



## **Coursework to Classroom**

### **Learning to Scaffold Instruction for Bilingual Learners**

**Laura Schall-Leckrone**

#### **Abstract**

This qualitative research study examined the extent to which novice and student teachers drew upon pre-service preparation to use scaffolding practices identified in the literature as supportive of bilingual learners' (EBs') acquisition of academic content. Data sources included videotaped class observations, lesson plans and teaching materials, and semi-structured interviews to elicit participants' perspectives on how they scaffolded instruction. The results suggest inexperienced content teachers can develop an instructional repertoire to scaffold instruction for EBs. Participants consistently used four types of scaffolds: visuals, vocabulary instruction, graphic organizers, and adapted and/or annotated texts. Classroom experience and the support of a mentor teacher, who could provide site based coaching seemed to increase participants' ability to scaffold content instruction for EBs. Further research is recommended that shifts the focus from teacher learning to student learning to examine the extent to which scaffolding instruction improves learning opportunities and outcomes for emergent BLs.

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## **Introduction**

The population of emerging bilingual adolescents in U.S. secondary schools has increased dramatically in recent years (Capps et al., 2005; Pandya, Batalova, & McHugh, 2011). Even though older emerging bilingual (EB)<sup>1</sup> learners face the “triple challenge” of simultaneously learning academic content, academic English, and the culture of schools (Kirp, 2015; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008; Téllez, 1998), they are less likely to receive English as a second language (ESL) or bilingual instruction than their elementary-age counterparts (Páez, 2009; Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). U.S. schools place EBs directly into mainstream classes due to multiple related factors: pressures of annual high-stakes testing (Beykont, 2002; Brisk, 2006; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008), a mounting political climate of “English-only” policies epitomized by ballot referenda that eliminated bilingual education in several states (Brisk, 2006), costs associated with specialized language instruction; shortages of trained ESL and bilingual teachers, and increased immigration to non-traditional destinations (Capps et al., 2005). Indeed, most EBs spend the majority of their time in mainstream classes taught exclusively in English (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Gibbons, 2015) by teachers with little to no specialized training (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). Consequently, many adolescent EBs encounter inadequate time and support to develop sufficient academic English to pass high-stakes examinations prerequisite to high school graduation (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007; Beykont, 2002; Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006); drop out rates remain disproportionately high among adolescent immigrants and U.S.-born EBs (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Given the confluence of the aforementioned trends, all secondary teachers must be equipped to scaffold instruction for EBs, that is, to provide adapted instruction, so students still developing academic English proficiency can engage in standards-based content learning within the classroom community (Gibbons, 2009; Walqui, 2006; Zwiers, 2008). In this article, I present an analysis of how a cross section of history teachers who completed targeted coursework within a teacher education program learned to scaffold instruction for EBs from their student teaching to early years of full-time teaching experience.

History challenges students who speak a language other than standardized English because it consists of abstract concepts and complex linguistic structures quite different from everyday language (Schleppegrell, Greer, & Taylor, 2008). History students must unpack lexically dense texts with unfamiliar content situated in long noun phrases and nominalizations (when a process is turned into a noun, such as industrialization). Multiple terms often represent the same concept within a passage: the British Empire, the imperial system, the English government. To complicate matters further, history teachers are socialized into a profession that largely sees its task as covering content, because history standards span vast geographies and time periods (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Schall-Leckrone & McQuillan, 2012).

Some argue mainstream classrooms provide an ideal setting in which to integrate second language and content instruction for EBs (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2017; Gibbons, 2009, 2015). However, transmission-oriented instructional practices like lectures—typical of many history classes—do little to facilitate comprehension and production of historical knowledge (Schall-Leckrone & McQuillan, 2014). Therefore this analysis of how history teachers learned to scaffold instruction may be especially relevant to teacher educators and secondary teachers who seek to actively engage EBs in rigorous content instruction in mainstream settings.

### **Preparing Mainstream Teachers to Work With Emerging Bilinguals**

There has been heightened attention to the urgent need to prepare mainstream teachers to work with EBs (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Schall-Leckrone & Pavlak, 2015). Mandates exist in several states (Arizona, California, Florida, Massachusetts) requiring teachers to complete coursework aimed at equipping them to teach EBs. Orientations, knowledge, and skills needed to teach EBs in general education settings have been articulated that can be used to structure such coursework (Clayton, 2008; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Lucas, 2011; Lucas & Villegas, 2010, 2011; Lucas et al., 2008). In addition, a growing body of literature has described particular methods for teaching EBs academic language and content concurrently (Echevarría et al., 2017; Gibbons, 2009, 2015; Zwiers, 2008, 2014). Some research has even reported benefits and challenges of approaches to preparing teachers (and teacher educators) to work with EBs (Costa, McPhail, Brisk, & Smith, 2005; see especially Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Nagle, 2014; Schall-Leckrone & McQuillan, 2014). To date, however, almost no empirical research has examined how teachers develop foundational knowledge and expertise in skills needed to teach EBs in mainstream secondary settings (Garrone-Shufra, 2015; Schall-Leckrone & Pavlak, 2015). This qualitative study builds on prior research on preparing teachers to work with EBs (Brisk, Homza, & Smith, 2014; Nagle, 2014; Schall-Leckrone & Pavlak, 2015), including related work on requisite knowledge, skills, and approaches (Lucas & Villegas, 2011, 2013), to present the extent to which five history teachers used scaffolding practices identified in the literature as supportive of EBs' learning of academic content.

### **What Do Mainstream Teachers of EBs Need to Know and Be Able to Do?**

Although there is no consensus on what constitutes good teaching, researchers have argued that teachers must possess content and pedagogical content knowledge,

understand how children learn, use assessment to inform instruction, and reflect on and continually advance their practice (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Lucas et al., 2008; Shulman, 1987). To be effective with EBs, teachers need additional knowledge and skills (de Jong & Harper, 2005). For instance, they must develop an understanding of how language, culture, and identity interconnect in the learning process and related knowledge to build on EBs' background experiences during instruction (Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Content teachers also should integrate opportunities to develop language and literacy skills into content instruction (Bunch, 2013), which requires the ability to identify language demands of classroom tasks and texts (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Santos, Darling-Hammond, & Cheuk, 2012; Schleppegrell, 2004). This article focuses on yet another key aspect of teaching EBs in mainstream secondary settings: scaffolding instruction—approaches intended to enable EBs to access, engage in, and demonstrate standards-based content learning as they develop academic English proficiency (Echevarría et al., 2017; Gibbons, 2009, 2015; Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Walqui, 2006).

