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ABSTRACT

The report presents preliminary findings from a study of middle school American history classes with English language learners. The study investigated the construction of social studies knowledge in these classes and the development and implementation of lessons that address the cultural and educational backgrounds of the learners while integrating language, content, and culture objectives. After briefly describing some features of social studies language, revealed through analyses of classroom discourse and textbooks, the report focuses on the implementation of several lessons from a unit on "protest and the American Revolution." Attention is given to the strategies teachers used to meet their students' needs and capabilities, aspects of student oral and written participation, and the infusion of multicultural issues and perspectives. Some transcripts of classroom interaction are included. (MSE)

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# INTEGRATING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN MIDDLE SCHOOL AMERICAN HISTORY CLASSES

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**INTEGRATING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE  
IN MIDDLE SCHOOL AMERICAN HISTORY CLASSES**

**DEBORAH J. SHORT  
CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS**

**NATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND  
SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING**

**1993**

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# **INTEGRATING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN MIDDLE SCHOOL AMERICAN HISTORY CLASSES**

## **OVERVIEW**

This report describes preliminary findings from a study examining middle school American history classes with English language learners. The study has investigated the construction of social studies knowledge in these classes and the development and implementation of lessons that address the cultural and educational backgrounds of the learners while integrating language, content, and culture objectives. After briefly describing some features of social studies language, revealed through analyses of classroom discourse and textbooks, this report focuses on the implementation of several lessons from a project-developed unit, "Protest and the American Revolution." Attention is paid to teacher accommodations, student oral and written participation, and the infusion of multicultural issues and perspectives.

## INTRODUCTION

This educational practice report describes an ongoing research project investigating middle school social studies classes with English language learners (ELLs).<sup>1</sup> The project is examining ways in which social studies knowledge is constructed in middle school classrooms with students who are learning English as a second language, and the linguistic and cultural competencies students need to engage effectively in this domain of discourse and learning. Specifically, we have been investigating ways in which classroom teachers of social studies strengthen the academic language competence of English language learners, develop and implement lessons sensitive to the cultural and educational backgrounds of the students, and explore the knowledge students bring to the social studies classroom in order to promote them as multicultural resources. Through classroom observation, the study is also identifying effective instructional practices used to guide students to accomplish socially and academically meaningful tasks.

The project is being conducted in two phases. In the first phase, which is the subject of this report, we studied American history classes. In the second phase, we are conducting a similar study in world social studies classes. Components of the project have included developing and field-testing instructional materials, observing effective teachers, analyzing samples of the academic language required in social studies from textbooks and classroom interaction, and training social studies and English as a second language (ESL) teachers in techniques for teaching content to English language learners.

After a brief overview of the rationale for integrating language and content instruction and a sample of the features of social studies language, this report focuses on the implementation of the instructional lessons designed by the project. Particular attention is paid to the accommodations teachers made when teaching social studies content to students who were learning English as a second language and to the infusion of multicultural issues and perspectives in the time period of American history that was studied.

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## RATIONALE FOR INTEGRATING LANGUAGE AND CONTENT INSTRUCTION

The U.S. educational system is currently confronting an important change in its K-12 student population that has considerable instructional ramifications: increased numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse students. Analysis of the 1990 U.S. Census reveals that the total number of school-aged children and youth grew by 39% in the 1980s; those who

reported they did not speak English very well increased by 83% (*Numbers of school-agers*, 1993). In a few school systems, such as Los Angeles, students who are learning English as a second language are already the majority of the student population. Tucker (1990) projects from current immigration and birthrates that, by the year 2000, the majority of the school-aged population in 50 or more major U.S. cities will be from language minority backgrounds. These English language learners are faced with the burden of mastering the academic content of their classes at the same time they develop their English language skills.

American educators have recognized that delaying academic instruction until the English language is fully mastered is detrimental to the eventual success of these students in the school system, where all classes, for the most part, are taught in English. Although most students learn social language skills in one to two years, academic language skills lag behind, often needing four to seven years of instruction (Collier, 1989; Cummins, 1981). In a recent report, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) noted: "For limited English proficient (LEP) students success in school hinges upon gaining access to effective second language learning opportunities, and to a full educational program" (CCSSO, 1992, p. 4). CCSSO recommended that while language-assistance programs help students develop English proficiency, they should, at the same time, "ensure that these students continue to learn and expand their knowledge of new content and therefore do not fall behind peers whose native language is English" (CCSSO, 1992, p.6). This recommendation became an overarching principle in a report by the Stanford Working Group (1993) that examined federal education programs and the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students in light of the school reform movement: "Language minority students must be provided with an equal opportunity to learn the same challenging content and high-level skills that school reform movements advocate for all students" (p.1).

Recognizing that the need to prepare language minority students for a rigorous academic program is great—though in many school settings the time for such preparation is brief—language and subject area educators have begun joining forces to involve language minority students in the regular curricula as soon as possible. To minimize the time gap between students acquiring proficiency in English and beginning instruction in content areas, many educators, both ESL and content teachers, have started integrating language and content objectives in their lessons. Although in a number of school districts, bilingual education programs have offered one means for keeping students on grade level for content objectives while developing language proficiency through English as a second language instruction, bilingual programs are not feasible in many schools where ELLs come from multiple language backgrounds. Moreover, in many bilingual programs, students must exit after two or three years. This length

of time is not always sufficient for students to acquire the academic language skills and content knowledge needed in mainstream classes.

