Choosing and Using Interactional Scaffolds: How Teachers’ Moment-to-Moment Supports Can Generate and Sustain Emergent Bilinguals’ Engagement with Challenging English Texts

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Gibbons (2009) argues that emergent bilinguals should experience “high challenge/high support” instruction, which requires teachers to balance rigorous curriculum and materials with appropriate instructional scaffolds. Yet, studies suggest that well-intentioned teachers of emergent bilinguals may overscaffold tasks and texts, which can diminish the rigor of instruction (Athanases & de Oliveira, 2014). Current research explains little about what high challenge/high support teaching looks like and how students respond. In this comparative case study of two exemplary teachers’ English reading instruction of middle school emergent bilinguals, I consider whether and how their interactional scaffolds (in-the-moment supports for language and content) meet Gibbons’s standards for high challenge and support. Data include transcripts of 16 video-recorded English reading lessons and 6 interviews with the teachers, conducted over one school year. In these lessons, students read and discussed challenging English texts. I analyzed transcripts for evidence of challenge (complex texts, rigorous tasks, higher-order questions) and examined interactional scaffolds for their broader means (van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, 2010; e.g., modeling) and specific discourse moves (e.g., modeling academic language). Although both teachers introduced high challenge, one’s use of “generative” scaffolds sustained that challenge and promoted discussion, while the other’s use of “directive” scaffolds seemed to reduce both challenge and interaction. Their divergent approaches appeared to contribute to differences in student talk, reasoning, and inquiry. The findings have both theoretical implications for conceptualizing “high” support for challenging instruction and practical implications for helping teachers become skillful providers of effective scaffolds for their students.

As García and Kleifgen (2018) argue, teachers of emergent bilingual (EB) students—typically categorized as English learners (ELs)—should provide rigorous curriculum and challenging instructional materials that create opportunities for their students to develop essential academic skills. Challenging instruction, rather than remediation, is crucial for adolescent newcomers, who enter US schools and must simultaneously master complex English language arts (ELA) content and English-language proficiency in classes where formal literacy instruction often is not provided (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Although bilingual programs offer valuable

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opportunities to develop students’ biliteracy and bilingualism, for most EBs, access to such programs is scarce (Menken, 2013). If they are to experience challenging literacy instruction, that likely will occur primarily in English-language contexts.

Scholars also argue that, in conducting challenging instruction, teachers must appropriately support EBs (de Oliveira & Athanases, 2017; Walqui, 2006). Drawing on cognitive (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976), sociocultural (Vygotsky, 1978), and second-language acquisition (Krashen, 1982) theories, these experts contend that temporary instructional scaffolds (Wood et al., 1976) are especially effective in helping EBs progress in language and academic development. Appropriate scaffolds maintain the intellectual challenge of the task and help learners successfully engage with it, while building the knowledge and skills required to perform the task independently (Mariani, 1997).

One such support is an interactional scaffold that helps students make sense of text and language through discourse or action (Reynolds, 2017; Walqui, 2006). Examples of interactional scaffolds include when teachers model the use of academic language, explain a new concept in a student’s primary language, or provide wait time to encourage students to think. Most available research examines teachers’ use of planned scaffolds—materials and structures such as visuals to preteach vocabulary, graphic organizers, and small-group work. Yet interactional scaffolds offer opportunities for teachers to gauge students’ needs and respond appropriately in the moment (de Oliveira, Gilmetdinova, & Pelaez-Morales, 2016; Mertzman, 2008).

Scholars generally agree that EBs benefit when instruction combines the right proportions of challenge and support (Gibbons, 2009) to achieve what Hiebert and Grouws (2007) call “productive struggle.” But research has yet to clarify what an optimal balance of challenge and support looks like. In this comparative case study, I investigate how two exemplary middle school English language development teachers used interactional scaffolds during English reading instruction with their EB students. One teacher exhibited a “directive” approach to scaffolding (Silliman & Wilkinson, 1994), using scaffolds intended to guide students to correct responses. In doing so, he reduced the challenge of the question or assigned task. The other teacher’s scaffolds were “generative,” encouraging more talk and reasoning by students. Her use of challenge-sustaining scaffolds maintained the initial rigor of her question or task. My analysis of students’ responses suggests that the teachers’ contrasting use of interactional scaffolds contributed to differences in student talk and opportunities for challenging work with text.

In the following review of the literature, I establish the context for this study by identifying three characteristics of high-quality reading comprehension instruction for EBs, introducing the practice of scaffolding, and explaining the goal of achieving a balance between support and challenge during instruction.

High-Quality English Reading Comprehension Instruction for Emergent Bilinguals

Drawing on literature about high-quality reading comprehension instruction for EBs, I ground my analysis in three fundamental premises: language is social
practice; reading comprehension is sense-making; and instruction for adolescent emergent bilinguals must be challenging.

**Language Is Social Practice**
The first premise undergirding this study is the sociolinguistic theory that language is a social practice developed through interaction with others (Hymes, 1974; van Lier, 2004). Studies of second-language acquisition suggest that, through interaction and apprenticeship (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991), learners produce more comprehensible and coherent discourse. The pedagogical implications of this theory include the importance of providing ample opportunities for EBs to process, produce, and refine language. Considering language as social practice does not preclude providing explicit instruction about language forms and functions, such as syntactic structures and vocabulary, but it prioritizes students’ authentic use of language in social, meaningful contexts.

A theory of language as social practice also recognizes that EBs simultaneously develop and use multiple languages. In their interactions, EBs *translanguage* (García & Wei, 2014) flexibly, drawing upon their linguistic repertoires to make meaning, which often includes concurrent use of two or more languages. While translanguaging practices may be more common in bilingual education contexts (Palmer, Martínez, Mateus, & Henderson, 2014), there is growing attention to their value in English-language literacy instruction (de Oliveira et al., 2016). These practices include modeling translation strategies (Daniel, Jiménez, Pray, & Pacheco, 2017) and organizing students to work in small, linguistically homogenous groups to summarize, translate, or discuss texts in their home language (Jiménez et al., 2015).