### **Scaffolding Instruction**

Approaches to teaching EBs in mainstream content classes often are referred to as “scaffolding” or “sheltering” instruction (Echevarría et al., 2017; Gibbons, 2015; Walqui, 2006). Although Vygotsky (1978) did not coin the term, scaffolding is associated with sociocultural learning theory; in brief, an expert learner (teacher) provides temporary support until a student masters “new skills, concepts, or . . . understanding[s]” needed to complete a task independently (Gibbons, 2015, p. 16; see also Gibbons, 2009; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976; Zwiers, 2008). According to Gibbons (2009), two types of scaffolds should be used with EBs: designed scaffolds and interactional scaffolds (see pp. 153–158). Designed scaffolds encompass the plans teachers make *in advance* to build on students' prior knowledge and develop targeted language skills. Accordingly, lesson plans have explicit learning goals; content is presented in multiple ways to make it comprehensible, and varied interactions (whole group, small group, partner work) are embedded in lessons so that sequenced tasks build student independence. Interactional scaffolds occur *during instruction*. For instance, in conversations with EBs, teachers employ wait time, recast responses into the technical language of the content area, and generally prompt students to “say and think more” (Gibbons, 2009, p. 158; Zwiers, 2014). These scaffolds are intended to enable EBs to engage in rigorous content learning.

The shift toward rapid inclusion of EBs in mainstream classes also has prompted use of the metaphorical term *sheltering* to describe adapted instruction. Similar to scaffolded approaches (Gibbons, 2009, 2015; Walqui, 2006), with sheltered instruction, the idea is that EBs learn English best by receiving comprehensible content instruction in English (Krashen, 1985; López, Scanlan, & Gundrum, 2013). For

instance, with the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), complementary content and language objectives are taught through sequential instructional practices, as listed in Table 1.

Drawing on constructivist learning theory, that is, new knowledge and understanding are constructed based on preexisting knowledge (Bransford, 2000), SIOP teachers activate students' prior knowledge, then build background, for instance, by teaching vocabulary that represents key lesson concepts. They provide comprehensible input (see Krashen, 1985) by speaking slowly and clearly and by using hand gestures, visuals, simulations, and graphic organizers. In addition, strategic thinking and learning strategies are modeled. Then, students engage in structured interactions to support the development of academic English through all communicative modes: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Bunch, 2006). Throughout the lesson, teachers assess mastery of integrated content and language objectives and provide feedback to students.

There are several benefits of these approaches for EBs and their teachers. In either sheltered or scaffolded approaches,<sup>2</sup> academic content and language are simultaneously taught to EBs within mainstream classrooms by targeting explicit instructional objectives, building background knowledge, providing comprehensible input, and planning varied interactions (Echevarría et al., 2017; Gibbons, 2009, 2015; Short & Echevarría, 1999). Essentially, such approaches provide a template to plan instruction for EBs. Moreover, SIOP researchers found the method increases the academic achievement of EBs when utilized by trained teachers (Echevarría, Short, & Powers, 2006; Echevarría et al., 2017).<sup>3</sup> However, the response of one SIOP teacher suggests mastering this systematic instructional approach may be beyond the purview of inexperienced teachers:

WHEW. This process has taken me a couple of hours today. For real. . . . Is there a short form? Maybe it just becomes second nature after doing it . . . two or three hundred times. I really want to improve my planning and skills, and this is really helping, so thanks for bearing with me! (Short & Echevarría, 1999, p. 12)

**Table 1**  
**SIOP Instructional Practices**

	<i>Instructional practice</i>
Tenet 1	Activate prior knowledge and build background
Tenet 2	Provide comprehensible input
Tenet 3	Teach learning strategies and strategic thinking
Tenet 4	Create varied opportunities for student engagement and interaction
Tenet 5	Provide opportunities for students to use all communicative modes
Tenet 6	Review and assess learning objectives and provide feedback to students

Note. Adapted from Echevarría et al. (2017). I borrow usage of the word tenet to describe SIOP components from a presentation by Dr. C. Patrick Proctor within a secondary bilingual methods course at Boston College.

In other words, the teacher, who received in-service professional development and ongoing support, found SIOP a useful but challenging approach to planning instruction. Given the amount of time and supported practice needed to develop expertise in instructional strategies that impact student learning (Bullough, 1989; Feiman-Nemser, 2001), and the additional specialized knowledge and skills needed to be effective with EBs in mainstream settings (Lucas & Villegas, 2011), this study examines an unresolved question: How do preservice and novice teachers learn to scaffold instruction for EBs?<sup>4</sup>

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#### **Enacting Teaching Practices From Preservice Preparation**

A small body of prior research suggests inexperienced teachers can enact teaching practices to which they have been exposed during preservice coursework (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Grossman et al., 2000; Stairs, 2010). Expectations for new teachers, however, must be tempered by understanding inherent challenges of learning to teach and teaching in particular contexts (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Grossman et al., 2000; Stairs, 2010). Along these lines, Feiman-Nemser (2001) proposed novice teachers develop a basic repertoire of teaching strategies and the inclination and skill to reflect and build on their practice. Drawing on Feiman-Nemser's (2001) work and recognizing it takes time and ongoing support for teachers to develop expertise in pedagogical knowledge and skills to teach linguistically diverse youth, Lucas and Villegas (2013) proposed preservice teachers develop foundational strategies for scaffolding instruction.

