Where is Systemic Functional Grammar in the Adult Migrant English Program?

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Abstract: *Starting in 1948, Australia's Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) has continued to deliver language education to migrants for the purposes of settlement and attaining employment. Both in Australia and internationally, the AMEP and its related developments in English language education have had a profound impact on the teaching and learning of English as an Additional Language (EAL), particularly in terms of their contributions to the field of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), which became the theoretical underpinning of the AMEP curriculum in the early 1990s. However, it would seem that a quarter of a century later, SFG is missing in action. This paper traces SFG's presence in the AMEP through its inception in the Certificate in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) through various evolutions of the AMEP, and speculates on the implications of SFG's apparent absence in the AMEP today.*

Introduction

From humble beginnings to international recognition as a leader in EAL, the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) has evolved and changed significantly for three quarters of a century. Shaped by, and helping to shape, pedagogical movements over the years, the AMEP was fortuitously enhanced by Australia's involvement in the research and development of systemic functional linguistics (Oliver, Rochecouste, & Nguyen, 2017). The functional view of language has had a profound and lasting impact on language teaching – most notably, it gave rise to a game-changing EAL curriculum framework (Burns, 1995), which was adopted at the national level for the AMEP.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, fruitful collaborations were carried out between researchers, curriculum writers, and educators. Systemic functional grammar (SFG) became the theoretical foundation for language teaching in the AMEP, and its

implementation was supported by ongoing research and development funded by the Commonwealth Government of Australia. Gradually, however, with the shifting of political sands and an increasing focus on accountability, many of the support channels dried up, leaving the AMEP in a state of disrepair. The quality of teaching has deteriorated and the stress levels of teachers and administrators has increased (ACTA, 2018). As will be argued throughout this paper, the gradual erosion of the prioritisation of professional development and professional standards (ACTA, 2018; ACTA, 2019) seems to have overshadowed the status of SFG, which had once featured prominently in pedagogy. Throughout recent decades, AMEP stakeholders have been calling for more professional development and support that would help teachers to better understand and implement elements of the AMEP curriculum (Burns & Hood, 1994; Brindley, 2001; Yates, 2008; ACTA, 2018). It would seem that this need is more important than ever today.

In this paper, the history of the AMEP is outlined, focusing on significant reforms and highlighting the relevant political landscape. The centrality of SFG in the development of the AMEP curriculum framework and its implications for teaching and assessment are then discussed. The paper concludes with a reflection on the present-day role of SFG and argues that the AMEP needs a revival of the knowledge sharing that once existed and which elevated the AMEP to its former status as a world leader in EAL (Moore, 1995; 2022).

Background to the AMEP

The AMEP began in 1948, when economic pressure compelled Australia to grow its population. To address this need, Australia opened its doors to immigrants, many of whom were fleeing their home countries. The post-war period saw a significant increase in immigration, with Australia agreeing to settle an annual quota of 12,000 refugees from 1947 (Martin, 1999, p. 4). As a result of relevant government policies, the AMEP[1] was founded with the aim of providing migrants with basic English skills to assist with their settlement. According to Martin (1999, p. 5), this was a unique program, as no other country in the world guaranteed free English tuition as part of its immigration policy. The AMEP

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[1] Until 1990, AMEP stood for the Adult Migrant Education Program.

continued to grow until 1964 (Martin, 1999). At this time, the program was run by the Commonwealth Office of Education (as it was then called), which was also responsible for training AMEP teachers and publishing AMEP materials. A review of the program in 1978 resulted in increased funding stability on a triennial basis, transforming the program "from an educational backwater into a professionalised program capable of meeting a diversity of ESL needs" (Moore, 2001, p. 104).

Since its inception, the AMEP has been passed between various government departments, but has remained largely with the immigration portfolio (Lowes, 2004). A revised bill in 1958 saw the abolishment of the xenophobic dictation test that was connected to Australia's post-war assimilation policy: the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* (Moore, 1995). In 1973, the government introduced a new multicultural policy (Martin, 1999) and, by 1987, a new language policy had been commissioned, entitled the National Policy on Languages. The National Policy on Languages initiated many benefits for language education programs (Moore, 1995), particularly because it was based on the assumption that linguistic diversity was intrinsically valuable. In other words, the value of language education was not defined by employment outcomes.

