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Scaffolding Practice: Supporting Emerging Bilinguals' Academic Language Use in Two Classroom Communities

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Using a community-focused, language-as-practice perspective, this study examines the scaffolds that first-grade teachers leverage to support emerging bilingual students' use of academic language.

Ms. Daryl (all names are pseudonyms) wrote *loud, proud,* and *confident* on the whiteboard before asking her students to practice their speeches with shoulder partners. As the members of the first-grade classroom "described their dreams and why they are important," she weaved through the pairs, reminding students to use words like *equality* and *demand*. Ms. Daryl then pointed to a civil rights circle map with other useful vocabulary and the sentence-starter, "I have a dream . . . ." When students shared hopes for a better and brighter future from a podium, she urged those sitting on the carpet to be good listeners and ask questions. After Carol, a quiet student learning both English and Spanish, gave her speech, Ms. Daryl responded with a smile and praised her "loud and proud" delivery.

This snapshot shows Ms. Daryl using different scaffolds to support her emerging bilingual students' use of academic language. She models academic discourse with sentence starters, highlights important vocabulary words with a graphic organizer, and encourages her students to practice using new language in ways that are appropriate to the speech genre. This snapshot also shows Ms. Daryl attending to academic language as a way to support her students' participation in classroom meaning making. She scaffolds student understandings of *what* language is useful and needed to give

a speech (Bailey, 2007). She also scaffolds student understandings of *how* to use this new language, or the pragmatic aspects of delivering a speech. In doing both, Ms. Daryl supports not only students' access to new content and language, but also their participation in an activity where using academic language is a valued classroom practice.

Grappling with academic language—what it is and how to scaffold emerging bilingual students' access to and use of this language—is a challenge for elementary school teachers like Ms. Daryl who are learning to adapt instruction for multilingual learners. With a growing number of emerging bilingual students in classrooms where instruction is delivered primarily in English (Helman, 2012; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2014), understanding how to scaffold students' content and language learning simultaneously is a pressing need. In this article, we take a community-focused, language-as-practice perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Palmer & Martínez, 2016) to understand how teachers can support emerging bilingual students' use of academic language to participate in classroom meaning-making activities. We explore how scaffolds can support students' understandings of language as "an end in itself," as well as a "means to achieve a variety of ends" in the classroom (Haneda, 2014, p. 128). Specifically, we examine

how two teachers scaffold first-grade students' academic language use to explore cause-and-effect relationships in Ezra Jack Keats's (1962) text, *The Snowy Day*. We ask:

1. How do teachers scaffold emerging bilingual students' use of academic language?

2. How does this scaffolding afford or constrain student participation in classroom meaning making?

Academic Language

Although there are differing views on exactly what constitutes academic language (see Anstrom, DiCerbo, Butler, Katz, Millet, & Rivera, 2010, for a review), there is consensus that academic language is critical for students' academic and linguistic development. Snow (2010) argues that using academic language is necessary for learning within specific content areas. This disciplinary view suggests there might be uses of vocabulary, for example, that a student needs in order to "talk and write about science" (p. 452). Schleppegrell (2004) shares this perspective, finding that students can attend to academic registers, or specific grammatical structures and vocabulary that are used within a genre or discipline, in order to make meaning in content-area texts. A teacher might support first graders in sequencing a soybean's life cycle, for example, by attending to issues in syntax and reviewing sentence-starters like *first*, *next*, *then,* and *last*, as well as scientific terminology such as *root* or *sprout*.

More recent scholarship builds on this disciplinary perspective, but highlights the layered nature of academic language and the need to focus on language practices that are transferable across disciplines and grade levels. Lee, Quinn, and Valdés (2013) point out that these language practices support meaning making in mathematics, sciences, and literature, all of which require students to express arguments, provide rationales, and counter and question claims. To support students' participation in these practices, Pritchard and O'Hara (2016) found that teachers can scaffold student language use by creating opportunities for learners to engage in extended interactions, by modeling and clarifying aspects of academic language, and by structuring activities where students apply their developing understandings of language. These scaffolds can attend to disciplinary language when reading texts and to how this language transfers across contexts (Snow, 2010). For instance, a teacher could support students' knowledge of words used to describe a fictional character, like *trait* or *similar*, and, at the same time, could support students' awareness of how word meanings might change when making scientific observations (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2013).

This layered view highlights opportunities to focus on how students use language across disciplines to participate in meaning-making practices, such as predicting, summarizing, and developing models of abstract concepts. When students engage in these practices, they can build on more familiar uses of language to then participate in increasingly competent and complex ways. While academic language is important for students to think, act, and communicate like scientists or historians (Gee, 2005), students can also draw on gesture, visual representations, more informal registers, and heritage languages to demonstrate and develop conceptual understandings (Moschkovich, 2002).

