Documenting language and content integrated learning: a case study of a genre-based history in films course

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Documenting language and content integrated learning: a case study of a genre-based history in films course

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**ABSTRACT**

In this paper, we explore how advanced college students use the past history and experiences of others to understand the present while learning a foreign language through a content-integrated curriculum. To assess student learning we operationalize Norris (2006, “The Why (and How) of Assessing Student Learning Outcomes in College Foreign Language Programs.” *The Modern Language Journal* 90 (4): 576–583) learning outcomes model (content, skills and dispositions) through linguistic indices. The learning is documented throughout a semester via learners’ written production, comparing the changes and expansion in the use of meaning-making resources that demonstrate their understanding of others through choices in the wording, logical organization of texts, and their positioning in relation to those contents. The participants have varied language trajectories ranging from heritage to L2 language learners of Spanish. The findings show how a content and language integrated curriculum focusing on a historical theme (i.e. Southern Cone dictatorships) through a particular genre (i.e. film review) can reveal students’ content, skills and dispositions in an L2. Learners demonstrated their developing capacities in a foreign language and history through their production of written texts that allow them to use knowledge about the past to interpret the present via academic genres. The paper provides a framework for describing content, skills and dispositions learning outcomes with linguistic features that evidence the achievement of those outcomes.

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**KEYWORDS**

Content-based L2 curriculum; history in films; academic genres; learning outcomes

**Introduction**

Foreign language education in the context of globalization aims to educate speakers who have deep transcultural and translingual competence (Kramsch 2012). At the curriculum design level, the challenge has been how to achieve these goals. In the U.S. context, curriculum debates have foregrounded the importance of including basic knowledge of history and culture to develop the capacity to understand and interpret mass media products from those target ‘foreign’ society or societies (MLA Report 2007). To communicate and understand others requires socio-semiotic work that connects language choices with socio-historical content and contexts. How can we document this multidimensional learning in a language course?

The content-based foreign language instructional approach provides principles to design curricula integrating the learning of language and content (e.g. Achugar and Carpenter 2012; Byrnes and Sprang 2004; Lorenzo 2013; Mohan 1986; Ryshina-Pankova 2016; Schleppegrell, Achugar, and...
From a socio-semiotic perspective, language content and form cannot be separated; as a result, the goal of a curriculum organized around this principle is to help students understand and use language to produce academic content. The learning of content occurs through participation in particular cultural and disciplinary activities with specific ways of using language. As a result, the goals of content-based foreign language curriculum go beyond the ability to communicate with speakers of a foreign language, or understand members of foreign cultures. Content-based foreign language curriculum includes as goals the development of an awareness of the historical and political conditions that made it possible for people to speak, think and act the way they do (Kramsch, 2012). It incorporates a political and critical cultural awareness education (Byram, 2012). More recently, discussions in foreign language education have extended this awareness to the affective and civic-mindedness realms (Porto and Byram, 2015; Yulita, 2018). Learning a foreign language in a content-based approach entails expanding the individual’s repertoire of content, skills and dispositions through participation and engagement with semiotic products, social practices and orientations.

In this paper, we explore how young people use the past history and experiences of others to understand the present while learning a foreign language in the context of a college level foreign language content-based curriculum organized around genres and cultural knowledge in a course dealing with historical events represented in films about the 1970s dictatorships in the Southern Cone. We investigate language learning in context to provide a description of the functional constructs that characterize CBI FL and track students’ learning using linguistic evidence.

Most prior research in CBI FL has not yet documented student learning in terms of their actual production in the context of curricular thematic design and meaning-based classroom practice. Since Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (1989) introduced content-based instruction in the context of education in English as an additional language in the US, this approach has been extended to the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Content-based instruction foreign language (CBI FL) curriculum models vary in terms of the degree of focus on content and language, ranging from content-driven to language driven courses, or disciplinary focus to theme-based courses that combine the learning of curricular content and language. There have been numerous studies documenting various ways of implementing it at the curricular level in different educational levels and foreign languages (e.g. Pessoa et al. 2007; Troyan, Cammarata, and Martel, 2017). These studies have been mostly qualitative, and relate curricular design, teacher knowledge and practice, as well as implementations of CBI with students’ content and language capacities in the FL. The findings of these studies have shown that there are challenges in teacher appropriation and implementation of this approach.

Though not always framed as studies of CBI FL, similar curricular approaches based on functional perspectives on language education have found that students’ language capacities are greatly expanded when focusing on content as meaning in the FL classroom. Some researchers have investigated how a genre-based curriculum impacts students’ language development (Abdel-Malek, 2017; Fernández, 2017; Morton and Llinares, 2018; Ryshina-Pankova, 2016). These studies have shown through systematic and detailed linguistic analyses how students’ language capacities and meaning-making resources expand through engagement with genres that focus on achieving social purposes through language. These studies, as well as others focused on advanced foreign language development (Byrnes, 2006; Byrnes, Maxim, and Norris, 2010), have also shown that development of high scale multilingualism requires an understanding of cultural references of various kinds.

Other researchers have investigated critical CBI in the FL classroom framed as the teaching and learning of history (e.g. Kramsch, 2012; Kubota, 2012; and Brooks-Lewis, 2010). This area of research has recognized the importance of foreign language education in providing access to diverse historical memories and problematizing power and knowledge. There is not as much development in this area and these authors mostly focus on case studies of classroom practices.

In sum, the contribution of the current study is to provide an integrated multiscalar description of CBI FL that considers curriculum level, course level and student capacities to show how this language...
and content approach translates into students’ multidimensional foreign language learning (content, skills and dispositions). The article’s main contribution is the operationalization of Norris’ (2006) content, skills and dispositions learning outcomes through linguistic features that evidence the achievement of those outcomes throughout time in the context of a genre-based course design. The paper starts with an overview of the socio-semiotic approach to CBI in foreign language education describing the language resources that characterize these learning outcomes and then focuses on one case to show students’ achievement of these outcomes.

