

Moving Beyond *Yes or No*: Shifting From Over-Scaffolding to Contingent Scaffolding in Literacy Instruction With Emergent Bilingual Students

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Building on theories of scaffolding and previous research on scaffolding between adults and children, this article provides empirical examples of over-scaffolding as it occurs in peer-to-peer literacy activities among elementary-level emergent bilingual students. In their analysis of data from the first year of a design-based research project (Bradley & Reinking, 2011) consisting of a cross-aged peer-tutoring program, the authors shed light on how their curriculum tools unintentionally over-scaffolded students' interactions. Over-scaffolding limited students' productive and substantive engagement and inadvertently led students to enact the prevalent initiate-respond-evaluate discourse pattern in their partner discussions. The broader phenomena of over-scaffolding in many classrooms may position emergent bilinguals as passive respondents in literacy interactions rather than as active participants in their language and literacy learning. To ensure that learners are participating and teachers and tutors are scaffolding literacy practices appropriately, the authors advocate for responsive, contingent scaffolding to keep learners productively engaged. The aim is for the findings and implications to help readers reexamine their own interactive literacy practices and research

with emergent bilingual students and shift from over-scaffolding to contingent scaffolding.
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Determining how to scaffold literacy tasks for emergent bilingual (EB) students (or English language learners; Garcia, 2009) to facilitate their access to and engagement with complex texts has challenged English language arts teachers for decades. With the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) come more demands for students and teachers in literacy classrooms, making scaffolding processes more complex. Students are expected to comprehend higher level texts, integrate knowledge across textual sources (Valencia & Wixson, 2013), work collaboratively, and use sophisticated linguistic functions to explain evidence-based arguments (Hakuta, Santos, & Fang, 2013; Kibler, Walqui, & Bunch, 2014). Because the demands of new CCSS-based curricula require students to have greater interactional competence when reasoning through texts with peers (Kibler et al., 2014), examining peer-to-peer scaffolding is an emerging need.

In teacher-led, whole-class literacy activities, teachers have been cautioned against “providing so much . . . information that students are simply filling in the blanks” (Valencia & Wixson, 2013, p. 184), which is a problem often exacerbated in classrooms with EBs. Well-intentioned teachers of EBs often ask overly simple questions (Boyd, 2012; Ho, 2005) or over-scaffold writing tasks (Kibler, 2011). Previous research on teacher–student scaffolding shows that students’ pleasure in science inquiry is diminished when the teacher models too much (D. Donnelly, O’Reilly, & McGarr, 2012) and that EBs lose learning opportunities when the teachers “almost just tell [them] what to write” (Kibler, 2011, p. 45). In language arts, reciprocity in interactions (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991) and contingent questioning (Boyd, 2012) are essential to building substantive engagement among students. Less is known about high-quality reciprocity in peer-to-peer interactions (Klingner & Vaughn, 2000), which are essential for practicing authentic collaboration and discussion in literacy classroom contexts.

In this article, we examine the following question: How do elementary-level EBs offer scaffolding and sometimes miss opportunities to mediate language and literacy learning with their peers during a cross-aged peer-learning (CAP) program? This CAP program was designed to offer students extended opportunities to talk one-on-one with peers (supporting CCSS standards) to enhance language development and literacy learning, specifically reading comprehension and vocabulary growth. Yet our analysis reveals that our curriculum design may have inadvertently over-scaffolded language and literacy tasks for children and hindered elaborative, exploratory talk (Mercer, 2007) between peers. Based on these findings from the first year of a 3-year program, we refined the curriculum of this iterative, design-based research process (Bradley & Reinking, 2011) subsequently.

By revealing some of the unintentional consequences of our initial implementation, we contribute to educational practices that seek to better understand how to balance scaffolds and rigor in classrooms with students of diverse interests and linguistic backgrounds. We discuss the implications of over-scaffolding literacy instruction for EBs by closely examining peers' conversations around text and some missed opportunities for language and literacy learning afforded by our initial CAP curriculum. Rather than advocating that teachers use or do not use specific scaffolding tools and techniques, we assert that all scaffolding moves must be contingent on and responsive to what students know and can do. Through sharing what we learned from unintended consequences of over-scaffolding, we make the case that contingent scaffolding occurs when teachers and peers prioritize responsiveness to the learner's contributions over a preset curriculum, and we provide suggestions for teachers wishing to make this shift.