This points to a persistent challenge for teachers scaffolding emerging bilingual students' use of academic language in elementary classrooms. On the one hand, scaffolding academic language can support student participation in meaning-making practices, from using sentence-starters to engage in book discussions to using nuanced vocabulary to describe characters. On the other hand, this growing emphasis on using academic language can exclude those students who are just beginning to grapple with, explore, and take up this new, and at times complicated, language—particularly in English-dominant settings where teachers are working toward explicit language objectives (Iddings, 2005; Miller & Zuengler, 2011; Pacheco, 2016). In this article, we describe a community-focused, language-as-practice perspective of academic language that helps address this challenge.

A Community-Focused, Language-As-Practice Perspective

Our community-focused, language-as-practice perspective of academic language builds from the foundation that a classroom is a *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991), or a group of individuals that engage one another with shared resources to work toward common goals. With this perspective, we frame academic language as *practices*, or the different ways that students and teachers use language to participate in activities that are recognized and valued by other community members. These practices could include giving a speech in Ms. Daryl's classroom or summarizing a story with a five-finger retell, as well as the specific uses of language valued in a discipline, such as describing a mathematical problem-solving strategy or comparing storybook characters. As such, academic language is not something that a student does or does not have, but a practice that a student *does* (Palmer & Martínez, 2016). Language isn't a static set of words or phrases to be acquired, but a changing and adaptable way for students and teachers to participate in meaningful classroom activities.

Academic language is not something that a student does or does not have, but a practice that a student *does*.

Similarly, academic language isn't a tool that can be transmitted from a teacher to a student, but a form of classroom participation that teachers can scaffold. This scaffolding involves community members supporting other members' movement from the community's periphery toward its center (Wenger, 1998). This movement is facilitated when teachers and students support community members' participation in activities that might be unfamiliar or too difficult for learners to engage in on their own (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). This involves teachers' "mindful and responsive support for student language output" (p. 5), which could include attention to language at the vocabulary, syntax, and discourse levels (Pritchard & O'Hara, 2016).

Scaffolding can be structured (Walqui & Van Lier, 2010)—that is, teachers may identify vocabulary or syntactical features that are central in order for students to engage in content-area learning. Scaffolding can also be an "adaptive support" (Pea, 2004, p. 431), where teachers attend to student language during instructional interactions and scaffold in ways that are "contingent on and responsive to what students know and can do" (Daniel, Martin-Beltrán, Peercy, & Silverman, 2016, p. 396).

For teachers learning to support emerging bilingual students, we find this perspective particularly powerful, as it highlights how scaffolds must be responsive to students' actual language use as well as to the many different classroom activities that students engage in. Furthermore, this perspective emphasizes that multiple members of the classroom community—and not just the teacher—can offer, define, and negotiate new language within classroom activities. Last, this perspective focuses attention on opportunities to recognize and expand bilingual students' emerging classroom participation; as students begin to wrestle with new concepts and language, their "incorrect" or "everyday" language isn't a marker of deficiency, but a sign of meaningful participation in the classroom community of practice.

In our study described here, we focus on the different ways that two teachers scaffolded emerging bilingual students' use of academic language in two classroom activities within literacy instruction informed by the Common Core State Standards. We show how this scaffolding afforded opportunities for students to not only participate in disciplinary meaning making, but to engage as valued members of their classroom communities of practice.

The Study

We explored this scaffolding in an urban district that has seen a growth of nearly 50 percent since 2009 (NCES, 2014) in students identifying as English language learners (ELLs). While only about 3 percent of the students in this southeastern state are ELLs, approximately 15 percent of the students in this district are ELLs, with students speaking 130 languages, including Spanish, Arabic, Vietnamese,

Kurdish, and Somali. The district does support some bilingual education with dual language and heritage language program models, but similar to other contexts across the country, the overwhelming majority of instruction for elementary students is through sheltered English immersion (SEI). In this study, the two first-grade teachers, Ms. Daryl and Ms. Rick, followed this SEI model where instruction was delivered in English and teachers made mindful adaptations to support student engagement in content-area learning.

At the time of this study, Ms. Daryl and Ms. Rick were obtaining an endorsement to teach ELLs through a university partnership led by the authors of this article. This included university coursework and weekly observations and discussions about instruction. As such, both teachers were developing understandings about scaffolding academic language and its relationship to content by examining different approaches in immersion settings, including the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004) and the WIDA framework, which has the aim of advancing "academic language development and academic achievement" of students who are learning English as an additional language (WIDA, 2013). While WIDA initially began in (and created its acronym by working in) Wisconsin (WI), Delaware (D), and Arkansas (A), it is now used in more than half of US states (WIDA, 2013). Both approaches seek to support the academic and linguistic achievement of bilingual students by encouraging student interaction, higher-order thinking, attention to new vocabulary, and the use of learning strategies, among other pedagogical practices.

