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Lauren Freedman, Ph.D.
Susan V. Piazza, Ed. D.
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**There is no more crucial or basic skill
in all of education than reading.**



Editorial Advisory Board



Dear Readers,

As we reflect on our first year as editors, we would like to thank the many scholars who have submitted their research to *Reading Horizons* to share with our readership. We also would like to thank our Editorial Review Board, many who are new this year, for their thoughtful and constructive feedback on manuscripts. We are also thankful for the many great submissions we've received. In this volume, we have a variety of topics that will inspire education professionals in their research and practice.

In this last letter to our readers for this year, we have decided to share a review of a recently published book titled, "Engaging Students in Disciplinary Literacy, K-6: Reading, Writing, and Teaching Tools for the Classroom" written by Brock, Goatley, Raphael, Trost-Shahata, and Weber (2014). We chose to review this book because of its timeliness to key issues in the literacy field.

Elementary educators and administrators will be delighted with the content of *Engaging Students in Disciplinary Literacy, K-6: Reading, Writing, and Teaching Tools for the Classroom*. Out of all the recently published texts supporting implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), this professional text offers educators a quick and accessible review of research and experience that has consistently demonstrated how to create positive outcomes in student achievement across the disciplines. The authors of this text bring a diverse and well-rounded perspective that condenses an enormous amount of complex research and pedagogy into a pragmatic examination of how to provide effective disciplinary literacy instruction.

The text begins with a nod to the current political context that drives the emphasis on disciplinary literacy at all levels. The authors demonstrate how the CCSS, whether you view them positively or negatively, have placed a priority on higher levels of learning across the subject areas in K-12. The standards are a reality in most schools across the U.S. for the moment. "Although we agree that standards alone cannot lead to sustainable improvements, the rhetorical power and policies that stem from standards – especially nationally supported ones such as CCSS – do impact the day-to-day lives of teachers and students" (p.16). A national mandate is never welcomed, and there are many critical issues that leave us concerned about the possible misuses of the standards. However, the authors weave a powerful argument that these are some of the more pedagogically sound, research based, and constructivist mandates the U.S. has ever seen.

The chapters present clear and concise arguments for new conceptions of disciplinary literacy that contextualize the higher levels of learning. An important feature of this text is that the authors specify that disciplinary knowledge must foreground instructional practice in each subject area. That means it is no longer acceptable for a literacy expert or consultant to visit a school and advocate the

use of generic strategies across the disciplines. In fact, when administrators seek professional development on “high utility” strategies, it is now an opportunity for many providers to talk about the problems associated with that approach when deeper understandings of disciplinary literacy are not present. The authors point out four problems that have slowed progress in this area: 1) a very limited research base in disciplinary literacy, 2) disciplinary literacy is minimally defined in the early grades, 3) elementary learners typically have little experience with informational texts, and 4) “Norms of the discipline – how experts think, act, talk, and write within their disciplines – have not been foregrounded in elementary classrooms” (p.21). The authors provide readers with descriptive examples of what is, and what is not, effective disciplinary literacy instruction. Visuals and graphic information support their arguments across the text to drive home salient features of effective practices versus ineffective practices. As researchers and scholars in the field of literacy, we acknowledge that professional texts have not always provided clear and explicit descriptions of recommended practice. We applaud the practical classroom scenarios provided in this book.

The book also addresses how teaching and learning in the areas of literacy; defined as reading, writing, and talking, will support disciplinary knowledge. Five interrelated components of the reading process are shared in chapter three. Regarding reading as a social process, the authors embrace a transactional and sociocultural framework of literacy learning. The context of the reading situation, knowledge of the comprehension process, knowing your students and their backgrounds, knowledge of texts and text features; and finally, knowledge of instructional and assessment practices are all key features of disciplinary reading for information. It is this birds’ eye view of the disciplinary reading process that we find most helpful to practitioners in the field – who ultimately need accessible instructional guideposts that are research based and practical.

The authors have provided excellent principles for the complex task of teaching specific content knowledge through varied literacy practices within and across texts. If you are looking for a practical and pedagogically sound resource to help schools implement mandated CCSSs, then “Engaging Students in Disciplinary Literacy, K-6: Reading, Writing, and Teaching Tools for the Classroom” is highly recommended.

We hope you enjoy reading this volume and we wish you all an excellent holiday season!

Lauren Freedman, Ph. D.

Susan Piazza, Ed. D.

Selena Protacio, Ph. D.

Co-Editors of *Reading Horizons*



GRADES FIVE AND SIX STUDENTS' REPRESENTATION OF MEANING IN COLLABORATIVE WIKI WRITING

Shelley Stagg Peterson, University of Toronto

Christine Portier, University of Toronto

Abstract

This paper examined grades 5 and 6 students' participation in wikis while writing reports on social studies topics. An analysis of eight wikis showed that students represented meanings they had constructed about their topics by engaging in knowledge telling practices (e.g., introducing, stating, or repeating information or an idea and developing previous ideas with examples, statistics or other information) more frequently than they engaged in knowledge transforming processes, such as drawing conclusions, identifying cause-effect relationships, or making inferences or judgements. Our research shows that Bereiter and Scardamalia's model (1987) is useful to inform the development of tools for assessing students' demonstration of their understanding of concepts in content area writing.



This research took place in a classroom setting where two grades 5 and 6 teachers co-taught a social studies unit involving students in collaborative research and writing on a wiki. The inspiration for our study was the action research that we conducted with two grades 5 and 6 teachers, Kyrie and Sara (all names are pseudonyms), who were interested in harnessing wikis as a tool for a social studies unit. We were interested in ways to assess students' collaborative essays using standards that went beyond typical writing assessment criteria, such as content, organization, vocabulary, sentence structure, and conventions (e.g., Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999; Spandel, 2013) in order to incorporate students' representations of the knowledge that they constructed about the subject area content. Our analysis of students' wiki writing centered on these research questions: (1) How and with what frequency did participating grades 5 and 6 students represent the meanings that they constructed about their group topics in their collaboratively-written essays, composed on wikis? (2) Are there gender or grade level patterns in students' representation of meanings in the collaboratively-written essays?

Our research provides emerging insights into students' approaches to communicating meanings that they have constructed about social studies topics in essays composed collaboratively in wikis. Drawing on the research analyzing students' written syntheses of information from multiple sources, and mindful of the ever-expanding use of wikis across grades and subject areas, we designed a study examining students' representations of meaning in wiki writing.

We begin this paper with a review of research on wiki use in classrooms and on students' synthesis of information in their writing, together with a description of the theoretical underpinning of our research. We then describe the classroom context and research methods, outlining our inductive analysis of student writing with a focus on ways in which students represented meaning. Following a presentation of results, we discuss what we have learned about how students represent meaning in their writing and the implications for writing assessment in content areas.

Literature Review

Wikis and their Use in Classrooms

Wikis are online environments that foster the collaborative creation, revision and editing of texts (Leuf & Cunningham, 2001). They are ideal spaces for collaborative writing in classrooms because they provide opportunities for

everyone within a group to contribute and make it possible to include links to web pages, visual images, and audio and video information in texts (Nicol, Littlejohn, & Grierson, 2005). Although the most widely-known wiki, Wikipedia (Wikipedia.org), is accessible to anyone with internet access, teachers often choose to create accounts in other commercial systems, such as pbworks (<http://www.pbworks.com/education.html>) or wikispaces (wikispaces.org) for classroom projects. These wikis are free and have security features that allow teachers to restrict access to anyone outside the class.

Teachers' and students' experiences with classroom wikis have been the focus in previous research conducted at the postsecondary level, where wikis were used for discussing assigned readings (Heafner & Friedman, 2008; Mathew & Felvegi, 2009); for discussing class activities (Arnold, Ducate, & Kost, 2009; Kessler, 2009); and for collaboratively creating glossaries and other compositions (Elgort, Smith, & Toland, 2008; Hughes & Narayan, 2009). At the elementary level, researchers have observed students using wikis to give their opinions about the possibility of a human colony being established on Mars (Pifarré & Fisher, 2011); to create biographies of a famous person and a poster on school hygiene (Woo, Chu, & Li, 2013); and to create an information brochure for parents about their school (Mak & Coniam, 2008). Additionally, wikis have been used in elementary classrooms for solving mathematics problems (Lee, 2012).

Although previous studies of classroom wikis use have provided a wealth of information about students' high levels of motivation to write and about the ways in which wikis facilitate students' writing processes, they have not examined the ways in which students represent meaning in their wiki writing. Given that demonstrations of content understanding is a goal of much of the writing that students do in content area classes (Vacca, Vacca & Mraz, 2011), such research is needed to add to our understanding of wikis' potential for supporting students' learning within content areas.

Students' Writing Processes and their Synthesis of Information in Writing Theoretical model of writing processes.

Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) model of composing has informed our research examining grades 5 and 6 students' synthesis of information in their collaborative wiki writing. They present two writing processes. One process, knowledge transforming, involves a "two-way interaction between continuously developing knowledge and continuously developing text" (p. 12). Writers exercise strategic control over the shaping of their writing, assessing and revising their

writing in order to achieve their communicative goals. In the knowledge transforming process, writers develop a deeper understanding of the topic. Described as no less important, but certainly less demanding, the knowledge telling process is where writers “make maximum use of natural human endowments of language competence and of skills learned through ordinary social experience” (p.5) to produce text that requires only the level of planning and goal setting of everyday conversation. In the knowledge telling process, revision involves assessing how well the information is expressed. Knowledge telling is not an early stage of knowledge transforming. Instead, it reflects a different intention on the part of the writer—to communicate information. In contrast, knowledge transforming emerges from intentions to develop deeper and new understandings while achieving social communicative goals.

Bereiter and Scardamalia’s (1987) model of writing processes provided an overarching framework for our analysis of the ways in which grades 5 and 6 students represented the meanings that they had constructed about social studies topics in their collaborative wiki writing. Kyrie and Sara informed students in class mini lessons that they wanted students to “make [their] own meaning and not just copy the ideas from the websites and books.” In our inductive analysis of student writing, we sought to describe the ways in which students carried out knowledge transforming. We also found ways in which students engaged in knowledge telling, however, as students communicated information in sentences and paragraphs that were very similar to the ones in the original sources.

Previous research on students’ synthesis of information.

Research informing our study has examined the process of synthesizing information from multiple information sources in wiki and non-wiki settings. Teachers regard synthesizing as both effective in deepening students’ knowledge and a demanding, difficult task for students at all levels, including those at the college level (Mateos & Solé, 2009). Previous research has shown that older writers tend to be more successful in writing coherent syntheses with well-connected ideas than younger writers (Mateos & Solé; Spivey & King, 1989; Segev-Miller, 2004). Younger writers “tend to take ideas from the different texts without providing the necessary links between them” (Mateos & Solé, p. 437). When middle-grade students synthesized information from multiple print sources in their pen-and-paper writing, for example, they tended to list information from the original sources, rather than integrating and transforming it (Lenski & Johns, 1997).

Much of the research examining students' synthesis of information in their writing has taken place in controlled settings where students were given a number of texts to read and synthesize in written compositions (Mateos & Solé, 2009; Spivey & King, 1989; Segev-Miller, 2004). The researchers' analysis of students' written texts focused on how students used the original source materials in their syntheses. Mateos and Solé's analysis, for example, used these codes to describe university students' written syntheses:

- integration and connection of the information from both texts around a structuring theme
- selection of ideas necessary for producing the synthesis
- appropriateness of the interpretation, as measured by the presence/absence of incorrect content
- content elaboration: copying, paraphrasing, introduction of new terms (p. 439)

Similarly, in their deductive analysis of postsecondary students' wiki writing about selected Finnish novels and historical events, Sormunen, Heinström, Romu, and Turunen (2012) looked for examples of the following in students' writing: copy-pasting; (exact copying of original source); near copy-pasting (slightly edited copying of original text); paraphrasing (major change beyond technical editing of original text); and own text (comments expressing writer's thoughts in writer's words).

Method

Participants and Wiki-Writing Context

The research participants were 18 girls and 24 boys. The students were in single-grade classes in Year 1 and in combined-grade classes in Year 2. In Year 1, there were 30 grade 6 students in one class and 28 grade 5 students in the other class, with equal numbers of girls and boys in each class. In the Year 2 combined-grade classes, there were 30 students in one class and 29 students in the other. Across the two classes in Year 2, there were fewer grade 5 students (25) than grade 6 students (34) and more boys (15 in grade 5 and 20 in grade 6) than girls (10 in grade 5 and 14 in grade 6). Participating students were assigned to a particular wiki based on their topic preferences, which produced groups with a mix of abilities.

Of the 12 wiki groups that the teachers created each year, we randomly selected four groups—two grade 5 and two grade 6 wiki groups. In our Year 2

sample there was one grade 6 girl and one grade 6 boy who had also been in our grade 5 sample in Year 1. The girl was in the littering group in grade 5 and the plastic waste group in grade 6. The boy was in the plastic waste group in both grades. All other sample students in Year 2 grade 6 wiki groups had not participated in the wiki project in grade 5. Because there were greater numbers of boys in the Year 2 classes, our sample contains many more boys than girls for that year. Wiki topics and the number of girls and boys in each group can be found in Table 1.

Gender	Year 1				Year 2			
	Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 5		Grade 6	
	Littering	Plastic Waste	Water Sanitization	Plastic Waste	Homelessness	Polluted Water	Plastic Waste	Poverty
Girls	2	1	3	4	1	1	3	1
Boys	2	3	3	2	4	4	3	5

Table 1: Wiki Topics and Wiki Group Members

Preparing students for the wiki task

In both years, Kyrie and Sara collaboratively taught a social studies unit on global issues. They told us in interviews that they instructed their students in the safe and effective use of online tools, specifically blogs and wikis during the first term of the school year. Kyrie and Sara posted a summary of the group collaboration assessment criteria that were generated in these lessons on each wiki:

- Group Cooperation (in-class and online)
- Time on task
- Cooperative
- Respectful
- Organized
- Prepared
- Regular contribution

During our classroom visits, Kyrie and Sara gradually introduced their students to online tools, beginning with homework blogs. Here they posted assignment questions for the students to answer from home. In this way, the students became familiar with navigating online and posting comments. In one lesson, for example, the teachers printed the students’ homework blog entries from the previous evening (identifying an item in their homes and the country in which it was made). They gave these print-outs to the students who were placed in

groups of four. The students then sorted the items using any category rule that they chose. Generally, students sorted by country and then by type of item. Following this group work, in a whole-group activity, the students called out the countries in which their chosen items were made and their teachers marked the countries on a world map.

Later in the school year, Kyrie and Sara set up small group wikis and guided the students through the navigation features and new tools. They introduced the social studies project and posted information about the assignment on each wiki (found in Appendix A). They also modelled ways to search for online sources for the research topics, how to determine if a website was appropriate (for the students' ages and reading levels), how to scan text and images for relevant information, and how to organize information using the categories that would later be used for the social studies wiki project (e.g., Physical, Environmental, Economic, Political, and Social – they used the acronym, PEEPS). To begin a lesson about the PEEPS topics, Kyrie and Sara handed out photographs to each student and asked the students to consider to which of the five categories their image belonged. The students then posted their images under category headings, which had been tacked to a wall in the hallway (the teachers often used the hall space for activities because the halls were very wide and there were very few other classes on the third floor that would be disturbed). Students then discussed their rationales for categorizing the images with others who had used the same category. Following a whole-class discussion during which students and teachers talked about the characteristics of each category using the images as examples, students wrote about each of the PEEPS categories, using at least three of the images in their definitions of each category.

During one of our after-school action research meetings, Kyrie and Sara co-planned with us a series of lessons on grouping jot notes into paragraphs because we had observed that students were having difficulty creating cohesive paragraphs. Jot notes was the term that Kyrie and Sara gave to notes that students created from their readings. The following examples of jot notes, representative of jot notes from all 12 wiki groups, come from the grade 5 polluted water wiki group's wiki in Year 2:

- fish poisoned and contaminated from industrial waste
- obvious places where pollution is caused such as factories dumping chemicals in the water areas
- heat and oil can be a source of water pollution
- sewage and chemicals dumped into the great lakes

In the first jot note-to-paragraph lesson, Kyrie and Sara used a SmartBoard to demonstrate how to organize 20 or so jot notes according to what they had in common. The teachers did a think-aloud and invited students to provide their thoughts about which jot notes seemed to go together and what idea/topic they had in common. Kyrie and Sara then gave each group envelopes with strips of paper containing jot notes that they had created from the book *One Well* (Strauss, 2007). The two teachers asked the students to organize the jot notes by their common topics and then tape together the jot notes that belonged together. The students then were asked to discuss what each group of jot notes had in common. Figure 1 is a photograph of one group's jot note groupings.

