Similar Settings, Different Story Lines: The Positioning of ESL Teachers in Two Middle Schools

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—————— Abstract ——————

As the need to better support English learners' achievement in academically rigorous content area classes increases, so does the call for expanded ESL teacher/content area teacher collaboration. However, the nature and outcomes of such collaboration depend on how these professionals are positioned within their school settings. Using positioning theory as an analytic lens, this article investigates the collaborative interactions of two ESL teachers in two separate, but demographically similar suburban middle schools. It also examines the impact of these ESL teachers' collaborations on ELLs' opportunities for academic language and content area learning. Findings highlight the importance of ESL teacher agency in sustaining rigorous and effective literacy scaffolding for ELLs. Findings also highlight the need for the field to purposefully consider issues of culture and agency in teacher partnerships. Overall, this article informs educators' and teacher educators' efforts to optimize school-based, ELL/focused teacher collaboration.

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Background and Purpose of Study

With the increasing numbers of English Language Learners (ELLs) in schools across the United States, research has documented the benefits of collaboration between English as a second language (ESL) teachers with their content area counterparts in meeting the educational needs of ELLs (Dove & Honigsfield, 2010; Teemant, Bernhardt, & Rodriguez-Munoz, 1996). The collaboration between ESL and content area teachers is especially important in light of research which has documented that mainstream teachers often feel ill-prepared to address the needs of ELLs in their schools (Fu, 2004; Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Li & Zhang, 2004). Further, a survey showed that middle school teachers wanted more training and information so they could better address the academic needs of ELLs in their content area classes (Hansen-Thomas & Cavagnetto, 2010).

Successful forms of ESL teacher/content area teacher collaboration include a shared model in which one teacher offers ELLs individual support while the other conducts the lesson. Alternatively, ESL teachers may anticipate difficulties their students will have with a particular topic and may pre-teach words or concepts before the whole class lesson. ESL teachers may also provide post-lesson reinforcement when unanticipated language or prior knowledge gaps present learning difficulties (Pardini, 2006).

In addition to sharing instructional responsibilities, successful ESL teacher/content area teacher partnerships include scenarios in which ESL teachers serve as consultants, offering specific guidance and resources for mainstream colleagues (Staehr Fenner, 2013). In all of these cases, the goal of collaboration is to identify general academic or subject-specific vocabulary and concepts that ELLs may not understand without additional scaffolding and to determine the most effective means of providing needed support. ESL teachers have been particularly helpful in identifying culturally embedded assumptions about students' prior knowledge and in providing ELLs with needed background information about a topic of study (Pardini, 2006). Research has documented that collaboration between ESL teachers and content area teachers is associated with bridging the achievement gap between ELLs and their native-English peers (Pardini, 2006) as well as an overall increase in ELLs' academic language proficiency (Dove & Honigsfield, 2010).

In order for successful collaboration to occur, each participant should agree on individual teacher responsibilities, including timelines for providing resources or lesson plans, processes for decision-making, expectations for student interactions, and assessment criteria. These procedurally focused understandings should be based on teachers' foundational agreement about how subject-specific and language acquisition goals should be integrated (Davison, 2006; Dove & Honigsfield, 2010). Yet, negotiating these shared understandings presents challenges. ESL teachers and content area teachers may possess varied grounding dispositions about what content should be taught. Being in school cultures that are less supportive of linguistic diversity and that offer limited collaborative opportunities for teachers create additional challenges for successful collaboration (Davison, 2006).

As the preceding research has shown, ESL teachers are a valuable resource for mainstream teachers; however, they are underutilized as studies have demonstrated that ESL teachers are often relegated to a support role within the school context rather than being perceived as equal to content area teachers at the secondary level (Creese, 2002). A factor which may contribute to the underutilization of ESL teachers is that content area teachers may be unaware of the responsibility they have regarding the literacy and language development of middle school ELLs, and may view teaching ELLs as the sole responsibility of ESL teachers (Jimenez, 1997; Rubinstein-Avila & Johnson, 2008). ESL teachers have the potential to share their expertise with their content area colleagues to help them make modifications to their practice to ensure that ELLs are able to better comprehend content and become active participants in the classroom.

Given the literature, which shows the importance of collaboration between ESL and content area teachers at the secondary level, we deemed it important to examine the ways in which these collaborations occur in the middle school setting. In this article, we discuss the contrasting experiences of two ESL teachers in two separate, yet demographically similar middle schools. We use positioning theory (Harre & Moghaddam, 2003) to examine the ESL teachers' interactions with their content area colleagues and to consider how these interactions facilitated and/or constrained ELLs' opportunities to develop their content-specific literacy skills. The following research question is addressed in this inquiry: How do two suburban middle school ESL teachers' interactions with their content area colleagues limit or enhance ELLs' access to rigorous content area instruction?

Theoretical Framework

This study utilizes positioning theory as a way to examine the collaboration of ESL teachers with their content-area colleagues in suburban middle schools.

Positioning Theory

Situated within the social constructivist perspective, the concept of positioning is based upon the premise that identities are constructed and continually reconstructed discursively in social contexts where shared norms and practices exist (Harre & van Langenhove, 1999). The concept of positioning incorporates the idea that through discursive interactions, individuals position themselves, or are positioned, in relation to colleagues, supervisors, family members, and others with whom they associate. Unlike the more static concept of role, position emphasizes the fluid nature of social interactions and holds that specific positions can shift, even during the course of a single discussion. Positioning theory, then, permits the study of the dynamics related to these discursive episodes, and it facilitates an understanding of how these discrete dialogic exchanges contribute to the ongoing work of identity development (Harre & van Langenhove, 1999).

