Teaching ESL students in mainstream classrooms:

Language in learning across the curriculum

PARTICIPANT MANUAL

LEXISEDUCATION

1 Introduction

Reflection

> *Notes*

Overview

In Module 3, we explored the relationship between the nature of an oral language task and the demands made on second language learners. In particular, we focused on the relationship between language patterns in a text and its place on the mode continuum. We then examined a range of language tasks which involved language at the spoken end of the mode continuum, that is, 'talk as process'.

In this module, we delve more deeply into the nature of language at the middle of the mode continuum, that is, 'talk as performance' and consider language assessment practices. We consider the implications for ESL students as listeners and speakers in the classroom and for us as their teachers, and explore ways that we can support and scaffold them.
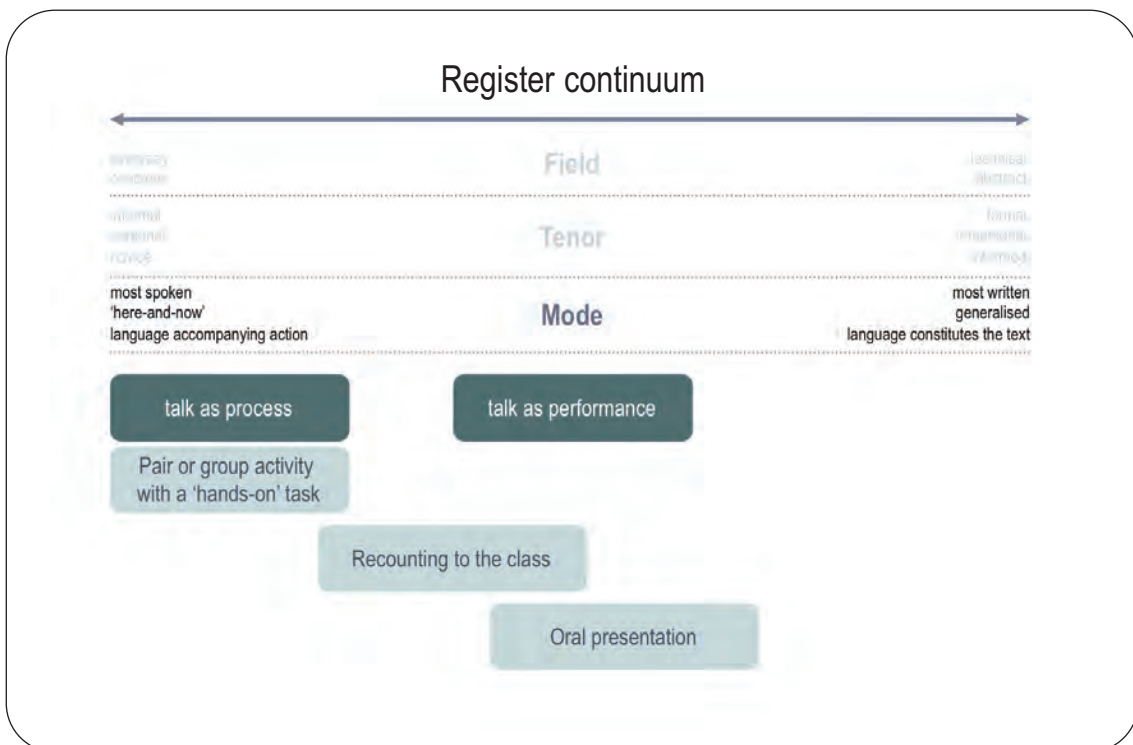
2 Oral language: 'Talk as performance'

Figure 1: Talk along the mode continuum

ACTIVITY   **Moving from commonsense to specialist fields**

To shift from more commonsense fields such as the one constructed in the *Sharks* text to more specialised, technical fields such as the one in *The Antarctic Fur Seal* text, we can see that we need to make different language choices.

In this next activity, we look at one of the principal resources in the language system to express these more specialised meanings, the nominal group. A nominal group is concerned with a central idea or thing and can be defined as 'a group of words built around a key noun'. It is through the nominal group that we can quantify, describe, classify and qualify the particular things we are writing about.

The more complex and more specialised the meanings we want to make, the longer and more complex the nominal groups. To support students in making informed and appropriate language choices when producing written texts, we need to build their understanding of exactly how the nominal group works.

WORKSHEET 3   *Introducing the nominal group*

Fur Seals   have   a smooth, streamlined body with a soft coat under a rough outer layer.

Nominal group		Nominal group

Fur   Seals   have   a smooth, streamlined   body   with a soft coat under a rough outer layer.

pre-modifier	key noun		pre-modifier	key noun	post-modifier

Example 1: <u>Oil spills</u> ... can also wipe out colonies.

