"My Partner Always Helps Me": Exploring Two Co-teachers' Practices to Support Writing in a First-Grade Linguistically Diverse Elementary Class

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Abstract

English Language Learners (ELLs) are often deprived of using English for academic purposes in meaningful and authentic contexts when pulled out of the classroom for English Language Development services. To tackle this issue, schools have increasingly integrated ELLs in the mainstream classroom through an inclusive model of co-teaching between one content and one language teacher. Through a case study approach, we explored two co-teachers' practices that fostered writing development within one first grade linguistically diverse mainstream classroom. Through analysis of classroom interaction as well as teachers' and researchers' notes, findings revealed that in holding core shared practices, the two teachers achieved an enhanced ability to scaffold their teaching to support their students' writing development. Core shared practices included a sensitive view of students' academic language and writing development, modeling for conversations about writing, embedding specific scaffolds for academic language, and opportunities for talking and sharing ideas about writing. These core practices enabled the ESOL and content teacher to take up and share equal and complementing roles during planning, instruction, and assessment. Co-teaching can yield positive results provided that the ESOL teacher has a central, not peripheral role in the mainstream classroom.

Key words: *Co-teaching; ELLs; academic language; writing*

Introduction

In the United States of America (USA), there is a contested history of instructional practices aimed at teaching English as an additional or second language in K-12 public schools. These practices are often distinguishable by the existence of specially dedicated instructional periods on English language development, where, most of the time, English Language Learners (ELLs) are kept from working side by side English-speaking students in mainstream, regular classes (Shin, 2018). In these sheltered settings, ELLs are often tracked into remedial classes with low expectations for academic achievement (Coulter & Smith, 2006; Valdés, 2001). As a result, ELLs might end up having limited opportunity to use and practice English for authentic academic purposes and contexts for a long period of their schooling (Durán, 2008; Janzen, 2008). This is especially true regarding standards-based writing instruction since ELLs do not usually have access to the same rigor of content and academic language as their English-speaking counterparts (Bailey, 2015).

Thus, many public K-12 schools in the USA have adopted an inclusive model to increase the amount of time ELLs spend inside the regular, mainstream class. New York State, the location of this study, has implemented a co-teaching model to integrate ELLs in the general education classroom. This model requires that English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers and the main classroom content teachers co-teach in "integrated" periods, where ELLs of all backgrounds and levels work side by side English-speaking peers. As co-teaching becomes more prevalent in New York State elementary classrooms, ESOL and content teachers are tasked with addressing all students' needs while promoting a positive atmosphere for learning and inclusion. In this inclusive environment, all students engage in the same standards-based curriculum, regardless of language proficiency level.

In particular, supporting writing development can be challenging in a linguistically diverse elementary class as many ELL students might not have developed a strong foundation in spoken English yet (Gibbons, 2015). Difficulties with writing can interfere with ELLs' academic achievement, impacting their performance in various school subjects. Therefore, teachers in general might struggle to balance the needs of students who are learning English as an additional language and the needs of students who speak English as a primary language. The assumption in a co-teaching model is that the presence of the ESOL teacher would help the content teacher balance these different demands. However, studies that investigate the specific ways or practices a team of ESOL and content teacher can engage in to cater to the many demands of an elementary linguistically diverse class are still scarce. In light of this, the goal of our study was to explore how one ESOL and one content teacher collaborated to support writing in a first-grade linguistically diverse class, especially focusing on the practices and roles the two teachers implemented and took up during co-teaching.

Literature Review

Co-Teaching for ELLs in the Mainstream Classroom

The inclusion of ELLs in the mainstream classroom through team teaching or co-teaching between a content teacher and a language teacher has been a sensible solution to tackle the issue of an ever increasing number of ELLs in US schools. Teacher collaboration and co-teaching have been advocated as strong practices that can foster teacher leaders and enhance student learning (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2017). This is in sharp contrast to the "pull out" model of ELLs from the mainstream

classroom for specially designated periods of English Language Development. These programs have demonstrated limited rates of success in helping ELLs achieve at grade levels (Alvarez, Ananda, Walquí, Sato, & Rabinowitz, 2014; Shin, 2018; Valdés, 2001). The process of isolating students for language instruction can be even more detrimental for students who come from households where there is little exposure to the use of English for academic purposes (Drake, 2014). In line with these ideas, recommendations made by the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages International Association highlight co-teaching and closer collaboration among ESOL and content teachers as the most prominent transformation in K-12 school practices to attend to the rigor and focus on language and writing that US common core state standards bring (Valdés, Kibler, & Walquí, 2014). The authors cite examples from New York City, Oregon, and Florida to illustrate how content teachers and ESOL teachers have already successfully collaborated to support ELLs.