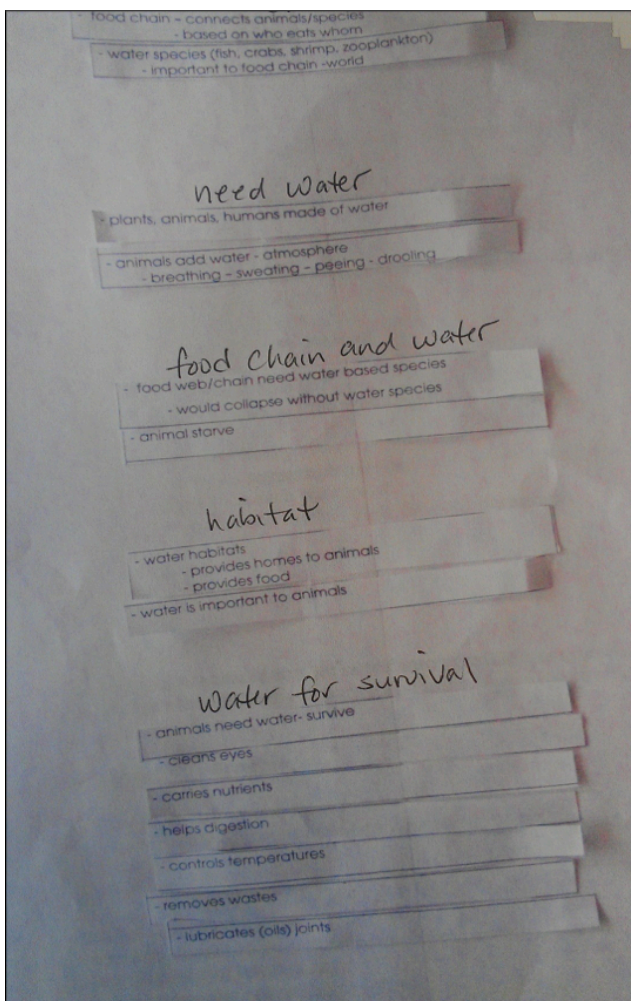


Figure 1. Topic categories created by one group of students

The two teachers provided links to relevant web sites that they had previewed and deemed to be appropriate to their students' ages and reading levels and to each group's topic. They did not restrict the students to gathering information only from the websites they had previewed. Examples of the websites previewed by the teachers are:

- <http://www.endpoverty2015.org/> - This website was created by the UN Millennium Campaign, established by the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2002 to support achievement of goals adopted in the Millennium Declaration, signed in 2000.
- <http://www.onedrop.org/en/default.aspx> - The organization, One Drop, was founded in 2007 by Cirque du Soleil founder, Guy Laliberté. It is dedicated to ensuring that potable water is accessible to everyone in the world.

Data Sources

Data for our research study were gathered from March-June in Year 1, during 11 classroom visits, and again from March-June in Year 2, during 15 classroom visits. Data sources include observations of whole-class lessons taught collaboratively by the two teachers, and observations of eight groups of 4-6 students writing together to write about global social issues on their wikis. We used these data to contextualize our analysis of the essays.

We gathered eight pieces of writing in total, two from each of the grade 5 wiki groups and two from each of the grade 6 wiki groups each year. The grade 5 wiki groups' writing varied greatly in length. The Year 1 littering group's collaborative writing was the shortest (244 words in 15 sentences) and the Year 1 plastic waste group's collaborative writing was the longest (1371 words in 60 sentences). The grade 6 wiki groups' collaborative writing ranged from 545 words written in 28 sentences (written by the water sanitization group in Year 1) to 1116 words in 62 sentences written by the plastic waste group in Year 2. Across both years the average number of sentences was 33.75 and average length in words was 660.5 words in the grade 5 collaborative writing and 907 words in 43 sentences in the grade 6 writing.

One of the (best) collaborative essays from our sample of eight essays, written by a Year 2 grade 5 wiki group, can be found in Appendix B. The coding for the first two paragraphs is identified. We describe our inductive coding process of the collaboratively-written essays in the following section, following a description of the ways in which our coding differs from that of previous studies examining students' syntheses of information from multiple sources.

Data Analysis

We drew upon Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) knowledge transforming and knowledge telling model in our examination of the ways in which Kyrie's and Sara's grades 5 and 6 students represented the meanings that they constructed in their collaboratively-composed wiki writing. Our analysis of students' collaborative wiki writing was underpinned by a view of students' written texts as their representations of the meaning that they have made from their reading of multiple sources and their background knowledge and experiences (Beal, 1996; Olson, 1994). We used a parallel constructivist approach in our analysis of the texts, as our process involved "integrat[ing] the [students'] words with relevant prior knowledge" (Beal, p. 221) to make inferences about students' meaning-making about the topics. Our view of the meaning-construction processes involved in reading texts points to a limitation in our method—our views of what constitutes a conclusion or a confusing sentence or what is considered peripheral or incorrect information, are influenced by our prior experiences and knowledge and may not reflect universal views.

We attempted to address this limitation by working together to analyze the data, discussing differences in our views of how students were representing meanings until we came to consensus. Our inductive data analysis process involved reading through four of the collaborative writing samples and identifying the kinds of meaning-making that students seemed to be demonstrating in their writing. Initially, we analyzed each sentence in these writing samples, describing in detail how students represented meanings that they had created (e.g., provides a statistic from jot notes about Canadians carrying plastic bags with no connection to previous sentence about San Francisco banning plastic bags, asks a rhetorical question using statistics from jot notes—unrelated to the issue statement in previous sentence). We then created codes from these specific descriptions. We noted that students wrote general beginning- and end-of-paragraph statements, drew conclusions, made general statements, exhorted readers to take action, added personal touches, repeated ideas, elaborated on ideas using statistics and examples, made judgments, provided information unrelated to the topic, provided inaccurate information, identified cause- effect relationships, and created confusing sentences through bringing together two unrelated ideas, or through the use of non-standard syntax.

Because frequencies were very low for some of these codes and because we found overlaps and redundancies, we refined our initial codes. In the refining process, we arrived at one code to describe what students did to show that they

were transforming or reworking the information and two codes to describe how students generated content but left the ideas intact, what Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) deem to be a demonstration of knowledge telling processes. Of the three codes listed below, we see the first two codes as being more representative of knowledge telling practice and the last code as being more representative of a knowledge transforming practice.

- Introduces/states/repeats information or idea
- Develops previous idea with examples, statistics or other information
- Draws conclusions/makes inferences/judgements/identifies cause-effect relationships

Additionally, we found that sometimes the meanings were inaccurate or incomplete (to the best of our knowledge and experience). We generated three codes to describe ways in which students appeared to attempt to rework information from the original texts, but their attempts resulted in their demonstration of an incomplete or inaccurate understanding of the content. We were not always present while students contributed to the collaboratively-written essays, and thus were unable to gather information systematically about the students' thinking processes while writing. This would have allowed us to differentiate between students' incomplete or inaccurate meanings constructed about the topic and possible writing difficulties.

The three codes were as follows:

- Brings many pieces of information together in confusing way
- Includes information that has peripheral or no relationship to topic
- Presents incorrect information

We then applied these six codes (examples from students' writing for each code are found in Table 2) to all eight essays.

Ways in Which Students Demonstrated Knowledge Telling and Knowledge Transforming	
Codes	Examples from Participating Students' Writing
Introduces/states/repeats information or idea	In Canada homelessness is a serious problem. Everyone must be aware about this serious issue and take action.
Develops previous idea with examples, statistics or other information	There are an estimated 200,000-300,000 people that are homeless in Canada Regina, Victoria and Edmonton stopped using plastic bags
Draws conclusions/makes inferences or judgments/identifies cause-effect relationships	Even if people would give some money to someone with less than them, it is still a small amount and they don't really care to do more. The political impact is that the government has to make meetings and talk about water pollution and how to stop it instead of more important things across the world like child labour.
Ways in which Students Represented Incomplete/Inaccurate Meanings	
Codes	Examples from Participating Students' Writing
Brings many pieces of information together in confusing ways	Also some ministries like the ministry of natural resources would be affected if and when Canada has plastic almost everywhere (which it's on it's way there). There are diseases in the water and water is a natural resource; therefore they have no choice but to drink it.
Includes information that has peripheral or no relationship to topic	A lot of people such as grandparents (or people under stress) need a way to relax and fishing is normally really relaxing especially for grandparents. A man was in poverty and had to go find shoes for himself so he took some stick and 2 plastic bottles and made flip-flops.
Presents incorrect information	Litter can also melt the Rockey Mountains witch means people can not ski!!! Many people are pushed (farther) into debt when there is a strong economic growth.

Table 2: Codes Used to Analyze Collaborative Writing

Based on previous research (Lenski & Johns, 1997), we expected that there would be greater numbers of sentences reflecting students' knowledge telling processes than knowledge transforming processes. We hoped that students were engaging to some degree in the more reflective knowledge-transforming processes in their writing, however. We also expected and hoped that there would be significantly greater instances of sentences involving knowledge telling and transforming processes when compared with sentences in which students used processes that resulted in the representation of inaccurate/incomplete meanings.

Our research findings are limited by the small sample and by what was possible in the action research context. Data were gathered in an instructional setting established by the teachers. The research question arose as we talked with Kyrie and Sara in our after-school meetings and found out about the challenges they were facing in implementing a new teaching practice. As a result, we were not in a position to set up a control group, nor to create additional writing tasks that would have allowed us to compare students' independent writing with their wiki writing. Because we were not present at all times when the students wrote, we were not able to gather data systematically on students' thinking and decision-making processes, nor about meanings they intended to communicate in their writing. The results of our analysis must be interpreted with these limitations in mind. We offer the following results as emerging insights into students' representations of meaning in collaboratively-written essays.

Results: Ways in Which Students Represented Meaning in Collaborative Essays

Across the two years 78.5% of the sentences in the grade 5 small-groups' collaboratively-written compositions and 71.9% of those written by grade 6 peers reflected knowledge telling and knowledge transforming practices (see Table 3). In contrast, 28.1% of sentences in grade 5 wikis and 21.5% of sentences in grade 6 wikis represented meanings inaccurately/incompletely. The students engaged in knowledge telling and knowledge transforming practices more frequently than they represented meaning inaccurately/incorrectly.

Some of the sentences (22.8% of participating grade 5 wiki groups' essays and 12.4% of grade 6 groups' essays) reflected students' engagement in knowledge transforming processes. However, the students were more likely to create sentences that involved knowledge telling processes (introduced or summarized the topic of their paragraph, repeated information previously stated, or that added examples, statistics and other information), than to engage in knowledge-transforming

processes (e.g., drew conclusions, made inferences/judgments or identified cause-effect relationships).

Bringing ideas together in confusing ways was the most common way students in both grades represented meaning inaccurately/incompletely (11.7% of grade 5 students' sentences and 7.2% of grade 6 students' sentences). Although there were no patterns in comparisons of girls' and boys' sentences, we found puzzling grade-related patterns. Knowledge transforming processes were found with greater frequency in grade 5 essays (22.8%) than in grade 6 essays (12.4%). Further unexpected grade comparisons were found in the relative percentages of sentences that represent inaccurate or incomplete meanings, as grade 6 essays were slightly more likely to contain sentences that brought ideas together in confusing ways and almost three times as likely to contain sentences with information that was only peripherally related to the topic.

	Percentage of Sentences in Grade 5 Wiki Writing n = 135 sentences	Percentage of Sentences in Grade 6 Wiki Writing n = 178
<hr/> Sentences Demonstrating Knowledge Telling and Transforming Processes		
Introduces/States/Repeats Information/Idea	28.8	29.8
Provides more Information about Previous Idea with Examples or Statistics	27.4	29.8
Draws Conclusions/Makes Inferences/Judgements/Identifies Cause-Effect Relationships	22.8	12.4
<hr/> Percentage of All Sentences Showing Knowledge Telling or Transforming Processes for each Grade		
	78.5	71.9
<hr/> Inaccurate/Incomplete Representation of Meaning		
Brings Ideas Together in a Confusing Way	15.6	17.4
Peripheral or No Relationship to Topic	3.7	9.6
Presents Incorrect Information	2.2	1.1
<hr/> Total Sentences Representing Inaccurate/Incomplete Meanings for Each Grade		
	21.5	28.1

Table 3: Ways in Which Students Represented Meaning in Eight Collaboratively-Written Essays (Percentages)

Conclusions and Implications

Students' Representation of Meaning in Wiki Writing

In their collaborative wiki writing, participating students represented meanings they had constructed about their topics in a variety of ways: by introducing, stating, or repeating information or an idea (knowledge telling processes); by developing previous ideas with examples, statistics or other information (knowledge telling processes); and by drawing conclusions, identifying cause-effect relationships, or making inferences or judgements (knowledge transforming processes). Students engaged in knowledge telling processes to a greater degree than they engaged in knowledge transforming processes, a finding that was consistent with previous research on elementary students' written syntheses (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Lenski & Johns, 1997).

We find it promising that students did engage in some knowledge transforming processes without formal instruction. We believe that these processes can be further developed through teachers' mini-lessons where modeling and think-alouds provide examples and show the thinking processes involved in transforming knowledge in their writing. Teachers' feedback on students' writing can further highlight what students do to transform knowledge in their writing and suggest ways to rework the information that the students have gathered to engage in knowledge transforming processes. The wiki-writing context, itself, provided informal scaffolding; all students, regardless of their writing abilities, had access to examples of these knowledge transforming processes as they read their peers' writing and discussed the writing in their wiki groups during school hours.

Gender and Grade Differences

There were no gender patterns in the types of sentences composed by individual students. However, there were grade differences indicating that the grade 5 students' writing was more likely to involve knowledge-transforming processes and less likely to represent inaccurate or incomplete meanings than the grade 6 students' writing. With the random selection of wiki groups, it is possible that the grade 5 groups we selected had students who were stronger in synthesizing and representing meanings than those in the grade 6 groups. Furthermore, as reported elsewhere (Authors, submitted), in all three plastic wiki groups, one student contributed significantly more than the group did. It is possible that this student was not one of the stronger writers in the two grade 6 and 1 grade 5 plastic wiki groups.

Additionally, previous research on topic familiarity helps us to understand these unexpected grade differences. This research shows that topic familiarity influences students' recognition of parts of their writing that may be unclear to readers and need revision (Beal, 1996; Butterfield, Hacker & Albertson, 1996). Beal explains:

with less familiar topics, children may not have the necessary background knowledge to make appropriate inferences to reconcile a discrepancy or to fill in missing information. Thus, the likelihood of successful revisions may be lower, even if children recognize that the text is not clear. (p. 226)

It is possible that the topics of grade 6 wiki groups were more unfamiliar to grade 6 students than the topics of grade 5 wikis were to the grade 5 students. The topics that appear to have been the most challenging to students (in a comparison of the topics for which wikis contained the greatest number of sentences in the "unclear representation of meaning") were the plastic waste and polluted water wikis in grade 5, and the water sanitization and plastic waste wikis in grade 6 (there were two plastic waste groups in our grade 6 sample).

Another possible explanation for the surprising differences between grades comes from research showing a relationship between the levels of difficulty of the source texts that students consult and their abilities to represent accurate meanings (Nash, Schumacher, & Carlson, 1993; Spivey & King, 1989). It is possible that the websites that grade 6 students chose to gather information contained more challenging content than the websites that grade 5 students consulted. If the grade 6 students had difficulty constructing meaning from the online sources, either because of the way that it was organized on the website or because of the vocabulary and syntactic sophistication of the text, they also would have struggled to represent meaning in the writing synthesizing information from these sources.

Although we did not carry out controlled experimental research and cannot generalize widely beyond our research context, we believe that our results provide helpful starting points for teachers who are seeking assessment tools for content writing, whether the writing is collaboratively written in wikis or independently written using pen and paper. We suggest that Bereiter and Scardamalia's model (1987) is useful to inform the development of scoring guides. As such, together with criteria that are typically included in scoring guides and rubrics in order to assess written products (e.g., content, organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, conventions), the assessment criteria could include some knowledge telling

processes (e.g., introducing, stating, or repeating information or an idea, developing previous ideas with examples, statistics or other information), and knowledge transforming processes (drawing conclusions, identifying cause-effect relationships, or making inferences or judgements) to assess ways in which students represent the meanings they have constructed about the topic.

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Appendix A

Wiki Task

ACT (Active Citizens Today)

Big Ideas Grade 5

How might a national citizen exercise their rights and responsibilities as a citizen? What process would you use to investigate and bring about change on a national issue?
How does your issue relate to PEEPS?

To which area in PEEPS is the issue in the article more strongly related?

Big Ideas Grade 6

How might a global citizen exercise their rights and responsibilities as a citizen?
What process would you use to investigate and bring about change on a national issue?
How does your issue relate to PEEPS?

To which area in PEEPS is the issue in the article more strongly related?

Success Criteria

Collaborative Wiki Writing

Contributing member on the wiki

Provides feedback to members

Shows an understanding of issue in relation to PEEPS

Organized thoughts

Evidence of research

Cite Resources (primary and secondary)

ACT (Active Citizens Today)

National/Global Issue that I will be researching is:

Remember your National/Global Issue and its connection to Canada and the world in relation to PEEPS.

Wiki Collaboration- Due _____

- As a group you will co-construct your leaning about your chosen National/Global topic.
- Over the next 5 days, you will research your topic in relation to PEEPS and using the Success Criteria as a guide.
- All research will have to be sourced and put into jot notes.
- Information should NOT be copied from the Internet and/or a book but interpreted by you the reader into jot notes that will help your team understand you topic more clearly.
- It is essential to co-construct a page together this will directly be related to the Culminating Task
- Culminating Task-Due
- Challenge: To have your piece selected as the next National Geographic Front Cover to there newly published book on “Being an Active Citizen.” Use your expert wiki pages to help you complete your independent Front Cover, Back Cover and inside flap explanation.
- Design a cover page and title for a Non-Fiction Book that will introduce others to the issue and what has and can be done to help solve the problem.
 - Write the back cover for the book (200 word description of the national/global issue and an explanation of why it is important to you)
 - On the inside flap, write a brief explanation of how the images you selected on the cover represent PEEPS aspects of the issue

Appendix B

Collaborative Writing from Grade 5, Year 2

We included some of our coding for the first few sentences.