**Reading Comprehension Is Sense-Making**
The second premise comes from Aukerman’s (2008) theory of comprehension-as-sense-making. Grounded in principles of Bakhtinian dialogism (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1982), Aukerman (2008) recommends classroom conversations where students, regardless of language background, see themselves and their peers as active sense-makers, “contributors of new ideas that shape the subsequent course of discussion—and each other’s views about the text’s meaning” (p. 57). Students deliberate about possible textual meaning(s), engaging with others to question, critique, and reconsider their ideas. Aukerman asserts that teachers who seek to promote students’ sense-making should limit their own talk, follow students’ ideas, ask students to share their reasoning, and highlight ambiguity and differences of opinion.

**Instruction for Adolescent Emergent Bilinguals Must Be Challenging**
Finally, as García and Kleifgen (2018) and others (Kibler, 2011; Walqui, 2006) argue, equitable and successful instruction for secondary EBs must be challenging. English-language instruction is inherently difficult for EBs because they must simultaneously develop second-language proficiency and learn content-specific knowledge and skills, as well as the unique features of academic English (Schleppegrell, 2004). Challenge is also embedded in new standards and complex
instructional tasks, including high-level cognitive and linguistic demands; higher-order questions requiring analysis, synthesis, or interpretation; and complex texts (Bunch, Kibler, Pimentel, & Walqui, 2013). Scholars argue that EBs progress more when they receive challenging, complex instruction rather than instruction in “basic” skills (Harklau, 2002; Thomas & Collier, 1997). Challenging instruction is particularly important for adolescents, who must quickly develop the “advanced literacy” (Colombi & Schleppegrell, 2002) required by secondary and postsecondary schools and employment.

Support for Adolescent Emergent Bilinguals in English-Language Reading Instruction

To help students meet these high expectations, teachers can provide a variety of temporary supports, or scaffolds. The pedagogical term scaffolding derives from Bruner’s (1966) early research on the one-to-one tutoring relationship between child and caregiver. Wood et al. (1976) adopted the metaphor of scaffolding from the field of construction, suggesting that a scaffold “enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts,” (p. 90). Scaffolding serves as the contingent, instructional response to Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural concept of the zone of proximal development, the area between what the learner can currently do independently and can do with assistance. As learners develop their capabilities, teachers “fade” scaffolds and transfer responsibility to the student (van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, 2010).

In order for teachers to help students develop and refine language in meaningful contexts, make sense of text, and engage in challenging instruction, they must do more than rely on planned materials (e.g., graphic organizers) and structures (e.g., small-group work). They must use interactional scaffolds as well, providing support through discourse and action. Yet, with few notable exceptions, researchers have just begun to examine the role of interactional scaffolds in multilingual contexts (de Oliveira et al., 2016; Johnson, 2018; Mertzman, 2008; Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008).

Productive Struggle: A Theory for Balancing Challenge and Support

Teachers also need to use interactional scaffolds in ways that sustain rather than reduce challenge. Gibbons (2009, 2014) argues that teachers should provide instruction to EBs in the “learning/engagement zone” (Gibbons, 2009, p. 14), which incorporates a high degree of both challenge and support. Within this zone, students are motivated to extend their skills and are supported in doing so.¹

Teachers, then, must determine how to appropriately balance challenge and support throughout instruction. For instance, teachers must take care not to over-scaffold a lesson, compromising the cognitive challenge of the tasks that students undertake (Bunch, Abram, Lotan, & Valdés, 2001). Well-intentioned teachers might provide students with an overly-simplified text rather than expecting them to work through a complex original text (Fillmore & Fillmore, 2012), or assign
“recall” questions when students could develop higher-order skills of inference (Boyd, 2012). Teachers might provide what Silliman and Wilkinson (1994) call a “directive” orientation to scaffolding, leaving little room for student voice and agency, rather than a more “supportive” orientation that opens up such opportunities. Daniel, Martin-Beltrán, Peercy, and Silverman (2015) found that by introducing supports, teachers can unintentionally overscaffold student interactions, “position[ing] emergent bilinguals as passive respondents in literacy interactions rather than active participants in their language and literacy learning” (p. 393). Similarly, Athanases and de Oliveira’s (2014) case study of two high school teachers’ instruction reveals the pitfalls of well-intentioned, but excessive, support. The teachers, themselves, expressed concern that their students were not prepared for college-level independent thinking and academic work because they “handheld” them (Athanases & de Oliveira, 2014, p. 291).

In order to better understand how scaffolds can be used effectively to support rigorous instruction with challenging English texts, I closely examine how two
exemplary middle school teachers (as defined by a range of qualitative measures) in a large urban school district provided interactional scaffolds to EBs. In these English Language Development classes (Saunders, Goldenberg, & Marcelletti, 2013), nearly all instruction occurred in English, although curriculum and presentation were geared to students learning the language.

Drawing upon Gibbons’s (2009) conceptual framework of challenge and support, my study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What evidence of challenge (i.e., complexity of the text, intellectual rigor of the task, cognitive demand of the questions) was apparent in these teachers’ instruction?
2. How did the teachers use interactional scaffolds to support students in meeting that challenge?
3. Did the teachers’ use of interactional scaffolds maintain or diminish the levels of challenge?
4. How did students in each class respond orally to opportunities for language production and higher-order thinking?

Methods

This comparative case study (Yin, 2014) is part of a broader investigation of six exemplary middle school teachers’ instruction in a large, urban California school district where 26.5% of the students spoke English as a second language. Because assessment data were unavailable due to Common Core assessment piloting, I asked district EL coaches, who were familiar with teachers’ practice, to nominate individuals who met at least five of six criteria that addressed the teachers’ knowledge of ELA content and instructional strategies for EBs; colleagues’ and students’ regard for their teaching; teaching credentials and awards; and teaching experience. I then observed eight nominees, looking for evidence of challenge (e.g., complex texts, higher-order questions) and use of research-based scaffolding practices (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006; Goldenberg, Haertel, Coleman, Reese, & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2013). Based on this screening, I asked six teachers to join the study. Mr. Lau and Ms. Cheung’s instruction is the focus of this analysis. (All names are pseudonyms.)

Consistent with other research identifying the characteristics of effective teachers of EBs (Loeb, Soland, & Fox, 2014), Mr. Lau and Ms. Cheung were experienced in teaching middle school EBs; were bilingual (English/Cantonese); had a multilingual teaching certification; were National Board–certified; were admired by other teachers and district administrators; and demonstrated positive, caring relationships with students. Ms. Cheung was born in China and immigrated to the United States as a child. Mr. Lau was born in the United States to immigrant parents and taught in China for several years.