Still, studies that describe specific practices a team of teachers can successfully engage in to support ELLs in the mainstream classroom are limited, especially in elementary settings. A handful of ethnographic studies have provided favorable findings, such as the long-term study conducted by York-Barr, Ghere, and Sommerness (2007), which revealed that ELLs' achievement scores increased in one elementary school district after three years of co-teaching implementation. Fu, House, and Huang (2005) also reported positive findings, with significant gains in Chinese-speaking students' confidence and writing in a case study of collaboration between one fourth-grade teacher and one ESOL teacher. At the secondary level, Slater & Mohan (2010) findings shed light on the different, but complementing roles ESOL and content teachers can have in a high school Science class. In the study, the ESOL teacher focused on content scaffolding and cooperative learning to help ELLs develop the discourse needed to engage in science tasks; the Science teacher, in turn, focused on presenting relevant science concepts, guiding all students to apply knowledge to solve the given task.

Despite the promises, most research on co-teaching in K-12 environments has shown that there is an imbalance between roles and responsibilities taken by content and ESOL teachers during co-teaching in mainstream classrooms. Most ethnographic and qualitative research has reported that ESOL teachers have had their roles diminished in mainstream classrooms (Creese, 2002, 2006; Davison, 2006; Gleeson & Davison, 2016; Pawan & Ortloff, 2011; Whiting, 2017). For example, Creese (2010) demonstrated that when a secondary Geography teacher and an ESOL teacher collaborated to modify content-specific text, subject knowledge continued to take priority as the main goal of instruction with little room for a language focus in the curriculum. Beninghof and Leensvaart (2016) found out that many content teachers had difficulties sharing instructional time, releasing control, and seeing the value of their ESOL colleagues in an elementary school in Colorado. In larger statistical research, there seems to be an overall mentality governing co-teaching in K-12 contexts that ESOL teachers are responsible for teaching language while content teachers are responsible for teaching content (Lo, 2014). As a consequence, ESOL teachers tend to feel a loss of autonomy and power that impacts their ability to fully support their students in mainstream classrooms.

The impact of these findings results in a lack of systematic structure for successful collaboration between ESOL and content teachers. Up to this day, there is very little evidence that can be drawn from the existing research literature to demonstrate that co-teaching can indeed fulfill its potential as an adequate model to include and serve ELLs in the mainstream classroom. There seems to be a dire need for studies that describe how two co-teachers can effectively negotiate their roles and

responsibilities to fully serve the varied demands of a core curriculum and a linguistically diverse group.

The Role of the ESOL Teacher in Co-teaching

To tackle the potential imbalance of power during co-teaching, ESOL and content teachers need to be able to share expertise and negotiate roles and responsibilities (Arkoudis, 2006). In successful co-teaching models, the ESOL teacher can take up the roles of language specialist and cultural guide, who can help content teachers focus on both the linguistic and cultural aspects of lesson design and implementation (Hilliard & Gottlieb, 2015).

As language specialists, ESOL teachers can collaborate with content teachers to address one of the key challenges in working with ELLs, namely, helping these students move from everyday informal ways of constructing and representing knowledge to more specific and technical ways of conveying knowledge in academic ways, including writing (Cummins, 2000; Gibbons, 2015; Shatz & Wilkinson, 2013). The implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in US schools intensified this task as it requires that students analyze text and draw evidence from text while using language in sophisticated ways to describe their reasoning, provide detailed explanations, and justify conclusions in written and oral forms (Understanding Language, 2013). For this reason, there is a growing consensus among second language educators and specialists that features of academic language should be taught explicitly to ELLs so that they are able to successfully accomplish the kinds of writing tasks required in schools (Gibbons, 2015; Shin, 2018; Snow, 2015; van Lier & Walquí, 2012; Zwiers, O'Hara, & Pritchard, 2014).

