and Farnan conclude that when students are instructed to view grammar as a resource for meaning-making—and not as a separate activity for editing—language-based instruction can have beneficial effects on the quality

of students' writing by facilitating their transfer of grammatical knowledge to functional literate practices (73, 78).

Taking a similar functional approach to language-level instruction, research examining the effects of explicitly teaching the rhetorical moves of academic discourse finds that these approaches not only enhance students' metacognitive awareness, but also can positively affect their academic dispositions and, in turn, their ability to transfer. Don Kraemer, for example, reports on the results of explicitly instructing basic writers using the templates from Graff and Birkenstein's *They Say / I Say* to make students aware of valued social practices underlying "academic discourse" ("Fact and Theory and Value Judgment" 10). In one study Kraemer examined how using these templates as models for making conventional "intellectual moves" (e.g., to introduce debates and engage counter arguments) can potentially help students "embody [the] values important to academic discourse" (13). In a similar study examining the use of *They Say / I Say* in a basic writing course, Kraemer suggests that students learned "to act out ways of thinking with different audiences for different purposes" ("Economy of Explicit Instruction" 113). By using the templates as a guide, in other words, students were able to develop the socio-cognitive habits of mind valued within academia, specifically those "valued across English Studies, including the ability to critique powerful, institutionalized semiotic systems" (Aull, *How Students Write* 15–16). Although the language patterns templated in *They Say / I Say* are rarely used in published scholarship, Kraemer's findings suggest that instruction that connects generic and linguistic form to their intended rhetorical and social functions can help students internalize the socio-cognitive habits and dispositions that underlie academic discourse conventions.

Thomas Peele et al., like Kraemer, examined the effects of language-level instruction in basic writing courses at the City College of New York (CCNY). Informed by the results of a "form-function analysis" that examined the rhetorical moves in a corpus comprising 548 argumentative essays by CCNY students, Peele et al. describe reforms made to the "philosophy and structure" of the writing program at CCNY (45). With consideration of their findings, the writing program at CCNY reconceived their assignments so that the writing tasks focused on rhetorical analysis at the macro-level of genre and the micro-level of language features and subsequently replaced the assignment sequence of narrative to expository genres with "a curriculum that asks students to study genre explicitly," which served to "support their transfer of writing knowledge from composition to other classes" (36, 51). Informed by the TFT framework, the curriculum included corpus analysis

to facilitate students' reflection and their development of metalanguage (51–52). According to students' performance after this intervention, Peele et al. conclude that, although explicit language-level instruction is often designed for the “explicit teaching of genre as a means of demystifying the expectations for second language learners,” their basic writing students, who like “English language learners” are likely “less familiar with conventional rhetorical moves than other students,” benefited from the instruction that focused on the valued language-level patterns of academic argumentative genres as indicated by students' ability to develop a “much better sense of academic genre expectations” (53).

Adding to the possible curricula interventions that aid students' successful transfer, the lessons designed for this study offer a similar functional approach to language instruction. I examined the possible effects this instruction had on the metalinguistic awareness of students enrolled in basic writing courses modeled on the corequisite and stretch designs. To examine these possible effects, I conducted interviews with students enrolled in these basic writing courses during which I solicited descriptions of these students' academic literacy practices to provoke the metalanguage they use to articulate these practices. In what follows, I explain the lessons' general aims to give a sense of the nature of the instruction that students enrolled in these experimental courses received. This explanation includes the functional linguistic theories informing the lessons' design and example applications used in the seven experimental corequisite and stretch courses. I then explain the protocols and coding process for conducting and analyzing interviews with students who were enrolled these experimental courses. Before turning to these explanations, however, I first situate the basic writing courses within their institutional contexts in addition to describing the integration of the functional language-based instruction into the curricula of experimental corequisite and stretch courses, which was done in collaboration with five participating instructors after receiving IRB approval.<sup>1</sup>

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Institutional Contexts and Data Collection in Experimental Sections**

Located in Northeast Ohio, both institutions that served as the research sites for the study are four-year, public universities. The first institution, which I refer to as Institution A, has been offering the corequisite model

as an alternative to non-credit bearing, remedial writing instruction since the fall of 2017. With a design informed by the extended instructional time model (Miller et al. 83), the corequisite was initially implemented as a response to a remediation-free mandate (“Uniform Statewide Standard” 1), and approximately 2,900 students have been enrolled in the course as of spring 2022. The second institution, Institution B, has been offering stretch courses exclusively on its regional campuses since the early 2000s.

To recruit instructors at both institutions, I chose from a pool of instructors who regularly teach the respective models of basic writing at the institutions and requested these instructors’ participation in the study that would integrate the functional grammar lessons into the curricula of their corequisite and stretch courses for the upcoming semester. Selecting from this pool of instructors, I considered the instructors’ views on language-level instruction, giving preference to instructors who had a less prescriptive view of grammar specifically and the conventions of academic discourse generally. I also considered the instructors’ familiarity with approaches from applied linguistics, such as pedagogies for English Language Learners, believing that such familiarity would facilitate their ability to instruct the lessons in functional grammar. However, this latter criterion was difficult likely due to an inadequate “knowledge of linguistics” amongst post-secondary writing instructors (Aull, *How Students Write* 22; Gere et al., “Communal Justicing” 391).

