"It's Kind of a Balancing Act": Scaffolding Collaborative Writing Activities in a Diverse First-Grade Classroom

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“IT’S KIND OF A BALANCING ACT”: SCAFFOLDING COLLABORATIVE WRITING ACTIVITIES IN A DIVERSE FIRST-GRADE CLASSROOM

By
Loren Jones

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of the University of Miami in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Coral Gables, Florida
May 2018
A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

“IT’S KIND OF A BALANCING ACT”: SCAFFOLDING COLLABORATIVE
WRITING ACTIVITIES IN A DIVERSE FIRST-GRADE CLASSROOM

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This design-based research study explored how collaborative writing activities can be used in support of ELLs’ writing development in the context of a culturally and linguistically diverse first-grade classroom. Using qualitative methods, I examined two focal ELL students’ participation across four iterations of collaborative writing activities, analyzing their interactions and collaboratively written texts. Additionally, I explored the context in which each iteration of collaborative writing activities was implemented, focusing specifically on the teaching and learning activities surrounding the collaborative activities and the interactions between the teacher and her students. By analyzing audio recordings, field notes, classroom artifacts, students’ written texts, teacher interviews, and debriefing notes, this study aimed to answer the following three research questions:

1. What is the nature of first-grade students’ (ELLs and their partners/group members) interactions when participating in collaborative writing activities?
2. How do the two focal ELL students’ written texts compare across the collaborative writing activities?
3. In what ways can collaborative writing activities be scaffolded to support ELLs’ writing development in a diverse first-grade classroom?

The findings from this study indicated that the two focal ELL students demonstrated dynamic patterns of interaction when working with their peers throughout the four iterations of collaborative writing. These patterns, characterized by unique
language features and scaffolding occurrences, were identified as collaborative, collective, dominant/passive, and expert/novices. The evaluation of students’ writing revealed that their collaboratively produced texts were varied across the writing activities, as they were tasked with producing texts from four different genres. In some instances, the students’ texts revealed their clear understanding of the genre, including its purpose and stages, as well as their ability to control and implement different language features. However, in other cases, their texts showed that they needed further instruction or revision in specific areas. Findings also revealed specific ways in which the collaborative writing activities were scaffolded to support ELLs’ writing development in this first-grade classroom. Before the writing activities, the teacher prepared students to write collaboratively and utilized planned scaffolds to design and structure the different activities. During the collaborative writing activities, the teacher employed interactional scaffolds and facilitated the revision process to support the ELL students in producing texts that aligned with the writing goals. After the collaborative writing activities were completed, the teacher encouraged students to share their final product and invited them to participate in a discussion to debrief about the writing activities.

Ultimately, this study contributed to the field of second language writing by (a) highlighting the rich and dynamic patterns of interaction that can arise when ELLs have the opportunity to participate in collaborative writing activities, (b) showcasing the high-quality texts that ELL students can produce when writing collaboratively, and (c) identifying effective scaffolding practices as they relate to implementing collaborative writing activities in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.
I would like to first express my heartfelt gratitude to the participants who made this dissertation research possible. I am extremely grateful to Mrs. Cabana and her first-grade students for welcoming me into their classroom. It was my distinct privilege to work with such a passionate and dedicated teacher, and I will always remember her enthusiasm and warmth. I am also thankful for her spirited, young students, who were always eager to learn.

I was very fortunate to work with the amazing faculty, staff, and students at the University of Miami throughout my doctoral program. I am especially grateful for the extraordinary guidance and incredible mentorship offered by my wonderful advisor, Dr. Luciana C. de Oliveira. I will always remember the countless hours she spent working with me, both in person and from a distance. I don’t know how I would have made it through this process without her thoughtful suggestions and reassuring comments. I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Drs. Mary Avalos, Blaine Smith, and Andrew Lynch. These esteemed scholars served as remarkable role models throughout my program and I greatly appreciate the direction they offered me in completing this work. I attribute much of my success to their timely and insightful feedback.

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I am blessed with an unbelievable family that has lovingly supported me throughout my entire educational journey. I am especially thankful to my parents who have always been my biggest cheerleaders. I am also incredibly grateful for my amazing partner, Kenneth Carter Eshé. His unconditional love, relentless support, and kind words of encouragement have made it possible for me to pursue my educational dream. Kenneth, thank you for always believing in me and pushing me to believe in myself. I will forever be thankful for the wonderful life we share together.


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Chapter One: Introduction

The population of the United States has grown increasingly diverse over the recent decades. The most current U.S. Census data revealed a 158% increase in the number of individuals that speak a language other than English at home (Ryan, 2013). This increase, which occurred over a period of thirty short years, from 1980-2010, will likely continue in the years ahead as the nation experiences a high, sustained flow of immigration from countries across the world (Fix & Passell, 2003). This expanding cultural and linguistic diversity is bringing about a momentous shift in the United States’ population with a myriad of implications for education.

One of the most prominent challenges that educational stakeholders face is effectively teaching students who are in the process of acquiring English as an additional language. Although all students, especially at the primary level, are at some level of English language development, I am referring specifically to students who are learning English in U.S. schools, and come from a home or background where a language other than English is spoken. In the context of this study, I will refer to these students as English language learners (ELLs). I selected this term because it does not identify the students’ level of language proficiency nor how many other languages they may use. Instead, it simply recognizes that they are learning English.

ELLs represent a substantial, ever-growing portion of the K-12 population in the United States. In some states, ELLs make up over one-fifth of student enrollment in public schools. Florida has the third highest ELL enrollment in the United States, with more than 292,000 students (approximately 10%) in public schools classified as ELLs, the great majority of which come from Spanish-dominant families and heritages (U.S.
Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2015). As this number of students continues to rise in the years ahead (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2015), projections show that language minority students will comprise 25% of the country’s school-aged population by 2025 (Gottlieb, 2016).

The success of these diverse students will largely depend on teachers’ ability to address their cultural, linguistic, and overall academic needs (Hite & Evans, 2006). While these changing demographics are not new, they contribute to classroom environments that present unique requirements for teachers. Research continues to demonstrate the large and persistent opportunity gap between ELL and non-ELL students (e.g. Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Garcia, Lawton, & Diniz de Figueiredo, 2012), which speaks to the importance of teacher preparation for these diverse classroom settings. This opportunity gap, defined as “deficiencies in the foundational components of societies, schools, and communities that produce significant differences in educational opportunities” (Carter & Welner, 2013, p. 3), inevitably leads to the stark achievement gaps we have seen for the past 30 to 40 years (Reardon, Robinson-Cimpian, & Weathers, 2015). At the same time, students are faced with a rigorous educational environment driven by the implementation of standards, such as the Common Core (CCSS; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) and variations of the CCSS in states across the United States. Florida implemented the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) in 2014 (Florida Department of Education, 2017). These standards, commonly referred to as the Florida Standards, are closely aligned with the CCSS, and they hold all students to the same achievement expectations, regardless of their ELL status. This presents a concern for teachers working with ELLs, as the new
standards place an extraordinary emphasis on language, requiring students to “apply a multifaceted knowledge of English” (Dutro, Nuñez, & Helman, 2016, p. 43) when demonstrating their knowledge and skills via discussions, presentations, and written performance tasks.

In conjunction with the emphasis placed on language, the CCSS and states’ adaptations of them contain stringent expectations for writing skills and applications that students need to master across grade levels and content areas. These expectations make writing a necessary central focus in the classroom, which represents a shift from past instructional practices, during which students spent little time writing or being taught how to write (e.g. Applebee & Langer, 2011; Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Graham, Harris, & Santangelo, 2015). Recent studies revealed that less than 10 minutes were devoted to writing instruction and activity during the literacy block in some first and third-grade classrooms (Connor, Ingebrand, & Dombek, 2013; Connor et al., 2009). This finding is especially disheartening, given the importance of writing for students’ success in school and beyond. Prominent scholars in the field have pointed out that “most contexts of life (school, the workplace, and the community) call for some level of writing skill, and each context makes overlapping, but not identical demands” (Graham & Perin, 2007, p. 9).

Writing in Schools

In the context of school, writing skills are needed across content areas for various purposes. In science, students may be tasked with writing a procedural recount in which they describe an experiment they completed. In math, students may be required to write explanations for the steps they use to solve a word problem, and in history, they may be asked to write a biography. These different genres place unique demands on students as
they must learn to produce texts with the appropriate structure and language features (Christie & Derewianka, 2008). At the first-grade level, students are challenged to produce texts from multiple genres, including narrative, informative/explanatory, procedure, and persuasive (Florida State University, 2017). When writing these texts, they are also challenged to draw on foundational literacy skills that they are often still working to master, including spelling, handwriting, and sentence construction (Graham, McKeown, Kiuhara, & Harris, 2012b). Facing these challenges is no simple matter. Writing is a complex process that places numerous demands on young students, many of whom are in the process of transitioning from spoken to written communication (Martin & Rothery, 1986; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986).

Teachers’ instructional support is crucial for young students working to develop the writing skills they will need to be successful in navigating the many demands of genre-based school writing. This support is especially important for ELLs, who are learning English while simultaneously attempting to engage in academic tasks at their grade level. Research has shown that ELLs tend to follow a similar trajectory for writing development as their non-ELL peers (e.g. Buckwalter & Lo, 2002). Despite this similarity, research has also shown that teachers’ writing instruction should be modified and adjusted to meet the unique needs of ELLs (e.g. August & Shanahan, 2006; Helman, 2016; Shanahan & Beck, 2006), as they often encounter cognitive and emotional challenges that native English-speakers do not. In addition to the cognitive demands of learning unfamiliar concepts through a new language, ELLs must also grapple with issues of transfer, or the influences that their native language has on their English language acquisition (Bear & Smith, 2016; Olson, Scarcella, & Matuchniak, 2013). ELLs must
find ways to balance their home language and culture with the often-competing English-dominant classroom culture, frequently resulting in emotional and identity struggles (Meltzer & Hamann, 2005; Moll, Sáez, & Dworin, 2001).

This need for inclusive writing instruction that is responsive to ELLs’ needs has been brought to scholars’ attention, resulting in an increase in studies focusing on writing instruction and ELLs. However, there continues to be a dearth of literature in this area (de Oliveira & Silva, 2016). The available literature in this field focuses on effective practices that teachers can utilize to facilitate ELLs’ writing development (e.g. Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005; Gersten et al., 2007). These practices include (a) providing more opportunities for ELLs to write; (b) using direct instruction to guide students through writing processes (e.g. planning, drafting, revising); (c) focusing on foundational skills (i.e. handwriting, spelling); (d) incorporating modeling, visual aids, realia, and gestures; and (e) providing accurate feedback (August, Goldenberg, Saunders, & Dressler, 2010; Calderón, Slavin, & Sanchez, 2011; Graham & Perin, 2007). Additionally, this research advocates for opportunities for students to write collaboratively (Graham et al., 2012b; Graham et al., 2015).

**Collaborative Writing**

Collaborative writing has been promoted in the literature as an effective practice due to the multiple benefits it offers teachers and their ELL students. This approach to writing instruction is supported by research that highlights collaborative work as an effective tool to support ELLs’ language development (Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2002), especially when ELLs are paired with their fluent English-speaking peers (Faltis, Arias, & Ramírez-Marín, 2010; Rumberger & Ganadara, 2004). While collaborative writing has
been defined differently across the literature, within this specific study it refers to the process by which students join efforts to develop a single text (Graham et al., 2012a). Studies that conceptualize collaborative writing in this way have been carried out across grade levels, but the great majority of this research is concentrated at the university level (e.g. Li & Kim, 2016; Storch, 2011). The limited number of studies conducted at the elementary level have shown that young writers benefit from collaborative writing, both academically and socially. Academically, students learn new writing skills, show improvement in writing performance, and develop a more positive perception of writing (e.g. Li, Chu, Ki, & Woo, 2012). Socially, students experience an increase in motivation and self-efficacy (e.g. Chung & Walsh, 2006).

Although the available research on collaborative writing is informative and well-intended, the great majority of it does not focus on ELL students at the elementary level, which leaves a significant gap in this field. As research continues to show that teachers do not feel adequately prepared to teach writing (Gilbert & Graham, 2010) or ELLs (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008), there is a need to further explore collaborative writing as a practical approach to writing instruction that teachers can use to support ELLs in developing their writing skills and in meeting the ambitious expectations set forth by the CCSS (Spycher, 2014). The present study seeks to contribute to the gap in this field by examining how collaborative writing activities can be used in support of ELL’s writing development in the context of a diverse first-grade classroom. The research questions for this study were the following:

1. What is the nature of first-grade students’ (ELLs and their partners/group members) interactions when participating in collaborative writing activities?
2. How do the two ELL students’ written texts compare across the collaborative writing activities?

3. In what ways can collaborative writing activities be scaffolded to support ELLs’ writing development in a diverse first-grade classroom?

As a design-based research (DBR) study (Cobb, Confrey, diSessa, Lehrer, & Schauble, 2003), this investigation captures the complexities of collaborative writing activities carried out in a first-grade classroom. By identifying an optimal instructional sequence, this study also provides a frame of reference that other teachers can draw on to implement collaborative writing in their own classrooms.

**Overview of the Dissertation**

In the following chapter, I present the theoretical perspectives that guided this study and the pertinent literature that influenced its design. I first discuss the two complementary theoretical frameworks that served as the basis of this study, including sociocultural theory of learning and systemic functional linguistics. I then examine the relevant literature on children’s writing development and writing instruction, with a special focus on the ELL population. I conclude Chapter 2 with an explanation of how this study will contribute to the field of second language writing research. In Chapter 3, I discuss the details of the designed-based research methods that informed this study. This chapter provides specifics about the research site, participants, writing instructional units, and students’ written products. I also describe my role in the research, data collection methods, procedures for data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and limitations.

Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 report findings from this study. In Chapter 4, I present findings in relation to the two focal ELL students’ interactions with their peers.
when writing collaboratively, including a comparative case analysis (Research Question 1; Stake, 2006). Chapter 5 also presents a comparative case analysis, in which I examine the two focal ELL students’ written texts produced across the four collaborative writing activities (Research Question 2). In Chapter 6, I present findings in relation to Research Question 3, which explores the ways in which collaborative writing activities can be scaffolded to support ELLs’ writing development in a diverse first-grade classroom. Lastly, in Chapter 7, I discuss how this study contributes to the field of second language writing. I conclude with implications for teacher education and possibilities for future research.
Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In the first two sections of this chapter, I present the two theoretical perspectives that guided my research study — the sociocultural theory of learning (Rogoff, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978, 1987) and systemic functional linguistics (SFL; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin, 2009; Rose & Martin, 2012). In the second section, I review the research on literacy instruction, with a specific focus on writing development and instruction for ELLs.

Sociocultural Theory of Learning

The sociocultural theory of learning and development emphasizes the inseparability of the individual from the social (Moll, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). Children learn and develop through a social process in which they interact with peers and adults in particular environments. These social interactions have been identified as the central element of the educational process (Moll, 1990) because it is through these interactions that “knowledge is transferred to the child in a definite system” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 169). This transfer of knowledge often takes place in the child’s zone of proximal development (ZPD; Vygotsky, 1978). ZPD, arguably the most well-known construct in the sociocultural theory of learning (Au, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978; Walqui, 2006; Wood, 1988), is defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

Research has shown that the most effective learning takes place in the child’s ZPD, when the challenge of a particular task is just ahead of students’ current abilities,
and they have support from a more knowledgeable other (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). Building on their ZPD, scaffolding targets the gap between the actual or current performance level of children and the levels they may reach without assistance (Athanases & de Oliveira, 2014; Walqui, 2006; Wood, 1988; Wood, Brunner, & Ross, 1976). The notion of scaffolding was first introduced by Wood et al. (1976) in reference to the support and guidance that an adult (or more capable peer) may provide to children as they progress through a difficult task (Fernández, Wegerif, Mercer, & Rojas-Drummond, 2001). Various types of scaffolding are identified throughout the literature, but one of the most common is the expert/novice relationship. This particular type of scaffolding has received a great deal of attention in the developmental literature (e.g. Donato, 1994) and can be conceptualized as a child being assisted by an expert, often receiving guidance, advice, and modeling (Van Lier, 1996). A second type of scaffolding, known as collective scaffolding, focuses on a relationship of equal knowledge in which learners work together on a shared task to guide one another through complex problem solving (Donato, 1994; Fernández et al., 2001; Wood & O’Malley, 1996). Several distinguished researchers whose work focuses on collective scaffolding have shown that children create zones of proximal development for each other, in which they produce results none of them would have been capable of producing on their own (Walqui, 2006).

Through the different types of scaffolding (novice/expert, collective) that take place in a child’s ZPD, children begin to move from the social to the individual. More specifically, as children collaborate with peers or adults in socially structured activities, they become prepared for individual participation in related events (Rogoff, 1995). This “later participation” is identified by Rogoff (1995) as participatory appropriation.
Participatory appropriation is used in contrast to the term of *internalization*, which typically refers to something static taken across a boundary from external to internal. This, in Rogoff’s estimation, implies a separation between the personal and social context. Participatory appropriation, on the other hand, is conceptualized as a process of transformation in which, through a person’s own participation in an activity, the individual changes and develops the knowledge and skills which prepare him or her for involvement in other similar events (Rogoff, 1995).

**Summary of Sociocultural Theory of Learning**

In summary, the sociocultural theory of learning establishes social interaction as the driving force in the learning and development of children. This social interaction is most beneficial when it takes place in the child’s ZPD with other adults or more capable peers. When working in their ZPD with adults and peers, children are often scaffolded through an expert/novice relationship or through what Donato (1994) has termed *collective scaffolding*. During this process of scaffolding, children often move from the social to the individual in a process of transformation known as *participatory appropriation*. It is through participatory appropriation that children become prepared for involvement in other related events. This theory, which outlines the social process of learning and development, has several educational implications for literacy instruction, specifically collaborative writing in the elementary context.

In order to be effective, teaching and learning tasks must be more complex than those which students can complete individually, but within their ability to complete when working collaboratively with others who can provide scaffolding (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Walqui, 2006). This indicates that teachers need to be strategic when planning
writing tasks for students and must create challenging, collaborative environments where students’ learning can be scaffolded. In addition, when designing these writing tasks (whole class, collaborative groups/pairs), the teacher must consider the diversity of learners in their classrooms, as children will need varied degrees and different types of scaffolding, depending on the task at hand (Athanases & de Oliveira, 2014). With the ultimate goal of students moving to participatory appropriation (i.e. taking on the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in a similar event at a later time), the teacher must also continuously monitor the children’s progress as they work through the writing tasks.

This research study used the sociocultural theory of learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978) in combination with scaffolding (Wood et al., 1976) and participatory appropriation (Rogoff, 1995) to examine how collaborative writing activities, in the context of the teaching-learning cycle (Rothery, 1996; Martin, 2009; de Oliveira, 2017), scaffold the writing development of ELL students in the first-grade classroom. The student-student and teacher-student(s) interactions (i.e. dialogue) were analyzed to better understand how they worked together when writing collaboratively. In addition, the collaboratively produced texts were analyzed with consideration of the scaffolding that took place through the interactions in the social environment of the classroom. Finally, the results of the analysis were interpreted based on both the classroom context and the individual characteristics of the students.

**Systemic Functional Linguistics**

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) highlights language as a meaning-making system and emphasizes the relationship between language and the social context (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). SFL recognizes the dual functionality of language – the
intrinsic functionality being the organization of language itself and the extrinsic as the connection to social context (Martin, 1992). Accordingly, the organization of language is broken down into three kinds of meaning, identified as metafunctions by Halliday (e.g. 1974, 1978). The first of these metafunctions is ideational, which can be conceptualized as language as reflection or the means of construing experience. The second of the three metafunctions is the interpersonal meaning, which is characterized as language as action or the means of enacting personal and social relationships. The last of the three metafunctions is textual, which focuses on the sequencing of discourse and the overall organization and cohesion of the text. These metafunctions are realized in social contexts, which has given rise to variables of register in the areas of field, tenor, and mode, each of which influences the use of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin, 1992, 2009). Field is the social action or what is going on in the situation, whereas tenor is the role structure or who is taking part in the situation, and mode is the symbolic organization or what role is being played by language (Martin, 1992). The field values resonate with ideational meanings, the tenor values resonate with interpersonal meanings, and mode values resonate with textual meanings (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Together, the metafunctions and register variables comprise the meaning-making system of language.

SFL, like most theories, has been elaborated and expanded throughout the years. A notable expansion occurred with the addition of a level of genre, which aimed to coordinate resources in order to specify how a given culture organizes meaning through different stages (Martin, 2009). Genre allows for the discussion of the social purposes of texts and the ways in which language is presented and organized differently to achieve specific goals. Genre has been defined by Martin (2009) as a “staged, goal-oriented social
process” (p. 13). It is “staged” because it requires more than one phase of meaning to work through a genre, it is “goal-oriented” because the various phases are designed in order to accomplish something, and it is “social” because genres are undertaken with others interactively (Martin, 2009). The notion of genre was utilized to design what is now known as genre pedagogy or a genre-based approach, with a focus on enhancing literacy teaching and learning across disciplines and grade levels.

Today, genre pedagogy is used to scaffold writing instruction by means of the teaching-learning cycle (TLC; Hyland, 2007; Martin, 2009; Rose & Martin, 2012). The TLC, once known as the “curriculum model,” was originally developed by Rothery in her work with teachers and linguists (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988; Rothery, 1994, 1996). Rothery’s development of the TLC was heavily influenced by Painter (1986), who emphasized the need for “guidance through interaction in the context of shared experience” (p. 90).

The “shared experience” component is found in the first of the three phases of the TLC, Deconstruction. This phase begins with the teacher establishing the focal genre of the cycle; discussing the purpose, text structures (stages), and language features typical of that genre; and then moving forward with a detailed reading (or deconstruction) of a mentor text through which the teacher models and demonstrates best practices for identifying the content and organization of the text. In this way, with the teacher serving as a guide, the students are able to engage in the “shared experience” of deconstructing a text from a specific genre.

The second phase of the TLC, Joint Construction, is filled with the “guidance through interaction” component, as the teacher and students work together to write a text
from the focal genre, using the text they deconstructed as a model. During this joint writing, the teacher provides a bridge for students between the everyday language they are accustomed to using for social purposes and the academic language appropriate for the text in the new genre (de Oliveira, 2017). When providing a bridge for students, the teacher draws their attention to the purpose, stages, and language features of the genre, with the hopes of gradually handing over responsibility to students in the third and final phase of the TLC. The last phase of the TLC is labeled *Independent Construction*. During this phase, the students are charged with writing a text in the new genre on their own, drawing on both the text they deconstructed and the text they jointly created with the teacher in previous phases of the cycle.

The TLC provides teachers with a means to present a new genre to students so that they may gain an understanding of how authors construct the genre and develop the ability to write texts of the same genre themselves. The cycle allows students different points of entry into the text and enables teachers to start at any one of the phases, with the flexibility of returning to previous ones, as needed for revision purposes (de Oliveira, 2017; Hyland, 2007). Since the introduction of the original TLC by Rothery (1996), many scholars have sought to develop it further. Martin and Rose (2005), for example, modified the cycle to focus on reading, while Brisk (2015) and de Oliveira (2017) have elected to incorporate a collaborative construction component.

The most recent version from de Oliveira (2017) places a *Collaborative Construction* phase between the Joint Construction and Independent Construction phases (see Figure 1). This newly added phase was designed especially for K-2 novice writers in order to provide them with additional practice in the new genre before writing a text
independently. During the Collaborative Construction phase, students work with their peers in pairs or small groups to create a text together, as they brainstorm and negotiate ideas, write, and revise. The teacher provides support to the pairs or groups as needed throughout the phase.

Figure 1. Teaching-learning cycle, adapted to K-12 from Martin and Rose’s (2012) Write it Right teaching/learning cycle (de Oliveira, 2017).
Summary of SFL

To summarize, a number of researchers and teachers are currently employing a genre-based pedagogy informed by SFL to support their students in learning to write the types of texts they will encounter across disciplines in schools (e.g. Brisk, 2015; de Oliveira & Lan, 2014; Harman, 2013, 2017). With this approach, learning to write essentially means learning to use language (Hyland, 2007). More specifically, through the exploration of texts, students gain an understanding of how texts are structured with a specific focus on the social purpose, stages, and significant language features.

This research study used the SFL-inspired, genre-based approach to writing instruction (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin, 2009) guided by the TLC (de Oliveira, 2017; Rose & Martin, 2012) to explore how collaborative writing activities were integrated in the first-grade classroom to facilitate ELLs’ writing development. All phases of the updated versions of the TLC (Deconstruction, Joint Construction, Collaborative Construction, and Independent Construction; Brisk, 2015; de Oliveira, 2017) were explored to discover how students built their genre-specific writing skills throughout each phase. Additionally, the collaboratively written texts were analyzed using components of SFL to investigate how the students incorporated what they learned from the Deconstruction and Joint Construction phases in their collaborative writing (i.e. language features of the genre).

Integration of Two Frameworks: Sociocultural Theory of Learning and SFL

Both the sociocultural theory of learning (Rogoff, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978, 1987) and SFL (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin, 2009; Rose & Martin, 2012) provided a basis for this research study. These frameworks are complementary in that they both view
language and learning as social phenomena (Hyland, 2007); integrating them allowed me to construct a holistic representation of collaborative writing in a first-grade classroom.

Sociocultural theory allowed me to explore the social context of the classroom in which this study took place. Throughout this exploration, I focused on the ways in which the focal teacher facilitated a social environment for writing, looking specifically at participant structures, assigned writing tasks, and interactions among participants in relation to these tasks. Building on the exploration of the social context, SFL provided me with a deeper understanding of the ways language was used as a meaning-making resource in the social environment of the classroom. To be more specific, SFL provided insight into the ways that language was used purposefully in social interactions to allow for individual and collective learning during various writing tasks. Together, these frameworks allowed me to develop a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which collaborative writing activities scaffolded ELLs writing development in a first-grade classroom.

**Review of Literature**

Both the design and analysis of this study were guided by the complementary theoretical frameworks of sociocultural theory of learning and SFL. They were also shaped by findings from relevant research on writing development and instruction. Below, I will examine the literature that focuses on children’s writing development and writing instruction, with a special focus on the ELL population.

**The Complexity of Writing**

Writing is a complex and recursive process that involves multiple sub-processes, such as planning, generating and organizing ideas, accessing prior knowledge, drafting,
revising, and attending to foundational skills such as spelling and handwriting (Chapman, 2006; Graham, 2006; Graham et al., 2012b; Graves, 1982; Hayes & Flower, 1980; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986). As such, this component of literacy is one of the most difficult academic tasks that ELLs will encounter in their scholarly lives (Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Graham & Hebert, 2010). This is due, in large part, to the strain of having to simultaneously learn to read, write, and speak the language of instruction (Helman, 2016), while at the same time balancing the knowledge and literacy skills they have established in their L1. Despite the challenges that writing poses, it is still the mode of communication by which students have to demonstrate their knowledge in school, beginning in the upper elementary grade levels (de Oliveira & Lan, 2014). Thus, it is an area that needs special attention from teachers (Graham, 2006; Christie & Derewianka, 2008). While writing has received increased attention in the school curriculum and the rigorous CCSS (2010), there are few studies that showcase what development in writing actually looks like, especially for ELLs (Christie & Derewianka, 2008; de Oliveira & Silva, 2016).

**Writing Development of ELLs**

Scholars have found that ELLs typically follow a very similar writing developmental sequence as that of their native English-speaking peers (Buckwalter & Lo, 2002; Genishi, Stires, & Yung-Chan, 2001; Helman, 2016; Moll et al., 2001; Rubin & Carlan, 2005; Seda & Abramson, 1990). Because of this, it is appropriate to look towards the research in first language writing development which shows that writing development begins before children start formal schooling (Baghban, 1984; Bissex, 1980), due in large part to their exposure to various symbol systems or media, including store signs,
billboards, product labels, magazines, and more (Clay, 1982; DeFord, 1980; Dyson, 1986). With this exposure to a rich and meaningful print environment, children’s literacy learning begins.

