From Talking to Writing
Part 2, Micro-Discourse and Discourse Strategies

1. Build semantic cohesion: (core vocabulary, synonyms, pronouns)

2. Teach “Detail Circle”; Embed details in:
   i) Single sentences
   ii) Small “text units”
   iii) Personal sequence narrative

What is a vocabulary problem in this student’s text?
Many bears live inside Yellowstone Park. There are large bears found there. Tourists at Yellowstone should stay at least 100 yards from bears. Every year, bears cause serious injuries to visitors.

Strategy: Support Cohesion with Semantic Feature Knowledge
Example: grizzly bear
-land mammal
-hunts salmon
-endangered

http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/staticfiles/NGS/Shared/Static/FeatureImages/primary/grizzly-bear.jpg

Synonyms that my students came up with for “bears”:
bruins
grizzly bears
land mammals

omnivores
dangerous animals
creatures
these mammals
Semantic Cohesion

Students need to recognize and employ variety and balance in their nouns, synonyms, and pronouns.

See if you can identify the semantic ties to the proposition “grizzlies” in this short passage...

Many grizzlies live inside Yellowstone Park. They are the largest of all the bears found there. A tourist visiting Yellowstone is advised to stay at least 100 yards from these dangerous creatures at all times. Every year, they cause serious injuries to visitors.

Replacement w/Synonym

Teacher Sentence: After that, the fire truck arrived.

Student’s relevant fact detail: The vehicle was equipped with a long ladder and hose.

Replacement w/Pronoun

Teacher Sentence: After that, the fire truck arrived.

Student’s relevant fact detail: It was equipped with a long ladder and hose.

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Three-sentence “chunk”; student employs both cohesive ties

After that the fire truck arrived. The vehicle was equipped with a ladder and several hoses. It pulled up right in front of the main building.

Your turn! Draw the Cohesion Circle from memory and vary the semantic cohesive ties in this piece of micro-discourse: (Hint: prepare a synonym box!)

The fishermen worked strenuously over the entire week off George’s Bank. The fishermen had to work 18-20 hours per day and some days the fishermen fell asleep while standing up. In bad weather, the fishermen could faint and be injured by hooks on other fishermen’s haul lines.

Common problem for most struggling writers: Lack of strategies for adding a variety of salient details

Solution: Combine semantic feature analysis with “Detail Circle” strategy (next slide)
Adding Relevant Facts

Teacher Statement: The children raked the leaves in the yard.
Relevant Fact: The kids raked them into a large heap.
Relevant Fact: The pile of leaves started to blow all over the yard.

Adding Adjective Detail

Teacher Statement: The children raked the leaves in the yard.
Relevant Fact: The kids raked them into a large heap.
Adjective Sentence: The leaves were red, yellow and pumpkin orange.

Adding Why- Detail

Teacher Statement: The children raked the leaves in the yard.
Self-prompt: Why did the children rake the leaves in the yard?
Why-detail: The children raked the leaves in the yard because their father was going to pay them.

Adding a Quotation

Teacher Statement: The children raked the leaves in the yard.
Fact: The kids raked the leaves into a large heap.
Quotation: One of them asked, “How much longer do we have to do this?”

Adding a Simile

Teacher/Student Statement: The colorful leaves had been floating down into the yard for days.
Simile: The red, orange and yellow colors looked like a beautiful carpet.

Jennings & Haynes, 2018
Adding a For Instance-Sentence

Teacher/Student Statement: The family had many fall chores to finish to prepare for winter.

For instance, there were leaves to rake, storm windows to put up, and cord wood to split.

Jennings & Haynes, 2018

Adding an Inference Sentence with If/Then-Detail

Teacher Statement: The children raked the leaves in the yard.

Self-prompt: How did it make a difference if the children raked the leaves in the yard?

If-/Then-Detail: If the children raked the leaves in the yard, then they could go to the movies later.

Jennings & Haynes, 2018

Adding Humor

Teacher/Student Statement: The kids had raked all the leaves in the yard into a huge pile.

Humor: It was funny when their golden retriever leaped into the gigantic pile and sank out of sight!

Fact: They all laughed as the dog tried to swim out of the leaves.

Jennings & Haynes, 2018

A “Personal Sequence Narrative” (PSN) is a logically sequenced story retell based on the individual’s experience.

A PSN can be:
• Listened to,
• Told,
• Read, and/or
• Written

PSN’s Core Elements:

Introductory Sentence: (“I” or “we” voice)
+ (specific event) + (where) + (when)

Body: Chronologically ordered sequences driven by transitional words: First, -- Then, --
Next, -- After that, -- Finally, --

Conclusion (optional): Remark that captures the overall feeling (In conclusion.)

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The PSN is a Springboard

- Starting discourse structure for successful retrieval of salient details.
- Opportunity for experimentation with varying sentence patterns.
- Preparation for elaborating expository texts.