The final recruitment included five instructors amounting to seven experimental corequisite and stretch courses. At Institution A, I recruited one part-time instructor who had research interests in transfer and another, the composition coordinator, who helped design the original curriculum of the corequisite when the model was first piloted in fall 2017. At Institution B, I recruited one instructor whose research interests included pedagogies for English Language Learners, while the other two instructors had interests in online instruction and creative writing. After instructors agreed to participate in the study, I requested samples of their course materials, such as syllabi and assignment instructions from prior semesters during which they taught corequisite and stretch courses, so that I could review the materials and provide recommendations for how the lessons in functional grammar might configure into their lesson plans. My recommendations focused on how the lessons would scaffold toward the major writing tasks of the instructors’ curricula. After the instructors reviewed these recommendations, we met on various occasions both individually and once as a group to determine the specific scaffolding of the lessons. Once we determined the scaffolding of



the lessons, I worked with each instructor throughout the semester, having the opportunity to observe as well as co-teach the class sessions in which the lessons in functional grammar were taught.

### **Functional Grammar Instruction**

As noted above, the lessons are informed by a functional view of language by being theoretically grounded in Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and are designed to develop students' metalinguistic awareness—specifically their awareness of how conventional language-level features function in conjunction with socio-rhetorical practices to construct meaning in academic contexts (Rose and Martin 235–303). Similar to the “form-function analysis” designed by Peele et al. for developing the genre awareness of basic writers at CCNY, the lessons aim to enhance students' awareness of the typical language patterns that help writers execute the conventional rhetorical moves of academic discourse. The language-level features explicated in the lessons, in this way, do not merely instruct in formal features but aim to develop students' understanding of how these features “embody [the] values important to academic discourse” and thus reflect the socio-rhetorical practices valued in academia (Kraemer, “Fact and Theory and Value Judgment” 13).<sup>2</sup>

To instruct students in these social practices and the related language-level patterns embodying them, each lesson emphasized the dialogic nature of academic discourse, or what Barbara Bird describes as a “meta-purpose of academic writing” which, according to Bird, is “contributing to a conversation” (63). This “meta-purpose” aligns to SFL's view of language, which draws on Bakhtin's notions of dialogism and heteroglossia. That is, linguistic frameworks within SFL, as J.R. Martin and Peter White explain, operationalize the study of how language construes “social relationships” through linguistic resources that arrange “relationships of alignment / disalignment” and “various value positions” (95). SFL, in this way, diverges from frameworks that focus on “form” as emphasized, for instance, by Transformational-Generative approaches (TG) (Martin 3; Thompson 8). Frameworks in SFL instead focus on how language is used in situated, social contexts and thus provide explanations of how social relationships are construed through language by, for example, “entertaining” alternative viewpoints or, in other words, how a “point-of-view is...potentially in tension with dialogistic alternatives” (Martin and White 108). Further illustrating the meta-purpose identified by Bird, analyses of written discourse informed by theories within

SFL suggest that while all utterances are “dialogic,” disciplinary discourse is particularly so by construing writerly positions that are in response to previous arguments and thus occurring within a “heteroglossic backdrop of other voices and alternative viewpoints” (Martin and White 99; cf. Hyland 6; Lancaster 28). This dialogic nature reflects the constructivist epistemology of academia, which views knowledge as a product of a balance between “contrastiveness” and “solidarity” among competing perspectives (Aull, *How Students Write* 6–7; Barton, “Epistemological Stance” 754). Developing students’ awareness of how this valued epistemology is embodied in the common language-level patterns of academic discourse further aligns to Bird’s approach to developing students’ academic writerly identities which, like Kraemer’s instruction, emphasizes “explicit instruction” in the “whys” underlying certain academic “discourse practices” and, importantly, illustrating for students how these practices reflect “academic community purposes and dispositions” (65, 68–69).

In all, there are a total of seven lessons informed by this view of language that participating instructors and I tailored to scaffold with their existing curricula. Each lesson typically required at least two class sessions. The materials provided for the lessons included first an explanation of how the typical language patterns of academic discourse reflect valued social practices by connecting specific language-level features to macro-rhetorical concepts, such as genre and discourse communities. The materials for this first part of the lessons were designed to be read by students before the class session in which they were taught and then explicated by the instructor using examples from published and successful undergraduate writing to illustrate. The second part of each lesson provided instructions for guiding meta-discussions on the concepts and analyses of the examples. These collaborative activities were designed to prompt students to use metalanguage informed by a functional view of grammar and, in turn, facilitate students’ development of a terminology to articulate the socio-rhetorical purpose of these conventional language patterns. The third part of each lesson provided possible tasks and activities for students to apply their understanding of the concepts to their own writing.<sup>3</sup>

Instructors and I scaffolded the lessons so that students received sequenced instruction in the discourse patterns that reflect conventional social practices of different text types. An introductory lesson used early in the curricula, for example, explained to students how functional grammar differs from traditional grammar with the former focusing on the conventions of language used to communicate in various rhetorical situations—and

subsequently emphasizing meaning-making, patterns, and conventions—while the latter focuses on prescriptive (i.e., formal) rules and subsequently emphasizes correctness. As explained in the first part of the lesson, by focusing on conventions as opposed to formal rules, functional grammar provides the means to understand how the forms of language help writers achieve their communicative goals. To set a foundation for the metalanguage used throughout the curricula, the introductory lesson also presented students with the common terminology of functional grammar contrasting it with the terminology informed by a traditional view of grammar (Moore 180).

