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Interactional scaffolding in a first-grade classroom through the teaching–learning cycle

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ABSTRACT

Many educators are tasked with the dual responsibility of facilitating emergent to advanced bilingual students’ (EABs) content learning, while also simultaneously supporting students’ ongoing literacy and language development. One pedagogical tool that has garnered growing attention in recent decades is the teaching–learning cycle (TLC). This article presents a study that took place in a first-grade classroom that contained a number of EABs. Working in collaboration with the classroom teacher, we designed English language arts (ELA) units based on the TLC and analyzed the ways in which the teacher used interactional scaffolding applying this pedagogical approach to guide instruction for her EABs. We focused specifically on how the teacher’s interactional scaffolding moves engage students, and especially EABs, in the Detailed Reading, Deconstruction, and Joint Construction phases. We present study results, including excerpts of classroom discourse. This article demonstrates how the TLC can be used to facilitate a meaningful understanding of interactional scaffolding and its role in the TLC.

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KEYWORDS

Bilingual students; classroom discourse; content and language integrated learning (CLIL); ELL; teaching and learning cycle; interactional scaffolding

Over the past 10 years, the United States’ K-12 population has seen a dramatic increase in the number of students that enter school speaking a language other than English at home (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 2016). This demographic shift has numerous implications for education. Teachers need knowledge and practical ideas to address the unique academic needs of emergent to advanced bilingual students (EABs). Educators are tasked with the dual responsibility of facilitating EABs’ content learning, while also simultaneously supporting students’ ongoing literacy and language development (Schleppegrell 2004). Scholars have implemented various approaches for language and content integration in an attempt to provide teachers with the foundational knowledge and skills that they need to address the complex needs of this growing population. One pedagogical tool that has garnered growing attention is the teaching–learning cycle (TLC; Rose and Martin 2012), an instructional technique based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014).

This article presents a study that took place in a first-grade classroom that contained a number of EABs. Working in collaboration with the classroom teacher, we designed English language arts (ELA) content-and-language-integrated units based on the TLC and observed the ways in which the teacher used interactional scaffolding moves to engage students, and especially EABs, when applying this pedagogical approach. We focused on the Detailed Reading, Deconstruction and Joint Construction phases of the TLC, which provide students with the highest levels of interactional scaffolding, an instrumental aspect of classroom discourse for student engagement. We present study results,
including excerpts of classroom discourse that transpired during the activities. This article demonstrates the role of interactional scaffolding within the teaching–learning cycle. To our knowledge, the contribution of interactional scaffolding moves during the phases of the TLC has not been explored through empirical data. Interactional scaffolding is of particular interest in the analysis of the TLC due to the opportunities it provides for teachers to gauge students’ needs and respond appropriately in the moment, which has not been explored within the context of the TLC. Scaffolding is a major part of the type of support that teachers are supposed to give students during the various phases of the TLC, yet very little is known about the kind of interactional scaffolding moves that teachers use specifically within this model of writing instruction.

**Background**

Recognizing that language development and content knowledge are intricately intertwined, scholars have investigated approaches to integrating these two foundational components of learning into everyday classroom instruction (e.g. Lo 2017; Escobar Urmeneta 2013). One such approach draws on Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Schleppegrell 2004), a meaning-based theory of language that does not separately address language and content, but instead sees language as the realization of meaning in context. When applied to the classroom, this perspective puts the focus on content, helping teachers understand how language works to construct knowledge across disciplines. It offers a way of focusing on texts, going beyond general reading strategies to provide a means of tackling content-area texts, unpacking meanings, clause by clause, to examine how content is presented through language (Gebhard et al. 2013).

Inspired by SFL, genre-based pedagogy emerged as an approach to reading and writing instruction in classrooms across Australia and is now used in many other parts of the world (Rose and Martin 2012). This pedagogy focuses on teaching written genres as staged, goal-oriented, social processes through which different communicative purposes are achieved (Rose and Martin 2012). It offers a framework for preparing learners for the tasks they will eventually complete on their own, with the teacher gradually releasing control to learners over time. Genre-based pedagogy facilitates instructional contexts where language and meaning are taught explicitly (Christie and Derewianka 2008; de Oliveira, Klassen, and Maune 2015; Gebhard, Chen, and Britton 2014). This approach to language and literacy instruction provides a more equitable learning environment (Rose and Martin 2012), shifting the focus away from students’ differences, and instead preparing all students to do each task in a more democratic pedagogy (Martin and Rose 2005). This pedagogical approach has been implemented across content areas and teaching contexts, with the aim of enhancing literacy teaching and learning (e.g. Lorenzo 2013; Ramos 2014; Shum, Tai, and Shi 2018).

**The teaching–learning cycle (TLC)**

An SFL-oriented, genre-based pedagogy is often realized as a carefully designed set of activities, commonly referred to as the TLC. Originally developed by Rothery as a curriculum model (Rothery 1996), the TLC includes various phases that have evolved over time and have been modified by scholars, according to different educational contexts (e.g. Brisk 2015). The TLC used in this article (see Figure 1) starts with Detailed Reading (de Oliveira, Klassen, and Maune 2015; Derewianka and Jones 2016). Detailed Reading involves carefully selecting short passages from texts and guiding students to read them sentence-by-sentence. Because many ELA classrooms use trade books to build students’ knowledge, this phase of the TLC is critical for students to understand the books they read. Although we view Detailed Reading as a separate phase, some scholars have elected to combine it with the second phase in the TLC, Deconstruction (e.g. Rose 2015). We view Detailed Reading as a separate phase because it can be a focus along with any phase of the TLC.