Oil   spills   can also wipe out   colonies.

Example 2: The Killer Whale is <u>one of the predators of the Fur Seal</u>.

the Killer   Whale   is   one of the   predators   of the Fur Seal.

Other examples of nominal groups

They   nets   pollution

key noun		key noun		key noun

A nominal group complex

Oil   spills   and   pollution

pre-modifier	key noun	*joining element*	key noun

MODULE **Participant manual** Teaching ESL students in mainstream classrooms: Language in learning across the curriculum

7 Developing knowledge about language

WORSHEET **4**	Comparing nominal groups

(WORKSHEET 4)

Consider the following selection of nominal groups taken from the *Sharks* text and *The Antarctic Fur Seal* text. Compare the differences in the use of pre-modifiers, post-modifiers and nominal group complexes.

Pre-modifiers and post-modifiers

	Sharks			*The Antarctic Fur Seal*	
PRE-MODIFIER	KEY NOUN	POST-MODIFIER	PRE-MODIFIER	KEY NOUN	POST-MODIFIER
the fish	**family**		The Antarctic Fur	**Seal**	(*Arctocephalus gazella*)
All	**sharks**		a	**member**	of the Otarid or 'eared' seal family
	seas	all over the world	a smooth, streamlined	**body**	with a soft coat under a rough outer layer
small marine	**life**		the breeding	**season**	in October and November
live	**young**		thick, soft	**fur**	
male	**sharks**		one of the	**predators**	of the Fur Seal
the female	**shark**		the	**ice**	that the seal is on
other	**sharks**		A grey brown	**colour**	

Nominal group complexes

fish, squid, crabs, clams, plankton, small marine life	small eyes and ears
	krill, fish, young penguins, crustaceans, squid and octopus
	October and November
	the leopard seal, sharks, and white pointers
	Nets, tangled fishing gear and plastic bags
	Oil spills and pollution

3 Focusing on the nominal group

Using terms such as pre-modifier and post-modifier is limited and we now need to look more carefully at what constitutes these parts of the nominal group.

ACTIVITY **Understanding the nominal group**

WORKSHEET 5 *Understanding the nominal group*

	pre-modification			key noun	post-modification
Pointer	Numerative	Describer/s	Classifier/s	Thing	Qualifier/s

To point to the thing: **Which one are you pointing to?**

To quantify the thing: **How many or how much?**

To describe the thing: **What's it like?**

To classify the thing: **What kind is it?**

What are we talking about?

To qualify the thing: **Which one in particular?**

ACTIVITY Expanding the nominal group

As students move to the right of the register continuum, they need to be able to expand the nominal group. To do this, they need to repackage information given in, for example, a series of separate clauses with simpler nominal groups.

WORKSHEET 7 *Expanding the nominal group*

Register continuum

everyday	Field	technical/abstract
informal/novice	Tenor	formal/expert
spoken	Mode	written

Example 1

Seals have a smooth body.
The body is streamlined
and it has a rough outer layer

Seals have

Pointer	Describer	Thing	Qualifier

Example 2

The heart is a muscular organ.
It's found in all animals with a
circulatory system.

The heart is

Pointer	Describer	Thing	Qualifier

Example 3: *Form one nominal group complex*

Dangers to the Fur Seal
- nets
- tangled fishing gear
- plastic bags

are a danger to the Fur Seal.

Thing	Describer	Classifier	Thing	joining element	Classifier	Thing

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WORKSHEET 8 *The nominal group*

1. *What are some of the possible challenges for ESL students in exploiting the potential of the English nominal group?*

2. *What value is there in explicitly teaching students about the structure of the nominal group through a focus on the functional labels?*

3. *What other kinds of activities could be used in building up students' understandings of how the nominal group works?*

4. *How might we draw upon students' knowledge of other languages to understand the structure of the nominal group in English?*

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As students move up through schooling, they will be expected to express more complex concepts and one of the key language resources to do this is the nominal group.

For teachers and students, knowing that this complexity is achieved by expanding nominal groups provides a basis for helping students understand how they can write texts that are at the highly written end of the mode continuum. Making explicit the workings of the nominal group is key to more effectively supporting the process by which ESL students develop control of this crucial language resource.

4 Moving to highly written texts through nominalisation

Another key linguistic feature of highly written texts, apart from longer and more complex nominal groups, is their greater abstraction and technicality. This is achieved through the use of nominalisation, which can be defined as the process of forming nouns out of language elements such as verbs and adjectives. For example, 'erode' becomes 'erosion', 'calculate' becomes 'calculation' and 'happy' becomes 'happiness'.

Consider the following statements:

Statement A
If we change the way we work, we will become more productive.

Statement B
Changes in work practices will lead to greater productivity.