Ms. Daryl and Ms. Rick were purposefully sampled (Patton, 1990) from a cohort of 16 teachers participating in this endorsement program based on their classrooms' linguistic diversity and evidence of strong instruction in weekly observations. In literacy instruction, each teacher regularly encouraged student interaction, supported the use of different strategies to make meaning in texts, and affirmed and praised students' language and ideas. Ms. Daryl was in her sixth year of teaching, and had 17 students in her first-grade class, 13 of whom were

identified as ELLs with varying English proficiencies ranging from entering (beginning) to bridging (advanced) per the WIDA framework. Ms. Rick was in her second year of teaching and had 15 students in her first-grade class, 12 of whom were identified as ELLs with varying English proficiencies ranging from entering to bridging per the WIDA framework.

Data sources included field notes from 16 weekly observations of literacy instruction in each classroom, video-recordings from three successive observations in each classroom, classroom artifacts, and three reflective post-lesson interviews with each teacher. We analyzed data in two phases. First, we looked across field notes derived from prolonged engagement with each classroom and teacher in order to create a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the two classroom communities. In the second phase, we sought to directly address academic language use and scaffolding. We explored our first question by analyzing video data from three consecutive observations. Using the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), we generated categories for teacher scaffolds that attended to lexical, syntactical, semantic, or pragmatic features of language. To address our second question, we built on Gee's (2005) work with social languages and attended to instances where language was used to establish a "socially situated identity and carry out a particular socially situated activity" (p. 20). We analyzed instances of scaffolding and described how language use did or did not facilitate the negotiation of other tools, activity goals, and engagement among community members (Wenger, 1998). Where possible, we triangulated findings with post-observation teacher interviews.

Findings

We present illustrative examples of scaffolding from three days of videotaped lessons about *cause* and *effect* that align with our year-long observations of literacy instruction. In the following examples, both classrooms are reading Ezra Jack Keats's *The Snowy Day* (1962), a popular text about a young boy's exploration of his snow-covered neighborhood on a day off from school. In the story, Peter attempts to join a snowball fight, makes snow angels and a

snowman, and puts a snowball in his pocket, only to discover that it has melted in his warm house. He goes to bed sad and disappointed, but wakes up the next day to see new snow falling outside.

In Ms. Daryl's classroom, we highlight how a strict focus on using academic language at times constrained student participation. We show how Ms. Daryl addressed this challenge by recognizing students' actual language use as a scaffold for taking up new academic language. In Ms. Rick's classroom, we highlight how she offered opportunities for students to use new language with multiple modalities, including writing, oral language, and gesture. We then show how Ms. Rick's scaffolding included attention to students' language use and responsive adaptations that supported students in the moment. In each section, we discuss how attention to language afforded, and at times constrained, emerging bilingual students' participation in activities valued by their classroom communities of practice.

Scaffolding Academic Language in Ms. Daryl's Classroom

As Ms. Daryl explored causes and effects with her students in *The Snowy Day* on our second day of observation, she leveraged scaffolds that supported students' use of language as well as their understandings of the concepts this language described. Prior to having students look at the text, Ms. Daryl gave relevant examples of causes and effects by showing the class a version of the game *Chutes and Ladders*. She scaffolded language and content understandings by relating new concepts to students' past experiences, an important pedagogical practice when supporting language learners. She then modeled how to use *cause* when describing a boy's actions:

> **Ms. Daryl:** This boy made a really good choice. He's carrying out the trash. Does anybody help out their family?
>
> **Morgan:** I help sometimes.
>
> **Ms. Daryl:** So, the cause, he takes out the trash. And the effect?
>
> **Students:** He gets ice cream!
>
> **Ms. Daryl:** He gets to have a treat!

Using a familiar game to tap into students' background knowledge, Ms. Daryl modeled word-level uses of *cause* and *effect* to describe an individual's actions and their consequences. Table 1 shows some of the other scaffolds Ms. Daryl used to support student uses of academic language at the word, sentence, and discourse levels. While these scaffolds— which include modeling, comparing, and identifying different aspects of academic language—can support all students' use of new language, we include examples from our observations that are particularly helpful for emerging bilingual students. The fourth column within Tables 1 and 2 demonstrates aspects of this scaffolding that are important for emerging bilingual students' language learning.

Moving toward the Margins?

While some of these scaffolds align with Pritchard and O'Hara's (2016) description of "best practices" for building students' academic language, a strict attention to "correct" language at times constrained students' participation in the community of practice. Johnston (2004) has urged educators to consider how language affords and constrains opportunities for students to engage in meaningful activities, negotiate tools, and build relationships and identities. In the following two examples, we see how the use of academic language has the unforeseen potential to move students toward the community of practice's periphery, rather than its center.