As a consequence, the practice of integrating language and content objectives in lesson plans has been widely accepted and implemented by a broad range of teachers and administrators as one solution to the dilemma of how to prepare linguistically and culturally diverse students who do not know English for grade-level curricula. A review of teacher reference materials and professional conference presentations reveals that each year more teacher resource handbooks and student textbooks are written to guide instruction in this approach,<sup>2</sup> and more training workshops and seminars focus on strategies and techniques for integrating language and content. A national study, conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, is collecting data from more than 1600 school-based programs in the United States with integrated language and content courses in order to describe the range of practices and identify key program features that produce effective results.

The integration of language and content is provided through several approaches. In one, often referred to as content-based language instruction, language teachers use content topics as the framework for instruction, rather than grammar rules or vocabulary lists. Quite frequently, the language teachers collaborate with content area colleagues to plan lessons that complement or reinforce instruction in the regular content course. The language teachers still maintain the primary objective of improving the students' skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, but have a secondary agenda of preparing the students for mainstream subject areas.

In another approach, content teachers are trained in ESL techniques that enable them to adjust their instruction to meet the needs of English language learners. When a content class has only ELLs, this approach is commonly known as sheltered instruction.<sup>3</sup> A similar approach has been called language-sensitive content instruction and describes a class with both English speakers and non-English speakers. Our study involved both sheltered social studies and language-sensitive social studies classes.

These approaches are not implemented without a good deal of effort on the part of teachers and administrators. Both language and content teachers need training outside their areas of expertise: language teachers in content information and teaching strategies; content teachers in language learning techniques and language sensitivity issues, such as the use of idiomatic speech in teacher talk. Administrators need to support teachers in flexible scheduling of classes for ELLs, joint planning time for teachers, and in materials acquisition and development. Although, as noted, some materials that integrate language and content have been published, the supply is insufficient for all grade and proficiency levels and all subject areas. Most often, teachers need to design their own materials to ensure that both language and content objectives are included.

The techniques used in integrated language and content classes include increased use of visuals and demonstrations, emphasis on graphic organizers and thinking/study skill development, and pre-reading and pre-writing activities (see, e.g., Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989; Crandall, 1993; Short, 1991). A key feature of an integrated language and content class is the emphasis on active student participation with communication about content topics through all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In most cases, language and content teachers use cooperative grouping, thereby enabling language minority students to access additional support from their peers. By providing opportunities for students to use language in meaningful contexts—studying the academic subject matter while they develop language proficiency—teachers create an ideal learning environment for facilitating the transition of these students into mainstream courses.

The content area classroom that integrates language, content, and culture is an excellent place to scaffold instruction for students learning English. According to Vygotsky (1978) and others, students' language learning is promoted through social interaction and contextualized communication, which can be readily generated in all subject areas. With teacher facilitation, students can construct meaning from texts and classroom discourse and can be assisted to understand complex content concepts. Without teacher assistance, English language learners may flounder in content area courses. As Mohan (1990) explains, these learners are involved in a process of "language socialisation," learning their second language while learning the subject matter. Guided teacher assistance will help these students become socialized to the academic language setting.

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### PROJECT BACKGROUND

The remainder of this report provides more detail on the first phase of the research project, "Integrating Language and Culture in the Social Studies," and the implementation of a project-designed curricular unit, "Protest and the American Revolution." Although the first phase examined American history in general, for the materials development component and most of the classroom observations, the project narrowed its focus to the time frame of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary America, between the French and Indian War and the War for Independence.

The project has been conducted with the active participation of classroom teachers. These teachers acted as consultants and writers during the materials development component, piloted and field-tested the materials, participated in the project training seminar, and several also became trainers themselves, presenting workshops with project staff at professional conferences. Six middle school and junior high teachers from

Virginia (2), Maryland (2), New York (1), and Florida (1) were involved in most aspects of the project. Two other teachers, one from Nebraska and one from California, who learned about the research independently, field-tested several lessons and reviewed others. Five of these eight teachers are trained social studies educators; three are ESL educators. Three of the social studies teachers had never had prior training for teaching English language learners.

The field-testing of the instructional materials has been conducted in a variety of classroom settings. Some were sheltered social studies classes with only English language learners. Two of these classes had students with a low intermediate level of English proficiency; a third had beginning-level students. The other cases involved mainstream classes of 25-37 students, each including 2-12 English language learners. Three of these classes also included some mainstream students with learning disabilities; one class had a student with severe physical disabilities.

We chose to work at the middle school level for several reasons. First, the middle school curriculum is a challenging shift for all students who leave the nurturing atmosphere of the elementary schools, where, in general, they had one regular teacher for most of the school day. Middle school students see many different teachers, each with their own subject agenda that is not necessarily connected with language skills development. Second, the advancing middle school philosophy of teacher teams and interdisciplinary, thematic instruction is an excellent structure through which to accommodate the needs of English language learners. Third, certain constraints, such as the number of course units required for graduation, exist at the high school level, but not in the middle school. Teachers can be more flexible in the time spent on their lessons and the number of topics covered in a course. This flexibility is important to English language learners who benefit from more extended exposure to and practice with new content area information. In this way, ELLs can more fully develop academic language skills and gain a deeper understanding of content issues.