As part of their framework for linguistically responsive teaching (LRT), Lucas and Villegas recommended four types of scaffolding practices: using extralinguistic supports, adapting written texts, adapting teacher oral language, and providing clear instructions (see Lucas & Villegas, 2011, pp. 65–67). Extralinguistic supports, such as visuals, graphic organizers, and simulations, facilitate understanding of lesson content by reducing language demand. For instance, prior to a science experiment, the teacher does a demonstration or assignments are adapted, so students can present what they learn via drawings, maps, graphs, or pictures. Teachers adapt or supplement written texts and modify oral language usage to maximize comprehensible input. Scaffolded written materials can include study guides; summaries; and shortened, simplified, or annotated texts. During lesson delivery, teachers explain difficult concepts, employ wait time, avoid idioms, provide examples, and build repetition of key concepts/skills into the lesson to make it more comprehensible. Finally, teachers use systematic processes to provide explicit instructions: listing task procedures orally, in writing, and with visuals; having students repeat directions in their own words; doing an example together; and addressing questions before students work independently. Although this framework emphasizes teacher moves, not student responses, the intent

of incorporating these scaffolds into instruction is to foster bilingual student learning and independence. In this article, I analyze the extent to which preservice and novice history teachers incorporated such scaffolds and which types of scaffolds were used most frequently and effectively in their classroom practice.

## **Research Design**

This qualitative study's research design was guided by a social justice vision of student learning as I believe EBs in history and social studies classes should receive equitable access to content instruction that equips them for academic achievement and civic engagement. The study was conducted as part of a larger investigation that examined how student teachers and novice history teachers learn to teach adolescent EBs from preservice coursework to secondary classroom settings. Their preparation took place within a teacher education program at a Jesuit university in a city in the northeastern United States. The following research question guided this study: How do student teachers and novice history teachers, who completed targeted preservice coursework, scaffold instruction for EBs?

Scaffolding instruction, as discussed previously, signifies the use of instructional supports that enable EBs—still developing academic English proficiency—to access, engage in, and demonstrate standards-based content learning within the classroom community (Echevarría et al., 2017; Gibbons, 2009; Walqui, 2006). To understand how student and novice teachers scaffolded instruction for EBs, multiple data sources were collected from teaching settings: observation videotapes, interviews, field notes, lesson plans, and teaching materials. The portion of the LRT framework that pertains to instructional scaffolding (Lucas & Villegas, 2011, pp. 65–67) was used to assess which types of scaffolds participants employed.

## **Research Participants**

As is typical in qualitative research, a purposive sample was selected tailored to the study design (Stake, 2006). More specifically, the five participants met two criteria: they completed preservice course work between 2009 and 2011 intended to prepare them to teach EBs, and they were teaching secondary history or social studies in or near a northeastern city in 2012. All took both a history methods class and a secondary bilingual methods course in which scaffolding techniques for EBs were modeled, practiced, and presented in assignments. The secondary bilingual methods course was designed to promote facility with methods that help EBs simultaneously develop academic language and content in mainstream classes, including practice with SIOP components, such as creating integrated language and content objectives, effective vocabulary, and strategy instruction (for an analysis of teacher learning within the secondary bilingual methods course, see Schall-Leckrone & Pavlak, 2015). In the secondary history methods class, a history methods profes-

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sor and language specialist cotaught a series of modules intended to prepare participants to promote EBs' academic language development in history classes. The modules highlighted instructional strategies associated with receptive (listening/reading) and productive (speaking/writing) communication skills. For instance, the participants in this study practiced approaches to providing comprehensible input, decreasing teacher talk, and increasing interaction in structured group activities, such as varied types of text-based discussions (for a complete description of the modules and analysis of teacher learning during the history methods course, see Schall-Leckrone & McQuillan, 2012, 2014). The five participants fully satisfied the requirements of both courses, representing a fairly homogeneous sample: All were female, in their 20s, and accomplished students (see Table 2).

Three participants, Olivia, Susana, and Victoria, were student teachers, and two, Cammie and Sarah, were first- and second-year teachers, respectively, when the study began.<sup>5</sup> Participants claimed varying levels of proficiency in a second language. Susana was a bilingual (Spanish–English) Latina. Victoria was bilingual (French–English) of Canadian ancestry. Sarah had an advanced level of Spanish proficiency, having lived and studied in a Latin American country. Cammie spoke a little Spanish, and Olivia was monolingual. Among this small convenience sample, participants represented backgrounds perhaps typical of the predominantly White female U.S. teacher population (Zumwalt & Craig, 2008).

#### Teaching Contexts

Observations took place in four high schools and one middle school. Susana and Victoria student taught in large urban high schools with diverse student populations and inconsistent support from their cooperating teachers. (Sixty percent of Susana's students and 55% of Victoria's were bilingual.) Olivia student taught in a

**Table 2**  
**Cross Section of Research Participants**

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Teaching context</i>	<i>Demographics</i>	<i>Age (years)</i>
Olivia	student teacher	eighth-grade social studies	White, monolingual	22
Susana	student teacher	tenth-grade world history	Latina, bilingual	24
Victoria	student teacher	ninth-grade humanities	White bilingual (English–French)	24
Cammie	first/second year teacher	sheltered history instruction	White monolingual	24
Sarah	second/third year teacher	ninth-grade world history	White, advanced Spanish speaker	27

Note. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect anonymity.



suburban middle school with few EBs (less than 10% spoke a home language other than English) and a highly supportive mentor teacher. Cammie was employed as a sheltered English immersion (SEI) history teacher within the ESL program of a comprehensive urban high school in a gateway city (100% of her students were EBs). Sarah taught world history to ninth graders in a high school experiencing a recent dramatic increase in its immigrant population (approximately 25% of honors students and 33% of students in “standard” classes were bilingual). The number of EBs in observed classes ranged from several students in Olivia’s context to all of the students in Cammie’s SEI classroom.

### **Observations**

I observed participants’ teaching to understand how they demonstrated scaffolding practices to which they had been exposed during preservice coursework. Both student and novice teachers were observed multiple times: student teachers twice during a 10-week practicum and novice teachers three times over the course of two consecutive school years. Observations lasted the duration of a class period (60 or 90 minutes, depending on the school schedule) and followed an identical protocol. Prior to observations, I collected lesson plans and teaching materials. During observations, I videotaped and took field notes, and following them, I interviewed participants. Interviews were conducted with a semistructured interview protocol, digitally recorded, and transcribed in their entirety to get a sense of the teachers’ perspectives on how they scaffolded instruction.