Early writing attempts are typically interrelated with other forms of communication, especially talk and drawing (Dyson, 1983). Talk is often cited as the basis of writing growth (Britton, 1980), as multiple scholars contend that children first represent their ideas in oral language and then later encode them into written language (Chapman 1995, 1996; Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Dyson, 1983, 1986; Raban, 2014). In addition, drawing is commonly referenced as one of the first stages of writing development (Dyson, 1993), which evolves to a form of orthographic representation over time. More specifically, children’s writing development can be characterized as a general progression, from random scribbling to a more organized scribbling with horizontal and vertical characteristics, to linearity, to letters and letter-like shapes, and finally to conventional alphabetic forms (Chapman, 2006; Clay, 1975; DeFord, 1980; Graham et al., 2012a; Rowe, 2009).

One of the earliest studies to demonstrate this progression comes from Dyson’s (1983) study of kindergarteners in the fall and winter of 1980. Dyson established a writing center in a kindergarten class and invited students to write, encouraging them to interpret the writing task individually. After several weeks of observation at the writing center, Dyson analyzed the data and concluded that the kindergarten children followed the general process of writing development from a form of drawing to a form of language, although the form of language may or may not have been in conventional alphabetic forms. Dyson also highlighted that in order to understand the written message
of these children, their readers would need to listen to their talk, look at their drawings, and read their text. More recent studies (e.g. Ackerman, 2016; Yang & Noel, 2006) have drawn the same conclusions, demonstrating that young children are able to successfully create narratives, informational texts, and opinion writings, first with pictures and then with words. Children, even as young as kindergarteners, are able to produce original texts that convey intention and meaning, organization, and writing as a meaning-making activity (Ackerman, 2016). Consistent with the literature cited above on children’s writing development, the kindergarteners in this recent study first produced writing with drawings and scribbles, then progressed to letter-like symbols, which eventually evolved into producing personal letters and guidebooks.

**Development of Written Genres**

As young children progress through the stages of writing development, they are exposed to various genres and the underlying structures and language features of those genres. Researchers show that the most prominent genre in the first years of schooling is the narrative (Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Martin & Rothery, 1986; Pappas, 1993), and most children come to school with an awareness of the underlying structures of this genre (Applebee, 1978; Donovan, 2001; Langer, 1986). Despite the high value placed on the narrative, there is strong evidence that young children have the ability to acquire other genres to which they are exposed and have opportunities to use (Chapman, 1994, 2002; Donovan, 2001; Wollman-Bonilla, 2000). Studies have found that kindergarteners and first-graders are able to successfully differentiate between genres and produce complex texts outside of simple labels and statements (e.g. Chapman, 1995; Donovan & Smolkin, 2002). In her study focused on first-graders, Chapman (1995) found that children’s
repertoires of genres expanded as the school year progressed. Early in the year, students produced basic records, lists, and labels; however, as the year progressed, they created texts of higher complexity, including recounts, narratives, and written dialogues. Much of this growth was attributed not only to the rich print environment of their classroom, but also to the opportunities created by the classroom teacher for students to explore written language, both independently and collaboratively.

In general, children exhibit a gradual progression in their ability to write different text types. More specifically, with age and experience, their repertoires of organizational patterns increase, as does their ability to produce longer, more complex pieces of writing (e.g. Brisk, 2015; Chapman, 2002). In their comprehensive review of more than 2,000 texts, Christie and Derewianka (2008) revealed that narratives and recounts produced by very young children, aged 6 to 8 years old, were very simplistic and lexically “thin,” in that their language patterns were closer to those of speech than those of writing. However, students just a few years older, aged 9 to 12, created higher level texts by using nominalizations along with varied clause types and more elaborate vocabulary.

Research focused on young ELLs has revealed that children’s writing development is in line with the stages identified in early first-language writing development. Buckwalter and Lo (2002) highlighted the following stages of writing development for young ELLs: (1) scribble writing, (2) prephonemic stage, (3) early phonemic stage, (4) letter-name stage, (5) transitional, (6) conventional spelling. In scribble writing, students understand that writing is symbolic and has meaning. During the prephonemic stage, students are able to use a combination of letters, but letters do not yet represent sounds. Students represent each word by one letter that represents the initial
consonant sound of the word in the early phonemic stage. The letter-name stage is characterized by students using letters to represent more than one or two sounds in a word and beginning to incorporate vowel sounds in words. Although researchers revealed that ELLs did not progress to the fifth or sixth stages during their research project, they did argue that the substantial growth made in just 15 weeks was compelling evidence of the similarity between ELLs and non-ELLs in their writing development.

Other research has also identified similar writing development stages for ELLs by examining writing samples from Spanish-English bilingual children (Rubin & Carlan, 2005). Writing development for these bilingual students began in the precommunicative stage, characterized by scribbles and mock letters, and eventually progressed to the conventional stage, in which writing was generally correct and vocabulary and sentence structure became more complex. These stages of progression, despite the difference in labels, align with what Dyson (1983) and other researchers (e.g. Chapman, 1996; DeFord, 1980) identified in their work with native English-speaking children.

Although the research reviewed above confirms that the general patterns of first language writing development are similar for ELLs, there are still explicit linguistic demands and implicit cultural expectations that these children must face as they work towards accomplished literacy in English. In terms of cognitive challenges, children are required to learn the differences between speech and writing, the organizational structure of different text types, and the different grammatical patterns of English (Gibbons, 2015). Emotionally, children must find ways to validate their home language and culture, which may differ considerably from the mainstream culture of the classroom (Kennedy, 2006; Moll et al., 2001).
Positive Transfer in Children’s Writing

The previous section highlights literature that outlines the writing development of ELLs and illustrates how they progress through a developmental sequence of writing similar to that of their native English-speaking peers. There is one main difference in their development, however: ELLs’ literacy development in English is influenced by their knowledge of other languages and literacies (August & Shanahan, 2006; Bear & Smith, 2016; Cummins, 1979; Cummins et al., 1984; Genesee et al., 2005; Samway, 2006). Some researchers have investigated this difference to understand exactly how ELLs utilize their primary language and literacy knowledge in order to facilitate their literacy development in English. The studies that focus on this cross-linguistic influence commonly identify the influence of one language upon another as positive or negative transfer. Traditionally, transfer was conceptualized as “interference” (Weinreich, 1957) and was considered to have a negative impact on second language literacy. In current studies, however, positive transfer refers to the facilitating effects of one language in acquiring another, while negative transfer refers to divergences caused by differences between the first and second languages of the learner (Odlin, 2013).

Positive transfer has been identified in several research studies, demonstrating that ELLs can use the linguistic and literacy knowledge of their first language as a type of “shortcut” to access writing skills in English (Genesee, Geva, Dressler, & Kamil, 2006; Gort, 2006; Lanauze & Snow, 1989). A recent study (Silverman et al., 2015) showed that ELLs in grades three through five were able to successfully draw on their funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Using their linguistic and literacy knowledge from their first language, ELLs were able to outperform their non-ELL peers.
on a narrative writing task that focused on their ability to write in a logical, organized fashion, generate a specific theme or plot, develop a character’s personality, and utilize an interesting and engaging prose (Silverman et al., 2015).

A similar study was conducted by Woolpert (2016) with Spanish and English-speaking, dual-language learners and their monolingual classmates in grades ones through four. Woolpert compared writing samples from the two groups of students, looking specifically at (a) **productivity**, as measured by total number of words, number of different words, and number of story grammar elements; (b) **complexity**, as measured by proposition density, syntactic use score, and proportion of literate language features; and (c) **accuracy**, as measured by proportion of spelling errors and proportion of lexical errors. After controlling for differences in vocabulary, there only appeared to be one difference between the writing samples of the two linguistic groups – the dual-language learners used a greater proportion of literate language features than their peers. Woolpert attributed this difference to their knowledge of another language, which she claimed can provide advantage in lexical development that can then aid in the use of literate language features.

While these studies highlighted positive transfer from ELLs’ first language to English, other studies have identified cases in which very little transfer occurred (e.g. McCarthey, Guo, & Cummins, 2005) or situations of negative transfer (e.g. Huie & Yahya, 2003; Soltero-González, Escamilla, & Hopewell, 2012). A study which found little transfer from students’ first language to English was completed with fourth and fifth-grade Mandarin speakers (McCarthey et al., 2005). Researchers in this study analyzed writing samples for grammar, punctuation, sentence complexity, rhetorical
style, and voice. Findings revealed that students demonstrated little transfer from Chinese into English in their writing. The researchers were not surprised by this finding because of the different structural features of the languages; however, this contradicts other research which has identified positive transfer between languages with writing systems as different as Japanese and English (Cummins et al., 1984).

In the case of negative transfer, researchers have compared writing samples of ELLs and non-ELLs in primary grades (kindergarten through second) on their use of detail, organization, and conventions, and their ability to address the given topic (Huie & Yahya, 2003). Using these criteria for analysis, researchers found that the writing samples of ELLs lacked fluency, detail, and voice. They also identified a few obvious interferences of the students’ first language with English. The most common interference was the use of the English word *is* to mean *it is*, as *es* does in Spanish. This interference was noted in multiple writing samples along with the interference of the *v* in Spanish, which is pronounced as a *b* in the medial position. These specific cases of negative transfer, caused by differences between Spanish and English, contributed to the weakness of the ELLs’ writing, when compared with that of their peers (Huie & Yahya, 2003).

In a more recent study, researchers analyzed more than 200 writing samples produced by Spanish-English emergent bilingual students from grades 1 through 5 and identified instances of negative transfer at the word, sentence, and discourse level (Soltero-González et al., 2012). At the word level, researchers found multiple cases of phonetic transfers in which students applied Spanish phonetics when writing in English, resulting in unconventional spelling. In addition, at the sentence level, students often omitted required nouns or pronouns, which resulted in sentences such as, “Is my favorite
toy to play with” (Soltero-González et al., 2012, p. 79). These cases of transfer provide an opportunity for growth, as teachers can use them to expound on the differences between the two languages (Huie & Yahya, 2003; Soltero-González et al., 2012).

**Writing Instruction**

As research has confirmed that the writing development of ELLs follows a similar trajectory to that of non-ELLs, scholars recommend that teachers implement approaches to writing instruction that have been identified as effective for native speakers of English. There is evidence, however, that writing instruction needs to be modified and adjusted to meet the particular needs of ELLs (e.g. August & Shanahan, 2006; Helman, 2016; Shanahan & Beck, 2006). Despite this evidence, the literature in this area is limited when compared to that of other skills, such as reading (Calderón et al., 2011; de Oliveira & Silva, 2016).

Much of the research that is currently available in the area of writing instruction for ELLs followed the publication of the *Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth* (August & Shanahan, 2006). This report highlighted the lack of research on effective instructional practices for ELLs. Following this report, the last decade has seen a distinct increase in studies that take on this focus (Helman, 2016). In addition, a practice guide released by the U.S. Department of Education put forth evidence-based recommendations addressing the challenge of effective literacy instruction for ELLs in the elementary grades (Gersten et al., 2007). Many of the recommendations from this guide are more in line with district or school-wide initiatives; however, there are a notable few that can be important for teachers as they plan literacy instruction. These recommendations include providing intensive small-
group reading interventions, implementing extensive and varied vocabulary instruction, and developing academic English.

Recently, scholars have examined what is available in the literature in terms of literacy instruction and English language development (ELD) of ELLs (August et al., 2010; Calderón et al., 2011). Based on their findings, these teams of researchers have been able to provide specific recommendations for effective instructional practices of ELLs. In the area of ELD instruction, the need for teachers to provide a dedicated block of time for ELLs to focus on all four modes of communication (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), with a special focus on listening and speaking was emphasized. They also highlighted the need to explicitly teach vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and conventions in such a way as to direct students’ attention to the functions of the language being learned. In their recommendations for English literacy instruction, the research team suggested that teachers build on and make adjustments to programs that have proven to be effective with monolingual English speakers. Specifically, they recommended that teachers adjust the instruction typically used for non-ELLs by incorporating modeling, visual aids, realia, and gestures. They also stated that teachers should provide students with explicit instruction in the components of literacy, while ensuring that their instruction is aligned with the students’ individual levels of language proficiency, content knowledge, and development. Despite their recommendations, researchers note that the literature is scarce in the way of writing instruction and call for additional studies that identify effective instruction for ELLs (Calderón et al., 2011).

The research highlighted above, although valuable for the contributions it makes to the field of literacy instruction for ELLs, falls short in focusing on effective writing
instruction for these learners. This is to be expected, however, as many scholars have noted previously that literacy is primarily understood as reading, while writing has often received a rather diminished status (Brisk, 2015; Christie & Derewianka, 2008). A notable exception to this is the extensive literature review completed by Genesee and Riches (2006) that focused solely on the scholarship of writing instruction for ELLs. In their review, Genesee and Riches identified studies from the last 20 years that focused specifically on oral language development, literacy, and academic achievement among ELLs from Pre-K to grade 12. Each of these studies was categorized into one of three major approaches: (a) direct instruction, (b) interactive, and (c) process-based. The authors contend that these approaches may be best understood as forming a continuum, from direct instruction to interactive to process-based approaches.

**Direct instruction approach.** Studies that focus on direct instruction highlight the teaching of specific reading or writing skills that are thought to be essential for all students learning to read and write. This approach, sometimes referred to as the traditional approach (Cutler & Graham, 2008), has been used in numerous studies in which researchers focus on a variety of different skills, including acquisition of new vocabulary, use of context clues, and the explicit teaching of handwriting, spelling, and sentence construction. Unfortunately, of the studies available on direct instruction, there are few that emphasize writing skills. Instead, the great majority identify specific reading skills as the target of instruction (Genesee & Riches, 2006).