In the following exchange, Carla, a student at the emerging stages of developing English proficiency, tries to use sentence-level academic language. Ms. Daryl attempts to scaffold her language use by encouraging the use of new vocabulary and by using the text as a support for content understandings:

> **Ms. Daryl:** What happened here? We're going to put this into our own words, and you'll use the new vocabulary: the effect. *(Shows illustration of snow falling on Peter's head)*
>
> **Carla:** The effect was he hit the tree and the snow fell on his head.
>
> **Ms. Daryl:** Well, one part of that is what happened. The effect. Let's look here in this picture.

Table 1. *Scaffolding academic language (AL) in Ms. Daryl's classroom*

Classroom Dialogue	AL Addressed	Teacher Scaffolding	How Does Scaffolding Support Student AL?
Ms. Daryl: What caused the water to gather? When it rains? **Eugene:** When the water gathers food. **Ms. Daryl:** You were thinking before when the animals gather food! But does the water gather food? But I like that connection!	vocabulary (*gather*) across contexts	asks question and recasts student response	connects student language to prior learning to address different uses of *gather*
Philip: Why did you put a question mark after *do your best*? **Ms. Daryl:** What should I use instead? **Philip:** Exclamation mark. **Ms. Daryl:** Why should I? What does it help you do as a reader? **Brian:** To say it with emotion. **Ms. Daryl:** Oh! I love that, I agree.	punctuation in morning message	compares different linguistic features and functions in text	clarifies functions of language when reading texts
Ms. Daryl: What caused the animals to move over so the fox could come in to the mitten? **Eugene:** I think the, cause what the animals started to move over because when the story said shiny teeth. They thought he was going to eat them. So, they moved over. **Ms. Daryl:** Goodness! I love your response. I agree with you and love how you were listening and used evidence. There were shiny teeth!	phrase-level uses of language to describe texts (*"cause what the animals started to move over because . . ."*)	positions AL as a tool to make meaning in text	encourages use of AL to describe concepts in the text
Glen: I have a dream to help anyone who feels bad. This is important because they might bleed a lot when they cut their self. I also have a dream everyone will be nice. **Ms. Daryl:** You were really strong. You have a strong voice and you were confident. Does anyone have a comment or a question?	how to use AL, or pragmatics, when giving a speech (*strong, confident*)	identifies and praises use of AL	places value on AL use and builds student confidence in using language

Though Carla uses language to describe two events and their relationship to one another, Ms. Daryl does not further engage with Carla about Peter's actions. Ms. Daryl declares that "one part of that is what happened," despite Carla's accurate description of the text's illustrations. In a sense, Carla's "incorrect" use of the word *effect* does not align with her accurate understanding of the story. As such, her meaning making, or participation in this community, is limited by an expectation that she produce the desired academic language. The discussion quickly shifts back to uses of *cause* and *effect* when describing the story:

> **Ms. Daryl:** How can we use *the cause and effect* when we talk about that?
>
> **Bob:** The boy hit the tree and the snow fall on his head.

> **Ms. Daryl:** Do you agree with him? Is he using the words *the cause and effect*?
>
> **Eugene:** Umm . . .
>
> **Ms. Daryl:** I agree that's what happened. How can we use our new words to explain what happened?
>
> **Eugene:** He hit the tree because he was pretending he was fighting.

Rather than attending to the meaning within Bob's utterance, Ms. Daryl asks students to consider whether or not Bob is "using the words *the cause and effect*." From a communities of practice perspective, Ms. Daryl, a central member, explicitly values a particular language practice—in this case, using the terms *cause* and *effect*. This guides students toward a narrow use of language and limits opportunities to investigate how cause–effect

relationships can further the text's narrative. Furthermore, for emerging bilingual students like Bob and Carla, Ms. Daryl's encouragement to use a specific form of language might even discourage their continued linguistic development. As they take risks and make mistakes—which are both helpful when learning language—their experimentation marks an incorrect usage rather than an expanding communicative repertoire. When community members do not use language in ways recognized by Ms. Daryl, they are not encouraged to continue participating and are pushed to the community's periphery.

These exchanges are not meant to portray Ms. Daryl as overly strict or as discouraging of students' participation. On the contrary, Table 1 illustrates the many productive ways she scaffolded her emerging bilingual students' use of language that align with other research in elementary classrooms (see Gibbons, 2002; Lucero, 2014), including her enthusiastic praise of student language use, her recasting of student responses to model language, and her comparisons of linguistic features like punctuation marks to clarify meaning. Despite her adept use of these scaffolds, however, she recognized that focusing on this particular form of academic language within this lesson was "slightly clumsy" because "we don't normally say 'the cause was' and 'the effect.'" Ms. Daryl's reflections highlight two challenges she faced. First, as she urged Carla, Bob, and Eugene to use *cause* and *effect*, she struggled to give feedback on their language use while acknowledging their accurate descriptions of the text. In other words, Ms. Daryl struggled to find ways of scaffolding student language without discouraging their continued participation in the community of practice. Second, her focus on academic language created a "clumsy" syntactical structure (*the cause is* . . .) that might not accurately represent student thinking or how individuals *actually* use language to describe cause and effect.