### **Data Analysis**

A multistep process was followed to analyze data on how participants scaffolded instruction with each observed lesson as a discrete unit of study. First, I reviewed the corresponding lesson plan and teaching materials. Next, I viewed the observation videotape in its entirety to get a general sense of how the lesson went. As I did so, I recorded what the teacher and students said and did in separate grids in 10-minute increments. Then, I used the LRT framework (Lucas & Villegas, 2011) to determine which scaffolds participants employed. When I identified scaffolds used by all five participants (see the appendix), I determined the frequency and effectiveness with which these scaffolds were used.

### **Results**

How did student teachers and novice history teachers who had completed targeted preservice preparation scaffold instruction for EBs? Participants consistently used four types of scaffolds: visuals, vocabulary instruction, graphic organizers,

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and adapted and/or annotated texts. These findings are presented in order according to which scaffolds were used most frequently, as indicated in Table 3. In this section, I describe the purpose of each scaffold, explain the ways in which it was employed, and provide examples of effective usage.

**Visuals**

Visuals such as illustrations, paintings, cartoons, diagrams, Microsoft PowerPoint (PPT) slides, and videos provide EBs opportunities to activate prior knowledge, engage with content, and demonstrate analytical skills that otherwise might be inaccessible if language were the sole medium of instruction (Chappell & Faltis, 2013). Participants most frequently used visuals, videos, PPT, or a Smart Board to provide comprehensible input and, more specifically, to clarify directions, to present content information, and to scaffold analytical thinking.

Four of five participants outlined each lesson’s agenda and provided visual support throughout class instruction on a PPT or Smart Board, a routine consistently demonstrated in both the history and bilingual methods courses. Sarah, the most experienced participant, used visuals most effectively to provide clear and explicit instructions. For instance, she showed a poster with a diagram of names, student facilitators, and desk arrangements prior to a group activity during which students analyzed Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. It is important to note that the visual was just one noteworthy component of sequenced steps intended to prepare students for cooperative work. First, she did a read- and think-aloud, modeling how to paraphrase words and phrases from the text; reviewed guiding questions on a handout; asked if there were questions; and checked comprehension: “Can I get some head nods? Does everyone understand?” After showing the poster with desk arrangements, she told them, “Before anyone moves, show me you have the handout and

**Table 3**  
**Scaffolds Most Frequently Used by Student and Novice Teachers**

<i>Scaffold</i>	<i>Student teacher</i>			<i>Novice teacher</i>		<i>Total of each type of scaffold</i>
	<i>Susana</i>	<i>Victoria</i>	<i>Olivia</i>	<i>Cammie</i>	<i>Sarah</i>	
1. Visuals	6	1	3	6	4	20
2. Vocabulary instruction	3	3	2	5	3	16
3. Graphic organizers	5	1	6	3	1	15
4. Supplementing/ modifying texts	1	1	2	2	2	8
Total scaffolds used by each participant	15	6	13	16	12	62

a pen or pencil.” Then, scanning the room, she said, “OK, moderators, get your groups going.” Although Sarah mentioned that in her first year (before observations began), her day frequently ended in tears, no classroom management issues were visible in this or any other lesson I observed during her second and third years in the classroom, perhaps due to the clarity with which she expressed expectations for group and independent work with appropriate scaffolding.

Sarah, Cammie, Olivia, and Susana used artwork to activate prior knowledge and scaffold student engagement in critical thinking, the importance of which has been recognized in current literature (Chappell & Faltis, 2013). Cammie asked recent immigrants in her sheltered U.S. history class to describe, inference, and then form questions about a photo of the Trail of Tears (the forced relocation of native Americans). Similarly, Sarah and Olivia both had students analyze Renaissance themes in paintings (discussed in greater detail in the section on graphic organizers). As the warm-up activity for a lesson on communism, Susana prompted students to analyze a cartoon that depicted an octopus with Stalin’s head extending over a world map (see Figure 1).

She provided these guiding questions for the analysis: “What do you see? Why were these images chosen? For what kind of audience? What is the purpose of the image? What is the message?” In other words, Susana aimed for students to describe then interpret an authentic historical source, a practice emphasized in her history methods class. Doing so with a historical artifact like a cartoon rather than a primary source document promotes EBs’ development of analytical skills of history, such as sourcing, or examining an author’s intended audience, and contextualizing, or examining the context in which an artifact is produced in a linguistically less-demanding way (Schall-Leckrone & McQuillan, 2014; Wineburg, 1991).

Generally, visuals were used to provide comprehensible input, not to augment options for comprehensible output (Swain, as cited in Wright, 2015). Of the five participants, only Victoria offered students the opportunity to draw an illustration to depict point of view instead of writing a paragraph. Although such choices appeal to adolescents and drawing rather than writing provides an extralinguistic means to demonstrate comprehension, critical thinking, and creative expression (Chappell & Faltis, 2013), relatively inexperienced teachers may not consider such instructional options.

### **Vocabulary Instruction**

Vocabulary instruction—explaining difficult words/concepts, providing examples, and building repetition of key concepts into the lesson—plays a critical role in scaffolding content and language development for EBs (Calderón, 2011; Echevarría et al., 2017). Along these lines, when I asked Victoria what she drew upon in preparing lessons, she said, “Vocabulary, vocabulary, vocabulary, vocabulary,” and she elaborated, “When we work with vocabulary . . . we know we have