The studies that highlight writing skills within the realm of direct instruction speak to the effectiveness of such an approach for ELLs. Researchers in this area contend that direct skill and strategy instruction are beneficial to ELLs’ writing development, as it
results in more extensive elaboration in students’ written products (Bermudez & Prater, 1990) and overall improvements in foundational academic skills needed for reading and writing (Kucer, 1995; Van Staden, 2011). Direct instruction can be employed in a variety of ways in the classroom, including whole-class guided instruction or focused small groups. Small groups allow for teachers to provide direct instruction in areas that students need most (i.e. phonemic awareness, reading comprehension skills), while a whole-class approach gives students a better opportunity to interact and learn from peers that may be at a higher level of literacy development. Although these few direct instruction studies showed improvements in ELLs’ overall writing development, researchers did note some challenges when working with this approach, including students’ lack of engagement, use of unvaried, predictable story formats, and premature completion of a text (Kucer, 1995).

Interactive approach. Numerous studies have utilized an interactive approach to literacy instruction for ELLs (e.g. Williams & Pilonieta, 2012). This approach is a collaborative one, in which learners engage in literacy activities with others. Their collaborative counterparts are typically more mature readers and writers, such as teachers, parents, or older students. This approach relies heavily on social interaction as the means by which learning is achieved. Oftentimes, the teacher guides students through the process of writing a text as a group or class. Students frequently contribute to the text, not only through discussion, but also by taking control of the pen to write a letter, word, sentence, etc. The teacher is encouraged to capitalize on opportunities to draw attention to specific phonics guidelines, grammar rules, and spelling patterns (McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas, 2000; Pinnell & McCarrier, 1994). The vast majority of studies that have employed an interactive approach to writing instruction have resulted in improvements
for ELLs in reading and writing or behaviors related to reading and writing (Calderón, Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Slavin, 1998; Doherty, Hilberg, Pinal, & Tharp, 2003; Genesse & Riches, 2006).

Over the years, several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the interactive approach with native speakers of English (e.g. Button, Johnson, & Furgerson, 1996; Craig, 2006; Wall, 2008; Williams & Lundstrom, 2007), but few have focused on ELLs. Williams and Pilonieta (2012) are an exception to this, as their study was conducted with kindergarten and first-grade ELLs to explore the benefits of using interactive writing to facilitate early writing development. The teacher and students in this study worked through the interactive approach beginning with a shared activity – storybook reading. Throughout the reading, the teacher and students discussed the story’s events, so the teacher could easily monitor and support their comprehension. After reading the story, the teacher and students collaborated to plan and write a text in response to the story. The teacher began the writing process using a “think aloud” method to model for the students. The students then had the opportunity to “share the pen” to write specific letters or words and add appropriate capitalization or punctuation. After completing the writing, the teacher and students reread their shared writing and made revisions and edits, as needed. At the end of the lesson, the teacher briefly discussed the key concepts and strategies that children should have learned during instruction. During this discussion, the teacher was able to ask questions in order to assess students’ comprehension and address misconceptions. Finally, to transition into the next activity, the teacher led a discussion about how students could extend and apply what they learned to their own writing. It is important to note that throughout the interactive writing lesson,
the teacher took advantage of the opportunity to model phonemic segmentation skills, teach specific letter-sound correspondence, and point out the difference between English orthography and the ELLs’ native language. The authors argue that the interactive approach highlighted in their study is exactly what ELLs need to find success in their development of English literacy – structure, interactive conversation, collaboration, and explicit instruction.

**Process-based approach.** Teachers who utilize the process-based approach to writing in their classrooms emphasize student engagement in authentic literacy activities for communicative purposes. Additionally, student interaction is typically encouraged, and writing is often completed in stages of planning, translating, and revising (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Graham & Sandmel, 2011). Writing activities that focus on communication are common when this approach is implemented, such as dialogue journals and literature logs. Despite the widespread popularity of this approach, results are mixed across studies, some showing that students’ writing has benefited from this approach, and others showing no significant improvements for students’ writing quality (Genesse & Riches, 2006; Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Stahl, Pagnucco, & Suttles, 2001).

Many researchers over the years have critiqued the process-based approach, and in some cases, called for a reconceptualization of the approach in order to better meet the needs of learners across contexts (Matsuda, 2003). One of the largest problems with the process approach is that process activities are not appropriate for all writing tasks (Applebee, 1986). Implementation of process activities typically occur in stages – prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. While this may be effective for some tasks, others require a different approach, depending on the purpose, goals, audience, and
context. For instance, the stages and approach used to write an e-mail differ a great deal from the stages and approach one might use to compose a research paper. Because of this, Applebee (1986) called for a reconceptualization of process instruction so that teachers and students understand that writing processes are essentially strategies that writers use purposefully to achieve particular goals.

One of the other problems regarding process approaches to writing instruction is the lack of consideration for ELLs. The writing instruction for ELLs requires distinct approaches and practices which process-based approaches do not meet (Silva, 1990). Differences in individuals, writing tasks, and situations, along with varying levels of language proficiency and cognitive development often cause variations in writing processes that are not taken into consideration with process approaches. Accordingly, an approach that addresses the second-language writer (language proficiency, background knowledge, cultural orientation, etc.), the text (genre, audience, etc.), and the context for writing would be more effective for ELLs (Silva, 1990).

In today’s world, most teachers and researchers recognize and understand that when using process approaches, they must make concentrated efforts to activate schemata for students to access prior knowledge, help students understand elements of genre, develop audience awareness, and deal with emotional barriers (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006); however, many teachers believe that a different approach to writing instruction is needed, especially those who serve ELLs.

**Genre-based approaches.** Genre-based approaches to writing instruction can be divided into three broad, overlapping theoretical camps, including (1) New Rhetoric, (2) English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and (3) The Sydney School (Hyland, 2003; Hyon,
These approaches differ from one another in the emphasis they give to text in relation to context, the research methods they propose, and the pedagogies they inspire (Hyland, 2002). The New Rhetoric approach emphasizes the contexts in which genres are used, focusing specifically on the relations between text and context and the complex ways that one reshapes the other (Hyland, 2003). New Rhetoric theorists and researchers often argue that genres are too complex and varied to be taken from their original rhetorical situations, and as such, it would be nearly impossible to teach them in a classroom (Johns, 2002). The ESP approach is more linguistically and textually oriented. Rather than emphasizing the context, like the New Rhetoric approach, ESP pedagogies focus on the structure of the text and the features that reveal relationships between writers and audiences (Johns, 2008). ESP scholars employ a wide range of pedagogies, largely based on local needs. The scope of these pedagogies ranges from explicit teaching of grammar or vocabulary to instruction of a specific genre, such as the research paper (Johns, 2002).

The Sydney School approach, originally developed in Australia, is based largely on Halliday’s (1994) SFL, which emphasizes “text-in-context” (Rose, 2016). This particular approach underscores the purposeful linguistic and structural characteristics of target genres that are used to create meaning in social contexts. Proponents of this approach call for teachers to scaffold students’ learning by providing explicit instruction on these characteristics. Providing students with this instruction facilitates their access to the specialized ways of communicating that are valuable in various contexts which can lead to academic success and enhanced career opportunities (Tardy, 2011). This type of instruction is especially effective for ELLs, as they often lack the cultural knowledge and
resources needed to produce genres that are valued by English-speaking dominant societies. One widely accepted instructional technique found in this genre-based approach is the highly scaffolded TLC (de Oliveira, 2017; Martin, 2009; Rothery, 1996). The TLC is utilized to apprentice student writing through three phases – Deconstruction, Joint Construction, and Independent Construction. This TLC has recently been modified by Brisk (2015) and de Oliveira (2017) to incorporate a Collaborative Construction phase between the Joint Construction and Independent Construction phases.

**The teaching-learning cycle (TLC).** In recent years, the Sydney School genre-based approach and its associated teaching methodology, the TLC, has been adapted and implemented across U.S. elementary and secondary school contexts to support the literacy development of ELLs (e.g. Brisk, 2015; de Oliveira & Iddings, 2014; de Oliveira & Silva, 2016; Harman, 2017). Because of its growing popularity in the United States and its theoretical grounding in SFL, I will refer to this pedagogy as the SFL genre-based approach. Researchers have found this approach to be especially effective in promoting the academic writing development of ELLs, as it provides new ways for teachers to explicitly focus on genre, including the purpose for writing, expected text organization, and appropriate language features (e.g. Gebhard, Chen, & Britton, 2014; Hodgson-Drysdale, 2016; Kerfoot & Van Heerden, 2015; Pavlak, 2013; Schleppegrell & de Oliveira, 2006; Schleppegrell et al., 2014). While not all studies explicitly describe the implementation of all phases of the TLC, many still draw on one or more of the distinct phases, including Deconstruction and Joint Construction.

Deconstruction is a critical phase of the TLC, as it provides teachers with an opportunity to make the genre visible to students, with special emphasis on the stages of
the genre and the linguistic features that characterize those stages. Throughout various studies, teachers have opted to complete this phase with the support of a graphic organizer (e.g. Brisk, Hodgson-Drysdale, O’Connor, 2011) or through whole-class discussion (e.g. Palincsar & Schleppegrell, 2014). Others have chosen to guide students in highlighting and underlining specific vocabulary, lexical terms, and phrases of importance (e.g. de Oliveira & Lan, 2014; Schulze, 2011), while some have selected to implement a more dramatic approach with manipulatives, such as hand puppets (Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2011).

Joint Construction, the second phase of the TLC, can be accomplished in many formats; however, it is typically carried out as a whole-class collaborative writing activity (e.g. Caplan, 2017; Caplan & Farling, 2016; Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007). During this whole-class activity, the teacher guides the students in writing a new text in the target genre, which they have become familiar with during Deconstruction. The teacher elicits input from the students in the form of words, phrases, and sentences while reminding them of the stages and typical features of the genre (Dreyfus, Macnaught, & Humphrey, 2008). Despite the common approach of completing Joint Construction as a whole-class activity, others have elected to carry out this phase in small group or even in one-on-one settings (e.g. Harman, 2013, Kerfoot & Van Heerden, 2015). These more intimate settings have shown to be effective for ELLs that are still in the early stages of acquiring English proficiency (Harman, 2013).

Genre-based studies from an SFL perspective that have captured the implementation of the entire TLC have been carried out in both elementary (e.g. Accurso, Gebhard, & Selden, 2016; Pavlak, 2013) and secondary schools (e.g. Caplan & Farling,
2016; Harman & Simmons, 2014). Within elementary schools, studies have focused on a range of grade levels and genres, from first-grade scientific reports to third-grade biographical recounts, and even fifth-grade argumentative essays. In one case, a fourth-grade teacher incorporated the TLC into her teaching of science writing to support students, specifically ELLs, in their writing of procedural recounts (de Oliveira & Lan, 2014). The teacher in this study completed a text deconstruction with students to focus on the recording stage of the procedural recount in order to help students become more aware of the ways to record events sequentially and with more precision. During this deconstruction, the teacher and students explicitly talked about language features and functions in the model text. After deconstruction, the teacher and students jointly constructed the conclusion stage of the recount, making sure to include the appropriate linguistic and structural features discussed in the Deconstruction phase. After completion of these two phases, students completed the Independent Construction phase by writing their recounts individually.

In order to better understand the impact of implementing SFL genre-based pedagogy and the TLC, numerous scholars have elected to include an analysis of students’ written texts in their studies. Analyses of these written texts have revealed that ELLs were able to draw on a wider range of linguistic resources, including technical language and content-specific vocabulary (e.g. Brisk, Nelson, & O’Connor, 2016; Shin, 2016). In addition, students often produced texts with more detailed descriptions, more varied temporal connectors, and effective use of aspects of appraisal (e.g. Schulze, 2011). In the study described above from de Oliveira and Lan (2014), analysis of the independently constructed texts revealed that the focal ELL writer demonstrated greater
control of technical vocabulary and the use of temporal connectors. Analysis also showed that the student was more precise in his use of participants and processes. These positive results are not unique to the studies that implemented all phases of the TLC. In fact, many of the genre-based studies that focused on only one phase of the cycle also showed benefits through analysis of students’ writing (e.g. Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2011; Gebhard et al., 2014).

**Updated TLC: Collaborative construction.** The newest version of the TLC (Brisk, 2015; de Oliveira, 2017), which incorporates a Collaborative Construction phase, was designed especially for kindergarten through second-grade novice writers, as they often require additional support when writing a difficult genre for the first time (Brisk, 2015). During this phase, students work with their peers in pairs or small groups to jointly construct a text as they brainstorm, negotiate ideas, write, and revise. This additional phase of the TLC is promising for ELLs, as working in pairs and small groups has shown to be effective in supporting academic language development for these students (Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2002), especially when they have the opportunity to interact with their fluent English-speaking peers (Faltis et al., 2010; Gibson, Gándara, & Koyama, 2004).

Collaborative construction, though a recent addition to the TLC (Brisk, 2015; de Oliveira, 2017), is not new to the field of writing instruction. Commonly termed *collaborative writing*, researchers and teachers define this strategy in writing instruction as a process in which students join efforts to develop a single text (Graham et al., 2012a). The defining trait of this technique is the joint ownership of the text produced, which sets it apart from other writing tasks such as group planning or peer-feedback activities.
(Storch, 2011). The seminal work of Daiute and Dalton, published in the late 80s and early 90s, set the groundwork for implementing collaborative writing in the classroom and paved the way for further research in this area. *Do 1 and 1 Make 2? Patterns of Influence by Collaborative Authors* (Daiute, 1986) and *Collaboration Between Children Learning to Write: Can Novices be Masters?* (Daiute & Dalton, 1992) captured the positive impacts of collaborative writing on the writing development of young students.

Following the seminal pieces, more researchers began to focus on collaborative writing in both the elementary (e.g. Marzano, 1990; Fisher, 1994; Schultz, 1997) and secondary context (e.g. Dale, 1994; Keys, 1995).