During Deconstruction, teachers introduce mentor texts from a specific genre in which students are expected to read and write. The teacher uses demonstration, modeling, and discussions about
text purpose, organization, and language features in order to scaffold students’ understanding about language and meaning (Derewianka and Jones 2016). Teachers approach Deconstruction from various angles, sometimes incorporating graphic organizers (e.g. Brisk, Hodgson-Drysdale, and O’Connor 2011), facilitating whole-class discussions (e.g. Palincsar and Schleppegrell 2014), highlighting and underlining specific linguistic features (e.g. de Oliveira and Lan 2014; Schulze 2011), or drawing on manipulatives (Brisk and Zisselsberger 2011) to foster an understanding of language and content.

The next phase is Joint Construction, in which the teacher and students work together to create a new text in the same genre as the deconstructed mentor text. During this phase, teachers share responsibility with students, as they function as scribes, eliciting information and ideas from students to co-construct the text (Derewianka and Jones 2016). Joint Construction usually takes place as a whole-class collaborative writing activity (e.g. Caplan and Farling 2016; Gebhard, Harman, and Seger 2007), but it has also been implemented in small group and one-on-one settings (e.g. Harman 2013; Kerfoot and Van Heerden 2015). Regardless of the delivery method, this phase provides the teacher with a critical opportunity to demonstrate how different genre features come together to form a cohesive text.

A recent quasi-experimental intervention study (Hermansson et al. 2019) showed that the Joint Construction phase of the TLC did not significantly improve students’ narrative writing or increase length of the texts that students produced. Other studies, however, have shown the power of this phase at various levels of schooling, including elementary (de Oliveira and Lan 2014; Hodgson-Drysdale 2016), secondary (Humphrey and Feez 2016), and university (Caplan and Farling 2016). This article further supports the results presented in these studies about the benefits of Joint Construction and shows it as a very useful practice to support students’ writing development.

In the final two phases, students apply what they learned in the initial teacher-directed phases. Collaborative Construction provides students with additional scaffolding, as they work with their peers in partnerships or small groups (e.g. Chung and Walsh 2006; Woo, Chu, & Li, 2013). Collaborative construction is an opportunity for students to practice writing a new text in pairs or groups. In a sense, they are jointly constructing a new text, like in the Joint Construction phase, but this is not a whole-class activity; it is a pair/group activity that students work on together. This added phase is especially important for younger learners who are in the process of developing reading and writing skills but
can be used with students at any age. During Independent Construction, students write on their own and use their previous experiences and learning to individually create a text in the same genre (Dere-wianka and Jones 2016).

**Scaffolding students’ language and learning**

As teachers teach writing in the classroom, they often draw on scaffolding techniques to help students access academic language and written discourse (Johnson 2019; Walqui 2006). The construct of scaffolding posits that knowledge is created through interactions between the learner and a more knowledgeable other (e.g. teacher). In an effort to promote the use of scaffolding in the classroom, different scaffolding frameworks have emerged in the literature (see Athanases and de Oliveira 2014; de Oliveira and Athanases 2017). A scaffolding model proposed by Hammond and Gibbons (2005) is grounded in social theories of learning (Vygotsky 1978) and language (Halliday 1978; Hasan and Williams 1996). Hammond and Gibbons (2005) operationalize scaffolding as having two dimensions – macro and micro – which serve as a clear and inclusive means to integrate scaffolding in classrooms. The macro-level is a designed-in dimension or planned scaffolding and consists of the following elements: (a) prior knowledge, (b) task selection and sequencing, (c) participant structure, (d) semiotic systems, and (e) metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness. The micro-level is composed of interactional scaffolding which often takes place through the initiation-response-feedback (IRF) discourse sequence. This type of scaffolding involves teachers making explicit connections between students’ prior experiences and their current and future learning and their use of appropriation, recasting, cued elicitation, and recapping. For this article, we focus on interactional scaffolding.

Interactional scaffolding is instrumental in how teachers engage students in the classroom (see Figure 2). The moves of linking to prior experience and pointing to new experiences involve referencing students’ experiences, both in and out of school. Teachers are able to link students’ funds of knowledge (González, Moll, and Amanti 2005) to broader conceptual frameworks in the curriculum by connecting previous learning to current instruction and preparing students for what will follow.

Appropriating, recasting, and recapping students’ contributions take place when actively involving students in the construction of subject-specific discourse. During discussions or exchanges, teachers direct students’ contributions by means of summarizing or restating their ideas and employing more academically-appropriate discourse. Cued elicitation can further engage students in complex academic conversations, as teachers offer strong verbal or gestural hints about expected responses. In

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**Linking to prior experience and pointing to new experiences** – Referencing students’ experiences, both in and out of school; linking students’ experiences to broader conceptual frameworks in the curriculum by connecting previous learning to current instruction and preparing students for what will follow

**Recapping** – Summing up the major point of the interaction

**Appropriation** – Taking contributions (wordings, ideas, information) from students and building this into the discourse

**Recasting** – Putting what students say into academically appropriate discourse

**Cued elicitation** – Offering strong verbal or gestural hints about expected responses

**Increasing the prospectiveness** – In an IRF sequence, in the third move (Feedback), prolonging the talk and leading to longer, and more productive, sequences of meaning so students can say more

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**Figure 2.** Interactional scaffolding moves by Hammond and Gibbons (2005).
another move, called increasing the prospectiveness, teachers can ask for clarifications, probe a student’s response, or ask for a more detailed explanation of a particular point as ways of moving the conversation forward. All of these interactional scaffolding moves can be implemented as part of the feedback turn of the IRF sequence.

Work on the TLC has shown that interactive activities between teachers and students are critical, but little has been done to recognize the kinds of moves that teachers make when using interactional scaffolding in classrooms with bilingual students. Identifying interactional scaffolding can be a promising way to make explicit the types of interactions that need to go on when implementing the TLC in classrooms with bilingual students.

