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Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz



Research Paper

Metalanguage for Spoken Discourse in Genre-Based Pedagogy

José David Herazo Rivera[1], Geraldine Sanchez Ruiz[2], & Diana C. Arroyo[3]

[1]Corresponding author, School of Education, Universidad de Cordoba, Montería, Colombia; *jdherazo@correo.unicordoba.edu.co*
[2]School of Education, Universidad de Cordoba, Montería, Colombia; *geraldinesanchezr@correo.unicordoba.edu.co*
[3]Department of Second Language Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA; *dcarroyo@iu.edu*

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Abstract

Genre-based pedagogy is an instructional approach that supports learners in understanding and writing texts. Extensive research has shown the benefits of this pedagogy for student reading and writing, assigning a key role to metalanguage in this process. However, few studies have explored the role of metalanguage to support learners for creating spoken texts. This case study explored how a teacher and her students used metalanguage during an adaptation of genre pedagogy for spoken communication called talking to learn (T2L). Analysis of data from lesson observations, student speaking tasks, and professional development meetings revealed that the teacher first learned the metalanguage of the chosen genre, using it for genre analysis and planning before including it during her lessons. Students subsequently used this metalanguage to understand and create meaningful spoken texts, both in interaction with the teacher and with peers. This study contributes to understanding metalanguage integration in language education and invites further exploration of its role in pedagogy.

Keywords: Spoken Texts; Talking to Learn; Language Awareness; Metalinguistic Mediation.

1. Introduction

Genre-based pedagogy originated in Australia in the 80s and is based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). This theory sees language as a resource for creating meaning that functions according to context. That is, the choices in lexis and grammar that one makes are tightly linked to communicative purpose and the specific situations in which language is used (Devira, & Westin, 2021; Eggins, 2004). Thus, genre pedagogy places texts and context at the forefront of teaching and learning since texts are instances of the genre or purpose of language as it is used in a social context (Derewianka & Jones, 2016). According to Rose and Martin (2012), this pedagogy helps teachers deliver clear information about the language in use to facilitate student meaning-making in written and spoken texts.

One recent version of this pedagogy focuses on reading and writing, known as Reading to Learn or R2L. (Rose & Martin, 2012). R2L consists of several scaffolded strategies to help students read and write successfully and independently. These strategies are organized into three increasing levels of guidance which go from the general to the specific features of a genre: The first level engages learners in understanding and writing whole texts belonging to the genre under study using strategies like preparing for reading, joint construction, and independent text construction. The second level focuses on segments of text that may be interesting for their lexicogrammar and discourse features using strategies like detailed reading, joint re-writing, and individual re-writing. The third level engages learners in understanding how the lexicogrammar works inside the clause through sentence making, spelling, and sentence rewriting. This three-tiered system supports students in gradually accessing meaning from a specific text to communicate independently in yet another text of the same genre.

To suit this pedagogy for teaching spoken discourse, we use a teaching sequence called Talking to Learn (T2L), proposed in Herazo et al. (2021) which mirrors R2L strategies but focuses on spoken rather than written texts. For example, instead of preparing learners for reading as an initial step for helping them write, T2L engages and prepares learners for listening to promote their awareness of spoken discourse. This sequence is also based on genre-based

principles privileging explicit teaching of language in context and support of student learning through metalanguage. Unlike other genre-based models, T2L actively promotes learners' use of pedagogical diagrams (Martin & Rose, 2008) for helping them first understand and then create spoken texts.

The driving idea behind genre-based teaching sequences such as T2L is that learners' explicit knowledge of the language may assist them in understanding and producing their texts (Schleppegrell, 2013). This idea draws upon Vygotsky's views about learning as an event in which teachers and students interact with linguistic signs to support understanding and agency during lessons (Barrs, 2022). Metalanguage is one of these linguistic signs described as the language used to talk about language or a mental instrument to construct knowledge about language (Berry, 2005). In SFL terms, metalanguage is "a functional way of talking explicitly about features of the language itself, offering a principled means of focusing on language in systemic ways" (Achugar et al., 2007, p. 3). In other words, metalanguage is more than technical terminology to describe the workings of language, as it fulfills a pedagogical function by helping students recognize linguistic patterns and the meaning they create in context (Macken-Horarik, 2002; Schleppegrell, 2020). Despite its crucial role, little research has explored the specific ways in which metalanguage use by teachers and learners can engender learning opportunities in the English as foreign language (EFL) classroom.