As a practice, positioning incorporates three fundamental, mutually constitutive components: *position, acts* and *story line*. A position is determined by the rights and duties one possesses in a given context, and a position can limit or expand the range of actions an individual can then take. For example, among a group of primary grade teachers, one teacher may occupy a position of instructional leadership based on the fact that he commonly attends workshops and shares resources with colleagues. Acts are defined as the actions that have significance within a particular situation. For instance, at a grade level meeting the teacher positioned as an instructional leader may speak about an instructional strategy that his colleagues can use to support ELLs' emerging phonemic awareness. Such a verbal presentation would be viewed as an act since it would be associated with his recognized position among his primary grade teacher colleagues. The description of this instructional strategy would not be viewed as significant if, for example, it were made over lunch to physical education teachers whose practice typically does not involve early literacy skill development. Such a description would be viewed as an action. This example illustrates the power of context in determining the position of the speaker and the level of significance attributed to his utterance. Story line refers to the norms and commonly understood patterns of behavior that develop over time within a given context (Harre & Moghaddam, 2003). Over time, the acts of the teacher described above may validate his position of leadership among his primary grade colleagues. As he continues to share salient instructional strategies with these teachers, and as they discuss these specific instances, the individual episodes contribute to a story line of instructional leadership and reify the story line's existence in the school. Taken together, position, acts, and storyline interdependently comprise the factors that enable individuals to assume or be placed in positions that contribute to their identity development.

Other-positioning and self-positioning. Two categories of positioning – other-positioning and self-positioning-- bear particular significance in studies focusing on teachers' collegial interactions. With other-positioning, one discursively situates another individual within a specific scenario. Other-positioning can take place tacitly so the positioner does not act purposefully, but rather acts in a manner that is consistent with established patterns of belief and behavior. Alternatively, other-positioning can take on a strategic quality so that the positioner's act occurs with the aim of achieving a certain goal such as reinforcing an existing story line or contributing to the development of a different story line (Harre & Slocum, 2003; van Langenhove & Harre, 1999). Self-positioning takes place as an individual describes an episode from her life or refers to her capabilities and rights in a given context. Through the descriptions, attributions, justifications and consequences implicit in these narratives, the individual positions herself in a particular way. Thus, in this study, we examine how the ESL teachers positioned themselves and were positioned by the content area teachers with whom they shared responsibility for educating ELLs in their respective schools.

Literature Review

In the previous section, we defined positioning theory. In this section, we describe related research, which has used positioning theory to examine teachers' positioning of themselves and their colleagues. Scholars have used the concept of positioning to examine how positioning educators impacts teaching and learning (e.g., Handsfield, Crumpler, & Dean, 2010; Reeves, 2009). Studies that highlight teachers' positioning of colleagues illustrate how this type of other-positioning facilitates teachers' development of desirable professional identities. However, these inquires also reveal how other-positioning does not always lead to favorable learning conditions for students (Reeves, 2009; Watson, 2007).

Representative of this work is Reeves's (2009) analysis of an episode in which a high school English teacher positions his fellow English teachers as being overly permissive and ineffective in preparing ELLs for adulthood. In this instance the teacher remarks, "It's easier for teachers to just give the kid [ELLs] the answer than explain it to them. And I think that's the way the kids get cheated" (Reeves, 2009, p. 38). This instance of other-positioning serves as a point of departure from which the teacher goes on to make the following declaration, "Because if they're really going to be a part of this society, and they're really going to function in it, then they're going to [be] overwhelmed for a while, and I don't shorten assignments" (Reeves, 2009, p. 38). In this manner, the teacher builds his own identity as an educator who, unlike his colleagues, can successfully equip ELLs to face life's challenges; the effect of such positioning tactics is to create a storyline that elevates the positioner in relation to his fellow English teachers. At the same time, the other-positioning he

engages in serves to reify his practice of not modifying assignments for ELLs, many of who may legitimately require modifications based on their levels of English proficiency. Reeves's study illustrates how other-positioning, while contributing to a story line of positive professional identity, can also add to a story line of academic disservice toward ELLs.

Other work related to positioning has called attention to teachers' deliberate self-positioning discourses and to how these mediate students' learning experiences (Brock, Nikoli & Wallace, 2011; Handsfield et al., 2010; Reeves, 2009; Yoon, 2008). For example, the research of Handsfield et al. (2010) highlights a novice teacher's use of self-positioning to successfully assume the stance of an experienced educator. They focus on the teacher's recounting of a conversation with her principal in which she successfully justifies the use of unapproved instructional techniques to address the differentiated learning needs of her bilingual students. Here, the teacher's own description of the conversation with her principal took on an authoritative tenor as she commented on her "guts" in addressing "what I know is best for my class." (p. 421). In this manner, the teacher used her own discourse to deliberately position herself as a skilled and seasoned teacher so that her positioning moves contributed to her positive professional identity. In this instance, her instructional decisions were sound, so her deliberate self-positioning also added to a story line of effective ELL-focused pedagogy.

