



Genre-Based Instruction for Multilingual Learners Session 1: Introduction to SFL Genre Pedagogy and the Report Genre, September 3, 2026

What is SFL Genre Pedagogy?

SFL genre pedagogy emerged in the 1980s in Australia partly in response to a lack of explicit writing instruction. It is undergirded by an understanding of language focused on function. In other words, it views language as a system of choices to make meaning in particular contexts to fulfill specific purpose(s). SFL genre pedagogy explicitly teaches students how language works to fulfill their purposes and it explicitly teaches students how to write different genres by grounding instruction in authentic mentor texts.

Defining “Genres”

“the range of ways in which things get done with language in a particular society or culture” (Gibbons, 2015)

Genres are texts that share a common:

1. Purpose
2. Organization
3. Linguistic Features

Often genres in school are lumped into three categories: narrative, informational/explanatory, and argument. However, when we consider different text types by their purpose, organization, and linguistic features, we can see that there are many more distinct genres than three broad categories. Teaching students genres in this way makes visible many elements of text (e.g., organization, linguistic features) that are often implicit in instruction. Below is a table that shows many common genres in school grouped by common purpose.

Genre	Personal Recount	Biography	Fictional Narrative	Report	Explanation	Procedure	Argument	Discussion
Purpose	To tell stories	To tell stories	To tell stories	To inform	To inform	To give instructions	To persuade	To persuade

SFL Genre Pedagogy Supports Students in:

- Reading and writing genre-specific texts
- Making purposeful language choices
- Understanding text structure, which transfers to writing and reading comprehension
- Learning content across academic disciplines
- Developing research skills

- Making explicit what is often invisible/obscured

Reports

The purpose of reports is to inform.

Reports are organized by:

- A general opening statement
- Information grouped by subtopics
- [Sometimes] a summarizing statement (often not included in mentor texts)

Some key linguistic features of reports are:

- Present tense verbs
- Third person verb tense
- Mostly generalized participants (e.g., coyotes, they)
- Logical ties/transitions between ideas (NOT sequential) (e.g., also [NOT: first, next, then])

Mentor Text Exploration

DIRECTIONS FOR APPLICATION ACTIVITY: As you explore the two featured texts below, think about what you notice about their purpose, organization, and linguistic features.

Purpose: What is the text trying to do?

Organization: How is the information organized?

Linguistic features: What do you notice about the verbs? What do you notice about the subjects? How are ideas connected?

Text A:

El león africano tiene todas las características que uno esperaría encontrar en uno de los animales más mortales de la tierra. Estos depredadores poderosos son cazadores de mucha capacidad. Normalmente cazan en grupos que se llaman “manadas” y pueden matar a presas diez veces más grandes que su tamaño. Es por eso que le llamamos “el rey de la selva.”

Text B:

Coyotes are a type of wild dog.

Coyotes are about as big as a medium-sized dog, such as a collie. Coyotes are a lot like wolves, but coyotes are smaller than wolves.

Coyotes have gray fur on their backs and white bellies. Their legs and feet are reddish-brown. Coyotes turn their big, pointed ears to hear sounds from far away. Their muzzles are reddish-brown.

Coyotes live in North America and parts of Central America. Many coyotes live in grasslands. Grasslands are flat areas of land that are mostly covered in grasses.

To Extend Your Learning

If you are interested in extending your learning before our next webinar, here are some suggested activities:

1. Read this [blog post](#) and/or [this chapter](#) to review and extend some of the content from today and preview ideas we'll talk about in future sessions.
2. Take a look at this [list of report mentor texts](#). Think about how you might use them in your instruction. Which ones are excellent examples that illustrate clearly the purpose of reports? The organizational structure? The linguistic features?

References

Gibbons, P. (2015). *Scaffolding language, scaffolding learning: Teaching English language learners in the mainstream classroom* (2nd ed.). Heinemann.

Thomas, D. (2021, Oct 28). Grammar and genre-based pedagogy. *Read Write Teach Learn*.
<https://readwritethinklearn.com/blog/grammar-and-genre-based-pedagogy/>

The 2026-27 Genre-Based Instruction for Multilingual Learners Webinar Series

Presented by: Nelia Peña and Mileidis Gort, University of Colorado Boulder

- 1: Introduction to SFL Genre Pedagogy and the Report Genre
 - 2: Overview of the Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC) and Developing Content Knowledge (Building the Field)
 - 3: Deconstruction of Mentor Texts to Uncover Purpose, Organizational Structure, and Linguistic Features of Reports
 - 4: Joint Construction and Independent Writing
 - 5: Differentiating for Diverse Strengths and Needs and Assessing Student Writing through a Genre-Based Approach
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