SCAFFOLDING FOR LANGUAGE ARTS WITH EMERGENT BILINGUALS

An understanding of scaffolding that is grounded in Vygotskian sociocultural theory served as our orienting framework (diSessa &

Cobb, 2004) that guided program and research design. Scaffolding provides support so that learners can progress beyond their current level of development with guidance from others (Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding can encourage students to attend to the task, simplify it, keep them engaged in completing it, and limit their frustration (Donato, 1994) to help learners “meet new, more complex requirements” (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976, p. 89). For teachers and peers to assist learners, they attend to learners’ understandings (Wood et al., 1976), gauge what learners know, and determine how to build on their knowledge to guide them to new understandings. In fact, “the level or amount of help is critical to scaffold learning” (Rodgers, 2004, p. 505). Given that optimal scaffolding occurs when the teacher modifies her or his instruction based on each “child’s present interests and abilities . . . and . . . reactions” (Wood & Middleton, 1975, p. 189), appropriately scaffolding tasks to make them challenging and motivating for every student based on individual potential can be difficult.

To support EBs, research has shown that teachers should make English visible (Harper & de Jong, 2004) by guiding EBs to comprehend and apply new linguistic features that will help them achieve literacy objectives. Recommended language arts and literacy-related scaffolds that make English visible for EBs include modeling, giving mini-lessons about language forms and functions, providing sentence starters that show EBs how to use language orally and in academic writing (Coelho, 1994; Harper & de Jong, 2004; Walqui & Van Lier, 2010), using visuals (Short & Echevarría, 2004), and simplifying vocabulary and syntax complexity in questions used to assess EBs’ understandings (Lenski, Ehlers-Zavala, Daniel, & Sun-Irminger, 2006).

This CAP program design was informed by research on teacher-led scaffolding as well as the recognition that providing EBs with opportunities to engage in elaborative discussion helps them develop interactional competence (Kibler et al., 2014), which in turn supports them in developing literacy. Discussion in literacy lessons can help all children, because “learning from text is by its very nature a constructive process, guided through feedback”

(Kintsch, 2009, p. 233). Talk is especially important for EB students who need additional opportunities to draw on and expand their rich linguistic repertoires (Gutierrez, 2008; Swain, 1985). Further, student talk enables teachers and peers to diagnose and respond to students' strengths and needs (Swain, 1985; Wells & Arauz, 2006). Engaging EBs—and all children—in discursive interactions in which they reason and talk collaboratively about words and texts can help them develop oral language (Boyd, 2012; Cheung & Slavin, 2012), gain literacy skills (Gersten et al., 2007; Klingner & Vaughn, 1996; Palinscar & Brown, 1984), and become more agentically engaged in class activities (Lawson & Lawson, 2013).

Contingency to Support Sense-Making in Literacy

Our conceptual framework is influenced by Aukerman's (2008) reframing of literacy instruction from an "outcome" or "stable, uniform procedure" toward "comprehension-as-sense-making" (pp. 52, 53). *Comprehension as sense-making* focuses on students hypothesizing about textual meanings and evaluating texts' meanings through unique perspectives. Teachers, and students who are asked to coach peers, must move away from expecting all students to give a "right" answer or strictly follow explicit modeling of comprehension strategies. Instead, teachers and peer coaches can "ask students to explain how they arrived at their thinking" and "draw students' attention to differences of opinion about textual meaning" (Aukerman, 2008, p. 57).

Doing this work requires teachers and peer coaches to give up some control of literacy-based conversations that is often found in the initiate-respond-evaluate (IRE) discourse sequence (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003; Mehan, 1979) and shift toward asking authentic questions (Boyd, 2012). "Contingently responsive teacher behaviors" push the onus of directing the literacy discussion on the students and give students liberty "to initiate topics of discussion, to elaborate on their own responses, or to direct substantive questions" (Boyd, 2012, p. 144). Comprehension as sense-making with contingent questions can allow for more exploratory talk in which "partners engage critically but constructively with each other's ideas" (Mercer, 2007, p. 146).

Scaffolding that is “dependent on cycles of assessment and adaptive support” (Pea, 2004, p. 431) is vital for comprehension as sense-making. Therefore, although the aforementioned research-based scaffolds for literacy instruction with EBs can be useful, the *structures* of scaffolding can overpower the *processes* of scaffolding (Walqui & Van Lier, 2010) if teachers make assumptions about students’ abilities or take the perspective that comprehension involves taking one narrow path toward a specific response. When these assumptions are enacted, teachers and peer tutors may over-scaffold tasks for EBs, which can constrain students’ progress in gaining new skills and content knowledge.