Codes:

- A – Introduces/states/repeats information/idea
- B – Develops previous idea with specific examples
- C – Shows cause and effect with specific examples

Codes Polluted Water: Grade 5, Year 2 Wiki Group's Essay

- A The people of Canada and other areas surrounding the Great Lakes are polluting and contaminating the Great Lakes.
- A Everyone must be aware about this serious issue and take action.
- C Politicians must work hard to manage and control the pollution and waste valuable time that could have been spent discussing other important issues, because when everyone is focused on this issue, no one pays attention to other important issues that should also be solved.
- B The governments of areas surrounding the great lakes must raise awareness about how to reduce the environmental impact on the environment.
- B For example, the Ontario government's aim is to protect drinking water in lake Ontario, one of the 5 great lakes.
- A Therefore, politicians and government must work to raise awareness and protect our freshwater and the Great Lakes.
- C Although the economic effect is not as large as the environmental effect, polluted water has an impact on families depending on fishing as their income because when you cannot fish, you have no income to support your family.
- C Also, because of the polluted water, we have to pay more money to clean water in water treatment plants.
- C Clean water becomes more expensive because it is harder to obtain.
- C Business surrounding the lake suffer because pollution reduces the amount of people who come to the lake and therefore the amount of customers and, as a result, the profit is low-paying.
- C Lastly, becoming homeless can affect your family because your kids will not be able to go to school because they work for money so they and their family can afford a living.

Therefore people will not have a enough money to sustain a proper life. Due to this pollution, fish and other animals are poisoned and contaminated from industrial waste and diseases travel up the food chain and infect many different species of animals. Where chemicals are washed into the water areas like oil from cars, pesticides from lawns, household chemicals pour down drains and into lakes. Harmful pesticides wash off from gardens and into lake Ontario and pollutes the water and aquatic life. Sewage chemicals dumped into the great lakes. Heat and oil can also be a source of water pollution. Obvious places where pollution is caused are places like factories dumping chemicals into the water areas.

Polluted water and fish are not fit for human/animal consumption and when animals eat other polluted animals drink polluted water or swim in polluted water. This can go up the food chain. Polluted water effects everything. Like the water some people get there from the seas, oceans, lakes. Not only that but we might use polluted water to water the trees and that could kill the trees that give us oxygen and if this continues soon forests will turn into waste land. Water pollution has a part in killing animals to extinction. In conclusion if we keep polluting our water our earth could die.

Because of polluted water people will not come to the beach, talk, play, and socialize so the level of social interaction is decreased. Therefore, pollution in the great lakes has a negative effect on not only the environment but the people living near or visiting the lake.

Water Pollution in the great lakes is a serious and important issue that must be solved. We can do this by supporting politicians who are taking action and raising awareness about this important issue. This issue has a very large environmental effect because when we pollute the water, we pollute aquatic and land animals living in the area. Diseases from contaminated waters travel up the food chain and, as predators we eat other infected animals, they, too become sick with the disease and could eventually die from it. Families who rely on fishing as their main or sole income are at a disadvantage because they no longer have a profit to support their family. Therefore, if this issue is not solved, it will be an overall loss for communities and ecosystems surrounding the 5 Great Lakes.

About the Authors

Shelley Stagg Peterson is a professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. She teaches and conducts research on writing and oral language in early childhood settings and elementary classrooms.

Christine Portier is a Postdoctoral fellow in the same department, conducting research on play, oral language and writing in early childhood settings in northern Canada.





CAPITALIZING ON SOCIAL AND TRANSACTIONAL LEARNING TO CHALLENGE FIRST-GRADE READERS

Amanda Meyer, Ridgeview Elementary School

Roland Schendel, Metropolitan State University of Denver

Abstract

A classroom teacher capitalizes on social learning and reader response theories to challenge her accelerated first-grade readers by implementing literature circles. The aim of this action research was to identify a clear view of how to use literature circles with first-graders and what might be accomplished. Three constructs emerged from the interviews and observations that support the potential for using literature circles with primary students including: engagement and independence, reading benefits, and writing improvement. With respect to social learning and reader response theories, literature circles were found to be possible, practical, and beneficial for supporting the literacy perceptions and practices of accelerated primary students.



As I reflected on the ways my students learn about literature, I decided to seek something that would allow my independent readers to think and talk more deeply about the stories they were reading. I have used guided reading groups in my classroom for several years now, however, I realized that I end up doing a majority of the talking about the text following reading. As a result of this realization, I aimed to nurture my students' engagement and learning independence by focusing on our responses to reading.

The focus of this research is to explore a group of first-graders' engagement in reading from the social learning and transactional/reader response theoretical perspectives in literature circle contexts. Literature circles appear to be a worthy literature response activity due to their social learning attributes. I used the following questions to guide my efforts: How might social learning and reader response activities associated with literature circles impact the reading engagement of the accelerated readers in my first-grade classroom? What are the observed literacy behaviors and perceptions of first-graders involved in literature circles? The intent was not to look at what they were learning, but how they learned and their views of reading experiences as participants in literature circles.

Defining Literature Circles

It was necessary to define literature circles in order to determine how to implement them into my first-grade classroom and answer my first research question. I used practical guide-books, research articles, and information retrieved from teaching websites to do so. As a result, this study was framed by Harvey Daniels' (2002) approach to conducting literature circles. This structured approach provides the scaffolding my students and I needed to get started. In this model, each group member is assigned a role (e.g., passage picker, word wizard, artful artist, etc.) to give students a purpose for reading and to help them bring thoughts to the discussions that follow readings. The cycle then repeats itself using a different piece of literature and different roles.

Guiding Theories and Research

Many reader response learning experiences, like literature circles for instance, are grounded on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of learning. Through this framework, learning is social, or influenced by interactions with others. Children are actively engaged in knowledge construction while immersed in social learning

contexts. The teacher considers the zone of proximal development of the students in order to determine just how much instructional support each needs. Essentially, the teacher provides an abundance of support early on and slowly draws back as the students gain efficacy. As the teacher relinquishes responsibility, peers continue to support one another through text discussions.

Louise Rosenblatt's (1978) Transactional Theory, or Reader Response Theory, sheds light on the way students respond in literature and how they bring their own knowledge to group discussions of what they have read. According to this theory, it is believed that an individual reader may have a unique understanding of a text that is different from the understanding of other readers due to his/her varied background knowledge of the text's content (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). The reader actually brings meaning, as a result of individual background knowledge and experience, to the text and constructs understanding during and after reading through aesthetic and efferent responses (Rosenblatt). Efferent responses indicate that the reader's attention is on the information presented in the text, whereas aesthetic responses are more focused on what Hancock (2008) describes it as, "feelings and thoughts that flow through the reader's mind and heart as she or he reads" (p. 8). Furthermore, Rosenblatt believed that most readers slide on a continuum between the efferent and aesthetic stances as they engage in the reading process (Hancock).

Rosenblatt (1982) further explains the foundation for linguistic development as needing, "a nurturing environment that values the whole range of human achievements, the opportunity for stimulating experiences, cultivation of habits of observation, opportunities for satisfying natural curiosity about the world, and a sense of creative freedom" (p. 273). With this in mind, I saw literature circles playing a key role in allowing students to interact with the text and their peers through conversations about those texts. This vision drove me to seek answers to the question: What are the observed literacy behaviors of first-graders involved in literature circles?

Using literature circles in the primary classroom is an uncommon approach for teaching literacy because most teachers feel that students are still decoding at this point in school and need to continue practices that allow for increases in reading fluency. Most of the research focusing on the value and potential for using literature circles comes from intermediate and secondary grade levels where comprehension in reading plays a major role (Avci & Yuksel, 2011; Whitaker, 2012). I believe that literature circles have a place in the primary classroom. My

research will help to fill the gaps in early literacy instruction by attending to the need to teach comprehension in tandem with early reading skills.

Literature circles can be used to support primary readers through opportunities to respond to reading during social learning experiences.

Much can be learned from research including older students. However, a handful of studies conducted with younger elementary learners were identified to show the promise and potential of using literature circles to support my first-graders. Martinez- Roldan and Lopez-Robertson (1999) challenged themselves to use literature circles with first-grade bilingual students to promote meaningful language practice. They found that literature discussions promoted the transactional engagement of students and allowed them to share their constructed meaning of readings with peers.

Certo, Moxley, Reffitt, and Miller (2010) explored the perceptions and experiences of first, third, fourth, and fifth grade students participating in literature circles. These researchers found that members of the groups were engaged, experienced enjoyment, learned how to talk about books, monitored their own comprehension, and learned new vocabulary. Furthermore, engaging students in writing activities before and after literature circles led to improved discussions. Finally, the students themselves expressed the value of learning from peers during discussions.

Pearson (2010) infused literature circles in a third grade classroom to explore the function and value of student talk in response to reading. She discovered that students often emulated the voices of book characters and peers as they negotiated the meaning of a text through discussion. The mimicking of others proved to support student understanding of diverse perspectives. They also reported that consistent use of literature circles enhanced reading engagement and invigorated the text discussions that followed.

Jewell and Pratt (1999) conducted small group literature discussions with second and third grade students. They explored the way that students used discourse and how their teachers interacted with the groups to prepare them for discussions. They found that the literature discussions involving the teacher enhanced reading comprehension. Most importantly, however, this study showcases a possible model of literature circles to be used in the primary classroom and the potential for its use. Consequently, this model serves as a framework for delving into the use of literature circles in my own classroom.

My Classroom

I set out to implement my own action research using socio-cultural theory, reader response theory, and the previous classroom studies as guides. Schwandt (2007) describes action research as a viable model for practicing teachers to attend to classroom issues using detailed planning, actions, observations, and reflection. In this article, I present the practice of implementing literature circles with a group of my first-grade students at Roland Elementary (a pseudonym) located in the mid-western United States. The student population (292) of the school is comprised of 49 percent low-income and predominantly (91%) white.

I chose to observe and work with only 10 of my 23 students because I had never tried literature circles before and wanted a smaller group to experiment with. I also chose the accelerated readers, feeling they needed to move beyond decoding and working with words. I had observed them being “bored” at times and I wanted to challenge them. These students were defined as accelerated because they could read fluently based on classroom assessments (i.e., reading series checks for understanding, and DIBELS) and demonstrated comprehension of the stories they read through retelling and answering questions during one-on-one conferences. During the three months of research during the second half of the school year, I observed my students an average of three days a week and collected data through surveys, field notes, photos, videotaping, audio recordings, and interviews.

Having combined lenses, that of my own teaching experience and the views of those using literature circles with older students, I hoped to gain insight into how primary grade children might take responsibility for using and revealing explicitly taught reading comprehension strategies on their own as they respond to readings during social learning experiences inherent to literature circles. My work here contributes to the ongoing research of literacy instruction, focusing on the potential for using upper grade level reader response practices to support primary readers. Furthermore, this article is intended to offer primary grade teachers practical ideas for implementing literature circles.

Getting Started

At the beginning of the year all first-grade students in my class were introduced to “The Daily 5” by Boushey and Moser (2006). The month-and-a-half long implementation allowed students to build stamina and become more independent with literacy activities: listen to read alouds, read to someone, read to self, word work, and work on writing. With much modeling and practice of these

routines, my students were able to learn without me for 20-30 minutes at a time while I met with guided reading groups. I began to notice that my accelerated readers needed to move beyond “The Daily 5” (Boushey & Moser) and craved a sixth component. Then it happened, a serendipitous conversation with a reading professor I know opened my eyes to the idea of extending student learning by enhancing social learning experiences and introducing opportunities to respond to reading. Literature circles would offer both for my accelerated readers.

I immediately began to journal about my ideas for using literature circles. I also inquired with peers to find out what they knew. None of the other teachers at my school were using literature circles so I had to seek answers elsewhere. I found a variety of teaching resources, but they focused primarily on the use of literature circles in the upper- elementary grades. Using those, and staying focused on my knowledge of teaching first- graders, I was able to come up with an idea of how I would challenge my accelerated students to grow as readers by exploring ways to respond to literature with peers.

Time and Text

I began by thinking about time, when and how long literature circle sessions might occur. I had a block of time during the afternoon labeled “intervention time”. This 30-minute block was already used for “The Daily 5” (Boushey & Moser, 2006) with the whole class, so it would allow time for the striving readers to get guided practice from the Title I teacher on fluency and decoding or to read independently while I was implementing literature circles with my accelerated readers.

After selecting the time of day for literature circles, I needed to decide what texts the groups would read. I sought multiple copies of literature that would appeal to my students and inspire them to read and share their reactions with peers. I also identified themes and concepts that would serve to guide my search for texts (i.e. winter, school, friendship, black history, etc.). I checked my own shelves, the local library, the school library, and asked other teachers. I even went to a local book sale to purchase inexpensive sets of books.

I chose to offer a choice of at least three different books for each theme in order to positively motivate my students to read (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006) and to inspire their responses. This was new to my students because they were used to me choosing their texts during guided reading groups. I offered choices to capitalize on student interest and promote engagement in hope of invigorating

reader response discussions. Their choices included fiction, nonfiction, chapter, and picture books.

Student Roles

I wanted to scaffold student learning by providing some direction for their responses at literature circle time so I purposefully chose six roles to guide student learning. The roles included: Artful Artist, Question Asker, Connector, Word Wizard, and Passage Picker. Each would give students a chance to practice various strategies when thinking about and discussing the text they were reading. I also incorporated the role of Circle Supervisor to provide opportunities for students to practice and showcase their leadership skills. It was the responsibility of the Circle Supervisor to question their peers to get them talking. They also decided how many pages the group would read to prepare for discussions. Roles changed with the reading of each new book. This allowed students to explore each role, focus their efforts while reading, and practice leading.

Purposes and Processes

At the onset of this research, I met with a group of 10 accelerated readers to explain the purposes and processes for using literature circles. On the first day we sat on the carpet and simply discussed what literature circles were. I explained, "Literature circles are when groups of people read the same book and meet together to discuss what they have read." I went on to explain how they would be in charge of leading their discussion and making their own decisions in their group. I said that they would have to determine their own questions to discuss and work together with their peers to find answers. To ease their tension and build anticipation I told them, "Each of you will have a role to help when you read and discuss. We will talk about each of these roles tomorrow."

I then talked the group through the process we would go through each week, Monday through Thursday. On the first day, I would present what books they could choose from with a short book talk, we would form groups based on their text choices and then start reading. On the second and third days they would continue their readings and write in a journal. On the fourth day, after finishing their reading and journal work, they would discuss the text with their book group. I informed the group that we would practice the process this week and I would model and answer questions so the purposes and process would become clear. To conclude our implementation meeting, the students constructed their own journals out of construction and ruled paper.

Social learning theory played a significant role in supporting the entire process. I defined the roles (i.e., Passage Picker, Word Wizard, Artful Artist, Connector, and Question Asker) and modeled how to use each to create a written or verbal response using books from our classroom library. To follow, we talked about discussion expectations and etiquette. These were also modeled for the group. While I modeled, each student was given a “When I have a Conversation...” paper that listed tips for helping in their discussion along with pictures to help them connect visually.

To further expand on their ability to navigate the process on their own, I presented them with a text that we had previously read from our reading series so each would have a copy while we explored how to generate responses in a practice discussion. The students were given time to reread the text and write down their thoughts in their journals while thinking about the roles they were assigned. I was amazed by my students’ interest and engagement in the process! They carried smiles on their faces and eagerly learned about their roles through each step of the process.

On the final day of that practice week, the ten students broke up into two smaller groups of five and discussed the practice text for the first time. I monitored their social learning behaviors by physically moving from one group to the next and listening in on their conversations. This gave me a chance to write anecdotal notes on individual student needs and begin to identify ways to support their ability to take on the challenge of discussing the text on their own. After reviewing my notes, I crafted my instruction for the following week. I decided that we would watch a short video on YouTube to view and hear what a literature discussion might look and sound like. During the viewing, I purposefully pointed out ways that the students in the video were pulling ideas from the text as they talked. We then read another story to practice the process before moving on to choosing texts. This gradual release of responsibility helped the students to become more independent as readers and discussants. I was tickled to witness their growing enthusiasm throughout the practice process.

Instruction and Assessment

Once students seemed to grasp the procedures, on Monday of the third week, I officially launched literature circles by introducing a choice between two books. I conducted a brief book talk to introduce each text and inspire student interest. They were then instructed to write their first choice on a post-it and submit it to me. Since I had a limited number of books, I told the students that if

they did not get their first choice this time around, they would the next time. My students were thrilled to be given the chance to choose what they read! They couldn't wait. We used this anticipation to launch the process. Students had a few days to read and respond in their journals before the first discussion. I aimed at focusing on assessing their communication and comprehension needs revealed in the discussions in order to guide any instruction I could provide to support their growth.

Observations and Focus Lessons

As I observed students' conversations and read their journal entries, I identified certain etiquette issues or reading skills that needed to be addressed. Schlick Noe and Johnson's (1999) book, "Getting Started with Literature Circles" guided me through the process of developing "focus lessons" to address those needs. "A focus lesson targets instruction in one area and emphasizes strategies used in authentic situations" (p. 81). The instructor typically uses the focus lesson to showcase and model the skills and strategies used by proficient readers. These lessons allowed me to guide student attention to the how and why of discussing texts with peers.