Students in both classes were at beginning to intermediate levels of English-language proficiency. All had attended school in the United States no more than
 três anos. Eles falavam uma variedade de idiomas, incluindo cantonês, mandarim, espanhol, tagalo e vietnamita.

Instrução em ambos os salas de aula incluía elementos de instrução de alta qualidade. Ambas as professoras ofereceram actividades pré-ler, como prevê-la vocabulário ou géneros literários desconhecidos. Usando diversos protocolos de participação, os alunos então lêem secções curtas de um texto mais longo, intercalando perguntas e respostas, examinando o uso da língua e estabelecendo ligações com suas vidas pessoais. Ambas as professoras regularmente incentivaram os alunos a usar estratégias de leitura, como anotar e resumir o texto, e regularmente forneceram oportunidades para os alunos trabalharem de maneira colaborativa com os pares. Enquanto a instrução foi principalmente em inglês, ambas as professoras ocasionalmente forneceram suporte primário para os estudantes cantonês.

Durante um ano acadêmico, observei 2 ciclos de instrução de leitura por cada professor, cada um incluindo 5 lições consecutivas ou conectadas. Os dados incluíam arquivos de vídeo e transcrições de 16 lições (8 por professor), trabalhos produzidos durante aqueles lições, e 6 arquivos de áudio e transcrições de entrevistas abertas com os professores, realizadas em três momentos durante o ano. Durante as entrevistas, os professores e eu assistimos e discutimos clipe de vídeo de suas lições. Eu amo extrair transcrições de 8 lições em cada sala de aula (4 outono, 4 primavera), onde os alunos estavam lendo e discutindo o texto. O tempo total de instrução analisado foi de 423 minutos; os segmentos de Mr. Lau levaram um pouco mais de tempo, em média, do que os de Ms. Cheung (27:10 versus 25:43).

Análise

Eu avaliei o desafio da instrução de leitura de três maneiras: a complexidade do texto, a rigor do trabalho intelectual, e o nível de demanda cognitiva de cada professor’s questions.

**Análise do Desafio no Texto, Atividade, e Falas do Professor**

Eu usei o Lexile, Flesch-Kincaid, e o Coh-Metrix para avaliar a complexidade de todos os textos.2 Embora haja preocupações válidas acerca da dificuldade de medir a complexidade para leitores em geral e EBs em particular (Bunch, Walqui, & Pearson, 2014), essas ferramentas forneceram medidas úteis – como comprimento de palavra, comprimento de frase, e coesão do texto – que coletivamente captaram os tipos de texto que os alunos eram esperados para ler.

Eu avaliei o rigor da instrução com um quadro de quatro pontos do Instrucional Quality Assessment (IQA; Matsumura et al., 2006) que foi projetado para capturar o grau em que o professor pressionou para conhecimento correto e pensamento rigoroso durante a instrução de leitura. Para identificar possíveis variações de rigor dentro de lições, eu cotei em intervalos de 15 minutos.

Finalmente, usando a taxonomia revisada de demanda cognitiva de Bloom (Anderson, Krathwohl, & Bloom, 2001), eu cotei para o nível de demanda cognitiva nos professores’ questions e prompts (“Pense no que o autor quer dizer aqui”). As perguntas de ordem mais alta eram aquelas que envolviam os alunos em criar, avaliar,
and analyzing, while lower-order questions called for applying, understanding, and remembering.

**Analysis of Support in Teacher Talk**

I examined the following interactional scaffolds: (a) patterned linguistic moves undertaken by the teacher at the turn-of-talk level to support literacy and/or language development, with or without obvious intent; and (b) oral or physical references to visible objects, writing, or multimedia discernibly connected to the current text and/or to reading/language processes. I defined the unit of analysis as the individual interactional scaffold, which might include the teacher referring to prior knowledge (“We talked about realistic fiction last week”); asking elicitation questions (“What’s going on in this sentence?”); or directing students to use a reading strategy (“Summarize the paragraph with your partner”). Teachers often used several interactional scaffolds within a single turn of talk. I did not code comments that pertained to management, off-topic conversations, or general classroom procedures.

I developed an initial coding system based on van de Pol and colleagues’ (2010) framework for analyzing “means of scaffolding.” Although this framework was not developed for instruction with EBs, it is useful for identifying key differences in their teachers’ scaffolding use. The codes include: feeding back, hinting, instructing, explaining, modeling, and questioning. I added to this list highlighting, which I saw teachers frequently use to direct students’ attention to another student’s comment or textual assertion, or to a section of text under discussion. While highlighting is used to make comments or text accessible to everyone, hinting directs students’ attention to content and language that holds the “right answer.”

To better understand how teachers enacted scaffolding, I also examined their “moves.” For example, a teacher could choose from many types of questions, such as those intended to clarify, elicit, or confirm students’ views. Therefore, in addition to coding every scaffold used for its broad means (e.g., questioning, modeling), I also identified its specific move (e.g., asking an elicitation question, modeling academic language). I included codes for moves specific to instruction in multilingual contexts, such as using students’ primary language, assisting linguistic transfer via cognates, or explaining how two languages differ. (A sample coded transcript excerpt is shown below in Figure 2. The full list of codes is displayed in the online supplementary archive.) Because I coded for 48 moves and each teacher used many—Mr. Lau used 42 and Ms. Cheung used 45—the frequency of any single move in each teacher’s total moves was relatively low. In fact, most moves accounted for less than 2.8% of each teacher’s total. However, a notable gap occurred between moves that constituted 2.8% or less of each teacher’s total and those that constituted 4% or more—the point where a teacher’s concentrated use of particular moves became apparent. Therefore, I considered those that accounted for more than 4% of a teacher’s total moves as “high-frequency” moves.
I measured the quantity of student talk during lessons in two ways. First, within each lesson, I calculated how long students individually or chorally responded to teachers’ questions and how long they spoke with partners or in small groups about a topic related to the lesson. In both cases I adjusted Ms. Cheung’s measurement of average talk per lesson to address the fact that her lessons were 1 minute and 14 seconds shorter than Mr. Lau’s on average. Next, I measured all audible student talk by the students’ mean number of words, turns, and words per turn, as well as the total number of nonprocedural questions asked in each segment. When multiple students were talking at once, I only measured talk that was captured by recordings and included in the transcripts.