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### ACADEMIC LANGUAGE OF AMERICAN HISTORY

As mentioned earlier, our research is investigating the academic language competencies students need to learn and be able to use in social studies classes. When we refer to the academic language of social studies, we are considering semantic and syntactic features (such as vocabulary items, sentence structure, transition markers, and cohesive ties) and language functions and tasks that are part of expected social studies routines (such as defining terms, explaining historical significance, reading expository text, and preparing research reports). As we planned our study,

we anticipated that we would identify the features of the social studies register in much the same way that Halliday (1975) delineated the register of mathematics, and Spanos, Rhodes, Dale, and Crandall (1988) applied it to mathematics instruction for English language learners. We have discovered, however, that the language of social studies is less restrictive than that of mathematics or that of sciences like chemistry and physics. The academic language used in the American history classes we observed and the textbooks we reviewed was commensurate with much of the academic language in other humanities courses and similar to the non-technical language used in math and science classroom discourse when teachers and students are explaining, reviewing, discussing, and so forth.

Our findings are comparable to those of Coelho (1982) and Snow, Met, and Genesee (1989). Coelho examined specific features of geography and history (and science) in textbooks, teacher and media presentations, and student assignments. She found that certain linguistic signals cued students to time references, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, and generalization-example in text structures and assignments. These signals included verb tenses and conditions, expressions of time, and rhetorical markers such as temporal phrases, conjunctions, and causative words (e.g., *as a result*, *so*). She recommended that students be taught to recognize these cues to help improve reading comprehension.

Snow, Met, and Genesee (1989) distinguish between "content-obligatory" language and "content-compatible" language within the framework of a content course: language that is obligatory for understanding the material taught in a content course, such as technical terms like *evaporate* and *condense* in physical science, versus language that is non-obligatory but compatible with language objectives developed in the ESL curriculum and could be taught in the science course, such as *if-then* structures and *because* clauses. They point out that students must learn content-obligatory language in order to master the material in a course.

Our research shows that there are certain key vocabulary terms and tasks that are specific to the social studies (e.g., *Stamp Act* and *Declaration of Independence*; reading timelines and interpreting maps) and that need to be mastered as part of an American history course. This result is consistent with the content-obligatory language described by Snow and colleagues. Other aspects of the language of social studies are not necessarily exclusive to social studies but are required for successful participation in a social studies class. Once mastered by students, however, many of the processes involved in performing social studies language tasks and functions, as described below, could be transferred to other subject area demands.

Further, our examination of the textbooks used in middle school American history courses<sup>4</sup> revealed several text structures in common. Most texts were organized according to sequencing and cause-and-effect patterns. A few of the textbooks used a problem-solution structure. The

textbooks used language to enhance the logical connections of the structures framing the narrative. The following excerpts from *Exploring American History* (O'Connor, 1991, pp. 186-87) illustrate the cause-and-effect relationship:

Parliament passed a tax law called the Stamp Act. . . . Colonists refused to obey. . . . Parliament voted to end the Stamp Act. . . . However. . . . Parliament passed the Declaratory Act. . . . Because the British government still needed money, Parliament in 1767 passed the Townshend Acts. . . . The Townshend Acts caused more and more colonists to protest.

The choice of words (e.g., *refused to obey*, *voted to end*, *caused more and more colonists to protest*) and the transition markers (e.g., *however*, *because*) reinforce the concept that the colonists reacted to British actions in the hope of changing the situation. Our classroom observations supported the claim (Coelho, 1992) that these signal words can be helpful for English language learners when they are explicitly taught to recognize them and understand their functions. Students we observed were better able to follow the relationships among the concepts presented in their text reading passages.

Table 1 presents some samples of the specific language features, functions, tasks, and text structures that appear in American history classes. Certain instructional tools correspond closely to the social studies, such as globes and maps. The related language varies from key vocabulary words like *north* and *south* to general academic instructions like "look at the bottom of page 25." All disciplines have their **famous people and events** (though they may play a less important role in the overall curricula of mathematics and science courses), and these samples here are indicative of those found in the period of American history that we studied. These concrete vocabulary items can be taught directly to English language learners, often through visual aids, demonstrations, and physical movement.

The **concepts** represent more abstract use of the language, and thus are more difficult for English language learners to comprehend, especially if they have not been exposed to them during their elementary school years and cannot see visual representations of the terms. Some concepts may have a social studies thrust (e.g., democracy and patriotism), but not all these terms are limited to a social studies context (e.g., taxation). Nonetheless, these concepts are of particular importance to understanding history, and teachers of English language learners should take care to instruct students in the meanings and use of these words. Teachers in our study often made connections to students' personal experiences and current events to do this.

The **language functions and language skills tasks** were identified through our classroom observations and transcriptions. We discovered that several functions occur regularly in both student and teacher discourse, while other functions are much more in the domain of the teacher

**TABLE 1 SAMPLE FEATURES OF SOCIAL STUDIES LANGUAGE IN AMERICAN HISTORY CLASSES**

**Tools of Social Studies**

textbook  
map  
globe  
timeline  
graph, chart

**Related Language**

on page..., at the top, chapter illustration  
north, south, east, west, landforms  
latitude, longitude, continents  
years, dates,  
title, percent, bar, pie, column, heading

**Famous People/Events**

Samuel Adams  
Mercy Otis Warren  
Stamp Act  
Second Continental Congress  
Lexington and Concord

**Related/Technical Vocabulary**

rebel, speech  
boycott, correspondence  
taxes, tar and feather  
represent, delegates  
militia, minutemen, musket

**Concepts**

propaganda  
patriotism  
self-governing

protest  
rebellion  
independence

taxation  
justice  
liberty

**Language Functions**

*Students and Teachers*

explain	give example
describe	sequence
define	compare
justify	evaluate

*Teachers*

ask recall questions  
give directions  
encourage  
clarify/restate

rephrase  
extend  
review  
preview

**Language Skills Tasks**

read expository prose  
take notes  
conduct research

find main idea, supporting details  
present an oral report  
write a cause-and-effect essay

**Text Structure**

*Macro (chapter level)*  
cause and effect  
sequential/chronological order  
problem-solution

*Micro (paragraph level)*  
compare and contrast  
generalization-example  
enumerative

**Syntax**

simple past  
historical present

sequence words  
active voice

temporal signals  
causative signals

For instance, both teachers and students are expected to define terms (although often the student is prompted by the teacher). Teachers, however, are more apt to rephrase student responses, conduct reviews of information, and give directions than are the students. Teachers of English language learners may need to provide practice opportunities to enable students to use appropriate functional language.