A review of more current literature reveals that collaborative writing continues to be a popular focus for research in university settings (e.g. Dobao, 2012; Li & Kim, 2016; Sajedi, 2014; Storch, 2005, 2011); however, there have been far fewer studies conducted at the elementary level. Of the studies that are available from the elementary school level, the vast majority reveal that young writers benefit from collaborative writing, both academically and socially (Jones, in press). In terms of academic benefits, studies revealed that students learn new writing skills, show improvement in writing performance, and develop a more positive perception of writing (e.g. Li et al., 2012). Socially, researchers have shown that students experience an increase in motivation and self-efficacy (e.g. Chung & Walsh, 2006).

The collaborative writing studies that have cited an improvement in individual writing performance have captured the improvements in different ways, based on the goals of the study. In some cases, improvements were shown through linguistic complexity, rhetorical structure, features of style, and holistic quality (Daiute, 1986; Li,
Chu, & Ki, 2014) whereas other studies evaluated vocabulary and story elements (Daiute & Dalton, 1992; Roberts & Eady, 2012). In addition to the improvement in individual writing performance, many studies have highlighted how students helped each other learn new writing skills and strategies during collaborative writing activities. In multiple studies, students helped one another through joint planning, in which they shared, explored, and integrated ideas (Rojas-Drummond, Albarrán, & Littleton, 2008; Vass, 2007; Yarrow & Topping, 2001). In other studies, students helped one another by providing comments and corrective feedback (Li et al., 2012; Woo, Chu, Ho, & Li, 2011; Woo, Chu, & Li, 2013; Yate González, Saenz, Bermeo, & Castañeda Chaves, 2013).

As students learned new skills and strategies and improved their writing performance in the context of collaborative writing, they also, in many cases, developed a more positive perception of writing. This perception was observed (Roberts & Eady, 2012), and in some cases, measured via survey (Hertz-Lazarowitz & Bar-Natan, 2002; Li et al., 2014; Wong, Chen, Chai, Chin, & Gao, 2011). Many researchers indicated that the positive perception of writing was observed through students showing excitement and enthusiasm for continuing to write collaboratively (Topping, Nixon, Sutherland, & Yarrow, 2000; Yarrow & Topping, 2001).

Apart from the academic benefits afforded by collaborative writing, several researchers have also noted the social benefits for students in the form of increased motivation and self-efficacy (e.g. Chung & Walsh, 2006). Various factors contributed to the observed increase in motivation and self-efficacy; however, researchers cited the opportunity to incorporate personal experiences and the opportunity to work in partnerships/groups as the most salient factors increasing students’ constructs of
motivation and self-efficacy (e.g. Vass, 2007). By encouraging students to incorporate their personal experiences in their writing, students were able to take ownership of their texts and were encouraged to write (Yate González et al., 2013). Working in partnerships/groups allowed students to improve their weaker skills, while also helping others in their areas of strength, leading to an overall increase in students’ confidence and self-esteem (Topping et al., 2000; Wong et al., 2011; Yarrow & Topping, 2001).

Despite the limited amount of recent research on collaborative writing in the elementary context, the available literature points to its potential in helping young students develop as both writers and individuals. This strategy for writing instruction is especially promising, as it is incorporated in the newest version of the TLC within the Collaborative Construction phase.

**Summary**

The review of literature indicates that the writing development of ELLs is, in many ways, similar to first language writing development. These similarities reveal themselves in ELLs’ exposure to rich and meaningful print environments, the developmental sequence of their writing production, and their ability to acquire and produce different genres. However, it is important to note that similar does not mean the same. ELLs’ knowledge of other languages and literacies must be recognized, as it often influences their English literacy development. Literature on writing instruction for ELLs reveals that there are many approaches to instruction, some of which have shown to be more effective than others. These approaches, ranging from direct instruction to SFL genre-based pedagogy, have shown mixed results and warrant further investigation.
Overall, it is evident that several areas in second language writing research need to be explored further. In particular, there is a need for additional studies to discover the patterns of writing development of ELLs across contexts. This would be especially useful in the form of longitudinal case studies, incorporating a focus on the impacts of L1 transfer. There is also a need for additional investigation of best practices for writing instruction for ELLs. Specifically, there is a need for researchers to further explore the impacts of implementing a genre-based approach to writing instruction, drawing on the most recent version of the TLC, which incorporates the Collaborative Construction phase. Research in these areas will provide a much-needed influx of knowledge on second-language writing development and instruction for ELLs, which would not only be beneficial for teachers, but also for administrators, curriculum planners, professors in teacher education programs, and other educational stakeholders.

This study will contribute to the field of second language writing research by investigating the Collaborative Construction phase of the TLC within the context of a first-grade classroom. This qualitative investigation will examine both the nature of students’ interactions when participating in collaborative writing activities and the texts they produce together. Additionally, this study will explore the ways in which collaborative writing activities can be scaffolded to support the writing development of first-grade ELL students. Using a DBR approach, this study aims to capture the dynamic classroom environment as writing activities are carried out across four writing instructional units. While DBR is a relatively new approach used in the realm of educational research, it offers much needed insight into effective interventions that can be used to improve instructional practice.
Chapter Three: Methodology

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the nature of first-grade students’ (ELLs and their partners/group members) interactions when participating in collaborative writing activities?

2. How do the two focal ELL students’ written texts compare across the collaborative writing activities?

3. In what ways can collaborative writing activities be scaffolded to support ELLs’ writing development in a diverse first-grade classroom?

To address each of these research questions, I conducted a DBR study (Brown, 1992; Collins, 1992; Cobb et al., 2003) in one first-grade classroom in a culturally and linguistically diverse elementary school located in Florida. Working alongside the classroom teacher, I designed and observed four iterations of collaborative writing activities. These collaborative writing activities were completed within writing instructional units (WIUs) and were therefore each connected to a different focal text. I collected multiple sources of data in order to build an understanding of the ways in which collaborative writing activities scaffold ELLs’ writing development.

In the following section, I present and discuss the details of the DBR method that informed this study, followed by a description of the research site, participants, WIUs, and students’ written products. I also discuss the roles of the researcher, the data collection methods, and the process for data analysis.

**Design of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine how collaborative writing activities can scaffold ELLs’ writing development in the context of a diverse first-grade classroom.
This study originally began as a qualitative case study (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995), with the intention of conducting an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon of collaborative writing within the real-life context of a first-grade classroom (Yin, 2003). However, after planning and observing the first WIU, it became clear that DBR methods, in conjunction with comparative case analysis (Stake, 2006), were much better suited for the nature of this inquiry.

A DBR approach was ultimately selected for this study, largely because of the emphasis it places on closing the gap between research and practice. While educational research has long been criticized for its implementation of inadequate conventional methodologies that tend to ignore the complexity and variability of classrooms (e.g. Pressley, Graham, & Harris, 2006), DBR captures the distinctiveness of classroom life in an attempt to identify effective interventions that can be used to improve instructional practice (Bradley & Reinking, 2011). Although researchers differ in their implementation of DBR, there is a general consensus regarding the defining characteristics of the approach. The characteristics identified below come from van den Akker, Gravemeijer, McKenney, and Nieveen (2006); however, it is important to note that they drew from the work of Cobb et al. (2003), the Design-Based Research Collective (2003), and Reeves, Herrington, and Oliver (2005), among others.

- **Interventionist**: Research aims to design an intervention within real settings and classrooms.

- **Iterative**: Research incorporates a cyclic process of design, enactment, analysis, and redesign (see Figure 2).
• **Process-oriented**: The focus of the research is on understanding and improving interventions, rather than input-output measurements.

• **Utility-oriented**: The value of the designed intervention is attributed, in part, to its practicality for users in real contexts.

• **Theory-oriented**: The research design and designated intervention are based (at least partly) on established theory. A major goal of the research is often to test whether a theory is effective when carried out in complex classroom environments.

*Figure 2*. Design-based research framework. Adapted from Cobb and Gravemeijer (2006) and Reinking and Watkins (1998).
The present study aligns well with the identified characteristics of DBR. First and foremost, the foundation of this study is based on the sociocultural theory of learning, which asserts that students thrive when immersed in social environments that allow them to interact with peers and adults (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory, along with the review of literature on writing development and instruction, led to the present collaborative writing study, which was conducted in the authentic instructional context of a first-grade classroom. In collaboration with the first-grade teacher, Mrs. Cabana (all individual and school names are pseudonyms), I designed collaborative writing units, observed their implementation, and then made necessary revisions through four successive iterations. During these iterations, various pedagogical methods were tested and modified in order to discover which was most effective for both the teacher and students. The overall focus of the study, throughout every phase of the research, was to understand and improve the process of collaborative writing, while constantly ensuring the practicality for both the teacher and young students.

Comparative case analysis (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003) was integrated with the DBR approach selected for this study, as it allows researchers to examine in rich detail the context and features of two or more instances of specific phenomena (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). For this study, I drew on the comparative case design to explore the experiences of the two focal ELL students, looking specifically at each of their interactions and written texts across the four iterations of collaborative writing activities.

**Research Site**

This study was conducted in one first-grade classroom at Sunnyside Elementary, a magnet school located in a large urban district in Florida. This school is unique in that it
serves two separate populations of children: (a) those from the neighborhood and (b) those who apply from all over the county to attend the highly regarded International Studies Magnet Program. The program attracts an international community of students who come from over 50 countries and speak a variety of languages, which has led to the school’s nickname, “mini United Nations.” Students participating in the program receive instruction in two languages, depending on their selected program of study. They can choose between English and Spanish, English and French, or English and German tracks. The school has been recognized as a National Blue-Ribbon School of Excellence and proudly boasts of their commitment to creating a “unique environment of cultures, abilities, and backgrounds” (school website, 2017). The enrollment for the school year during which the study was conducted (2016-2017) was 1,183 students in grades PK-5. Of the 1,183 students, 63% were Hispanic, 29% were White, 4% were Black, 2% were Asian, and 2% were designed as Multi-country. A small number of students (16%) participated in the free/reduced price lunch program, and 8% of students were identified as ELLs (school website, 2017).

Participants

Focal Classroom and Teacher

The first-grade classroom where I conducted my study was taught by Mrs. Cabana, a young, bilingual, Cuban-American teacher with 12 years of classroom experience. All 12 years of her teaching experience come from Sunnyside Elementary, where she started as a 19-year-old after-care teacher and paraprofessional for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Since that time, Mrs. Cabana has taught across multiple elementary grade levels and served in various leadership roles, including grade-
level chair and professional development coordinator. She has also worked closely with
the University of Miami as both a clinical teacher and a research participant for the
classroom-based study, “Planned and Interactional Scaffolding in Diverse Elementary
Contexts” (de Oliveira, Jones, & Smith, in preparation). Mrs. Cabana is highly regarded
by colleagues and administration at the school and often hosts visitors that wish to visit
the magnet program. She hopes to work at the administration level one day and is
currently pursuing her Ed.S. in educational leadership. She holds a bachelor’s degree in
elementary education with an ESOL endorsement and a master’s degree in curriculum
and instruction.

There was a total of 23 students in the first-grade class at the time of this study, 13
boys and 10 girls. There were two ESOL students (both were classified as level four)
according to district criteria; however, Mrs. Cabana suspected that two others that had
just recently arrived from Brazil were also in need of ESOL services. Additionally, the
class had numerous bilingual students from various countries, including Italy, Brazil,
Spain, United Arab Emirates, and multiple Latin American countries. This made for a
culturally and linguistically diverse classroom, reflective of the school’s “mini United
Nations” nickname.

Focal Students

All of the students from Mrs. Cabana’s class were invited to participate in the
study, “Planned and Interactional Scaffolding in Diverse Elementary Contexts.” Dr. de
Oliveira attended the open house at the beginning of the school year at Sunnyside, where
she presented information about the study to the students and their parents. She was also
able to answer their questions and distribute consent forms for their completion. Of the
23 students in the class, 22 returned their signed parental consent forms allowing them to participate in the study. These 22 students were then guided through the assent process by Dr. de Oliveira the following week. As this was a secondary study building upon and completed within the context of the larger study, it was not necessary to complete the consent and assent procedures a second time.

Because my study focuses on collaborative writing and ELLs, the two ESOL students served as my focal participants for this study. As focal students, my observations were centered on their interactions and written texts. Information regarding their background, social experiences, and academic performance is highlighted below and can be found in a condensed version in Table 1.

Table 1

*Description of Focal ELLs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focal Students</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Home Language</th>
<th>English Proficiency</th>
<th>Literacy Abilities</th>
<th>Personality Traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.J.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Emergent/Proficient reading skills - difficulty with vocabulary.</td>
<td>Socially outgoing, sometimes distracted by peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emergent/Proficient writing skills, showed improvement throughout the school year - “His writing had more voice by the end of the year.”</td>
<td>Strong communicator, “comfortable saying ‘I don’t know’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Spanish and English</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Emergent/Proficient reading skills - By midway through the year, she was scoring on grade-level for assessments of reading comprehension.</td>
<td>Shy, but friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emergent writing skills, “seems to miss out on the big idea”</td>
<td>Hesitant to speak out in whole-class discussions, but seems more engaged in small group settings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* All quotes are from the teacher, Mrs. Cabana, collected during debriefing sessions and interviews.
A.J., the Socialite. The first of my focal students, A.J., is Peruvian and was born in the United States. He lives with both of his parents and his older brother who also attends Sunnyside Elementary (3rd grade). His home language is Spanish, and although he speaks English with his peers at school, he communicates almost entirely in Spanish with his family. At the time of the study, A.J.’s mother worked in the home and frequently volunteered in the classroom and school. She was in close communication with Mrs. Cabana and often asked for strategies she could use to help A.J. with his school work. Because his mother was so accomplished in Spanish (all correspondence took place in Spanish), Mrs. Cabana encouraged her to work with A.J. on his reading comprehension and writing skills in Spanish. Mrs. Cabana felt strongly that the literacy skills he built in Spanish would not only assist him in the Spanish portion of the magnet program, but also in the English part, as she believed he could easily transfer his skills across languages (interview, November 2, 2016).