**A socio-semiotic approach to CBI in foreign language education**

Considering language as a socio-semiotic system (Halliday 1978) and learning as semiotic mediation (Coffin and Donahue 2014) allows us to integrate the teaching and learning of content in the foreign language classroom in a theoretically principled manner. From this perspective, language and culture are in a dialectic relationship. Language construes culture and simultaneously culture construes language. Language is always part of a social context. While learning about a particular content related to a social context, students learn the language used in it, thus the learning of culture and language occur concurrently. From this perspective, learning is the expansion of meanings and meaning-making resources.

Learning a foreign language and culture results from guidance through interaction in the context of shared experiences with texts (Rothery 1996). Therefore, when learning a foreign language we are not only learning a new code, or new knowledge but also new ways of being, doing and orienting in the world. Foreign language programs need to explicitly target language, content knowledge and socio-emotional learning.

Communicating across ‘unshared worlds’ and ‘different points of departure’ (Hasan 2004) requires an expansion of meaning-making resources. When learning an L2, meaning-making choices are expanded to make new meanings that go beyond the resources available in one community. The learning of history increases the potential of L2 students to make choices that negotiate across communities and multiply the potential to construct varied interpretations of experience. The capacity to make different meanings is generated by understanding difference in experiences between members of different communities who are socially differentially positioned, and also by the difference within individuals who vary their position throughout time. In this case study, we show the changes in students’ production of the same genre within a semester by comparing samples of their written work at mid-semester with the third essay they wrote towards the end of the semester. We selected these two essays because they represent what students are able to do after they are familiar with the teaching-learning approach and have some common background knowledge on the topic. Our goal was to have examples of students’ work throughout time to explore if there were changes in their production taken as evidence of their learning. The students’ familiarity with the target communities’ experiences during the dictatorship period and their own experience in the classroom during the semester create a context of possible changes in their meaning-making potential.

We conceptualize content as information and knowledge about history and culture which can be explored through communication and meanings (García Canclini 2004; Halliday 1978). These meanings and knowledge are related to patterned ways of using language. Cultures develop particular ways of achieving social purposes with/through language which we call genres (Bakhtin 1986; Kress 1989; Martin 1993). The structural properties of a genre are associated with particular ways of achieving a social purpose. This means that the curriculum is organized around culturally relevant activities which provide opportunities to engage with language, content and practices in meaningful and authentic ways.

To assess student learning the genre-based curriculum is complemented with the student learning outcomes model (Norris 2006). This approach identifies concrete outcomes that show that learning in foreign language classrooms goes beyond language learning and includes critical knowledge
of cultures, communication skills and dispositions towards multilingualism, cultural diversity and varied interpretations. These outcomes serve as evidence of learning, but do not constitute all learning. This type of assessment aims to systematically gather information in order to use it to improve the course and/or program. By documenting ‘how learners develop and change throughout and as a result of their educational experiences’ (Norris 2006, 581), the assessment can inform educators’ actions and decisions as well as document student learning.

To operationalize the integrated learning of L2 history, meaning-making resources and attitudes we identify three categories (content, skills and dispositions) that are realized through textual and linguistic choices (see Table 3). We focus on historical meanings because they are central to new curricula that strives to include multidisciplinary knowledge to develop intercultural understanding and citizenship (MLA Report 2007).

To explore the integrated learning of history and foreign language we investigated students’ production in a genre-based curriculum at the university level throughout a semester. Our main research focus was to describe in linguistic terms what students are able to do in this type of CBI FL context as evidence of learning in three areas, content, skills and dispositions. The research questions that guide the study are: (1) What choices do students make to construct historical meanings? (2) What academic skills are deployed through their writing? (3) How do students position themselves in relation to the events and social actors depicted in their texts? (4) What meaning-making resources are expanded or enriched throughout a semester? (5) What do these learning outcome indicators yield in terms of our understanding of learning in a CBI FL context? The following section describes the curriculum, the program, the course and the participants of the study.

The case study: content-based FL curriculum and learning at the university level

This case study serves as a detailed investigation of foreign language learning in the context of a course providing a holistic view of the students’ production throughout time. In our dual role as teachers and investigators we had an investment in the project that allowed us to collect data and assess student learning with the goal of improving the curriculum and students’ learning outcomes. To ensure students’ privacy and experience were protected we followed strict ethical principles which included obtaining students’ informed consent and internal review board approval. We also reported our work to our peers and received comments on our work from colleagues in the program and Modern Languages department. Below we describe the context, data collected and analysis we performed to investigate student learning of history in a CBI foreign language course of a genre-based curriculum.

The program and the course

This case study investigated learning in a content-based foreign language course in a private university in the US Midwest. This university’s Hispanic Studies curriculum fosters an integrated approach to the study of language and culture and to the study of culture through language. The majority of our students are primary majors in a wide range of disciplines (engineering, art, history etc.) from across the university, and come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds; most students who major in Hispanic Studies have come to university with some prior background in Spanish.

Before implementing this course, we conducted a needs analysis that included a review of extant course-level and program outcomes, solicitation of input from stakeholders, examination of several years of exit surveys from graduating majors, as well as a comprehensive survey of all current Hispanic Studies majors and minors in order to gain a more holistic understanding of students’ needs and of how to best integrate a genre-based approach throughout the curriculum. As a result of this needs analysis, several steps were taken: specific syllabi were revised to more explicitly incorporate CBI; two courses were piloted and studied, one at the third-year level, and the fourth-year course that is the
subject of this study; multiple workshops were conducted with all faculty in the Hispanic Studies program to build capacity; course and program level outcomes were reviewed; a proposal for curriculum redesign from first through fourth year was written with clear learning outcomes defined for each level according to a genre-based approach. 

The expected program level outcomes include an increase in students’ knowledge and appreciation of cultural productions in their historical context, of customs and contemporary issues while developing skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Concurrently engaging with a variety of texts students become competent users of Spanish in various contexts (personal, professional and academic). As part of our curriculum revision, we reframed our program outcomes in order to more precisely articulate a genre-based approach throughout the four years of the curriculum. The learner pathway describes the content and linguistic focus for different levels. Genres can occur at various curricular levels, but the linguistic resources in which these are realized are expanded as students progress. The genres and situations selected to organize the curriculum are sequenced in continua that range from congruent to incongruent language use and from everyday to specialized situations.