DESIGN-BASED RESEARCH

The data examined in this article come from the first year of a 3-year design-based project developing a supplementary CAP literacy program aimed at supporting reading comprehension and vocabulary development among fourth-grade (*big buddy* or BB) and kindergarten (*little buddy* or LB) EBs. The extensive, iterative design process involved advice from advisory board members who are renowned experts in literacy, peer tutoring, and vocabulary instruction and feedback from teachers and students. We co-created the program with teachers in ongoing teacher study groups (Percy, Martin-Beltrán, Silverman, & Daniel, 2015) and observed student interactions through ethnographic observations and video recordings.

An essential feature of literacy-focused design research that guided us is the “aim to identify and understand any salient factors that enhance or inhibit an intervention’s effectiveness while it is being implemented and then to modify or adapt the intervention based on that analysis” (Bradley & Reinking, 2011, p. 192). We sought to understand how the implementation of our theoretically grounded, research-based practices would impact literacy engagement and growth and how implementation would show challenges or areas needing revision. Findings in this article, informed by “ongoing analysis of both the students’ reasoning and the learning environment” (Cobb, diSessa, Lehrer, & Schauble, 2003, p. 11), helped us revise the program substantially in the ensuing years.

Context: Cross-Aged Peer Tutoring for Reading Comprehension and Word Knowledge

To help elementary-level EBs gain comprehension skills and word knowledge, our team of six university-based researchers and eight elementary school teachers created a 10-week, in-school CAP program to supplement language arts. In the teacher-led lesson, fourth-grade teachers led BBs in an interactive read-aloud of the lessons' anchor text, explicitly taught and had students practice four vocabulary words, and facilitated fourth graders' abilities to be BBs through practicing with same-age peers. In the kindergarten teacher-led lessons, teachers led LBs through a picture walk of the text, explicitly taught four vocabulary words, and asked students to draw a picture in which they personalized a vocabulary word. The buddy sessions consisted of LBs showing their drawings to their BBs and BBs guiding LBs through an interactive read-aloud with literal and inferential comprehension questions. To encourage interactions and remind BBs to make the read-aloud interactive, the research team inserted three Post-It notes with reading comprehension questions throughout the text. BBs led the interactive read-alouds, then the pairs played a questioning game that prompted students to use vocabulary in relation to text comprehension and personal experiences. As students discussed each question card, they earned one puzzle piece to make the activity more game-like and collaborative. Completed puzzles revealed a thematic image or phrase. Table 1 lists lessons, central texts (videos or books), and focal words.

Sample Curriculum Tools: Question Cards

We incorporated multiple scaffolds, such as visuals and sentence frames (B. Donnelly & Roe, 2010), into the questioning game. Our development of curriculum scaffolds was guided by research and teacher expertise. Before program implementation began, Tania (all names are pseudonyms), a kindergarten English as a second language (ESL) teacher, identified that some of her EBs would need direct questions. She explained:

They're going to need to be prompted to answer. Some of them, like [Carlos], he can't answer in a complete sentence because a

TABLE 1. CAP Lesson Overview

Lesson	Video/book	WORDS two per grade level; two for both groups
1	<i>Mary Takes a Stand</i> (Video)	Decide, fair, right, option, compromise, resolve
2	<i>Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type</i>	Problem, deal, exchange, gather, demand, strike
3	<i>We Are Citizens</i>	Group, together, community, care, belong, citizen
4	<i>Let's Vote on It</i>	President, choose, vote, leader, ballot, elect
5	<i>Cause and Effect</i> (video)	Garbage, clean, recycle, litter, debris, discard
6	<i>Ten Things I Can Do to Help My World</i>	Energy, save, valuable, pollution, replace, efficient
7	<i>Our Earth: Keeping It Clean</i>	Less, power, cause, landfill, product, chemical
8	<i>I Can Save the Earth</i>	Blackout, waste, electricity, reuse, green, reduce, compost

lot of times, he doesn't really understand So for some of them it will be okay [to ask], "Can you point to . . . ? Can you show me where this is happening?" They will be able to point. It's if you ask them, "What happened after the farmer gave them a typewriter?" they'll just sit and look at you.

We valued the teachers' expertise regarding their students' strengths and needs, and comments such as Tania's influenced our design of scaffolds in the question cards. Figure 1 shows two question cards designed for the second unit. (Words to be focused on are set in boldface.) The first card prompts students to personalize word knowledge (of **landfill**), while the second encourages students to use new words (**reuse**) while discussing the text. In every buddy session, each BB-LB pair had a set of nine question cards to prompt authentic discussion of the texts and their lives. We cut the question cards to include one side with the question (Row 1 in Figure 1) and one side with the sentence starters and visuals (Row 2 in Figure 1).