Taken together, this body of scholarship has examined other- and deliberate self- positioning in relation to teachers' professional identities and their concomitant story lines of pedagogical effectiveness. However, little is currently known about how positioning theory and its emphasis on specific discursive episodes can be applied to better understand ESL teacher/content area teacher interaction. In fact, the calls for well-articulated collaboration between these two types of teachers are so recent (Staehr Fenner, 2013) that long-standing patterns or well-codified modes of interaction may not yet have been established in many schools. Yet, as schools respond to these calls, opportunities for ESL teacher/content area teacher interactions will increase, and so will the other- and self-positioning moves that take place around them. Enhancing opportunities for ELL content area learning, then, requires that educators expand their understanding of these episode-specific dynamics and the local and cultural norms that ground them.

Methods

Data for this article were obtained from two separate case studies (McGriff, 2010; Protacio, 2013) centered on ELL education in suburban middle schools. In this section, we first describe each study. We then discuss how we analyzed the data from both studies in relation to the positioning of the focal participants in their respective school contexts.

Study One

The first study focused specifically on a professional development initiative with middle school teachers centered on improving participants' expertise in working with ELLs (McGriff, 2010). A case study design was utilized wherein Mary (first author) facilitated a teacher professional learning community focused on ELLs' content area literacy. The professional learning community met bi-weekly from August through December of 2009 to examine ELL-focused literacy building strategies and to explore approaches for situating these strategies into participants' respective classroom practices. Aside from Mary, participants in the learning community included the ESL teacher, Mrs. Knorr, as well as the five content area teachers who taught the school's ELL population.

Setting. Study One took place in Harding Middle School (HMS), which is located in a suburban town in a Northeastern state. The town in which HMS is located experienced an increase in its Latino population, which translated to an increase in the number of Latino students in the Harding School District.

In terms of support, ELLs in HMS were given 40-80 minutes of language instruction per day, depending on students' English proficiency levels. The ESL teacher, Mrs. Knorr, also provided daily lunch time tutorials in which ELLs completed science and social studies assignments. Aside from the language classes and the daily lunchtime tutorials with the ESL teacher, ELLs were placed in mainstream content area classes. Content teachers at HMS admittedly had limited experience working with ELLs, and prior to this endeavor, ELL-focused professional learning opportunities had been limited to occasional full-day workshops with no provision for follow-up support.

Focal participant. Mrs. Knorr held state certifications in elementary education and in ESL. At the time of data collection, Mrs. Knorr was in her seventh year as HMS's ESL teacher, and although she had previous experience as an international student liaison at a small private college, this was her first position teaching ESL in a K – 12 setting. During Mrs. Knorr's first four years at HMS, she taught ELL students up to three periods per day, depending on her assessment of each child's English proficiency and overall readiness to enter the academic mainstream. However, during year five of her tenure at HMS, the district adopted a literacy intervention program designed to increase reading proficiency among struggling students, and ELLs were included among the students chosen to participate in this program. The program was taught by the schools' reading specialists, and the time required to fully implement this program precluded Mrs. Knorr from teaching ELLs for three periods per day. The administrative team therefore determined she should instead support ELLs' content area learning within general education classrooms. Accordingly, seventh-grade ELLs attended science classes and eighth-grade ELLs attended

social studies classes. Mrs. Knorr accompanied both groups of students to these classes to provide push-in support. Table 1 serves as a quick reference about participants at Harding Middle School.

Table 1. *Participants at Harding Middle School*

Name	Position	Relevant Information
Mrs. Knorr	ESL Teacher	Provided 40-80 minutes of language instruction per day with School's ELLs by using a push-in model in the general education classroom
Mrs. Packer	Social Studies	Taught the social studies class in which Mrs. Knorr served as push-in ESL Teacher
Mrs. Jones	Science Teacher	Taught the science class in which Mrs. Knorr served as push-in ESL Teacher

Data collection. Data collection methods included three formal interviews, eight professional development sessions with HMS teachers, three formal classroom observations, numerous informal classroom visits, and document analysis.

Study Two

The second study focused specifically on the reading engagement of middle school English language learners in their ESL classroom (Protacio, 2013). A case study design was utilized for this study wherein Selena (second author) served as a participant observer in Mrs. Blake's ESL classroom for six months.

Setting. Study Two was conducted at Ford Middle School (FMS), which is a Grade 7-8 school in the Ford School District, a small school district in a suburban university town in the Midwest. The student population was fairly diverse, partly due to the high number of international graduate students at the local university. Those enrolled in Mrs. Blake's ESL class were mostly Muslim students from Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Saudi Arabia.

ELLs at FMS were provided a self-contained ESL class which lasted two periods in the afternoon. Otherwise, ELLs attended mainstream content classes. In terms of academic support, FMS provided homework support after school two days a week. Another class wherein ELLs could obtain support was their Academic Study Hall period, which was a 30-minute period which had a different purpose depending on the day. Mondays and Wednesdays were used for academic vocabulary lessons, school wide read-alouds, and community building activities. Tuesdays and Thursdays were used for academic and homework support. On Fridays, the whole school engaged in Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) during Academic Study Hall.

Focal participant. Mrs. Blake served as the ESL teacher for Ford School District's middle school and high school. She had 24 years of teaching experience as she has taught English, Spanish, ESL, and adult ESL. She had been in her current role as ESL teacher of both FMS and FHS for six years. She taught three periods at the high school in the morning, and then taught three periods at the middle school in the afternoon. Even though she taught at both the middle school and high school, Mrs. Blake said she considered the middle school her home base. Mrs. Blake originally was the ESL teacher at the middle school, but when the ESL teaching position became available at the high school, she told district officials that she wanted to be the ESL teacher at both schools so she could continue to support ELLs as they transitioned to high school. Mrs. Blake ensured that ELLs in her classroom would have academic support by actively recruiting community volunteers and regularly welcoming pre-service teachers. Table 2 serves as a quick reference about participants at Ford Middle School.