Finally, I coded for the cognitive challenge evident in each student’s response. I categorized as low challenge all utterances that demonstrated lower-order skills as defined by Bloom’s revised taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001; remembering, understanding, applying), and as high challenge all utterances that demonstrated higher-order skills (analyzing, evaluating, creating). I also coded for raw frequency of reasoning words (e.g., could, because, I disagree), which Wegerif and Mercer (1997) found to be associated with exploratory talk and elaborative explanation, and which Soter et al. (2008) used as evidence of high-level thinking and comprehension.

**Analysis of Students’ Responses to Opportunities for Language Production and Higher-Order Thinking**

**Figure 2. Sample coded transcript excerpt (interactional scaffolds italicized)**

**Table 1. Sample coded transcript excerpt (interactional scaffolds italicized)**

| Teacher: | [Reads aloud text] So what did Venkatesh do? (Questioning: Asking elicitation question related to text) |
| Student: | He went back to his house. |
| Teacher: | That’s right. (Feeding back: Explicitly evaluating) He went to take a shower. (Explaining: Explaining text) But then—? (Questioning: Asking elicitation question related to text) |
| Student: | He is also curious. |
| Teacher: | OK. [Writes “curious” on the whiteboard.] (Highlighting: Noting, repeating, or recording student comment) Venkatesh is curious. (Feeding back: Implicitly evaluating) (8 seconds) (Directing: Providing wait time) |
| Student: | About young people, about young people in the gang. |
| Teacher: | Yeah! (Feeding back: Explicitly evaluating) So, here’s this guy, Venkatesh, he’s so curious about those things. So, he goes back to talk to members of the gang. (Explaining: Explaining text) Would you guys do that? (Questioning: Asking authentic question) |
| Student: | No! He’s crazy. |
Two other researchers coded 25% of Mr. Lau’s and Ms. Cheung’s instructional transcripts for all teacher and student talk. Agreement over coded segments was 87%, and we resolved any disagreements through discussion.

Classroom Contexts
Mr. Lau’s and Ms. Cheung’s middle school classrooms were similar in many ways. Boisterous talk in several languages spilled into the hallways as these middle school students settled into class. Both teachers exhibited qualities of “warm demanders” (Kleinfeld, 1975), whose instruction balanced trust and care with structure and discipline, creating conditions where students could thrive. This was apparent in the teachers’ friendly conversations with students about their lives and frequent visits by former students. Students spoke various home languages in each class. Most students in both classes placed at the early intermediate and intermediate levels on the state English-language proficiency test, although Ms. Cheung had more students identified as beginners. Students in both classes were in eighth grade, but three students in sixth and seventh grades had been placed in Mr. Lau’s class for scheduling reasons. Ms. Cheung’s class had 32 students and Mr. Lau’s had 11. Finally, Ms. Cheung’s class included a larger proportion of Cantonese-speaking students, which may have provided more opportunities for her to offer primary language support than Mr. Lau, who had more students who spoke Spanish, which he did not speak proficiently.

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<th>Table 1. Student Characteristics</th>
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<td>Grade Levels</td>
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Findings
As I explain and illustrate below, the teachers showed similar levels of challenge in the complexity of assigned texts, although Mr. Lau tended to ask questions with higher cognitive demand and Ms. Cheung’s assigned tasks showed slightly more evidence of consistently rigorous activity. However, the teachers differed notably in their use of interactional scaffolding. Mr. Lau exhibited a “directive” approach to scaffolding (Silliman & Wilkinson, 1994) in that his scaffolds were intended to guide students to correct responses, while Ms. Cheung’s scaffolds were what I call “generative,” intended to encourage more talk, reasoning, and questioning. Further, Ms. Cheung often used “challenge-sustaining” scaffolds, which maintained the initial rigor of her question or assigned task, while Mr. Lau used scaffolds that reduced the initial challenge. Students’ responses to their teacher’s instruction suggest that Ms. Cheung’s generative approach contributed to their more frequent and extended talk, as well as higher-order thinking, reasoning, and inquiry, while Mr. Lau’s directive approach reduced both challenge and student talk.

Challenge in the Two Classes
Each teacher provided two fiction and two expository texts with roughly the same level of complexity, as measured by weighted average Lexile and Flesch-Kincaid levels (shown in Table 2). Ms. Cheung’s lessons averaged 3.27 on the 4-point IQA scale, indicating that her instruction was rigorous. Students engaged with underlying meaning or nuances of text, used evidence to analyze text, and developed their thinking through extended responses. In contrast, Mr. Lau’s coded segments averaged 2.4, suggesting less rigor. While his students spent some time interpreting and analyzing using evidence from the text, they spent more time constructing literal summaries of the text based on surface-level information.

Analysis of the level of cognitive challenge in questions posed by the teachers tells a somewhat different story, with Mr. Lau asking more high-challenge questions than Ms. Cheung. Of the 208 questions he asked in sampled transcripts, 28.3%

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<th>Table 2. Weighted Average Levels of Complexity in Texts</th>
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<td>Mr. Lau</td>
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<td><strong>Lexile</strong></td>
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were high-challenge, while only 22.5% of the 186 questions Ms. Cheung asked were high-challenge. As subsequent analysis shows, however, Ms. Cheung used interactional scaffolds to sustain the challenge of her questions, while Mr. Lau’s scaffolds often curtailed opportunities for higher-order thinking.

Interactional Scaffolds in the Two Classes
Mr. Lau and Ms. Cheung demonstrated notable differences in their interactional scaffolding, as shown in Table 3. Most of Mr. Lau’s high-frequency scaffolds took the form of questioning, hinting, explaining, and feeding back, and he used them in directive ways. For instance, he asked many elicitation questions immediately after reading the text. Most were known-answer questions (“What just happened in this paragraph?”). He regularly followed students’ responses with evaluation (“Good job!” or “No, not quite”). And he explained the text by summarizing the main idea (“Right here they’re giving us three reasons why immigrants tend to move to cities”) or defining key vocabulary (“‘Vacant’ means no one was there”).

In some cases, when a student’s response to an elicitation question was incorrect or insufficient, Mr. Lau provided the answer he was seeking. In other cases, he hinted by drawing attention to sections of text where students might find answers to his question (“Look for [the name] somewhere on page 96. . . . One of those middle paragraphs that we just read. . . . You need to be looking. Page 96.”). On the whole, Mr. Lau’s high-frequency interactional scaffolds directed students to read the text accurately and answer his questions.