Statement A is typical of a spoken text because it is grounded in actions, people and attributes. Statement B, however, is typical of a highly written text in that it is abstract; it is not easy to pin down exactly what changes, practices and productivity are. Words such as 'changes', 'practices' and 'productivity' have been formed through nominalisation.

It is possible to nominalise verbs ('approached', 'is degraded'), adjectives ('courageous'), and modal elements ('might').

Nominalisation also produces terms such as 'photosynthesis', 'the industrial revolution' and 'global warming' — processes made up of a series of actions.

ACTIVITY **Moving to abstraction — from spoken to written**

| WORSHEET **9** | *Nominalising—from spoken to written* |

Register continuum

everyday   Field   technical/abstract
informal/novice   Tenor   formal/expert
spoken   Mode   written

Peter **approached** the task differently from Helena.

Everybody was impressed with how **courageous** she was.

She **might** finish it on time.

Because the soil is **degraded**, it is difficult to grow crops.

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TUTOR MANUAL

LEXISEDUCATION

1 Introduction

(15 minutes in total)

Reflection

(10 minutes)

- Reflect on the between module activities and readings from the previous module.

Overview

(5 minutes)

- Open **Powerpoint: Module 4**.
- Show **Slides 2** and **3** and read through the points or read out the following.

> In Module 3, we explored the relationship between the nature of an oral language task and the demands made on second language learners. In particular, we focused on the relationship between language patterns in a text and its place on the mode continuum. We then examined a range of language tasks which involved language at the spoken end of the mode continuum, that is, 'talk as process'.

> In this module, we delve more deeply into the nature of language at the middle of the mode continuum, that is, 'talk as performance' and consider language assessment practices. We consider the implications for ESL students as listeners and speakers in the classroom and for us as their teachers, and explore ways that we can support and scaffold them.

2 Oral language: 'Talk as performance'

(40 minutes in total)

ACTIVITY Analysing language across three texts

(15 minutes)

- Explain to participants that they will now consider three texts that are similar to those produced in the fishbowl activity in the previous module.
- Ask participants to work in pairs.
- Direct participants to the three 'Chicken Dance' texts in their Participant manual and ask them to discuss with their partn[er] where they would place these along the mode continuum, indicating this on **Figure 1**.
- Show **Slide 4** and ask participants to note the placement of the three texts.
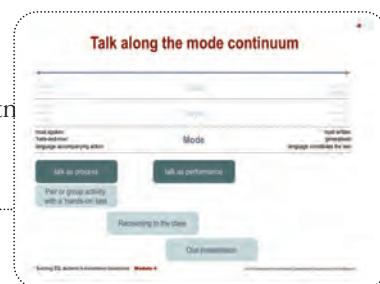
- Explain that you will now analyse the language of the three texts to give a general sense of some key differences between spoken and written texts.

- Show **Slide 5** and direct participants to **Worksheet 1: Analysing language across three texts** and explain that they will complete the table as you work through the slides.

- Read out the blue texts as you click through Slide 5.

- Show **Slides 6–11**, clicking through each of the slides to show the analyses and reading out any blue texts. Remind participants to record the analyses in Worksheet 1.

- Ask participants to read **Resource Note 1**, which defines lexical and grammatical items.

> Work steadily through the slides. The idea of the activity is to show patterns across the three texts so do not allow yourself to get too distracted with the identification of the various elements and the calculation of information density.

- Show **Slides 12–17**, clicking through each of the slides to show the analyses and reading out any blue texts.

- Ask participants to read **Resource Note 2**, which talks about information density and increasing abstraction across the mode continuum.

ACTIVITY   **Implications for ESL students and their teachers**

(25 minutes)

- Ask participants to form groups of four and direct them to **Worksheet 2: Implications for ESL students and their teachers for producing 'talk as performance'**.

- Tell participants they will be recording their responses to the questions on the worksheet.

- Ask each group to appoint a reporter, who will report to the whole group on their responses.

- After about 15 minutes, re-form as a whole group and ask for each group's responses.

- Record their responses on a board.

> Keep the reporting brief and ask each reporter to add only new points to those already made.

- Show **Slide 18** and read through the summary points.

- Direct participants to **Resource Note 3**, which summarises the kind of support teachers could provide.

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- Explain that the next activity is a jigsaw activity. Form two groups, A and B. Group A will be completing **Worksheet 1** and Group B will be using **Worksheet 2**.
- Allow 7–8 minutes for participants to complete the worksheets.
- Pair a person from Group A with one from Group B to share their findings by giving a brief summary of the discussion that took place in the original groups. Ask the As to begin, followed by the Bs. Make sure that each participant gets 3–4 minutes.