Data collection. Selena served as a participant observer in Mrs. Blake's classroom one to four times a week for six months. She also served as a participant observer in the after-school homework support program initiated by the school. Data collection methods included classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, and artifact collection.

Synopsis of Study One and Study Two.

Individually, Study One and Study Two offer portraits of ESL teaching and learning in suburban middle school settings. The ELLs in Study One were primarily Latino and eastern European while ELLs in Study Two were mostly from Middle Eastern countries. However, ELLs in both studies received instruction in pull-out and mainstream contexts. Additionally, ELLs in both studies received in-class support during their mainstream classes that was either provided by the ESL teacher or by community volunteers. The focal participant in Study One, Mrs. Knorr, had significantly less cumulative years of overall teaching experience than the focal participant of Study Two, Mrs. Blake. However, both Mrs. Knorr and Mrs. Blake possessed a similar amount of

experience in their current middle school ESL teaching positions. Overall, both studies had similar staffing and instructional frameworks in place to support ELL language and literacy development. Despite the similarities in context, in the Findings section, we will compare and contrast how each participant positioned herself and was positioned by their content area colleagues.

Table 2. *Participants at Ford Middle School*

Name	Position	Relevant Information
Mrs. Blake	ESL Teacher	Taught ESL at the district's middle school and high school, but considered the middle school as her home base. Spearheaded a school wide vocabulary initiative which focused on increasing all students' knowledge of academic vocabulary
Mrs. Jamison	Principal	Provided support for the school's vocabulary initiative. Included the word of the day in her morning announcements. Dedicated to increasing teacher buy-in and participation for the vocabulary initiative

Data Analysis

We used a system of coding which we created based on positioning theory (Harre & Moghaddam, 2003). Coding entailed determining whether each act was indicative of other-positioning and/or self-positioning. As previously discussed, other-positioning occurs when one discursively situates another individual within a specific scenario. Self-positioning, on the other hand, occurs when an individual discusses an event in ways that point to his or her capabilities and rights in a certain context.

As one example of our data analysis, one of the focal participants, Mrs. Blake, offered to present an academic vocabulary-building strategy to a group of content area teachers. We coded this an as instance of self-positioning because by making the offer, Mrs. Blake situated herself as a knowledgeable practitioner among her colleagues. Data related to the preparation for, and delivery of, the vocabulary presentation were coded as acts since these data carried significance

in establishing and maintaining the teacher's position as a knowledgeable practitioner. In Table 3, we provide other examples of coding.

Table 3. *Examples of Data Analysis Coding*

Categories	Data Source	Example	Explanation of Coding
Self-positioning	Interview	Mrs. Blake: Oliver's brother is over the high school now. He is not in ESL anymore. He exited. But I keep an eye on him. I get to his school and look. I notice this year, there's a sloop of absences. What's going on? And I caught it early enough.	In this instance, Mrs. Blake is positioning herself as someone who looks out for her former students. She is using self-positioning to show that she is an observant and caring educator.
Other-positioning	Transcript of a professional development session	Mrs. Packer speaking to Mrs. Knorr: "You know I was going to propose...this may not be the most appropriate time but you know how you have that office duty second period? That is our team planning time, and if you are okay with it, I was going to make a plea to start at least twice a month and then roll it over to once a week that they let you out of that office duty to meet with me."	In this instance, Mrs. Packer is positioning Mrs. Knorr as a support teacher. In this interaction, Mrs. Packer's statement implies that she is a better judge of how Mrs. Knorr should spend her time.

Lastly, we looked across positioning instances and concomitant acts associated with each focal participant in order to identify consistent story lines (stable patterns of belief and behavior) related to each focal participant and her interactions with her content area colleagues. Significantly, the story lines include opportunities that each focal participant's students had to engage in substantive content area learning at HMS or FMS.

Findings and Discussion: Similar Contexts, Divergent Story Lines

A story line captures patterns of belief and commonly understood behavioral norms that develop over time within a given context (Harre & Moghaddam, 2003), and in this section we focus on the development of four story lines that capture Mrs. Knorr's and Mrs. Blake's positions vis-à-vis their content area colleagues. In story lines one and two below, we examine how the rights, duties, and responsibilities that Mrs. Knorr associated with her job carried over to influence her ELLs' opportunities to engage in content area learning. We offer a corresponding examination of Mrs. Blake's positioning and resultant learning opportunities for her ELLs in story lines three and four. The story lines related to each school are respectively followed by a discussion of implications for ELL language and literacy development in content area classes.

Story Line One: Reduced Expectations and Limited Academic Rigor at Harding Middle School

A study of Mrs. Knorr's discursive interaction with her social studies teacher colleague, Mrs. Packer, best illustrates the manner in which the rights, duties, and responsibilities she held served to limit authentic learning opportunities for her ELL students in their social studies classroom. A combination of other- and self-positioning tactics lead to the development of this story line.