2. Literature Review

Over the last two decades, many studies have advocated for SFL metalanguage use in genre-based teaching of writing (Accurso & Gebhard, 2020; Achugar & Carpenter, 2012; Gebhard et al., 2014; Humphrey & Hao, 2020; Iddings, 2021; Matruglio, 2021; Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014; Schleppegrell, 2013) and reading (Becerra et al., 2019; Emilia et al., 2022; Hipkiss & Varga, 2018). More recently, in an innovation to this approach, Herazo (2014, 2021) and Herazo et al. (2021) explored metalanguage use during genre pedagogy for spoken communication. However, these studies have not investigated how the teachers learned and started to use metalanguage in the first place and, most importantly, how students picked up some of this metalanguage to support their meaning-making as the lessons progressed. The present study fills that gap by describing how a teacher and her students appropriated and used metalanguage, first introduced in professional development, to support student's creation of spoken descriptive reports. The study is part of a larger investigation exploring how a teacher's praxis changed as she learned T2L and SFL principles to promote students' spoken discourse in EFL.

Metalanguage serves to identify and explain meaning in specific contexts (Berry, 2005; Schleppegrell, 2013), showing "how and why the text means what it does" (Halliday, 1985, p.15). From this perspective, metalanguage becomes a mediation tool to support learners' linguistic choices when creating meaning in L2 (Gánem-Gutiérrez & Roehr, 2011; Lantolf, 2011). As used in this context, mediation refers to the role that psychological tools, most notably language, play in supporting thinking across the lifespan (Kozulin, 2018). Thus, mediation can be considered the process by which we gain control of our own social, communicative, and mental activity using shared cultural artifacts, concepts, and activities as support (Lantolf et al., 2018). As Schleppegrell (2013) notes, metalinguistic knowledge is a mediation tool (Daftarifard & Birjandi, 2017) because it helps "students to explore the choices speakers and writers make, unpacking text to talk about meaning and recognizing patterns in language" (p. 164). The verbal meanings of metalanguage can also be represented symbolically in pedagogical diagrams (Martin & Rose, 2008) or other forms of representation. These pedagogical diagrams add conceptual mediation because they condense the scientific knowledge of metalanguage visually (Arievitch & Haenen, 2005; Herazo, 2014), making it more readily available for mediating learners' engagement in spoken discourse (see Herazo et al., 2021 for a detailed description of such use in T2L).

Teachers' appropriation and use of metalanguage have been found to benefit learning during genre-based lessons. When learning SFL, teachers develop an awareness of how language works in texts (Gebhard et al., 2013), changing, in turn, their conceptualization of language and literacy (Aguirre-Muñoz et al., 2009; Gebhard et al., 2011). This transformation in teachers' thinking results in new ways of teaching that promote student learning (Accurso et al., 2023; Acevedo, 2020; Gebhard et al., 2019; Jodairi Pineh et al, 2017; Whittaker & García-Parejo, 2018). For example, teachers' metalanguage use during genre-based lessons has been shown to favor students' ability to write persuasive texts (Humphrey, 2018), create authorial stance and character attitudes in stories (Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014; Schleppegrell & Moore, 2018), and identify and use key lexicogrammatical patterns in explanations, arguments, and literary writing (Harman, 2013; Harman & Simmons, 2014; Jodairi Pineh, 2022; Simmons, 2018). This study adds to this body of

literature by exploring how metalanguage was learned by a teacher, negotiated by teacher and learners during T2L lessons, and then picked up by learners to mediate their spoken meaning-making.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participant and Context

This study focuses on the metalanguage used by Ely (pseudonym) and her sixth-grade students to support their spoken teaching and learning activities in EFL. During the study, Ely worked for a public secondary school in a small town in Cordoba, Colombia. One of the largest in the city, the school serves about 1000 students from first to eleventh grades. Ely has 12 years of experience as an EFL teacher and holds a master's in English language teaching. Being an experienced teacher, she has taught EFL at various grade levels at school and in higher education. The study involved 35 of her students aged 11-13 who had not received any instruction in EFL up to this point. Most students come from low-income households, although some reported having access to computers, the Internet, and cell phones.