While courses from the first to third year in our curriculum are sequential, fourth-year courses in our program are not sequenced and highly specific, in order to rigorously interrogate critical debates and themes in the Spanish-speaking world. Students’ development of written and oral skills in the fourth-year is of a high level and increasingly connected to the socio-cultural content. These courses are designed taking into account the needs and feedback of stakeholders from our analysis, that indicated – in keeping with trends indicated in the MLA 2007 report1 – a need for greater integration of content to meet the demands of a rapidly globalizing world, to provide some flexibility for both instructors and students, and for courses that prepare students to engage in multiple literacies. In the survey of majors and minors, several students in particular noted the importance of the inextricable link between language, history and culture as being a motivating factor in their continued study of Spanish, and its value to them in the future:

• ‘Interesting historical/cultural material and I wanted to broaden my language knowledge for personal and professional aspirations’;
• ‘I want to be fluent in Spanish so I wanted to take more Spanish classes and learn about history, culture and art’;
• ‘I believe furthering my education in Hispanic studies will benefit and enrich my future experiences (job, medical school, service trips, traveling abroad, communication skills) greatly’.

For each level, of the curriculum, genres were very specifically chosen that are appropriate for the course (in the fourth year, for example: film reviews for a course on recent history through film; media critique for a discourse analysis course; expository essay for a cultural studies course).

For this paper, we explore a fourth-year college course on recent history through film that provides students with the historical knowledge to deepen their understanding and interpretation of Latin American Spanish-speaking cultures while developing advanced grammar and communication skills in context. The course surveys the Southern Cone dictatorships during the period of the Cold War through their representation in films (fiction and documentaries). This content is organized around genres that link context, text and discrete language patterns. The genres included were: film reviews, expository essays and academic oral presentations. This approach promotes comprehension and analysis of Latin American Spanish-speaking cultures while developing advanced grammar and communication skills in context.

Data

In order to document student learning in this particular curricular context, we compared two essays of the same genre (i.e. film reviews) produced by all the students taking the course at the middle
and end of the semester (7 students and 14 texts). The comparison provides evidence of students’ meaning-making capacities within the same genre through time. We analyzed change within-subjects (each student’s meaning-making choices in comparison to those made by him/herself at a different point in time). This design enabled us to identify and describe the particular content, skills and dispositions that students displayed as they progressed through the semester and engaged with increasing amounts of texts and activities. During the semester, students were exposed and asked to produce texts from written and oral genres (i.e. response paper, expository essay, and information report). Table 1 presents the focal genre (the response paper: film review), and its linguistic features.

The students’ texts were produced during the semester as part of their regular course activities. The teaching-learning cycle included an instance where films were used to build content knowledge, followed by the deconstruction of model film review texts. These model texts were used to analyze and discuss content and language choices in relation to the topic of the films which dealt with the dictatorships in the Southern Cone. Finally, students wrote their film reviews integrating their knowledge of the topic with disciplinary literacy skills and expressing their dispositions towards the particular topics addressed in the films.

The genre used to document students’ production constitutes a culturally relevant form through which Spanish-speaking cultures fulfill certain social purposes linguistically: a film review. The social purpose of film reviews is to interpret and evaluate a film commenting on its strengths and weaknesses, its aesthetic, social, informational, political or entertainment value using arguments and evidence from the film to support the appraisal. The film reviews focused on movies whose subject was the Southern Cone dictatorships of the 1970s.

**Participants**

The students in this course included seven undergraduates who had varying levels of Spanish and distinct language trajectories. Some of the students had started learning Spanish in college, while others were Heritage Learners of Spanish and a few had spent a semester abroad in Latin American countries. The students’ majors included Hispanic Studies and Global Studies which are interdisciplinary areas of specialization that incorporate a strong foreign language requirement. Other students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Genres and language focus in the study.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genre</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Response paper (film review) | To evaluate the qualities of a film and recommend it to others | Context<sup>∧</sup> summary of plot<sup>∧</sup> Judgment | • Impersonal voice  
• Present, past and future as needed  
• Indicative and subjunctive mood  
• Indirect inscription of evaluation |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Students’ background.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simari</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Language history: 1 – Foreign LL; 2 – Heritage LL; 3 – Foreign study abroad.
majored in engineering, international relations and biology. Table 2 provides the background of the participants (all names are pseudonyms).

**Analysis methods**

The operationalization of curricular goals in terms of content, skill and disposition outcomes (Norris 2006) provides concrete goals and evidence to assess and document learning. These student-learning outcomes, categorized as content and dispositions, were mapped to the ideational and interpersonal meanings. The skills were defined as social practices associated with the use of those texts within a particular context.

Historical content is constructed through choices in ideational meanings that represent social actors, events and changes over time (transitivity structures according to Halliday 1994 and Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). Historical discourse is also characterized as an experience by distinguishing past from present while connecting past events to the present (Ricouer 2010). The content can also be described in terms of its quantity, through a lexical density measure detailing how much content there is in a clause (the amount of content words per total number of words in the text).

Dispositions refer to the positioning of the learner/author in relation to the audience and the content being represented. This orientation can be constructed through pronoun choices that establish power, distance and affective relations (Poynton 1993) or also as an orientation to time and space to position oneself as member of groups that predate and outlive oneself (Rüsen 2004). These positionings construct interpersonal meanings realized through attitudes expressed through semantic choices, modality and selection of deixis of person, time and place. Dispositions also refer to the construction of voices and the use of technical vocabulary that indexes an identity as a member of a specialized community.

The learning outcomes also include practices that are typical of academic contexts such as: selecting a genre and following its conventions, reading across texts establishing intertextual links through sourcing, mentions of texts or using stock phrases, patterns or expressions associated and writing using comparison, contrast or argument. These meanings are enacted through literacy skills characteristic of academic and historical thinking practices such as synthesizing, interpreting, evaluating and comparing texts through close reading and juxtaposing series of texts to construct an argument or explanation (Achugar, Schleppregrell, and Oteiza 2007; Wineburg 2001). These skills are revealed in linguistic practices such as: attribution, nominalization and genre conventions. Table 3 shows the linguistic operationalization of these curricular goals.