Mrs. Packer viewed the fundamental elements of Harding's ESL program, general education inclusion and supplemental support, as untenable and insufficient for ELLs' content area learning. These interpretations also gave cause for her reduced estimation of what ELLs could accomplish academically. For instance, during a morning professional development meeting in which Mary presented collaborative learning strategies that could be used in content area classes or during lunch period tutorials, Mrs. Packer overtly declined to consider using these approaches, stating, "I'm telling you, that would never work in my class." Mrs. Packer then shared her determination that ELL content area learning was not her ultimate responsibility but that of Mrs. Knorr. The science teacher, Mrs. Jones, agreed with Mrs. Packer, and expressed the view that Mrs. Knorr's lunch time tutorial sessions were also limited in their ability to support ELLs' content area literacy development due to the range of ELL needs to be accommodated at these times.

Mrs. Packer:	This unfortunately goes back to you [Mrs. Knorr]. We can introduce everything but ultimately it is on you, which is what I addressed in that email to you that it is wonderful that you have that time [lunch period tutorials] to focus on them [ELLs]. But even with that, you are dealing with so many different levels.
Mrs. Knorr:	Yes, and also the lunch periods are limited since sometimes they come late or they need to go back to buy something. Sometimes 8th graders will be there with 7th graders, so I am always juggling roles.
Mrs. Jones:	And you have your lesson to do, as well.
Mrs. Knorr:	Yeah, and sometimes that goes out the window if something else is more important.
Mrs. Jones:	Yeah, it is difficult.

In this exchange, Mrs. Packer and Mrs. Jones positioned Mrs. Knorr as a teacher whose instructional time for reinforcing subject-specific and general academic literacy was not effective in light of her students' diverse needs. This positioning move was particularly deleterious since Mrs. Packer had already dismissed the notion of implementing collaborative approaches in her classroom, and lunchtime tutorials provided the only remaining opportunity to actively engage ELLs in scaffolded social studies instruction (albeit without the presence of English-proficient classmates). In this discussion, Mrs. Knorr's self-positioning discourse compounded the other-positioning acts of her colleagues as she contributed additional information about the complications of balancing and prioritizing different subject learning needs during lunch tutorial. A significant consideration is the fact that Mrs. Knorr's self-positioning discourse occurred after Mrs. Packer's statement disavowing ultimate responsibility for ELLs. In this manner, Mrs. Knorr validated and acceded to Mrs. Packer's view about the untenability of general education social studies instruction for ELLs. It was, therefore, not surprising that these teachers also expressed a preference that ELLs learn apart from their English-proficient peers.

In an earlier conversation about ELLs' learning needs, Mrs. Knorr and Mrs. Packer lamented about the teaching opportunities that were lost when administrators intervened to stop ELLs from maintaining the school's landscaping as a co-curricular activity organized by an instructional aide. Mrs. Knorr and Mrs. Packer favorably described how the instructional aide supported these students' learning of gardening terms while they weeded, pruned and watered plants around the building. Through this description, their thoughts about the inappropriateness of rigorous academic learning experiences for ELLs were plain to note.

Mrs. Packer:	Carol [instructional aide] did not get to work with me last year and I missed her. That one–on-one and someone of her abilities. I defend her left and right. She was doing so much more than taking care of the plants when she was working with them.
Mrs. Knorr:	They took that away from her, too. They didn't want her out there doing the plants. The fact that they are out there with the plants and they're talking and they're socializing and they're learning so much.
Mary:	Because of time in class, that's why they got rid of it?
Mrs. Knorr:	Yeah. They can't see beyond.
Mrs. Packer:	I brought up the fact that have you ever thought that there is more than one way to learn? And in a classroom where you are embarrassed. People look at it like, "Well why you would take Hispanic students out there? The only gardeners and landscapers yousee are Hispanic, and you're teaching them that that is what they can expect."
Mrs. Knorr:	Yeah, but it is okay to put them in sports. Are they going to be soccer players? No, but you put them on the teams because they are good.
Mrs. Packer:	Let's put all the Asians in robotics.
Mrs. Knorr:	Yeah. Exactly.
Mary:	Was there ever any discussion about perhaps integrating biology into it or having the [gifted and talented] kids get involved?
Mrs. Knorr:	It was the basics. What's a root? What's a stem? What's a petal? The different tools.

As the primary teacher of Harding's ELLs, Mrs. Knorr positioned herself as a teacher who favored "the basics" over rigorous learning experiences for her students. Additionally, she viewed their physical and academic separation from English-proficient students as appropriate for their language acquisition. However, in addition to minimalistic views about the academic experiences that ELLs should have access to, it is significant to note that Mrs. Knorr again positioned herself as a follower of Mrs. Packer. She remained in this position even as Mrs. Packer engaged in stereotypical commentary about students from Asian and Hispanic backgrounds.

In both of these excerpts, Mrs. Knorr's repeated statements of "yeah" and "yes" demonstrate the manner in which she readily acceded to Mrs.

Packer's positioning of her. By providing arguments that supported Mrs. Packer's reasoning, even reasoning that relied on overt stereotyping, Mrs. Knorr took up a position that countered established best practices for ELL literacy development (Nieto & Bode, 2008) and that demonstrated her lack of voice when interacting with content teachers.