The study

Data for this article were taken from the implementation phase of a design-based research project (Barab and Squire 2004; Brown 1992; Design-Based Research Collective 2003), the goal of which was to systematically design and study the use of scaffolding strategies in TLC implementation across various ELA units. The implementation phase consisted of the classroom teacher carrying out lessons that were co-constructed in the selection and design phase. Examining this specific phase allowed us to observe and analyze Mrs Cabana’s lesson delivery, her scaffolding practices, and her students’ work.

This article focuses on the ways the teacher utilized interactional scaffolding during the initial phases of the TLC to guide ELA and language-integrated instruction for EABs and to support their understanding of language, answering the following research question: How does the application of an interactional scaffolding framework help identify effective teacher support in TLC practices with emergent to advanced bilingual students?

Context and participants

We conducted this study in a first-grade classroom in a diverse elementary school located in a large urban district in the Southeastern United States. This school houses an International Studies Magnet Program that provides instruction in two languages (e.g. English/Spanish, English/French, or English/German), with a clear focus on bilingual and biliteracy development. With over 50 countries and numerous languages represented in the student body, this school has been nicknamed a ‘mini United Nations’.

Participants in this study included one bilingual teacher and 23 students in a first-grade classroom (all names are pseudonyms). We purposefully selected the teacher, Mrs Cabana, based on our existing relationship with her. She had previously worked as a clinical teacher with our University’s undergraduate teacher candidates and had expressed interest in research. Even with 12 years of experience at multiple elementary grade levels, Mrs Cabana was eager to continue in her learning and professional development. Students consisted of 13 boys and 10 girls between the ages of six and seven, two of whom were classified as Level 4 ESOL students. A Level 4 ESOL student is considered at the ‘Expanding’ level and typically are able to combine the elements of the English language in complex, cognitively demanding situations and use English as a means for learning in academic areas. Two other students had recently arrived from Brazil and had yet to be evaluated for ESOL services; however, Mrs Cabana suspected that they would meet the qualifying criteria. Furthermore, there were several bilingual students from Italy, Spain, United Arab Emirates, and countries all over Latin America, resulting in a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom.

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected across six ELA units that incorporated the TLC. These units took place throughout the 2016–2017 school year and differed in length, depending on the nature of the unit (e.g. one to
three weeks). We use the term unit to refer to a series of lessons related to the same picturebook. For the duration of each unit, a member of our research team was present to observe and collect all relevant data. This data collection occurred during the daily 90-minute block designated for ELA instruction. Our team met on a weekly basis to discuss our observations and ongoing data collection efforts. The data analyzed for this study arose from the implementation phase of this project and included audio recordings of classroom observations and corresponding field notes from two ELA units.

To analyze the data, we reviewed all transcripts and developed emerging categories and themes. Guided by our theoretical framework, we repeatedly reviewed and analyzed the teacher’s use of interactional scaffolding moves across classroom episodes focused on the TLC. First, we independently examined the data and recorded our initial impressions vis-a-vis interactional scaffolding. We then came together to compare and discuss our recordings to ensure interpretive convergence (Saldaña 2016). Drawing on inductive and deductive methods, we identified examples of interactional scaffolding across the classroom episodes. Using the interactional scaffolding framework from Hammond and Gibbons (2005) along with constant-comparative methods (Merriam 1998), we developed a matrix of practices as a result of our repeated analysis of these episodes, which we then used to write up our results. The transcripts of classroom observations were analyzed to focus specifically on the interaction between the teacher and students. Data analysis concentrated on the ways the teacher’s use of the initial phases of the TLC supported students’ understanding of ELA content and language, specifically focusing on her use of interactional scaffolding moves. We focused on the initial phases Detailed Reading, Deconstruction and Joint Construction because they provide students with the highest levels of interactional scaffolding. Together, these categories for interactional scaffolding practices allowed us to highlight moves previously identified in the literature while simultaneously remaining open to new moves that might emerge.

**Results**

This section presents the teacher’s use of interactional scaffolding throughout the initial phases of the TLC – the Detailed Reading, Deconstruction, and Joint Construction phases – to guide ELA and language-integrated instruction with EABs. The first part of this section captures the Detailed Reading of a biographical text to build background knowledge in preparation for the Joint Construction of an argument text, and the second part presents the Deconstruction and Joint Construction of a recount. The selection of these genres was due to the emphasis on argument and recount in first grade. The purpose of the argument genre (specifically exposition) is to persuade an audience to agree with a position on an issue (de Oliveira, Jones, and Smith 2020). The overall structure of the argument genre is Thesis, Arguments, and Reinforcement of the Thesis. The purpose of the recount genre is to retell a sequence of events. The recount genre has as an overall structure of Orientation and Record of Events.

We report on different phases of the TLC to show how the teacher consistently used interactional scaffolding moves with her bilingual students. Because Joint Construction is such a critical phase of the TLC and often missing in writing instruction in the US (Caplan and Farling 2016), we used examples of this phase for both genres. We focused on Detailed Reading for one genre and Deconstruction for the other genre to show the interactional scaffolding moves in these different phases of the TLC along with Joint Construction.

Our analyses found that Mrs Cabana used the interactional scaffolding moves described in Hammond and Gibbons (2005), but additional ones as well. We build on their model by adding five moves (in bold and italics) to the original framework based on the results of the study. Four of the added moves provide a finer-grained level of analysis for increasing the prospectiveness, to show explicitly how the teacher provides students with opportunities to say more (moving the conversation forward), follows-up so a student can add new information or expand on their answer (probing), adds to the contributions (elaboration), and clarifies (clarification). The move purposeful repetition was added because it was an important move that came out of our data analysis, and was not a
move present in Hammond and Gibbons (2005). We introduce them in Figure 3 and further explain each one as they occur in the examples provided in this section.