The analyses depict students’ choices in terms of the content and orientation to the subject matter as evidence of history knowledge, foreign language capacities and dispositions towards others. Because we approach the development of language and historical understanding through a functional perspective (Christie and Derewianka 2008; Coffin 2006; Schleppregrell, Achugar, and Oteiza 2004), we looked at how language choices in texts construct historical meanings. Thus, we

**Table 3. Linguistic operationalization of content-based learning outcomes.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linguistic resources</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Dispositions</th>
<th>Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Representations of social actors and events through nominal groups, selection of various types of processes and circumstances.</td>
<td>Positioning: use of pronouns (us vs. them), jargon, modality, deixis.</td>
<td>Intertextual reading: sourcing (quoting and reporting), referring to other texts through phrases and patterns of expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense: present, past, future</td>
<td>Attitudes: judgment, appreciation, affect.</td>
<td>Writing: comparison, contrast and argument, productivity (total number of words).</td>
<td>Composition following genre conventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep taxonomy (detailed classification)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical density</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
considered the linguistic features that learners produced over time to track their language and content learning in terms of expansion or change in use of resources.

The analysis to track skill development focused on students’ deployment of academic and historical knowledge expressed through the conventional realization of the genre and the identification of intertextual references (direct or evoked references to other texts) and comparison with relevant texts/films. These linguistic choices constitute indices of academic practices and skills.

Students’ production was analyzed also to explore their development of dispositions that revealed historical consciousness and empathy through their positioning as well as through encoding of attitudes of judgment and affect and other metadiscourse choices (i.e. graduation and engagement). Following Martin and White (2005), we identified attitudes through linguistic choices that encode or evoke evaluations in terms of institutionalized feelings of three types: affect (reactions), judgment (behavior) and appreciation (things). We also looked at students’ use of comparison, modality and graduation as ways to lower or strengthen the force of evaluations. We traced sources that were integrated into the text through the use of sourcing and other features to construct a voice of the author such as choice of pronouns (us vs. them), stance (evaluation patterns throughout the text) and modality (probability and obligation).

The analysis proceeded by coding texts for the genre functional constituents, and later their linguistic choices. First, we coded the texts identifying the functional stages of the genre: an introduction or contextualization, a summary of the plot and an evaluation with an optional recommendation that states the author’s position regarding the value of the film. We assigned a number to each text based on the presence and order of these components. This provided evidence for skills. Then, we counted the number of words each text had, and calculated the text’s lexical density to describe the texts’ written language complexity. Subsequently, we identified the social actors, processes and circumstances represented to document historical content learning. Finally, we coded the lexical choices and semantic orientation of the text categorizing the use of different types of evaluation (in particular attitudes of affect and judgment). We also documented the positioning of students in relation to these evaluations describing different voices (recorder, interpreter or adjudicator) that constructed interpersonal meanings (Coffin 2006; Martin and White 2005).

Findings

The overall analysis will focus on selected categories from Table 3 (representation of events and actors), then the qualitative analysis of discrete cases will offer a detailed analysis including all features. First, we present the overall patterns and variation in the group. Afterwards, we present the qualitative results first to illustrate the more detailed analysis of the texts to show how content, skills and dispositions are realized through particular linguistic choices which change through time in terms of diversity and/or frequency of occurrence.

The general analyses’ findings show that students with diverse trajectories exhibited different capacities to complete the task. The findings are presented using the categories of content, skills and dispositions to organize the evidence of learning.

Content

Evidence of students’ content knowledge is revealed in the representation of key social actors related to the dictatorship (e.g. ‘la mayoría silenciosa’ [the silent majority]). The use of this nominalization allows students to treat a way of responding to the events as a label for a group. This packaging of the information allows students to use labels that incorporate historical explanatory meanings, not only identifications of social actors. In addition, students’ content knowledge was evidenced by the identification of the circumstances which characterized the period (e.g. ‘cuando sus compañeros de trabajo escuchan sus conversaciones’ [when his workmates listen in on his conversations]) and through the explicit reference to shared knowledge about the period (e.g. ‘Salvador Allende fue
un presidente socialista elegido democráticamente en Chile en 1970 ([Salvador Allende was a socialist president democratically elected in Chile in 1970]) that connects to discourses about the dictatorship in the Southern Cone. These examples show choices that represent use of types of resources that characterize disciplinary content knowledge. They demonstrate students made choices that are valued in the discipline. These types of choices appeared in all students’ work and may be related to the pedagogical classroom work with the model texts to build their field knowledge.

Students displayed diverse levels of academic discourse as shown variations in the lexical density of their texts. Figure 1 shows the comparison of lexical density across time in all students. There is no evidence of change to indicate learning through the use of these features of academic discourse. This may be due to the short period of time the data comparison captures, as well as to the lack of explicit instruction of these resources.

These descriptions of the students’ texts in terms of their academic features realized through linguistic choices reveal some of their academic foreign language capacities in relation to their content knowledge. All students displayed linguistic resources used to make meanings within the genre’s social purpose as shown through these ideational indices (lexical density, representation of social actors and events and historical knowledge). In this task, they built their field of knowledge of the historical (what happened during the dictatorships) and cultural context (what are Latin American films about dictatorships like). However, there was no indication of learning in terms of their frequency of use of academic language meaning-making resources.

Skills

All students except one included all the genre constituents in their text, and two changed the order of the constituents. There was also variation in the number of words in the texts they produced. Figure 2 presents the comparison of students’ production in terms of text length.

Figure 2 shows that most students increased or maintained the number of words in the texts throughout the semester. In terms of skills, the number of words in the text is an indicator of writing productivity since there has to be a certain amount of words for ideas to be adequately developed. However, there are two students whose second text had fewer words. This could be due to their more efficient use of other linguistic resources to construct meaning. For example, Mia’s
second text has higher lexical density which means more content words per number of clauses in the text (see Figure 1).