Story Line Two: Content Area Inclusion and Exclusion at Harding Middle School

Content area classes at HMS provided ELLs with limited access to intellectually rigorous learning experiences. Consistent with Mrs. Packer's convictions regarding her limited responsibility for ELLs' social studies instruction, she did not solicit suggestions about how to optimize these students' instruction in social studies classes. Moreover, Mrs. Knorr did not attempt to provide ELLs with additional linguistic supports, and she did not attempt to implement any of the collaborative learning activities examined during the morning professional development sessions that Mary facilitated. Rather, Mrs. Knorr sat quietly at the side of the classroom while Mrs. Packer taught. During guided practice lesson segments, Mrs. Knorr rotated among the ELLs, who were seated at different tables, to assist them in interpreting maps or in writing journal entries related to social studies topics. While all social studies students had the option of working with the classmates with whom they were seated during these lesson segments, there were no structured frameworks to guide this interaction, and ELLs were not invited to collaborate with English proficient peers. Rather, they worked by themselves and spoke only with Mrs. Knorr when she came to check on their progress.

In science classes, ELLs were seated together in the front row and did not interact with English –proficient students on a routine basis. Mrs. Knorr sat at the ELLs' table, and while Mrs. Jones taught, Mrs. Knorr ensured that her ELLs were on the correct page of text. Occasionally Mrs. Knorr would also prompt them to respond to a recall level question when she was certain they knew the answer. As a result of the limited opportunities to collaboratively analyze topics such as how geography has impacted students' individual lives, ELL students seldom had the opportunity to construct authentic understanding of concepts, and their completed written assignments rarely contained anything other than fact-based, single word or sentence-length responses. Although they were included in mainstream content classes, their inclusion was not authentic, and their language and literacy development were not optimized by their presence in these classes.

ESL Teacher/Content Area Teacher Interactions at Harding Middle School: Discussion and Implications

The story lines that developed from HMS's ESL teacher/content area teacher interactions reveal a learning environment with limited opportunities for

ELL language and literacy development. Content area teachers' positioning of Mrs. Knorr and Mrs. Knorr's self-positioning combined to create this untenable context for ELL academic achievement. HMS's content area teachers had the ability and inclination to decline responsibility for their ELL students. This was due, in part, to HMS having no established norms in place related to content area teacher accountability for ELL learning. However, in spite of the way that Mrs. Knorr was positioned, it is important to note that Mrs. Knorr made no move to counter this positioning of her; indeed, her self-positioning reinforced her colleagues' views and even led to her participation in a discussion that included cultural stereotyping.

Researchers have emphasized the importance of teachers affirming linguistic diversity in their classrooms and pedagogy (Nieto & Bode, 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). Additionally, ESL teachers have been identified as exemplars and as potential professional development agents in affirming linguistic and cultural diversity (Staehr Fenner, 2013). Mrs. Knorr's stereotyping remarks about Latino students, and her agreement with Mrs. Packer's comments about Asian students, demonstrate that ESL teachers themselves can fall prey to the culturally disaffirming mindsets that have been associated with minimalistic expectations and low-level academic experiences for ELLs. Thus, Mrs. Knorr's positioning provides a cautionary example about the potential insidiousness of cultural stereotyping and the damaging impact it can have on ELL learning.

Although ELLs' previous landscaping activities were halted when they were placed in mainstream social studies and science classes, a significant observation that arose from this study is the fact that ELLs' inclusion in mainstream science and social studies classes amounted to their de facto exclusion within these settings. In science and social studies classes, neither content teachers nor Mrs. Knorr attempted to facilitate ELLs' interaction with English-proficient classmates. As a result, they were not a part of student groups that were using academic English to build their understanding of content area concepts, and they did not get to learn from different students' perspectives. ELLs' experiences in their content area classes, therefore, sustain and extend Iddings's findings (2005) by illustrating how in-name-only inclusion of ELLs actually hinders their opportunities for substantive knowledge building.

Overall, the story lines produced at Harding Middle School provide educators with a reminder of the need to cultivate dispositions of cultural and linguistic responsiveness in teachers of all subjects. These story lines also serve as a reminder that structures such as ELL inclusion in mainstream settings do not, by themselves, guarantee that ELLs will be able to engage in substantive learning experiences. Rather, these story lines point to the need to regularly and critically evaluate the effectiveness of such arrangements.

Story Line Three: Systematic, Effective Literacy Scaffolding at Ford Middle School

In order to develop proficiency with the academic language and concepts germane to specific content areas, students must know and be able to use a lexicon of school-based words and phrases that have applications across subject areas and that serve as a base upon which subject-specific knowledge can be built (Calderon, 2007). Mrs. Blake served as a member of FMS's School Improvement Team, and in that capacity she spearheaded a school-wide academic vocabulary initiative aimed at building proficiency with a core set of academic terms by facilitating their instruction and regular use in all content area classes. While leading this initiative, Mrs. Blake had many interactions with her colleagues during staff meetings and during special meetings such as those designed to develop interventions for struggling students, and she provided all content area teachers with four sets of laminated vocabulary slides that she created. One component of the program included a word of the day that the principal, Mrs. Jacobson, defined and used in her morning announcements. Each teacher was then supposed to use the word of the day in his/her lessons and display the PowerPoint slide that Mrs. Blake created for each word of the day. In addition, Mrs. Blake created large signs that she had printed and displayed in the cafeteria using the word of the day within the context of health and nutrition. In her classroom, Mrs. Blake addressed ELLs' specific instructional needs related to these words. She taught the words' linguistic features, made use of cognates wherever possible, and provided ELLs with opportunities to discuss how they were using the words in their other classes. Collectively, these measures were aimed at providing ELLs' with a cohesive, meaningful approach to building academic vocabulary proficiency.