The interactional scaffolding move moving conversation forward is used when Mrs Cabana provides students with opportunities to say more by asking why, how, and what questions. This allows the whole class to participate more and expand their answers. It is not targeted at individual students. Probing is used as a follow-up after a student responds to an initial question, allowing the student to add new information or expand on their answer. With probing, the teacher typically is interacting with individual students. Elaboration refers to when the teacher supplements contributions with additional information, typically of a more personal nature, with examples from experience, or provides further explanation when discussing a specific topic or concept. The move clarification occurs when the teacher clarifies what students say, typically when students provide an answer that the teacher and/or students are not sure about. Purposeful repetition is used to draw attention; the teacher repeats so all can hear and provides cues to self-correct or extend thoughts. All of these additional moves were salient in Mrs Cabana’s classroom discourse and are exemplified next.

**Detailed reading and joint construction of an argument genre**

The ELA unit centered around the focal text Johnny Appleseed (Harrison 2001) was integrated with topics (e.g. geography, American history) from their social studies curriculum. This text is designated as a level 2.4, according to the Accelerated Reader (AR) program, which indicates that it could likely be read by a student whose reading skills are at the level of a second grader during the fourth month of school. This picturebook is part of a series of early reader biographical texts designed to engage young learners as they begin independent reading (Penguin Random House 2018). This biography told from a third-person point of view portrays the journey of Johnny Appleseed as he sets off across the frontier, planting apple orchards along the way. This text helps children discover both facts and myths about Johnny Appleseed (Harrison 2001).

Mrs Cabana used this unit to provide the students access to complex language features that were present in this above-grade level text through a Detailed Reading and jointly constructed text that was directly related to this picturebook. During the Detailed Reading phase, Mrs Cabana elected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moving conversation forward</th>
<th>– Provides students with opportunities to say more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Probing</td>
<td>– Follows-up after a student responds to an initial question, allowing a student to add new information or expand on their answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>– Supplements contributions with additional information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification</td>
<td>– Clarifies what students say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposeful repetition</td>
<td>– Draws attention, repeats so all can hear, and provides cues to self-correct or extend thoughts</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Figure 3.** Interactional scaffolding moves used by Mrs Cabana in ELA content and language-integrated lessons.
to focus on several aspects of the picturebook. She drew students’ attention to the illustrations and the information that can be gathered from them. She also highlighted different vocabulary and figurative language used by the author and discussed how these word choices affected meaning. The excerpt below captures some of the interactions from this Detailed Reading.

Excerpt #1

1. Mrs. Cabana: Since last week I have been thinking about this one line that we read in Johnny Appleseed. It’s on page 19. If you look at the illustration you see where Johnny Appleseed is holding the seeds. I see something glowing around them. Who has ever had an apple before?

2. Students: [All the students raise their hands.]

3. Mrs. C: Have you ever seen the seeds?

4. Ss: [Multiple students call out mixed answers over each other, including, ’Yes!’ and ’I ate them!’]

5. Mrs. C: I want you to think about the time that you held or you looked at your apple seeds. Now look at Johnny. When he holds his seeds, what do you see glowing around his seeds?


7. Mrs. C: Has anyone ever seen apple seeds with gold around them?

8. Ss: [Multiple students call out mixed answers over each other.]

9. Mrs. C: Go back to page 19 and reread it to yourself and tell me what the author says about the seeds. ’He grinned as if the seeds were gold.’ (Harrison 2001, 19). What does the author say about the seeds? Turn to a neighbor and tell them what the author says about the seeds.

10. Ss: [Students talk to each other while Mrs. Cabana circulates, listens to conversations, and provides feedback.]

11. Mrs. C: I want to hear what you are thinking and sharing with your partner. Who would like to share? What was the author trying to say? Does the author mean the seeds were really gold or does he mean something else?

12. Student 2: He means something else.

13. Mrs. C: Okay. Can you tell me why you think that? Or, what do you think the author means?

14. Student 2: He means that it ’s gold for him.

15. Mrs. C: Okay. Any other ideas?

16. Student 3: It looks like gold, but it ’s not really gold.

17. Mrs. C: Okay, so what does that mean? Gold is what to people? ’As if they were gold … ’ We used a really important word last week and it starts with a V. We talked about how gold is a way to show that there is a lot of what? A long time ago when people had gold, they were very …


19. Mrs. C: Gold was very …

20. Ss: Valuable!

21. Mrs. C: We talked about how gold might not be valuable to everyone. Valuable is something that is important to you and something that is very special.

During this exchange, Mrs Cabana challenged students to interpret the figurative language and infer meaning from both the written text and the corresponding images (e.g. turn 5). She used varied participant structures so that all students had the opportunity to contribute their ideas to the conversation (turn 9). Mrs Cabana utilized aspects of interactional scaffolding to move the conversation forward (turn 15), drawing heavily on probing (turn 13) and cued elicitation (turns 17 and 19). Probing is used as
Dr. Pearson is a valuable person at Sunnyside Elementary. **One reason** that she is important for the school is because she helps the teachers be exciting. **Another reason** is that she makes important decisions that make the school better.

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**Figure 4.** Jointly constructed text displayed on the interactive whiteboard.

...
4. Mrs. C: How she’s valuable. Remember, we talked about that word valuable. First, we are thinking about what made us think about Dr. Pearson. Mrs. Cabana had told you to think about a person that is valuable in our school and we said Dr. Pearson. So, we want to put our ideas together in a sentence. Who wants to give it a try?