One of the first lessons we had as a whole group was driven by the question, "Why do we meet for literature circles and talk about books with friends?" Students offered answers to this question that I recorded on a chart for all to see. We often referred back to these reasons to give our discussions purpose as we continued literature circles in the weeks to come. Although students used the list to give purpose to their discussions, I soon realized that my groups were only discussing for a few minutes and thought they were "done". So, I responded with a focus lesson titled, "How do we keep the discussion going?" I used another anchor chart (see Figure 1) to record the students' thoughts so they could refer to it to strengthen and lengthen discussions.

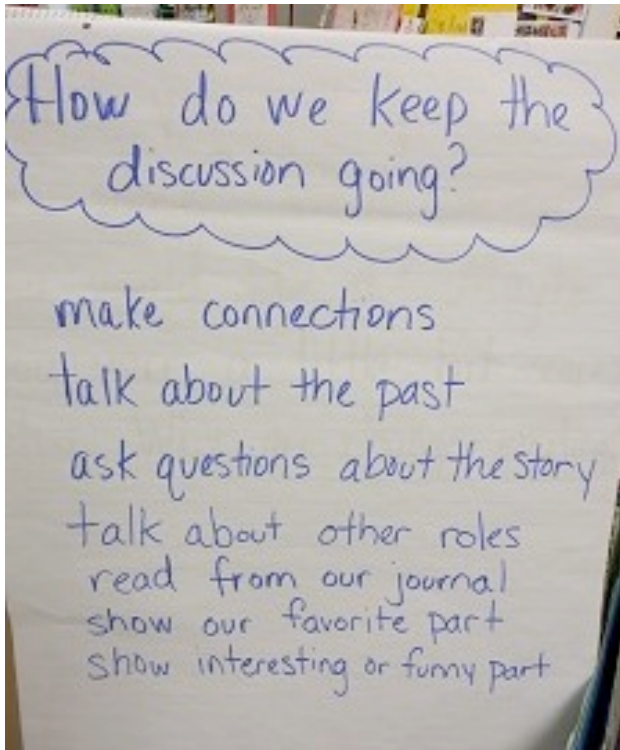


Figure 1: Lengthening Discussions

I also noticed that some students were unsure about what to write about and respond to in their journals, so we had a focus lesson on “Journals”. We listed ways to journal on another chart for all to read (see Figure 2). The focus lesson and anchor chart provided the initial instruction and continued support that the students needed. Afterwards, I observed students responding more extensively in their journals and discussing for longer amounts of time. Although all focus lessons were impactful in supporting student learning, some proved to immediately enhance student learning and offered substantial opportunities for reflection that served to generate ideas for the next focus lesson.

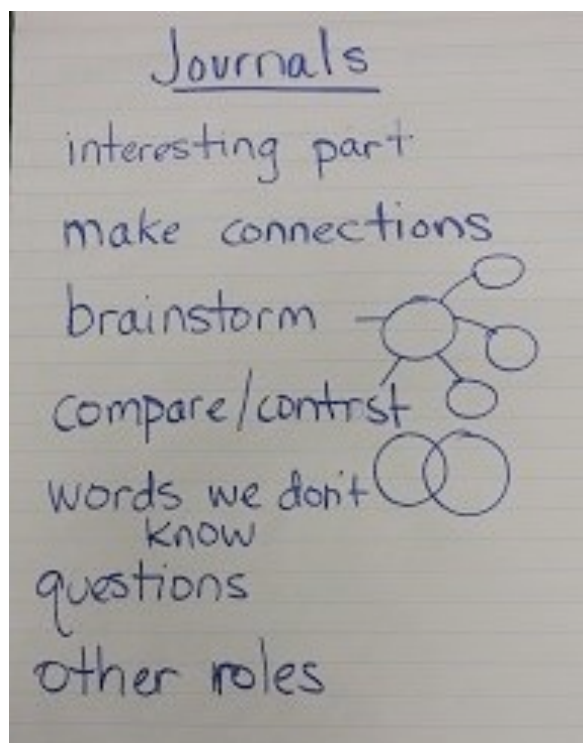


Figure 2: Journal Ideas

A focus lesson on discussion.

After several weeks of discussions on their own, we had a focus lesson that centered on watching a video recording of a particular discussion that took place in the groups. I wanted students to experience what I was seeing while observing their discussions. We sat on the carpet, huddled around my laptop to view the video. They were asked to watch and listen to the video and then to identify strengths and point out ideas for improvement. As we began the video, one boy asked if he could record his thoughts of the discussion in his journal while he watched. This inspired all of the students to get out their journals to take notes and I noticed each of them jotting down their thinking throughout the viewing.

As we listened and watched the video, I chose to stop the video at predetermined points to draw their attention to particular student behaviors and the content of the discussion. One video observation discussion played out like this:

Mrs. M: Alright, let's stop there. Jeremy said, "Why do you like happy endings?"... and...Laura didn't quite answer that, did you? (looking at Laura) Laura: I didn't know what he meant?

Mrs. M: Could you have asked him that? Could you ask him a question? Could you say, what do you mean Jeremy? (She agrees with a nod)

Mrs. M: Yeah! And do you think he could have answered and then discussed more? (Laura nods and smiles)

Mrs. M: Yeah, so you have a conversation about it. (We continue watching)

Later, we paused and talked about other strengths and needs noticed in the discussion. For example, Jeremy had marked a page in his text with a post-it during discussion. We had talked about using these post-its earlier, but only a few students had employed them during discussion to hold their thinking and capture thoughts to share with peers. They could see how Jeremy was using the post-it to find the part of text he wanted to discuss and commented on it.

Sierra: I like how Jeremy marked his page.

Mrs. M: Ohhh, I saw that too!

Sierra: So he knew what he was going to share.

Mrs. M: Okay. So marking our page with a post-it, right? Do you think it helps your discussion when you already know where the spot is?

Group: Yeah.

Mrs. M: He knew right where it was, right? He didn't have to flip through his whole book to find it, right?

Sierra: So he didn't have to go like flip, flip, flip (showing the motion of flipping through the book) and take him a long time so...he put that there and it was a lot easier.

Mrs. M: Yes. Now what do you think? If we are using a post-it to mark our favorite part...or page, do you think we could write on the post-it? So we would already know?

Group: Yeah, yeah.

Mrs. M: Jeremy, what do you think? Would that be helpful? Jeremy: Yes.

Mrs. M: Yeah, so when someone asks you, you'll know right away why you picked that part. So that is why you can use these post-its.... Okay?

Danny: That is why Mrs. M got them. Mrs. M: Right...

We continued to discuss and list (see Figure 3) behaviors that students could work on from the video: listening better, giving eye contact to show attention, saying the title of the book at the beginning of discussion, rewording a statement or question when someone doesn't understand, and using/writing on post-its to help with thoughts about the text.

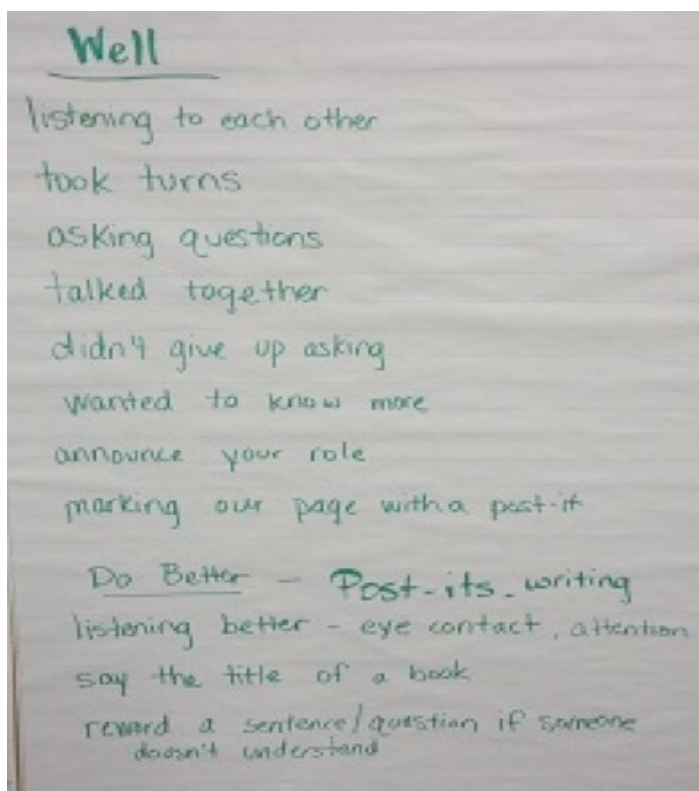


Figure 3: Effective Discussion Behaviors

The next day students had a chance to go back and reread parts of their text to practice using post-its to capture their thoughts on certain passages they wanted to discuss. On the following day, the students used those notes in discussions. As a result, the students connected to the text, asked questions of each other, and shared their favorite parts with reasons to support their views.

With the explicit instruction offered through the focus lessons, students were guided throughout the process of literature circles. I was able to let go of some of the control I had with them in guided reading groups and encourage them to take ownership of sharing their thinking about reading with peers.

Resulting Literacy Behaviors of First-Graders

Having a clear view of how we used literature circles, now take a look at what was accomplished. Three ideas emerged from the interviews and observations that support the potential for using literature circles to capitalize on social learning and reader response with primary students: engagement and independence, reading benefits, and improvement with writing.

Engagement and Independence

Creating a learning environment that is engaging is the key to successful literacy practice (Glǵveanu, 2011). Social learning experiences were the key to this. Students shared their love for working and reading with fellow peers:

Mrs. M: Do you like literature circles? Jeremy: Yeah.

Mrs. M: What do you like about them? Jeremy: You get to read.

Mrs. M: Okay.

Jeremy: And get to meet with your friends. And see them more than once a week.

At the beginning of my research I had the whole class take a pre-survey to find out their views of group work and reading with peers. One of the questions was: Do you think you would be able to talk with your peers about a book in a group without the teacher? Of those students participating in literature circles, four out of ten believed that they would not be able to meet without the teacher. Then, at the end of my research I interviewed these four students and they all thought they could meet and talk about a text without the teacher.

Mrs. M: At the beginning of literature circles you took this survey (holding up the survey paper) and said that, no, you cannot discuss a story in a group without a teacher there. What do you think about that now?

Bonnie: You can!

Mrs. M: How or why do you say that?

Bonnie: We have been in lit. circles a long time and we know how to do it. Mrs. M:
So, you can do it without a teacher?

Bonnie: Yeah!

The others continued to believe that they could actively participate in literature circles without the teacher present. As you can see from reading the spoken words of these students, literature circles show much promise for being used in the primary grades to nurture engagement and independence.

Reading Benefits

Students voiced their acquisition of new information from the books they read and were able to discuss this new knowledge with peers.

Danny's thoughts:

Mrs. M: What do you think you have learned in literature circles?

Danny: In the George Washington book, he owned 9, 7 dogs and at the end of the war for giving the dog back to the other army, he got a mule and 9 dogs.

Mrs. M: Okay. Anything else?

Danny: That...I really have a connection with it, I like mules and I like animals. And I really care for them. I have a little dog, named Baxter and like he is black and white and he um, is nice and I love him...

Danny's thoughts showcase that he learned new information from literature circles. Students went on and on about the information they learned from the interesting texts they read. This was an exciting time for me, as I knew the students were picking up more than just reading skills from our literature circles. They were using their skills and the support of peers to learn how to read strategically.

Mary's thoughts:

Mrs. M: What do you think about literature circles? Mary: It's fun...and it helps me learn to read better. Mrs. M: Ok. How?

Mary: Like, if a tough word comes to me, it just helps me because if I read the tough word once before I read it, it just helps me to remember. Then I read that tough word.

Mary's ideas reveal the way that students were learning to read more fluently while using the reading strategies they had learned at the beginning of the year. The students were also showcasing how they were growing in their vocabulary knowledge.

Sierra goes on to explain in her interview how she learned from the story and gained new words along the way.

Sierra's thoughts:

Mrs. M: What do you think you have learned about reading? Sierra: Well...I have learned some tricky words.

Mrs. M: Okay. Can you give me an example? Sierra: It was, I think it was "idea".

Mrs. M: Okay. Anything else you have learned about reading?

Sierra: That, some words can be really easy even though they look hard, you just try it.

Not only did students learn new schema from the texts, but they also learned how to read and use the words in the text to gain meaning. Instead of revealing what they were learning, students' reading responses revealed how and why they were doing so.

Improving Writing

Students were able to make connections with other areas of learning in the classroom. Some students realized the value of writing in their journals throughout literature circles. This is a reflection of the work we did in writers' workshop.

Mrs. M: What do you think about literature circles?

Danny: ...that I like it cuz I like reading and I really like writing...

Mrs. M: Okay.

Danny: I like writing big, I like to write big stories like my Titanic story and sometimes I like to make 6 pages, sometimes 5.

Mrs. M: Interesting.

Danny: I love to write, and do stories. I like to do that because I'm a really good writer...

Throughout literature circles, students mentioned and exhibited the skills learned in writers' workshop when crafting literature circle journal responses. The abundance of opportunities to practice writing personal responses to what they had read allowed students to move forward and grow as writing practitioners. From writing just a few thoughts and sentences, to writing more detailed sentences, students used lessons they learned in writers' workshop to improve their journal work.

For example, I observed as one boy read from his journal, "My role is the Artful Artist. I like this story. It is cool." His peers looked on, waiting for him to share more. After realizing he had nothing more, he began to read his notes again. His peers replied, "You already said that". This inspired him to immediately write down more in his journal about the text they had read. The prompting from his peers urged him to continue his growth in writing throughout the weeks that followed.

These observed behaviors from students regarding engagement and independence, reading benefits, and writing improvement, all shed light to what primary students can accomplish when they are introduced to and challenged through a social and responsive learning experience like literature circles. The scaffolding from the teacher and peers allows them to learn the "how" and "why", not just "what" to learn.

Limitations / Future Application

Some people might say that literature circles cannot be used in the primary grades. Others might believe that students are unable to work on their own and have meaningful text discussions in first-grade. I would emphatically disagree. Literature circles can, and should be employed with primary students! Practices might look slightly different than those in the intermediate grades, but powerful learning can still be achieved through the social and transactional learning experiences often reserved for older students.

As I look to the future with literature circles in first-grade, I see a few implementation changes based on the limitations of this experience. One limitation to my inquiry and the findings involves the abbreviated amount of time we have used literature circles in our classroom. We have only scratched the surface on the potential for using literature circles to support accelerated first

grade readers. I would like to try implementing the literature circles earlier in the year as an extension of the “Daily 5” (Boushey & Moser, 2006). This would provide more time for explaining and modeling the process and a connection to the independence associated with the “Daily 5” (Boushey

& Moser). Furthermore, planning the use of literature circles from the beginning of the year would allow me to block an extended amount of time for us to capitalize on them. This would take some careful consideration and require preparation over the summer in order to work with others to arrange a schedule conducive to our needs. Allotting more time would offer more reading practice, greater opportunities to respond to readings in journals, and more frequent/lengthier discussions. A modified and purposeful schedule would also allow more time and opportunities to infuse purposeful focus lessons.

Another limitation involved the small number of text sets offered to my literature discussion groups. This limitation stifled student engagement because I was unable to attend to individual interests or offer their first choice of texts. In the future, to reveal the actual value and potential of literature circles with my first graders, I would allocate more time and resources to accessing and acquiring an abundance of text sets. I could do so by collecting sets from book orders, bookstores, colleagues, and student families.

A final limitation was caused by restricting involvement in literature circles to my accelerated readers, those who have a knack for regulating their own learning behaviors and are able to read a wider variety of texts with greater fluency and comprehension. In the future, I would implement literature circles with the whole class, including striving readers. Literature circles would enhance and extend guided reading group learning by giving striving readers’ greater opportunities to learn through authentic social learning experiences. Students could support one another as learners. Using a fishbowl technique would allow students who are familiar with literature circles to practice and model a text discussion revealing the look, sound, and feel of discussions to novice peers. Just like the focus lesson with the video, students could observe and learn how a group might discuss and reflect on ways that a discussion might be enhanced. Literature circles would also offer more time for striving readers to practice reading and reap the same rewards as their accelerated counterparts. This would serve to extend the learning of all my students.



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About the Authors

Amanda Meyer is currently a first-grade teacher at Ridgeview Elementary School in Colfax, Illinois where she has taught for the past 9 years. Mrs. Meyer received her BA in Elementary Education from Eastern Illinois University and has received her Master's in Reading from Illinois State University. This is her first publication in a journal and focuses her research on ways to enhance student achievement in reading and writing. She also coaches other teachers on new methods of reading instruction.

Roland Schendel is an Assistant Professor of literacy at Metropolitan State University of Denver where he teaches pre- and in-service urban educators. He is currently immersed in research focused on professional development, teacher preparation program partnerships with elementary schools, and "tandem" teaching/learning linking teacher training and professional development.