Following this introductory lesson, the applications and subsequent meta discussions involved having students analyze example texts by identifying the linguistics features according to their functional categories and then reflecting on how these features relate to macro-rhetorical features ranging from the writer's stance and credibility to the execution of rhetorical moves including concessions and rebuttals. Students in Corequisite C, for example, applied the metalanguage from this lesson to an analysis of published scholarship and popular texts. During the meta discussion following students' analysis, we discussed how the functional features of popular texts, such as the use of intensifying language, often sensationalize topics, which led to speculation on how such language features perhaps reflect a common purpose of popular writing, namely to entertain readers, while the use of hedging language in published scholarship often functions to make claims precise and honest.

Emphasizing the dialogic nature of academic discourse, instruction in strategies for engaging competing viewpoints ranged from how contrastive connectives (e.g., *however*, *on the contrary*) index macro-rhetorical moves, such as introducing objections and concessions, to how the use of reporting verbs function to convey a position in relation to viewpoints from sources. Similarly, instruction for engaging competing viewpoints also explained how the strategic use of qualifying and intensifying language projects an appropriate academic *ethos*, one that values “diplomacy” and “civility” by “balancing open-mindedness and conviction” (Aull, *How Students Write* 6–7; Barton, “Metadiscourse Functions” 234; Lancaster 40). In another lesson, students are first introduced to common words and phrases that help qualify and intensify the certainty with which claims are expressed. The lesson then explains how these language-level features function to project an appropriate academic disposition or *ethos* (Kraemer, “Fact and Theory and Value Judgment” 21). Linking the language-level features of expressing certainty to macro-rhetorical moves and common social practices, the expli-

cation part of the lesson informs students that the use of hedging language reflects values of precision and honesty by helping academic writers avoid overstating their claims beyond available evidence in addition to anticipating possible objections from putative readers (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 89). With the explanation of these functions of common discourse practices, students gain an awareness of how linguistic choices for meaning making project an appropriate writerly identity, one that is “open-minded toward competing positions” (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 97; Gere et al., *Developing Writers* 9–10).

Applications of this particular lesson led to discussions of how the language features for expressing certainty help to realize macro-rhetorical concepts, such as credibility by demonstrating critical thinking. When I was observing and co-teaching this lesson in the experimental section Stretch B, for example, I had explained how students might tacitly use these language patterns for expressing degrees of certainty depending on their familiarity with the research. This was in the context of explaining to students how patterns of hedging language are appropriate, especially when the available evidence is inconclusive, and thus hedging in such instances can avoid overly expressing the certainty of claims beyond what the evidence will support. One student then related this consideration to how knowing the research would also expose the writer to alternative viewpoints; he elaborated on this insight explaining that such awareness helps to avoid bias which, as he suggested, illustrates critical thinking as well as open-mindedness—with the latter specifically, according to the student, functioning to make a “connection” with an “opposite point of view” (Student 41, Stretch B). As found in the results of the interview data with this student, such connections were a typical theme of the metalanguage he used to discuss the relationship between language patterns for expressing degrees of certainty and macro-rhetorical concepts such as credibility.

To develop students’ ability to abstract and subsequently apply rhetorical strategies to various writing tasks, another lesson introduced students to the moves of *problematization*. Informed by the concept *macro-genre*, the lesson emphasized how the moves of problematizing can be applied in a range of more specific, rhetorically situated genres (Bawarshi and Reiff “Genre” 228–229). Students are first introduced to key terms for executing this move which, according to functional analyses of academic discourse, is conventionally highlighted and cued by contrastive language (e.g., *but*, *however*, *yet*) (Barton “Epistemological Stance” 748; Gere et al., “Local Assessment” 619). Although applicable to other genres, the lesson illustrates

the moves of *problematization* in abstracts of published scholarship and the introductions of non-disciplinary argumentative writing, including film reviews, to illustrate for students how these rhetorical moves are realized in both academic and popular contexts. Students in the experimental sections Stretch A and Stretch B were taught this lesson while being tasked to write reviews of a film or TV show and a visual, respectively. The focus of the curricula at the time students were taught the lesson thus informed the choice to illustrate the moves of *problematization* in these rhetorically situated genres. However, employing other genres, such as op-eds and feature articles, would likely encourage students to view discourse strategies as flexible—and not “generally universal” (Downs and Wardle 554)—by seeing how writers of different genres adapt similar strategies when writing in specific, rhetorically situated genres.

By illustrating the applicability of these moves in disparate rhetorical situations and genres, the lesson potentially encourages high-road transfer in far-transfer contexts particularly when considering that students who are more likely to successfully transfer their prior knowledge often repurpose a “range of genre strategies” rather than “whole genres” when metacognitively reflecting on their writing process (Reiff and Bawarshi 325). With consideration of these findings, instruction in the moves of *problematization* and *macro-genres* more generally not only gives students insight into the patterned moves valued in academic discourse, but also develops their potential to successfully transfer by providing a flexible notion of rhetorical strategies rather than instruction in the formal conventions of whole, rhetorically situated genres.