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection for the first year included 48 sets of researchers' field notes from eight teacher-led lessons and buddy sessions that

<p><i>Card 1 (Front)</i></p> <p>Would you like to live next to a landfill? Why?</p> <p>How do you know?</p>	<p><i>Card 2 (Front)</i></p> <p>How did Max and his friends reuse their toys? (p. 20)</p> <p>How do you know?</p>
<p><i>(Back)</i></p> <p>I _____ like to live next to a landfill because _____.</p>	<p><i>(Back)</i></p> <p>Max and his friends reused their toys when they _____.</p>

Figure 1. Question card examples

were video-recorded for further analysis. Two to three researchers took detailed field notes with event maps (Castenheira, Green, Dixon, & Yeager, 2007) in each lesson. Fifteen hours of video recordings and field notes of peer interactions in cross-age sessions of two focal pairs across the third through eighth buddy sessions constitute the primary data sources for this article. We analyzed the field notes and teacher comments for triangulation. Additional data included pretests and posttests of 73 students, field notes and recordings from 10 teacher study groups, five surveys from all eight teachers, two interviews from five teachers, and eight post-implementation interviews with students. Focal students were chosen based on consent, teachers' descriptions of students' self-regulation and academic work, and students' linguistic background as Spanish-English EBs who received ESL services at school. In the focal pairs examined below, Andrés's (BB) and James's (LB) teachers described these boys as having low English language proficiency and low self-regulation in academic tasks

(although we found that placing them together increased their engagement as compared to whole-class instruction). Selena (BB) had been transitioned out of ESL services, Carolina (LB) was assessed as having low English language proficiency, and both girls were identified as having high self-regulation.

DATA ANALYSIS

In alignment with design research (Bradley & Reinking, 2011; Cobb et al., 2003), our analysis was guided by broader questions regarding workability and effectiveness of the program components and how the program seemed to benefit participants. To analyze the data and seek out patterns across the 15 hours of buddy interactions, we created event maps (Castanheira et al., 2007), which included student and teacher activity, transcription of student talk, and a column for analysis where we began using open and axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

During the open coding stage we identified discursive moves that fourth-grade BBs used to mediate literacy tasks with their kindergarten LBs. After flagging such episodes, we recoded and identified moments in which children missed opportunities for supporting one another and encouraging elaboration. Viewing mediation as a central process within sociocultural scaffolding theories (Gibbons, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978; Wood et al., 1976), we focused our analysis on mediation that furthered peers' elaboration around identifying and grappling with confusion or different interpretations (Aukerman, 2008) and contingent questioning (Boyd, 2012). Episodes of student talk were coded as *missed opportunities for mediation* when fourth-grade students dropped questions posed by LBs or missed an opportunity to support their LB socially, linguistically, or cognitively. We coded for *missed opportunities* because our field notes indicated that we could do better at supporting students in mediating for one another, with over-scaffolding episodes as potential "loci for refinement" (diSessa & Cobb, 2004, p. 100) for the program. Although we found multiple examples of the rich resources EBs bring to the classroom to support one another in literacy-based activities, we recognized that our curriculum tools sometimes over-scaffolded these interactions, thereby inadvertently guiding

students toward a comprehension-as-outcome approach instead of a comprehension-as-sense-making approach (Aukerman, 2008). Examples of missed opportunities are when BBs asked questions of their LBs and accepted one-word responses or unrelated responses without further discussion. The BBs closed the discussion with a remark such as “correct” and superficially moved on to the next task. After coding all 15 hours of focal pair interactions from Lessons 3 through 8, we flagged and collected the episodes marked *missed opportunities for mediation* and we examined these further to determine how or why students did not elaborate.

FINDINGS

Despite the teachers’ expertise of their students and researchers’ knowledge of current scholarship on scaffolding literacy tasks for EBs, our well-intentioned scaffolds inadvertently limited students’ opportunities for collaborative meaning-making. We show short excerpts of students’ interactions around the use of the questions on Cards 1 and 2 to highlight how these scaffolds sometimes prevented students from accessing and using higher order thinking skills that are relevant to the comprehension-as-sense-making framework.