The task required students to contextualize the film in its historical and cinematographic context. Exploring the diversity of interpretations on the events represented in a corpus of films afforded them the resources to compare and contrast this particular film with others dealing with the same event, and in turn critically assess it. For example, most of the texts made explicit reference to other films which deal with the dictatorship (e.g. Kamchatka, Historia de un Oso o Machuca). These intertextual connections enabled students to synthesize the meaning and value of a particular rendition of the dictatorship and use it to understand their present context.

**Dispositions**

The students’ positioning as expressed through attitudes encoded in linguistic choices reveals a culturally appropriate usage. As expected in this genre, there is a dominance of appreciation evaluations of the aesthetic and semiotic features of the film (e.g. ‘lo que la película hace correctamente es que nos da una representación preciosa de la vida de la mayoría silenciosa y de la memoria de la vida sobre este tiempo’ [what the movie does correctly that is it gives us a precise representation of}
the silent majority’s life and the memory of life at that time.}). Figure 3 shows the interpersonal resources deployed to construct evaluation across time focusing on judgment and affect. Appreciation is not included in this figure, because it is the expected choice in an evaluation of a film. In addition, we were interested in capturing students’ display of empathy in terms of their moral and affective closeness to participants and events from the target culture.

As shown in Figure 3, students’ evaluative language choices show an increase in the use of affect and judgment across time. This was an unexpected finding in terms of the genre prototypical features; however, considering the topics of these films, the students incorporated affective and moral evaluations that showed their connection to universal human rights topics. (e.g. ‘El sonido de los pasos y el eco añaden a la inquietud porque crean un ritmo despacio y señala que Francisco está solo y nadie pueden ayudarlo’. [The sound of the steps and the echo add to the restlessness because they create a slow rhythm and point out that Francisco is alone and no one can help him]). These choices reveal that students position themselves through language that constructs an affective and moral involvement with the topic at hand (i.e. the dictatorship’s consequences on families and various generations).

The students’ dispositions towards others reveal their empathy through attitudes of affect (‘la dictadura crea un miedo en toda la población Argentina’ [the dictatorship creates fear in all of the population in Argentina]), and through the construction of voices typical of historical thinking or through technical vocabulary that describes the film in disciplinary appropriate ways (e.g. ‘sonidos diegéticos’ [diegetic sounds]). The use of a recorder voice (Coffin 2006; Martin 2006), that is more objective and does not include judgment, is not used in the last texts produced by students. For example, ‘La memoria en este caso representa una manera de reflexionar y evaluar qué significa ser ciudadano y cómo afecta la política la vida cotidiana y a decisiones sobre activismopolítico.’ [Memory in this case represents a way to reflect and evaluate what it means to be a citizen and how politics affects everyday life and decisions about political activism]. This example constructs an impartial and objective description of the situation (what it means to be a citizen ...) without positioning the author in relation to those events.

In the last text they produced, most students adopt an interpreter voice (Coffin 2006; Martin 2006) that assigns affective and social value judgments to the social actors depicted in the films. Meanwhile a few students construct a moral judgment of the behavior depicted in events and position in subjective stances through an adjudicator voice (Coffin 2006; Martin 2006). This voice constructs the events from a point of view that is attributed to outside sources distancing the speaker from the positions put forth in the text. For example,

Salvador Allende fue un presidente socialista elegido democráticamente en Chile en 1970. Conocido por la nacionalización del cobre y su interés en la salud y bienestar de familias trabajadoras, su vida personal se quedó así: personal. El documental Allende, mi abuelo Allende ofrece una mirada profunda de la persona que fue no solamente un político exitoso, sino también un marido, padre y abuelo. Marcía Tambutti, nieta de Allende y directora del documental, explora su curiosidad sobre su abuelo y rechaza la tendencia de su familia de no hablar de él.

[Salvador Allende was a socialist president democratically elected in Chile in 1970. Known for the nationalization of copper and his interest in health and working-class families’ well-being, his personal life remained like that: personal. The documentary Allende, my grandfather Allende offers a deep look at the person who was not only a successful politician, but also a husband, a father and a grandfather. Marcía Tambutti, Allende’s granddaughter and director of the documentary, explores her curiosity about her grandfather and rejects the tendency of her family not to talk about him].

The adjudicator voice portrays the evaluation for the film and the social actors depicted in it as the construction of a particular source: Marcía Tambutti, Allende’s granddaughter. The positive evaluations are then displaced to the director of the film, not to the writer’s interpretation of the film.

This positioning also demonstrated that students were able to connect their present experience to that of others in a foreign culture and a distant past. For instance, they revealed the capacity to transform historical context as trigger for subsequent actions. E.g. ‘La larga noche transmite el horror en el
que hasta los apáticos viven, y transmite un mensaje no de perseverancia como Kamchatka sino de movilización’ [The Long Night transmits the horror that even those who are apathetic lived in, and it transmits a message not of perseverance like Kamchatka but of mobilization]. There is also evidence of a capacity to connect other’s past to one’s present. For example, ‘Su periplo es importante no solamente en cómo explora la memoria de la dictadura pero también tiene un mensaje importante en el clima político moderno – es crucial hacer algo cuando se puede para ayudar a los demás, quienes están afectados directamente por política dañina’ [His journey is important not only in how it explores the memory of the dictatorship, but also has an important message about the current political climate – it is crucial to do something when one can help others, who are being directly affected by damaging politics].

Karen’s learning: an example to illustrate qualitative in-depth analysis

We will look now at a single case to show how one student deploys meaning-making resources for expressing content, skills and dispositions across time. The section of the genre used to illustrate this comes from the evaluation section of film review 1 and film review 3. The examples include markings of the coding of dispositions, distinguishing inscribed or evoked evaluations of affect marked using bold and judgment using underlining.

Excerpt from Karen’s film review 1

En otras películas de la dictadura, hay individuos que protestan, desaparecen y pelean.