At the start of the school year, A.J. tested at a kindergarten level for foundational reading skills (phonological awareness, phonics, and high-frequency words), vocabulary, and reading comprehension in literature and informational texts. As the academic year progressed, however, he showed significant growth. By the end of the school year, he had increased his scale score by 77 points and ultimately tested on grade-level in all areas. Written texts collected and evaluated at the beginning of the school year revealed that A.J. was also below grade-level in writing in terms of handwriting, spelling, and sentence construction. His first writing task, for example, was to complete the sentence starter, “My first day of school was…” and A.J. wrote, “Ma fr da was gud bcoz the skul”. As the year moved forward, writing samples revealed that A.J. had grown into a fairly
accomplished writer. As the year came to an end, A.J. was writing cohesive paragraphs in various genres, including narrative, informational, argument, and procedure. Mrs. Cabana noted that his writing had more voice and he was able to incorporate higher level vocabulary terms, transitional words, and varied pronouns (interview, May 30, 2017).

Throughout the year, A.J. remained a socially outgoing student. He developed friendships with many of his classmates, and he could frequently be found talking with his peers. He was not involved in any of the clubs at school, but he often mentioned playing outside with his brother and neighborhood friends at home. Mrs. Cabana noted that his social nature caused him to be distracted in the classroom at times, but she also described his willingness to communicate and motivation to work with peers as a contributing factor for his academic growth (interview, May 30, 2017).

**Sara, the Conservative Artist.** Sara, my second focal student, was born in the southeastern United States to an Italian father and Spanish mother. She lives with her mom and has no siblings, but Mrs. Cabana recalled her mentioning that she enjoyed spending time with her grandmother on weeknights and weekends when her mother had to work. Sara’s home language, officially documented on her home language survey, is Spanish. While she spoke with her grandmother entirely in Spanish, she used both Spanish and English with her mom, as observed by Mrs. Cabana. At the very beginning of the year, Mrs. Cabana met with Sara’s mom for a parent-teacher conference. During the conference, Sara’s mom explained that even though her daughter was quiet and shy, she would eventually come out of her shell. She described Sara’s kindergarten experience as one of significant growth. She began her kindergarten year as a reserved student who was hesitant to speak out, but ended the year giving an oral presentation to her entire
class. In addition to this information, Sara’s mom also requested that her daughter not receive any special accommodations based on her ESOL designation. She thought that the accommodations were stressful for Sara and did not actually provide her with the support she needed. Instead, she explained that Sara would have a tutor throughout the school year to guide her in both reading and math (Mrs. Cabana, interview, November 2, 2016).

As the school year began, Sara was tested in both reading and writing. Reading tests revealed that Sara was performing at a kindergarten level in foundational reading skills (phonological awareness, phonics, and high-frequency words), vocabulary, and reading comprehension in literature and informational texts. Writing samples from the beginning of the academic year showed similar results, as Sara was evaluated below grade-level. For writing, in specific, Sara had difficulties in the areas of handwriting, spelling, and sentence construction. For the first writing task, responding to the sentence starter “My first day of school was…”, Sara wrote, “My freirithii g isGowi to The parke I lik bowigspash I likiri Lach I meia now fren”. As the academic year progressed, Sara made significant gains in reading. By midway through the year, she was testing on grade-level in foundational reading skills, vocabulary, and reading comprehension in literature and informational texts. She increased her scale score by 60 points in just three months and added to that score with 22 more points by the end of the year. As the year moved forward, Sara made great progress vis-à-vis writing. By the end of the year, she was able to produce texts in various genres, including narrative, informational, argument, and procedure. Mrs. Cabana was especially impressed by her growth in spelling and use of varied sentence structures (interview, May 30, 2017).
Sara began the year as a shy and reserved learner. She often chose to stay quiet and simply nod or shake her head in response to Mrs. Cabana’s prompts or questions. She also did not seem to engage much with her peers during class, but she was frequently observed drawing and coloring at her table, with her overflowing box of colors next to her. Outside of class, Sara took part in the school’s flamenco club and as such, she stayed after school each Friday with other classmates. In time, as the year progressed, Sara began to supply short comments or responses during discussions with Mrs. Cabana. She also began to visibly engage more with her peers, especially during the last month of the school year. Mrs. Cabana believed that Sara’s hesitation to communicate impeded her academic growth, but she was pleased to see her become more outgoing as the year came to an end (interview, May 30, 2017).

**Researcher’s Partner Role**

I first met Mrs. Cabana in January 2016 while serving as a co-supervisor of student teachers at the local elementary school where she was teaching first grade. At that time, she was one of the designated clinical teachers at the school and was therefore hosting one of the student teachers that I was co-supervising. Because of this, I found myself in her classroom to conduct weekly observations of the student teacher. Over the course of the semester, I got to know Mrs. Cabana very well. We developed a friendly, yet professional relationship, in which we frequently discussed her students and instructional methods, including her visions and goals for the future. Through our conversations, Mrs. Cabana made it clear that she would happily participate in classroom-based research, led by Dr. de Oliveira. In the following semester (September 2016), Mrs. Cabana continued in her role as a clinical teacher, while beginning a new role as a
research participant for the study mentioned previously, “Planned and Interactional Scaffolding in Diverse Elementary Contexts” (de Oliveira et al, in preparation).

**Planned and interactional scaffolding in diverse elementary contexts.** This research project, currently in its second year, was designed to investigate the kind of instruction that culturally and linguistically diverse learners receive during first grade, with a special focus on the scaffolding strategies used by the teacher, Mrs. Cabana. I have worked on this project since it began in September 2016, with the principal investigator, Dr. de Oliveira, and two graduate students. My main duties with this project include coordinating and conducting all stages of research. More specifically, I attend planning meetings with Mrs. Cabana and the research team in order to prepare for upcoming literacy units. I assist in the development of the targeted literacy units, designing instruction aligned with the TLC, with a special focus on bilingual learners and ELLs. I collect data through classroom observations, where I audio record the teacher and students’ interactions and take detailed field notes. I participate in debriefing sessions with Mrs. Cabana after completion of literacy units, and I work with other members of the research team in all areas of writing instruction, especially for ELLs. I also developed an amicable relationship with Mrs. Cabana, and I was very grateful when both she and Dr. de Oliveira allowed me to collect data for the present study within the context of the larger study on planned and interactional scaffolding in diverse elementary contexts.

**Scaffolding collaborative writing activities in a diverse first-grade classroom.** As the present study evolved and took place within the ongoing study named above, my role shifted from that of research assistant to researcher, designer, and collaborating partner. DBR studies require extensive collaboration among researchers and practitioners
Design-Based Research Collective, 2003), and thus Mrs. Cabana and I worked together throughout every phase of the study. In our initial meeting to plan the study, we discussed the needs of her ELL students. As mentioned before, diagnostic assessment scores from August revealed that both ELLs were at a kindergarten level for reading comprehension, vocabulary, and foundational skills (e.g. phonics). Writing assessments administered by Mrs. Cabana revealed similar results, with both students struggling with spelling, grammar, punctuation, and unable to write a complete sentence. With this information, we decided to concentrate our efforts on writing.

Mrs. Cabana had previously been introduced to the TLC through her work with Dr. de Oliveira and the scaffolding study, but I took this opportunity to introduce her to the fourth phase of the TLC, Collaborative Construction (Brisk, 2015; de Oliveira, 2017). This phase is based on collaborative writing activities, which Mrs. Cabana and I worked to incorporate into her existing WIUs, always keeping her instructional goals and objectives in mind. I worked with Mrs. Cabana to develop the specific collaborative writing activities, often co-planning everything from the text that would guide the writing unit to the rubrics that would be used to evaluate students’ work. When Mrs. Cabana carried out the WIUs, my role was limited to that of an observer, with my focus on collecting data. Each day that I observed, I consulted with Mrs. Cabana prior to the start of class in order to set up audio recorders and review the plan for that day. I took field notes, circulated among students as they worked in pairs/groups, and often took pictures of relevant artifacts (e.g. model texts, student’s planning sheets).
Writing Instructional Units (WIUs)

Four WIUs were implemented throughout the 2016-2017 school year. Each unit was tied to a different focal text that Mrs. Cabana identified as part of the reading/English language arts curriculum. Working within the constraints of the assigned curriculum, the focal texts ranged from a four-page text taken from a basal reader to an entire chapter book. Due to the varying lengths of the focal texts and the corresponding curriculum standards and objectives, certain WIUs spanned four or five days, while others spanned more than two weeks. Within each WIU, Mrs. Cabana employed multiple teaching and learning activities often drawing on phases of the TLC. Additionally, in each WIU, Mrs. Cabana implemented collaborative writing activities that she and I designed together to correspond to each of the focal texts. These collaborative writing activities were carried out differently across the WIUs, based on the modifications we chose to make according to our analyses of the previous iteration(s) (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006).

WIU 1: Narrative Recount

The first WIU was designed in connection to the focal text, *The Legend of Old Befana* (dePaola, 1980), which the entire first-grade team chose to incorporate in the curriculum. This text is designated as a level 2.9, according to the Accelerated Reader (AR) program, which indicates that it could likely be read by a student whose reading skills are at the level of a second grader during the ninth month of school.

This short picture book is an Italian Christmas story about a woman, Old Befana, who lived in a small village in Italy. Old Befana is portrayed as grumpy and unfriendly, as she spends her days sweeping her home and baking. Then, one night, she sees a bright star in the dark sky that illuminates everything. The following day the Three Kings stop
to ask her for directions to Bethlehem. They explain to Old Befana that they are searching for the Christ Child who has come to change the world. Old Befana dismisses them at first, but later decides that she will search for the Baby King as well, to take him cakes, cookies, and candies. After baking all day, Old Befana sets out on her search for the Child in Bethlehem, but never finds him. The story comes to an end, describing how Old Befana still searches for the Christ Child every year on January 6th by visiting all the children while they sleep, leaving them gifts, as she does not know who might be the Baby King.

Mrs. Cabana led the students through various activities in conjunction with this text, including collaborative writing activities that focused on the narrative recount genre. The two focal ELL students, A.J. and Sara, were each paired with a classmate to collaboratively plan, write, and illustrate a text about the main events from *The Legend of Old Befana* (dePaola, 1980). While Mrs. Cabana monitored students’ progress and assisted in the editing process, the students completed these collaborative writing activities largely on their own (in pairs), without a great deal of teacher guidance.

**WIU 2: “How-to” (Procedure)**

The second WIU was created to focus on a “how-to” (known as a procedure in SFL) text from the Reading Wonders series, “Making Paper Shapes” (August et al., 2014). This text is designated as a level 2.8 according to the AR program, which indicates that this text could be read by students who are reading at the level of a second grader during the eighth month of school. The four-page text first introduces students to origami and briefly describes how people from Asia, including children, make bright origami to decorate the streets for certain celebrations. After this short introduction, the text provides
a list of seven steps that students can follow to create their very own origami in the shape of a dog.

The collaborative writing activities tied to this text were focused on the “how-to” genre, and A.J. and Sara were once again paired with a different classmate to collaboratively plan, write, and illustrate a text that described how to do something. A.J. and his partner chose to write the steps for how to draw a dragon and butterfly, while Sara and her partner decided to write the steps for how to make a paper airplane and how to draw a giraffe. This time, however, the two pairs of students completed their collaborative writing activities at a small-group table, with Mrs. Cabana leading them through each step. This modification to the design of the collaborative writing activities was made based on our analysis and discussion of the activities from the first WIU. Specifically, we noted that during the first collaborative writing activity, A.J. and his partner did not complete their writing assignment. Instead, they spent a great deal of time talking and laughing with each other about topics unrelated to the writing task.

**WIU 3: Informational Text**

The third WIU was planned based on the chapter book, *Dolphins at Daybreak* (Osborne, 1997). This text is designated as a level 3.1 according to the AR program, which means that it could likely be read by a student whose reading skills are at the level of a third grader during the first month of school. This book is the ninth in a series of more than fifty Magic Treehouse books, which follow two children, Jack and Annie, as they go on exciting adventures, traveling through time and space in a magic treehouse.

In this particular story, Jack and Annie are tasked with becoming “master librarians” so that they can collect books for the treehouse. In order to become “master
librarians,” Jack and Annie must solve four riddles using a book they are given, called *Ocean Guide*, to help them. The children explore the beach, travel the ocean in a mini-sub, and come in close contact with several ocean animals that they learn about in their book. At one point in their adventures, Jack and Annie find themselves frantically swimming away from a shark, only to be saved by two dolphins that tow them to the beach shore. By complete accident, as they make their way back to the magic treehouse to go back home, the two children end up solving the first of their four riddles.

The collaborative writing activities for this specific unit were focused on the informational genre, and this time, A.J. and Sara worked with three other peers in one small group, led by Mrs. Cabana. In this small group, each student was tasked with writing a specific portion of an informational text on the anglerfish. Mrs. Cabana and I selected to design the collaborative writing activities in this way based on our analysis and discussion of the activities from the two previous WIUs. While the two pairs of students from the second WIU completed their writing task, we noted that A.J. and Sara were both a bit overshadowed by their partners. This was especially the case with Sara, who did not seem to have many opportunities to contribute her thoughts and opinions for the writing. Thus, Mrs. Cabana and I decided to try a small group setting for the third WIU. We believed that in this setting, Mrs. Cabana would have more control over the flow of conversation, which would allow her to focus on facilitating contributions from A.J. and Sara.

**WIU 4: Opinion (Argument)**

The fourth and final WIU was designed in conjunction with the chapter book *High Tide in Hawaii* (Osborne, 2003). This text is designated as a level 3.4, according to
the AR program, which means that it could likely be read by a student whose reading skills are at the level of a third grader during the fourth month of school. This book is from the same series as *Dolphins at Daybreak* (Osborne, 1997), but this time Jack and Annie must go on a mission to find a special kind of magic, using another book they are given, *A Visit to Old Hawaii*, to help them. The magic treehouse takes Jack and Annie to a village in Hawaii where they meet new friends, dance the *hula*, eat *poi*, and surf. Unfortunately, as they are surfing, a tsunami approaches and they have to hurry and take cover with their new friends. Luckily, they were able to get away in time, so the “gigantic wave” did them no harm. Afterwards, Jack and Annie realize that they had completed their mission. They found a special kind of magic – the magic of friendship.