The syntax in recent textbooks was surprising in that most of the text was written in the active voice and the most frequent verb tenses were simple past or historical present. Moreover, the syntax of written student

assignments most frequently reflected the simple past, unless the teacher was making an effort to introduce and practice a grammatical structure like conditional sentences. This finding may be reassuring for English language learners. While they will still have to struggle with the dense presentation of social studies information in textbooks, the additional burden of analyzing the passive voice and complex verb tenses has been removed.

The overall implications of these findings on the academic language of social studies are important for teachers and school systems with limited budgets and resources that are planning integrated language and content courses for English language learners. If, as we posit, the academic language demands of a social studies course mirror many of the higher level literacy demands of other courses, then an integrated language and social studies class may be the appropriate springboard for developing the requisite academic skills before placing students in mainstream classes.

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### PROTEST AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The lessons described below are part of the curricular unit on the American Revolution. In the summer of 1991, project staff worked with teacher consultants to design lessons that integrate language arts, culture, and social studies. The project's goal has been to create material that actively engages middle school students, relates to their own experiences, and provides them with a means of mastering academic content as they develop their language abilities, critical thinking skills, and study habits.

An overriding consideration was to design a multiculturally inclusive unit. As Gay and Banks (1975) have argued, for students to gain a comprehensive understanding of the American Revolution, it is imperative that they study it from multiple perspectives. The infusion of multiculturalism in the unit developed by this project was two-pronged. First, the lessons include activities that draw upon the students' varied backgrounds, making connections where possible to their countries' histories and current events and allowing them to act as resources to the class. Second, the lessons reflect the cultural diversity prevalent in the population of the United States during the late 1700s and highlight the different perspectives the people of colonial America had concerning the revolutionary war period.

The instructional unit was organized around the theme of protest. Individual lessons focused on events and issues that led to the American Revolution, types and symbols of protest, and the roles that several ethnic, racial, and gender groups played during the 1760s and 1770s. This theme suits English language learners well, for most have some background knowledge and experience related to protest and revolution from their own countries. They may not, however, recognize the important role that protest

maintains in our democratic tradition. The theme is also topical, allowing teachers to make connections with events in the news.

We also chose to emphasize two subthemes in the unit: symbolism and point of view. These subthemes are recommended in social studies frameworks as overarching principles to teach students (e.g., California State Dept of Education, 1987; Crabtree, Nash, Gagnon, & Waugh, 1992). Students examine symbolism through lessons on protest flags and songs, political cartoons, and poetry. They investigate point of view while studying different groups present in pre-revolutionary America, such as Native Americans, African-Americans (slaves and free people), Daughters of Liberty, Loyalists, and Patriots.

The content objectives were drawn from commercial textbooks and from documents such as *Lessons from History: Essential Understandings and Historical Perspectives Students Should Acquire* (Crabtree et al., 1992) and the *California History-Social Science Framework* (California Department of Education, 1987). The language objectives promote development in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, with specific attention to verbal interaction among students and to academic tasks, such as reading for specific information, taking notes, listening for details, presenting an oral report, and writing a comparison essay. The lesson activities reflect many of the academic functions and tasks our research has found to be important for success in mainstream social studies classes. The thinking and study skill objectives are designed so teachers will pose more higher order questions: asking students, for example, to make inferences and recognize symbolism.

The lesson format for the unit is comprised of five phases: 1) **motivation**, which seeks to activate student background knowledge and/or connect to past experiences; 2) **presentation** of new material, in whole group or small group work, where the teacher takes the lead in sharing information or eliciting discoveries from the students; 3) **practice**, where students are guided in processing new information, sometimes through teacher modeling; 4) **application** of new material, where small groups apply new ideas to old; and 5) **review**, an informal assessment to check student understanding of the lesson objectives. Some lessons combine the practice and application phases. All lessons also contain extension activities to reinforce or extend the concepts covered and to provide alternative activities, especially for multilevel classes. Many of the lessons also suggest one or two project activities that lead to the culminating lesson, the publication of a colonial newspaper.

In designing the lessons for the unit, "Protest and the American Revolution," we kept the guiding principles found in Table 2 in mind.

**TABLE 2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR INTEGRATED LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND SOCIAL STUDIES MATERIALS**

1. Offer opportunities to communicate about social studies - in oral, written, physical, or pictorial forms.
2. Make connections between the content being taught and students' real-life experiences.
3. Tap the students as resources for information about their native countries.
4. Activate students' background knowledge.
5. Provide hands-on and performance-based activities.
6. Promote critical thinking and study skill development.
7. Pay attention to language issues and employ strategies that will help students learn the language of social studies.
8. Use graphic organizers to help students represent information and identify relationships.
9. Incorporate cooperative learning activities and seek peer tutors among classmates.
10. Be process oriented and provide modeling for students to make transition to academic tasks.
11. Open discussion to different perspectives of history.
12. Adjust instruction for the different learning styles of the students.