UNDERSTANDING LITERACY TEACHER EDUCATORS' USE OF SCAFFOLDING

Joyce Many, Georgia State University
Eudes Aoulou, Georgia State University

Abstract

This inquiry examined four literacy teacher educators' perspectives and practices as related to scaffolding by using document analysis (i.e. syllabus), observations, and interviews. Findings indicated these teacher educators used scaffolding to develop preservice teachers' dispositions, strategies, and conceptual understandings. Faculty used scaffolding processes such as modeling, feedback, purposeful structured assignments, discussions, and reflective pieces. Participants' use of scaffolding varied; with the participant with more years of teacher education experience exhibiting a richer and larger repertoire of scaffolding strategies. Findings also suggested some faculty might be unsure of how to monitor preservice teachers' growth in order to provide subsequent scaffolding



In today's diverse schools, meeting the individual needs of students is one of the most challenging aspects of teaching. Instructional scaffolding is a powerful tool that many teachers utilize to meet the challenge. Many educators consider scaffolding to be one of the most effective instructional procedures available (Cazden, 1992; Graves, Graves, & Braaten, 1996). Scaffolding refers to support that a teacher, or more knowledgeable peer, supplies to students within their zone of proximal development that enables them to develop understandings or to use strategies that they would not have been capable of independently (Meyer, 1993; Palincsar, 1986; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

Researchers have examined the use of scaffolding strategies such as modeling, cognitive structuring, providing information, prompting, encouraging self-monitoring, and labeling and affirming as means of assisting students' performance in the classroom (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990; Many, 2002; Meyer, 1993). Research has also found that scaffolding can be planned before teaching through the creation of broad instructional frames or in the form of responsive instruction which is shaped during teaching events by the needs of those participating (Many, Dewberry, Taylor, & Coady, 2009; Roehler & Cantlon, 1997). In addition, Many et al.'s (2009) work went beyond describing processes (how to scaffold) to also examine the focus of scaffolded instruction (what was scaffolded). Her and her colleagues' findings indicated scaffolding was related to development of conceptual understandings and to development of strategies.

Providing scaffolded instruction is a complex task and can be challenging for teachers. To be responsive, teachers must be alert to teachable moments in instruction and choose supportive strategies based on the movement of students through their individual zones of proximal development (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Maloch, 2002; Gallimore & Tharp, 1990). This process is complicated by teachers' need to weigh, in a moment's notice, questions regarding what to teach, what to ignore, how much help to give, and what kind of help to give (Rodgers, 2004). In addition, learning to use scaffolded instruction effectively requires not only considerable knowledge of the domain, but is a process that evolves over an extended period of time (Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Schuder, 2004; Many et al., 2009; Pinnell & Rodgers, 2004; Pressley, 2002).

While a strong body of research exists on the use of scaffolding in the K-12 classroom, the focus of this study is to examine the presence or absence of such contingent teaching used by teacher educators. We were specifically interested in literacy teacher educators' perspectives on scaffolding and the ways instructors enacted scaffolding in their program and in their individual courses. Our work

focused on a graduate initial teacher preparation program that leads to state certification as a bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher for K-12 schools. From the inception of this program, faculty and administrators had examined the key role instructional scaffolding played in the performance of enrolled preservice teachers (Many et al., 2009; Many, Taylor, Tinker-Sachs, Wang, & Schreiber, 2007), but there had not been systematic attention to how the faculty modeled scaffolding themselves in response to preservice teachers' differing backgrounds, needs, and/or performance. Consequently, the question addressed in this study was: How do teacher educators consider background knowledge and experiences of their students in the design and implementation of instructional scaffolds in their ESL preparation program?

Literature Review

Previous research has underscored the need to consider preservice teachers' prior knowledge and the ways their attitudes and perspectives can influence their development as educators. Kellner, Gullberg, Attorps, Thoren, and Tarneberg (2011) stress prospective teachers' tacit ideas about teaching serve to filter their consideration of students' conceptions regarding content knowledge. Their work indicated the effectiveness of special case studies for math and science topics which elicited candidates' conceptions about students' difficulties and enabled teacher educators to provide a context for scaffolding within their teacher education program.

Other research has also found that providing careful attention to the foundational content knowledge of specific topics can support preservice teachers' development of effective pedagogical approaches for that topic (Hume & Berry, 2011). Scaffolding in teacher education has also examined how preservice teachers can be supported in developing an identity as a teacher (Van Zoest & Stockero, 2008) and in developing a diverse constructivist perspective (Kaste, 2004). Devereux and Wilson (2008) studied the effectiveness of scaffolding on helping students improve their literacy abilities. They found that by carefully structuring tasks and assessment requirements across a four-year undergraduate program, they could assist students of diverse backgrounds in developing complex literacy strategies needed for success at the university and in their teacher careers. Overall, these studies indicate teacher educators across content areas have been effective at designing coursework and assignments in ways which support preservice teacher learning.

Other research has specifically examined how preservice teachers' prior experience and beliefs about language and literacy can shape their views of literacy teaching and their teaching practices. Two studies have found that ESL teachers hold theoretical orientations that shape the methodological approaches they use in classrooms and that their personal practical knowledge is partially influenced by their prior knowledge as learners (Golombek, 1998; Johnson, 1992). Johnson found that formal language learning experiences have powerful impacts on ESL preservice teachers. When the participants' experiences were positive, they wanted to replicate them. But when these experiences were negative, they rejected them and wanted to implement better instructional practices. Milambiling (1999) found that preservice teachers' prior knowledge or personal background can advance their learning as teachers. Participants argued that preservice teachers who were non-native English speakers or those who had experiences learning a second language (L2) before entering teacher preparation programs had some advantages over their native peers or those who had never gone through the process of learning an L2. Firsthand experiences about how an L2 is learned was seen as helping teachers to anticipate students' difficulties, facilitating effective teaching and teachers' own learning. Milambiling's study also revealed that non-native speakers of English can notice the subtleties in the target language lexicon and semantics.

Gupta and Saravanan (1995) investigated how prior beliefs may impede student teacher learning of reading instruction. They found that preservice teachers favored traditional reading instruction and these beliefs were resistant to change. When candidates had not experienced strategies themselves, they did not judge that it was necessary to incorporate such strategies in their repertoire. Their study showed the necessity for teacher educators to evaluate and understand the beliefs about reading instruction that teacher candidates bring to teacher education programs in order to help them examine critically such beliefs.

Many, Howard, and Hoge (2002) investigated how literacy preservice teachers' epistemological beliefs were related to their reactions to teacher education coursework and to their field-based experiences. Results indicated some participants held a dualistic perspective and an interactive view of reading. Preservice teachers holding this view saw knowledge as external to the knower; they believed the teacher was the transmitter of knowledge and skills and the learners were passive receivers. Another lens used by some preservice teachers demonstrated a contextualized view of learning. From this perspective, preservice teachers indicated that the learner constructs knowledge and the role of the

teacher is to facilitate the student's knowledge construction. Participants with a constructive epistemology learned most effectively from modeling within the course and from field experiences. From these experiences they gleaned how "reading and writing instruction should be organized in school ... They learned from their reading and from their writing of authentic pieces" (p. 308). Some participants in Many et al.'s (2002) study demonstrated a consistent epistemological stance throughout their program, with their beliefs matching their classroom practices. Others held conflicting epistemological stances evidenced in their comments and their observations in field work. This latter group experienced tensions in terms of beliefs implementation in practicum settings. Because of the influences of preservice teachers' epistemological beliefs on their learning and growth in teacher education programs, the researchers recommended that teacher educators need to understand the kinds of epistemological beliefs their teacher candidates hold. This understanding could help teacher educators in providing an appropriate scaffold to teacher candidates who can then reach a greater understanding of their profession.

There is some indication, however, that educators in the academy may find instructional scaffolding in the university classroom to be a challenge. Speer and Wagner's (2009) case study noted that a faculty member's ability to scaffold during class discussions was related to both his pedagogical content knowledge and his specialized content knowledge. In addition, Many et al. (2002) found the effectiveness of some of the approaches to scaffolding they used depended on the ways in which their preservice literacy teachers' viewed knowledge and the process of knowing. As a result, what was an effective pedagogical approach for some candidates in a methods course failed to be supportive for others. Similarly, Adler (2011) also underscored the difficulties of having preservice teachers examine their epistemologies as they develop their understandings as educators. In light of the important role prior knowledge and beliefs can play in preservice teacher development and the need to better understand the challenges and successes of trying to use scaffolding within teacher education programs, the purpose of this study was to examine teacher educators' beliefs about scaffolding and the ways in which they enacted scaffolding within their instructional practices.

Methodology

Context and Participants

The context of this inquiry was a Master’s in the Art of Teaching program in reading, language, and literacy education in a large urban research university in the Southeast United States. The graduate degree was designed (a) in light of the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Association’s standards for programs preparing educators to work with English language learners as well as (b) consideration of the International Reading Association’s standards for the preparation of classroom teachers of reading. The program was recognized by the state as leading to an initial certification as a PreK-12 ESL teacher and to a reading endorsement.

Faculty participants included one international associate professor, one international assistant professor, one African American part-time literacy instructor, and one white clinical assistant professor who taught both literacy courses and the cultural issues course (See Table 1 for country of origin and teaching responsibilities). Candidates enrolled in the cohort program during the year of data collection included ten preservice teachers. All of the preservice teachers indicated a proficiency in a second language, and in all but one instance the preservice teachers had studied or lived in international contexts.

Table 1. Faculty Participants’ Countries of Origin and Program Responsibilities

Pseudonym	Faculty Position	Country of Origin
Dr. Hope	Associate Professor of ESL and Literacy Education, Program Coordinator	Bahamas
Dr. Goldenstar	Assistant Professor of ESL Education	South Korea
Dr. Wellborn	Clinical Assistant Professor of Literacy Education and Instructor of Cultural Issues course	USA
Dr. Allbright	Part-time Faculty for Literacy Education courses	USA

Data Collection

Data for this study focused on interviews with program administrators and faculty involved in the program, program documents, field notes of class sessions, and copies of course syllabi and assignments.

The primary data source consisted of interview data from the four ESL/literacy faculty members who taught in the program. Initial interviews during the first semester of the program focused on having faculty describe their understanding of the prior knowledge and experiential background of their preservice teachers, ways in which they take into account this background knowledge in their teaching, and specific pedagogical approaches or assignments which were designed in light of awareness of candidates' diverse backgrounds or beliefs. Follow up interviews in the spring semester focused on teacher educators' reflections on how candidates' prior knowledge and beliefs may have impact their learning across the program.

As part of a larger study, additional data were also collected from the preservice teachers. In their first summer of coursework, preservice teachers completed demographic surveys and were interviewed regarding their experiences having learned a second language, their academic and professional backgrounds, and their literacy histories. These data were used as secondary sources for this research project to contextualize the interview data or instructional approaches of the teacher educators.

In addition to interview data, field notes were used to describe instructional approaches used by the teacher educators. During the first semester (summer) of this cohort program, teacher candidates took courses related to reading methods and cultural issues for bilingual and ESL learners. These field-based courses included opportunities to plan and implement daily literacy lessons in a summer program for English language learners. Field notes were taken in the on-campus reading and culture classes. Field notes were also taken in the fall semester in the ESL methods course which was paired with an internship experience. In addition, syllabi were obtained for the following courses: ESL methods, applied linguistics, cultural issues for the bilingual/ESL teacher, reading methods, reading assessment, literacy in the content areas, and all practica.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with the first day of data collection by identifying all instances of scaffolded instruction through the use of marginal notes. Using a constant-comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to data analysis led to the emergence of patterns in the types of scaffolding noted in the interview transcripts and field notes. Working hypotheses regarding faculty members' views of and uses of scaffolding were used to guide creation of follow-up questions, focused observations, and review of syllabi and program documents. Following the

summer data collection of field notes and initial interviews, the research team began a recursive- generative process of data analysis. First, the team identified units of data related to scaffolding and compared these to initial codes and to categories found in previous scaffolding research (Many et al., 2007; Meyer, 1993; Roehler & Cantlon, 1997). As a result, the definition of scaffolding used to identify relevant units of data in this study was expanded to include not only instances where instructors endeavored to provide explicit structures to support learning and development (e.g. scaffolded instruction) but also all data related to drawing on prior knowledge and background experiences. This led to continual refinement of the coding system and subsequently elaboration of specific definitions for each category. Findings were triangulated across data sources and drafts were crafted of the findings. All findings related to a specific faculty member were emailed to that faculty member to allow for member checks. Faculty members sent minor clarifications related to transcriptions of some sentences but otherwise agreed with the thematic analysis.

Results

Analysis resulted in delineations of both the focus of scaffolding and ways in which teacher educators utilized scaffolding in their program design, coursework, and interactions with the preservice ESL teachers. As shown in Table 2, the teacher educators designed and implemented this program in ways which supported candidates by scaffolding strategy development, conceptual understandings, and dispositions.

Table 2. Understanding the Focus of Scaffolding and the Ways Scaffolding Was Used

Focus of Scaffolding		Ways Scaffolding Was Utilized
Disposition	Toward Diverse Learners	Creating Affordances
	Acceptance of Diverse Perspectives	
Strategies	Learning Strategies	Instructional Design
	Academic Language	
	Development as a Writer	
Conceptual Understandings	Theories	Teacher/Student Discourse
	Instructional Approaches	
	Language Learning Process	

Scaffolding the Dispositions of Future ESL Educators

Faculty working with the program believed in the importance of ESL certification candidates demonstrating both positive dispositions toward diverse learners and acceptance of diverse perspectives. Teacher educators' primary way of scaffolding these dispositions were through creating affordances through specific entrance requirements and through discourse in the classrooms. The sections below illustrate these themes.

Creating affordances for the development of positive dispositions.

One way the teacher educators' created a context for the graduation of preservice teachers who had positive dispositions toward diverse learners and diverse perspectives was to ensure candidates who were accepted into the program had rich background experiences related to second language learning.

From the time this ESL teacher preparation program was created in 2003, entry requirements stipulated all candidates would bring with them the experience of having learned a second language. Talking about this requirement, Dr. Hope, who also served as the unit coordinator noted:

We do not admit anyone into our program unless the person has lived abroad and/or has a second language learning experience. If the person does not meet either condition, we advise the person to learn a second language and provide evidence of that before getting accepted in the program. It is an important requirement for us because it brings a knowledge base, sensitivity, awareness to the program, cultural sensitivity as well as learning sensitivity of the trials and tribulations one goes through as one tries to learn a second language. You can tell the difference if one has not had such experiences or if one has not deep language learning experience because they don't have that sensitivity. They don't have that sense of awareness. When you have learned another language, you have another schema to draw upon. Without such language learning experiences, you miss a lot important schemas. You can only guess what learning a second language is about. Experience brings a different set of perspectives.

The degree to which this background was considered of importance was further evident in the focus of prompts faculty used during the interview process. According to program documents, beginning with the first applicants in 2004 candidates have been asked to respond to the following:

Write a short autobiography of your experiences in learning a second language. Include descriptions of the types of positive or negative teaching events that were part of this experience. How do you feel these background experiences might shape your work with students?

In subsequent oral interviews, candidates expand by talking in detail about their prior experiences with learners and views of teaching.

The current faculty seemed to feel having such a background contributed to preservice teachers' dispositions toward second language learners from diverse cultures. Dr. Wellborn noted:

From what I observed in my class, I noticed that the pre-service teachers (PSTs) had travelled extensively, learned many languages, and are opened-minded. They tended to examine their own biases. As they encountered people from other cultures, they discovered their own blind spots. I have one particular one whose parents travelled extensively and who can relate easily to her native land and the United States. They are very open-minded and tend to get away from the deficit view we tend to have of low socio-economic groups' students or of minority children.

In some cases, faculty assumed the fact the program required background experiences with second language learning created affordances such that students would be able to make connections and capitalize on their prior knowledge independently. This perspective was evident in comments which indicated faculty assumed background was being utilized in a positive ways, but they did not necessarily articulate that they systematically drew out such prior knowledge or had students analyze such experiences. For instance, Dr. Goldenstar, who was working with the ESL applied linguistic course and practica explained, "I think [the preservice teachers] are a carefully-selected group, and they are eager to learn. I don't have to do a lot of groundwork with them. Also, they care about the students they are working with at Latin American Association. They are excited about teaching." Remarking on the preservice teachers' varied backgrounds, Dr. Allbright commented:

Their backgrounds varied. They speak multiple languages and they come from many fields. [...] I have one particular student who volunteered to teach in Bolivia and who ended up getting married to one Bolivian. She noticed the struggles of her husband as

related to second language learning. These diverse experiences bring some uniqueness to the course.

Using discourse to scaffold dispositions. While the fact that candidates brought second language learning experiences to this program afforded them the opportunity to appreciate the experiences of second language learners, the teacher educators noted these experiences may not necessarily lead to positive dispositions. Faculty expressed a sensitivity to monitoring preservice teachers' language for presence of attitudes which might alert them as instructors to the need to scaffold candidates' dispositions. Dr. Wellborn explained, "[I use] reflective responses to articles. I don't have the opportunity to look at the responses of all of them. But when I notice something puzzling or of concern in a response, then I address that." Dr. Allbright also used class discussions to try to understand candidates and to help uncover possible negative assumptions:

The first day of class, I asked them: Who are you? Where they are coming from, and how they end up here. We talk a lot about assumptions. I chose a set of pictures about people and I asked them to attribute a profession to the people based on their look. We all make judgments based on the appearances of people; we make a lot of assumptions. [...] we cannot do that with children. We can't assume that they can't speak English or are not literate. They might be literate in their first language and they understand English. They will become literate in English [...] So my first task is ask them to talk about biases as related to people and races. The reason is that your assumptions are going to drive your teaching.