In contrast, most of Ms. Cheung’s high-frequency scaffolds were questioning, highlighting, directing, and feeding back, which she used in ways that were generative—encouraging students to say more and reason more with text and language. For instance, she rarely asked questions to elicit literal recall of the text. Instead, she questioned students about their understanding of vocabulary, language, and reading strategies. Those questions were usually contingent upon a prior student’s response or signs of confusion (“It sounds like we don’t know that word. Equivalent. What does equivalent mean?”).

Similarly, when she directed students, Ms. Cheung typically asked them to pose authentic questions about the text, encouraged them to enter a discussion in progress, or prompted them to closely examine the language they used to talk about text (“Can we clarify Qiaohui’s question? Which she are you talking about? Can you be more specific?”) To help make students’ ideas audible, visible, and central to instruction, Ms. Cheung highlighted content, language, and students’ ideas by pointing to comments and text, repeating them, or recording them on the SMART Board.

Finally, like Mr. Lau, Ms. Cheung scaffolded learning by evaluating students’ responses. She often repeated verbatim the answers she considered correct. While Mr. Lau regularly evaluated students’ comprehension of texts, Ms. Cheung tended to evaluate their use of language and reading strategies. In summary, she used a repertoire of interactional scaffolds that generated rich opportunities for student talk, reasoning, and inquiry with complex text.
Choosing and Using Interactional Scaffolds

Notably, the teachers rarely used students’ primary language or translanguaging scaffolds (translation, use of cognates, prompts for contrastive analysis, encouragement of speaking/writing in primary languages) as they read and discussed text. In 8 observed lessons per teacher, Ms. Cheung’s instruction only included 7 instances, and Mr. Lau’s included 2, most often translations in Cantonese for individual students.

**Scaffolds that Sustain or Diminish Initial Challenge**
The scaffolds the teachers provided not only helped students improve their reading and language development, but also affected the level of challenge the students faced. The following examples illustrate how the teachers’ use of scaffolds appeared to have divergent effects on students’ opportunities for sustained engagement in challenging work.

### Table 3. Comparison of High-Frequency Interactional Scaffolding Moves

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<tr>
<th>Scaffolding Means</th>
<th>Mr. Lau</th>
<th>Ms. Cheung</th>
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| **Feeding Back**  | - Explicitly evaluating  
|                   | - Implicitly evaluating  | - Explicitly evaluating  
|                   |                     | - Implicitly evaluating  |
| **Explaining**    | - Explaining text  
|                   | - Explaining key vocabulary | - Explaining key vocabulary  |
| **Hinting**       | - Noting, rereading, repeating key text/information to answer question | None* |
| **Highlighting**  | None | - Noting, repeating text already under discussion  
|                   |                     | - Noting, repeating, or recording student comment about text  
|                   |                     | - Noting, repeating, or recording student language use  |
| **Modeling**      | None | - Modeling reading strategy/process  |
| **Questioning**   | - Asking elicitation questions about text  
|                   | - Asking elicitation questions about vocabulary  
|                   | - Asking elicitation questions about language/grammar  
|                   | - Asking elicitation questions about reading strategies  
|                   | - Asking clarification/confirmation questions  | - Asking elicitation questions about vocabulary  
|                   |                     | - Asking elicitation questions about language/grammar  
|                   |                     | - Asking elicitation questions about reading strategies  
|                   |                     | - Asking clarification/confirmation questions  |
| **Directing**     | - Providing wait time | - Prompting student inquiry/question-asking  
|                   |                     | - Prompting students to comment on a student’s idea or language use  |

* “None” indicates that the teacher scaffolded in this way less than 4% of the time.
Mr. Lau: Overscaffolding and Diminishing the Initial Challenge of the Task

Mr. Lau routinely arranged for his students to engage in higher-order work in response to a difficult text, yet his moves frequently overscaffolded their work. Often he presented a challenging question or task that required analysis, but quickly reverted to hinting and explaining, prompting students only to recall information about what they had just read or heard.

This is evident in Mr. Lau’s lesson with *Freakonomics* (Levitt & Dubner, 2010), which was part of a unit he created on finance and economics. He had read aloud several paragraphs describing the activities of the Black Disciples, a Chicago drug gang. He then posed a challenging question to the class: “In what ways is this gang similar to a company?” This required students to synthesize and analyze several pages of complicated information about the dealings and financial structure of the gang. The excerpt displayed in Table 4, with teacher turns of talk highlighted in gray, begins when Mr. Lau asks his question (1: questioning) and then prompts students to discuss their responses with partners for two minutes (2: directing). After this partner talk, a student responds (3), “They’re similar because they make money,” and Mr. Lau evaluates his response (4: feeding back): “OK, they’re similar because they make money.” Next, signaling that he wants students to consider other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK: Students analyze how the gang described in the text functions like a company</th>
<th>Sample Talk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Support and Student Action</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 <strong>Questioning:</strong> Teacher asks elicitation question</td>
<td>Mr. Lau: In what ways is the Black Disciples gang a company?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 <strong>Directing:</strong> Teacher prompts students to talk to partners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Student responds</td>
<td>Student: They’re similar because they make money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 <strong>Feeding back:</strong> Teacher evaluates response</td>
<td>Mr. Lau: OK, they’re similar because they make money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 <strong>Questioning:</strong> Teacher asks elicitation question</td>
<td>In what other ways is this gang a company?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 <strong>Directing:</strong> Teacher provides wait time</td>
<td>(15 seconds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 <strong>Hinting:</strong> Teacher notes key text to answer question</td>
<td>There’s an example of how they’re similar on page 103. See if you can find it at the top.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Student responds</td>
<td>All the people, they get paid different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 <strong>Feeding back:</strong> Teacher evaluates response</td>
<td>Yes, the members of the gang have different jobs and they get paid different amounts!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 <strong>Explaining:</strong> Teacher explains topical information</td>
<td>See, the drug gang is a franchise like McDonald’s because . . .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
similarities, he reiterates his analytical question (5: questioning), “In what other ways is this gang a company?” and provides 15 seconds of wait time (6: directing). Sensing that his students are struggling to answer his question, he tells students where to find relevant information (7: hinting): “There’s an example of how they’re similar on page 103. See if you can find it at the top.” After two minutes of silence as students reread the text, one responds (8), “All the people, they get paid different,” which Mr. Lau evaluates as correct (9: feeding back): “Yes, the members of the gang have different jobs and they get paid different amounts!” He then explains the intricacies of a franchise (10: explaining) for several minutes before prompting a student to read aloud the next page of text.