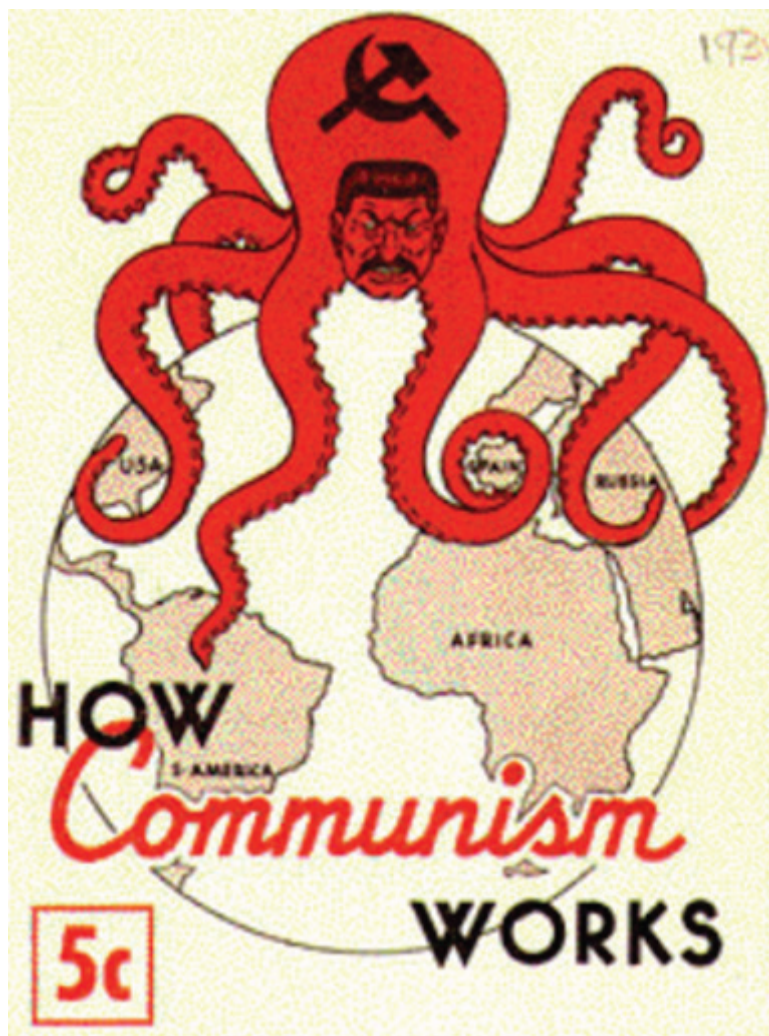
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the skill to break down words and break down meaning.” All participants seemed to share Victoria’s perspective, since some form of vocabulary instruction occurred in every observed lesson. However, the way vocabulary was taught ranged considerably from impromptu translation or explanation of unfamiliar words to instructional activities focused on key history concepts, word-learning strategies, and background building. Here I highlight the most frequent and effective ways participants scaffolded vocabulary development.

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**Figure 1**  
*Cartoon analysis from Susana’s class*



All five participants routinely taught words associated with key historical concepts, seeming to recognize that mastery of content-specific terms promotes comprehension (Proctor, Uccelli, Dalton, & Snow, 2009; Zwiers, 2014). For instance, Cammie taught the concept of Manifest Destiny during a lesson on U.S. westward expansion with map activities, while Susana contrasted communism with capitalism by providing definitions, visuals, and examples on PPT slides before students considered these concepts in the context of Cold War events and policies. Generally, participants selected just a few content-specific words, also called Tier 3 words (see Beck, Mckeown, & Kucan, 2002); introduced them with direct instruction; and provided multiple opportunities to apply them during the lesson. This is consistent with current research suggesting vocabulary instruction should promote deep understanding of “a small number of words, their elements, and related words in rich contexts” (Kelley, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Faller, 2010, p. 6) rather than superficial command of long vocabulary lists.

Several participants also taught word-learning strategies, such as identifying cognates (similar words in two languages), recognizing word parts, or inferring meaning from context, strategies EBs can apply independently when encountering new words (Echevarría et al., 2017; Kelley et al., 2010). Naming cognates was a frequent phenomenon in Cammie’s SEI history classes, where most students were native Spanish speakers. During a discussion of civic duty, for example, Cammie asked students, “What are some of your responsibilities?” and after a brief pause, “What’s responsibility?” When a student replied, “Responsibilidad,” Cammie replied, “Thank you, Google Translator,” and everyone laughed. She might have reinforced the similarity between the words in English and Spanish, because EBs who recognize cognates (English words that end in -ity end in -dad in Spanish) read with more understanding (Kamil & Hiebert, 2005). Similarly, morphological awareness, that is, the ability to parse words into morphemes (the smallest units of meaning in words), facilitates comprehension for EBs (Kelley et al., 2010; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007). Accordingly, Susana showed students root meanings for history terms like nationalism, communism, and capitalism and how these words change meaning when the affix -ism (a belief) is replaced with -ist (a person who practices the belief). A bilingual learner herself, Susana seemed to recognize that teaching word families is more efficient than teaching individual words (Echevarría et al., 2017), and EBs need strategies to decipher words independently, such as unlocking word parts (see Lesaux & Harris, 2015).

Along similar lines, Olivia taught eighth graders how to use context clues to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words, a vocabulary strategy most beneficial to strong readers (Lesaux & Harris, 2015). First, she modeled how to infer the meaning of words from context with a reading on the Manchus in China. Then students used the same strategy with a partner. Afterward, as each pair reported definitions of their assigned words from the overall list, Olivia displayed word definitions for the class to record and discussed any differences that arose between student-generated definitions and

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the standard definitions she provided. Finally, she told students they were reviewing the words because they would see them in the article they were about to read. This sort of scaffolding has both immediate and long-term benefits: to build background knowledge to facilitate comprehension of a particular reading and to provide practice with a strategy students can apply independently to subsequent texts.

Making relevant vocabulary visible in content classrooms also potentially increases EBs' independence, because they can consult word charts/walls when engaging in interactions and literacy activities (Echevarría et al., 2017; Gibbons, 2015). However, of the five participants, only Cammie and Sarah, the full-time teachers with more authority to shape the class environment and procedures, displayed word walls aligned with instructional units (a practice more common in elementary instruction). In addition, Sarah recognized that students need to acquire general academic language or Tier 2 words (Beck et al., 2002), including polysemous words; terms with different connotations in different subject areas, such as analyze; and mortar terms, which are used to create logical and cohesive extended texts (Zwiers, 2014). Students in Sarah's classes selected mortar terms for a rotating word wall display and weekly vocabulary quizzes. This classroom ritual, which Sarah attributed to her preservice preparation, is consistent with recommendations that vocabulary instruction emphasize Tier 2 words (Beck et al., 2002) and foster word consciousness (Echevarría et al., 2017).