Faculty also believed background in learning a language contributed to candidates' ability to value different perspectives. Dr. Hope, who taught the ESL method's course and supervised practica experiences, believed strongly in capitalizing on the contributions the candidates' background knowledge and expertise could bring to the program:

...When I teach about certain things and I know that a student has already some background related to those things, I ask the students to tell us about them before proceeding. I do this because I feel that they know certain specific things I don't know and drawing on that helps contribute to a better understanding. ...I scaffold because I think that the student might have the

knowledge but with gaps or the knowledge is insufficient or she needs more help understanding such and such things.

Similarly, Dr. Wellborn noted she drew on the diverse backgrounds through class discussions. Her course syllabi (Cultural Issues for the Bilingual/ESL teacher) identified learning outcomes which were consistent with this focus by stipulating that students were expected (a) to explain the nature of culture and understand how one's own and others' assumptions, attitudes and behaviors are shaped by culture, and (b) to understand through first-hand experience issues related to crossing cultural boundaries. Fieldnotes from course discussions supported the instructor's contention by documenting ways in which students drew on their experiences in Italy and Jamaica, for example, to add to the class' understanding of individuals in other countries toward women and regarding social practices. In encouraging such discussions, this faculty participant noted she hoped to aid students in seeing others' views. She commented, "[I draw on the diverse background of the preservice teachers] primarily through classroom discussions. I also try to take them out of their comfort zone so that they can see things from different perspectives." She recognized some students needed more scaffolding than others in order to value and recognize diverse opinions, "I think that those who are sheltered or who have fewer life experiences or who feel that their worldview is threatened are the most in need of scaffolding. I also notice that boys [sic] tend to be more closed or tend to be less open-minded. I draw all this type of preservice teachers into the conversations and talk to them outside of the class."

Summary: Scaffolding dispositions. In summary, faculty in this preservice teacher education program created programmatic structures to ensure that candidates would bring relevant background (having learned a second language) to the program related. For many of these candidates, this involved having studied abroad or having lived in another country. Through this requirement, faculty felt they created affordances for the teachers to have positive dispositions toward children of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In some cases, faculty did not articulate ways of systematically scaffolding candidates' dispositional attitudes, although most noted being sensitive to the language candidates used in reflections and class discussions and a willingness to address biases or negative assumptions as they were uncovered. Faculty also noted the varied background of the candidates proved useful in helping them to consider diverse perspectives; some purposefully drew on this background in classroom

discourse to aid candidates in appreciating the views, knowledge, and attitudes others brought to the program.

Scaffolding Candidates' Strategy Development

In addition to focusing on the development of dispositional attitudes of their preservice teachers, faculty members in this teacher education program were responsive to candidates' development as learners. They explicitly identified course assignments and ways of providing feedback that they utilized in order to help preservice teachers (a) improve their ability to read and critically analyze information, (b) to communicate using academic language, and (c) to write effectively. The sections below are organized by the ways scaffolding was utilized to address these different strategies.

Using instructional design to scaffold strategy development. Dr. Hope integrated scaffolding of students' ability (a) to learn from texts and (b) to acquire and use academic language. In the following example, she describes a classroom session in which she purposefully scaffolded students in these areas:

I asked my preservice teachers to go to Chapter 11 in Marie Clay's book and list all the literacy behaviors. I told them that I am going to grade the assignment and they know that I will do that. They had 10 minutes to complete the task. When time was up, I asked them to look closely again as I was about to walk them through the same chapter so that they could add any behavior they might miss the first time. The purpose was not testing. What I really wanted was their learning through noticing, to support their learning. It has a connection with professional language because when you are talking with parents, these are these things you are going to be talking about: you need to be able to describe the kinds of things their children will learn and when you are talking with other educators, you need to be able to describe behaviors in specific ways. I told them that what I had just taught is noticing. This came to upfront of the consciousness. They can attend to that [more] attentively. I told them that when they submit their assignment, this is what I am looking for. This is part of my scaffolding because I am telling them explicitly what I want and what they need to learn. They can also see the big reason for that because that's what we, professionals, need to know. That's my way of double-checking that they are reading and they are

learning. They have to learn to learn to highlight [important things] when reading.

This activity illustrates this faculty participant's approach to scaffolding her students' ability to learn by the ways she structured class sessions. She valued not only their need to acquire reading strategies that could assist their learning, she also systematically supported their acquisition and use of academic language. Her emphasis on these areas was further evident in the way she addressed an assigned reading on another occasion:

We have to model the kinds of practices we want them to take on. For example, today we did cooperative learning. I have divided the class in expert group and home-based group and I gave them articles to read. The expert group will come and explain things to the home-based groups. Afterwards, I asked them to tell me what we have just done and why it is important for learning. What is the rationale behind? As far as L2 learning is concerned, they have to read and understand for themselves and go and share as experts. That's what they need to do as educators. We need to provide learners with the best examples.

Dr. Hope purposefully structured assignments sequentially to ensure students built knowledge and expertise gradually and were able to draw on their growing abilities as they pulled together their final projects. In addition, during her ESL method's course, Dr. Hope was observed explicitly calling the preservice teachers' attention to her own scaffolding of their learning in her class discussions. Reflecting on her approach to scaffolding, she explained:

Let me take the example of the class I am teaching currently. I told them to keep in mind that everything we are doing in class is directed toward their final project in the class. The same thing applies when I teach my TESOL students. For example, when they have to design curriculum as the final project, I use backward design, referred to in language teaching as task-based assignment. All the small steps on the way have the purpose to build up their knowledge as for the final project. The readings, the work with the students, the transcriptions, and the understandings we gain should be used for that final project. ...So when I am teaching, I am scaffolding, explaining the assignments slowly. I am giving them a lot of hints.

Lastly Dr. Hope exhibited her approach to scaffolding through her attitude toward allowing students to revise and resubmit assignments. From her perspective, the primary objective of assignments should be to support the preservice teachers' learning. Consequently, when students failed to come up to par, her interest was in pushing them to continue learning rather than in giving them a grade and having the learning stop at that point.

While the other instructors were not as systematic about integrating scaffolding into their instructional approaches, instances of scaffolded instruction focusing on the need for students to develop new strategies was evident in their instructional approaches as well. Dr. Albright described her approach to scaffolding her students' development by the way she paired students together for projects based on their abilities. Talking about her use of scaffolding in her literacy course, Dr. Albright explained:

Let's me take the example of the debate of today. I deliberately formed the two groups. I know which student is strong and which one is not strong enough. I know which student will never dare speak and I know which one can help them. So in order to provide the necessary support the less strong students need, I pair them with the ones who can support them. At the end of the debate, you can see that each of them does well. That's one of the scaffolding strategies.

Provide individualized support for strategies through teacher/student discourse. In addition to designing specific instructional approaches which provide scaffolding for strategies, some faculty discussed their attempts to provide individualized oral or written feedback to support their preservice teacher development. Dr. Wellborn, for example, described her belief in the importance of scaffolding the students' learning by explaining:

... In the literacy assessment course, when they do reading assessment and they just provide a list of things they notice such, as the student makes this number of errors, the students does not self-correct, or anything else, I can reply back and ask them to elaborate on what such things tell them about that child as a reader. A range of possible explanations include the child is not constructing meaning, or is shy of reading in front of you, or s/he does not how to read in a way that can make sense, or it is OK to go back and self-correct. Examining such possibilities help you

design assessments that can help design which one is true. That's the kinds of scaffolding I provide.

In a follow up interview, she clarified further:

I think that I do provide some form of scaffolding during the weekly reflections. Usually, I do something like this: I am not sure of the point you are trying to make in a particular area, or in relation to a specific issue, or I want to see more depth here, just a way of encouraging them to put more depth in their responses.

As for Dr. Goldenstar, she noted some difficulty of regularly providing scaffolded instruction, particularly in terms of drawing on specific elements of her students' background. She commented, "... I can't say that I try to connect to students' background in a systematic way because it is not easy for me to tap in each preservice teacher's background. Except for ethnicity or race, I can say that it is not easy." When describing the backgrounds of her students, however, she did note one area that she felt they needed improvement stating:

If there is one area I think I need to work with them about, it is the academic writing. I think this represents one of the best ways to communicate in the field. I want to see their works public in educational journals.

This interest in developing the preservice teachers' ability as writers led to her process of providing individualized feedback on introductory paragraphs, progress reports, and initial drafts prior to the students submitting final papers. She noted:

At each step I provided them with scaffoldings through the feedbacks and encouragements as well as through peer support. I also provide scaffolding through writing conferences between steps. During the writing conferences, we can talk about their topics, the organization, and the content of the writing or anything relevant such as academic writing or showing them models.

Summary: Scaffolding strategies. In summary, all faculty members included specific instructional frames in the way in which they designed their courses. These assignments and pedagogical approaches supported students' strategy development by either focusing on their development of strategies for learning to read and write critically, their use of academic language, and/or their abilities as writers. Faculty varied in the degree to which they were systematic in

their use of oral and written discourse to recognize differences in students' backgrounds and to offer differential support as teachable moments arose.

Developing Preservice ESL Teachers' Conceptual Understandings

Faculty in this initial preparation program felt the candidates' background as having been second language learners afforded them with knowledge and experiences which could contribute to understanding of (a) theory, (b) instructional approaches, and (c) learning processes involved in second language learning and teaching. Some faculty members carefully drew on this background in their construction of assignments or in the way they framed instruction so as to help candidates make connections, critically analyze, and carefully construct their knowledge and expertise. The sections below describe ways faculty used instructional designs to support students' use of their background knowledge to develop conceptual understandings.

Using Instructional Designs to Scaffold Conceptual Understandings.

In two courses in the program (literacy methods and applied linguistics), assignments were described in the syllabi which required students to purposefully reflect and critically analyze their experiences as they constructed understandings of how to teach English language learners. In the literacy methods course, the literacy history assignment required critical analysis of four episodes related to learning to read in school, at home, and/or in out-of-school learning environments and how these experiences shaped them as a readers and learners. This assignment resulted in rich, detailed descriptions of the preservice teachers' background experiences and they subsequently made explicit connections between these experiences and their understanding of specific theories and approaches to literacy instruction. Dr. Albright noted:

...I think that it is a good assignment because it is related to how the preservice teachers view reading and how they learn to read. Usually, when preservice teachers come to your class, whether it is theory or strategies, they tend to think of reading as the printed text. It goes beyond that and literacy encompasses listening, talking, writing, viewing and so on. So talking about their literacy history forces them to see things that make them as readers.

While the assignment had potential for helping the preservice teachers construct personal understandings of theory and pedagogy, the instructor particularly appreciated the way the assignment could help the candidates envision the important role teachers could play in children's lives. She explained, "I want

them to see how their experiences from childhood through adulthood have influenced them today. We are the sum of our experiences. As teachers, we are making some impression on our students.”

An assignment in the applied linguistic course also involved students considering their personal backgrounds as they constructed understanding of language learning. While Dr. Goldenstar did not discuss this assignment when asked about her consideration of students’ background knowledge or her use of scaffolded instruction, the purpose of the assignment as listed in the syllabus was to raise students’ meta-linguistic awareness as a language learner and to enable them to become a more sensitive language teacher.

In addition to assignments such as these, some faculty members used pedagogical approaches designed to tap into students’ prior knowledge and, in some cases, to explicitly support students’ use of this information to construct understanding. For instance, Dr. Hope described her process of carefully gathering information in the following way:

One of the things I do is to collect their background information on index card that I use when I am teaching. As I teach, I draw on their background. For example, I have had one preservice teacher who went to Japan and taught English to Japanese children. One day, I asked that preservice teacher to tell us about the issues related to teaching English to them and how they learn. Likewise, I had many others who went abroad. So I asked them to tell us about their experiences as strangers and foreigners. We draw on such experiences.

This faculty member also used the background of her students to aid her in conveying content. For example, on one occasion she had a preservice teacher Magda, who was from an Arab country, use her expertise in that little known language, to provide all of the preservice teachers with an experience on which they could draw to better understand their students’ learning processes: “I asked [Magda] to teach us her language. The rationale behind that is to help understand what it feels or it is like when one is learning or teaching a language to people who do not know anything about the language.”

Both of the ESL faculty members in this program had an international background, but Dr. Hope in particular drew on her own experiences of having been a student in a second language environment to inform her own perspective on the importance of tapping into her students’ background. She explained:

I do all these things with my students because I know what it means when one's background is not drawn upon. For example, when I was in Canada to get my education, the educators never drew upon my background. They were not interested in it. I was the only international student among them. The only thing I could do is to shut up and learn. But I felt it was unfortunate.

In addition to explicitly drawing on their background knowledge and then using preservice teachers' input in lessons, this faculty member also carefully modeled instructional approaches such as collaborative learning or language experiences, which she wanted preservice teachers to later incorporate into their own classrooms. She saw this modeling as a very important form of scaffolded instruction. She explained:

My instructional strategies also vary every time I have the opportunity to teach the methods course. What I am projecting for Fall, for example, is language experiences approach. I am thinking of taking them to [the state capitol building] so that they can take a look at the statues there; they are packed with history. After the field trip, we come back to class and I will ask them to design curriculum based on their observations and what they learn that I will teach to English language learners. I am going to ask them to design online newspaper and this will be backward design. What kinds of steps and writings children need to go through until they achieve the final project? These kinds of learning tasks are real.

For this instructor, modeling effective instructional approaches and ways to tap into students' funds of knowledge were crucial to implementing an effective teacher preparation program. She explained:

So all this is modeling. What we do here will prepare them for practicum, that is, what they will do on their own when they go to field experiences. This is important because I don't want us (teacher educators) to be accused of being Ivory towers. That is, we are not effective in preparing teachers. The teachers cannot cope and deal with real classroom issues.

Summary: Scaffolding Conceptual Understandings. In summary, while all of the faculty appreciated that candidates' experiences having learned a second language could be beneficial in their understanding of theories, pedagogy, and language learning processes, faculty were varied in the degree to which they

explicitly drew on this prior knowledge when teaching. One faculty member systematically drew on students' prior knowledge and modeled effective pedagogical approaches as she designed her course experiences.

Discussion

Requirements for candidates to have background experiences in learning a second language seemed to be valued by faculty in that it provided affordances for preservice teachers to have developed positive dispositions toward diverse cultures, to value diverse perspectives, and to provide a foundation for understanding the process of learning a second language. In addition, this requirement established a foundation on which faculty could draw in developing conceptual understandings. Interestingly, while background knowledge was valued and acknowledged by the faculty, their use of such knowledge to frame instruction varied across individuals. Some instructors integrated multiple assignments designed to tap into unique experiences, while some faculty felt that scaffolding was more applicable in other courses, in field experiences, or that they were challenged in being able to tap into individual students' prior knowledge.

When the focus of scaffolding in the program was examined, the foci included development of dispositions, of strategies, and of conceptual understanding; scaffolding for dispositions was often passive. Faculty often relied on the fact that entry requirements created affordances for understanding and valuing others rather than explicitly framing assignments to understand and unpack candidates' perspectives or to move to them to more positive dispositions. While instructors recognized the importance of being alert to teachable moments, systematic and explicit attempts to understand how individual backgrounds of candidates were shaping the prospective teachers' dispositions were not frequent. Previous research has underscored the need for teacher educators to understand candidates' dispositions, to have them explore their current perspectives, and to support development of positive dispositions and orientations toward culturally diverse learners (Kaste, 2004; Rath, 2001; Muehler & Hindin, 2011). While some researchers contend pre-existing frames of reference can be difficult to change (Pattnaik & Vold, 1998), Muehler and Hindin (2011) contend that careful assessment of dispositions can aid teacher educators in understanding factors influencing candidates' dispositions and be helpful in shaping coursework and field experiences in ways that positively impacts the social consciousness of preservice teachers. While requiring specific background experiences may afford

candidates with opportunities to understand and value diverse learners, teacher educators may also need to consider how specific assessment tools or case studies may be systematically used into order to unpack, analyze, capitalize on, and/or neutralize the impact of specific prior experiences on developing dispositions.

The second focus of scaffolding evident in the program focused on strategy development. Faculty recognized that as students in a graduate program, their preservice teachers could benefit from developing strategies for learning. Consequently, all faculty emphasized the development of preservice teachers' learning strategies and their use of academic language both in class discussions and as writers and seemed comfortable in providing this support. This emphasis seems consistent with Van Zoest and Stockero's (2008) work on synergistic scaffolding which indicates that carefully designed scaffolds, provided during the writing of papers, can enhance preservice candidates' explorations of self-as-teacher. Often, course assignments and carefully designed scaffolds such as in Van Zoest and Stockero's (2008) work, are planned in light of a pre-determined need. Instructors in this program drew on their prior experiences with preservice teachers in graduate program as well as their observations with current students to construct assignments, to sequence tasks over the semester, and to provide individual feedback in ways that supported their graduate students' development as academic writers and their ability to express themselves as educators.

