Teaching Secondary English Learners How to Corroborate Evidence-Based Historical Claims

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What is corroboration?

**corroboration**

/ˈkərəˌbreɪəˈræʃ(ə)n/  

noun

evidence that confirms or supports a statement, theory, or finding; confirmation.  
"there is no independent corroboration for this"
Many people rely on social media and other unreliable venues for their news which is indeed proving to be problematic as they can promote uncorroborated “fake news.”
For example ...

Noting how easily social networking accounts can be faked or hacked, the Pennsylvania Superior Court has ruled in a case of first impression that social media posts are inadmissible in criminal cases unless prosecutors can present evidence of who actually authored them.
In this presentation, my goal is to
- engage participants in an activity that evaluates and corroborates historical claims based on personal experiences and events;
- review key lessons from the SHEG curriculum website to demonstrate ways to build background knowledge while engaging EL students in corroborating evidence-based historical claims;
- analyze close reading techniques as a way to help ELs make meaning of abstract and complex historical text, while building upon prior knowledge and skills.
Why is that important? Because, as Dr. Jim Cummins (1981) has explained, social studies concepts are routinely abstract and often difficult for second language learners to comprehend. To fully understand social studies concepts, teachers need to build upon students' prior knowledge and skills in their first language to help them learn concepts in a second language. But how?
Quadrant B is most beneficial to EIs as it shows cognitively demanding lesson ideas that are contextualized.

We need to move lessons from the D quadrant to the B quadrant.
What does the Framework say?
“All students should engage meaningfully with and learn from challenging text.”

ELA/ELD Framework Figure 2.10
Primary Sources is one of the historical dimensions - ELs will need to be able to closely read and analyze primary source documents.
### Why Historical Thinking Matters

[http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/why.html](http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/why.html)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>why historical thinking matters</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>10</th>
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Using the questions historians ask about sourcing, contextualizing, close reading, and corroborating, we begin to see history as an inviting set of stories awaiting investigation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sourcing</strong></th>
<th>Considering a document's author and its creation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextualizing</strong></td>
<td>Situating the document and its events in place and time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Close Reading</strong></td>
<td>Reading carefully to consider what a source says and the language used to say it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corroborating</strong></td>
<td>Checking important details across multiple sources to determine points of agreement and disagreement</td>
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Social Studies Instruction for ELLs

One of the greatest challenges in helping English language learners (ELLs) master Social Studies content is the role of background knowledge. The resources below provide ideas and guidance for planning effective Social Studies lessons for ELLs as well as for choosing appropriate academic language and vocabulary.
The Role of Background Knowledge

One of the most critical components of helping English language learners (ELLs) succeed academically is the role of background knowledge. Lessons, reading passages, and test questions that assume prior knowledge or familiarity with a certain experience, person, or object may not be an appropriate tool for ELLs who lack the required background knowledge to understand the content.

To learn more about the role background knowledge plays and some ideas for identifying particular pieces of background knowledge that may be useful to review before a lesson, see the following articles, videos, and blog posts below.
Let's review a sample of history-social science model lessons about historical inquiry from “Reading Like a Historian,” a powerful SHEG curriculum developed by Dr. Sam Wineburg of Stanford University.

http://sheg.stanford.edu/rlh
How to Use the Lessons

The FREE 73 lessons in the U.S. curriculum, the 37 lessons in the world history curriculum, and the 5 lessons in the introduction to historical thinking unit, can be taught in succession. But these lessons are designed to stand alone and supplement what teachers are already doing in their classrooms. Most lessons take a full class period, though some extend over several. We will partially experience two of the lessons.
The goals of “Reading Like A Historian” is to equip teachers to help students develop process skills that enable them to engage in higher order thinking skills. Why teach these historical skills?:

1) Think critically and creatively
2) Understand the features of history
3) Develop empathy for historical events
4) Explore complex and abstract ideas with the teacher's guidance
5) Understand how historians re-construct past events using evidence to determine the significance of certain events
The curriculum follows a three-part structure: 1) Establish relevant background knowledge and pose the central historical question. 2) Students read documents, answer guiding questions or complete a graphic organizer; and, 3) Whole-class discussion about a central historical question. Teachers use strategies such as Opening Up the Textbook (OUT); Cognitive Apprenticeship; Inquiry; and, Structured Academic Controversy (SAC).
But what about Close Reading?

As Dr. Douglas Fisher explains:

Close reading isn’t in the Common Core State Standards. However, an analysis of the Common Core State Standards really says you’ve got to learn the text well. The Common Core State Standards require that students provide evidence and justification for their answers. The only way we know how students can do this – that they really learn to provide evidence and justification – is if they closely read.

Read the document 3 times – asking questions

(1) The first reading allows the reader to determine what a text says,

(2) The second reading allows the reader to determine how a text works, and

(3) The third reading allows the reader to evaluate the quality and value of the text (and to connect the text to other texts).
CLOSE READING

• What claims does the author make?
• What evidence does the author use?
• What language (words, phrases, images, symbols) does the author use to persuade the document’s audience?
• How does the document’s language indicate the author’s perspective?