Example of Sentence Development within an Early Three-Part PSN

Background:

- Preliterate second grader, age 7.
- Family history of dyslexia.
- Recount of daily routine.

Accompanying Teacher-Mediated Dialogue

Student: First, I get cookies.
Teacher: Where do you get the cookies?
Student: In the cafeteria.
Teacher: Now say the whole sentence to me.
Student: First, I get cookies in the cafeteria.

Jennings & Harris, 2010

Student: Then, I meet my friends.
Teacher: Where do you meet your friends?
Student: In the lobby.
Teacher: Say the whole sentence.
Student: Then, I meet my friends in the lobby.

Jennings & Harris, 2010

Student: Last, I wait for the class bell to ring.
Teacher: Where do you wait?
Student: At the foot of the stairs.
Teacher: Say the whole sentence.
Student: Last, I wait for the class bell to ring at the foot of the stairs.

Jennings & Harris, 2010

Key Strategy: Provide Home Support for PSN for All Learners

1. Enlist primary caregiver in telling & retelling
2. Coach them how to verbally mediate their child’s experience:
   - Preview event (e.g., going to the zoo, or to the beach)
   - Interact verbally around event (e.g., What is happening? What do you think will happen next?)
   - Afterwards: Caregiver models retelling event using sequence words (First-, Then-, Last). Child recounts event to caregiver. Caregiver guides child to provide missing information.
Every morning we gather in the Meeting Room for the morning meeting. First, we find a place to sit on the floor. Then, Mr. Swanson reads some announcements. Next, Mr. Kahn tells us which teachers are absent. After that, we are reminded not to throw snowballs. Finally, the bell rings and we go to class.

All in all, we enjoy our early morning meeting.

Example from thirteen year-old’s PSN recounting of trip to county fair.

After that, we tried to get the wrist bands so we could go on the rides for twenty dollars. I walked up to the booth and asked for one wrist band, please. The evil, older woman just looked at me like I was crazy. She said, “We don’t sell those anymore.” I was so mad. Now I had to buy twenty tickets which only got me on four rides. I thought that was a rip-off! I asked her, “Why don’t you have them anymore?” She just said, “Next!” That made me really mad. She gave me twenty tickets and I left the booth.

Process Paragraph: Strategy for Scaffolding Introductory Sentence

Question: Were there many steps for climbing the mountain?

Topic sentence: There were many steps for climbing the mountain.

Basic Process Paragraph

Theme: Mountain Climbing

There were many steps for climbing the mountain. First, the mountain climbers packed their bags. Then, they began the long trek into base camp. Next… After that… Finally…

Concluding sentence frame: Performing/Making/Doing (activity) is a complex process that results in (a) (positive adjective) + (product(s)).
Expansion of Process Paragraph Using Detail Strategies

There were many steps for climbing the mountain.

First, the mountain climbers packed their bags.

(Why-How?): They needed to carry light nutritious foods that would give them energy.

Then, they began the long trek into base camp.

(Why-How?): The trek into base camp improved their physical conditioning and prepared them for higher altitudes.

Next,…….. (et cetera)

p.156-166 in Jennings & Haynes, 2019

Top section of Descriptive Paragraph Template

Description of: Coyote  
Name: ___________  
Date: ___________

Topic Sentence: A coyote is a mammal with many important characteristics.

Topic noun + is/are + category + general attributes phrase

Key Features: ears, muzzle, coat, legs, paws, tail

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Bottom section of Descriptive Paragraph Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Adj.</th>
<th>Adj.</th>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Function verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The</td>
<td>alert</td>
<td>triangular</td>
<td>ears</td>
<td>listen for danger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>sensitive</td>
<td>pointed</td>
<td>muzzle</td>
<td>sniffs for food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>thick</td>
<td>greyish</td>
<td>coat</td>
<td>protects it from the cold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>thin</td>
<td>legs</td>
<td>carry the coyote quickly towards its prey.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The</td>
<td>padded</td>
<td>black</td>
<td>paws</td>
<td>pad silently across the snow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>long</td>
<td>bushy</td>
<td>tail</td>
<td>acts as a signal flag.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concluding sentence: In conclusion the _______ has many important features that help it to ________________.

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Persuasive (Enumerative) Paragraph
(Theme: Sailing Safety)

Intro: There are several reasons why young teenagers should not sail out to sea without an experienced sailor on board.

First of all, green sailors lack awareness of weather conditions.

Secondly, they may not know how to navigate well.

Thirdly, they may panic if the boat goes out of control.

In conclusion, it is important that sailors are well-prepared before they head into the open waters.

Before moving to the essay level:
Self-check for “dysteachia”!

– Do my students know the vocabulary and concepts, and can they retrieve these? (e.g. word boxes!)
– Have they mastered the relevant sentence patterns?
– Do they know strategies for building different paragraph types (graphic organizers)?

If Yes: Graphic Organizers Now!
Q & A

What is still “circling” in your mind?

What are some “points” you will walk away with?

Selected References