5. Student 3: Dr. Pearson treats this whole school like a pot of gold.

6. Mrs. C: That’s fantastic. I love that sentence. Now, does that sentence tell you what Mrs. Cabana told you to think about? Remember, Mrs. Cabana told you to think about someone who is valuable to our school and you all picked Dr. Pearson. […] I need those two ideas in a sentence together. [No responses. Students appear to be struggling.] Dr. Pearson is a … do we want to use special or valuable because that was our topic?

7. Ss: Valuable

8. Mrs. C: She’s a valuable person or principal?

9. Ss: [mixed responses – some say principal, some say person.]

10. Mrs. C: Well, we are talking about our school, and how many principals do we have?

11. Ss: One.

12. Mrs. C: One. So, since we are talking about our school and one main principal, I think for this sentence it might be a good idea to use person. Dr. Pearson is a valuable person at …

13. Ss: At the school.

14. Mrs. C: At school or at Sunnyside Elementary?

15. Ss: Sunnyside Elementary. [Mrs. Cabana types the first up the first sentence on the board, and the students copy it on their own papers.]

16. Mrs. C: Now, let’s go to the reasons. Why is she important? We need to look at the bubbles now. Who can give me the first reason?

17. […]

18. Mrs. C: So, we can start off with one reason or we can say first. Which do you like better?

19. Ss: [mixed responses – some say one reason, and others say first.]

20. Mrs. C: One reason what? She likes baseball? One reason she is …

21. Student 5: Valuable!

22. Mrs. C: One reason she is …. We can switch the word, maybe not valuable, but important. One reason she is important for the school is because …

23. Student 6: She helps to make the school the best school ever.

24. Mrs. C: Look at the first bubble

25. Student 6: She helps the teachers be exciting.

26. Mrs. C: [Types up the second sentence on the board, and students copy it on their own papers.]

During this Joint Construction, the teacher used guided interactions to help facilitate students’ understanding of the language features of the argument genre. Mrs Cabana chose the more familiar ‘topic sentence’ to refer to the Thesis stage of the genre, as this is a common terminology used across first grade. First-grade teachers at the school use ‘topic sentence’ to refer to the beginning of each paragraph. Language features of the argument genre include abstract and generalized nouns, transitional phrases that link ideas, and beginning of paragraphs that refer to thesis through shared vocabulary. Drawing on their previously co-constructed plan, Mrs Cabana used interactional scaffolding moves to link to prior experiences (turns 1; ‘remember, your topic sentence … ’), move the conversation forward (turn 1 – ‘what are we saying about her? Why are we writing this?’), probe for additional
details (e.g. turns 12 – ‘Dr. Pearson is a valuable person at …’ and 14 – ‘At school or at Sunnyside Elementary’), and refine word choices (e.g. turns 6–12). She used purposeful repetition (turn 12 – ‘one’) to emphasize the answer. By explicitly discussing the words person and principal, she helped students see how the nuances of meanings can change as we make different choices, through shared vocabulary. With the words school and Sunnyside Elementary, Mrs Cabana recast the student’s more general word choice to the specific school name, important features for this genre. She was very intentional about focusing students’ attention on the transitional phrases, providing an opportunity for students to think through this aspect of language while simultaneously highlighting the phrases on the interactive whiteboard.

**Deconstruction and joint construction of a recount genre**

The ELA unit centered around the book *Last Stop on Market Street* (de la Pena 2015) was co-developed by the research team and Mrs Cabana. This book is about a boy named CJ riding the bus with his grandma. CJ asks several questions which are answered in an inspiring way by grandma, who helps him appreciate the community around them. Mrs Cabana engaged students in discussions about the book to explore the main topics and events. This unit included Detailed Reading, Deconstruction, Bridging Reading to Writing, and Joint Construction. *Bridging Reading to Writing* was an additional phase that was added as we were designing the unit because Mrs Cabana felt that her first grade students would need additional practice recounting the events of the story. This also ensured that EABs would be more prepared for the other phases of the TLC.

For the Deconstruction phase, the research group and Mrs Cabana collaboratively constructed a mentor text that captured the major events of *Last Stop*. Mrs Cabana displayed the mentor text on the board and used it to discuss different aspects including language used, topic sentence, common and proper nouns, and transitions. Mrs Cabana began the Deconstruction process by displaying the mentor text on the smart board for everyone to see. The mentor text is below.

> CJ had a busy day on Sunday! First, CJ and Nana went to church. After church, CJ and Nana waited for the bus in the rain. When CJ and Nana got on the bus, they saw many different people. CJ listened to the music played by the guitar player. After the song, CJ dropped a coin in the man’s hat. Then, CJ heard the bus driver call for the ‘last stop on Market Street.’ Soon after, CJ and Nana stepped off the bus and walked down the sidewalk. CJ noticed that it was dirty, but then he saw a perfect rainbow over their soup kitchen. Once CJ saw everyone inside, he told Nana that he was glad they came.

She read this out loud with students. She pointed out whole text features and asked students about the paragraph format and the indent of the first line. After reading the text, she began to ask students questions about what they liked from the writing. They provided various responses such as ‘the rainbow’ and ‘the coin in the man’s hat.’ Mrs Cabana then started to point out important features of the writing, highlighting ‘topic sentence’, a concept with which students were already familiar. The recount genre has as an overall structure of Orientation and Record of Events. Language features include sequences in time, individual nouns, and transition or time phrases to help organize the text (de Oliveira, Jones, and Smith 2020).

**Excerpt #3**

1. Mrs. C: Let’s look at some of the great things the author did. Great writing always starts with some sort of topic, some sort of catcher to get us hooked on the reading … All good writing catches a reader’s attention … what sentence here catches your attention? Gets you ready to read, makes you ready to read? Where do you find that sentence? Marcos?