### **Interview Protocols and Coding**

To understand the potential effects that functional language-level instruction had on developing students’ metalanguage and metalinguistic awareness, I conducted semi-structured interviews with student participants who were enrolled in one of the seven experimental corequisite and stretch courses. These interviews were recorded and transcribed so that students’ metalanguage when reflecting on their literacy practices could be coded and analyzed. With this approach, I follow similar methods for examining the effects of curricula designed to foster transfer, such as TFT and WAW, which examine how students use key terms related to the socio-rhetorical concepts of the curricula during interviews (see, for example, Blaauw-Hara et al. 70; Yancey et al. “Teaching for Transfer”).

## Explicit Language Instruction

In all, there were a total of 14 interviews conducted at the end of the semester during which participating students received functionally informed language-based instruction. The purpose of these interviews was to understand the potential effects that the instruction had on students' metalinguistic awareness and the metalanguage they use to verbalize their academic literacy practices. The interviews were, in turn, designed to be generally descriptive by first asking students about their experiences with writing instruction, drawing on some of their prior knowledge, and getting insights on their personal constructs of academic writing. While the specific formulation of these questions varied, generally I began by asking, "What are the expectations of college-level writing? In other words, what do you believe instructors value when evaluating students' writing?" The purpose of having students describe their understanding of these expectations was two-fold. First, I aimed to understand how the language-based instruction possibly informed the construct of academic writing they described. Second, and relatedly, throughout the interviews, I attempted not to lead students explicitly to use terminology from the lessons and instead see if the metalanguage from the instructional materials naturally emerged from their responses. In sum, these interviews provided space for students to articulate their construct of academic writing and their strategies for using such discourse.

Subsequent questions ranged from asking students about their strategies for executing macro-rhetorical moves to the language-level features of academic discourse. For example, I asked students about their typical strategies for engaging others' viewpoints in their academic writing and their strategies for engaging ideas from secondary sources. Other questions aimed to gain insights on students' metalanguage for discussing more socio-rhetorical elements of their academic writing, such as strategies for counter argumentation and enhancing one's credibility. In sum, the structure of the interviews aimed to solicit students' metalanguage for discussing their academic literacy practices, including their ability to discuss the relationship between language-level patterns and socio-rhetorical concepts.

My process for coding transcripts of these interviews was informed by the instructional materials taught in the experimental sections. These codes emerged from constant comparison of the memos I used to document the content that was covered by participating instructors while either observing or co-teaching the lessons in addition to various scholarship, including research examining language-level instruction and transfer. The codes, in other words, were informed by my "literature reading" (Tavory and Timmermans

125; cf. Geisler and Swarts 124). Because instructors' use of the lessons varied, these codes helped to identify instances during interviews where students were drawing on concepts from the instructional materials in their responses, but not using the metalanguage from the materials verbatim. The codes also aided in analyzing the frequency and distribution of metalanguage in the transcripts with this quantitative perspective providing an examination of general trends in the data (Bird 75, 81). In total, there were six codes, which I associated with two primary dimensions, including *metalinguistic awareness* and *metalanguage* (Geisler and Swarts 118). These two dimensions were devised primarily by my reading of related scholarship, while their subcodes emerged from my analysis of the interview data, specifically by the recurring themes I found in my initial analysis of the transcripts.

Within the dimension *metalanguage*, these subcodes included *rhetorical*, *functional*, and *traditional*. I applied the subcode *functional* to students' responses that used any functional elements to "talk about language" use (Moore 180). These elements ranged from specific terms that were used in the functional language instruction students received including, for example, "hedging" and "intensifying," or related derivations given the variation in the language used by participating instructors. I applied the *functional* code, for example, to a response from a student who was enrolled in Corequisite C in which the student was probed for language to describe phrases that introduce information from secondary sources. The student responded saying "Johnson goes on to explain. . ." and identified such phrases as "leading phrases" (Student 1C, Corequisite C). Following this scheme, I applied the code *functional* to students' responses in which they identified functional elements using appropriate metalanguage to describe that function but not the specific metalanguage of the functional language instruction. For instance, in the previous example, the student described phrases that introduce source information as "leading" although the terminology used in the materials identified these as "signal phrases."

The other two codes within the *metalanguage* dimension were used to distinguish between other possible sources of students' metalanguage and the metalanguage they seemed to develop from the functional language instruction they received. I applied the code *rhetorical* to students' responses that included terminology common to most academic literacy instruction (Nicholes and Reimer 43). For example, the response below by Student 29 used *rhetorical* metalanguage when describing her general construct of academic writing.

## Explicit Language Instruction

Interviewee: ...obviously have a thesis based off what your paper is going to be about and not write about random stuff that isn't really backing up your thesis and if it's about a topic then trying to really key down...to get your point across. (Student 29, Stretch A)

The student's response illustrates the use of *rhetorical* metalanguage to describe their construct of academic writing by identifying features, such as thesis statements ("thesis") and evidence ("...backing up"). Although these concepts are addressed in the instructional materials designed for the study, such terms are common to most academic literacy instruction. Responses coded as *traditional* within the *metalanguage* dimension were primarily form-based. That is, students' responses to which this code was applied articulated rules and prescriptions for language use rather than emphasizing the ways language forms reflect their functional use as "meaning-making resources" (Halliday 10). For example, two students enrolled in Stretch B responded to the general probe about the expectations of college-level writing by explaining that "good writing" avoids "contractions" (Student 44, Stretch B; Student 41, Stretch B).