Table 3 shows the topics of the lessons in this unit. It should be noted that the lessons do not need to be implemented in numerical order; this was a deliberate feature of the design. Knowing that teachers may not have time to include all the lessons in the syllabus and also that some lesson activities may be less appealing to one group of students than another, we sought to provide teachers with many options. Certain lessons that set the historical stage, such as 2-4, work best in order, but the others can be introduced as best suits the needs of the class.

**TABLE 3 LESSONS IN "PROTEST AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION"**

Lesson 1	Making Rules and Protesting Rules
Lesson 2	Events Leading to the Revolution
Lesson 3	British Actions and Colonial Reactions
Lesson 4	Types of Colonial Protest
Lesson 5	Revolutionary Groups
Lesson 6	Looking at the Revolution from Different Points of View
Lesson 7	Flags: Symbols of Protest
Lesson 8	Protest Through Songs

Lesson 9	Protest Through Political Cartoons
Lesson 10	The Declaration of Independence
Lesson 11	People who Protested in Revolutionary America
Lesson 12	Paul Revere and Sybil Ludington
Lesson 13	Contributions to the War Effort
Lesson 14	Major Battles of the Revolution
Lesson 15	Recording Protest: A Colonial Newspaper

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## LESSON IMPLEMENTATION

This section of the report will describe two lessons from the curricular unit and their implementation in the field-testing classes. First the objectives of each lesson will be presented, and then the lesson activities will be reviewed and their actual implementation discussed. The discussion will explain how the lessons relate to students' prior experiences, review students' knowledge of historical events and people, provide opportunities for critical thinking, and incorporate hands-on activities. Specifically, the strategies teachers employed to meet their students' needs and capabilities will be shared.

The two lessons, "Looking at the Revolution from Different Points of View" and "Flags: Symbols of Protest," are sixth and seventh in the 15-lesson unit. Before these lessons, if the order of lessons has been followed, students will have already discussed reasons that protest occurs and ways to protest in a general sense. They will have studied an overview of the events leading to the American Revolution, including various acts of protest committed by the colonists against the British. They will also have reviewed the roles and actions of different groups active during the time between the end of the French and Indian War and the beginning of the Revolution. These groups include the Sons of Liberty, Daughters of Liberty, Loyalists, Committees of Correspondence, and the Continental Army.

### Lesson 6

In Lesson 6, "Looking at the Revolution from Different Points of View," students are asked to delve more deeply into the viewpoints of several ethnic, racial, and gender groups, including Native Americans, African Americans (both free people and slaves), other colonists of non-British descent, and women, as well as Patriots and Loyalists. In order to do so, the students must think critically about the motives and interests of these diverse groups, drawing upon prior knowledge and their reasoning abilities. The following objectives are featured in this lesson:

- Language** Students will discuss points of view in cooperative groups and listen to points of view of others.  
Students will generate a list of reasons for being pro-British or pro-independence.  
Students will complete a chart about pre-revolutionary groups.  
Students will practice persuasive speech and the conjunction *because*.
- Content** Students will recognize various points of view among different pre-revolutionary groups and identify reasons why some groups sided with the colonists seeking independence and others with the British.
- Thinking** Students will determine and analyze different points of view.  
Students will justify viewpoints.  
Students will compare and contrast viewpoints.

The lesson will be presented and discussed according to the phases described earlier. The guidelines for each phase are written to the teacher.

**Motivation**

Show optical illusions (e.g., the well known graphic showing two faces or a goblet) to the class. Let students talk about what they see (goblet or faces). Discuss point of view. Connect the point of view discussion to students' lives. For example, ask if they have a different point of view than their parents about curfews.

The original motivation to this lesson encouraged students to discuss their reactions to a current incident in the news that lent itself to differing viewpoints. That motivation was found to be inadequate when we realized that the English language learners in our field-test classes needed more concrete material to understand perspectives and points of view than an oral discussion about a current event was able to provide. To help the students complete this lesson successfully, we developed the above revised version and the connection to a current incident became part of the presentation. The optical illusions provide a quick visual reference from which to develop a discussion on the topic.

**Presentation**

Move to a discussion of a current incident (such as the Los Angeles riots/Rodney King beating case) where people have different points of view. Ask students general questions about the incident to make sure they have background information, or let different students explain their interpretation of the incident. Then ask the students to name different groups that have expressed opposing points of view in relation to the incident. If appropriate, ask students whose side they would take and why.

Connect the discussion to the American Revolution and ask students to think about the points of view that have been discussed in class so far. Review different groups of people that lived during the Revolution (e.g.,



- 23 S: *(interrupting)* What - - - ?  
24 S: How did they get - - ?  
25 T: . . .the colonies. Right. They were not part of the country yet.

### Practice

On one side of the board write, "We should fight on the colonists' side" and on the other, "We should fight on the British side." Ask students which side the different groups were on and why. Students can list the groups on the board under the British or colonists' side. Review the fact that there were Native Americans, African-American slaves, and people from other European countries on both sides during the war.

This phase of the lesson was very straightforward, although in the classes we observed, it was more teacher-directed than we had anticipated. This occurred in part because the teacher had to inform the class that there were Native Americans fighting on each side (see transcript below) and because the students were unfamiliar with the activity format. In retrospect, the teacher's high level of involvement is understandable; the textbooks we reviewed described the pre-revolutionary period primarily from the Patriots' point of view and did very little weaving of information about non-white colonists or British into the main story line, and the students had not been exposed to thinking from multiple perspectives.