As noted, this study is part of a larger investigation exploring Ely's praxis during her training in SFL and T2L and how such changes may have helped students develop their spoken discourse. Ely's training in SFL and T2L occurred during professional development sessions designed following a formative intervention model (Engeström et al., 2012; Sannino & Engeström, 2018). Ely's learning of T2L occurred through online professional development in which researchers with experience in genre-based instruction led 11 sessions over an academic semester. Each session lasted approximately two hours and sought to develop a deep and collective understanding of Ely's teaching and to study T2L. The sessions covered two main stages: Meetings 1-4 focused on understanding Ely's praxis, whereas meetings 5-11 guided Ely through concepts and practices associated with SFL and T2L. Throughout the second stage, Ely and the researchers developed activities that helped her understand how T2L could be implemented. These meetings were designed to immerse Ely in the nuances of SFL-based pedagogy and proved instrumental in shaping her understanding and application of metalinguistic concepts later during her lessons.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Data sources for the larger project consisted of three online semi-structured interviews, two prior to professional development and one after she taught all T2L lessons. We held 11 online dialogic sessions (Daneshkhah & Gooniband Shooshtari, 2023) with Ely using Google Meets. We recorded these sessions and generated automatic transcripts using the Taqtic add-on, which were later revised to ensure accuracy. Learning sessions lasted approximately 2 hours each, amounting to approximately 22 hours of recording. Ely taught six in-person lessons, which we recorded in video and audio. Ely recorded most of the lessons, and the researchers attended the first and last lessons as outside observers. All lessons were transcribed for later analysis. We also collected lesson artifacts and recorded students' spoken products before the first lesson and during the last lesson. For this study, we use data from interviews, learning sessions, and observations since these captured all the metalanguage used by researchers, Ely, or students during the study. We used thematic analysis for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We coded the data in three rounds of coding. In the first round, we identified all instances of metalanguage use in the data. Then, we coded in detail for the characteristics of such use (see below). This allowed for identifying patterns of metalanguage use in a third coding round.

To identify instances of metalanguage use, we relied on Gebhard et al.'s (2014) concept of Metalinguistic Literacy Events (MLE) as the unit of analysis. An MLE is 'any teaching/learning event in which the use of SFL metalanguage was fundamental to the task' (p. 112). Thus, we focused on the moments when metalanguage was crucial and fundamental for any teaching/learning event. Unlike Gebhard et al, we used the concept of MLE to also identify moments of metalanguage use by the teacher and researchers during professional development. Then, we traced that metalanguage as it started to appear in Ely's and her students' subsequent talk during lessons. The coding scheme included metalanguage, type of metalanguage (e.g., metalanguage about tenor, text structure, or lexicogrammar), who used it, when, and for what purpose (e.g., for conceptualizing or explaining).

4. Findings

The analysis tracked Ely's metalanguage from professional development until her lessons, including how students used it to facilitate their spoken meaning-making. We explored how SFL metalanguage influenced Ely's material

selection, analysis of learning activities, and other teaching practices.

4.1. Metalanguage during Professional Development Sessions

Ely was first exposed to SFL metalanguage during professional development, as researchers helped Ely understand SFL, guided her selection of texts for instruction, and supported her analysis of students' spoken tasks. Ely first read selected sections from Derewianka and Jones (2016) to provide an SFL foundation followed by lesson planning and teaching. Researchers used metalanguage to discuss the nuances of SFL-based pedagogy with Ely, proving instrumental in shaping her understanding and application of SFL concepts.

4.1.1. Metalanguage to Support Ely in Learning T2L

During the first sessions, it was the researchers (identified as R in the transcripts) who mainly used metalanguage since they were explaining the pedagogy and introducing new terms to refer to specific language features. These explanations sought to familiarize Ely with T2L and clarify her doubts. At this initial stage, Ely's concept of text became a first topic of discussion, shown in transcript 1. All instances of L1 use by researchers, Ely or learners have been translated into English and appear in plain format in transcripts. Instances of metalanguage use appear in bold, whereas instances where speakers originally used English appear in italics. When metalanguage use occurred originally in English, it appears in both bold and italics.