Overall, Sarah, the most experienced participant, and Olivia, the student teacher whose supportive mentor teacher was present and engaged during all observations, demonstrated the most effective vocabulary scaffolding. Both introduced words and integrated word-learning activities throughout lessons to deepen understanding of key concepts, as evident in this final example. For Sarah's lesson on the role of ambition in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, first students responded to the prompt "in what ways are you an ambitious person?" Afterwards, Sarah led a discussion of what students wrote, which generally related to sports or school. Then, she asked, "Anyone have an example of when you or someone else was too ambitious?" A student mentioned Lance Armstrong's use of steroids, and Sarah responded,

His ambition grew to such an extent that it was no longer a good thing. We're going to be thinking about Julius Caesar today. Was he ambitious? Was he too ambitious? That's what we're going to be thinking about today.

Next, Sarah asked students to record a definition of *ambition* from a PPT slide, view a brief video clip of Marlon Brando delivering Marc Antony's speech at Julius Caesar's funeral, and then work in groups to analyze the speech from the Shakespeare tragedy. Throughout the lesson, students considered the role ambition played in Caesar's demise to promote deep understanding of a core concept.

### Graphic Organizers

All participants also used graphic organizers to make content more accessible

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and to “display relationships among concepts” (de Jong & Harper, 2005, p. 110). More specifically, graphic organizers were employed to assist students in processing, recording, and displaying content information from history sources. For instance, under the guidance of her cooperating teacher, Olivia taught eighth graders to complete Cornell notes (a T-chart with key words/phrases on the left and notes on the right), a Brain Frame (a concept web), or a Four Square (with elements written in quadrants: words you expect to see, questions you expect to be answered, important facts, and a summary) to facilitate reading comprehension.<sup>6</sup> A graphic organizer was also used to guide analysis of Renaissance paintings (see Figure 2).

In small groups, students analyzed paintings by following three steps: observing, making inferences, and then asking questions. While observing the painting, they were instructed to “study the image for two minutes, form an overall impression, and then examine individual items.” Then, they listed people, objects, and activities in different sections; divided the painting into quadrants; and described what was happening in each of them. Next, they were asked to infer the purpose or message of the painting and, finally, to identify questions that the painting evoked. In other words, students were guided to describe, interpret, and then question original historical sources with a graphic organizer and artwork, as Olivia explained:

Because we are a . . . text-heavy class, we’ve been trying to do . . . art . . . and movies . . . recently, which is good for [EBs]. . . Giving them . . . variation in the material is a nice thing for . . . those who are better at analysis [of other forms of representation] than just reading the text.

Olivia’s usage of the word *we* twice suggests that she and her mentor teacher together decided to use multiple scaffolds: artwork, a group activity, and a graphic organizer to support historical analysis.

As a first- and second-year teacher, Cammie also routinely used graphic organizers in her SEI history class. For instance, after Cammie modeled how to annotate a brief reading on political parties, students compared Democrats with Republicans using a Venn diagram. When Cammie asked the diagram’s purpose, Isaac explained, “A Venn diagram is to classify and organize information,” suggesting students were accustomed to using this graphic organizer. While they were reviewing the Venn diagram, Abby—a recent immigrant from Haiti—said, “There’s nothing similar about Democratic and Republican parties.” Cammie responded, “They both care about freedom.” Abby replied, “No, they don’t, Miss. Republicans are negative. They have nothing in common.” Cammie said, “Obviously, you like the Democrats!” When she asked for more information from the reading on the Republicans, Abby blurted out, “They’re wicked!” Cammie laughed and said, “Abby, you’re on another level.” Then Cammie continued, “They both want to make sure all countries have peace, freedom, and human rights, which is a good thing.” Abby murmured, “No.”

As a second-year teacher, Cammie skillfully employed Venn diagrams to promote independent analysis by students. However, Cammie did not ask Abby to

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elaborate on her strong political views, which seemed like a missed opportunity. Inexperienced teachers may need more guidance and support to enact interactional scaffolds during instruction that prompt EBs to say more (Gibbons, 2009). In contrast, graphic organizers, which are prepared in advance, can form an integral part of the instructional repertoire of novice teachers.

**Figure 2**  
**Graphic organizer for art analysis from Olivia's class**

Name of Painting: \_\_\_\_\_ Artist: \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 1. Observation**  
Study the image for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the image and then examine individual items.

1. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

People	Objects	Activities

2. Divide the image into quadrants. Write down what is happening in each quadrant

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2. Inference**  
List two things you can infer from this image. (What is the purpose/message the artist is trying to convey? What stands out in this painting?)

**Step 3. Questions**  
What questions does this painting raise in your mind?



**Supplementing/Modifying Texts**

While simplified texts may be necessary for EBs at the earliest stages of English acquisition, most EBs benefit from scaffolded engagement with authentic texts (Wong-Fillmore & Fillmore, 2012). Along these lines, all participants supplemented or modified written texts in advance for students. For instance, Victoria added marginal comments, questions, and indications of reading turns to a Coretta Scott King memoir that had been photocopied from a textbook and already had glossed vocabulary words and textual features like “Key Idea: You don’t have to be rich or powerful to change society.” Nonetheless, Victoria struggled to keep students on-task during class, which was spent round-robin reading the annotated text.