Cuando una piensa en la dictadura latinoamericana, piensa en las protestas en las calles y la violencia de las fuerzas armadas. En La larga noche de Francisco Sanctis, no hay imágenes de la violencia. En vez de la violencia, los directores usa [sic] el miedo y el terror de un individuo que representa muchas personas durante los años de la dictadura. La realidad es que es más fácil para relacionarse con Francisco que René Saavedra en No. La película No cuenta la historia de un protagonista, René, quien está definido por su carrera y su papel en su involucración de la campaña de ‘no’. Mientras, La larga noche de Francisco Sanctis cuenta la historia de muchas personas; la lucha interna durante una época oscura donde cada decisión tenía riesgo. Interesantemente, las dos películas le deja [sic] a la audiencia sentimientos de confusión y insatisfacción hacia los protagonistas. Por ejemplo, en No, Saavedra camina a través de la gente que está celebrando con una expresión perdida. Francisco, también, la deja la audiencia con preguntas porque no es claro si Francisco hizo lo que quería hacer. Pienso que representa la inseguridad de la memoria de la dictadura; una memoria compleja con varias emociones.

In other films of the dictatorship, there are individuals who protest, disappear and fight.

When you think about the Latin American dictatorship, you think about the protests in the streets and the violence of the armed forces. In The Long Night of Francisco Sanctis, there are no images of violence. Instead of violence, the directors use the fear and terror of an individual who represents many people during the years of the dictatorship. The reality is that it is easier to relate to Francisco than René Saavedra in No. The film No tells the story of a protagonist, René, who is defined by his career and his role in his involvement in the ‘no’ campaign. While, The Long Night of Francisco Sanctis tells the story of many people; the internal struggle during a dark time where every decision was a risk. Interestingly, the two films leave the audience with feelings of confusion and dissatisfaction toward the protagonists. For example, in No, Saavedra walks through people who are celebrating with a lost expression. Francisco, too, leaves the audience with questions because it is not clear if Francisco did what he wanted to do. I think it represents the insecurity of the memory of the dictatorship; a complex memory with several emotions. (Karen, excerpt from text 1)

Content

In terms of content, the extract shows the identification of several social actors that range from individuals identified by proper names (‘Francisco’ and ‘René’), to functional identifications by roles (‘audience’ or ‘protagonists’), to more indefinite groups (‘individuals who protest, disappear and fight’), products (‘films’), nominalizations (‘protests in the streets’ or the ‘violence of the armed forces’) to more abstract representations of ideas (‘the fear and terror of an individual’). This
continuum of representations that go from the concrete to the more abstract allow the writer to construct an argument that goes beyond describing what happens to particular social actors to interpreting the historical significance of those events. The circumstances locate the events in the context of the film and also of other films about the same historical period (‘In other films about the dictatorship’). These circumstances index literacy and disciplinary skills that compare and evaluate the content in relation to other exemplars in the category.

The events in the text include existential representations that introduce participants (‘Hay individuos que protestan, desaparecen y pelean’ [there are individuals who protest, disappear and fight]). These choices reflect the foregrounding of descriptions over representations of social actors as agents (protesting, disappearing, fighting); these material processes appear in a lower rank and therefore are less foregrounded. There are also thinking processes such as ‘pensar’ [think] used to represent the actions of the audience who receives the film. Finally, there are also choices made by the directors, ‘los directores usa [sic] el miedo y el terror’ [the directors use fear and terror], their choices produce an effect on the audience and represent mostly an aesthetic choice. The representation of the events distinguishes three levels of action: that of the ones who experienced them first hand, that of those who are represented in the film as characters, and lastly that of the directors who construct and aesthetic mediation of those events. These distinct levels of representation construct the historical perspective that distinguishes historical agents from mediators and audiences.

The text also reveals a degree of complexity shown by the number of content words packed in this section of the film review. The total number of words in Karen’s text 1 was $N = 740$, with 41 clause complexes, and 62 clauses. Lexical density in this text was 6.2 and grammatical intricacy 0.66.

**Skills**

Karen used specialized vocabulary and impersonal constructions with no explicit attribution to other sources. An intertextual link to other texts is established through the use of comparison to construct a message based on the contrast between what is presupposed as normal in relation to what occurs in this instance (e.g. ‘[…] there are no images of violence. Instead of violence the directors use the fear and terror of an individual’). These comments evidenced familiarity with the genre and patterns of expression that are typical of it. There was also a comparison to other films (‘No’) which, besides demonstrating a prototypical skill of the genre indirectly evidences knowledge of the field since the reference to other films demonstrates content knowledge beyond what is in the prompt (i.e. the film that is being reviewed: ‘The Long Night of Francisco Sanctis’).

**Dispositions**

The orientation to the information is encoded through lexical choices that construct affect (‘fear and terror’) and judgment (‘it is easier to relate to Francisco’) and appreciation (‘a dark time’). There is also positioning through pronoun choices that orient the author in relation to the message (‘I think it represents the insecurity of the memory of the dictatorship’). The excerpt also shows the use of indirect or invoked evaluation represented as the effect of the movie on the audience produced through the potential motivation for the character’s actions (‘it leaves the audience with questions because it is not clear if Francisco did what he wanted to do’).

There is a deployment of a *commentator voice* that expresses the writer’s attitude towards the events depicted and the film (‘The reality is that it is easier to relate to Francisco than René Saavedra in No’ or ‘Interestingly, the two films leave the audience with feelings of confusion and dissatisfaction toward the protagonists.’). This voice is constructed through judgements of social esteem and social sanction that explicitly insert the writer’s subjectivity into the text.

This excerpt illustrates how configurations of meaning-making resources are deployed to construct content, index skills and organize axiological orientations. There is a general interpretation of the meaning of the film in relation to historical events that points to the importance of
understanding how regular people had to make important choices. It demonstrates the importance of narrating the past in a key that foregrounds general struggle over the hero’s epic story. This interpretation allows for the possibility to connect past and present, since this type of decision needs to be made today.

1. **Excerpt from Karen’s text 3 (section of evaluation)**

Como otros documentales que tratan de las dictaduras del Cono Sur, como *M* y *Por Esos Ojos*, este documental usa documentos históricos, pero los usa la directora en maneras más creativas. **Los documentos importantes en este documental son las fotos y videos caseros de Allende.** Este documental es más eficaz que los otros en su uso de estos documentos. En los otros, la audiencia puede mirar a las fotos, pero es posible que las miren pasivamente. Por ejemplo, en vez de mostrar las fotos por unos segundos en silencio, la directora eficazmente decidió usar una lupa. […] La directora también incluye los video caseros y el enfoque no es solo los videos, pero **las reacciones de la familia a los videos.** Las reacciones son acciones de la generación de posmemoria en Chile.