Transcript 1. *A Text Is Written…*

1	R	We would like to listen to you for a while; what is a text for you?
2	Ely	Well, a text for me is a series of written sentences that have a common meaning, that are related to each other and that in one way or another describe a particular event. So, for example, when I work with my children, we talk about the textual part, right, about the production, that written production that they do. Initially, I never send them to write just because that is, we have a theme. Usually, before sending them to do a written production, I give them a guide text, a reading, right, a guided reading that we read, we understand it, we take out the unknown words, they know what it refers to, and later they use it as a model to write theirs.

Ely defined a text as a collection of written sentences with common meaning (turn 2), reducing its meaning to merely written communication. The following transcript, from learning session 5, shows how metalanguage introduced a more comprehensive concept of text based on material Ely had read as preparation for the session.

Transcript 2. *A Text Is…*

1	Ely	... Well, the girls worked with me on that part, well the last meeting we had they shared, right, knowledge about what a text is, that a text is not only what is written, right, that everything we produce is a text and that this involves a series of aspects such as the genre, right, what has to do with the context and that this context varies, right, and that there are two types, I know that there is, well, the question of the situation as such and (...) that there is the context of the text, and the context of the situation, we were also talking about Genre, the part of...
2	R	context of culture
3	Ely	Exactly, there is the context of the situation. We were also talking about Genre, the part of the context of culture, and other parts that were mentioned there.

As noticed above, Ely changed how she interpreted a text, which guided her in developing a new understanding of the text in SFL terms. She defined the text as "*everything we produce is text and … this involves a series of aspects such as...*" Although she developed awareness of the relationship between text and its contexts, she still did not use a previously mentioned metalinguistic term context of culture, which was reintroduced in this extract by the researcher. This shift from a narrow definition of a text as a syntactically and semantically connected set of written sentences to a broader understanding of everything produced as text involving various aspects reflects an evolving comprehension of language from a more traditional perspective to a systemic-functional one. This new conceptualization became material in orienting her subsequent teaching activity, as shown below.

4.1.2. Metalanguage To Support Text Selection

SFL metalanguage also helped define Ely's and the researchers' linguistic criteria for text selection since it

articulated specific linguistic features of the chosen texts. This metalanguage referred to the schematic structure (stages) of the genre of descriptive reports of a typical dish: presentation, description (ingredients, side dishes, moment of the day), and comments or opinions. Once this genre was selected, Ely was shown a text example to conduct a detailed linguistic analysis but mainly focused on how and what was communicated at each stage of the text. The text corresponded to a video of a descriptive report of a typical dish found on YouTube. This process involved breaking down the text into different linguistic strata (e.g., lexicogrammar, semantics, phonology) and using specialized terminology to describe and categorize linguistic features.

Transcript 3. *Text Analysis*

1	R	Where is it? Here it is; let us put it all together so you can read it; let us go down.
2	Ely	Well descriptive, it starts with the presentation of the dish, with the name and what we were talking about now, which has to do with the classification because they keep saying that it is traditional.
3	R	Right, so then we would have sancocho; here's the identification, right? And then the classification, maybe very traditional soup. What phase particularly? How would you classify or how would you categorize what we call “sancocho”, to every recipe that requires you to put a lot of ingredients in a large pot with a lot of water? Ingredients in a large pot with a lot of water?
4	Ely	That is part of, it is part of the preparation, yes, that is, it is something very general, that says that I put what, everything that is put, we are not given...
5	R	Perfect, but it doesn't mention ingredients, right?
6	Ely	ingredients, just like what is done or how it is done there, very general.
7	R	And this little part: In this case, we're going to eat sancocho de gallina, that is a hen.
8	Ely	So, there it is, again describing or presenting the dish as such. Because no, I mean, what I mean is that I don't know if I should call it a classification because of the “sancochos” that he says in general. Specifically, he is going to show that he is going to eat the chicken one.
9	R	Of course, in other words, he identifies again the typical dish he is referring to.

Ely used metalanguage (presentation, classification, ingredients) mostly related to the schematic structure of the text, which served as grounds for her development of the T2L cycle for the genre. The stages identified in this extract served as the basis for the T2L cycle and analysis of the genre with her students. Once she identified the features of the genre, Ely continued using metalanguage from the readings and prior discussions in her analysis of other short video descriptions.

Transcript 4. *What Do You Think*

1	R	What do you think?
2	Ely	Okay, well, the purpose is still descriptive because it describes “ceviche.” Well, very well, then, well, we were saying that the purpose is still descriptive, to describe a typical dish, in this case, ceviche.
3	R	What about the stages?
4	Ely	Well, it is still a descriptive report. It shows the ingredients, obviously with the use of images.