In contrast, with the support of her cooperating teacher, Olivia integrated several scaffolds that supplement/modify texts during one lesson sequence. First, she taught students to infer word meanings from context, as explained earlier. Next, she provided two versions of the reading: The adapted version for students at lower English proficiency levels had a larger typeface, more space between lines, and simplified vocabulary. Then, students recorded two quotes from the text on the left side of a double entry journal (a graphic organizer modeled in the history methods class as a scaffold for text-based discussions). On the right side of the grid, students commented on the significance of the excerpts. The successive use of scaffolds, vocabulary instruction, adapted texts, and graphic organizers, seemed to facilitate student engagement and reading comprehension. Following the observation, which occurred during the final period of the day, Olivia explained that she adapted the lesson plan each time she taught it in consultation with her mentor teacher. A distinguishing characteristic of Olivia’s ability to scaffold instruction was continuous reflection on fine-tuning her practice, which was encouraged by her cooperating teacher.

While the student teachers provided EBs with adapted or annotated texts, Cammie and Sarah, the full-time teachers, demonstrated during observations how they taught students to annotate texts themselves. Sarah explained how her approach to teaching text annotation evolved as she gained classroom experience:

SARAH: To me, read[ing] actively means pencil in hand. I say, “As you read the article make brief notes in the margin about what happened in each paragraph. When you refer to the text, which you will, these notes will help you find what you need.”

LAURA: Do you model how to do that?

SARAH: I spent . . . the first month modeling note taking . . . and it’s funny because last year I didn’t model note taking until . . . halfway through the year. I didn’t think of it, but now I did it the first week of school. . . . I made up this step-by-step note-taking sheet.

In the transition from her second to her third year, Sarah realized that her students should learn to annotate texts at the beginning of the year. Her directions to students

on how to read an excerpt from a *New Yorker* article on the sacking of Baghdad had the following admonition:

READ ACTIVELY. As you read the article, make brief notes in the margin about what happened in each paragraph. When you need to refer back to the text, which you will, these notes will help you find what you need.

My observations revealed that Sarah's students used their written notes from the article's margins during small-group discussions. In sum, Sarah drew upon her preservice preparation and classroom experience to provide EBs access to rich sources and to engage students in actively reading them and acquiring independent reading strategies. Overall, Olivia, who was mentored by a cooperating teacher, and Cammie and Sarah, the two full-time teachers, most frequently used a range of scaffolds to supplement or modify written texts that seemed to enable EBs to access and interpret authentic historical sources.

## **Discussion**

I sought to understand how history teachers learn to scaffold instruction because the importance of scaffolding content instruction for EBs has been established (Echevarría et al., 2017; Gibbons, 2009, 2015; Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Walqui, 2006; Zwiers, 2006). All five participants in this study routinely used visuals, graphic organizers, and annotated texts and taught vocabulary. These practices, which make content more comprehensible, were the types of scaffolds inexperienced teachers could readily incorporate into their instructional repertoire. As designed scaffolds, they could be planned in advance of execution. However, interactional scaffolds—in-the-moment efforts to encourage students to stretch their language use—were not consistently observed in participants' practice (see Gibbons, 2009). This suggests that student and novice teachers may benefit from opportunities to rehearse, practice, and receive feedback on oral scaffolding techniques, such as providing wait time, prompting students to say more, and recasting responses, to develop facility with them (Gibbons, 2003; Grossman, Hamerness, & McDonald, 2009).

Content area also may be a deciding factor in the selection and implementation of scaffolds. Because history teachers feel pressed to cover large swaths of content (Barton & Levstik, 2004), scaffolds related to processing content, such as graphic organizers, may be more readily employed. Other scaffolds may be more prevalent in science or art instruction, such as simulations or listing procedures to complete a task. Participants rarely used hands-on techniques or provided alternative assessments or primary language support.

Context also matters when choosing scaffolds. Indeed, Cammie—who exclusively taught EBs—used the greatest variety of scaffolds, including clear, simple language; hand gestures; and primary language support (see the appendix). Recent immigrants in her SEI classes used their first language to clarify concepts and

instructions. While some of Sarah's students greeted her in Spanish, native language support did not occur during any observations of her class or those of the student teachers, even though Susana and Sarah were fluent in Spanish. Cammie's students had the lowest levels of English proficiency of any observed in the study. In addition, legislation that restricted bilingual education in the state was frequently misinterpreted. Although native language support was allowed, in this "English-only" context, it is reasonable to surmise that many teachers, and inexperienced teachers especially, might be hesitant to provide or permit it.<sup>7</sup>

There were also visible differences between the student teachers and novice history teachers. Cammie and Sarah scaffolded instruction more effectively; their scaffolds consistently aligned with instructional objectives and prepared students to complete activities independently. As relatively more experienced teachers, they modeled what students needed to do before students engaged in activities, as exemplified by how Sarah prepared students for small-group analysis of a complex text. In contrast, Susana and Victoria assigned the most challenging activities to students to complete independently. Consequently, both often struggled to redirect off-task students. On a related note, novice teachers distinguished themselves from student teachers in their skill in giving clear and explicit directions. It is encouraging to note that among this small sample, participants seemed more skilled at teaching, in general, and scaffolding instruction for EBs, in particular, with support (as in Olivia's experience) and over time (as Cammie and Sarah demonstrated during observations and explained in interviews). Aspects of preservice preparation aimed at providing EBs with equitable access to content seemed to be embedded in proactive and coherent instructional practices as these teachers gained classroom experience.

In this study, participants with more classroom experience were more accomplished at scaffolding history instruction for EBs than less experienced participants. This promising finding emerged from my analysis of how novice and student teachers scaffolded instruction using Lucas and Villegas's (2011) framework. It implies that with prior training and experience, content teachers can become increasingly adept at scaffolding instruction for EBs. In addition, the presence of a supportive cooperating teacher, who could model and provide site-based coaching, increased Olivia's capacity to use multiple scaffolds within a lesson and to reflect on and fine-tune her instructional practice. In contrast, Victoria and Susana used fewer scaffolds, seemed more isolated, and were frequently overwhelmed by classroom management issues. In sum, consistent site-based support for continued learning, reflection, and fine-tuning one's instructional repertoire matter when student teachers are expected to implement practices to which they have been exposed during coursework. Cooperating teachers play a vital role as on-site teacher educators (Garrone-Shufra, 2015) and should be included in university initiatives, such as course and professional development, to create coherent support for student teachers from coursework to classroom settings.