Over-Scaffolding Limited Collaborative Meaning-Making

Excerpt 1 (Table 2) occurred during the questioning game activity of the buddy session after the BB (Selena) led her LB (Carolina) in an interactive read-aloud of *Our Earth: Keeping It Clean*, by Peggy Hock (2008). In addition to comprehension questions (e.g., “What do people do to hurt Earth?”), question cards included prompts that helped students personalize the words (such as Card 1 in Figure 1). Excerpt 1 shows Carolina and Selena’s interaction as they discussed whether they would like to live next to a landfill.

In this excerpt, we can see Selena push Carolina to respond to the question in specific ways when she interrupts Carolina and prompts “Yes or no?,” even though this card was designed to have students make sense of and personalize their new word knowledge. Selena did not use the prompt “Why?” to further meaningful dialogue, but instead focused on the closed-ended question and sought Carolina’s direct response. Students’ discussions around the

TABLE 2. Excerpt 1

Card	Transcript
<p><i>Card 1 (Front)</i> Would you like to live next to a landfill? Why? How do you know?</p> <p><i>(Back)</i> I _____ like to live next to a landfill because _____.</p>	<p>(.) = pause; ... = elapsed or inaudible speech; – = interrupted speech</p> <p>Selena: (<i>reading from card</i>) Would you like to live next to a landfill? (<i>looking at Carolina</i>) Do you know what a landfill is? Carolina: Yep. I don't like to – Selena: No. It's garbage. Carolina: I – I – I was trying to answer the question! I – don't – Selena: Yes or no? Carolina: want to – No. Selena: Why? Carolina: Because it's too dirty, and there's no special stuff, and – Selena: (<i>gives puzzle piece to indicate end of question. Asks next question.</i>)</p>

question and answer cards were mitigated by their interest in getting a puzzle piece after each answer, which led learners to view questions as having correct answers rather than as a process of understanding and conversing with the new words.

Over-Scaffolding Limited Comprehension as Sense-Making

In Excerpt 2 (Table 3) of buddy dialogue from Andrés (BB) and James (LB), we found that our structured scaffolds limited interaction and led them to disregard the text. Scaffolds in this question card included a reference to a page in the book *I Can Save the Earth*, by Alison Inches (2008), which they had previously read, a sentence starter, and a picture from page 20 of the text. In the book, Max (the green monster) reuses his old toys by selling them in a yard sale and trading with his friends.

Why this scaffolding led to missed opportunities. In Excerpt 2 (Table 3), James described what he saw in the picture instead of thinking about the key vocabulary term *reuse*. Andrés responded with positive feedback, repeating the familiar teacher-like IRE discourse pattern (Cazden, 2001; Mehan, 1979), and the boys moved on to the next question card. Although visuals are often

TABLE 3. Excerpt 2

Card	Transcript
<p>Card 2 (<i>Front</i>) How did Max and his friends reuse their toys? (p. 20)</p> <p>How do you know?</p> <p>(<i>Back</i>) Max and his friends reused their toys when they _____.</p>	<p>Andrés: (<i>looking at James, holding card up to support James with visual</i>) How did Max and his friends reuse their toys?</p> <p>James: (<i>takes card from Andrés and looks more carefully at it</i>) (.) He rides his bike!</p> <p>Andrés: Good!</p>

touted as helpful supports for EBs (Short & Echevarría, 2004), in this case a visual stopped the boys from looking back at the text, rereading to find pertinent information, or interpreting the text to determine possible responses. Guided by the question-answer-relationships strategy (Raphael, 1982), we prompted big buddies to ask their little buddies, “How do you know?” We had intended this question to support the framing of reading comprehension as sense-making (Aukerman, 2008), by helping them discuss their interpretation of the text for the larger social goal of caring for the environment. Nevertheless, we found that Andrés skipped this follow-up question and other potential contingent questions and instead praised his little buddy for responding. Our findings show that the visual interfered with more productive discursive interaction between Andres and James because it over-scaffolded and prevented students from engaging in practices of good readers, such as textual decision making, explanations of their interpretations of text (Aukerman, 2007), and discussions of puzzlement (Aukerman, 2008).

Reconsidering Our Scaffolding Approach

In the second month of program implementation, we refined materials to include more open-ended questions, thus enabling learners to interact more and providing opportunities for big buddies to scaffold little buddies contingently. For instance, we gave each pair of students a sheet with the following open-ended prompt: “What can we do to take care of the environment while we’re at school? Write a sentence and draw a picture about what you can do to take care of the environment. Thinking about all the

books you read together can help you come up with a great idea!" When we gave Selena and Carolina this prompt, their conversation was very different from the example in Excerpt 1 (Table 2):

Excerpt 3

Selena: (*paraphrases prompt*) How do you think we can take care of the environment when we're at school? (*both girls looking at prompt as Selena holds it up in front of them*)

Carolina: (*looking around classroom*) Environment, huh (.) Oh! We can turn off the lights when we leave for lunch!