Despite the initial challenge of his question, Mr. Lau’s hints and explanations reduced opportunities for students to substantively analyze the complex text. Although asking students to talk with partners allowed them to share their thinking, and providing wait time encouraged them to consider alternative ideas, ultimately his scaffolds did not offer students sustained opportunities either to engage in higher-order work with text or to participate in extended talk.

Ms. Cheung: Generative Scaffolding Sustains Opportunities for Higher-Order Thinking about Text and Language Use

Ms. Cheung routinely required her students to engage in higher-order intellectual work with text. Unlike Mr. Lau, she also required them to analyze their use of language by examining and revising their classroom talk for clarity. Her scaffolds supported the students in completing these tasks without diminishing their rigor.

Ms. Cheung’s patterns of scaffold use—deliberately moving among highlighting, questioning, and directing—are evident in a lesson in which the students read and discussed “Where Are the Women in Math and Science?” (Word Generation, 2012). In the excerpt summarized in Table 5, the students collaboratively worked to make sense of the first line of text: “The former president of Harvard University upset many people when he explained why he thought there were fewer women than men in math and science jobs.” The challenging task that Ms. Cheung had presented was for the students to pose an original question about the text. She gave them ten minutes to individually brainstorm questions and discuss them with partners, then invited volunteers to share their questions with the whole group.

After her initial prompt for original questions about the text (1), Ms. Cheung combined highlighting and directing moves to help students evaluate and propose revisions to a student’s question. For instance, after Matthew shared his question (“Who was upset while he explained why fewer women than men are working in math and science?”), she directed him to repeat it “three times louder and two times more slowly” (2: directing). She then repeated and recorded the question on the board (4: highlighting). Next, rather than prompting students to answer Matthew’s question, she challenged them to evaluate his language use (5: directing: “Students, I want you to look at this question critically”) and to propose revisions to the question (7: questioning: “How can we make this question more clear?”). Given wait time for this analysis (8: directing), the students spent several minutes in whole-class conversation analyzing and revising Matthew’s original question.
**Table 5. Ms. Cheung: Teacher/Student Action and Sample Talk**

**TASK:** Students write and discuss original questions about the text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Support and Student Action</th>
<th>Sample Talk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Matthew shares his question</td>
<td>Matthew: Who was upset while he explained why fewer women than men are working in math and science?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 <strong>Directing:</strong> Teacher tells Matthew to speak louder and slower</td>
<td>Ms. Cheung: Matthew, try again. Three times louder, two times more slowly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Matthew repeats his question</td>
<td>Matthew: Who was upset while he explained why fewer women than men are working in math and science?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 <strong>Highlighting:</strong> Teacher repeats and records student’s question</td>
<td>Ms. Cheung: ((records)) Who was upset when, while he explained why there were fewer men than women in math and science?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 <strong>Directing:</strong> Teacher prompts students to evaluate Matthew’s question</td>
<td>Ms. Cheung: ((points)) Students, I want you to look at this question critically. Is this a question?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Students evaluate Matthew’s question</td>
<td>Students: No. Student: It’s similar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 <strong>Questioning:</strong> Teacher prompts students to clarify Matthew’s question</td>
<td>Ms. Cheung: How can we make this question more clear?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 <strong>Directing:</strong> Teacher provides wait time for student groups</td>
<td>(10 seconds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Students revise Matthew’s question</td>
<td>Student: Couldn’t the “he” become “the man”? Student: [You should] write “former president of Harvard University”!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 <strong>Directing:</strong> Teacher prompts students to answer Matthew’s question</td>
<td>Ms. Cheung: Students, shout out your answer. You think you know the answer to this question? Shout it out!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Students share multiple answers to question</td>
<td>Students: Former president! Students: Many people. Student: No answer!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 <strong>Highlighting:</strong> Teacher repeats/records multiple student answers</td>
<td>Ms. Cheung: Your answer is many people ((records)). OK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 <strong>Highlighting:</strong> Teacher notes that students disagree</td>
<td>So, James’s answer is that many people were upset. Jessica’s answer is that the former president is upset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 <strong>Highlighting:</strong> Teacher rereads key section of text and shows sentence on screen</td>
<td>Ms. Cheung: So, let’s go back to that first sentence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 <strong>Questioning:</strong> Teacher asks elicitation question about grammar</td>
<td>Ms. Cheung: Here is my question: Who upset who in this sentence? Who did the upsetting? . . . And how do you know?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 <strong>Directing:</strong> Teacher provides wait time</td>
<td>(10 seconds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Students justify their answer</td>
<td>Students: Many people. Oh! Because the subject is in front.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 <strong>Explaining:</strong> Teacher explains why this sentence was challenging</td>
<td>Ms. Cheung: This is why I read the sentence two times at the beginning. It’s a long sentence, and you guys are not used to “upset” being a verb.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students suggested revisions such as, “Couldn’t the ‘he’ become ‘the man’?” and “[You should] write ‘former president of Harvard University’!” (9). Overall, her particular cluster of highlighting and directing moves helped students collectively work through challenging linguistic analysis.

Ms. Cheung then pivoted the whole-class conversation from analysis of language use to analysis of the text itself by asking students to answer Matthew’s newly revised question (10: directing). Again, she used several highlighting scaffolds to repeat and record those answers (12: highlighting) and to point to disagreement among the students over the answer: “So, James’s answer is that many people were upset. Jessica’s answer is that the former president is upset” (13: highlighting). In response to this disagreement, she drew students’ attention back to the first sentence of text, rereading it aloud (14: highlighting), and asked an elicitation question to gauge the students’ understanding of the word upset: “Here is my question: Who upset who in this sentence? . . . How do you know?” (15: questioning). After 10 seconds of wait time (16: directing), students offered their reasoning: “Many people. Oh! Because the subject is in front” (17). Ms. Cheung concluded by explaining why this sentence was challenging: “This is why I read the sentence two times at the beginning. It’s a long sentence, and you guys are not used to ‘upset’ being a verb” (18: explaining).