Use of scaffolding to develop conceptual understandings was predominant in methods courses where the faculty integrated assignments designed to unpack the theoretical underpinnings of their literacy and language learning experiences. It also invited participants to model and clarify instructional approaches in light of their own prior experiences. While most courses had some type of assignment designed to tap into candidates' background experiences, course instructors varied in the degree to which they purposefully capitalized on or concentrated on such information. Only one instructor, the associate professor, systematically used both predetermined assignments and responsive instruction in order to understand individuals' perspectives and help individuals draw on their own unique backgrounds as they constructed their understandings of second language development and instruction. This may indicate a need for programs in teacher education to consider the professional development that new faculty or part time instructors may find valuable as they develop as teacher educators. As Adler (2011) indicates, having students examine their background epistemologies is challenging, as students are required "to look to their past experiences, participate in the present dialogue, and anticipate how new knowledge and perspectives will help

them develop multiple perspectives in their future teaching” (p. 617). Such a process requires teacher educators to work alongside candidates to explore the preservice teachers’ beliefs, practices and expectations and how these, which came from their worldview, are translated into pedagogical choices. In some cases, teacher educators may find that assignments, course experiences, and instructional approaches which are effective for some students may be ineffective for others (Many et al., 2002). However, such differentiated instruction is a complex undertaking and may call for program administrators and others to consider how we mentor teacher education faculty to help them consider how to utilize such approaches within their programs.

Finally, although this study identified teacher educator’s use of scaffolding by creating affordances through instructional design within assignments and class experiences and use of responsive instruction in oral and written discourse, there was less indication of teacher educators’ systematic monitoring of students’ growing abilities as a result of scaffolding. Previous research on scaffolding has noted responsive teachers need to be aware of students’ zone of proximal development, and then choose the amount of support necessary as students begin to respond to instruction (Maloch, 2002; Meyer, 1993). During such episodes, educators and researchers need to understand the ways in which teachers provide for a gradual release of responsibility to students. Some researchers contend that scaffolding of conceptual understandings, in particular, may resemble a collaborative co-construction of knowledge within a community of learners, and thus not incorporate a release of responsibility to the learner (Many, 2002; Roelher & Cantlon, 1997). In the case of this study, evidence of a gradual release of responsibility to the learner was not clear from the data related to scaffolding of learning strategies and dispositions. Future research focusing on the nature of teacher educator-student engagement may be beneficial in more fully understanding the way in which a gradual release of responsibility may be used within teacher education programs with respect to students’ development of dispositions, learning strategies, or conceptual understandings.

Conclusion

In this study, we examined the perspectives of four teacher educators towards instructional scaffolding, and the way in which these perspectives were evident in the the design and content of the teacher education program focusing English language learners in which they taught. While all the participants believed

that instructional scaffolding is crucial for preservice teachers' learning and development, the faculty members varied in the ways they approached the task of scaffolding.

Scaffolding foci generally included preservice teachers' development of dispositions, strategies, and conceptual understandings while ways of scaffolding encompassed (a) creating affordances, (b) instructional designs such as modeling, purposeful structured assignments and group activities, and (c) teacher/student discourse in the form of discussions, feedback, and reflective pieces. These ways of scaffolding were not equally distributed among participants.

More experiences or seniority in teacher education might give some advantage in the use of instructional scaffolding. This finding left us with the question of whether novice teacher educators might need some professional development or mentoring in how to provide instructional scaffolding. In this case, future research needs to investigate what kinds of scaffolding strategies these teacher educators need to acquire most and the conditions under which such strategies work more effectively. For instance, particular ways of scaffolding may be best suited for supporting development for specific foci (e.g. strategies as opposed to conceptual understanding). In addition, teacher educators may need to consider ways to differentiate instruction when data indicate variation in the effectiveness of specific approaches to scaffolding across different individuals.

Finally, we found less evidence of systematic monitoring of the ways preservice teachers were learning. This might be problematic in the sense that some scaffolding provided might not be necessary or might be less effective as course instructors might not be aware of where preservice teachers are in their zone of proximal development. Again, future research might need to examine how teacher educators monitor their candidates' cognition and growth and how such monitoring efforts affect the ways they tailor their instructional scaffolding.

In closing, this inquiry focused on the role scaffolding played in teacher educators' own approaches to designing coursework and providing instructional support to preservice teachers. While the importance of understanding learners' zone of proximal development and ways to support development has been stressed in research examining literacy teachers and literacy preservice teachers approaches (Palincsar, 1986; Many et al., 2009, Many et al., 2007; Meyer 1993), this study suggests the instructional support provided by literacy teacher educators needs to also be carefully considered. Professional development for literacy teacher educators focusing on their own instructional approaches and ability to support preservice teachers' learning, as well as additional research on the use of

scaffolding in teacher education is needed to ensure that scaffolding is not only stressed in teacher education programs as an important approach for P-12 instruction, but is also modeled and utilized in teacher education classrooms as well.



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About the Authors

Dr. Joyce Many serves as the associate dean of undergraduate studies and educator preparation in the College of Education at Georgia State University. Dr. Many's recent research explores the effectiveness of teacher education programs and factors impacting teacher education students' performance and subsequent retention in the classroom.

Dr. Eudes Aoulou has taught ESL and Communication at Georgia Perimeter College. His current research interests include exploring and understanding English language learners' comprehension of various texts and the ways teachers of these students support them.





STEPPING INTO SCIENCE FICTION

Rebecca Barone, Clark County School District
Diane Barone, University of Nevada, Reno

Abstract

This manuscript focuses on fifth graders' understanding of science fiction. It is argued that it is necessary for students to understand both reading strategies and the key elements of a genre for comprehension. Students read *The Giver* within literature circles and conversation and written responses about the book were used for analysis. It was found that students often focused on the same aspects of text and noticed several elements of science fiction.



Your reading processes vary by genre. Reading is genre-specific. (Duke, Caughlan, Juzwik, & Martin, 2012, p. 35)

What exactly is science fiction and how can a reader figure that out? Students in a fifth grade classroom explored multiple genres throughout their school year by talking and writing about each as they read books within the genre classifications. While it might appear that recognizing the essential qualities of a genre is not that difficult, this was not evidenced as the students explored science fiction.

Literature Review

Much of the research on reading is targeted to strategy instruction, but not necessarily strategy instruction connected to genres (Dewitz, Jones, & Leahy, 2009; Duke & Pearson, 2002). Early strategy-focused research supports the importance of strategy instruction for student comprehension (Pearson, Roehler, Dole, & Duffy, 1992). Moreover, Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) discovered that skilled readers use strategies as they read, after they learn and practice them with teacher scaffolding.

Shifting a bit to include the text with a strategy, Almasi and Hart (2011) refined ideas surrounding strategy instruction and warned that short-term instruction in strategies might not transfer to all contexts for reading. They suggested teachers offer students opportunities to talk about the strategies they use, and in which situations they were used, so that a specific reading goal could be met. “Early studies focused on teaching students the strategy rather than teaching students to be strategic” (p. 253). They suggested that teachers support students in recognizing the intention that is required to successfully navigate text with an understanding of the variability of text genre.

Almasi and Hart (2011) also talk about the importance of considering the reader, the context, and the text when students read. They suggest that teaching students a strategy is complicated by the need to determine which strategy is most appropriate for the reading task. Thus, just knowing about strategies and randomly using them did not benefit the readers. Similarly, Duke and Pearson (2002) suggest that genre is important for comprehension; however, they do not fully explore how students and teachers might accomplish this. In general, most of the descriptions of strategy instruction do not focus on specific genres, rather, they recognize the differences in comprehension based on text structure (Almasi & Hart, 2011; Duffy, 2003; Duke & Pearson, 2002), but the potential differences are not explored.

Duke, Caughlan, Juzwik, and Martin (2012) recently wrote about the importance of genre to comprehension. They acknowledge, “Readers use different processes to read different kinds, or genres, of text” (p. 34). Further, they offer suggestions for helping students recognize broad categories of genre, such as stories, dramas, poetry, and nonfiction. However, they do not dig into the differences within the broad genre categories. Similarly, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for fifth grade indicate that students are expected to read and comprehend stories, dramas, and poetry, but they do not identify issues surrounding genres under these umbrellas. While the CCSS standards also indicate that students should explain how a series of chapters contribute to the overall structure of a story, they do not mention the expectations surrounding various genres (www.corestandards.org). It appears that within the research on strategies and within the Common Core expectations, there is an assumption that students will understand the unique qualities of each genre and how its structure contributes to the meaning as they utilize various reading strategies.

Cadden (2011), however, describes how readers use genre understandings to set expectations for reading. These understandings help them as they navigate text. For instance, when reading fantasy they would know that magical elements would be present. This research suggests that strategies and genre both contribute to student comprehension.

When working with intermediate students, we noticed they were not necessarily aware of the unique qualities of each genre. We provided opportunities for students to learn about mysteries, before reading and writing mysteries by having them explore the genre and create a chart of key characteristics. Then, as they read mysteries independently, they continued to add to their chart expanding their knowledge of the genre (Youngs & Barone, 2007). This explicit knowledge helped them construct meaning within a genre, as the genre was the roadmap of what might be contained within the pages. This work suggests that, “It is important to discuss the many reading strategies that children need, and it is equally important to ask particular questions of the text” (p. 55). We would add that it is important to connect the strategies with genre, so that students can better select the strategy that best benefits a particular construction of meaning. For instance, rereading for clarity best suits mysteries; information may be passed over without much attention on a first reading, only to later be discovered that it was critical to the plot.

Science Fiction

Separating fantasy from its subgenre science fiction is difficult (Kiefer, 2007). Fantasy often creates a world that never existed, while science fiction creates a world that might occur in the future, particularly in dystopian novels. Kiefer (2007) writes about the content of science fiction, “Writers must construct a world in which scientific frontiers of genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, space exploration, or robotics have advanced beyond our present knowledge” (p. 389). She further discusses the value of science fiction as a means to “develop children’s imagination and intuition as well as exercises their speculative and improvisational abilities” (p. 390). Thus, science fiction allows students to interpret characters’ motivations within the characters’ world and use the reading strategies related to inferential understanding and rereading.

The key characteristics of the genre of science fiction are:

- Science fiction is often based on scientific principles and/or technology.
- Science fiction may suggest predictions about life in the future.
- Science fiction often deals with aliens or people from other worlds.
- Science fiction provides comments about important societal issues.

In our research, we define science fiction as narrative text focused on the future and, in particular, “Scientific possibilities that might affect societies of human or alien beings, or both” (Tunnell & Jacobs, 2008, p. 120).

The book we chose for students to explore was *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993) as this book is “...a rich source for analysis and interpretation” (Stewart, 2007, p. 22), and a classic example of the science fiction genre. Rather than selecting a newer science fiction text, we used *The Giver* as a foundational text that would lead to further exploration of more current science fiction works.

Latham (2002) suggested that one of the themes within *The Giver* is centered on childhood versus adulthood where roles are critical, rigid, and enforced. Childhood benchmarks are defined by events such as, at age 9 children receive bicycles. The essential age for children in this community is 12, which is when they receive their lifetime role. Moreover, the society in which the characters live is perfect and considered utopian, or as an extended childhood where no problems exist (Stewart, 2007). All members of the society, with the exception of

The Giver and later Jonas, are drugged so that they do not make bad choices by not making any choices at all. They lack memories of the past and exist in a continuous present. Within the society, the Committee of Elders makes and enforces all rules. Interestingly, they have removed all color, even racial color, and all members of the community share whiteness or sameness. One color that Lowry does name, however, is the color of *The Giver's*, Jonas's, and Gabriel's eyes, which are blue, unlike the other members of this society. She offers eye color as a hint to a special connection among these characters.

Stewart (2007) describes *The Giver* as a complex text since the ending is left open with possibilities. (Lowry has written 3 sequels so this openness is closed if students pursue the other books.) Stewart notes that this text is challenging for young readers to comprehend because it is filled with ambiguity, as there are multiple themes interwoven throughout this book, such as, the differences (or lack of differences) between childhood and adulthood, conformity, censorship, deception, and community.

Our work was guided by how students embrace the complexity of learning about and comprehending a specific genre, in this case science fiction. We chose science fiction because students indicated their preference for fantasy. We believe students were prepared through their fantasy reading to explore the complexities of science fiction. In this Study, we explore how fifth grade students comprehend and come to understand the genre of science fiction through the reading of *The Giver*. We accomplished this objective by listening to conversations centered on the book and analyzing the students' daily writing about it.

We responded to the issue recognized by Almasi and Hart (2011), that most researchers consider the end product of comprehension but don't document the comprehension journey of students by analyzing all of the talking and writing throughout the entire book study to document students' meaning journeys. Simultaneously, we incorporated the suggestions of Johnston (2004) and invited students to respond to questions like, "What did you discover?" or "How did the author let you know?" or "What kind of text is this?" in their conversations. The understandings of this genre came from students. We participated with them in this journey not as the experienced other, but as co-travelers

Methods

We used a qualitative methodology to explore student understandings of science fiction (Merriam, 1998), as our purpose was to describe their awareness of

this genre and the meanings they created (Shank, 2006). We engaged the majority of the fifth grade students in one classroom in a large, urban elementary school to learn about student understandings of this genre throughout their reading of *The Giver*.

Researcher Backgrounds

The two authors engaged in this endeavor. The teacher, Becky, participated daily and joined the student literature groups as a participant observer. She nudged students to move beyond noticing an event, and shifting to an interpretation of it. To accomplish this goal, she organized students into groups so they could participate in the reading, writing, and talking about each book routinely throughout the school year. Student groups changed as books changed and the jobs that students were responsible for within a group also varied by genre. For instance, for science fiction, she asked students to participate in certain responsibilities such as science fiction fact finder, summarizer, and journaler (Daniels, 2002).

The roles of science fiction fact finder and journaler (created by Becky) were critical to this study as both of these roles directly targeted science fiction. The expectations for the science fiction fact finder were to describe artifacts, language, or events that suggested this book was science fiction. The journaler was expected to find interesting points in the text and offer opinions as to why the author included these events. The person responsible for this role had to step into the shoes of the author and try to understand the importance of events and why they were placed where they were.

Becky assigned each role carefully. Directors had to be strong readers as they developed complex questions and had to be good managers of their groups making sure that each student participated. Summarizers were the least sophisticated readers in each group as their responsibility kept them grounded in the text. The other roles were assigned to the remaining students based on individual student preferences.

Direct and Informal Instruction of Genre

At the beginning of the year, Becky went over genres of literature with her students. This introduction was brief, as each genre would be explored in detail during the year. She also met with students daily in their literature circles and responded to their conversations. For instance, during the science fiction explorations, she might say, "That is a very interesting idea about science fiction, tell us again how that supports and identifies this book as science fiction?" She

then wrote responses to their daily literature circle jobs where she might ask, “So why is this idea important to understanding science fiction?” Periodically, as students explored a book, they convened as a class. Becky led students in developing understandings. For instance, on one day, she asked the students to consider possible themes in *The Giver* and how they discovered these themes. This whole class investigation was then followed with groups of students exploring relevant themes for *The Giver*.

Participants

Twenty-seven fifth graders participated in the study. The only children excluded were three students who were struggling readers and could not read *The Giver* independently. These students also left class during literature circles to receive special education support. The twenty seven participants varied in reading achievement; some were above grade level, the majority were at grade level, and about five students were slightly below grade level. The students all attended a large elementary school, approximately 1000 students from kindergarten to fifth grade with varied socioeconomic backgrounds. Gender was almost balanced with 14 boys and 13 girls.

Data Collection

Literature Circles

Students participated in literature circle instruction daily. There were five groups with 5 to 6 students in each group. During their exploration of science fiction, the literature circle jobs changed to reflect the genre. The jobs and descriptions were as follows: director, a person who created questions to guide discussion; science fiction fact finder, a person who researched science fiction facts that they noticed in their reading, described why the author included it, and how it supports science fiction; summarizer, a person who summarized the day’s reading; journaler, a person who explored events and tried to explain why the author included them and what was their significance to the story, investigator, a person who researched interesting details, including interesting vocabulary, and connector, a person who made a personal connection to the text.

Once a role was established for a student, she/he continued with this role throughout the reading of the book. This continuity allowed each student to become proficient in a role and allowed students who were becoming independent in reading to complete a more close-to-text expectation such as the summarizer. More proficient readers might be the director or journaler. Students

met in class daily for literature circles (approximately one hour) and read at home where they completed their literature circle job to share with students the following day. During their in-class meetings, they discussed their written responses, with each member of the group participating in discussion as triggered by the responses.

As we listened to the conversations during literature circles, we made notes about the central ideas that students discussed. We tracked when a topic consumed numerous literature circles, such as when students faced the real meaning of “release”. We served as the recorders of their conversations so we could learn how they collaborated to understand science fiction.

Journals and Final Posters

Each student wrote a daily response based on his/her literature circle job. We collected and dated all responses for this analysis. There were 263 total responses that were analyzed. We also used the students’ group posters to examine its more abstract qualities. These posters shared ideas about their interpretations of the themes within *The Giver* as they provided evidence of their understanding of this genre and their ability. For each identified theme, students located text support to verify the appropriateness of their theme.

Data Analysis

Both researchers examined student responses and considered them in relation to the conversations of the students. The conversations were used as confirmatory evidence when a theme was discovered in the written responses. We initiated our analyses by considering all of the written responses from the first day to the last. On our first pass through the written responses, we sorted out those that directly connected to the science fiction genre. Each response was identified by topic and frequency tables were created to recognize dominant themes (see Appendix). The majority of this analysis centered on the journaler and science fiction fact finder roles as they were most directly linked to the genre of science fiction. Although other responses were interesting, they did not often directly lead to an understanding of the science fiction genre. Rather, they focused on understanding the plot, the characters, or interesting vocabulary. We categorized these responses by topic and created a frequency table to determine consistent responses.

We then brought in observational notes from literature circle conversations and connected students’ talk with their writing. We determined when written responses and talk overlapped; this synchronicity showcased when students

targeted a topic they believed to be important (Shank, 2006). This data was used to further refine our initial understandings. Finally, we considered the responses as a journey and looked at the first responses to the last to determine the shifts in student understandings of the book and its genre.