Selena: (*nodding and looking at Carolina*) Uh-huh, and what else?

Carolina: And (.) (*looking around classroom*) when we see a lot of trash (.) we can pick it up.

Selena: Good (.) Okay, well you said we can turn off the light when we go to recess or lunch. So you can write that here (*points to paper*)

Carolina: (*holding pencil, looks at paper, looks up at Selena*) Um, so I really need help with a sentence.

Selena: Okay. You said we could turn off the lights when we go to recess or lunch (.)

Carolina: So we put lights here?

Selena: Okay, so you can write: "We can turn off the lights when we go to recess."

Carolina: (.) just write it? (*Carolina writes "We"*)

Rather than asking "Yes or no?" as in Excerpt 1 (Table 2), Selena supported Carolina by offering the linguistic support of paraphrasing an open-ended question, listening to and re-voicing Carolina's ideas, and encouraging her to elaborate. During the task, Carolina communicated her need for additional scaffolding, at which point Selena responsively scaffolded. We included these more collaborative tasks in all final lessons of the program. After program implementation, the teachers also reconsidered how the program supported peer interactions. Upon reviewing video of students' interactions, Tania exclaimed, "I was definitely surprised at their responsiveness I was surprised at how well they responded to the older kids!"

The data excerpts here are representative of patterns we observed across the data, which suggest that we needed to reconsider scaffolding supports built into this curriculum. After we noted that students missed opportunities to mediate one another's comprehension and support peers' framing of comprehension as sense-making, we adapted our curricular tools to allow for students to engage in elaborative talk together. The third excerpt shows how we adapted the program pragmatically and how we refined our theory of learning to fit students' participation, the two strands "at the heart of" design-based research (Cobb et al., 2003, p. 9). BBs in this program could have, and did, develop their own questions for LBs in moment-to-moment interactions. Asking BBs to create and identify questions they view as interesting points for further discussion around text could increase authenticity, engagement, and elaborative talk around text. Later iterations of the CAP program incorporated more student-led tools and opportunities for students to adapt tools. Further implications follow.

IMPLICATIONS

Our findings provide concrete examples of the theoretical argument that effective scaffolding requires *contingency* and *responsiveness* among teachers and peer tutors, which lead to six implications for practice, which we describe below. Learning from missteps in our initial implementation, teachers can reconsider how they set up classroom interactions, support children in understanding how to interact during peer-to-peer classroom activities, and design curricular tools.

1. Reflect and Act on Classroom Norms

Given the ubiquity of the IRE pattern (Cazden, 2001; Mehan, 1979) in K–12 classrooms, it is not surprising to see BBs enacting this familiar discourse. Prior research has shown that in literacy classrooms with EBs, teachers often ask questions only to test students' recitation, clarify procedures, or work on discrete skills such as spelling (Gutierrez, Larson, & Kreuter, 1995; Townsend & Fu, 2001). In Excerpt 1 (Table 2), Selena leaves little wait time for Carolina to respond to the initial question; asks a more direct,

closed-ended question; and pushes for Carolina to give a specific response—either yes or no. Selena’s moves seem to align with Tania’s expectations of her kindergarten EBs—that they would need closed-ended questions with options instead of open-ended prompts. Tania’s suggestion for scaffolds and her subsequent surprise in observing EBs’ elaborative talk indicate that these children were accustomed to IRE discourse patterns in language arts and literacy lessons.

Even when teachers prepare students to coach one another, students are likely to face the “apprenticeship” of observation challenge (Lortie, 1975, p. 61) identified with novice teachers. In other words, if students have predominantly experienced IRE models of interaction in classrooms in whole-class discussions, they will “play the game” or “do school” (Pope, 2001, p. 158) during peer-led literacy tasks. Students might go through the motions they believe are expected instead of engaging one another in authentic conversations with more exploratory talk around texts. With several years of experience in elementary-level classrooms, in which teachers often ask questions with known answers in primarily monologic classrooms (Gutierrez et al., 1995), Selena may have assumed that being a good tutor meant pushing Carolina into a specific answer.