LECTURA ATENTA

• ¿Qué afirmaciones hace el autor?
• ¿Qué evidencias usa el autor?
• ¿Qué lenguaje (palabras, imágenes, símbolos) usa el autor para convencer a los lectores del documento?
• ¿De qué forma muestra el lenguaje del documento la perspectiva del autor?
CORROBORATION

• What do other documents say?
• Do the documents agree? If not, why?
• What are other possible documents?
• What documents are most reliable?

CORROBORACIÓN

• ¿Qué dicen otros documentos?
• ¿Coinciden en su información? Si no, ¿por qué no?
• ¿Qué otros posibles documentos existen?
• ¿Qué documentos son los más fiables?
Evaluating Sources

☐ Inspected material object surface for dates, signatures, and symbols of authenticity.
☐ Examined primary source documents for missing pages or signs that someone has tampered with the manuscript.
☐ Demonstrated ability to distinguish between credible and unreliable or biased Internet sources.
☐ Verified author credentials or affiliations of interview subjects to ensure they are qualified experts on the topic of research.
☐ Distinguished between primary and secondary sources.

Analysis

☐ Analyzed primary sources and read between the lines. What motivated the writer? Who are the other people mentioned here? Is there a meaning behind the words that can be found?
☐ Analyzed findings and factual materials collected.
☐ Demonstrated ability to think critically.

Drawing Conclusions

☐ Stated conclusions consistent with evidence collected.
☐ Presented and shared results using multimedia storytelling tools.
Close Reading Discussion Starters When Reading and Analyzing Documents

Word Banks & Frames

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Expanding</th>
<th>Bridging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I/We think that...</td>
<td>I/We believe that...</td>
<td>My interpretation is...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The author said...</td>
<td>The author states...</td>
<td>The evidence shows...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some think/feel</td>
<td>Some disagree...</td>
<td>In contrast to...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also...</td>
<td>Similarly...</td>
<td>Likewise...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For example...</td>
<td>For instance...</td>
<td>To illustrate...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then...</td>
<td>As a result...</td>
<td>Hence...</td>
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Now let’s engage in two lessons that require corroborating skills...
In this lesson, we will focus on why historical accounts differ, and how and why people (and historians) who believe they are telling the truth can have different versions of the same event. How can students prove that their version of events is true?
Lesson Plan Handout & Activity

Snapshot Autobiography

What is history? And why do historical accounts differ? In this lesson, students create brief autobiographies and then reflect on the process to better understand how history is written. Why are some events included and others not? How does their version of events compare to others’ versions of the same event? Why do two historical accounts differ when both sides believe they are telling the truth? How would students prove that their version of events was true? Exploring these questions will give students insight into the nature of history and will prepare them to engage in historical thinking in future lessons.

[Lesson Plan updated on 9/23/14.]

Snapshot Autobiography

**Materials:** Copies of Snapshot Autobiography Project

**Note:** This lesson is designed to span two class periods.

**First Day Plan of Instruction:**
1. Journal free-write: What is the story of your birth?
   - **Note:** For various reasons, including adoption, some students may not know the story of their birth. We encourage you to keep this in mind throughout the lesson and offer students an alternative life event to write about if appropriate.
2. Pair/Share.
3. Whole class discussion:
   - *How do you know the story of your birth?*
   - *What evidence do you have to back your story?*
   - *How might someone else remember this story?*

**Homework:** Students finish pamphlets and interview someone for second perspective. (See second page of Snapshot Autobiography Project.)
Part I: Snapshot Autobiography

1) Take blank, regular size piece of paper and fold it so that it forms 3 panels (like a letter you’d mail). Counting front and back, you should have 6 panels.

2) The first panel is the cover for your Snapshot Autobiography.
   - Give your autobiography a title, for example, “Snapshots from the Life of Kathy.”
   - You may illustrate it if you wish.

3) On the back panel write a brief “About the Author” section. Include your name, place and date of birth, and anything else you want people of know about you. You may include a self-portrait if you like.

4) This leaves four panels. In the first of these panels, write about your birth. In the other three panels, you are going to write about important events that have shaped you as a person. This means that you are selecting a total of three important events (besides your birth) from your life.
   - You will be interviewing another person about one of these events, so make sure to pick at least one event that someone else knows about.
   - For each of these three events, write a narrative (story) describing what happened. Make sure you describe it from start to finish. Pretend that someone who doesn’t know you will be reading your story and trying to understand it. Be sure to include details!
   - Illustrate each event with a small, hand-drawn picture.
Part II: Homework: Snapshot Biography – Another Perspective

Now is your chance to talk to somebody else who remembers one of the important events you chose.

1) Select one of the events you wrote about.

2) Find somebody who remembers that event. For example, a parent, grandparent, sibling, or friend who will be familiar with the event you described.

3) Ask the person you chose to tell you their version of the story. In order to make sure that you are getting their version, ask them an open question about the event, for example, “Mom, do you remember when Jane and I started being friends in fifth grade? Can you tell me what you remember about when we met?”

• Take careful notes of the interview. Pay attention to which parts of their story are different from your own.
• Make sure to thank the interviewee for their participation in this project!