I used codes within the dimension *metalinguistic awareness*, including *lexical*, *syntactic*, and *textual*, to identify instances in students' responses that indicated their understanding of how conventional discourse features function in conjunction with socio-rhetorical practices (Moore 179). While this awareness implies an ability to explicitly articulate social practices related to language use, such awareness can be implicit (Moore 179–180; Myhill and Jones 848). I, therefore, applied these codes even when students' responses did not use any overt metalanguage to indicate their understanding of these connections. For example, in an interview with a student enrolled in Corequisite A, I presented two claims that expressed the same argument but with varying levels of certainty. I asked the student to describe their differences with one claim being appropriately qualified by using hedging language (e.g., *likely*, *perhaps*) while the other used intensifying language (e.g., *all*, *always*) and thus expressed the argument with more conviction. The student first describes the intensified claim as a "false statement," and I probed for the words that informed this description. The student responded as illustrated below.

Interviewee: It says "...they will..." and there's no guarantee that they will and the second one says "they will" and they just kind of leave it at that whereas the second one says "likely" and the word



“likely” is the one that’s definitely true. You’re more than likely to do anything so just adding the word “likely” helps. I forget what we called that in class. There’s a fancy word for it though. (Student 7, Corequisite A)

The student identifies the hedge “likely” but lacks metalanguage, such as “hedge” or “qualifier,” to explicitly identify the lexical item; in fact, the student notes that they “forget” what these terms were called. Because the student identifies specific language, such as “likely” and “will,” that contribute to the different expressions, however, I applied the code *lexical* within the dimension *metalinguistic awareness*. In other words, while the student does not have the specific terminology or metalanguage to describe these lexical items, they demonstrate an awareness of their function in making arguments precise and honest (Myhill and Jones 848–849).

I likewise applied the code *textual* within the dimension *metalinguistic awareness* to responses in which students demonstrate an awareness of how macro features, such as paragraphs and *macro-genres*, can have specific rhetorical functions. I applied this code, for example, to the response below in which the student was asked to describe the conventional parts of paragraphs as taught in a functional grammar lesson on integrating sources which explained the function of topic sentences and strategies for elaborating ideas by using specific details.

Interviewee: I know that for a good paragraph you’re going to want to make sure you essentially introduce the topic that you’re talking about, and if you don’t then you’re kind of all over the place. (Student 7, Corequisite A)

Like the example above, the student lacks explicit metalanguage for describing the conventional parts of a paragraph. However, the student demonstrates an awareness of the macro-rhetorical function of a paragraph by explaining how “introduc[ing] the topic” maintains focus and, in turn, avoids being “all over the place.” In this way, while the student lacks specific metalanguage, they nonetheless demonstrate awareness of the macro-rhetorical function. I, therefore, applied the code *textual* within the dimension *metalinguistic awareness* to this and similar responses.

In aggregate, my analysis of students’ interviews using these codes suggests that functional language instruction has noticeable effects on students’ metalinguistic awareness and the metalanguage they use to verbalize academic literacy practices. Specifically, my analysis, as detailed below, suggests

that students develop an explicit metalanguage informed by a functional view of language which, in turn, allowed students to verbalize how the valued socio-rhetorical practices of academic contexts underlie conventional language-level patterns.

## RESULTS

As illustrated in Table 1 below, students used metalanguage informed by a functional view of language most often as indicated by the frequency of the code *functional* compared to other types of metalanguage including *rhetorical* and *traditional*. *Functional* metalanguage, in fact, was the most frequently occurring code per interview in addition to having the most frequent total occurrences across interviews overall, slightly exceeding the use of *rhetorical* metalanguage in the number of total instances across interviews and noticeably exceeding *traditional* metalanguage in both total occurrences and the number of interviews containing the code.

*Functional* metalanguage specifically occurred in 13 of the 14 interviews (~93%) and had a total frequency of 77 occurrences distributed across them. *Rhetorical* metalanguage, in comparison, had a total of 72 instances across interviews while also occurring in 13 of the 14 interviews (~93%), and *traditional* metalanguage occurred in nine of the 14 interviews (~64%) and had fewer total occurrences overall with only 20 instances across the interviews. Given that there was an emphasis on traditional grammar in the curriculum of Stretch A, I expected students from this experimental section to use *traditional* metalanguage more readily than students in other experimental sections. However, *traditional* metalanguage was evenly applied across the interviews with students from the seven experimental sections with four corequisite students and five stretch using *traditional* metalanguage. These results suggest that the functional language instruction had initially informed, to some degree, students' ability to articulate conventional academic literacy practices.