2. Marcos: [reads] CJ had a busy day on Sunday.

3. Mrs. C: Ok, good, I’m gonna highlight it in yellow. Very good, boys and girls. Notice that first sentence. Let’s read it together. Ready, set, go. [Mrs. Cabana and students read ‘CJ had a busy day on Sunday.’] What kind of punctuation mark does this sentence end with?
4. Ss: An exclamation mark.

5. Mrs. C: An exclamation mark. There’s a lot of feeling in this sentence. Does this sentence hook us? Does it make us wonder … like have a lot of questions?

6. Ss: No.

7. Mrs. C: We know the story about CJ.

8. Student 1: [reads] CJ had a busy day on Sunday.

9. Mrs. C: ‘CJ had a busy day on Sunday’. When I read that sentence, that makes me wonder, what did he do? Why was he busy? What happened? Remember when we talked about this too, when we are writing we have to pretend that we’ve never heard this before … we have to pretend that we’ve never heard this story before, ok? That way we know that we have all of the important details that we might want to say This that I highlighted in yellow, what kind of sentence is this? A /t-t-t/.

10. Ss: A telling sentence.

11. Mrs. C: It’s not a telling sentence.


13. Mrs. C: There’s a lot of feeling in that sentence. Different teachers will call it different sentences. I’m going to call it today a topic sentence. Does it tell you exactly what CJ did?

14. Ss: No.

15. Mrs. C: No. It just gives you the idea that CJ did a lot. It’s a sentence that gives us some information but doesn’t tell us exactly what happened. Some people in fourth grade might call it a hook. Like a fishing hook? Has anybody gone fishing before? You put a little bait on the end of the fishing rod. This one is called topic sentence [writes topic on board], but some people will call it a hook. It’s gonna capture your reader like if you were fishing. They’re gonna wonder, what happened next?

In this excerpt, Mrs Cabana used several interactional scaffolding elements. She started the Deconstruction of the mentor text phase by leading students in a discussion about the topic sentence. She asked students questions and they answered as part of the discussion. In turn 4, she used purposeful repetition. In turn 5, Mrs Cabana repeated students’ contributions and added an explanation, an example of elaboration on what this particular topic sentence was doing. She then continued to ask questions, consistently repeating students’ contributions purposefully in order to elaborate on their answers or ask more questions. In turn 15, she was referencing students’ out-of-school experiences with fishing. She ended this turn by providing an important question for the construction of a recount genre: What happened next?

**Excerpt #4**

1. Mrs. C: I wanna show you something else. This author did something that I really liked. This author used words to help organize our events. We had a lot of events in the story, we know that right? CJ waits in the rain for the bus, CJ listens to the man playing the music, CJ gets to the soup kitchen. But the author didn’t just say it like that. The author put some other words in here.

2. Carolina: After.


5. Mrs. C: You saw the word after? Carolina you saw this one, ‘after the church’?

7. Mrs. C: Ok, good. We are highlighting it. Anything else? That was one way to organize it.

8. Sarah: After the song.

9. Mrs. C: Ok, after the song, good. Come here and highlight it. Let’s see if any of our buddies can find… So far, we see after the church, after the song. So, Carolina is suggesting that these keywords help organize our events. Saying AFTER something… so AFTER church, AFTER the song. That’s one way… let’s see if there’s another one.

10. Isela: Soon after.

11. Mrs. C: Let’s see if there is another one. Isela, come on up. What did you find? It might not be after, it might be something else. So, let’s see. What do you see? [Isela goes to board.]

12. Mrs. C: Let’s highlight that ‘soon after,’ and there’s a comma there. Ok, very good. That one is giving us another way to let us know there’s another event coming.

[T and Ss continue discussion and find the word ‘first’ in the second sentence]

13. Mrs. C: How many of you also agree that first is a word that can be used to put things in order? Yeah, I agree too. Highlight it. Very good. Highlight first with the comma behind it.

Mrs Cabana continued the mentor text Deconstruction by asking students to focus on a key aspect of the recount genre: words to help organize our events. Following, in turn 2, one student, Carolina, identified after as one word that helps organize events. Mrs Cabana used cued elicitation when asking Carolina to repeat so all could hear. In turn 7, Mrs Cabana made sure students know what they are doing and asked anything else to continue the exploration, an example of moving the conversation forward.

In turn 9, Mrs Cabana continued the exploration and then summarized So far, we see after the church, after the song while continuing to affirm Carolina’s answer and summarizing what they have done so far. This is a clear example of recapping, briefly summarizing the major points of the interaction. In turn 12, Mrs Cabana ended this extended discussion with another affirmation, Ok, very good, and a summary That one is giving us another way to let us know there’s another event coming.

Excerpt #5

1. Mrs. C: So, let’s take a look, so far, we have first, after church, after the song, soon after. Was there anybody else that noticed another phrase, remember, phrase is a group of words. [Sarah raises her hand.] Sarah, do you want to come and whisper to Mrs. Cabana? [Sarah goes to the front and whispers to the teacher.]

2. Mrs. C: She’s looking at this part, right here [Mrs. C reads] ‘but then he saw a perfect rainbow over their soup kitchen’. There is a little word there that she’s looking at. Who can guess? Paulo?


4. Mrs. C: There you go! Then. So highlight it. Then, are there any other ‘thens’ in this writing? Miguel, come on up, any other thens that you see? Then is another great word to organize writing. Do you see one more? This is fun. We are writing detectives. [Teacher and students read paragraph again.]