It is important for all teachers to understand that each academic content area writing is tied to complex and technical specialist varieties of language as well as other special symbol systems that significantly differ from people's everyday varieties of language (Bazerman, 2004; Gee, 2004). It takes all learners several years to master this kind of language. For ELLs, this task is amplified by the fact that these students are learning both language and content simultaneously. It might take ELLs 5-10 years to learn this kind of disciplinary language, especially considering different schooling and writing experiences (Valdés, 2004). Sadly, most mainstream content teachers have had little or no preparation for supporting ELLs in learning academic content while developing proficiency in English (Lucas & Villegas, 2008). In contrast, ESOL teachers have extensive training and are highly sensitive to this challenge, equipping them with the necessary tools to collaborate and support content teachers in identifying language demands in content and academic writing tasks (Hilliard & Gottlieb, 2015). ESOL teachers can help content teachers to carefully "scaffold" (Wood, Brunner, & Ross, 1976) steps in the instruction of writing, providing a bridge between what students are currently able to say and do and what they can potentially accomplish with strategic assistance from a more experienced teacher or peer (Vygotsky, 1978). These supports or scaffolds can be in the form of linguistic structures, such as word walls and sentence frames or starters, gestures, visual aids, graphic organizers, manipulatives, realia, modeling, collaborative work, and writing frames (Hyland, 2016; Shatz & Wilkinson, 2013; Walter, 2004).

As cultural guides, ESOL teachers can potentially help content teachers see ELL students' writing in a new light. Teachers of ELLs need to be keenly aware that their beliefs influence their perception of what students are capable of doing (Kong & Pearson, 2003; Richards & Lockhart, 1996). Successful teachers of ELLs understand that learning to write involves the ability to share and present one's ideas to a target audience, following a certain style and genre (Bazerman, 2004). All

texts are addressed to others (Bakhtin, 1986). However, good writing in academic contexts is often viewed as the presence of topic sentences and body paragraphs, introduction and conclusion associated with the virtual absence of grammatical and mechanical errors (Valdés, 2004). This limited view is usually coupled with a monolingual perspective of English and writing development where monolingualism is seen as the norm (Hopewell & Escamilla, 2014; Weber & Horner, 2018). As a result, ELLs are by default deemed not normal and behind from the moment they enter school (August, Shanahan, & Escamilla, 2009). In adopting a more culturally sensitive and multilingual lens, ELLs' home language(s) and cultural practices can become useful resources for developing writing (Garcia, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017). In this view, instead of merely reacting to errors, co-teachers can collaborate to look for patterns, hypothesizing about misconceptions, highlighting successes, collecting additional data, and interpreting the student writing to inform subsequent teaching and learning activities as well as feedback (Alvarez et al., 2014; Reaser, Adger, Wolfram, & Christian, 2017).

A co-teaching model can potentially help the ESOL and content teachers balance the demanding task of focusing on language, culture, and content in a diverse classroom. The relationship between content and ESOL teacher should be reciprocal (Morita-Mullaney, 2015), actively involving each teacher into planning, instruction, and assessment. Given the scarcity of studies that explore specific co-teaching practices ESOL and content teachers can engage in to serve a linguistically diverse group of students in the mainstream classroom, our study aims to fill this gap by describing and detailing practices of an inclusive co-teaching case of two teachers who supported ELLs' writing in a first-grade mainstream classroom.