The implication is that teachers must make contingent scaffolding, student contributions, and authentic questions the norm during whole-class interactions in order to avoid the old adage “Do as I say, not as I do” when coaching students to work collaboratively. The traditional top-down social norms of a classroom (Yackel & Cobb, 1996) impact students’ interactions when students are asked to turn to one another as well as when they respond to the teacher. Teachers who wish students to move away from IRE patterns in peer-led literacy activities must more regularly move away from this pattern to model and support dialogic classroom discourse that focuses on comprehension as sense-making.

2. Assess Dynamically

Enacting contingent scaffolding and comprehension-as-sense-making norms may push teachers to question and reconsider the

gradual release model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) by asking students to try an activity before the teacher models it fully. Often, teachers view the gradual release model as “I do, we do, you do” in their lesson preparation and implementation. This gradual release model focuses on scaffolding as a structure instead of a process. Instead, we advocate for teachers to start language arts lessons by exploring students’ abilities, assessing dynamically, and scaffolding contingently. Effective scaffolding involves interactional dynamic assessment (Poehner & Lantolf, 2010), which focuses on not only what students can do but also what they are capable of doing soon, with mediation that is responsive to their specific needs. Such dynamic assessment and contingent supports are predicated on teachers’ awareness of students’ rich conceptual, cultural, and linguistic resources.

3. Guide Students Toward Productive Peer-to-Peer Discussions

Extending Nystrand and Gamoran’s (1991) suggestion that teachers use authentic questions and high-level evaluation, which they define as “acknowledge[ing] and build[ing] upon the substance of what the student says” (p. 264), we recommend that students be guided in incorporating such high-level evaluation into peer-led discussions around texts. The potential benefits of peer-to-peer activities—the greater interaction and individualized scaffolding that is so difficult to implement in whole-class environments (Rogoff, 1990)—will be amplified in peer-to-peer activities only if teachers model and engage students in more dialogic instruction. If teachers do not help students scaffold contingently, students may miss out on the advantages of personalized scaffolding during peer-to-peer work.

Previous research has suggested that student tutors be trained in explaining concepts (Fuchs, Fuchs, Bentz, Phillips, & Hamlett, 1994), so we suggest that preparing students for peer-led literacy activities should include training to ask open-ended questions, diagnose understandings and skills, and provide appropriate responses. Teachers can help students recognize the importance of dynamically assessing (Poehner & Lantolf, 2010) their peers’ capabilities and developing scaffolding moves in response to their peers’ knowledge. Scaffolding moves, such as providing feedback,

giving learners hints or options, providing additional explanation or modeling, and asking additional questions (van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, 2010) should only come as children gain understandings of what their peers are able to do.

4. Teach Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies, beyond helping during independent reading, can enhance children's interactions around texts. To scaffold contingently, students need to be able to identify times when their peers are confused and what the cause of confusion might be. Breaking down misunderstandings in this way requires metacognitive awareness prior to noticing confusion in another person. In the first year of this CAP program, teachers also guided little buddies to ask for help, which we saw Carolina do in the third excerpt. Carolina's request helped Selena know how to support her contingently, and together the pair worked through the ideas. Guiding children to ask for help and identify the type of help they need (such as paraphrasing or follow-up questions) and helping children dissect difficulties can support them in how to help one another. Previous tutoring research shows that the act of tutoring a peer may increase children's metacognitive abilities (Roscoe & Chi, 2007), and we suggest that increased practice with metacognitive strategies in literacy instruction can in turn improve peer-led literacy discussions.

5. Provide a Menu of Scaffolding Moves

In addition to helping children recognize confusion among peers and request support from one another, teachers can guide students in considering a menu of possible scaffolding moves. While the teacher prepares students to work with peers in literacy, for instance, she or he can conduct think-alouds regarding instructional processes to help make explicit how a teacher responsively scaffolds. The teacher can help reveal to students that these points of confusion or *puzzlement* (Aukerman, 2008) can lead to clarity and deeper learning. A responsive scaffolding move might be for a big buddy to shift from an open-ended question toward a reduction of degrees of freedom in the task (i.e., providing options for a response) if the little buddy seems

frustrated or confused. Alternatively, with practice in metacognitive reading strategies prior to or along with peer-led literacy discussions, a child could guide a peer to use any number of strategies while coaching the peer to make sense of text. With a comprehension-as-sense-making perspective, children can be guided to follow and build connections between seemingly tangential comments and texts. Although we incorporated “buddy training” at the beginning of the program, we found that instructing BBs to use typical interactional patterns (e.g., “Reread if your little buddy is confused,” “Ask your big buddy to reread”) was insufficient. In future peer-literacy programs, we recommend that peer coaches be given additional lessons and guided practice to adjust interactions with partners prior to the lessons when they read together. This training can be done through teacher modeling, discussion of *if-then* dialogic scenarios, and co-constructing authentic examples with students. Additionally, showing students videos of peers supporting one another’s comprehension as sense-making and asking students to evaluate the coaching moves can help them become more cognizant of effective coaching moves (Ensergueix & LaFont, 2011).