- 01 T: . . . Now the Native Americans. . . we had Native Americans, the Indians, who also had to decide which side are you going to be on. 'Cause remember . . . when the, the British came and started making colonies here who were the people that were here first *(pulls down and points to U.S. map)*? All right.
- 02 S\*: Indians.
- 03 S\*: Native Americans.
- 04 T: The Native Americans so they were living here . . . with the colonists and when the war started they had to decide. Whose side are you going to be on? And . . . there were some Native Americans who said . . . there were some Native Americans that that fought actually. . . that said . . . yes, we should fight *(writes on the board)* fight on the colonists' side or we should call it the Patriot side. And I put on here. I put colonist. I put it on your thing . . . *(continues writing and talking)* on the colonists' side. But, there were other Native Americans who decided to fight with the British.

### Application

Divide the class into cooperative groups of three to five students. Assign each student group to a different revolutionary group (e.g., Patriots, Loyalists, Daughters of Liberty, African-American slaves on the colonists' side, African-American slaves on the British side, Native Americans on the colonists' side, Native Americans on the British side, other ethnic groups, such as the Dutch in New York). Give each group a large piece of newsprint and have students label the newsprint with the name of the group they represent. Ask students to list on the newsprint at least five reasons why their group should fight for the colonists' side or the British side.

The students enjoyed placing themselves in the shoes of these revolutionary groups and generating reasons why their group might side with the British or with the independence-seeking colonists. However, in several classes they needed a push to get started. To accommodate the students, the teachers modeled the activity in advance by asking the whole class to generate one reason for one or several revolutionary groups.

Within their groups the students had to justify their ideas to one another in order to reach consensus before listing their reasons on the newsprint. This activity also provided explicit practice with the conjunctions *because* and *so*. The following lists reflect the interpretations made by several groups in one of the classes we observed. The students were low-intermediate ELLs in a sheltered social studies environment.

NATIVE AMERICAN (pro-independence)

- We should fight againsts British because we don't want to be slaves.
- Because we wan't to free and make our own laws.
- During the Jamestown the colonists were friend with Indians.
- Becaus the British people cut the tree down to make big back yard.
- The colonist need help they don't have people to fight againsts British.

BLACK SLAVES (pro-independence)

- Because they want freedom.
- Because they didn't want the British for their boss.
- They want to have their own things.
- The slaves want the British to pay for their work.
- The Brith killed their People for no Reason.
- They didnt want to be slaves for the British.

LOYAISTS - belonged to British

- This land is belongs to the British.
- The British soldiers is trained and can win.
- British help the colonists to get food.
- Colonists stil use black slaves and how can they said they wanted liberty, so they must belongs to British sides.
- May be the colonists were scared of fight with British, so they should fight with British.
- May be colonists think British worked so hard, so they should help the British.

Although these lists reflect the rough draft nature of the activity, the perceptiveness of the students is apparent. For instance, students recalled prior knowledge when they referred to Jamestown and the clear cutting of the forests. They recognized the freedom motivation behind the slaves' decision to fight for independence. The Loyalist group looked at the two sides of the debate as a way of coming to a decision, noting the British army was better trained and that the colonists did not really believe in liberty if they continued to maintain slaves.

### Review/Evaluation

When groups finish, place their point of view newsprint on the board for the entire class to see. Have one or two students from each group read their statements aloud.

The hands-on activity and stimulation of critical thinking were successful in this lesson. Students worked well in their groups, with teacher assistance, and willingly shared their lists with classmates. As a final wrap-up, one teacher suggested that students evaluate the reasons listed and select one or two that seemed to be the most important for each group.

### Lesson 7

In lesson 7, "Flags: Symbols of Protest," students focus on the creation of flags as a means of protest and the symbolism found in them. Students have opportunities to share information about their own countries' flags and to design a protest flag for a pre-revolutionary group. Like lesson 6, this lesson incorporates hands-on activities for the students. The following objectives are featured in this lesson:

- Language Students will listen to and follow directions to create a flag. Students will give an oral presentation to describe symbols and explain choices in flag creation. Students will complete a worksheet describing a flag. Students will practice imperatives and descriptive language.
- Content Students will identify and analyze early colonial and revolutionary flags.
- Thinking Students will make inferences about flag symbols.

### Motivation

Before this lesson, have several ESL students draw flags of their native countries on large white paper. Begin the lesson by presenting the flags to the class and have the students in the class brainstorm what the symbols on the flags might represent. For example, "Why is there a red circle and white background on the Japanese flag?" Let the ESL artists respond to the other students' guesses and tell the name of the flag (or the word *flag*) in their native language.

Most of the teachers who field-tested this lesson followed the motivation instructions fairly closely. In some of the classes, two to five students were selected to share their countries' flags. In other classes, all students were assigned the task of drawing, coloring, and explaining their native flags. Not all of these students knew what each symbol stood for, but many could explain some of the colors or emblems. The example below captures one student's explanation.

- 01 S: My flag is from India. The India flag has three colors: orange, white, and green. Orange stands for sacrifice. White stands for peace. Green stands for cultivation. In the circle is a wheel for the memory of a king.

In the next transcript selection the teacher shows the Bolivian student's flag to the class and encourages them to guess meanings of flag symbols and justify their interpretations.