The funding cycle for the National Policy on Languages ended in 1991 and, according to Moore (1995), its pluralistic view of language was replaced with an economic-rationalist paradigm in the form of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (Commonwealth of Australia, 1991). The Australian Language and Literacy Policy was founded on an economically-oriented agenda to grow the skilled workforce, and involved major reforms (Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2007). The policy introduced a basic entitlement of 510 hours of tuition for all eligible migrants, with potentially up to an additional 500 hours depending on the learner's age and pre-migration background. However, as Lowes (2004) points out, it is unreasonable to expect that most learners can attain a functional level of English in this timeframe.

The quantification of learning was connected to a deeper issue: that of the corporatisation and commodification of education. According to Moore (1995, p. 11), "Efficiency was defined, largely ideologically, in terms of reduced but clearly stated goals framed by senior managers, diminished program budgets, devolved responsibility for policy implementation, 'user pays', contracting out and tendering". Since 1998, public and

private education providers have tendered for the delivery of the AMEP, which according to Burns and de Silva Joyce (2007) has undermined the program's stability. The 1990s also saw a nation-wide adoption of competency-based training. While praised by some as being more learner-focused and relevant to learners' needs, this greater emphasis on measurable assessment diverted "energy and resources from client outcomes into meeting the increased paperwork required for making further applications for funding" (Lowes, 2004, p. 16)[2].

This shifting perception of language education was aligned politically with unemployment and threats to democracy (Moore, 1995, p. 13). The very same ideology has received renewed attention in recent years. In December 2020, Acting Minister for Immigration Alan Tudge announced major reforms to the AMEP including the removal of the 510 hour limit for tuition, stating that, "Without English, it is harder to get a job, harder to be an active member of the community, and harder to participate in our democratic processes" (Australian Government, 2010). Tudge's comment acknowledges the same social challenges voiced by Moore (1995), and has resulted in better access to EAL tuition for Australian migrants, particularly long-term residents whose prior entitlements had been exhausted or had expired. However, the uncapping of hours has not mitigated the impacts of the commodification of the AMEP in the 1990s. For example, competitive tendering still occurs today. Policy, in addition to other factors, has driven change and innovation in the AMEP curriculum, affecting all areas of teaching and assessment.

Pedagogical phases in the AMEP

From its inception up to 1977, the AMEP's curriculum structure was centralised (Colman, 1988). Pedagogically, the dominant teaching approach was the so-called traditional method, which focuses on the gradual accumulation of linguistic structures and the development of correct language habits (Oliver, Rochecouste, & Nguyen, 2017). In 1965 the Commonwealth Office of Education published a series of textbooks that featured sentence-level practice exercises situationally, highlighting their function in social contexts. The series, entitled *Situational English*, was used in the AMEP until the mid-1970s. Referred to as Situational

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[2] For an overview of the debate, see Burrows (1994).

Language Teaching[3], this approach emerged from the influence of British linguists such as John Rupert Firth and Michael Halliday, who were exploring the relationship between context and structure (Feez, 2001). The situational approach to language teaching involved "systematic principles of selection [...] gradation [...] and presentation" (Richards & Rogers, 2001, p. 38), which is how many EAL course books can still be described today. As Situational Language Teaching also included techniques inspired by behavioural psychology, drills and rote memorisation were common (Richards & Rogers, 2001).

The aim of Situational Language Teaching in the AMEP was to get learners using real-world English as quickly as possible. The centralised adoption of Situational Language Teaching represented a synergy between linguistic research and curriculum development, resulting in innovations which are still considered best practice in EAL today. For instance, the positioning of linguistic structures within their real-life contexts was an important development of the approach (Feez, 2001). Situational Language Teaching remained prominent in the AMEP until the 1980s, when Communicative Language Teaching became the new paradigm[4].