The saliency of these students' uptake of *functional* metalanguage was particularly evident in their responses to the general probe asking for their personal construct of academic writing. Responding to a variation of this question, which asked specifically about the expected and valued expression of stance in academic contexts, a student enrolled in Corequisite C, for example, demonstrated an understanding of the expectation for "balancing open-mindedness and conviction" (Aull, *How Students Write* 6-7; Barton, "Metadiscourse Functions" 234; Lancaster 40) and used func-

**Table 1.** Ranked Frequency of Codes within Metalinguage Dimension

<b>Code</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Total Instances</b>	<b>Interviews with Code</b>
functional	1	77	13/14 (~93%)
rhetorical	2	72	13/14 (~93%)
traditional	3	20	9/14 (~64%)

tional metalinguage to describe this expectation by identifying elements, including “hedges, boosters, and self-referencing.” As illustrated below, after identifying these functional lexical elements, the student then compares the expectations of expressing an appropriate stance in academic writing to their secondary, high school writing instruction.

Interviewee: More like speculative. I know in high school everything I would write would be like ‘this is how it is’ or ‘how it should be’ and you shouldn’t sound like as affirmative, and just allow the reader to see your point and be like ‘okay I can see where they’re coming from’ and make their own conclusions. (Student 2C, Corequisite C)

As the student’s comparison suggests, an appropriate expression of stance in college-level writing conveys more speculation by being less “affirmative.” Perhaps reflecting “traditional notions of argument” that “privilege winning and persuading one’s opponent” (Knoblauch 248; cf. Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 97) as commonly taught in secondary education, the student’s high school instruction suggested that an appropriate stance conveys more conviction. By articulating this distinction and using functional metalinguage to do so, the student’s response demonstrates not only an explicit metalinguistic awareness of how language-level features connect to valued socio-rhetorical practices of academic discourse, but also a willingness to reconceive their prior knowledge.

A student who was enrolled in Stretch B, likewise, demonstrated an explicit metalinguistic awareness explaining how contrastive connectives (e.g., *but*, *however*) can function to realize a credible academic *ethos*, one that conveys “critical thinking” and “open-mindedness.” The student explains the connection between these language-level patterns and their potential socio-rhetorical effects, as illustrated below, when I probe the student about their use of contrastive connectives.

Interviewee: Just kind of give a different view instead of the one I’m

### Explicit Language Instruction

talking about. 'But it also can be' blah, blah, blah. You know being more open minded about it. I'm open minded, hopefully they're open minded to see my point of view. (Student 41, Stretch B)

Explaining the function of contrastive connectives as lexical features that indicate a willingness to consider alternative viewpoints, or being “open minded,” the student’s response moves beyond a conventional description of the function of these language-level features, such as to illustrate contrast. Instead, the student explains patterns for using these lexical features from a functionally informed perspective, one aligned to the conventional discourse practices of academic argumentation. Specifically, the student’s explanation reflects the functional language instruction they received which explained how, when used to engage alternative viewpoints, contrastive connectives realize the socio-rhetorical convention regarding the dialogic nature of academic discourse by considering “various value positions” (Bird 63; Martin and White 95).

These students’ responses illustrate an awareness of the value placed on academic discourse practices that balance “contrastiveness” and “solidarity” when engaging various viewpoints (Barton, “Epistemological Stance” 754; cf. Aull, *How Students Write* 6–7). The students’ awareness as it aligns with this valued disposition is particularly evident in their suggestion that the appropriate stance opens one’s argument dialogically by allowing perceived readers to, as Student 2C put it, “make their own conclusions” or, as Student 41 explained, to “give [readers] a different viewpoint.” With the comparison of college and high school expectations for academic discourse, the response of Student 2C, moreover, seems indicative of the student’s ability to mindfully reconceive their prior knowledge which, in turn, likely enhances their ability to successfully transfer across contexts (Perkins and Salomon 22; Reiff and Bawarshi 315; Wardle, “Creative Repurposing”; Yancey et al., *Writing Across Contexts* 10–11).

Students’ metalanguage also indicates the development of metalinguistic awareness even when such metalanguage is not necessarily informed by a functional view of grammar. Sources informing students’ metalanguage included activities and instruction in experimental sections’ existing curricula and, in some cases, students’ prior writing instruction, whether in high school or a previous writing course. This was the case as illustrated in the response by Student 2C above in which they parse expectations for appropriately expressing claims in the contexts of high school and college. The effect of this prior instruction as another source of students’ metalanguage

is illustrated by the similar frequency of *rhetorical* metalanguage. According to Table 1 above, *rhetorical* metalanguage was ranked second, and while *rhetorical* metalanguage was almost as frequently used by students to articulate academic discourse practices, the fact that *functional* metalanguage was more widely distributed across the interviews and the most frequently occurring code suggests that the language-level instruction students received had some initial effects on their repertoire of metalanguage and in turn their development of metalinguistic awareness.

In some cases, however, students demonstrated metalinguistic awareness without drawing on declarative or explicit knowledge (Moore 179–180; Myhill and Jones 848). This implicit awareness can be seen in the quantitative results of the codes within the *metalinguistic awareness* dimension, including *lexical*, *syntactic*, and *textual* awareness. The results of this analysis can be seen in Table 2 below. According to these results, students developed an awareness of how textual features, such as the conventional features of *macro-genres*, can have rhetorical effects more readily than lexical or syntactic features. All students (100%) who participated in interviews demonstrated knowledge of conventional textual features while 13 interviews (~93%) included the code *lexical*.