- 01 T: OK. Let's go on to the next one. (Unless we can talk) all day about Korea. Here we have Bolivia. Three colors. Red, yellow, green. What do those three colors mean? We have a lot of, several people here from Bolivia.
- 02 S: Bolivia.
- 03 T: Maybe they - - - Yes?
- 04 S: Green means because they have a lot of trees and plants.
- 05 T: Green, OK. Could be.
- 06 S: No way!
- 07 S: They have too much bananas.
- 08 T: We are just guessing. Could be a lot of plants.
- 09 S: - - - they eat too many bananas - - -
- 10 S\*: - - - (laugh)
- 11 T: - - - (sound like you are silly) - - - N-, you are from Bolivia.
- 12 S: No, I'm not from Bolivia.
- 13 S: El Salvador, he's from El Salvador.
- 14 T: A few weeks ago you told me you were from Bolivia.
- 15 S: (laughs)
- 16 S: - - - was born in Bolivia and now - - -
- 17 T: Anyway.
- 18 S: The red one is - - - from the soldiers, the blood, - - -
- 19 T: Could be, I don't know, red, - - -. Red is the blood from the fighting, OK, N-.
- 20 S\*: - - -
- 21 S: (I think that) those colors mean that there is some people that come from different countries - - - and they are living here for a long time.
- 22 T: It could be the combination of people coming together, right. Um, and, what else, people from Bolivia. N-, what do the colors mean? Any ideas?
- 23 S: Red, blood.
- 24 T: We have the red, blood from the fighting. Yellow-
- 25 : - - -
- 26 T: What does the yellow mean? (points to the yellow color)
- 27 S: The gold.
- 28 S: Symbol that they had a lot of gold.
- 29 T: Yellow, gold.
- 30 S\*: - - -
- 31 S: The green, the grass.
- 32 T: The green?
- 33 S: The grass.

### **Presentation**

Give each student a blank white 8½" x 11" paper and a ruler. Explain that you will read directions and they must draw what you say on their paper. This is a listening exercise that should result in the first national flag of 1775.

Read these directions to the students:

1. Draw a rectangle 10" x 6½" (10" top and bottom horizontally and 6½" left and right vertically).
2. Put the edge of your ruler along the top line. Line up the left edge (0") with the end of the left line. Put a mark at 4". Turn ruler vertically and line up with mark at 4". Draw a straight line down vertically 3½".
3. From the end point of the last line, draw a straight line to the left side. This will make a box.
4. Put your ruler along the right vertical side. Make a little mark every ½".
5. Draw a straight line horizontally from each mark across the rectangle to the left side. Seven lines stop at the box in the left corner. Five lines continue all the way to the left side under the box.
6. In the box draw 13 stars in a large circle.

Have students compare drawings and guess what they have drawn. Have them title the drawing, "First National Flag, 1775-1795." Students should color the flag with blue and red crayons. The stars remain white and the rest of the box is blue. The top stripe begins with red. Every other stripe is also red.

Discuss the colors and symbols: "Why did the colonists choose red, white, and blue?" "What does the number 13 represent?"

Discuss how protest groups frequently design flags or banners: "Why are visual symbols important?" Introduce the pre-revolutionary flags of America. Show students the pictures on the overhead and discuss what each symbol could possibly mean.

This presentation activity was more difficult than expected. In some of the classes, several students were unprepared to measure and draw with a ruler. Others could not follow the half-inch designations. Many students in each class had to ask the teacher to repeat instructions frequently. Clearly, listening comprehension skills were not strong when the task required a great deal of concentration and student manipulation of materials. One of the social studies teachers commented, "This lesson was tested on a class of 36, 61% of which were failing the course. Most were not auditory learners . . . I would read directions or have one person in the group read one direction at a time. I would also have directions on the overhead projector."

Two ESL teachers anticipated some difficulty: One prepared a model of the outline rectangle for students to begin with; another drew pictures representing a rectangle, horizontal and vertical lines, and a star on the board in advance for student reference. In contrast to the teacher's comments above, one of these ESL teachers wrote, "Lesson went well! Students were able to follow the directions. All the students (with the exception of one) completed the First National Flag." Item number 6 in the directions resulted in a few chuckles in that teacher's class, however, as a number of students drew the 13 stars within the circle rather than around the perimeter. In

general, all the teachers' comments on this lesson reflected the need to prepare students better for this kind of task, to find out in advance if students are familiar with fractional dimensions, and to pre-teach vocabulary such as *horizontally, vertically, inches*.

The project staff believed strongly that this lesson activity was an important addition to the overall unit because of its emphasis on listening skill development and its hands-on practice. During the revision process, we have applied teacher comments in order to clarify the flag drawing directions and to pre-teach the vocabulary more thoroughly to the students. We also cautioned teachers to determine student ability with making measurements.

#### **Practice/Application**

In groups of two to four, tell the students to design flags for one of the different groups in pre-revolutionary America. Have students choose from the following:

- Sons of Liberty
- Daughters of Liberty
- Minutemen
- Loyalists
- Native Americans
- African-American slaves
- Free African Americans

Distribute the worksheet<sup>5</sup> and have students design the flag, using appropriate symbols to reflect the group represented. If desired, have students color or paint their flags for display.

This activity was very well received by students and teachers. The groups worked assiduously on their designs and were very creative. The symbols they chose were realistic and in some instances even poetic. Below are reproductions of several groups' worksheets. The teachers encouraged the students to spend time on their artwork once the flag designs had been completed. In many of the classes, students used tempura paint. One teacher posted the students' flags on the classroom walls. Another teacher secured a nearby hallway as a display area and had her students write the explanation of the flags' symbols on index cards to hang alongside.

#### **Review/Evaluation**

Ask student groups to give oral presentations in front of the class describing their flag.