Throughout these analysis sessions, Ely employed the metalanguage introduced in prior learning sessions, specifically focusing on terms like "purpose," "description," and "ingredients" as names of the stages. This deliberate incorporation served as a pedagogical bridge, connecting theoretical concepts referring to the genre’s schematic structure with their practical application in planning and later teaching. In our view, her use of metalanguage signifies a conscious effort to learn and apply the metalinguistic terms as tools she would later use to support students.

4.1.3. Metalanguage to Analyze Students' Spoken Texts

Ely also used metalanguage to understand students' spoken texts before T2L lessons. These texts were derived from a spoken task that required students to describe a dish, including its origin and ingredients. Ely seamlessly integrated the metalanguage acquired in previous learning sessions, fostering a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of her students’ abilities. She started using metalinguistic terms (e.g., *context, purpose, text structure*) to refer to the student’s

development in the spoken task. The teacher was shown a student video, and during her analysis, she included the metalanguage learned, such as *context, ingredient, and presentation.*

Transcript 5. *What Do You Think?*

1	R	Ready. That is the audio, if we analyze that, what Sara (pseudonym) says in terms of the concepts that she studied with the girls last time and that we reviewed right now at the beginning, what could we say? What do you think?
2	Ely	Well, what I can tell you. Regarding what has to do with the context, it's not clear because she simply mentions the name, the dish she chose, and the ingredients. So, it's a very general thing.
3	R	Does it achieve the purpose of the kind of text that we want?
4	Ely	Well, it seems to me that it lacks, well, and she does make her presentation, well, (..) maybe she mentioned the ingredients in English; specifically, we need to know what we want them to do with that audio or well, to what will be, because the activity will be more challenging because she simply mentions the product, right, sorry, the dish and the ingredients and then if for example, it is useful when she eats it, why she likes it so that it makes more sense.

The transcript shows that Ely provided a nuanced analysis of a student's task, employing specific metalanguage to enhance her examination, such as ingredients, presentation, and context. Initially, she highlighted a lack of clarity in the student's contextual presentation (turn 2), emphasizing that the student fulfilled only a few stages, such as name, the chosen dish, and ingredients. She went on to acknowledge the student's successful execution of the presentation while highlighting missing stages that could enhance its quality (turn 4). The teacher's use of metalanguage, particularly phrases like "mentioned that part about ingredients in English," showcases her ability to pinpoint specific linguistic elements in students' work and include what was missing to make the text more conforming to the genre. Bearing in mind the task objective, Ely was able to analyze students' products, emphasizing what one of her students named Saul (pseudonym) did:

Transcript 6. *The Only Text*

1	Ely	Saúl mentions everything in Spanish, but he does emphasize the context of the dish because he says that it is representative of…he gives it more context even though in Spanish, they mention that part of not just leaving the ingredients isolated.
2	R2	Right, so he has a text.
3	R	Yes, yes, if we link it to that concept of the text so far, the only one would be Saul, right?

In turn 1, Ely points out Saul's language choice. However, her analysis goes beyond this level, emphasizing Saul's focus on the contextual aspects of the dish, introducing a layer of depth that transcends a mere enumeration of ingredients. Furthermore, in turns 2 and 3, the researchers agree that he successfully achieved a text rather than an ingredients list. The analysis of her students' texts inevitably led Ely to question her teaching goals and the extent to which her learning tasks were demanding enough. In our reflections after this analysis, she said, "That task [asking students to describe a dish] does not go far enough, and what I want them to do is to produce more, that is, to produce simple formats, but that they do it well." Accordingly, she proposed a few changes to her teaching that, in her view, could enhance students' spoken discourse, making it more "challenging":

Transcript 7. *We Should Use a Format*

1	Ely	I think we have to work on that part of the language they are going to use, so I don't know if the term is correct to use a format right of expressions that they can use.
3	R	Of course, we could use a similar format to the one we are using to analyze the texts.
4	Ely	Yes, I think that expressions that they can use, that they can involve in the activities they are given. That is why I was talking about the format; I don't know to what extent it is like a script, but no, no, like the role play, like the conversation they give us, you are a and you are b and just repeat, no, but like showing them a series of expressions that they can include in the activity they are going to carry out. So, for example, if you want to mention the ingredients, you can use this expression; if you want to make the presentation, say this is so and so. You can use these expressions in such a way that it is free in the sense that it is not a single expression for everybody because they would do the same;

		what would change would be, well, the ingredients, if you understand me, but that they choose which ones of those expressions they want to include, which ones they find more interesting.