The development of students' metalinguistic awareness at the textual level suggests potential instances of concurrent transfer, and these instances seemed to be facilitated by the meta-discussions designed for the language-level instruction in functional grammar and informed by the concept of *macro-genres*. The instructor of Stretch A, for example, would often commit time at the beginning of class to analyze assigned readings, and we designed the meta-discussions for the language-level instruction around this activity of her existing curriculum. As students' primary exposure to rhetorical analysis, these meta-discussions likely developed students' *textual* metalinguistic awareness and, in turn, facilitated some forms of concurrent transfer. Students reported, that is, that these meta-discussions helped them to see the value of acknowledging alternative viewpoints generally and engaging counter arguments specifically. These meta-discussions, moreover, likely provided students with a metalanguage for classifying text types (Blaauw et al. 57; Beaufort 178); for instance, students during interviews used similar *macro-genre* categories to describe the writing tasks assigned throughout the course.

Illustrating the possible effect that these meta-discussions had on the *textual* metalinguistic awareness of students enrolled in Stretch A, one student, for instance, described how the “argumentative” writing they were

**Table 2.** Ranked Frequency of Codes within Metalinguistic Awareness Dimension

Code	Rank	Total Instances	Interviews with Code
textual	1	92	14/14 (100%)
lexical	2	62	13/14 (~93%)
syntactic	3	16	7/14 (50%)

assigned was facilitated by these meta-discussions (Student 29, Stretch A). After I probed the student about strategies for integrating alternative viewpoints into her essay, she suggests in reference to these meta-discussions that the “twenty-five-minute debate” they would have about “those random, weird articles” likely “helped all of us be able to write those types of essays” (Student 29, Stretch A). I then asked the student to elaborate on how these meta-discussions helped, and she suggested that they provided a way of considering multiple viewpoints when writing in the argumentative *macro-genre*: “It was showing everyone in real life that people don’t agree all the time and we’re writing argumentative essays and we’re on one side but there’s always going to be another person on another side that doesn’t agree with what you’re saying” (Student 29, Stretch A). As the student’s response suggests, she was able to connect these meta-discussions to the argumentative *macro-genre*, which was her categorization of the writing tasks assigned in Stretch A. The student went on to explain that, in some ways, these meta-discussions were also generative, particularly during workshops by encouraging students to seek out counter viewpoints or, as the student explains, she could “ask for opinions [from classmates] to bring into [her] essay” (Student 29, Stretch A). In addition to illustrating awareness of the rhetorical effect that the consideration of alternative viewpoints has within the argumentative *macro-genre*, the student’s response also suggests some form of concurrent transfer by applying the knowledge she gained from these meta-discussions to her writing tasks during the course (Yancey et al., “Teaching for Transfer” 277).

Two other students enrolled in Stretch A, likewise, described these meta-discussions as helpful to their ability to write in the argumentative *macro-genre* by, for instance, encouraging “healthy debate” (Student 32, Stretch A). Student 34, for example, seemed to develop notable *textual* metalinguistic awareness by categorizing various types of *macro-genres* ranging from “informational” to “argumentative,” and similar to Student 29’s explanation, the student suggested that these discussions were in some ways generative by

getting his “brain moving” (Student 34, Stretch A). Thinking about *macro-genres*, in this way, specifically how a particular mode of communication can be generative, the students demonstrate a metacognitive awareness, one likely to facilitate transfer by potentially using various modes in disparate rhetorical contexts. While the meta-discussions informed by the concept of *macro-genre* seem to have contributed to the metalinguistic awareness that particularly students who were enrolled in Stretch A developed as it pertains to the socio-rhetorical function of macro-textual features, such as engaging competing viewpoints, they also in some cases articulated their awareness of these conventions for academic argumentation by referring to materials designed for the functional language instruction and posted on the course’s learning management system.

For example, when probed about their strategies for approaching counter arguments, Student 29 references these materials explaining that “[My instructor] posted a lot of like transitional words but we never really had to put in a counter argument but she provided multiple papers of like the different words we can use to start a sentence or like continue a paragraph...which was helpful” (Student 29, Stretch A). When I probed the student for examples of the specific words or phrases that she found helpful for addressing counter arguments, she mentioned contrastive connectives including “however.” Student 32, who was also enrolled in Stretch A, likewise, referenced the “transitional” handouts when explaining how her instructor “taught [us to] use certain like transition words and ways to phrase words to help convince” (Student 32, Stretch A). Student 32 referenced these materials again when probed about her strategies for organizing: “. . . [my instructor] would give us lists of good transition words and what kind of words were for an argumentative transition or just like an ending transition for the whole essay” (Student 32, Stretch A). In addition to referencing these materials, the student also demonstrates metalinguistic awareness by specifying the function of the transitional phrases she used, including “argumentative” and “ending” transitions. Like the explanation of the use of contrastive connectives by Student 41 from Stretch B above, the connection this student makes between the function of transitional phrases suggests a “depth of understanding” in terms of her metalinguistic awareness (Myhill and Jones 844).

This finding is not, however, meant to suggest that students enrolled in experimental sections of the corequisite did not develop a *textual* metalinguistic awareness nor that they lacked a repertoire of *functional* metalanguage. In fact, of the total 77 instances of students using *functional* metalanguage, 41 of these instances (~53%) occurred in interviews with students

enrolled in an experimental corequisite section. The distribution of these instances, moreover, occurred in all seven of the interviews conducted with students who were enrolled in an experimental corequisite section while the *functional* metalanguage occurred in six of the seven interviews (~85%) with students in an experimental section of stretch.