All teachers asked students to prepare for this oral presentation, but only one or two representatives from each group were actually required to speak. Some students prepared index cards for their talks; others spoke from memory. Each speaker showed the flag to the class and identified the symbols. The following transcripts are indicative of the presentations.

*(Two students go to the front of the class. One holds the flag; the other holds the pointer.)*

01 S: OK.

02 S1: Listen to me, here - - -

03 S2: She's going to um, um, what does that mean. . .

04 T: Who's going to talk?

- 05 S2: You. I'll help you. - - - She made it.
- 06 T: That's ok. Now, which group were you?
- 07 S1: Sons of um.
- 08 S2: Sons of Liberty.
- 09 T: Sons of Liberty.
- 10 S1: Yeah.
- 11 T: OK. And, um. Why don't you tell us, first of all, what's that picture in the middle.
- 12 S1: (*whispering*) You tell her. I can't - - -
- 13 S2: OK. She wanted that to be like she um, this was the colonist in the war. They didn't have money or anything, but the, the French helped them, and they gave them money and clothes. So, it was like the flowers are the colonists and the water is the French.
- 14 T: Oh, that's a good idea. Wow.
- 15 S1: It is? I was the one who said it.
- 16 T: So it's like the flower is dead. Right, it didn't have money or anything like that, and then.
- 17 S2: They got help.
- 18 T: It's like the French. Oh. That's a very interesting idea.
- 19 S2: I told her to make it.
- 20 T: Good.
- 21 S: - - -
- 22 T: And what about the colors? The yellow and the blue?
- 23 S1: Yeah.
- 24 S2: Yeah.
- 25 S1: Blue is liberty.
- 26 T: Blue is liberty.
- 27 S1: And yellow, I don't know.
- 28 T: Yellow? What do you think yellow could mean?
- 29 S1: - - - (what to say)
- 30 S2: Yellow is the sun, that um, that also helped them.
- 31 T: The sun?
- 32 S: Yeah.
- 33 T: OK.
- 34 S1: And that's liberty.

The creativity present in the students' work was evident as they described the reasons for their symbols. In lines 13-16 and 29-34, the student in the transcript above explains the picture of two flowers in her flag. At first the flower (representing the militia and the Sons of Liberty) was dying. Then sun and rain (the French soldiers) came to the flower and it revived.

## CONCLUSION

The research we have conducted so far has been very promising. We have been able to design social studies lessons that offer students a multicultural perspective about American history and that relate to students' knowledge of their native cultural and historic heritages. The lessons, in general, have also provided opportunities for hands-on interaction with the historical concepts and events, opportunities that are often lacking in middle school social studies curricula. The English language learners have been enthusiastic participants in class, practicing their language skills and demonstrating their critical thinking abilities. Among other things, the students have practiced note-taking and extracting details from text passages, given oral reports and performed role plays, compared and evaluated types of protest, analyzed the perspectives and goals of historical people and groups, and written essays and research reports. The lesson activities that promoted discussion, reading comprehension, and writing processes not only served to develop the students' language skills but also prepared them for requirements of mainstream classrooms.

The teachers have facilitated the students' success through several means. They have modified lessons when necessary, providing more explicit vocabulary instruction, for example, through word webs, realia, pictures, and role plays. They have also modeled activities with the class as a whole before breaking students into small groups. The teachers have supplemented the textbooks in order to help students interpret history through different lenses, examining the perspectives of people living in that time. They incorporated pre-reading and pre-writing strategies, often through graphic organizers, so the English language learners would have some schema upon which to draw before completing an assignment. They encouraged students to conduct research on their own, but remained near to provide support and assistance or to help students solicit assistance from a classmate. All of these accommodations have aided students in comprehending and using the academic language of social studies and in strengthening their knowledge of American history.

If, as our research suggests, the academic language of social studies is consonant with the higher level literacy demands of other subjects, the implications are important. English language learners who have the opportunity to expand their academic literacy skills through social studies classes may be better prepared to handle the rigors of mainstream instruction. Further research should be undertaken to determine if an integrated language and social studies course is a key endpoint in an articulated sequence of ESL and sheltered instruction courses that is designed to help English language learners make the transition to the mainstream.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>These students are also referred to as language minority students or limited English proficient students.

<sup>2</sup>Teacher resources include, among others, Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989; Cantoni-Harvey, 1987; Crandall, 1987; Mohan, 1986; and Short, 1991. Student textbooks include, among others, Chamot, 1987; Crandall, Dale, Rhodes, & Spanos, 1989; Fathman & Quinn, 1989; Johnston & Johnston, 1990; and Short, Seufert-Bosco, & Grognet, 1991.

<sup>3</sup>At the middle school level in some school districts, though, an ESL teacher with a background in one of the content areas may teach a sheltered content course.

<sup>4</sup>These books included *Two Centuries of Progress* (Jackson & Perrone, 1991), *History of the United States to 1877*, (Mason, Jacobs, & Ludlum, 1992), *America Will Be* (Armento, Nash, Salter, & Wixson, 1991b), *Exploring American History* (O'Connor, 1991), *The United States: Peoples and Leaders* (Abramowitz & Abramowitz, 1981), and *A More Perfect Union* (Armento, Nash, Salter, & Wixson, 1991a).

<sup>5</sup>This is the worksheet given to students:

**DESIGN A REVOLUTIONARY PROTEST FLAG  
WORKSHEET**

GROUP NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Background color of flag: \_\_\_\_\_ Stands for: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Symbol:

Color:

Stands for:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Draw a rough draft of your flag:

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