In this excerpt, Ms. Cheung used specific moves within highlighting, questioning, and directing to help students complete the challenging task of asking and answering original questions about text. Using elicitation questions, she assessed students’ understanding of the grammar, which led to her analytical question: “How do you know?” As I explain below, her use of scaffolds not only maintained challenge but also contributed to the overall quantity and quality of her students’ talk.

**Students’ Responses to Opportunities for Language Production and Higher-Order Thinking**

This analysis of students’ talk reveals how the two teachers’ use of interactional scaffolds created substantially different opportunities for their students’ language production and higher-order thinking. Ms. Cheung’s students talked more and talked more frequently than Mr. Lau’s and showed more evidence of cognitive complexity and reasoning in their talk.

**Quantity and Frequency of Talk**

Discourse analysis of eight lessons in each class reveals stark differences in the quantity of student talk. As shown in Table 6, Ms. Cheung’s instruction contained more student turns of talk per lesson than Mr. Lau’s (averaging 63.5 versus 46.4), even though her lessons were, on average, a minute and a half shorter. In each turn of talk, her students spoke more—an average of 5.0 words per turn compared with 4.3 words per turn in Mr. Lau’s class. Students in Ms. Cheung’s class asked more questions—an average of 10.4 per lesson (83 total) versus only 2 per lesson in Mr. Lau’s class (16 total).
Evidence of Cognitive Complexity and Reasoning in Student Talk

There is also evidence that Ms. Cheung’s students demonstrated more talk associated with higher-order thinking and reasoning. As shown in Table 6, the student turns of talk in Ms. Cheung’s class included a higher percentage of high-challenge thinking than those in Mr. Lau’s class. Although he asked more high-order questions, his students tended to answer with lower-order talk, likely in response to the reduced challenge that his scaffolds offered. The data also indicate that Ms. Cheung’s students used four times more reasoning words than Mr. Lau’s.

Therefore, despite both teachers’ obvious encouragement of and interest in their students, student talk in the two classes differed markedly. On average, students in Ms. Cheung’s class talked more often, talked more in a single turn, asked more questions, used more reasoning words, and showed more evidence of higher-order thinking than those in Mr. Lau’s. Together, these findings suggest that Ms. Cheung’s instruction provided an effective balance of support and challenge, which helped to keep her students in the recommended “learning and engagement zone.”

Limitations

This research has several limitations. First, although this observational study allowed me to closely analyze teachers’ use of scaffolds and their students’ responses, I cannot make causal claims about the effects of the teachers’ instruction on learning. Second, in order to reap the benefits of analyzing rich qualitative data, my sample—two teachers from the same school district—is small and deliberately, not randomly, selected. Third, because I wanted to observe the lessons and pedagogy that the teachers chose, I did not try to observe them teaching the same reading lessons. It is possible that the findings would be less divergent if the teachers were presenting the same lessons and texts. Further, the use of microgenetic analysis (Chinn, 2006), which includes more frequent observations during an extended...
time period, might have provided even more reliable accounts of scaffolding in each class.

Finally, differences in class composition might have contributed to these findings. Ms. Cheung’s class included 32 students, all eighth graders, while Mr. Lau’s class of mostly eighth graders (with one sixth- and two seventh-grade students) had only 11. Perhaps Ms. Cheung’s class demonstrated more talk and evidence of higher-order thinking because students were, on average, older and/or because there were more voices in the class. However, one might expect students in the smaller class to have more opportunities to talk. Perhaps differences in student talk were also due to the fact that Ms. Cheung had comparatively more students at beginning levels of English-language proficiency, who tend to show faster language and literacy growth than students at intermediate levels (Collier, 1987).

**Discussion**

Scholars of high-quality English reading comprehension instruction for EBs contend that effective teachers offer ample opportunities for students to develop and refine oral language in meaningful contexts, actively make sense of text, and engage in higher-order cognitive processes with complex texts. Gibbons’s (2009) “Four Zones of Teaching and Learning” provides an informative framework for conceptualizing how Mr. Lau and Ms. Cheung strived to provide challenge and support during instruction. Both teachers created opportunities for students to participate in rigorous comprehension and analysis with complex texts. Both offered considerable oral support to students by feeding back and questioning. Mr. Lau relied upon a range of explaining and hinting scaffolds, while Ms. Cheung tended to highlight content and student ideas and direct students toward inquiry and discussion.

Yet, only Ms. Cheung consistently used interactional scaffolds that maintained challenge and higher-order thinking. Her instruction displayed consistent evidence of students’ sense-making and engagement in productive struggle. In contrast, Mr. Lau’s instruction often showed evidence of “low challenge/high support.” While Mr. Lau often began by asking higher-order questions about complex text and appeared to provide the kinds of support recommended for EBs—explanation, direction, questioning—the supports gradually undermined the challenge of the task and left students less engaged in discussing text and language. Although Mr. Lau’s instruction might seem more rigorous because he asked more higher-order questions, his students had fewer opportunities to fully engage in this analysis. His well-intentioned efforts may have reduced the kind of language production and meaning-making that his students most needed.

**Differences in Why Teachers Scaffold**

De Oliveira and Athanases (2017) provide an illuminating framework for further exploring interactional scaffolding in this study. It centers on three questions: Scaffolding for whom? Scaffolding for what purposes? Scaffolding how? The last two are relevant to this study. De Oliveira and Athanases contend that teachers’ purposes...
for scaffolding have implications for how they teach and what their students learn. The teachers’ short-term goals (such as what they want students to “get” from a particular text) and long-term goals (such as helping students expand their linguistic repertoire by revising sentences for clarity) reveal the teachers’ broader aims for EBs. Ms. Cheung chose scaffolds that aligned with goals of sense-making, developing language through meaningful interaction, and rigorous instruction. Her scaffolds highlighted text and students’ ideas, clarified thinking, and directed students toward inquiry and conversation. As Ms. Cheung explained during interviews, she saw reading instruction as an opportunity to help her students present, explore, and critique their own assertions about text, while also encouraging them to use language in meaningful activities, even when that language was imperfect.