Methodology

In employing a case study approach (Yin, 2003), we sought to investigate how a team of ESOL and content teacher collaborated to support writing in a first-grade linguistically diverse class, especially focusing on the practices and roles the two teachers implemented and took up during co-teaching. To achieve this goal, we purposefully selected what we considered a positive case of collaboration between a content and an ESOL teacher. A case study approach allowed us to trace the two teachers' practices over time drawing from a wide array of documentation, which in turn helped us uncover the complexity of the social phenomena involving the two co-teachers' daily decisions, views, and classroom practices (Yin, 2003). Our study was framed by the following two questions: *How do one ESOL and one content teacher co-teach to support students' writing in a first-grade linguistically diverse class? What roles does each of the teachers take up during co-teaching?*

Setting and Participants

The study took place in a suburban elementary school district in the state of New York. To provide a wider look at the region, 68% of all the school district's students spoke Spanish at home. At the time, ELLs represented 18% of the district's total enrollment. Most of the incoming kindergarten students spoke Spanish at home, and more than half were classified as ELLs. 70% of ELLs were in bilingual programs, either dual language immersion or transitional. 30% of the remaining ELLs were in English as a New Language (ENL) programs, which meant that these students received the majority of their instruction in the mainstream classroom, with occasional ENL pull-out services as needed or depending on the students' language proficiency level.

The first author is a Bilingual/TESOL educator and the second author is a Science and Childhood educator who have been collaborating since 2014 in leading workshops and in-class coaching for teams of content and ESOL teachers. Through work in the selected K-4 school district as professional development providers, we identified one first-grade integrated class in which co-teaching seemed to work for both co-teachers and students. Through informal observations and coaching sessions, we noticed that in that specific period there were seemingly equal roles between the two co-teachers; that is, we could not tell who was the ESOL and who was the content (lead) teacher. Given our notes, we started to wonder what would make that partnership and classroom that way. We wondered whether there were specific strategies the teachers were employing to integrate all students and whether collaboration and co-teaching were a key element for achieving their goals. This initial inquiry provided the motivation for the present study.

We invited the two teachers (third and fourth authors for this study) to collaborate on this research project. Each of the teachers had over twenty years of classroom experience, and they had been collaborating for five years. The content teacher taught in early childhood classrooms for most of her career. The ESOL teacher was a dual certified teacher in both elementary and TESOL education. She was bilingual in Spanish and English.

The class included 21 students. There were two formally classified ELLs, eight bilingual Spanish-English speaking students, who were not formally classified as ELLs, and eleven English-speaking monolingual students. Other important considerations were students with special needs, such as attention-deficit disorder. This classroom was typical of a linguistically and culturally diverse district.

The ESOL teacher co-taught with the content teacher in the selected mainstream first-grade class for one 45-minute period a day. The subject co-taught during the ESOL integrated period followed the *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing, Grade 1, A Workshop Curriculum* developed by Lucy Calkins of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University. Given that this curriculum was not intentionally designed for ELLs, the two teachers felt they needed to modify the content and objectives significantly.

Data Collection

The study took place throughout one academic year. All four authors were involved in the data collection process. The data came directly from the classroom or from our collaborative work with the two teachers in conference presentations and professional development. The research adhered strictly to the Institutional Review Board Human Subjects protocol, and informed consent forms were distributed at the onset of the study. The two researchers conducted multiple interviews with the two teachers, video recorded classroom sessions, and took notes during classroom visitations. The two teachers were very active in the data collection process, providing us with sample tasks, instructional materials, and video recordings of their students talking with each other. Thus, we drew from multiple data sources: Two video recordings of classroom interactions among teachers and students, one video of the co-teachers presenting their practice at a teachers' conference, several informal interviews with the co-teachers, field and reconstructed observation notes taken throughout the academic year, teachers' personal notes, and teaching materials. All videos and interviews were transcribed.

Data Analysis

We employed a qualitative approach (Saldaña, 2009) to coding the data, which consisted of two cycles. In the first cycle, we coded all the sources of data line by line looking for ways and under what circumstances the two teachers collaborated to support students' writing. We created a set of descriptive codes associated with these ways, such as "modeling," "academic language," "partner talk," following patterns of frequency and correspondence. In the second cycle, we used the initial descriptive codes to generalize patterns of practices enacted by the teachers. We maintained respect towards the teachers' voices, trying to keep the codes as true to how they talked and described experiences as much as possible. We used transcripts of classroom interaction to illustrate actual instances of the practices in action. We ultimately identified three main core practices shared by the two teachers when co-teaching as outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *Codes Emerging from Analysis of Multiple Data Sources*