The vocabulary initiative included pre-and post-assessments that teachers administered each semester, and these data were analyzed to track student mastery of the terms as well as to track the overall effectiveness of the program. In the following email exchange with Selena, Mrs. Blake discusses her careful, on-going assessment of the vocabulary program in order to gauge its impact on ELLs' developing linguistic proficiency:

> We pre-tested again this fall and will post-test as well. ….Sada and Aina are my "litmus students" since they routinely report to me when they hear or read one of the words we have learned (even words from last year!). They make connections to the examples from the slides and make applications within the new contexts. For me, this is beneficial on so many levels! I see them interacting with language and progressing in their proficiency, I get feedback on the effectiveness of these [Mrs. Blake's vocabulary] lessons, and I see how relevant these words really are since these girls report back to me almost every day that they are hearing or reading them in their other classes.

Here, Mrs. Blake positions herself as a reflective, proficient cultivator of ELL content area literacy as she describes her program's inclusion of formal pre - and post- assessments and her consideration of daily feedback from her "litmus students" in evaluating the program's effectiveness. Also implicit in this excerpt is Mrs. Blake's self-positioning as a teacher who holds sway in collegial interactions related to the vocabulary initiative. Mrs. Blake's reporting of Sada and Aina's "almost every day" use of words from her program in their other classes carries with it the message that other teachers were, in fact, routinely making use of the program materials and procedures within the contexts of their own disciplines. As a result of this broad implementation, ELLs could situate their knowledge of each term within many of their content area classes; this supported their overall ability to understand the concepts taught in these general education settings.

Mrs. Blake's self-positioning as a proficient, influential language specialist generated opportunities for other-positioning as content area teachers collectively validated her work on behalf of ELL content area learning and of student learning, in general. The co-mingling of Mrs. Blake's self-positioning tactics and her colleagues' other-positioning acts is apparent in an email discussion she held with Selena regarding a faculty meeting:

> Today I presented to our staff the compelling evidence [pre- and post-assessment data] that our vocabulary initiative is working. We then looked at individual student data and brainstormed ways to do it even better. Teachers each put a round sticker next to their favorite idea.

In this message, Mrs. Blake describes how she shared favorable Spring 2012 vocabulary assessment results with the FMS faculty. In fact, the Spring 2012 data she describes in this email reflected a 20 point increase in student mastery of the semester's academic vocabulary terms, so her presentation of the data enabled Mrs. Blake to further strengthen her position as a proficient language specialist and vocabulary program creator. Mrs. Blake also describes how she led the faculty in collaboratively brainstorming and selecting strategies to enhance the vocabulary initiative. The faculty's engagement in a collaborative brainstorming session and their subsequent participation in an election to select approaches for program improvement had two effects: these acts encouraged the faculty's continued investment in a vocabulary program that directly promoted ELL content area learning, and they further legitimized Mrs. Blake's position of influence at FMS.

Although the aggregate effect of the FMS faculty's other-positioning of Mrs. Blake was to strengthen opportunities for ELL content area learning, not all faculty members participated in vocabulary initiative activities to the fullest degree possible. For instance, Selena had the opportunity to observe several times in both a seventh-grade and an eighth-grade English class. In Ms. Costa's

seventh-grade English class, the PowerPoint slides that Mrs. Blake created were displayed on one classroom wall. Ms. Costa also had the word of the day written on the board with the definition. Some days she would mention the word briefly, but there were also days in which she simply had the word displayed but did not verbally mention it. Meanwhile, on the two occasions that Selena was able to observe Mr. Killian's eighth-grade English class, he did not verbally mention the word of the day although he had it written on the whiteboard. The slides that Mrs. Blake created were not on display in Mr. Killian's classroom. While this limitation is important to explicitly describe, it is also important to stress the fact that program assessment results reflected ELLs' improved academic vocabulary proficiency, even though some faculty members implemented the program without full fidelity.

Broadly, the vocabulary initiative served to strengthen ELLs' access to academic content across subject areas by systematically scaffolding their growing proficiency with the academic vocabulary that served as a foundation for building ELLs' knowledge of the words and concepts encountered in each content area. However, at FMS this systematic approach to ELL literacy development was complemented by individualized student monitoring and intervention.

Story line Four: Proactive Advocacy at Ford Middle School

Mrs. Blake committed several acts throughout Selena's data collection process that form a story line of proactive advocacy for ELLs at FMS. She deeply cared about the academic, linguistic, and social development of ELLs in her classroom. In fact, Mrs. Blake shared that one of the reasons she agreed to be the ESL teacher for both FMS and FHS was so she could keep track of the students as they progressed through high school:

> That was my choice… The teacher who was at the high school decided to resign or to retire and I already had several years' worth of students over there, and I just felt a real attachment to them, like I wasn't really sure if their needs were really being met once they got there or I just kind of lost track of them. And I just thought when she retired, I can do what she does, and what I do. And I can work with these kids all the way through their secondary education.