The collaborative writing activities associated with this focal text were based on the opinion genre (known as an argument in SFL), and students were tasked with responding to the following prompt: In your opinion, should our class visit Hawaii during summer vacation? For these activities, A.J. and Sara each worked in different groups of three, where every group member focused on writing a specific portion of the opinion text. Mrs. Cabana monitored the progress of the small groups and worked with them to edit their text prior to publishing. The design for the collaborative writing activities was once again determined by Mrs. Cabana and I through our analysis and reflection of the activities from the first three WIUs. With this final WIU, Mrs. Cabana and I thought the students would do well working in a small group, without Mrs. Cabana as the lead. A.J. and Sara both contributed to the writing in the small group setting with Mrs. Cabana, and we were hopeful that they would perform similarly in their groups of three.
Data Collection

Various data informed my evaluation and refinement of the collaborative writing activities over the course of four iterations. These included classroom observations, interviews and debriefing sessions with the teacher, classroom artifacts, such as completed graphic organizers, jointly-constructed writing models, assigned worksheets, and samples of student writing. In the following, I provide details about each source of data that I collected throughout the study. Table 2 provides an overview of how these data sources connect to the research questions that guided this study.

Table 2

Relationship between Data Sources and Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>What is the nature of first-grade students’ (ELLs and their partners/group members) interactions when participating in collaborative writing activities?</th>
<th>How do the two focal ELL students’ written texts compare across the collaborative writing activities?</th>
<th>In what ways can collaborative writing activities be scaffolded to support ELLs’ writing development in a diverse first-grade classroom?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observations</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom artifacts</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student artifacts</td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher interviews and debriefing sessions</td>
<td>•</td>
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<td>•</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classroom Observations

In design-based studies, it is critical for the researcher to carry out classroom observations while the intervention (collaborative writing activities, in this study) is in
progress so that they may engage in an ongoing analysis of all relevant activities and interactions in order to modify the design of the intervention, as needed (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006). Accordingly, I conducted whole-class observations of all four WIUs that were carried out during the 2016-2017 school year. Each WIU varied in terms of instructional time; however, in total, I observed twenty-five, 75-minute sessions over a span of four months. The first WIU took place in December, the second in January, the third at the end of April and beginning of May, and the fourth in May. The gap during which there were no observations from January to April was due to Mrs. Cabana being out on maternity leave.

During my classroom observations and data collection, I strategically placed multiple audio-recorders in various parts of the classroom in order to capture the discourse that took place during all forms of instruction, including whole-class discussions and activities, small-group instruction, and pair/group work among students. To supplement these audio recordings, I took detailed field notes, paying particular attention to the focal students, A.J and Sara, as they interacted with the teacher and their peers throughout the different teaching and learning activities. In my field notes, I included observer comments and reflective memos (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), including my thoughts and questions, that I later used during the debriefing sessions and interviews with Mrs. Cabana during which we revised and refined the collaborative writing activities.

Teacher Interviews and Debriefing Sessions

Along with being present in the classroom to observe the interventions in progress, researchers conducting design-based studies must also conduct short debriefing
sessions with the collaborating teacher to discuss and develop joint interpretations of what is taking place in the classroom (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006). For this reason, after each WIU and set of collaborative writing activities, I met with Mrs. Cabana to talk about her impressions and opinions of the activities, including the participant structure, students’ level of engagement and behavior, the level of difficulty of the assigned tasks, and her thoughts on the success of the design. I also contributed my thoughts on these topics, and together we made a plan for the next iteration.

In addition to the debriefing sessions that took place after each WIU, I also completed three semi-structured interviews (Patton, 2015) with Mrs. Cabana (approximately 25 minutes each). These interviews were completed using a guide of questions; however, adjustments were made according to Mrs. Cabana’s responses (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Each interview was audio-recorded and saved for future analysis. The first interview was completed at Sunnyside Elementary in November 2016, prior to beginning the design-based study. During this initial interview, I posed general questions about her teaching experience, the students in her classroom (particularly the ELLs), the literacy practices she incorporated in the classroom, and her experiences and opinions on collaborative work among students (see Appendix A for interview guide).

The second and third interviews differed from the first in that I implemented a conversational strategy with the interview guide (Patton, 2015). This different approach gave me the freedom to ask specific questions, but also to “go with the flow” and explore topics as they arose. The second interview took place at the midpoint of the study, after the first two WIUs. The third and final interview took place at the end of the study, following the fourth WIU. Both the second and third interviews focused on Mrs.
Cabana’s impressions and opinions of the collaborative writing activities that were carried out in the context of the different WIUs. I specifically asked Mrs. Cabana to comment on the pros and cons of each collaborative writing design and ways to improve the design, moving forward (see Appendix B for the interview guide used for the second and third interviews). To assist Mrs. Cabana during the interview, I created a recap sheet that highlighted the details of the collaborative writing activities from each WIU. I included information about the participant structures, assigned tasks, and visuals of completed writing samples (see Appendix C for this recap sheet). These interviews, in conjunction with the debriefing sessions, helped shed light on Mrs. Cabana’s perceptions of the collaborative writing activities.

Artifacts

I collected all relevant materials produced by both the teacher and students throughout the four different WIUs. These materials included copies of the focal texts, jointly-constructed model texts, and students’ written texts, such as planning sheets, graphic organizers, worksheets, index cards, and journal entries (Creswell & Poth, 2018). When I was unable to collect or make copies of certain items, I took photos of the board in order to capture whole-class activities, teacher-created work samples, and writing prompts. These instructional materials and student-produced texts were an essential part of data collection, as they provided valuable insights into the different iterations of the collaborative writing activities and ELLs’ writing development.

Data Analysis

One of the primary aims of DBR is to produce a local instruction theory that has the potential to impact teaching and learning in authentic contexts (Gravemeijer & Cobb,
2006). This is achieved largely through retrospective analysis of the entire data set, which allows the researcher to provide a thick description (Miles & Huberman, 1994) of the design study. In the following, I describe the methods I employed for retrospective data analysis, my reasons for selecting those methods, and how I used them to address each of my research questions.

**Research Question 1: Nature of First-Grade Students’ Interactions**

In order to examine the nature of the focal students’ interactions with their partners and group members during collaborative writing activities, I examined how each pair or group of students approached the writing tasks in terms of *equality* and *mutuality* (Damon & Phelps, 1989; Li, 2014; Li & Kim, 2016; Li & Zhu, 2013; Storch, 2002; Zhu, 2001). In this study, equality is defined as the level of contribution to the writing task and the degree of control over the direction of said task. Mutuality, on the other hand, refers to the student’s level of engagement with their peers, which is made evident through reciprocal responses in task negotiation. The examination of these two indexes, equality and mutuality, was achieved through analysis of students’ interactions, in terms of language functions and scaffolding occurrences, and analysis of the roles that students assumed, as reflected in field notes, debriefing sessions, and interviews. Figure 3 depicts the specific approach I used to analyze the two indexes of group interaction, equality and mutuality.
As shown in Figure 3, I evaluated the level of equality of each pair or group by first comparing the frequency counts of students’ language functions. In order to do this, I created transcripts from the audio-recordings collected during classroom observations. I was present for all teaching and learning activities that took place throughout the four WIUs, but I selected to transcribe only the recordings from the collaborative writing activities. I supplemented the transcription process by drawing on the field notes that I took during my observations. By using these field notes, I was able to add relevant details to the transcripts, including the identity of speakers and the physical location (within the classroom) where students worked in pairs and/or small groups.

After the transcription process, I conducted *inductive process coding* (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Saldaña, 2016) in which I coded each turn of discourse by language function (e.g. agreeing, questioning, suggesting). Rather than imposing existing language function codes on my data, I reviewed the audio transcripts multiple times to establish a coding taxonomy that was appropriate for my data (see Table 3).
Table 3

Coding Framework for Language Function

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Function</th>
<th>Definition &amp; Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledging</td>
<td>Recognizing or praising others’ ideas, contributions, or comments. E.g., <em>Very good!</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeing</td>
<td>Expressing agreement with others’ opinions or ideas. E.g., <em>I agree.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering</td>
<td>Giving answers to questions or providing responses to prompts. E.g., <em>S: What was the first step you did? S: I did the top of the giraffe.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>Providing instructions or guidelines for completing specific tasks. E.g., <em>You and your buddy are going to look carefully at the details in the story and you are going to find three main events.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreeing</td>
<td>Expressing disagreement with others’ opinions or ideas. E.g., <em>No, no, no. I need to agree!</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborating</td>
<td>Extending the ideas, contributions, or comments made by oneself or others. E.g., <em>So, in the beginning, Old Befana swept. That’s true. That’s what she spent her whole day doing in the beginning</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>Asking questions for understanding or clarification. E.g., <em>What’s an organizer?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prompting</td>
<td>Asking leading questions or providing sentence starters to support students as they participate in classroom activities. E.g., <em>T: Who heard the bells tinkling? S: Old Befana</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td>Stating what others have said again, often to draw attention to important contributions, to provide cues to self-correct or to extend thoughts. E.g., <em>S: Then draw teeth. S: Then draw teeth in those two pointy thingies.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating</td>
<td>Providing information or presenting ideas in relation to the task, sometimes in response to suggestions, directions, or statements posed by others. E.g., <em>There’s a mistake here. ‘This is’ looks like it’s together.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting</td>
<td>Offering recommendations for completing the task. E.g., <em>What if we write, “In the middle of the night she woke up and the room was bright?”</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After coding for language function, I calculated the frequency of each type of language function as performed by each student in the pair or group. This coding process revealed insightful information about students’ interactions in the collaborative writing
tasks, namely the ways that each student contributed to the joint writing tasks. To provide additional clarity regarding the level of equality from each pair or group, I examined the individual role of each student by evaluating field notes, transcripts of recorded interviews with the teacher, and notes from debriefing sessions with the teacher. By reviewing these sources of data, I was able to gauge the stances and roles that each student assumed when taking part in the different collaborative writing activities.

After evaluating the level of equality for each pair or group, I evaluated their level of mutuality. I completed this evaluation by once again examining the audio transcripts from classroom observations. This time, however, I coded each identified language function in terms of initiating and responding behaviors (Li & Kim, 2016). For purposes of this study, initiating refers to proposing new ideas, while responding refers to reacting to others’ contributions. This coding process allowed me to explore students’ engagement with their partners or group members throughout the writing tasks.

To further examine the level of mutuality, I elected to examine the scaffolding moves employed by each of the students when participating in the collaborative writing activities. For this process of deductive coding (Miles et al., 2014), I drew from established scaffolding literature (Donato, 1994; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996; Walqui, 2006; Wood et al., 1976) to construct a coding framework that was appropriate for my data. In total, I identified four distinct scaffolding moves that students performed when writing collaboratively (see Table 4). These identified instances of scaffolding were triangulated with other relevant data sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018), specifically through examination of field notes, interview transcripts, and notes
from debriefing sessions. By drawing on these additional sources of data, I was able to further explore the level of mutuality throughout the collaborative writing tasks.

Table 4

*Coding Framework for Scaffolding Occurrences in Peer Interactions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining direction (Wood et al., 1976)</td>
<td>Maintaining pursuit of the goal for the group work by getting each other back on task and/or encouraging each other to move forward with the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructing (Villamil &amp; de Guerrero, 1996)</td>
<td>Giving “mini” lessons on grammar, vocabulary, stylistic conventions, or other aspects of writing; Providing insight about completing the task by specifically referencing directions or steps for completion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising (Villamil &amp; de Guerrero, 1996)</td>
<td>Offering ideas for writing or giving specific recommendations in the form of sentences for the writing task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborating (Hammond &amp; Gibbons, 2005)</td>
<td>Providing additional details to extend the ideas or contributions made by peers/group members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To ensure the reliability (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982) of this study and validity of its findings, I conducted procedures for inter-rater reliability in which I compared my coding with the coding of a second rater. The second rater in this case was an advanced doctoral student who had previous experience with coding procedures of this nature. After familiarizing the second rater with my coding scheme, including the categories of language functions and the subsequent initiating and responding classifications, we coded several pages of audio transcripts together. This collaborative coding process ensured that we were able to develop a mutual understanding of the coding process. Because each set of audio transcripts varied in length, ranging from 18 to 31 pages, the second rater coded 20% of each transcript independently. Afterward, we compared codes and resolved all
discrepancies through discussion. The final inter-rater reliability measure (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was 93.2%. This same process was not completed for scaffolding occurrences, as I was able to triangulate those findings with other data sources collected during the study.

Overall, the analyses I conducted to determine the levels of equality and mutuality throughout the collaborative writing activities revealed the nature of students’ interactions when writing collaboratively in pairs and small groups. After completing these analyses, I conducted a second level of analysis by carrying out a comparative case analysis to identify commonalities and differences between the two students and across the four different collaborative writing tasks. Throughout both levels of my analyses, I applied the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), continually moving back and forth between my sources of data to ensure the validity of my findings.

**Research Question 2: ELL Students’ Written Texts**

To evaluate students’ written texts across the collaborative writing activities, I first typed all of their published pieces in a word processing program (see Appendix D for students’ transcribed texts). This allowed me to easily read and review the writing samples. As students wrote in collaborative pairs or groups, there were a total of eight writing samples. During the first WIU, A.J and Sara were each paired with a non-ELL partner to complete the narrative recount; however, as stated before, A.J and his partner did not complete their work, so there was only one writing sample from this iteration (Sara and her partner’s writing sample).