Practices	Sample Initial Codes	Data Source
1) A sensitive view of students' academic language and writing development	Value students' input in writing instruction	a video of the co-teachers presenting their practice at a teachers' conference
	Teaching of academic language is important for all students	informal interviews with the co-teachers
	Parent survey	field and reconstructed observation notes
	Notes on students backgrounds and interests	teachers' personal notes
2) Modeling	Teachers modeling partner talk together	video recordings of classroom interactions, a video of the co-teachers presenting their practice at a teachers' conference, field and reconstructed observation notes
	Both teachers attentive to content and language	video recordings of classroom interactions, a video of the co-teachers presenting their practice at a teachers' conference, field and reconstructed observation notes
3) Opportunities for talking and sharing	Partner talk	videos of classroom interactions, field and reconstructed observation notes, teaching materials
	Writing buddies	videos of classroom interactions, field and reconstructed observation notes
	Teacher modeling of peer feedback	videos of classroom interactions, field and reconstructed observation notes

Findings

We organize findings according to the two teachers' core practices regarding writing: 1) a sensitive view of students' academic language and writing development, 2) modeling, and 3) opportunities for talking and sharing.

A Sensitive View of Students' Academic Language and Writing Development

Analysis of informal interviews, field notes, videos, and personal notes about individual students revealed that both teachers demonstrated and shared a highly sensitive view of students' linguistic, cultural, and academic backgrounds. This shared view directly informed their practices, helping them make principled decisions about how to support each individual student. Through collaboration, they were able to amplify their ability to identify students' strengths and needs as they each brought a different, but complementing perspective on content, language, and socio-emotional child development. The ESOL teacher noted:

We are always mindful of each individual's needs. Having two teachers in the room means more opportunities to share, to model, and to enrich. We pride ourselves in being equally responsible for their assessment, planning, goal setting and evaluations.

In order to gather critical information about students, the teachers created a parent survey for the first day of school. The content teacher highlighted that she was an observer of students and looked at the "best data" about how students behaved and used language in the playground, lunchroom and hallway. That allowed the content teacher to see the students outside of the mainstream classroom, establishing an equal ground with the ESOL teacher who moved around the school during the day also seeing the students in multiple settings. Both teachers believed that it was important to "give plenty of wait time" to students, respecting their different and unique levels of language acquisition. Both teachers consistently called the students "writers," instilling a sense of pride and confidence in the learners. The content teacher explained: "Very proud of them [students] and hope they will continue to love and be writers. As teachers, we both love writing and it means a lot to help students know it's a powerful tool."

Both held a positive view of students' academic language development in believing that in students' writing "there is nothing small in what we do," that is, everything students said and wrote counted. They believed that the teaching of academic language was important for all students in the class, not just ELLs. In her personal notes, the ESOL teacher said, "What we have learned is that all children need an emphasis on vocabulary. Most importantly all children need to have a personal connection with the material being taught to inspire them and motivate them to learn. Once the children are vested they truly become self-motivated, and half the battle has just been won."

The two teachers consistently communicated about each student in the class. The ESOL teacher was not only responsible for the two formally classified ELLs. All students became their students. The ESOL teacher explained her role in the integrated period in the following way:

For me the best part of my role as an ESOL teacher in the co-teaching setting is the children don't know who I am there to service. All students are happy to see me, as I am part of their daily routine. They are no longer the small group that re-enters with their head down concerned that they have missed something, something that might impede them from completing their homework, or following the next lesson. Confidence is crucial in learning for all students especially ELLs.

The ESOL teacher helped sort out details about linguistically diverse families as well as cultural background. The use of home language was viewed as positive, directly contributing to students' writing development. The ESOL teacher's notes about one of the ELL students connected the use of Spanish to academic performance: "He speaks to me in Spanish whenever he can. I can tell he

enjoys speaking Spanish. [He] always makes good choices." The same is done for one of the Bilingual students, "Academically she is above average, in addition she is fully bilingual and is super proud of her heritage." The two teachers attended to students' personalities and relationships with other classmates. Both teachers' notes emphasized the importance of the kind of support provided at home. It was evident that the teachers equally talked about all students' needs and strengths, not isolating or stigmatizing one student over the other, which is paramount to foster an inclusive environment.