Moving toward the Center

The previous excerpts show Ms. Daryl struggling to support her students' use of academic language when she encourages an overly prescriptive form of language use. The exchange below shows one way that Ms. Daryl responsively addressed this challenge during an interaction with Glen, a Spanish and English speaker. Their interaction shows how Ms. Daryl's scaffolds supported Glen's movement to the center of the community of practice rather than its periphery. After attempting to encourage students' use of *the cause is* and *the effect is*, Ms. Daryl began to recognize students' use of language as a valuable practice for making sense of the story, and at the same time, a practice for making sense of new language. Instead of students negotiating Ms. Daryl's language into their linguistic repertoires, it was Ms. Daryl that began to negotiate their language practices into her own. She used this student language, or "how we say it," to make an important comparison to academic language:

> **Ms. Daryl:** So we're trying to use this new word—what is it?
>
> **Glen:** Cause!
>
> **Ms. Daryl:** *(points to "cause" and "effect" boxes on the whiteboard)* So why did the snowball melt?
>
> **Glen:** The cause was the snowball melted because the house was too warm.
>
> **Ms. Daryl:** Yes! That's usually how we say it. "The snowball melted because the house was warm." So, we would actually flip it (*writes "the effect was the snowball melted" in the "effect" box on the whiteboard*)

Glen seems to think he is expected to use a sentence stem (*The cause was* . . .), but this does not fit perfectly with his actual language use. Trying to engage in what he might view as the proper discourse, he uses the sentence stem, cued by Ms. Daryl's pointing, and continues his thought with an expression that is more natural to him. Ms. Daryl acknowledges Glen's response with an emphatic *yes!* and repeats his contribution. Despite Glen's attribution of the snowball melting as "the cause," Ms. Daryl agrees that his description is accurate because that is "how we usually say it." Ms. Daryl then compares Glen's language with academic language where they "would actually flip it" and writes part of his response in the "effect" box on the board. Ms. Daryl recognizes Glen's language use as a means for understanding

new language, for discussing the text, and for making connections between causes and effects.

Though Glen's words don't exactly match his thinking when we look only at his academic language output, his ideas and language do correspond when he expresses his thinking in a more familiar discourse pattern. A strict focus on *how* something is said can preclude teachers and students from attending to *what* is said when discussing texts. This does not mean, however, that examining academic language or its uses should be left out of classroom activities. On the contrary, attending to *how* something is said can be very important for students making meaning in texts and learning language (Short, 1999). This example shows the importance of attending to how language is used in students' actual language use as well as in more academic registers, or the specific ways of using syntax and vocabulary in particular disciplines. Ms. Daryl recognizes Glen's language as valuable, and she then builds on this language to describe new academic language. His description of a snowball melting in a warm house demonstrates his understanding of an important literary concept and, as a result, offers an opportunity for his community to negotiate understandings of new language.

Scaffolding Academic Language in Ms. Rick's Classroom

Ms. Rick and her students were also reading *The Snowy Day* and describing relationships between causes and effects. Prior to attending to these relationships, Ms. Rick asked shoulder partners to do a five-finger retell of the story. As students accessed their prior knowledge and described characters, setting, and what happened at the beginning, middle, and end, Ms. Rick circulated through the partners, repeating contributions and encouraging the use of "scholar words." In Table 2, we describe these and other scaffolds that supported her emerging bilingual students' use of academic language, including her repetition of student responses to emphasize academic

language and her comparisons of academic language with more familiar linguistic forms. In what follows, we show how Ms. Rick's scaffolds were responsive to students' language use and how she encouraged students to take up and use academic language with multiple modalities.

Conveying Concepts with Multiple Modalities

Findings from this community of practice suggest that using academic language supported student participation in meaning-making activities. However, using oral language was not the only way in which students accessed new grade-level content and demonstrated understanding of academic language. Ms. Rick encouraged students to use a variety of modalities, including written texts and physical movement, which can be helpful for emerging bilingual students that are expressing complex understandings (see Moschkovitch, 2002; Zapata & Laman, 2016). Just as her students had opportunities to use multiple modalities to express academic language, Ms. Rick also leveraged gesture, images, and graphic organizers in her scaffolding. At the beginning of instruction, Ms. Rick drew students' attention to different causes on a flow-map (see Figure 1), and asked students to think of possible