Los videos caseros de Allende conectan emocionalmente la generación de posmemoria a la memoria documentada. Por ejemplo, Marcia les invita a sus primos a reunirse y ver los videos caseros. La imagen de los primos cercanos en el sofá es familiar para la audiencia. La audiencia se sienta como si esté en la sala con la familia. Ve los videos caseros y después, los primos conversan. Hablan de sus emociones, sus opiniones y comparten un momento íntimo. Pienso que eso es lo que Marcia quería tener; tener los momentos íntimos cuando están creando su historia de la familia Allende. Marcia y sus primos representan la generación posmemoria de la dictadura en Chile; especialmente Marcia quien cree que tiene que preguntar sobre su propia historia o como dice su hermano mayor, ‘Hay que preguntar.’ Pero, con una excepción que ellos son los nietos de una figura famosa. Esta excepción es importante porque los nietos tienen muchas informaciones sobre su abuelo, Salvador Allende. No todos los miembros de la generación posmemoria tienen la misma cantidad de información sobre sus abuelos o familias. También, la familia de Salvador Allende siempre está en la luz pública. […] Hay algunos momentos donde ella parece como una entrevistadora, pero la mayoría de las conversaciones que tiene ella en este documental son más íntimas. Mostrar la sala de Tencha que es un lugar privado, es una decisión artística que crea un espacio más personal para la audiencia. En una escena donde Tencha no está en su cama, ella sienta en una silla roja. Arriba de esta silla es un retrato de ella. Desde esta observación, uno puede discutir que este documental se trata de Tencha, porque este retrato significa la presencia de Tencha incluso cuando no está en la sala. Después de la entrevista más formal con Tencha, ella dice que quiere terminar y sale de la sala. En lugar de seguir a ella, la cámara se queda en la silla vacía con la mirada de Tencha en el retrato directamente en frente de la audiencia. No hay música y pasa algunos segundos en silencio antes de transicionar a otra escena.

Like other documentaries that deal with the dictatorships of the Southern Cone, such as *M* and *Por Esos Ojos*, this documentary uses historical documents, but the director uses them in more creative ways. The important documents in this documentary are Allende’s homemade photos and videos. This documentary is more effective than the others in their use of these documents. In others, the audience can look at the photos, but they may look at them passively. For example, instead of showing the photos for a few seconds in silence, the director effectively decided to use a magnifying glass. […] The director decides to display the photographs through a panoramic shot to show that there are many; many photos and memories. The director also includes home videos and the focus is not just the videos, but the family’s reactions to the videos. The reactions are actions of the postmemory generation in Chile.

Allende’s home videos emotionally connect the postmemory generation to the documented memory. For example, Marcia invites her cousins to meet and watch the homemade videos. The image of close cousins on the couch is familiar to the audience. The audience feels as if they are in the room with the family. They watch the homemade videos and then the cousins talk. They talk about their emotions, their opinions and share an intimate moment. I think that is what Marcia wanted to have; the intimate moments when they are creating their history of the Allende family. Marcia and her cousins represent the postmemory generation of the dictatorship in Chile; especially Marcia who thinks she has to ask about her own story or as her older brother says, ‘You have to ask.’ But, with one exception that they are the grandchildren of a famous figure. This exception is important because these grandchildren have a lot of information about their grandfather, Salvador Allende. Not all members of the postmemory generation have the same amount of information about their grandparents or families. […] There are some moments where she seems like an interviewer, but most of the conversations she has in this documentary are more intimate. Tencha’s room is shown as a private place. It is an artistic decision that creates a more personal space for the audience. In a scene where Tencha is not in her bed, she sits in a red chair. Above this chair is a portrait of her. From this observation, one can argue that this documentary is about Tencha, because this portrait symbolizes Tencha’s presence even when she is not in the room. After the most formal
interview with Tencha, she says she wants to finish and leaves the room. Instead of following her, the camera stays in the empty chair with Tencha’s gaze on the portrait directly in front of the audience. There is no music and there are a few seconds in silence before transitioning to another scene.

**Content**

The lexical choice and use of technical vocabulary in Karen’s last film review display her knowledge of film analysis categories (shots, camera angle, documentary style) and memory studies (post-memory, intergenerational transmission) and Chilean history (Salvador Allende’s political importance). Social actors are represented in varying ways that range from interpersonal relations that demonstrate closeness and affection, like the use of Allende’s wife nickname (Tencha), to the functional categorization of participants through, for example, their professional roles (director). There is a tendency to treat participants as close in terms of social contact and affective involvement using mostly their first names and their familial roles as representational choices (e.g. ‘Marcia’, ‘the cousins’).

The detailed analysis of the scene looking at Marcia’s family pictures reveals familiarity with the importance of technical choices to construct multimodal meanings. The significance of the film’s style is explained through a detailed description of the director’s choices in camera angles, location of scenes, sounds, and characters. Content and form are clearly connected through arguments that present a position and support it with evidence (e.g. ‘The director decides to display the photographs through a panoramic shot to show that there are many; many photos and memories’).

The text uses more clauses \((N = 94)\) to construct the message and more embedding to pack information \((N = 22)\). Its lexical density is 6.1. These characteristics are similar to the first text.

**Skills**

The total number of words in Karen’s final text was \(N = 1120\). It is a longer text compared to the first one. These structural features realize functional resources that enable the writer to compare and contrast this documentary with others to single out its main qualities (e.g. ‘Like other documentaries that deal with the dictatorships of the Southern Cone, such as \(M\) and \(Pour Esos Ojos\), this documentary uses historical documents, but the director uses them in more creative ways.’). The stages of the genre are more developed and elaborated as evidenced by the length as well as the detail and variety of statements in the evaluation section.