5. Miguel: [reads] Then, CJ heard the bus driver.

[Mrs. Cabana brainstorms with students other words that can be used to organize information]

6. Mrs. C: What do these words help us do? They help us put those things in what?

7. Miguel: Put in order.

8. Mrs. C: Say it again, Miguel, shout it from the rooftop!


10. Mrs. C: The things that he means are the events. It helps us put the events in order. So, we can call these time order words. You wanna learn the fourth-grade fancy word for it? In fourth grade, they call them transitional words, everybody say transitional words. [Students repeat, ‘Transitional words.’] Sometimes they call them phrases because it’s more than one word. A phrase is more than one word. That’s in fourth grade.
In turn 1 of Excerpt #5, Mrs Cabana started out with a ‘summing up’ of the series of exchanges, recapping what they had been discussing. In turn 1, Mrs Cabana offered a definition for phrase, part of the metalanguage that she was introducing to students. In turn 2, Mrs Cabana used the move clarification to explain what Sarah was doing so all students could understand. In turn 4, Mrs Cabana asked questions to one of the students, Miguel, which served the function of moving the conversation and work forward. She ended the extended discussion with an IRF sequence with the Initiation as the question (turn 6) What do these words help us do? They help us put those things in what?, a Response from Miguel (turn 7) put in order, and Feedback from Mrs Cabana (turn 8) Say it again, Miguel, shout it from the rooftop! which students responded (turn 9) Put those things in order. In turn 10, Mrs Cabana provided elaboration by further explaining what things Miguel was referring to, events, and reminded students that those words help us put the events in order.

A major part of the TLC is a shared experience, and Mrs Cabana brainstormed with students ways that they could help the community, as CJ, the main character, helped at the soup kitchen with his grandma. The students voted and decided that they would collect food items to make Thanksgiving baskets for the ‘Feed South Florida’ initiative which provides food and other resources to those who need it. Students brought in their own donations and solicited donations from other students and staff members at the school. This shared experience was used as a springboard for joint construction.

For the Joint Construction phase, Mrs Cabana told students that she had not been able to speak with the principal but would like to let her know about what they are doing:

Mrs. Cabana has not been able to speak to Dr. Pearson about the project we’re doing, so what we need to do is that we’re going to have to write to her a letter telling her what we’ve done because if today she walks around the school and sees these posters up, she’s gonna say, what is this?

The teacher and students proceed to plan and do the Joint Construction.

**Excerpt #6**

1. Mrs. C: what were we planning? A way to do what? We were planning a way to help …

2. Sts: The community!

3. Ms. C: Okay? So … we … [Writing on computer.] OK, I’m going to do this. I’m just gonna put the word in here … First …

4. Student 1: But we have to write first?

5. Ms. C: So we’re gonna write together now … yes! First, [Typing on computer.] we planned, or we thought?

6. Ss: we thought!

7. Mrs. C: We thought about ways to help the community [Mrs. C starts writing on computer.] Should we say the community or our community?

8. Ss: Our community!

9. Ms. C: So, I’m going to change this word … take out the and put our community. Perfect! OK, put this in your planner! [Continues after answering a question about formatting from a student.]

10. Mrs. C: What transition words did we use here? What time order word did we use? We talked about this … Which of these words lets us know …

11. Student 2: Oh, first!

12. Ms. C: First, good! [Ms. C gives directions to individual students and works with their spelling.]

13. Ms. C: Boys and girls, when you’re copying a long word, here is what Ms. Cabana likes to do, I like to look up at the word and pick three or four letters – T-H-O – and then I look down – T-H-O … U-G-H, like that!
Ms. C continues working with individual students. Students are writing in their planners what she is writing on the computer and projecting on the screen]

14. Ms. C: OK! Back together now! Boys and girls, let’s go ahead and focus on what we did next! So, the first thing we did was we thought about ways to help our community. What happened after that? What happened after we thought about ways to help our community?

15. Ms. C: [After a brief discussion about the different ways they thought about helping the community] What were we making? You wrote it on your poster! What were we making?

16. Ss: Thanksgiving baskets!

This exchange from Excerpt #6 exemplifies how the Joint Construction phase took place in the classroom. Mrs Cabana started out (turn 1) by using cued elicitation with what were we planning? A way to do what? We were planning a way to help … She engaged students in conversation by offering a strong verbal hint about expected responses. In turn 10, Mrs Cabana asked students about transition words/time order words, referring back to the Deconstruction that happened a few days before this, linking to prior experiences and pointing to new experiences. In turn 12, Mrs Cabana repeats first, an example of purposeful repetition. After a brief discussion about the various ways to help the community that they had brainstormed, in turn 15 Mrs Cabana asked questions to remind students about what they were making, another example of cued elicitation. The Joint Construction continued for another 20 min, with similar moves to the ones in Excerpt #6. Mrs Cabana ends this with the following:

Excerpt #7

1. Mrs. C: Alright, let me have … Sit … 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Before we leave, let’s read our planner together. Ms. C is not going to read this time, just you all. I’ll point. Ready, set, go!

2. ALL: [reading from planners] Dear Dr. Pearson,
   First, we thought about ways to help our community. Next, we decided to collect food to make Thanksgiving baskets to give to the people that need it. Lastly, we made posters to tell the other first-graders to bring in food for our baskets.

3. Mrs. C: Round of applause! This is a beautiful piece of writing [Proceeds to ask students to give planners to the student teacher] Fantastic!

The finished product is read out loud by all of the students together. In turn 3, Mrs Cabana affirmed everyone’s work with Round of applause! This is a beautiful piece of writing … Fantastic!

Discussion

This article focused on the ways a teacher utilized interactional scaffolding during the initial phases of the TLC to guide ELA and language-integrated instruction for EABs. To answer the research question ‘How does the application of an interactional scaffolding framework help identify effective teacher support in TLC practices with emergent to advanced bilingual students?’ we now turn to a discussion of the main findings.