Figure 1. Identifying causes and effects using images, accountable talk cards, and text
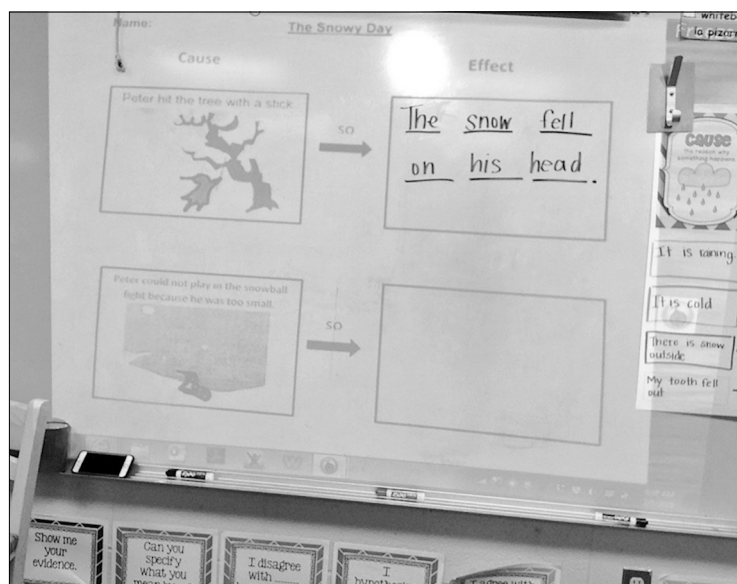
Table 2. *Scaffolding Academic Language (AL) in Ms. Rick's Classroom*

Classroom Dialogue	AL Addressed	Teacher Scaffolding	How Does Scaffolding Support Student AL?
Ms. Rick: Here, what's going on? **Sasha:** They're struggling. **Ms. Rick:** You're using a scholar word. What does it mean, "they're struggling"? **Noah:** The other day in my house . . . **Ms. Rick:** (makes hand gesture signifying a personal connection) **Noah:** I was with my brother and little cousin they were making noises and I cannot read my book. **Ms. Rick:** Oh, so you were struggling.	vocabulary (*struggling*) in context of story	recognizes student language; recasts language with AL	encourages students to connect AL to background knowledge
Ms. Rick: It says we're contrasting two stories. Which is it if we're contrasting? (points to cards with *same* and *different*) **Student:** Different! **Ms. Rick:** How do you know, different? **Sasha:** Because it's contrasting. An apple and orange don't look the same. They're not the same color. **Ms. Rick:** That must mean they're what? **Gabriel:** Contrast. **Ms. Rick:** They're different.	vocabulary (*contrast*) associated with meaning making in text	checks comprehension with visuals and connects AL to more familiar language (*contrast* and *different*)	associates AL with more familiar language uses
Ms. Rick: What happened at the end? **Tyrese:** They decided to clean up because they didn't want to be with the birds again. **Ms. Rick:** They decided to clean because they didn't want to be with the birds again. Anyone want to add on to what Tyrese said? Or if you agree or disagree? Rosita? **Rosita:** They were trying to rebuild their house so it could look bigger. **Ms. Rick:** They were trying to rebuild their house so it could look bigger. What do you think, Maggie?	sentence-level AL to describe cause and effect relationships (*They decided to clean up because . . .; They were trying to rebuild so . . .)*	repeats students' use of AL	emphasizes uses of AL that are valued when describing cause and effect
Gabriel: They different because in *Snowy Day* they didn't have animals. **Ms. Rick:** Do you guys agree or disagree? **Sasha:** Yes. **Ms. Rick:** Can you use some accountable talk? (points to sentence-starter cards) **Sasha:** I agree with Joe because there wasn't any animals in *The Snowy Day* and there was animals in *The Mitten*.	when to use AL, or pragmatics, to discuss texts with classmates	identifies and encourages use of AL valued in class discussion	students leverage listening, reading, and speaking skills when using AL

effects. Visible in the photograph are sentence stems such as "I disagree with___," which also helped students engage in disciplinary conversations. While these were a norm and always present in her classroom, Ms. Rick referred to these as tools for students to use when analyzing cause–effect relationships within the story.

Prior to the following exchange, students wrote one *effect* on a sticky note that described what happened to Peter after he was excluded from a snowball fight. Ms. Rick then focuses on academic language at the sentence level by drawing attention to *so* and *because* to relate causes and effects:

> **Ms. Rick:** I'm going to call on three friends to share . . . what was the effect of Peter not being able to play in the snowball fight because he was too small? We're going to pick Judith.

Judith: . . . He made a snowman and snow angel.

Ms. Rick: Do we agree or disagree?

Students: (*shake fist in a gesture of agreement*)

Ms. Rick: Does anyone have a different one they want to share? Gabriel?

Gabriel: The big boys played snowball fight but he was too little.

Ms. Rick: *So* what did he do *because* he was too little to play snowball fight?

Gabriel: He made snow angels and snowman.

Ms. Rick: He made snow angels and a snowman. Awesome job. . . . If you have your sticky note, you get to use that as your evidence to help you fill out the flow map.