  As groups undertake the activity, go around and check that they are making notes in the spaces provided.

- After 7–8 minutes, ask participants to check their responses with **Resource Note 2**.
- Follow this with a short whole-group discussion of the main similarities and differences of the texts. Explain that this will be taken up further in the next activity.

**ACTIVITY** Moving from commonsense to specialist fields

(15 minutes)

To shift from more commonsense fields such as the one constructed in the *Sharks* text to more specialised, technical fields, such as the one in *The Antarctic Fur Seal* text, we can see that we need to make different language choices.

In this next activity, we look at one of the principal resources in the language system to express these more specialised meanings, the nominal group. A nominal group is concerned with a central idea or thing and can be defined as 'a group of words built around a key noun'. It is through the nominal group that we can quantify, describe, classify and qualify the particular things we are writing about.

The more complex and more specialised the meanings we want to make, the longer and more complex the nominal groups. To support students in making informed and appropriate language choices when producing written texts, we need to build their understanding of exactly how the nominal group works.

- Show **Slide 3** and point out to participants that the first sentence from **Worksheet 3** has two nominal groups: one built up around the key noun 'Seals' and the other built up around the key noun 'body'.

- Explain that each nominal group has a key noun, which can be modified before and after the key noun, and that these groups of words are called the pre-modifier and the post-modifier.
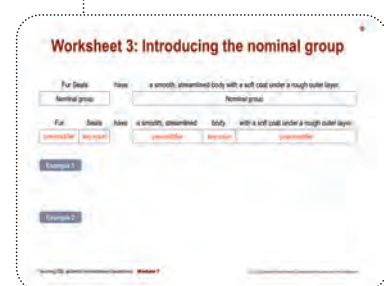
  In both nominal groups, there are more nouns than the key nouns. In 'Fur Seals', both 'Fur' and 'Seals' are nouns. In the nominal group, 'a smooth, streamlined body with a soft coat under a rough outer layer', there are three nouns, 'body', 'coat' and 'layer'. However, in each case, there is only one key noun. So 'Seals' and 'body' are the key nouns here.

- Click through the animations for Example 1 and read the blue text and co-construct the answers with the participants. Continue with Example 2.
- Refer participants to the remainder of **Worksheet 3** and explain that there are other kinds of nominal groups such as: a pronoun (They), a single noun (nets, pollution), or when one nominal group joins with another nominal group (Oil spills and pollution) to form a nominal group complex.

- Show **Slides 4** and **5** and refer participants to **Worksheet 4: Comparing nominal groups**. Explain that the table in **Slide 5** compares a number of nominal groups taken from *Sharks* and *The Antarctic Fur Seal* texts. Give participants time to read **Worksheet 4** and then ask them to identify the differences between the two texts.
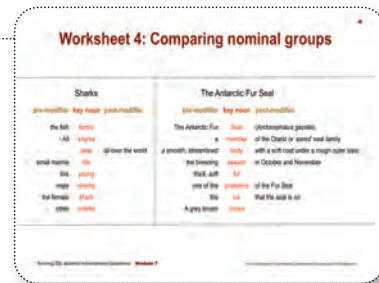
The most obvious difference is in the degree of both pre- and post-modification. *The Antarctic Fur Seal* has much more pre-modification as it makes much greater use of multiple describers (eg 'smooth, streamlined', 'thick, soft' and 'grey brown'). In contrast, the *Sharks* text uses only one describer, 'small', in one nominal group.

In terms of post-modification, *The Antarctic Fur Seal* text has also made much greater use of this resource reflected in the number of times it is used and length in each case it is used. In contrast, the *Sharks* text has used this only once ('all over the world').

As well, *The Antarctic Fur Seal* has several nominal group complexes while the *Sharks* text has only one.

All these features make *The Antarctic Fur Seal* a more linguistically complex text.

- Clarify any questions that participants may have and explain that they will be exploring the nominal group in more depth in the next sessions.

3   Focusing on the nominal group

(50 minutes in total)

Using terms such as pre-modifier and post-modifier is limited and we now need to look more carefully at what constitutes these parts of the nominal group.

ACTIVITY   Understanding the nominal group

(30 minutes)

- Ask participants to keep in mind that they are taking on the role of students as they do the various activities and to try to reflect on what challenges the English nominal group might present for their ESL students, as nominal group structures can vary between languages.

- Group participants in pairs and hand out **Tutor Resource 1A** (printed on A3 paper) and a set of cards made from **Tutor Resource 1B** to each pair and ask them to spread out the cards on the **Tutor Resource 1A** in front of them.

- Show **Slide 6**, which replicates **Tutor Resource 1A**.

- Explain to participants that you are going to take them through a strongly scaffolded process in order to understand the nominal group.