In contrast, Mr. Lau regularly checked for comprehension, provided wait time, and hinted where students could find answers to his questions. He provided less time for students to talk with others and rarely prompted them to analyze their use of language. During interviews, he stated his commitment to authentic discussion that encouraged meaning-making and language-in-action, but also noted the need for students to achieve sufficiently high scores on standardized reading and English proficiency tests to be reclassified as non-ELs. Such tests value standard comprehension and use of language more than nonstandard meaning-making, so it is not surprising that Mr. Lau’s instruction regularly required students to arrive at predetermined understandings about text and language.

Thus, these two English language development teachers’ patterned uses of interactional scaffolds illustrate divergent expectations about what EBs can and should do during reading instruction. One type of instruction builds on the potential of students, using scaffolds to engage and propel them through challenging tasks, text, and language. The other arguably represents a deficit view of students, using scaffolds as bridges across moments of difficulty. The bridges that Mr. Lau provided often removed opportunities for students to grapple with challenges—opportunities that might have served them well.

**Differences in How Teachers Scaffold**

Next, scaffolding how? As other studies have found, how teachers scaffold matters (Daniel et al., 2015; van de Pol et al., 2010). The choices that teachers make moment to moment affect the quality of instruction that EBs experience. Findings from this study confirm that effective scaffolds should be contingent upon what students know and can do (Reynolds & Daniel, 2018).

Yet, contingent responses, in themselves, are not sufficient. Key to Ms. Cheung’s apparent success in making productive struggle possible was not only her choice of scaffolds that responded to students’ comments, questions, and use of language, but also her selection of scaffolds that sustained their interaction with challenging tasks. Although Mr. Lau’s support also was contingent on students’ responses, the scaffolds he offered diminished the challenge and complexity of their work.

Scaffolds for EBs in particular ought to lead students to opportunities for greater challenge, such as inquiry, higher-order thinking, and extended talk. Without keeping an eye on rigor during reading instruction, teachers may overscaffold,
inadvertently short-circuiting opportunities for students’ growth in reading and language development. This can lead students to engage in lower-order tasks, narrow sense-making, and recitation-style discourse (Bunch et al., 2001).

Therefore, I argue that teachers should choose interactional scaffolds that are both contingent and challenge-sustaining. Effective teachers adjust scaffolds in response to the learners’ responses and ideas but do so in ways that create and maintain opportunities for EBs to engage in ongoing, rigorous work. Too much explaining, hinting, and known-answer questioning in response to students’ apparent confusion deprives them of the chance to struggle with text and language in productive ways.

Implications for Research and Practice

The teachers’ divergent expectations and patterns of scaffolding suggest that, in line with de Oliveira and Athanases’s (2017) recent recommendations, researchers need to rethink what it means to effectively scaffold reading comprehension instruction for EBs. If students are to become skilled sense-makers, then scaffolds should assist them in learning how to question, critique, and reconsider their ideas about text and language in collaboration with others. Further, if teachers assume that EBs have the potential to manage rigorous academic content and language, then scaffolds should be used to guide them to greater challenge. Practical theories for scaffolding instruction should reflect high expectations for what EBs can and will do.

Future studies might use large samples to isolate the effectiveness of individual interactional scaffolds that appear to sustain challenge, and explore the relationship between their use and student learning. In this study I did not investigate differences among students’ responses or learning within classes, though arguably they exist and are important. Further, given the two teachers’ limited use of primary language scaffolds, future studies can further examine how teachers working with a multilingual class of students in English-language contexts can creatively use students’ home languages to scaffold instruction (Daniel et al., 2017; de Oliveira et al., 2016; Jiménez et al., 2015).

Teacher educators and coaches can support practice by asking teachers to consider whether and how their purposes for scaffolding align with their broader goals for teaching and learning. Teachers whose philosophies incline them to follow and respond to students’ thoughts, as Ms. Cheung’s did, can be guided to select scaffolds that highlight, question, and build on students’ ideas. If teachers are to succeed in supporting EBs as they grapple with challenging texts and ideas, this analysis suggests that they should not immediately downshift to lower-order prompts for recall or resort to explaining the text. This may mean setting aside the pursuit of a specific answer and letting students struggle productively.

The importance of contingent and challenge-sustaining interactional scaffolding also has implications for preparing and supporting teachers. Mr. Lau and Ms. Cheung suggested during interviews that the little preservice training they received in scaffolding instruction for EBs focused on how to use planned, not interactional, scaffolds. If that is widely true, then the potential of skillful use of interactional scaffolds to achieve greater rigor is being overlooked and underused.
Further, both teachers described their teacher preparation programs as instructing them to teach in one language at a time, with little value placed on translanguaging and hybrid language environments. They also did not know how to provide such scaffolds if they, themselves, were not proficient in all students’ home languages. Given the linguistic diversity among students in most schools, teacher educators and instructional coaches can do more to model a range of bilingual pedagogies, even in primarily English-language contexts. This may include ways of deepening students’ metalinguistic awareness of how languages work (Escamilla, 2014) or providing more opportunities for students to make meaning of text and language in their home languages (Daniel et al., 2017; de Oliveira et al., 2016; Jiménez et al., 2015).

Teachers also need help to develop skills of observation and diagnosis of student learning and to provide scaffolds that are appropriately contingent on EBs’ current needs, linguistic practices, and potential. In the moment of instruction, teachers need to listen well and look carefully, paying attention to when their students trip over unfamiliar words or respond with quizzical looks. Based on Reynolds and Daniel’s (2018) recent recommendations, teachers can practice this by closely analyzing videos of instruction during supervision by experienced practitioners and coaches, who can pause recordings to point out children’s subtle indications of confusion or insight. Teacher educators and coaches can help prospective and current teachers practice tailoring support both to meet their overall goals and to address the immediate responses and actions of their students. Such efforts would guide teachers in developing these essential, but complex, practices. In doing so, productive struggle in classrooms for EBs might become the norm rather than the exception.

NOTES
1. Another method for analyzing instructional challenge/support is Cummins’s (1984) framework for Evaluating Language Demand in Content Activities, which considers the cognitive demands of the task and the amount of available contextual support.
2. Neither teacher relied heavily on district-adopted curricula. Instead, they selected novels and expository texts that were engaging, that aligned with district instructional goals, and that allowed them to teach relevant literacy and language skills.
3. Ms. Cheung had access to Word Generation articles but was not trained in the instructional practices the curriculum called for.

REFERENCES
Choosing and Using Interational Scaffolds


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