According to Nunan (1989), changing social dynamics in the migrant population brought into sharp relief the notion that a single, centralised curriculum was not able to meet diverse learners' needs. Thus, in the 1980s, a decentralised, learner-centred curriculum was implemented in the AMEP. Influenced by research in second language acquisition and progressive pedagogies, the approach placed a greater onus on teachers to negotiate an individualised curriculum for each learner (Butler & Bartlett, 1986). At the same time, Australian EAL was being influenced by Communicative Language Teaching. Inspired in particular by Dell Hymes in the United States and Michael Halliday in the United Kingdom, Communicative Language Teaching became the dominant approach in the AMEP.

Within the Communicative Language Teaching movement, there was also a focus on "units of meaningful language" which were classified as functions and notions (Feez, 2001, p. 211). Known as the functional-notional approach, this method aimed to

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[3] Also known as the structural-situational approach and the oral approach (Richards & Rogers, 2001). The underlying theory is British structuralism.

[4] For a more detailed history up to the mid-1980s, see Brindley (1986).

"integrate notional, functional, grammatical, and lexical specifications built around particular themes and situations", and Australia's AMEP was one of the first courses to attempt this (Richards & Rogers, 2001, p. 206). The benefits of the functional-notional approach were, however, offset by combining it with the principle of negotiating learning outcomes with learners. This combined approach proved to be difficult for teachers to implement in practical terms (Bartlett, 1990). The negotiated curriculum also suffered from a lack of continuity, feedback, and clarity, not to mention the difficulties for administration and reporting (Burns, 2003). As a result, it was soon abandoned (Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2007). According to Oliver, Rochecouste, and Nguyen (2017), the issues resulting from the negotiated curriculum demanded a more "visible" pedagogy (Bernstein, 1990; Freire, 2005 [1970]). Accordingly, government funds were invested into a National Curriculum Project to instate new curriculum guidelines (Nunan, 1989), namely the Certificate in Spoken and Written English.

The Certificate in Spoken and Written English and its theoretical foundations

In 1992 a new EAL curriculum was developed by AMES[5] – the Australian Migrant Education Services – under the AMEP national plan 1990-1992 (Martin, 1999, p. 36). The curriculum, known as the Certificate in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) was adopted as the national AMEP curriculum in 1993. It was theoretically informed by the 'Sydney School' of linguistics (Hyon, 1996) – a branch of systemic functional linguistics focusing on text types, or *genres*, within their social contexts. Despite the absence of the National Policy on Languages and its generous funding for language programs, the 1990s continued to attract funding for AMEP research, which was geared toward Australia's economic development in a globalised world (Moore, 1995, p. 11). Since the socio-political context and theoretical description of the CSWE is well documented elsewhere (Feez, 1999; Feez, 2001; Burns, 2003; Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2007; Yusny, 2014), only a brief overview will be presented here.

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[5] Known previously as State Migration Education Centres (Martin, 1999), AMES was formally established in 1951 (AMES Australia, 2020).

Built on the foundations of Sydney School genre pedagogy (Hyon, 1996), the CSWE approach views the whole text as the fundamental unit of meaning. In this way, the CSWE moves beyond the sentence level and takes a holistic view of grammar in context. Grammatical structures are viewed not merely as sentences functioning within a particular situation (as in Situational Language Teaching) but rather as the probabilistic linguistic elements that construe and characterise a particular genre (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Since context is viewed as inseparable from meaning, text-based language teaching is largely consistent with discourse-focused approaches to language teaching (e.g. Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). Text-based language teaching also acknowledges the social factors associated with learning languages, and recognises that *learning* a language occurs through *using* the language (Halliday, 2004 [1980]). Text-based language teaching is also, by and large, consistent with Communicative Language Teaching (e.g. Littlewood, 1981) and Task-Based Language Teaching (e.g. Nunan, 2004). The text-based approach allows for a variety of methods and syllabus elements. These elements are organised according to whole texts, the selection of which is determined by learners' needs (Feez, 1999). In this way, text-based language teaching remains learner-centred while potentially retaining the consistency of syllabus elements, which take the form of demonstrated knowledge and performance.