Ms. Rick invites students to participate with four different modalities—physically organizing thoughts on a flow-map, using gesture to communicate ideas, writing on sticky notes, and discussing orally as a class—to create opportunities to address sentence-level uses of *so* and *because* to describe cause and effect. Though Gabriel does not directly incorporate *cause* or *effect* into his oral language repertoire, he demonstrates conceptual understandings by writing an effect on a sticky note and placing this note in the effect box on the flow-map. Furthermore, though Gabriel is at the beginning stages of developing English, he is not excluded from this community of practice that values and emphasizes the use of English. Gabriel's writing and placing of sticky notes supports his movement toward central participation.

These multiple modalities supported students in expressing understandings of grade-level concepts, as well as Ms. Rick's scaffolding of new language. Table 2 further illustrates some of these scaffolds, from her use of notecards with familiar language like *same* and *different*, to her use of hand gestures to acknowledge students' academic language. After this lesson about *cause* and *effect*, we asked Ms. Rick about her ways of "making language visible" in her classroom:

> When I think about making language visible, I'm thinking about actually allowing them to see the words that they are speaking, like in word or in sentence form—

supporting that through writing on the board and then they say something. Or writing on the sticky note when they've shared, so they can visually see what their words are saying.

For Ms. Rick, "making language visible" includes using language in ways that extend beyond oral language. Making language visible also entails Ms. Rick finding opportunities for students to "see the words they are speaking." She supports her emerging bilingual students by drawing attention to connections between oral and written language with sentence-starters on the wall, with graphic organizers, and by repeating student language. Moreover, her scaffolding suggests that language is not a fixed entity for her to transmit to her students, but something that the community can manipulate and adapt within the activity.

Responsive scaffolding supported students' engagement in the activities in which new language and content were explored.

Emerging Practices and Responsive Scaffolds

As Gabriel and his classmates engaged in these practices, Ms. Rick had opportunities to repeat and clarify uses of "scholar words," or academic vocabulary like *melt* and *covered*. When students used new language, Ms. Rick responsively leveraged scaffolds to further their engagement. Along with focusing on the language of *cause* and *effect* at the word and sentence levels, Ms. Rick shifted attention to discourse-level uses of academic language when participating in class discussions. This responsive scaffolding supported students' engagement in the activities in which new language and content were explored. In this exchange below, Ms. Rick responsively scaffolds Sasha and Maggie's participation in the class discussion by clarifying the meaning of a sentence-starter:

> **Ms. Rick:** So what did he do because he couldn't join a snowball fight?
>
> **Maggie:** He made a couple snow angels and then he made a little snowball, he put it in his pocket, then he went inside to his warm, warm house.

Ms. Rick: Can I have Sasha add on to what you are saying?

Sasha (*to Maggie*)**:** Can you say that in a different way?

Maggie: Sure! Just one question, Sasha. How can I show that in a different way, though? You're a smart girl and I'm not that smart as you.

Ms. Rick: You are really smart. What Sasha is trying to ask you is to use some accountable talk. But we don't have to use the accountable talk we don't know. We can use talk like "I agree with" or "I disagree with" and "I want to add on." But another way you can show your answer is you can write it, or maybe you can use your words to explain it.

As Maggie sequences events in the story, Sasha attempts to leverage "accountable talk." Over the course of the year, both Ms. Rick and Ms. Daryl encouraged the use of this discourse-level academic language to support students' participation in whole-class discussions. While sentence-starters could be viewed as scaffolds to support discussion, this example highlights how, at times, the scaffolding itself needs scaffolding. Without understanding *how* to use accountable talk, Sasha's meaningful participation in this practice is limited. Maggie is confused by Sasha's request (*How can I show you in a different way?*) and Ms. Rick intervenes and provides a responsive scaffold, encouraging students to build on language they already know before she models how to use new language. As students engage with one another, Ms. Rick and students have opportunities to offer, define, and refine the ways that they participate in this emerging classroom practice.

These examples show students and Ms. Rick making meaning of the events in *The Snowy Day* by using multiple modalities to explore the concepts of *cause* and *effect*. Ms. Rick's scaffolding took two major forms. At times, she drew attention to specific uses of language within the activity, such as her pointing out *cause* and *effect* on the flow-map and the use of *so* and *because* to help organize students' evidence from the text. At other times, she

supported students' use of academic language by scaffolding their participation in the activities in which this language was used, such as her clarifying and modeling of accountable talk. For emerging bilingual students like Sasha, Maggie, and Gabriel, who are simultaneously learning the language for describing texts and the language for participating in the classroom, both forms of scaffolding are helpful. We also suggest that incorporating other modalities, or ways of expressing content and language, supported student engagement in classroom activities where academic language was valued, examined, and used.