Regardless of the course design, it therefore seems that, for these students, direct language-level instruction informed by functional linguistics helps to develop a repertoire of metalanguage to articulate metalinguistic knowledge, specifically an awareness of how the socio-rhetorical practices of academic discourse underlie typical language patterns. The instruction in functional grammar, in other words, served as a mediational means for developing students' metalinguistic awareness and, in some ways, socialized them to the socio-cognitive habits and practices for "thoughtful dialogue" and "civil discourse" (Aull, *How Students Write 5*).

## **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

Drawing on foundational socio-rhetorical concepts of the field, existing transfer pedagogies have shown to be effective, particularly for developing students' genre awareness by instructing in the contextual factors that affect writing and, in turn, students' ability to metacognitively reflect on their writing strategies by encouraging students to consider macro-social concepts, such as audience, genre, and discourse communities. However, such pedagogies have not adequately established a metalanguage for developing students' awareness of language-level features as they affect transfer. With this study, I therefore aimed to examine what approaches to direct language-level instruction informed by functional linguistics can potentially offer existing transfer pedagogies by examining the possible effects that functional language instruction has on basic writers' metalanguage and what these possible effects suggest about the instruction's ability to facilitate these students' transfer of writing strategies. In sum, I found that such language-level instruction has noticeable effects on the metalanguage that students use to verbalize their literacy practices. This repertoire of metalanguage, moreover, seems to facilitate students' development of metalinguistic awareness by allowing them to verbalize how valued socio-rhetorical practices of academic discourse underlie conventional language-level patterns. These effects suggest an enhanced ability to successfully transfer based on research showing the critical role that metalanguage and reflection have on



the transfer process. These findings, I believe, pose several potential implications for writing research and pedagogy.

First, given that transfer pedagogies often preclude developing a metalanguage for students to describe the language-level features of discourse practices (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 173–74; Brown 121, 129; Moore 197), the results of the study present potential implications related to the ways that writing instruction can reorient toward language-level instruction. Specifically, the approach toward explicit language instruction illustrated by the study potentially answers recent calls for developing students' language awareness generally and critical language awareness specifically (Gere et al., "Communal Justicing" 392–392; Shapiro). In response to these calls, the findings suggest that direct language instruction that aims to develop students' metalinguistic awareness helps basic writers acquire the metalanguage necessary for metacognitively reflecting on the social practices underlying academic discourse.

While there is limited data to make definitive claims about the effect the functional language instruction had on students' ability to transfer, my analysis of interviews suggests that, for some students, the instruction developed a metacognitive awareness conducive for transfer. Several students' responses, for instance, suggested that they engaged in concurrent transfer as indicated by the students' explanation of how they applied their understanding of *macro-genres* as learned during collaborative meta-discussions to the writing tasks they were completing, particularly in Stretch A. These instances of transfer from the data would seem to confirm claims about the efficacy of giving students and instructors metalanguage for "identifying overall genre families," that is, the identification of *macro-genres*, so as to "highlight rhetorical aims across a range of assignments, both to make those aims more explicit and to highlight expectations that do and do not transfer across them" (Aull, *How Students Write* 59). Nonetheless, these instances of transfer cannot be attributed to the curricular interventions for this research exclusively because, although *macro-genre* was a conceptual framework for the lessons' design, there were likely other factors informing students' constructs of writing tasks.

Finally, these findings have potential implications for approaches to basic writing instruction. The results, for instance, suggest that students who received instruction in functional grammar developed a repertoire of metalanguage, which allowed them to articulate connections between language-level features and macro-rhetorical strategies. In turn, they seemed to use this metalanguage to externalize their understanding and, likewise,

demonstrate their metalinguistic awareness of these connections. The conceptual awareness demonstrated in these interviews substantiates previous claims that language-level instruction should not be exclusive to English Language Learners (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 43–44; Gere et al., “Local Assessment” 624; Moore 197; Peele, et al. 53). The study, in other words, demonstrates the benefits of instructional approaches typically designed for English Language Learners for developing the linguistic knowledge of students who are native speakers of English.

Developing the linguistic knowledge of these students, however, is contingent on relevant applications that require students to externalize their metacognitive awareness through metalanguage, whether by analyzing their own writing or example texts in collaborative meta-discussions. As suggested by this and similar studies, such “awareness-raising activities” can be effectively used in “various ways and degrees in heterogeneous, low-level literacy courses” (Hardy et al. 17). By raising students’ awareness of the connections between language-level features and macro-rhetorical concepts, functional approaches to language instruction can also potentially aid students’ understanding of the “often tacit expectations” of academic writing (Aull, *First-Year University Writing* 10). As an approach lacking in most pedagogies that hold students’ successful transfer as their primary goal, instruction that makes these connections explicit for students, overall, illustrates the possible affordances of language-based instruction particularly for basic writers.

## NOTES

1. IRB Protocol Number 21-309 at Kent State University.
2. The concepts and overall instructional approach for each lesson were drawn from existing applications and pedagogical materials including those designed by Laura Aull (*First-Year University Writing; How Students Write*).
3. Examples of the lessons in functional grammar that were used for the study are available at <https://bit.ly/48QsWlX>.

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