Within the Sydney School's text-based, or genre pedagogy, a teaching-learning cycle was developed (See Figure 1) and adopted by the AMEP.
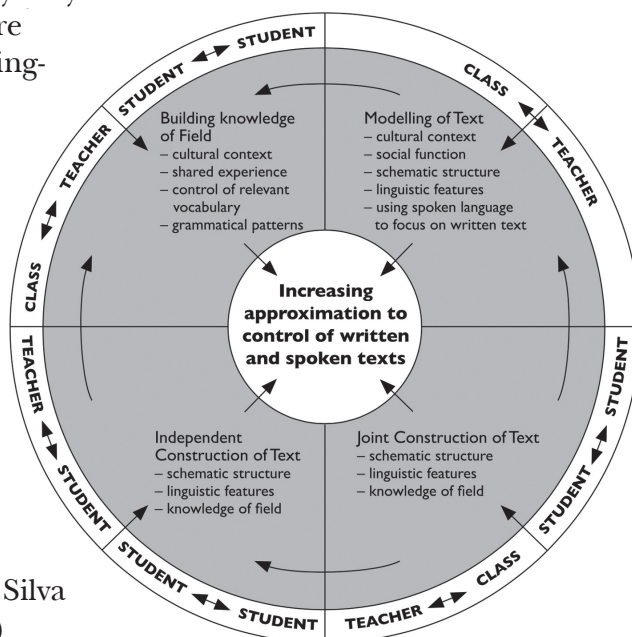

Figure 1: Teaching-learning cycle (Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2007, p. 13)

As shown in Figure 1, the approach can begin with activities that build learners' knowledge of context. The teacher may then present a model text, raising learners' awareness of the text's features including purpose, meaning and grammar. After that, the construction of a similar text is scaffolded through co-construction with the teacher or another learner. Learners then construct a similar text independently. Any feedback about the independently constructed text functions to increase the learner's understanding of the target genre, which brings the cycle back to the start. This, however, is not a prescriptive method. The process can begin at any point: for instance, a learner could start with the independent construction of a text as a diagnostic task.

By involving explicit grammar instruction, the teaching-learning cycle aims to make visible the language choices in a text that may often be taken for granted (Feez, 2001). Additionally, "by making the language patterns of different types of texts more visible, genre pedagogy also makes more visible the values and worldviews embodied in those patterns" (Feez, 2001, p. 215). In other words, text-based langauge teaching helps to facilitate the development of critical literacy.

SFG in the CSWE
From its inception to the first decade of the twenty-first century, the CSWE was supplemented by professional development that was supported by AMEP funding, and the collaboration of researchers, curriculum writers and practitioners. Located at Macquarie University[6], and influenced by the Sydney School (linguistics), the National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research and the AMEP research centre published research and teaching resources prolifically for around 20 years (1989-2009). Combined with pre-service TESOL courses that include a focus on SFG (Chappell & Moore, 2012) and the materials and workshops delivered at the time by AMES NSW, it would seem that the infrastructure for sharing knowledge about SFG was a major contributor to the high level of AMEP teacher expertise.

A notable amount of research published in CSWE's heyday suggests that the ongoing allocation of resources for teachers' professional development was vital for CSWE's success in the

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[6] NCLTR was a cooperative between Macquarie University in Sydney and LaTrobe University in Melbourne.

classroom. The importance of professional development has been underlined, with relevance to curriculum innovation (Burns & Hood, 1994; Butorac, 2008; Feez & Joyce, 2000) classroom practice (Burns, 2000; Yates, 2008; Zhang, 2018) and assessment (Brindley, 2000; Brindley, 2001; Murray, 2007). This support is critical because the effectiveness of the enacted curriculum depends largely on training and professional development for teachers: a crucial element that was missing from the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada program (Zhang, 2018, p. 123).