6. Design Curricular Tools With Scaffolding as Process

We found the curricular tools we created for the CAP program led to limited peer interactions due to what we have identified as over-scaffolding. We argue that the ways in which we structured these interactions did not sufficiently afford BBs with the crucial opportunity to *discover* and *diagnose* their LBs’ abilities prior to providing scaffolding that was contingent based on each LB’s needs and strengths, partially because the prompts minimized opportunities for elaborative *interaction*. Although the visuals, sentence starters, question cards, and Post-It note questions in the books may have been needed in some cases, students often demonstrated abilities to elaborate beyond the level the materials suggested.

Although teachers often develop scaffolding materials proactively during lesson planning, we must also remember that scaffolding occurs in the moment-to-moment interactions of skilled

teachers and their students (Daniel & Conlin, 2015). Providing options for responses can scaffold students' participation if they are reticent to engage in dialogue around text. However, using more open-ended prompts, such as "Tell me how you would feel if you lived next to a landfill," might have encouraged Selena to listen more for Carolina's sense-making. The question card included the follow-up "Why?", but the initial question was closed-ended, possibly indicating to Selena that she should search for a type of limited response. Although questions with options for answers may sometimes reduce student frustration, we assert that these optional responses are a form of scaffolding that should be provided only if students show they need further assistance. Differentiation, then, occurs in the moment-to-moment interaction and processes of contingent scaffolding. We needed to refine our curriculum tools for peer-led activities to focus more on the *processes* in addition to the *structures* of scaffolding (Walqui, 2006).

We found this static approach to scaffolding—viewing and preparing scaffolds as structures rather than preparing students to use the scaffolds in the cards adaptively through an interactive process—limited students' opportunities for engaging, ongoing discussion. In fact, in Excerpt 2 (Table 3), the interaction between Andrés and James shows that the visuals failed to scaffold effectively. If demonstrating comprehension is the goal, it may be more effective to omit visual scaffolds and prompt students to revisit the book so that they can interactively build their understanding of the text together. Our scaffolding led Andrés and James to disregard the text. Thus, we limited their opportunities to "build strategic competence," enhance their "access to complex texts," and facilitate "extended discourse and engagement with academic texts," all of which are necessary practices for EBs to meet the literacy demands of the CCSS (Hakuta et al., 2013, p. 452). Alternatively, we could have scaffolded this activity by providing the book's page number with relevant information to indicate to students that looking in the book could help them make sense of what they read. More fine-grained research on tools to promote dialogue in language arts is needed (Caughlan, Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Kelly, & Fine, 2013).

CONCLUSION

During effective peer-to-peer literacy activities, teachers allow students to guide instruction, but teachers hold the important roles of curriculum developers, facilitators, observers, and interveners. After preparing students to talk and setting up engaging tasks with supportive curricular tools, teachers can step back to show children that they truly can guide their own learning during buddy work. During peer-led literacy activities, teachers can observe students' interactions and later help children reflect on their interactions using the same behaviors discussed during the preparatory stages. For instance, if teachers helped students understand how identifying points of puzzlement, asking authentic questions, and employing strategies are three contingent scaffolds they can use during interactions, the teacher's role during interaction is to observe how students are implementing these moves and to provide feedback for students' interactions.

In this article, we illustrated how over-scaffolding in curriculum tools can stifle students' opportunities to elaborate language use for learning during peer-led literacy activities. Such over-scaffolding for EBs reflects lower expectations of culturally and linguistically diverse learners in ways that are reminiscent of Haberman's (1991) pedagogy of poverty and the deficit discourses that EBs often experience (Shapiro, 2014). Alternatively, we offer suggestions that can support teachers' and students' efforts to achieve new language arts standards collaboratively.

We hope that the findings in this article can help readers reexamine their own interactive literacy practices with EBs and shift from *over-scaffolding* to *contingent scaffolding* to push EBs to be active participants in their own literacy learning. Our empirical examples of over-scaffolding provide new "loci for refinement" (diSessa & Cobb, 2004, p. 100) for future design experiments and action research, particularly in considering scaffolding for text comprehension as sense-making and language development with EBs.

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