Name of the person being interviewed: ________________________________

Relation to you: ____________________________

Event from Snapshot Autobiography they will be corroborating (cross-checking):

__________________________

Interview Notes

__________________________

What do the two stories have in common?

__________________________

What is different about the two stories?

__________________________
Let’s debrief the Autobiography activity that you were able to finish. How do you think this activity will be relevant to your EL students and why in terms of tapping into background knowledge, making connections to students’ lives, and demonstrating why it is critical to use corroborated evidence to think and read like a historian?

Now let’s experience a central world history lesson. The topic is Nazi Propaganda, involving discrimination based on religious beliefs. Can EL students relate to this?
Did you know that Dr. Seuss had a reputation of infusing controversial, political, and racist messages in his books? For example...

Actual Dr. Seuss cartoon from 1941 criticizing America's policy on denying European Jews safe-haven during the Holocaust. Note the slogan on the Mother's shirt.
Central Historical Question:
How did the Nazi party convince 99% of Germans to vote in favor of the annexation of Austria?

Materials:
- Copies of Documents A-C
- Copies of Guiding Questions
- Nazi Propaganda PowerPoint

Plan of Instruction:

1. Before doing this lesson, students should have some background knowledge about the rise of the Nazi Party including the following:
   
   - After WWI, under the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was limited to a very small army. Furthermore, Germany was forbidden from uniting with Austria (as it had during WWI).
   
   - Many Germans were angry about the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. As Germany suffered economic collapse during the 1920s and 1930s, Germans began to look for a leader that could restore Germany to its former glory.
   
   - After becoming Chancellor of Germany in 1933, Hitler began to challenge the Versailles Treaty. In March of 1938, German troops moved into Austria in order to annex Austria and unite the two countries under Nazi rule.
   
   - In April of 1938, Germans and Austrians were given the opportunity to ratify the annexation in a public vote.
On March 12, 1938, the German army moved into Austria to annex the country. To justify the annexation, Hitler called for a public vote on whether the unification should stand. On April 10, 1938, Germans and Austrians voted overwhelmingly in favor of the Anschluss. In this lesson students analyze and compare three different forms of propaganda that influenced the vote — a speech delivered by Hitler, a campaign poster, and a voting ballot.

[Lesson Plan updated on 11/07/14.]

Image: 1938 Nazi referendum poster. From the Nazi Propaganda Archive.
Nazi Propaganda
The Annexation of Austria
Treaty of Versailles

Under the Treaty of Versailles, Germany:

- Ceded significant amounts of land
- Had to pay billions of dollars in reparations to allied countries
- Had to keep a small military

German delegates at Versailles
Germany’s Economic Collapse

Many Germans were angry about the terms of the treaty of Versailles.

Germany suffered economic collapse during the 1920s and 1930s.

Germans began to look for a leader that could restore Germany to its former glory.

Worthless money used as wallpaper
Annexation of Austria

Hitler became chancellor in 1933 and began to challenge the Versailles treaty.

In March of 1938, German troops moved into Austria in order to annex the country and bring it under Nazi rule.
In April of 1938, Germans and Austrians were given the opportunity to ratify the annexation in a public vote.
Vote Results

- When the votes were tallied, 98.9% of Germans and 99.71% of Austrians voted to ratify the annexation of Austria.

- Even given the unpopularity of the Treaty of Versailles, this seems like an incredible margin of victory.

- This has led historians to closely examine the tactics that Nazi leaders used to ensure their desired result on the referendum.
Central Historical Question

How did the Nazi Party convince 99% of Germans and Austrians to support the annexation of Austria?
Culminating Activity based on corroboration and evidence

Now let’s analyze evidence...

- What do other pieces of evidence say?
- Am I finding the same information everywhere?
- Am I finding different versions of the story? (If yes, why might that be?)
- Where else could I look to find out about this?
- What pieces of evidence are most believable?
In the space below write a paragraph that answers the question:
How did the Nazi Party convince 99% of Germans and Austrians to support the annexation of Austria?
(use evidence from all three documents in your answer)
Propaganda Posters

See examples of Propaganda Posters: + or - ?
http://constitutioncenter.org/learn/educational-resources/lesson-plans/creating-a-modern-day-propaganda-poster

Closing thoughts on the lessons and curriculum - Turn and talk to discuss the “Reading Like a Historian” curriculum.

When and how might you use these lesson activities in your classroom?

How does this curriculum provide access for English learners, especially secondary ELs?
Did Donald Trump support the Iraq War? Hillary Clinton says yes. He says no. Who's right?

In search of answers, many of us ask our kids to "Google" something. These so-called digital natives, who've never known a world without screens, are the household's resident fact-checkers. If anyone can find the truth, we assume, they can. Don't be so sure.

True, many of our kids can flit between Facebook and Twitter while uploading a selfie to Instagram and texting a friend. But when it comes to using the Internet to get to the bottom of things, Junior's no better than the rest of us. Often he's worse.

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2016/11/02/why-students-cant-google-their-way-to.html?print=1
The end!
Thank you for your time!

Feel free to contact me with any questions, and hopefully you will share your experiences using this curriculum.

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