At the high school, Mrs. Blake's former students benefitted from her longitudinal knowledge of their progress and background. Accordingly, she routinely checked her former students' attendance records and grade reports, and she proactively pulled together their current teachers and family members to discuss concerns and to develop interventions when ELLs appeared to be struggling in school. In the following excerpt, Mrs. Blake describes the steps she took to help a former student who was the brother of one of her current middle school students:

Mrs. Blake: Yeah, you know, Oliver's brother is over the high school now. He is not in ESL anymore. He exited. But I keep an eye on him. I get to his school and look. I notice this year, there's a sloop of absences. What's going on? And I caught it early enough. I could call his mom and she didn't even know that he has been skipping. So we had our big meeting with his mom and the counselor. So teachers got him back on track and he is just doing great now. So that is an example of something, that if somebody would have never met him before, that was monitoring him from afar, they just might not even pick on something like an extraordinary number of absences or something. I just realized that is a pattern I've seen before and something is going on and we need to intervene.

Selena: Or might just judge him rashly and say this kid is slacker.

Mrs. Blake: And I know better, you know so… yeah. It is nice. I really feel good about that.

Here Mrs. Blake positions herself as a concerned advocate for an ELL whose current teachers might have interpreted the student's poor attendance as an indicator of his motivational level. Her acts of initiating contact with this student's parents and of participating in an intervention meeting when he was no longer her student reflect the level of agency and vigilance that she assumed in her interactions with the content area colleagues who teach linguistically diverse students.

ESL Teacher/Content Area Teacher Interactions at Ford Middle School: Discussion and Implications

Story lines three and four highlight Mrs. Blake's positioning as a competent and agentive ESL teacher. She accomplished this by developing a school-wide academic vocabulary program to benefit all students' content area learning, but in a way that was fully supportive of ELLs' needs. For content area teachers at FMS, a significant aspect their interactions with Mrs. Blake included her faculty meeting presentations. In these meetings, she interacted with them in the position of spokesperson for and creator of a program that:

- included the school principal's daily, direct engagement;

- included teaching materials that she created and that needed to be displayed in each of their classrooms;

- included words of that day that they were asked to utilize in their practice;

- included assessments that, in fact, demonstrated evidence of improved academic language proficiency among all FMS students; and

- involved her facilitation of faculty discussions about how to further improve the program.

Every aspect of the initiative that faculty members implemented served to situate Mrs. Blake even more solidly in her position of a competent and agentive ESL teacher.

A documented obstacle to providing ELLs access to rigorous academic standards is that ESL teachers do not have consistent opportunities to participate in school level policy decisions about curriculum (Staehr Fenner, 2013). Mrs. Blake offers a powerful example of how school level involvement with curricular initiatives can be used to serve ELLs' content area literacy needs. Moreover, it extends our understanding of this concept by illustrating how one ESL teacher's specific self-positioning tactics were used to achieve this level of involvement. Using Mrs. Blake's example as a blueprint, ESL teachers can take stock of the opportunities and resources at their disposal and carefully consider how they might intentionally situate themselves in positions of influence in their schools.

Mrs. Blake's attention to individual student progress also reflected competency and agency. She monitored former students' progress and was prompt about stepping in to initiate resolution of concerns whenever they arose. She acted to ensure that content area teachers did not develop negative dispositions about ELLs' capabilities or motivational levels even when these students were no longer officially her students. In this fashion, she positioned herself in a manner that might have been perceived as outside of her bounds in order to effectively advocate for ELLs. For this reason, her example is particularly valuable to highlight since it provides educators with an explicit illustration of ELL-focused advocacy that counters the documented patterns of ESL teachers being subordinately positioned within their schools (Creese, 2002; McGriff, 2015). Additionally, Mrs. Blake's example offers specific, preemptive steps that advocates for ELLs can take to forestall the development of reduced expectations related to ELLs' motivation, and to help colleagues expand their understandings of why ELLs may struggle with content area work (Villegas & Lucas, 2007).

Conclusion

Positioning theory offers an ideal framework to support this analysis of ESL teachers' interactions since it focuses on the moment-to-moment negotiation of individuals' rights, duties and responsibilities as they interact within a given context. For Harding and Ford Middle Schools, data analysis revealed four story lines that capture how the dialogic positioning moves of

each school's ESL teacher and her content area colleagues impacted ELLs' access to rigorous content area instruction. At Harding Middle School, Mrs. Knorr's positioning was associated with discursive acts that constrained ELLs' content area literacy development.   Conversely, the ELL-related story lines at Ford Middle School cast Mrs. Blake as a proficient, influential language specialist. The measures she took to position herself in this manner and the fact that her content area colleagues also positioned her in this way resulted in acts of significant benefit to ELL content area language and literacy development.

Clearly, the story lines developing around Mrs. Knorr's and Mrs. Blake's respective positioning and concomitant acts led to different content area learning results for ELLs in their respective school settings. However, the differences highlighted in this inquiry also raise the question of how ESL teacher/content area teacher interactions can more effectively support ELL language and literacy development. A noteworthy dynamic that presented itself in this regard is that of proactivity in positioning. Unlike Mrs. Knorr, Mrs. Blake was proactive in positioning herself as a competent, advocacy-oriented ESL teacher and curriculum creator.   Her content area teacher colleagues, then, followed this lead through their engagement in the undertakings she initiated. This suggests that proactivity in positioning is a favorable tack for ESL teachers to take.   It therefore raises the question of what professional learning measures could encourage ESL teachers such as Mrs. Knorr to adopt Mrs. Blake's self-positioning tactics so that they can serve as effective language specialists and advocates for ELLs in their schools. This is an essential question to examine through continued research because, as the need to cogently support ELLs' academic achievement continues to grow, ESL teachers will need effective ways to encourage, and even lead the authentic engagement of their colleagues in ELL language and literacy development.

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