Discussion

From Ms. Rick's and Ms. Daryl's communities of practice, we highlight three implications that could support teachers as they continue to scaffold emerging bilingual students' use of academic language. First, our findings emphasize the need to integrate academic language with disciplinary engagement. We echo Hakuta, Santos, and Fang (2013), who articulate that "language is both the path to content and part of the content itself" (p. 454). Language and content are not separate, and as students engage with different disciplines, they learn to use language practices valued in that discipline. In Ms. Rick's classroom community, using academic language, which included "scholar words" and sentence-starters, offered students opportunities to participate in class discussions where meanings in the text were examined and negotiated. In Ms. Daryl's classroom, however, we saw an overemphasis on using the terms *cause* and *effect*, which drew the community of practice's attention away from the disciplinary practice of relating effects with causes and how these relationships furthered the narrative. We argue for the importance of attending to academic language as it is integrated with content and supports emerging bilingual students' meaning making within and across disciplines.

Second, our findings suggest the importance of responsiveness and flexibility when scaffolding. While structuring lessons to meet specific language objectives is helpful for bilingual students (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004), the scaffolds that teachers

leverage to support these objectives must respond to the actual language practices of the classroom. As Walqui (2006) reminds us, scaffolding includes structures that teachers plan in advance as well as processes that emerge through the interactions that occur during instruction. By recognizing the "fluid dynamics" in learning language, teachers can engage in "constant evaluation" to decide "when parts of the scaffolding structure can be dismantled or shifted elsewhere" during moment-to-moment interactions (p. 165). Ms. Daryl was responsive in her scaffolding when she recognized that using *because* was "how we say it," and she drew a comparison to a new linguistic form. Ms. Rick was flexible in her scaffolding when she provided opportunities for students to use and access academic language with multiple modalities. With students at differing levels of linguistic proficiency and understandings of content, scaffolding students' language practices, rather than solely working toward a prescribed language objective, offers opportunities to recognize and build on student language. Our findings emphasize the need to "embrace multiple and varied repertoires of languages and literacies as tools to facilitate learning rather than barriers that impede it" (Blair, 2016, p. 117).

Last, our findings highlight the varied scaffolds that the many members of the classroom community, and not just the teacher, can provide. In both classrooms, students had opportunities to interact with their peers and with the text. As students used language to turn and talk with partners, to examine texts in whole-group discussions, and to organize conceptual understandings on sticky notes, they had opportunities to consider language choices, to offer new ways of participating in the community, and to receive feedback on their ideas. Ms. Rick and Ms. Daryl scaffolded these community interactions by collaboratively creating visual representations of *cause* and *effect* on flow-maps, by attending to pragmatic features of language to make it accessible to classmates when giving a speech, and by encouraging students to listen to and respond to one another in class discussions. From our community-focused, language-as-practice perspective, teachers scaffolded opportunities for students to participate

in meaning making among other community members, which ultimately supports learning (Rogoff, 1994; Wenger, 1998).

Conclusion

As Palmer and Martínez (2016) have emphasized, framing academic language as a practice creates opportunities to recognize and build on the "creativity, skill, and intelligence embedded in bilingual students' everyday language practices" (p. 383). As students participate in activities where they are encouraged to use language, new and old, teachers can responsively and flexibly adapt scaffolds to support their participation. Similarly, as Toohey (1998) has long argued, framing the classroom as a community of practice creates opportunities to think about students as legitimate classroom members—important individuals whose language practices are not errors to be eradicated, but whose ways of participating can be recognized, explored, and expanded as they make meaning.

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INTO THE CLASSROOM

readwritethink

Lisa Storm Fink

NCTE

▸ *Each day of* Creative Problem-Solving with Ezra Jack Keats *has students listen as the teacher reads a different picture book by Ezra Jack Keats. Following the story, class discussion focuses on the problem that the main character faces and the related solution that the character chooses. An interactive bulletin board in the classroom allows students to create their own solutions to various problems that they face personally. After each read-aloud and discussion, students compare the different stories and plots using a story mapping graphic organizer. As a culminating project, students choose their own characters, define a problem and a solution appropriate for their characters, and then write their own problem-solving stories.*

http://bit.ly/2rZy06A

▸ *Teachers have found ways to make word walls work in their contexts, for specific purposes such as differentiating academic and everyday language and developing metacognitive awareness of the features of a second language. Learn more in this strategy guide.*

http://bit.ly/299BuFt

▸ *A Concept Sort is a vocabulary and comprehension strategy used with students to introduce new topics and/or familiarize students with new vocabulary. Concept Sorts can be used before reading to gather students' prior knowledge about the upcoming content, or can be used after reading to assess students' understanding of the concepts that were presented to them. Additionally, these sorts help students use critical thinking skills by creating categories for groups of words as they sort them based on each word's meaning. Have students brainstorm a list of words from reading material or an upcoming unit, lesson, or text (sometimes the word list may need to be provided by the teacher). Students then discuss each word and place it in its correct category; categories can either be defined by the teacher or students. Read on.*

http://bit.ly/299AWQ2