Ely's increasing genre knowledge allowed her to articulate more challenging outcomes for her students. Notably, she used metalanguage referring to the stages of the dish (presentation, ingredients) as an organizer for their lexicogrammatical choices. She emphasizes the need for flexibility and individual choice within a structured framework, suggesting a proforma with the stages of the genre that should go beyond a rigid script or role-play scenario but rather propose a series of prompts to help learners create their texts. Thus, Ely's approach aimed to empower students with linguistic tools beyond mere repetition or recital in their spoken meaning-making. In her view, this could foster a sense of autonomy and encourage students to consider the nuances of language use in different scenarios.

Integrating SFL metalanguage in learning sessions allowed for a systematic and specialized approach to linguistic analysis, influencing text selection, teacher analysis of student activities, and interpreting video data with the text example to be presented to students during lessons. In addition, metalinguistic knowledge of the stages of a dish provided the teacher with a framework for the subsequent introduction of lexicogrammar that students could use, as we will see later.

4.2. SFL-Metalanguage Use During T2L Lessons

During the T2L lessons, the teacher transitioned to the classroom setting equipped with the metalanguage she was acquiring during meetings with researchers. She used this metalanguage to guide students through describing a typical dish. This teaching theme aimed to contextualize students' learning experience, providing a practical and engaging platform for applying metalinguistic concepts. Following a video presentation describing a typical dish called *arepa'e huevo*, she strategically displayed pictures extracted from the video and prompted students to identify and discuss where these images fit into the overall stages of the culinary description. As seen in the transcript below, this interactive approach strengthened the visual elements of the description process and served as a springboard for introducing key metalanguage.

Transcript 8. *Arepa e Huevo*

1	Ely	On which part does she present the dish?
2	SS	At the beginning
3	Ely	That's right. In the beginning, when she introduced the dish *introduce the dish*. Now, in which part does she present (shows an image of an egg)
4	S	Ingredients
5	Ely	That's right in the ingredients *ingredients*. Here we have the one where she includes preparation *preparation*, and now, when she shows the process *process* of making the "arepa e huevo."

During this part, Ely skillfully integrated the metalanguage of the stages of the dish description, such as ingredients, introduction, and preparation (turn 3,5), in her explanation, both in L1 and L2. This strategic incorporation of pictures allowed students to grasp the visual aspects of the cooking process and articulate their understanding of the text stages using the appropriate terminology. Students began to incorporate the metalanguage of the stages to understand the text structure and articulate their comprehension of the text. All this occurred under Ely's guidance, as shown below when students reported their homework during the subsequent lesson. For this homework, Ely had asked them to identify the stages of the genre in the transcript of *Arepa'e huevo*.

Transcript 9. *The Stages in The Video*

1	Ely	So, the girl, right, when she started the video, right, that stage started, what was that stage called?
2	S	Presentation
3	Ely	*Presentation*, *presentation*, very good. So, the first stage we had was the presentation, right? Why? Because there she was presenting us, pardon the redundancy, the dish, the name of the dish. What, in this case, was it?
4	S	Arepa e huevo
5	Ely	Arepa e huevo, and that was one of the little things that we highlighted. Also, after this presentation stage, there was another stage, another stage followed where...
6	S	*Ingredients*

7	Ely	The *ingredients* and *the procedure*. Very good. Because? Because they mentioned the ingredients to us, but at the same time they showed us how to make the arepa and egg. Then we had another stage. What was that other stage?
8	S	*Dishes*
9	Ely	*Side dishes. Side dishes*, what does that mean?
10	S	What it goes with
11	Ely	Very good. And finally, what did we have?
12	SS	Opinion
13	Ely	Very good. The opinion, right? We call it comments, and the moment of the day, *moment of the day*, right, to know, well, the space in which that typical dish is eaten.