**Dispositions**

The interpersonal positionings of the writer construct an evaluation of the film and the events as well as an empathic connection to the history of Allende’s family. The relationship established with the audience is evaluated and described as effects of meaning produced by the film’s formal features (e.g. ‘As a result, the conversation is dynamic in the sense that the audience can follow the emotional journey of members of the Allende family.’).

There is a lot of affect in the text that demonstrates how the writer develops an empathic response to the film (e.g. ‘The discovery of these photos for Marcia is like a miracle because she has never seen them.’). Karen’s evaluation of the film is mostly framed through affect, foregrounding the emotional effects the film produces even though it is about a public figure and an emblematic case. The paper shows through its evaluation how the film approaches the family’s memory through an intimate and personal lens (e.g. ‘Allende’s home videos emotionally connect the post-memory generation to the documented memory. For example, Marcia invites her cousins to meet and watch the homemade videos. The image of close cousins on the couch is familiar to the audience. The audience feels as if they are in the room with the family.’). The writer uses an **interpreter voice** (Coffin 2006; Martin 2006) which inscribes observed affect (‘Allende’s family emotionally
connects') and authorial affect ('I think that is what Marcia wanted'). This stance is sustained throughout these paragraphs constructing an emotional and empathic prosody to convince readers of the potential connection they can have with the film even though it is about a distant past and a foreign culture.

**Conclusions**

The analysis shows how a content and language integrated curriculum in a foreign language course that focuses on a topic (dictatorships on film) through particular genres realized through linguistic resources serves as a structuring and organizing model to describe students’ content, skills and dispositions capacities. The learners’ capacities in language and history were displayed through their production of a genre that allowed them to use knowledge about the past to interpret the present. Linguistic evidence of content, skills and dispositions related to historical thinking and knowledge was used to describe integrated learning of language and content. The documentation of change and diversification of resources across time in these categories provides evidence of the expansion of various capacities following different individual trajectories within the same curricular unit. This type of curriculum design allows for students to engage with language, content and dispositions in meaningful and flexible ways that open up opportunities for learning and enable teachers to describe students’ learning outcomes using linguistic evidence.

To communicate and understand others requires socio-semiotic work that connects language choices with socio-historical content and contexts. Learning a foreign language provides the opportunity to also learn content and develop a sensibility towards others’ past experience. Engaging with the stories of others enables youth to develop multiple perspectives on historical events and deepen their understanding of their identity as global citizens.

Students in this course demonstrated a disposition towards understanding and feeling others’ suffering that revealed their empathy and critical exploration of the experience of others in relation to their present. The frequent use of affect and judgment in their evaluations of films revealed a connection to the events and the participants that went beyond the aesthetic depict and assessment of films. This emotional resonance was accompanied with other perspective-taking through interpreter voice that allowed them to engage with the material from an intercultural and interpersonal perspective. This subjective grounding revealed the learning of content and language as an enactment of humanistic and democratic practices and principles.

For example, Karen’s involvement with historical content in the form of films and texts that provided new content information as well as an explicit focus on meaning making within a genre allowed her to understand how to use those resources to make meanings while connecting in affective terms to the L2 community. The curriculum and pedagogical approach created a context where learning about history and culture was a natural way of using and expanding meaning-making resources in an L2 as well as developing an attitudinal closeness to the L2 community.

Our adaptation of Norris (2006) model for content and language integrated assessment contributes to operationalizing multidimensional features of L2 learning in linguistic terms to inform teaching and curriculum design. A socio-semiotic-CBI FL curriculum approach enables us to design teaching and learning experiences that promote the critical engagement with authentic texts and content while using the foreign language and developing axiological awareness. The organization of curriculum based on socio-semiotic and sociocultural theories provides a principled way of designing program-level, course-level and class-level activities and materials. In turn, these educational experiences offer students a context where they can learn about foreign language, content, others and themselves. This case study showed the potential of the socio-semiotic approach to document learning of content, language and disposition through linguistic data. This approach to curriculum planning ensures the integration of meaningful language instruction within content-based foreign language educational contexts.
Our study did not explore how this model was implemented and expanded across the department. In order to scale up the implementation of this approach, our program provided professional development workshops and opportunities to collaborate in material designs to all teachers in the Hispanic Studies Program. However, to ensure the appropriation and implementation of CBI by foreign language teachers with various backgrounds in terms of disciplinary training and pedagogical content knowledge, more resources and institutional support were needed. As previous studies have shown, some of the most important challenges to CBI in FL are the development of instructors’ capacities to integrate language and content (Troyan, Cammarata, and Martel 2017) and the inclusion of meaningful language goals and their systematic assessment (Bigelow 2010). Future work needs to further investigate how particular programs overcome these challenges and in what ways, or if this particular approach facilitates the professional development of instructors.

The results of this study need to be taken with caution since they document only one course with few students. However, this case points to the horizon of possibility showing that the learning of advanced capacities, such as cultural and affective understanding, in a foreign language is possible when we design educational experiences that approach content and language as integrated through genre-based curricula.

The study also showed that focusing on meaning-making resources as indices of learning provides empirical data to document and assess student learning. Traditionally we expect learning to be manifested as changes in the subject, in the behavior or cognition of the learners (Engeström and Sannino 2010), in this case we showed how a qualitative documenting of the broadening of meaning-making choices reveals learning as an expansion and enrichment of the repertoire. The study was not able to show how the individual’s performance is not only the expression of the subject’s particular life history (Engeström and Sannino 2010), it is also the result of the interaction with cultural models and social representations available in the community. Future studies need to explore the relationship between the classroom activities and experiences and students’ performance throughout time.

**Note**

1. The MLA (2007) report presents challenges and opportunities facing language study in higher education in the US and issued specific recommendations. One of the imperatives identified by the report was ‘the need to understand other cultures and languages’. Language is defined as a complex multifunctional phenomenon to link individuals, communities and cultures. Linguistic and cultural competence are necessary to understand other peoples and cultures and they are taught through critical engagement with literature, film and other media. According to the MLA (2007) report, curricular reform should place ‘language study in cultural, historical, geographic, and cross-cultural frames within the context of humanistic learning’ (238)

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