When interviewing Australian AMEP teachers regarding how they approached the teaching of writing skills, Cumming (2001) found pedagogical consistency, particularly in comparison to similar migrant EAL programs overseas. He concluded this observed consistency was probably due to the AMEP's use of government-funded professional development programs, resources and research from the previous 20 years. For example, one of the interviewees was quoted on this pheonomenon as saying:

> Debates about writing have been very intense here. For example, in Britain, educators have been compartmentalised. But in Australia that is not the case. Theoretical developments cross fields. There are close relations between researchers and teachers. This has produced very positive things. (Cumming, 2001, p. 8)

Cumming (2001) also found that Australian AMEP teachers had a good understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the CSWE's teaching-learning cycle (Figure 1), i.e. SFG. Much of this knowledge about the functional nature of language was disseminated through funded channels such as AMES NSW. AMES NSW, the organisation that developed CSWE, implemented an extensive professional development program focusing on SFG and its application to teaching. Such programs helped AMEP teachers to understand the grammatical and linguistic theory underlying the curriculum framework and it seems that this high level of support was necessary for its innovation.

CSWE was the first language curriculum to institutionalise systemic functional linguistics (Feez & Joyce, 2000). As such, the CSWE takes a descriptive rather than prescriptive approach to language, explicitly describing what learners need to do in order to achieve their social goals using language (Feez & Joyce, 2000).

According to Halliday (2004 [1980]), there are three significant areas that need to be considered in language pedagogy: learning language, learning about language, and learning through language. These aspects are reflected in the fact that children start learning language from the moment of birth (p. 308), that language shapes our worldview or social realities (p. 317), and that developing an explicit understanding of the nature and functions of language is critical (p. 322). The three areas are explicitly referenced in the CSWE documentation (Zhang, 2018):

- Learning language: [...] learning to make choices from linguistic systems.
- Learning about language: [...] knowing language choices that are available for use and knowing how these choices are made according to different social and cultural contexts.
- Learning through language: [...] language resources to communicate new knowledge and ideas with others. (Zhang, 2018, pp. 52-53)

Zhang (2018) goes on to argue that the theoretical foundation of the CSWE is a reason for its success, especially when contrasted with AMEP's Canadian counterpart, the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada program.

Although the CSWE takes SFG as its theoretical foundation, the teaching-learning cycle does not prescribe the teaching of SFG. Burrows (2000) showed that for some teachers, the implementation of the CSWE resulted in an increased usage of SFG metalanguage and grammatical terminology which was relevant to the curriculum. However, other teachers, who claimed that the CSWE had not affected their teaching, resisted this washback effect. This suggests that, as a framework, the CSWE has the flexibility to accommodate various approaches to teaching grammar. For instance, there is no requirement for teachers to teach SFG, even though this was the original intention of the CSWE writers. In fact, following an in-depth analysis of the CSWE framework, Zhang (2018, pp. 116-117) suggests that the curriculum guidelines could be better aligned to its theoretical framework in order to potentially improve teacher practice.

Assessment within the CSWE
Around the same time that the Australian Language and Literacy Policy was introduced in the early 1990s, concern with assessment

increased, especially from the Department of Employment, Education and Training (Moore, 1995). As Brindley (2001 p.393) pointed out, roughly a decade later, "Educational institutions worldwide have been under increasing pressure from governments to demonstrate efficiency and cost-effectiveness by more rigorous reporting of program outcomes." Notwithstanding the tension between political and educational perspectives on assessment (Brindley, 2001), the need for an assessment system that could serve both AMEP providers and government was clear.

At the time, the assessment system used in the AMEP was the Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ASLPR) scale (Ingram, 1996). New AMEP clients were assessed against the ASLPR before commencing tuition to establish a benchmark against which progress could be measured and reported[7]. However, the ASLPR was considered inadequate for government policy development and funding purposes because it only described learners in terms of general language proficiency. As such, it was not suitable for reporting "reliable gains [...] for the purposes of program reporting and evaluation" (Brindley, 2000, p. 4). A more clearly focused outcomes-based assessment system was needed.

The CSWE assessment system was designed with reporting outcomes in mind. Competency-based assessment was chosen, which was part of a larger nation-wide reform that was wrapped in the political rhetoric of upskilling the Australian workforce (Burrows, 1994). A set of outcomes were written for each of the four certificate levels, based on what learners were required to be able to do in the target text. However, there was a large degree of variation in the design and administration of assessment tasks and inconsistency with assessor's judgements (Brindley, 2001). Brindley (2001) concluded that the most significant factors affecting the quality of competency-based assessment were practical, such as time allocation and level of expertise.