Students could identify and recap the text stages (turns 2, 4, 6, 8, and 12) and the purpose (turn 10) of each one using the video from the previous class. This indicates a higher level of cognitive engagement, as the students recognized each stage individually and showed an understanding of the sequential flow and interrelation of the stages. This provided students with a structured overview, reinforcing their comprehension of the text using the visual and linguistic components of the culinary experience. This method served as a bridge to guide students from abstract linguistic concepts to a practical understanding of how language operates in context.

Ely introduced the stages of the description of a dish along with a chart she called '*cuadrito*' to represent those stages visually and how they could be realized lexicogrammatically. The chart constituted a visual representation of metalanguage which Ely and her students also used to mediate understanding and lexicogrammatical realization of the text. Interestingly, its role in supporting text creation was evidenced as students named each stage aloud before the text description. For example, they said, "Presentation, this is soup," rather than simply introducing the dish using "this is soup". This indicates that the metalanguage referring to stages worked as a mediation tool to support students in choosing lexicogrammar to try to describe their dishes.

Although mentioning the stage may have worked as a strategy for students at first, it was still far from Ely's intention that they could realize the text more spontaneously, using a variety of expressions. Accordingly, she introduced the same activity in the next lesson, asking students to realize the stage linguistically but keeping the name of the stage "in their minds" (turn 1):

Transcript 10. *Let's Look at The Chart*

1	Ely	Let's remember that last class, I gave you a little table where we can find the expressions we use to do the *description* of a *typical dish*. Well, on this occasion, we are going to keep in mind that in the little box, we are going to look at the stage, but we are not going to say the name of the stage; we are going to keep it in our mind, we are not going to say *presentation*. We are going to start by making a *description* of *soup*; we are going to use an expression to present the name of the dish.
2	S1	*This is soup*
3	Ely	Very good. Let's look at the next stage, where it says *ingredients*; there are some phrases that are
4	SS	*What we have*
5	Ely	*Very good, another example*
6	SS	*It has chicken*
7	S?	*We have beans*
8	Ely	*Very good*, let's continue, down there we have another stage
9	S2	*It comes with rice*
10	Ely	*Excellent*, because generally, the *side dish* of the *soup* is *rice*.
11	S3	*you eat it at lunch*
12	Ely	*Excellent*, and the last one?
13	SS	*It is yummy!*

Ely's use of metalanguage presented visually in the chart helped students describe an example dish. In our view, this indicates that the teacher used the metalanguage referring to stages as a mediation tool to support them in trying to realize each stage of the text linguistically. Moreover, the fact that Ely insisted on students keeping the name of the stages in their minds may have supported their internalization of the metalanguage of stages as a tool. The teacher's deliberate integration of metalanguage in the form of reminders demonstrates the capacity of metalanguage to mediate and enhance language learning experiences. In other words, the chart became more than a visual representation; it transformed into a cognitive or psychological tool to empower students to analyze and produce the text.

After being helped and guided during the preparatory stages of T2L and joint construction, the students were involved in different individual and group joint construction activities. The upcoming transcript presents the co-construction of a text among students, without teacher support, who actively offered suggestions to create a collective example. This interactive process reinforced their understanding of the material and allowed them to actively apply the metalinguistic concepts they had been learning as supporting tools for their speaking.

Transcript 11. *What Is the Side Dish?*

1	S1	The first one is *presentation*; we can say, "*This is sancocho*"
2	S2	Yes, we can also say *we have sancocho,* and then the ingredients
3	S3	And which one is the *side dish*?
4	S1	What do you eat soup with? With rice!
5	S3	Agreed, and we eat it at *lunch*
6	S1	Yes, and we can add that it is *delicious*.

The transcript shows how students collaboratively constructed an example of text, actively contributing suggestions, indicating a participatory and co-constructive approach to learning. Students also exhibited proficiency in employing metalanguage in their spoken discourse and written reflections on the activity. This observation underscores the potential of metalanguage as a pedagogical tool to mediate language learning experiences.

All the process was wrapped in the students' final task in which they could create a spoken text presenting a typical dish. Students demonstrated the application of the chart and the metalanguage they had acquired throughout previous T2L lessons. The use of these tools was noticeable and executed in an organized and coherent manner, indicating the student's ability to integrate their metalinguistic knowledge into the final task requiring a description of a new dish.

Transcript 12. *We Have Sancocho De Bocachico*

1	S1	*What we have here is sancocho de bocachico. It has celery, onion, tomatoes, banana, ñame, carrots, and bocachico. It comes with rice and lemon. You can eat lunch. It is super delicious*.