Results

While it was evident that students developed in their understandings of science fiction, it was not an easy process for them. Throughout their reading, they were constantly nudged by Becky to consider their ideas in relation to science fiction. For example, she chatted with, and wrote to them about explaining why their evidence supported science fiction. Students often resorted to saying, “It is futuristic” or “It is different from today.” While we had hoped that students might offer more sophisticated responses about science fiction, especially as they neared the end of the book, they held steady with their earlier descriptions. This consistency in response, we believed, was due to their limited exposure and naïve understanding of science fiction. However, they did capture the identity of science fiction being about a future world and different from their current life experiences.

We also noted that the separate literature circles, and students within a literature circle, most often focused on the same science fiction element or aspect of the plot. We were surprised at the overwhelming convergence in responses rather than variability among groups. This result is interesting as students in each literature circle did not share responses or chat about the book with students in other groups. Moreover, the majority of reading and writing was completed as homework, away from the potential influence of other students.

The Journey

The Beginning

Students recognized the following elements of science fiction in their first responses: There was only one mirror in the community; light colored eyes were rare; they called stuffed toys comfort items; and there were rules about ages, a bike at 9 and a life assignment at 12. We noted convergence in responses centered on these elements. For example, a director asked – “Based on the text, why do you think Jonas is feeling worried about his job now that he is almost 12?” Another director asked, “What do you know about Jonas’s life style?” She went on to describe, “He had many rules to follow and things are opposite of the way they

are today.” An investigator examined what a comfort object might be and learned that, “it is an object to provide psychological comfort.” Another student questioned why age was not important after 12. He decided, “After 12 they wouldn’t need anything. The only thing that is important is the training they receive when they are 12.”

One director urged her group to “think about what examples of science fiction were in the chapter?” Her responses converged with the science fiction elements that students discovered – “not many mirrors, light colored eyes are rare, and stuffed animals are comfort objects.”

The science fiction fact finders and journalers focused on the same elements. Figure 1 is an example of a fact finder response in which he targets the issue of limited mirrors. He explained this choice for science fiction as “it is futuristic and the community is strict.” One of the journaler responses identified eye color, an element that students were curious about throughout the book. They determined these characters were related, as they were the only ones with blue eyes.

This scene is important because Lily notices that Jonas and Gabriel have the same light colored eyes. Everyone else in the community has dark colored eyes. This scene is important because it makes the reader think that Jonas and Gabriel have a connection.

Figure 1 Science Fiction Fact Finder Entry

FIND: I found that it’s forbidden to have more than one mirror in the community. This is found on page 21.

HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT: This is different because we have mirrors practically everywhere. We have them in bathrooms, stores, malls, dressing rooms. My sister can’t even go 2 hours without looking in a mirror. We even have mirrors in schools.

INCLUDE: I think the author included this in the book because to show how strict the community is.

SUPPORT OF GENRE: This supports the book because it’s futuristic. It’s more futuristic, and we don’t do that today. Also it shows the community is strict.

Other students worried about the strictness of the society and Jonas's rule breaking. They wrote about Jonas teaching Lily to ride a bike before she was 9. They focused on his breaking the rules and how this was risky in such a rule-governed community. One student wrote, "Even though it was not serious you could get in trouble. He broke the rule." Finally, a science fiction fact finder focused on the life assignments given to individuals at 12. She wrote, "In this time period people don't get to choose what they want to do. The author included this to show that this time is different from today. Jobs being given supports science fiction because in the future the government tells you what to do. You don't choose."

These responses showed how students were carefully reading to discover differences between the present time and the future. They were successful at noting these differences. Interestingly, they accepted the differences as part of the future and did not question the differences or why the author thought they were important to this story. Primarily, they were creating a sense of this new community and discovering the many rules that guided it. We thought it was interesting that the focus of these early responses were about the community and its rules, not necessarily the story line. Although they didn't voice it, community (or a future community) is critical to science fiction as the setting often determines the actions of the characters or the dilemmas they face. Tacitly, their responses indicated their understanding of the importance of setting.

They departed from this community focus to explore eye color, which they recognized as one quality that acknowledged difference among the characters, or at least between three characters and the rest of the community. They also began to worry about the choices that characters made within this society. For example, they worried about the trouble that Jonas might get into following his teaching Lily how to ride a bike. These responses indicated their personal connections to characters and their understanding of plot structures.

The Middle

Throughout the middle of the book, students shifted from setting and pursued a focus on the society and the rules that governed it. For instance, they reported on many details:

- Females under 8 wear hair ribbons.
- People get 2 children.
- They release people; they painlessly kill them.

- Jobs are assigned.
- Babies are given to nurturers, not a family for a year.
- They don't name babies for a year.
- Learn to ride a bike at 9.
- There is a House of the Olds.
- At 8 can choose volunteer work.
- Have to discuss dreams.
- Have to take pills.
- Everyone is the same.
- No one knows about war.

While all of these qualities of the community were shared, an abundance of students focused on dreams and pills, babies and expectations, and colors. These three ideas consumed much of the conversation in groups and the writing of the students.

Dreams and Pills. Almost every student included an entry that focused on the rules about dreams and pills. One journaler wrote, "It is important when Lily was telling her dreams because everyone else in the community had to share their dreams. It was required by law that everyone share." He continued with, "Jonas was taking his pill. It is important because he was in the love phase. He is not going to love anymore if he takes the pills. He will have to take them until he is in the House of Olds." Another student wrote, "He had a dream of Fiona and him in the House of Olds. He takes pills so he doesn't feel love because when he is older he is assigned a spouse."

Continuing with this theme, a science fiction finder wrote, "You need pills because you have dreams about girls/boys. It is different from today because we don't take pills. They have to take it for the rest of their lives; that is why it is important. It supports science fiction because that doesn't happen in real life." Many directors asked questions about dreams and the resulting pills. A girl wrote, "Do you think it is kind of weird if you dream about a boy/girl you have to take medicine about it?" She followed up with, "Would you take the pill after a week is over if your parents don't remind you?"

Babies and Expectations. Students focused repeatedly on the differences in how babies were taken care of in this society and their own experiences. For instance, one student wrote, “In real life we might bring a baby to daycare for a period of time but in this book the babies were taken care of for a whole year. And other people took care of the babies before they even had a home.” Another student was concerned because there were no grandparents. He said, “Today you can see your grandparents, but in this book there is no way kids would even know who they are.”

Students also began to deal with the issue of release as they explored the topics surrounding babies. One student showed the conflicted emotions of Jonas as he pondered release and his father’s role with it. He wrote, “Jonas thought his father wouldn’t like release and then he saw his father release a baby. Jonas had emotions and he knew this was wrong, but his father just saw it as his job, not murder.”

A director asked his group to directly consider release. He asked, “Why did the author show the release of this child?” His expected response was, “It shows what release means if you didn’t figure it out and how they dealt with identical twins.” Instead students talked about the decision to release one of the twins. They were angry that this happened and didn’t believe that killing the baby was the right thing to do, especially since the decision was based on weight. One student said, “I can’t believe it. How could they just kill a baby? I get why they didn’t let the babies live with their parents. It was easier to kill them when no one cared.” We found it interesting that while they were upset that one twin was released, they didn’t question the author’s motives for the significance of this event.

A travel tracer made the issue of release come alive through the setting and quotes she chose. She wrote:

Jonas was shocked because one of the twins was released. He moved his arms and legs in a jerking motion and his head fell to his side. His eyes were half way open and then he was still. Jonas felt horror because of the releasing. Now he knows what it means.

Most students talked about release as something they disagreed with, but their discussion was more abstract. The travel tracer’s response brought the students closer as they considered the very specific details of release. Finally, a student wrote, “Lowry included this because we don’t have it today. Science fiction is about the future. If we did have release today what would it be like? Think!”

Colors. Students focused on the newness of being aware of colors for Jonas and how other individuals in the community were deprived of seeing colors, or difference. Despite the role students were completing, the issue of color showed up continuously. For instance, a director wrote several questions targeting color:

1. Why did the Giver say, “that’s probably driving the scientists crazy?”
 - a. Because Fiona has red hair and that is not sameness and they want everyone to be the same.
2. Do you think Jonas will receive the memory of a rainbow?
 - a. Yes because he will learn about more colors and their importance.

One director pushed the idea of colors a bit when he questioned, “Would it be better if there was not sameness?” His response was that, “It wouldn’t be better because you would have to have the same haircut and color and everyone is the same skin color.”

A travel tracer noted that the scientists were mad because Fiona had red hair and they wanted sameness. Several journalers selected the scene where Jonas gets the memory of red. One wrote, “Red is a color and it means their community was black and white. It shows they live in a box with no color. They have climate control with no sunshine, and everything is the same even the weather.”

Finally, students explained the focus on color and its importance to science fiction. One fact finder wrote, “The apple showing up as red supports science fiction because everybody in the community can’t get the memory of colors. They have a different life style because only the Giver has memories.” Another fact finder suggested, “I think the author removed color so it made the community more lifeless, more dull. They don’t see differences as they are all the same, no color and climate control.” And one journaler noted that learning about the color red also brought uncomfortable memories, “Jonas saw elephants killed and there was blood everywhere and it was red.”

Colors led to conversations about sameness and what it would be like if everyone were the same. They talked about the conundrum that knowing and understanding colors could lead to good memories but to bad as well. The students’ focus on color helped them to understand issues of sameness in the community and how it was problematic. They also began to move into the author’s mind and see that the use of color, or no color, enhanced the sameness or dullness within the community, more than just writing about having no colors

could. We were able to see students shift from readers of a book to critics trying to understand the reasoning behind the author's decisions.

The Ending

Many students continued to ponder release and colors and their importance at the end of the book. However, students also shifted perspective and now focused on emotions and transitions, more abstract text qualities.

Emotions. Students started to focus on the emotions displayed by Jonas and how his emotions helped them understand events in the story. For instance, one student wrote, "Jonas felt angry and sad because of his dad. His father lied to him so Jonas did not want to go home." Another student wrote, "Jonas was puzzled because he didn't understand the Giver's plan." Finally, a student shared the Giver's emotions when she wrote, "The Giver felt love because of Jonas. The Giver told Jonas about his daughter and his love for her." In groups, they talked about how the book didn't share emotions at first. One student said, "At first everyone was calm even the Giver, but at the end the Giver and Jonas are full of emotion."

Transitions. During the conclusion of the book, the Giver talked about wanting to join his daughter and how Jonas was preparing to leave the community. Several directors posed questions such as, "What did the Giver mean when he said he will go to be with his daughter?" Students suggested, "Since Rosemary is dead, I think he is going to release himself." A student built on this explanation by offering, "Legend says when someone dies you can see others that also died whether you commit suicide or not."

While students realized that the Giver was to be released, they noted that he seemed happier when he talked about his daughter with one student noticing that he smiled when he talked about her. Another wrote, "He sounded like he was going to cry when he talked about her release and he seemed happier than ever that he was going to see her again."

These oral and written reflections showcase the shift from simple understandings to more complex ones. For instance, students understood that at the beginning of the book everything, including characters, were calm or one-dimensional. As the book continued, because of choice, characters demonstrated conflicting emotions.

The second transition that students discussed was Jonas's leaving. One student commented, "Jonas felt sad because he left and he left his closest friends behind. He also had to leave the Giver and that had to be hard for him." Students

When considering the theme of choice, the catch phrases were: “There are many choices in life so make the right ones;” “The choices you make set your future;” and “You have to fight to choose freedom.” Vehicles were the symbol representing this theme. Two groups selected a bicycle because “The bike is how Jonas and Gabriel found their freedom.” The third group chose a sled “because it represents freedom for Gabriel and Jonas was able to save the others from sameness.”

Following are several quotes that students selected to support their theme:

- “For the first time, Jonas did not take his pills.”
- “Our people made the choice to go to sameness.”
- “The Giver chose to move away.”

The emotions theme caused some students to shift away from sameness. This group’s catch phrase was “Emotions help you see life to its fullest.” Their symbol was a “Christmas tree because it shows the memory where he felt excited about holidays.” Some of the quotes they used were as follows:

- “I felt very angry this afternoon.”
- “I’m feeling apprehensive,’ glad that the appropriate word finally came to him.”
- “‘We are almost there,’ he whispered without feeling quite certain without knowing why.”

The last group chose the importance of being an individual and their catch phrase was “It is important to be yourself.” Their symbol was a blue eye as only the Giver, Jonas, and Gabriel had blue eyes. They selected quotes such as:

- “It’s the choosing that is important.”
- “We never completely mastered sameness.”
- “Now for the first time in his 12 years, Jonas felt different, separate.”

The themes showcased students moving beyond more literal elements of text and stepping back to see the meaning behind this book. The themes, while different in description, all centered on the issues of sameness and being able to make decisions to move away from this conformity. Students understood that emotions led individuals away from the sameness expected to making choices, and

eventually to uniqueness. However, choices led to risk and difference led to internal conflict.

Discussion

Through reading, writing, and discussing students came to understand this text and the genre of science fiction (Duke, Caughlan, Juzwik, & Martin, 2012, Duke & Pearson, 2002). Further, students looked for indications of science fiction as they read due to the literature circle jobs they held and in response to teacher promptings (Cadden, 2011). To discover science fiction characteristics, they often reread for clarity and to better understand an event or a character's behavior. These discoveries support the need to connect strategies with genre (Almasi & Hart, 2011; Duke, Caughlan, Juzwik, & Martin, 2012). For instance, students demonstrated that setting was important in science fiction and they needed to reread to create an image of this world.

The major discovery, we believe, was that students spent most of their time noticing the differences in this community when compared to their own. They recognized that color and not knowing color were important, as were the issues of release and sameness. When pushed to explain how these observations helped them to know this text was science fiction, they most often replied, "It is different from today." or "It was futuristic." (They also knew that the setting was critical to understanding this book as is true of science fiction, but they stayed at a level of describing or noticing it, rather than moving to an analysis level where they explored the importance of various aspects of the community, such as strictness.)

We wondered what kind of support would be necessary for students to move beyond noticing to explore, for instance, why the author chose color as a way to move into memories? Why was color so important? What would have happened if she had chosen smells, for example? Why was color such a perfect choice to share memories? Similar observations could be made with release. Why was the one twin being released so meaningful to the discussion of release? Would release have seemed as awful if Jonas witnessed the release of an older person? Why did Lowry choose a twin? What is the significance of this choice to the story and to the reader?

Noticing is critical to understanding for without an initial perception, one cannot move to comprehension or understanding. However, noticing, in itself, is a naïve interpretation. Saying "something is different from today" is a beginning to critical understanding, but it is just a beginning or foundation. Our study opened up these more critical questions that could be pursued with students only after

careful scaffolding throughout their reading. The literature circle structure carefully built students' knowing or noticing so that with teacher scaffolding, they were primed to explore more complex interpretations at the end of their reading.

The science fiction fact finder and the journaler jobs helped students focus on science fiction. These roles complemented by the director's questions kept each group attentive on keeping the writing and conversation centered on the genre of science fiction. Perhaps, without these jobs or roles, students would have been more drawn to the plot or characters and would have seen the community in which they lived as not very important. This would have been a great loss to their understanding because the differences in this community are what hold the story together as characters respond to this complicated, rule-bound setting. Further, it suggests that for teachers using literature circles, roles or jobs need to be geared to the genre students are reading so that, in addition to the story, they gain experience with the genre in a more direct way. While general comprehension strategies were used by students throughout the book, particularly rereading for clarification, the combination of the genre's expectations and strategies better supported students' comprehension building.

There were many lessons learned in this investigation. First, students noticed elements of science fiction and talked and wrote about them, but it took probing to get them to consider the importance of these elements and why the author chose them. Importantly, students independently focused on plot, not the nuances of science fiction. Second, changing the roles and jobs to meet the genre's expectations facilitated students' understanding of the genre. For example, the science fiction fact finder nudged students to repeatedly focus on the genre itself, not just the story. Third, all jobs supported comprehension building and finding text support, with the exception of the connector. The connector role led students away from text support. For example, they wrote about when they were afraid or experienced a family member's death. While interesting, the personal narrative led away from the book and it was difficult for directors to bring the conversation back to the book. This was an interesting discovery and one for teachers to carefully consider with the current Common Core expectation of staying within text. Fourth, students had no difficulty supporting their opinions or observations with text support as noted in their writing, talking, and poster creation. Fifth, comprehension strategies and genres need to be linked to support students' understandings. Although students could independently read *The Giver*, they needed collaboration and teacher support to combine the narrative elements with the essential characteristics of science fiction.

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Appendix

Sample of Data Analysis

Date	Topic	Frequencies
2-26	mirrors	III
	Bike at 9	IIII
	Comfort object	II
	Eye color	IIII
	People get 2 children	II
	Jobs assigned	III
	Babies are given nurturers	IIII
	Don't name babies	I
	Release	IIII
3-1	Kids delivering food	I

About the Authors

Rebecca Barone has taught a multi-aged classroom of intermediate students, fourth grade for two years, fifth grade for two years, and was fifth grade writing coach. She has her master's degree in literacy and has worked on a doctoral degree in literacy.

Diane Barone is a professor who researches literacy practices in schools. She visited the school at the beginning of the year for foundation data collection, and then visited the school once during the science fiction exploration. Both of the researchers participated in data collection and analysis.