Concerns with the validity and reliability of competency-based assessment were also raised during CSWE's early stages, especially from teachers and assessment experts (Burrows, 1994).

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[7] A very similar procedure is in place today. New clients are assessed against the ACSF scale but progressive assessments are no longer required. The new contract for 2023 will most likely provide funding to providers based on the demonstration of learner progression through the successful completion of units – see Moore (2022) for a discussion of the potential impacts of such a funding model.

Further, the issue of equivalence between the ASLPR and the CSWE was a concern from an educational point of view (Brindley, 2000). Perhaps for this reason, the ASLPR was not replaced by the CSWE. Rather, it was decided that the AMEP would use both systems for assessment and reporting in the AMEP.

Although ASLPR changed its name to the ISLPR[8] in 1997 (Murray, 2007), fundamentally the system was not changed. Arguably the most signifcant change regarding AMEP assessment was introduced via a new business model in July 2017, with both the ISLPR and CSWE scales being replaced by the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF). The government decentralised the AMEP curriculum on July 1st, 2017 (ACTA, 2018), so that the CSWE was no longer mandatory. This resulted in some providers deciding to discontinue using the CSWE in the AMEP.

The government's decision to use the ACSF was comdemned by ACTA[9] – the peak body representing Australian EAL practitioners. ACTA's submission to the government claimed that the ACSF lacked validity and reliability, destroyed a working system, was theoretically unsuitable, and eroded the quality of education (ACTA, 2018, p. 6). By this time, funding for the AMEP research centre had ceased and, compared with the 1990s and early 2000s, the AMEP's ability to provide quality EAL instruction was compromised. Since the AMEP research centre was closed in 2009, the volume of published research has dramatically decreased and "With the absence of firmly established professional recognition in the education context, the provision of EAL instruction has suffered the impact of numerous external forces despite the agitations of those associations aligned with this field" (Oliver, Rochecouste & Nguyen, 2017, p. 20).

The demise of CSWE

The new business model of 2017 impacted not only assessment but also the sharing of knowledge which had helped teachers to enact the curriculum. The AMEP research centre and the National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research had been decommissioned eight years previously, and the consequences of reduced funding must have been obvious. For instance, the academic journal *Prospect*, which published many of the articles

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[8] International Second Language Proficiency Ratings.

[9] Australian Council of TESOL Associations.

cited in this paper, was funded by the AMEP research centre and ceased publishing in 2009. The demise of the AMEP research centre also meant that the development of the CSWE would now have to rely financially on its licence fee (ACTA, 2019, p. 64).

Since the 2017 business model did not mandate the CSWE, some providers in Queensland, Victoria and South Australia decided that they would adopt an alternative curriculum. According to ACTA (2019), the government's decision to allow alternative curricula was framed as providing flexibility. However, in reality, the move shifted costs away from the Commonwealth by allowing providers not to pay CSWE's licence fee, in turn allowing them to offer a more competitive AMEP tender. Ultimately, the cost was passed on to individual teachers in terms of the extra time required of them, since the alternative curricula was not supported by a bank of ready-made validated assessments and teaching materials (ACTA, 2019). Another source of increased frustrations was the use of the ACSF to report learners' progress to the government. As indicated in ACTA (2019, p. 67), "The curriculum market is now regulated by the ACSF compliance mechanism" and such reporting is a "fiction" that is "maintained and audited in a vicious cycle that is contaminated by conflicting interests" (ACTA, 2019, p. 83).

The move to choose CSWE alternatives is also linked to a gradual erosion of teaching quality. While both the CSWE and the EAL framework (Victoria State government's alternative) require teachers to hold a TESOL qualification, other curricula (namely South Australia's CEP and TAFE Queensland's CSL) do not. This stands in stark contrast to the 1990s and early 2000s, when ample support and professional development for CSWE teachers were provided through Commonwealth funding. As previously argued, the CSWE has a sound pedagogical basis that requires ongoing professional development for effective enactment. It would seem by cutting costs, the proverbial baby has been thrown out with the bathwater.