As the transcript reveals, by the end of T2L lessons and following planning using the chart introduced by Ely, students were able to create coherent texts that fulfilled the context and purpose and presented the stages of the genre.

5. Discussion

The analysis revealed that metalanguage presented by researchers in the learning sessions was appropriated and used by the teacher in various ways during professional development, lesson design, and subsequent teaching. Such use of metalanguage also seemed to have migrated to students' classroom talk, as they tried to understand and create meanings for describing a dish. In line with these findings, meetings between researchers and the teacher became a valuable tool for Ely to gain key insights into the metalanguage associated with the chosen pedagogy. During these sessions, it became evident that the teacher utilized metalanguage as a supportive tool for various purposes, including understanding the pedagogy, analyzing texts, and assisting students in the text creation.

The combination of metalanguage of the stages in the text and visual guidance from the chart not only aided in text creation but also contributed to a deeper understanding of the purpose behind each linguistic choice and how it aligned with specific contexts. By having access to this linguistic framework, the students could grasp not only the mechanics of language used to describe a dish but also the nuanced appropriateness of certain expressions in different situations as seen in the co-construction of the text in which they used the prompts included in the "*cuadrito*". Previous research (Brisk, 2015; Herazo et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2013) suggests that integrating metalanguage and visual aids serves as a practical tool for text generation and a conceptual means of leveraging a more profound understanding of language in context by students.

In the present study, metalanguage played a pivotal role in supporting the teacher's understanding of texts. Incorporating metalanguage in the teaching context proved to be an invaluable toolkit for the teacher who demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of its applications in an experiential journey. A shared metalanguage has been proven to foster more meaningful discussions about texts, facilitating the exchange of ideas and collective knowledge construction (Dreyfus et al., 2016; Matruglio, 2021). Throughout the lessons, students and the teacher demonstrated a collaborative approach, sharing a common metalanguage to organize ideas and choose options for creating comprehensive and coherent texts aligned with the chosen genre. As other studies have shown, this collaborative use of metalanguage usually enhances

learning by promoting genre awareness (Accurso & Gebhard, 2020; Gebhard et al., 2014; Herazo, 2021) and serving as thinking conceptual tool for learners (Gánem-Gutiérrez & Roehr, 2011; Herazo, 2021).

An essential aspect of the study focused on the symbiotic relationship between metalanguage and visual aids. Researchers and teachers discovered that integrating visual aids with language choices was pivotal in enhancing students' comprehension and expression of spoken texts. Integrating visual aids with language choices emerged as a critical factor in the success of T2L activities. The study showcased how this combination facilitated understanding and equipped students with the metalanguage necessary to create their texts. Visual aids acted as a complementary tool, reinforcing the linguistic concepts introduced through metalanguage. Although recent genre-based research has emphasized the use of diagrams and proformas as 'graphic organizers' (Brisk, 2015), more research is still needed to support student meaning-making to elucidate how such visual representations may serve a cognitive and communicative purpose in genre-based pedagogy.

6. Conclusion

This study highlighted the multifold role of metalanguage in genre pedagogy for spoken discourse. Researchers first employed metalanguage to elucidate T2L praxis, serving as a foundation for the teacher's learning of genre pedagogy. As the study progressed, the teacher leveraged this metalanguage to guide and assist students in constructing spoken texts. This underscored the dynamic nature of metalanguage, transitioning from a tool for researchers to a pedagogical instrument for educators to a thinking supporting tool for students. However, the design of our study did not allow for documenting whether such metalanguage use by learners could transfer to subsequent spoken tasks or how learners perceived their own metalanguage use. Further research could attend to these issues by adopting a more longitudinal design that involves interviews or self-report data. Despite such shortcomings, a fundamental pedagogical implication from our study is that metalanguage should be used as a tool for EFL teaching since it helps learners build explicit connections between linguistic forms and communicative purpose.

Notes

Not applicable.

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Not applicable.

Information on Informed Consent or any Data Privacy Statements

Informed consent was secured from both teacher and students prior to data collection.

Author Contributions

First author: Project director, data collection and analysis. Write-up and edition.

Second Author: Data collection, data analysis, manuscript write-up.

Third author: Project co-director, data analysis, write-up and edition.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Ethics Board Approval Statements

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