Throughout both of the ELA units, Mrs Cabana used interactional scaffolding in phases of the TLC to support students’ understanding of language. Though the two units differed, both in their instructional goals and lesson delivery, the teacher consistently leveraged this pedagogical tool to scaffold instruction for her diverse learners, including EABs. We focused our discussion on the initial phases of the TLC and their implementation, but the teacher used all phases throughout the year in various ways. Utilizing the TLC flexibly allows teachers to respond to classroom needs according to the time of the year when students need more support for deconstruction and joint construction and moving towards more independence as they become more familiar with the genres of schooling.
At times, she would choose to ‘zoom out’ and focus on the overall structure of a genre. At other times, she would ‘zoom in’ on specific features within the genre (e.g. word choice).

Mrs Cabana integrated the ELA content with a focus on language throughout the TLC phases. For example, discussing topic sentences and exclamation marks (Excerpt #3) and genre features such as the important events of a recount (Excerpt #4) are examples of ELA content that has been integrated with discussion of language features. Narrowing the focus to zoom in on particular language features allowed Mrs Cabana to not only showcase the overall structure of the text, but also to highlight how meaning and voice are intentionally created in each genre through genre-specific vocabulary and phrasing. Together, Mrs Cabana’s navigation between these broad and narrow foci provided students with a more holistic view of the genres being studied.

The excerpts we used to show the various phases of the TLC demonstrated that Mrs Cabana consistently used the pattern of affirmation and summary to show knowledge accumulation. The summary functioned as a recapping move, in which the teacher summarized major points of the interaction. Students were actively engaged in shared construction of knowledge with the teacher, but they also actively supported other students’ learning. During Detailed Reading and Deconstruction, Mrs Cabana helped students really digest what was happening in the text. During Detailed Reading of the argument genre, she zoomed in on the meaning of one particular as if clause. During Detailed Reading, the interactional scaffolding moves used consisted primarily of probing, cued elicitation, and moving the conversation forward. During Joint Construction of the argument genre, Mrs Cabana chose to zoom out drawing students’ attention to planning supporting details for their selected topic. She also zoomed in by pointing out different language features, specific vocabulary, and word choices. She elicited synonyms and details from the students, discussing how these linguistic choices help create meaning and constantly used interactional scaffolding moves to push forward the production of the text: moving the conversation forward and purposeful repetition.

During the second unit on the recount genre, Mrs Cabana called students’ attention to how the text was organized, highlighting how the introductory sentence was used in the mentor text during the Deconstruction phase. During this phase, Mrs Cabana worked with students to take note of different word choices in the model and mentor texts and how these phrases affected meaning. It was during the Deconstruction phase that she used the most varied interactional scaffolding moves. She consistently used purposeful repetition, cued elicitation, elaboration, moving the conversation forward, recapping, and clarification. As she continued with the Joint Construction, she also zoomed out during planning, facilitating a discussion where the class identified the topic and main events for their narrative recount. She focused on the transitional words that helped sequence their recount and contribute to the overall text structure. She also spent a considerable amount of time working with the students to provide additional details that were more specific. In addition to cued elicitation, Mrs Cabana asked questions to help students recall and remember what they had done before, using the interactional scaffolding move linking to prior experience and pointing to new experiences. The broad focus on the organizational structure of these two genres appeared to help students understand how each one was uniquely organized in order to achieve their social purposes.

The extended framework of interactional scaffolding that we used in this article with the five additional moves moving conversation forward, probing, elaboration, clarification, and purposeful repetition helped us identify the most salient moves used by the teacher. Based on these findings, we can say that the interactional scaffolding move cued elicitation was the most used across phases. It was used at the beginning of the phases when the teacher was connecting to previous lessons or tasks. Most significantly, she used it to ensure participation from all students. This is a very significant finding as this move is used so that specific students, who would otherwise perhaps lack the confidence to participate in these phases, were provided with very strong support to do so. Our results also indicate that Mrs Cabana was not simply using verbal or gestural hints to elicit expected responses, but rather that such cued elicitation was carefully targeted to specific students, such as her EABs, and used for specific purposes.
Conclusion

This article presented the results of a study in a first-grade classroom with emergent to advanced bilingual students. We worked in collaboration with Mrs Cabana to design ELA units based on the TLC and examined the ways in which she used the Detailed Reading, Deconstruction and Joint Construction phases of the TLC. We showed how the teacher provided students with interactional scaffolding and a focus on ELA content and language during lessons. This article demonstrated how the TLC can be used to facilitate a meaningful understanding of language for EABs to access the content and language of a specific subject area.

This article provides a novel perspective in examining interactional scaffolding moves within the TLC. The extended interactional scaffolding framework provides a more nuanced structure for examination of classroom discourse moves. The article also adds to the literature on genre-based pedagogies from an SFL perspective, especially expanding in the US context over the past 15 years (e.g. Brisk 2015; Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014). It also contributes to work on language and content integration in classrooms (e.g. Escobar Urmeneta 2013).

This study has several limitations. These include the scope of the single case that was studied and that the case was limited to one first-grade teacher. Including additional elementary teachers as well as moving the research into middle and high school classrooms would provide broader evidence for the use of interactional scaffolding and the implementation of the TLC in elementary and secondary classrooms.

Suggestions for further research include identifying the effects of what the teacher was doing on the learners’ participation and expanding this research into other grade levels. In addition, expanding the study to other elementary classrooms with students from a variety of language backgrounds and various English language proficiency levels would be beneficial to investigate how different interactional scaffolding moves work best for EABs’ participation in classroom discourse. While the focus of this study was on what the teacher was doing in classroom instruction, other studies could focus more on students’ interactions and collaborative work in the context of genre-based pedagogies.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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