Where is SFG?
The CSWE was an important innovation in the delivery of the AMEP in Australia and in EAL teaching more generally (Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2007; Feez & Joyce, 2000). Much of its effectiveness can be attributed to the role of SFG, which was instrumental in making language and learning more visible in the curriculum framework (Feez, 1999). As argued above, the role of funding and

policy cannot be understated – indeed it was the funding from the Commonwealth government that allowed the CSWE project to occur in the first place. What the funding provided, however, was the resources to research and develop a theoretically sound curriculum framework that also met the government's reporting requirements and was flexible enough to accommodate varying learner needs and teaching methodologies, in particular the teaching-learning cycle (Figure 1).

The teaching-learning cycle was not only adopted in the AMEP; the Sydney School (linguistics) research also had a profound influence on the Australian National English Curriculum for mainstream schools (Burns, 2003; Jones & Derewianka, 2016). However, although grammar is a fundamental element of the national curriculum and its teaching approach, from an SFG perspective, it was not adequately taught in schools (Polias & Dare, 2006).

The idea that there was a systematic connection between genres and their lexicogrammar and that these patterns could be taught was ignored by most teachers. Instead, what took its place was a somewhat superficial teaching around 'language features' that was neither systematic, or even functional (Polias & Dare, 2006, p. 124).

Functional grammar lays bare the visible ways in which texts achieve their purposes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). However, grammar was often neglected by school teachers, creating a need for structured professional development programs in order to properly enact the curriculum. This is understandable, given the reported "lack of teacher declarative knowledge of even basic traditional grammatical items, let alone the more complex grammar typical of authentic texts" (Derewianka, 2019, p. 842).

It would seem that an analogous phenomenon has occurred in the AMEP, whereby the curriculum's greatest strength, i.e. SFG, is no longer adequately addressed. As Derewianka (2019) points out, it cannot be taken for granted that AMEP teachers would have the required knowledge and confidence to teach SFG in a non-superficial way without ongoing professional support. Since the CSWE was eventually replaced with alternative curriculum frameworks in certain states, the question of whether SFG has survived remains unclear. For example, a brief review of selected writing units in the Core Skills for Learning (CSL) and English as an Additional Language (EAL) framework suggests that both are derivative of the CSWE in their approach to working with text

without prescribing the text type. As explained in the next paragraph, despite this similarity, each curriculum framework has key differences when compared to the CSWE.

CSL seems to be directed at literacy more than language, which indeed was one of the main criticisms voiced by ACTA (2018). In the CSL writing unit ETEWRT001 (TAFE Queensland, 2020), the word "grammar" does not appear in the performance criteria. However, in the knowledge evidence for ETEWRT001, explicit reference is made to a number of grammatical elements, including complex and compound sentences, dependent clauses, a range of verb tenses and language register appropriate to text purpose and audience. Interestingly, the demonstration of grammatical evidence is only required as "knowledge" and not "performance"[10]. In practical terms, this means that knowledge of grammatical items may be assessed in knowledge questions that are separate from the written text that learners have to produce. Well-written assessments would integrate the knowledge requirements with the performance evidence but the unit's separation of grammar from performance effectively downplays grammar's role in text construction, which is the very antithesis of the CSWE approach (See Section 4).

The EAL framework's reading and writing unit VU22629 does not include an explicit reference to grammar in the performance criteria, but the document does state, in the evidence guide, that the "Assessment must confirm the ability to use routine conventions and *linguistic knowledge* to [...] write, review and correct a simple message in a workplace context using a series of short sentences" (State of Victoria, 2018, p. 400, my emphasis). The required linguistic knowledge mentioned in the evidence guide is detailed in a separate section of the document, where particular grammar points are itemised with explicit reference to features including sentence structure, question forms, cohesive devices, tense and aspect and modality. This reference to grammatical items suggests that compared to CSL's aforementioned focus on literacy, the EAL framework assigns a higher value to grammar and assumes the explicit teaching of grammar in preparing learners for assessment. It is interesting to note that

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[10] Since the time when this manuscript was initially submitted, the CSL curriculum has been updated. However, in my opinion, the difference between the old and new CSL is negligible and the assessments have remained mostly unchanged.

traditional and not functional grammatical terms are used, although this may not necessarily reflect an intention to avoid SFG.