Modeling

Analysis of classroom interaction demonstrated the use of teacher modeling as a core practice engaged by the two teachers. The co-taught period usually started with the co-teachers modeling or sharing writing examples or strategies; then, the students would turn and talk, practicing the strategy and discussing other techniques. This part involved students making use of academic language resources modeled or available in the room such as word walls and cognate lists. Finally, the students would apply those strategies to their own work sometimes independently and sometimes cooperatively with a partner. During the teachers' modeling, children would sit in the "rug," watching and listening to the two teachers talk about their writing. Transcript 1 below shows the two teachers modeling a pair-share conversation about going to the zoo. They are trying to get the students to think and help each other pick a smaller or "see" topic from a larger topic. Brackets represent physical behaviors and suspension dots represent pauses. AA is the ESOL teacher and AS is the content teacher.

During the interaction in Transcript 1, the two teachers took up equal and complementing roles during modeling. There was no overshadowing of one teacher by the other. That is, the ESOL teacher led the discussion with the content teacher. The ESOL teacher was not physically removed from the main action during instruction, teaching ELLs only. The two teachers collaborated purposefully and consistently to scaffold academic language and writing for all students. For example, the two teachers provided scaffolds through the use of open-ended questions such as "What's one thing we do at the zoo?" (line 1), through different ways to talk to a partner as in "Can you tell me something about the monkey? What you saw and what you did with the monkey?" (lines 29-30), and through introducing academic content and language by asking closed-ended questions and making gestures, such as in "Hey… Why can't she make that her see story?" and "Can she make that her smaller story?" accompanied by the signals to indicate *see* and *small* (lines 27-28).

The fact that there were two teachers in the room allowed for the modeling to be an authentic conversation, where the two teachers collaborated to mimic the talk and the academic language they would like the students to utilize during their own conversations through pair share. The two teachers also modeled the importance of partner input and sharing. AA emphasized to students the idea of using partner talk to help with idea generation, saying, "My partner always helps me" (lines 18-19) to which AS agreed, saying "I'm listening cause I might be able to give her some ideas" (line 20). By modeling ways partners should talk to each other, the two teachers instilled the notion that respecting, listening, and helping others was an important way to get better at writing.

Transcript 1: "My Partner Always Helps Me" (Timestamp: 0:30-3:03)

1	AA: [Turns to students] Who can tell me… What's one thing we do at the zoo?
2	Student 1: We see the animals and feed them
3	[AA and AS talk together] We see the animals and feed them
4	AS: Okay
5	AA: What else do we do at the zoo?
6	Student 2: Bears
7	AA: Say it one more time
8	Student 2: Bears
9	AA: Sometimes we see bears but that is still seeing animals… What else?
10	Student 3: (unintelligible) pet them
11	[AA and AS talk together] Oooooh
12	AA: Alright
13	AS: [counting with fingers] We get to pet them, feed them, and see them
14	AA: Okay… That's three things
15	AS: That's three things… Oh my god… That's a lot!
16	AA: That is a lot… see? [dramatically] I'm so confused… Now let me think of what my favorite animal is… Hold on… Maybe that will help me
17	AS: Cause I think she needs some thinking time… Look… Listen… Let's see if we can help her
18 19	AA: Let me see… let me talk to my partner… [turns to AS] My partner always helps me… My partner always helps me
20 21	AS: [Turns to students] So… I'm listening cause I might be able to give her some ideas… Let's see… You do not have to do partner talk yet… [turning to AA] Okay
22	AA: [Talking to students] I remember that when I went to the zoo my favorite animal was the monkey
23	AS: The monkey?
24	[Student makes monkey sounds] [Students laugh]
25	AS: So… Why don't you… Boys and girls [drawing students' attention]… [turns to AA] I'm thinking you saw different animals but your favorite animal was the monkey?
26	AA: Yes
27 28 29 30	AS: Ooooh… [turning to students and putting hand next to mouth as if telling a secret] Hey… Why can't she make that her see story? [makes gesture to signal "see"] Can she make that her smaller story? [makes gesture to signal "small"] [turns to AA] Can you tell me something about the monkey? What you saw and what you did with the monkey?
31	AA: Wait… I get things in order in my head [puts two index fingers at different sides of head indicating thinking] So… everybody say "zoo" [makes gesture to signal "zoo" as a big topic]
32	[AS and students repeat "zoo" and make same gesture]
33	AA: Animals [makes gesture to signal "animals" as a subtopic]
34	[AS and students repeat "animals" and make same gesture]
35	AA: Monkey [makes gesture to signal "monkey" as a "see" topic]
36	[AS and students repeat "monkey" and make same gesture]
37	AS: Oh… Let's do it again!
38	AA: Again… Everybody together [repeating same gestures] zoo, animals, monkey
39	[AS and students repeat "zoo, animals, monkey" and make same gestures]