On a related note, differences between how the two novice teachers imple-

mented scaffolds also suggest the importance of context in learning how to scaffold instruction for EBs. Specifically, the instructional setting—mainstream or SEI—the corresponding student population, and their level of English proficiency influenced which scaffolds were employed. Clearly knowledge of student needs should be the deciding factor in determining how to support engagement in content learning. Even though creating opportunities for teacher candidates to observe effective models of teaching EBs in mainstream and SEI contexts remains a challenge for teacher preparation programs (Brisk et al., 2014), both school-based support and classroom experience seem necessary for student and novice teachers to put scaffolding methods presented in coursework into practice.

### **Implications**

Inexperienced content teachers can develop an instructional repertoire to scaffold instruction for EBs. Student and novice teachers readily incorporate certain scaffolds into their preliminary classroom practice, such as visuals, graphic organizers, vocabulary instruction, and annotation of texts, so teacher preparation programs might prioritize the development of an instructional repertoire of designed scaffolds that can be built upon over time (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Gibbons, 2009; Lucas & Villegas, 2013). More coursework and site-based practice seem necessary for new teachers to develop facility with interactional scaffolds and multifaceted instructional scaffolds, such as providing clear and explicit instructions or integrating related scaffolds throughout a lesson to build student independence. This study supports current research suggesting that preservice teachers receive clinical training in the rehearsal and enactment of core practices (Grossman et al., 2009; Grossman, McDonald, & Pupik, 2016; Kazemi, Ghouseini, Cunard, & Turrou, 2016). Accordingly, teacher educators should provide opportunities within courses to rehearse, enact, and receive feedback on key scaffolding practices (for a study of practice-based preparation in an online ESL course, see Percy, DeStefano, Kidwell, & Ramirez, 2016). Teacher education programs also should cultivate K–12 partnerships so that student teachers can practice under the guidance of mentor teachers who demonstrate scaffolding techniques to which they have been exposed during coursework and provide coaching with real students. Networks of strong alumnae should be developed and student teachers placed with them. In addition, opportunities for continued learning should be extended to alumnae beyond graduation. For preservice and novice teachers to develop facility with a solid repertoire of instructional scaffolds that engage EBs in rigorous content instruction, teacher learning must be reinforced from coursework to the classroom.

### **Limitations and Need for Further Research**

This research study was small by design, with a limited number of participants,

school sites, and classroom observations, but it can be replicated. The varied classroom settings, middle and high school, mainstream and SEI, urban and suburban, likely influenced outcomes, as did the student teachers' relationships with their cooperating teachers. Because I was not focusing on how on-site coaching supports the development of scaffolding expertise, I only collected incidental data on the role of cooperating teachers, which is another limitation of this study. Although its results cannot be generalized beyond the immediate settings (Kilbourn, 2006), useable knowledge produced in this study can inform the practice of those who seek to prepare secondary content teachers to work effectively with EBs.

This study examined how history teachers learned to scaffold instruction for EBs from coursework to the classroom. Similar investigations might be conducted with student and novice teachers from other content areas and over longer periods of time. A longitudinal study of a group of teachers could help us better understand the development of scaffolding expertise from coursework to the classroom. This study also suggests that there is a need for research on teacher preparation that emphasizes rehearsal and enactment of scaffolding practices and the role of cooperating teachers in whether and to what extent student teachers scaffold instruction for EBs. Further research is also recommended that shifts the focus to student learning. Important, unanswered questions remain: to what extent does scaffolding instruction improve learning opportunities and outcomes for emerging bilingual students? Continued work is needed to provide support and guidance to educators who seek to elevate the academic trajectories and improve the life chances of bilingual adolescents.

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## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> I use the asset-based term *emerging bilingual* first coined by Téllez (1998) rather than *English learners* or *English language learners* because these students speak another language. This article focuses on the population of emerging bilingual learners still developing sufficient academic English to succeed in school.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term *scaffolding* here because it suggests the enactment of a support system that leads to increased independence for EBs rather than sheltering, which implies that EBs need protection.

<sup>3</sup> A recent book offers a strong critique of the SIOP research base, theory of language, and pedagogy, stating key elements are just good teaching and not specific to EBs (see Crawford & Reyes, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> A similar question might be asked regarding experienced teachers who receive limited professional development to teach EBs in mainstream settings.

<sup>5</sup> Pseudonyms were assigned to protect anonymity.

<sup>6</sup> Olivia's cooperating teacher not only used graphic organizers to which she had been exposed during her preservice coursework; he also provided professional development to colleagues that spring, which also included a strategy she taught him from her secondary bilingual methods course.

<sup>7</sup> As of the fall of 2017, the state legislature finally overturned 15-years of restrictions on bilingual education, once again allowing families and school districts discretion in deciding which instructional models would benefit their population of bilingual learners.

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### **Appendix**

#### **How Student and Novice History Teachers Scaffold Instruction for EBs**

<i>Scaffolds</i>	<i>Student teachers</i>		<i>Novice teachers</i>		
	<i>Susana</i>	<i>Victoria</i>	<i>Olivia</i>	<i>Cammie</i>	<i>Sarah</i>
1. Use extralinguistic supports					
• Visual cues	x		x	x	x
• Graphic organizers	x	x	x	x	x
• Hands-on techniques		x			
• Alternative assignments		x			
2. Supplement/modify written text					
• Study guides/vocabulary lists			x	x	x
• Adapted text			x	x	x
• Highlighted text	x		x	x	x
• Annotated texts	x	x	x	x	x
• Summary presentation of central ideas	x				x
3. Supplement/modify oral language					
• Minimize use of idiomatic expressions	x	x		x	
• Native language support				x	
• Explain difficult words/ideas	x	x	x	x	x
• Provide outline of lectures/ lessons	x		x	x	x
• Give examples	x	x	x	x	x
• Pause frequently/wait time	x	x		x	x
• Build repetition/redundancy into lesson				x	
4. Provide clear and explicit instructions					
• List procedures for completing task			x	x	x
• Ask students to paraphrase directions		x		x	x
• Include all details in instructions			x	x	x
Total scaffolds employed	10	9	11	16	13