Although the auditing body Linda Wyse & Associates evaluated both CSL and the EAL framework as being suitable for the AMEP (LWA, 2018), the latter appears to lend itself more readily to the teaching-learning cycle, and requires a more structured and explicit approach to teaching grammar. However, despite EAL's similarity to CSWE, the extent to which the teaching-learning cycle and SFG are present in the classroom is unknown. Since the funding for AMEP research has ended, it is now more difficult than ever to ascertain the status of SFG in the AMEP. Extensive expertise in the area of SFG, which guides best practice and maximises the effectiveness of the curriculum, seems to be missing from the AMEP as a result of the many sacrifices that have been made over the years. In fact, ACTA predict that "On current trends, TESOL expertise at all levels – from schools to teacher educators and researchers – will be lost to Australian education within the next five years (ACTA, 2022, p. 12).

1. Future of the AMEP

In 2023, the AMEP contract is once again up for renewal. One of the key differences in the proposed new contract is a return to the nationwide adoption of a single curriculum. The chosen curriculum is not CSWE, but rather the licence-free EAL framework. As I have suggested in this paper, the EAL has the potential to be an appropriate alternative. However, as teachers and researchers have been arguing since the 1990s (Burns & Hood, 1994; Brindley, 2001; Yates, 2008), what is needed for the successful enactment of the curriculum framework is ongoing professional development provided by language experts. This is true today not only in the AMEP but also for supporting English as an Additional Language/ Dialect students in mainstream schools (ACTA, 2022). Since the EAL framework is derivative of the CSWE, and thus takes as its basis the theory of SFG, it is imperative that AMEP teachers have the opportunity to engage with and improve their knowledge and skills of SFG. A proactive rather than a reactive approach is needed: one in which professionals with advanced knowledge of SFG are engaged to help AMEP teachers understand the language requirements of the successful teaching and assessment of the curriculum framework.

The effectiveness of the EAL framework as a national AMEP curriculum remains to be seen. Being apparently quite derivative of the original CSWE, and with EAL's focus on explicit grammatical items, it seems like it could be an effective substitution. Following the CSWE, the EAL framework seems to retain the legacy of Halliday's linguistic research and the Sydney School (linguistics) in its organising principles. According to SFG, texts achieve their meaning and purpose through grammatical choices, the functions of which are best understood in their social contexts (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). These linguistic functions have a special metalanguage to describe them, which although complex, is a powerful and empowering way to make visible the intricate workings of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In order for AMEP teachers to be able to effectively teach SFG, special training and ongoing research and reflection is needed.

2. Conclusion

In this paper I have traced the evolution of the AMEP through various political landscapes to show the multifaceted ways in which it became a world leader in the field of EAL (Moore, 1995). I have argued that the introduction of the CSWE, with its theoretical foundations in SFG, was a game changer in terms of EAL pedagogy. I have also argued that its demise, brought about mostly by funding cuts and shifting political ideology, is lamentable. The decision to let AMEP providers choose their own curriculum, and more generally the contextual factors leading to this decision, have resulted in a significant decline in educational quality. Not only have certain alternative curriculum frameworks proven not to be fit for purpose (ACTA, 2019), but also the professional support and resources that were essential for effectively and efficiently enacting the curriculum have all but disappeared.

The AMEP, which was once an international champion in the field of EAL (Feez & Joyce, 2000; ACTA, 2022), has gradually deteriorated and now requires a concerted effort from its many stakeholders to return to its former glory. In order for this to occur, the role of SFG needs to be acknowledged in the curriculum, which includes remembering how many AMEP teachers across the nation once regarded its pedagogical value. SFG needs to be found and rescued before it is permanently lost in the ongoing conflict between educational values and economic rationalisation. Hopefully, this paper will make at least a small contribution to the pursuit of this important endeavour.

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