The two teachers combined their different expertise, creating the strategy to focus on both language and content through the use of the metaphor "see story" and the respective gesture associated with it (lines 31-39 and Figure 1 below). The two teachers employed a typical ESOL strategy when they used commands associated with physical movement and hand symbols to represent different kinds of topics, from broader to smaller depicted in the three successive frames in Figure 1 below. There was not one strategy adopted by one teacher only, with both embracing each other's strategies. This is an example of seamless integration of language and content teaching, where conceptual (see story) and linguistic (metaphor and gesture) aspects of the topic were equally emphasized.

Figure 1. Zoo, Animals, Monkey.

Opportunities for Talking and Sharing

Given that the district-adopted writing curriculum offered very little support for ELLs, the two teachers felt the need for slowing the pace in order to focus on second language development in the teaching of content. The presence of the ESOL teacher shed light on the importance of integration of language and content. In sharing ideas, the two teachers came to the conclusion that not only ELLs, but all learners needed to tap into prior knowledge and engage in talk before they did any writing. Thus, the teachers decided to include what they called "two days of schema building," where they embedded ways to build on students' prior knowledge and cultural experiences as part of each unit. The two teachers implemented activities for all students to share a common experience. For example, for an opinion unit, students tasted different kinds of dips and provided their opinion about it. Through schema building, students could "discuss it [the topic], simplify it, sequence it and own it," according to the ESOL teacher.

Both teachers shared a strong belief in the value of partner talk. In her personal notes, the ESOL teacher wrote: "Discussion and conversation are key in fundamentals of learning. The pair share, listening and presenting prepare our students to be great writers and great thinkers." The two teachers also created productive partnerships through "writing buddies," grouping students at different reading and writing levels, but kept the groups fluid because, in their opinion, students were always growing. During their interactions with pairs of learners, the co-teachers were also able to notice that "students literally copied how teachers engaged in partner talk" during modeling.

The content teacher emphasized the importance of holding students accountable when they gave their peers' suggestions by keeping prompting them to go beyond just saying "add more details." The co-teaches acted as facilitators, continuously pushing and modeling ways students needed to be more concrete through questions such as "what do you mean?" and "any suggestions?" The content teacher related that children "loved listening to others read their stories and were running back to their desk to add more to their own stories."

Transcript 2 illustrates ways peers provided feedback to each other while sharing their writings about the "Best in Show" unit, which required students to write an opinion piece about their favorite collection of objects. There were three students working in one group and the content teacher, AA, who facilitated the conversation. In bold, we highlighted specific suggestions given by Students 2 and 3 to Student 1's work.

Transcript 2: "Goldfish" (Timestamp: 01-1:40)

1 2	Student 1: This story is about goldfish… [reading from a paper] I have a collection of… [long pause] hum…
3	Student 2: Cars?
4	Student 1: Cars… [reading from a paper] that (unintelligible) pictures… and you will like because it make me be happy?
5	Student 2: [reading from a paper] Eleven goldfish… **I love the… ah… goldfish… eleven fish**
6	AS: Can anybody give any ideas? Suggestions for her?
7	Student 3: Maybe… hum… **she could add**… hum… what kind of… **what kind of color is the fish?**
8	AS: Add more details… color
9 10	Student 3: Or… and… hum… maybe she could… **maybe she could color the fish?** Hum… hum… **maybe you should've told how the fish look and how the side is?**
11	AS: Good idea! You gave her some pretty good ideas

Student 2 gave a general comment about how he loved the fact that the writing had eleven goldfish (line 5). The teacher kept pushing for more specific comments by asking students to provide ideas and suggestions (line 6). Student 3 followed by giving Student 1 very concrete ideas using the academic language modeled by the teachers signaled by the use of the verb *add* in "maybe she could add" (line 7) in combination with the suggestion of saying what color the fish was. The teacher acknowledged Student 3's comment and reiterated the importance of adding details and one example was color (line 8). The idea of "adding details" had been extensively modeled by the two teachers. Finally, Student 3 made two even more specific suggestions with the ideas of coloring the fish and explaining what the fish looked like (lines 9-10). The teacher celebrated Student 3's suggestions by giving positive and meaningful feedback by saying that she had given Student 1 pretty good ideas (line 11).

This interaction is an example of how the teacher worked as a more experienced peer, pushing the students to reach their potential to use academic language to provide peer feedback. The teacher bridged the process by helping students transition from the use of more informal and general ways of expressing ideas to more formal and more concrete ways of giving feedback to each other. Modeling provided by the two teachers created shared knowledge and language about how to give

feedback to peers, such as in the idea of "adding details." The use of academic language became more complex as the students worked through multiple attempts to convey their suggestions and ideas to peers.

Discussion

This study describes an example of how co-teaching between one content and one ESOL teacher provided carefully designed supports for ELLs' writing development in an inclusive, interactive, and intellectually challenging environment. The two teachers shared equal and complementary roles through employing three core practices. Through sharing a sensitive view of students' academic language and writing development, the two teachers were able to support all students emotionally and academically by instilling a positive sense of self and community. They both believed that all students were writers, who brought strengths and needs. This is especially important in the context of inclusion where ELLs' work should not only be supported, but also accepted, celebrated, and valued (Kong & Pearson, 2003; Weber & Horner, 2018). In this sense, there were equal supports for all students, and we could not distinguish between the formally classified ELLs, bilingual students, and English-speaking students during classroom interactions.

Through modeling, the two teachers were able to teach academic language explicitly while providing additional supporting materials to all students, not only ELLs (Gibbons, 2015; Shin, 2018). The ESOL teacher became all students' teacher, leading the class with the content teacher and placing language at the center of instruction. Academic language development was as important as content for all students, not just ELLs. In this rich context, students were exposed to challenging academic discourse modeled and facilitated by the two teachers, which in turn enabled them to practice and take risks using academic language purposefully to accomplish writing tasks. The ability to model academic language during partner talk is perhaps the most prominent advantage of a co-teaching model versus a one-teacher model.

Through affording students opportunities for talking and sharing, the two teachers' involved students in hands-on experiences, engaging students in talk using academic language through authentic and meaningful experiences during schema building and partner talk (Gee, 2004). Above all, there was no physical segregation or changes in learning goals for ELLs. Students were grouped or paired according to their writing buddies, which remained fluid throughout the year. The class was socially integrated, children worked well together, and were provided ample opportunity to talk with each other through pair share.

While some of the practices explored in this study could have been held and done by one teacher in isolation, we believe that co-teaching and collaboration provided a nuanced and unique approach to cater to the demands of an extreme diverse class where all students were integrated with access to rigorous mainstream curriculum. The role of the ESOL teacher in that classroom highlighted the importance of the integration of language, culture and content for all students. In line with other successful cases of co-teaching (Fu et al., 2005; Slater & Mohan, 2010), this team of ESOL and content teacher was able to take up and share equal and complementing roles during planning, instruction, and assessment. They worked as real partners while modeling and fostering partnership among students.

More research is needed to understand and identify whether the core practices enacted by the two teachers in this study can be generalized to all teams of ESOL and content teachers working in

elementary school environments. Future research studies can provide more evidence in this direction by examining other cases of successful collaboration or trying to replicate the core practices outlined in this study. With no doubt, co-teaching can yield positive results provided that the ESOL teacher has a central, not peripheral role in the mainstream classroom. Given the increasing diversity of public school classrooms, there is a pressing need for alternative models of education for ELLs that do not isolate those students socially. Integrating ELLs through a co-teaching model can be a promising solution that combines academic and emotional supports, maximizing the strengths each teacher expert brings.

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