For the second WIU, both A.J and Sara were once again paired with a non-ELL to complete their “how-to” writing. On the first day, one student from each pair was
designated as the “writer” while the other student was designated as the “doer” and completed the task they were writing about. On the second day, the students switched roles. For example, on the first day, Sara was the writer while her partner, Ben made a paper airplane. Working together, Sara and Ben determined the best way to write the steps for making the paper airplane, thus completing their “how-to” writing assignment. On the second day, Sara was the doer and elected to draw a giraffe while her partner, Ben, was the writer. They once again worked together to determine the steps for the task, drawing a giraffe, in order to complete their “how-to” writing. Therefore, there were two writing samples from each pair for the second WIU. For the third WIU, A.J and Sara were part of the same small group that completed an informational text (one writing sample from the whole small group). During the fourth and final WIU, A.J and Sara were each placed in a group of three to complete an opinion writing (one writing sample from each of their groups).

The first part of my evaluation of the students’ collaboratively written texts was based on the Florida Standards (2014). I reviewed and compared the first-grade Florida writing standards with the students’ written work in order to ascertain whether the students had successfully met the standard or not. For the second part of my evaluation, I analyzed the written texts using the SFL framework (Brisk, 2015; Halliday, 1994). This framework allowed me to conduct a genre-based analysis of students’ writing. I first examined the designated purpose and stages of each genre and compared them to students’ completed texts. This comparison led me to determine whether their writing aligned with the purpose of the genre and if it followed the appropriate stages. I then reviewed the language features of each genre, as outlined in the SFL framework (Brisk,
and compared them to students’ texts. This comparison once again led me to determine if students’ writing contained the appropriate language features for each specific genre. Using the information gathered in the genre-based analysis, I was able to consult the rubric put forth by Brisk (2015) to determine a score for each of the students’ texts. The scores, ranging from one to four, indicated the following: (1) needs substantial support, (2) needs instruction, (3) needs revision, or (4) meets standards. It is important to note that the “standards” referenced in this rubric are in relation to the purpose, stages, and language features put forth in the SFL framework, and not the standard from the Florida first-grade writing standards.

Overall, this genre-based analysis facilitated my understanding of how students’ collaborative writing compared across the four iterations of activities. Specifically, I was able to identify areas in which students excelled and areas where they needed additional instruction and practice. After completing this analysis, I once again conducted an additional level of analysis by carrying out a comparative case analysis to identify commonalities and differences in the two students’ collaboratively written texts across the four writing tasks.

**Research Question 3: Scaffolding Collaborative Writing Activities**

In order to identify the ways that collaborative writing activities can be scaffolded to support ELLs’ writing development, I approached collaborative writing at different levels. I first examined each of the four WIUs separately. To gain a comprehensive understanding of what took place throughout each unit, I listened to the audio-recordings from whole-class discussions and activities, small-group instruction, and pair/group work among students. As I listened to these recordings, I consulted field notes that I gathered
during classroom observations. Using both of these data sources, I created a detailed overview of the teaching and learning activities from each WIU. This overview allowed me to better understand the context in which the collaborative writing activities took place.

In addition to building out the context of the collaborative writing activities, I also took a closer look at the different scaffolds that Mrs. Cabana utilized throughout the activities. I was not only interested in the scaffolds that Mrs. Cabana planned to incorporate, but also the scaffolds that occurred spontaneously as she interacted with students. In order to identify and examine the different scaffolds, I once again worked with the transcribed audio recordings from the collaborative writing activities, focusing specifically on the interactions that involved Mrs. Cabana. After reading through the transcriptions multiple times, I consulted the existing literature on scaffolding to identify established frameworks that corresponded to my data. Because my focus was on scaffolding between Mrs. Cabana and the students, it was not appropriate for me to draw from the coding framework I constructed to evaluate students’ peer-to-peer scaffolding moves. Instead, I located two frameworks from de Oliveira and Athanases (2017) and Hammond and Gibbons (2005) that accounted for the majority of what I saw and heard during my classroom observations. The two frameworks describe two types of scaffolding, planned and interactional.

Planned scaffolding can be understood as those strategies that teachers consciously plan to incorporate in their classrooms. These may include the ways in which classrooms are organized, how classroom goals are determined, and the identification and implementation of tasks (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). There are four different
scaffolding moves that fall under the planned category: (1) considering students’ prior knowledge and experiences, (2) selecting and sequencing tasks purposefully, (3) implementing varied participant structures, and (4) utilizing semiotic systems.

When considering students’ prior knowledge and experiences, the teacher must reflect on the students’ current levels of knowledge, their English language proficiency, and their unique backgrounds and experiences in order to design and implement effective instruction. The selection and sequencing of tasks is of utmost importance when planning instruction for diverse learners (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). This particular scaffolding move calls for the teacher to identify challenging and engaging tasks that are just beyond the ability level of students, so that they may develop new knowledge through scaffolded interactions with their teacher and peers. Additionally, the teacher carefully plans the sequence of tasks, so that each one serves as the building block for the next. Apart from selection and sequencing of tasks, the teacher must also select appropriate participant structures and incorporate varied semiotic systems during instruction. Participant structures (i.e. pairs, small group, whole class) are selected based on the level of support students need to successfully engage in complex tasks. Multiple semiotic systems (Kress, 2010) are utilized in instruction to provide students with varying points of access to the material they are learning. These semiotic systems may include visual, aural, and tactile supports through the use of graphs, maps, videos, pictures, hands-on activities, gestures, and more.

The second type of scaffolding, interactional scaffolding, takes place in the dynamic classroom environment as teachers and students interact through various teaching and learning activities. These interactions, also known as classroom talk, are
opportunities for teachers to engage students in instructional conversation to build their academic literacy (de Oliveira & Athanases, 2017). There are seven different scaffolding moves that fall under the interactional category: (1) students’ prior knowledge and experiences, (2) cued elicitation, (3) purposeful repetition, (4) appropriation, (5) recasting, (6) elaboration, and (7) recapping.

Classroom interactions often incorporate students’ prior knowledge and experiences as teachers reference students’ unique out-of-school and home experiences and shared experiences from previous teaching and learning activities. During these interactions, teachers use a variety of moves to provide students with the support they need to participate in the classroom talk and associated writing activities. One of these moves is cued elicitation, which involves the teacher using strong verbal or gestural hints about expected responses. Teachers often use this move to provide a substantial amount of support for students to participate or when attempting to make material more memorable (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). Similarly, teachers repeat what students say during instances of purposeful repetition in order to cue the students to self-correct or extend their thoughts.

Another move used by both teachers and students is appropriation. Appropriation refers to times when learners incorporate language and tools previously used by their teacher in their own dialogue for their own purposes; however, it also refers to the teacher’s appropriation of students’ contributions. When the teacher appropriates students’ contributions, they typically recast the wording of the student into more academically appropriate discourse. This reshaping of students’ contributions allows the student to be a co-participant in the discourse, but it also enables the teacher to effectively
move the discourse forward (de Oliveira & Athanases, 2017). At times, the teacher may incorporate elaboration, which involves supplementing students’ contributions with extra information. Elaboration can also be used to ask students to provide more details for their own contributions, which allows them to continue their involvement in the discourse. Additionally, the teacher may use recapping to give a brief summary of the main points of an activity, lesson, or interaction. This can be very helpful for students as it provides them with a connection between key concepts, highlights the information students should have gathered from the activity, lesson, or interaction, and provides students with a clear focus for future learning.

Through a process of deductive coding (Miles et al., 2014), I was able to combine and adapt these two frameworks (see Figure 4), which allowed me to pinpoint the planned and interactional scaffolds that Mrs. Cabana implemented in order to support the ELL students during the collaborative writing activities. In addition to building out the context of the collaborative writing activities and examining the planned and interactional scaffolds that Mrs. Cabana integrated throughout the activities, I also reviewed field notes, interview transcripts, and notes from debriefing sessions that took place throughout the four WIUs. Drawing from these three data sources, I was able to identify emergent codes, which I compared in order to identify recurring and salient categories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Braun & Clarke, 2006). These categories captured the ways that collaborative writing activities were scaffolded to support ELLs’ writing development in this diverse first-grade classroom.
Figure 4. Scaffolding framework. Adapted from de Oliveira and Athanases (2017) and Hammond and Gibbons (2005).
Implementation as a Design-Based Research Study

Frameworks for implementing DBR studies have been put forth by many scholars (e.g. Reinking & Bradley, 2008; Reinking & Watkins, 1998, 2000); however, my study was guided by the work of Reinking and Watkins (1998). My implementation framework (see Figure 2) includes three phases, (1) preparation and design, (2) enactment and analysis, and (3) redesign and evaluation. Within each of these phases, there are multiple steps. The steps are as follows: (a) needs assessment, (b) goal setting, (c) intervention selection and design, (d) implementation and data collection, (e) data analysis and intervention refinement, and (f) evaluation of intervention and outputs. In the following, I will describe the first five steps of research as they pertain to my study. The last step will be discussed in my discussion (see Chapter 7).

Step 1: Needs Assessment

Mrs. Cabana and I first collaborated to identify the specific strengths and challenges related to literacy learning for her students, focusing specifically on her ELLs. We analyzed diagnostic assessment data, evaluated student work, and discussed her observations and perceptions. Based on our discussion and review of data sources, we decided that it would be beneficial to focus on writing. Mrs. Cabana had a special interest in this area as she had targeted writing as her professional development goal for the year. In doing so, she was required to show improvement and growth in her students’ writing in order to be deemed a “highly effective” teacher.

Step 2: Goal Setting

The pedagogical goal or purpose of this study was identified through the needs assessment that Mrs. Cabana and I completed together. After deciding to focus on
writing, we narrowed our focus to concentrate on methods for writing instruction that would specifically benefit ELLs. Our goal was to implement writing instruction that would be effective in scaffolding ELLs’ writing development in the first-grade classroom. Although Mrs. Cabana only had two students officially designated as ELLs, she suspected that at least three others should have been receiving additional support in language development. These students, she explained, were not labeled as ESOL learners because their home language survey did not reflect that they spoke a language other than English at home. Keeping this in mind, Mrs. Cabana and I knew that focusing on effective writing instruction for ELLs would be beneficial for numerous students.

**Step 3: Intervention Selection and Design**

The intervention utilized in this study was the implementation of collaborative writing activities throughout four different writing instructional units. Collaborative writing was selected for two reasons. First, previous studies have shown that students benefit, both socially and academically, from participating in collaborative writing activities (e.g. Jones, in press). Though many of these studies involved the use of technology or students working at the tertiary level of education, Mrs. Cabana and I both thought that there could still be benefits for her students as well. Second, Mrs. Cabana had previously been exposed to the TLC and the Collaborative Construction phase, which provided her with some background knowledge about collaborative writing and how it may fit within her writing instruction. Based on these two factors, we felt that collaborative writing was an ideal selection for the intervention.

Because Mrs. Cabana did not have prior experience incorporating collaborative writing activities in her literacy instruction, we worked together to design each iteration
of the activities. To begin, we reviewed her schedule and discussed how the activities could fit into her established curriculum and grade-level plans. We decided to complete the first iteration of collaborative writing activities within the writing unit that focused on the text *Legend of Old Befana* (dePaola, 1980). Students first participated in a whole-class, detailed reading of the text and were then given a partner to complete the activities. The design of the first iteration, largely based on my knowledge of previous studies, involved the joint planning, editing, and publishing of a narrative recount based on the focal text. Each focal ELL student was paired with a non-ELL and Mrs. Cabana began the activities with a planning sheet that she provided to each student. The students worked together to complete the planning sheet and then met with Mrs. Cabana for editing. Finally, after making revisions, students jointly published their text on chart paper with an accompanying illustration.

**Step 4: Implementation and Data Collection**

The first iteration of the collaborative writing activities was implemented in December 2016. The collaborative writing activities, which lasted two days, took place within the five-day writing instructional unit. Data collection was described earlier in this chapter; however, for this particular iteration, I collected data through audio-recorded classroom observations, detailed field notes, collection of student artifacts, and teacher debriefing sessions.

**Step 5: Data Analysis and Intervention Refinement**

DBR calls for an iterative process of analyzing the entire data set (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006). While I audio-recorded the classroom observations, I also constantly took field notes to document my thoughts and questions based on the participation and
interactions of the focal students. After each class session, Mrs. Cabana and I would meet briefly to compare and discuss our thoughts, questions, and ideas for moving forward. We would also evaluate student work to better understand how students were performing during the collaborative writing activities.

After the first iteration of collaborative writing, Mrs. Cabana and I quickly realized that the focal ELL students and their classmates required additional scaffolding to efficiently participate in the collaborative writing activities. Informed by this realization, Mrs. Cabana and I designed the second iteration of collaborative writing activities to take place in a small group setting. The focal ELLs were once again paired with a non-ELL peer, however; this time all of the writing activities were completed in a small group led by Mrs. Cabana.

The third iteration of collaborative writing was also implemented in a small group setting, but this time the focal ELL students were not in pairs. Based on our observations and discussions following iteration two, Mrs. Cabana and I decided to try a group of five students, with both focal ELLs and three non-ELLs. These collaborative writing activities were carried out much differently from the first two, as students were assigned a part of the text (e.g. topic sentence, conclusion) to write on an index card. Mrs. Cabana encouraged each student to talk with the group members to gather their input before writing their individual part of the text. Once each student had written their part of the text, Mrs. Cabana and the group members completed an editing activity and then published the final product on a writing sheet.

The fourth and final iteration of collaborative writing was implemented based on all of our accumulated observations and discussions. We decided that the third iteration
worked well in that each student was assigned a part of the text to write, but we decided that a group of five was too large. Instead, this time, the focal ELLs were placed in a group of three students with two non-ELLs. Students were assigned a part of the text to write and were told to work with their group members to agree on what they would each individually write. Mrs. Cabana did not work as closely with students this time, but she did complete the editing activity with each small group. Once editing was complete, students were told to publish their text on a writing paper with an illustration.

Step 6: Evaluation of Intervention and Outputs

The primary aim of DBR is to establish a local instruction theory and corresponding optimal instructional sequence that can positively impact teaching and learning in authentic contexts (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006). After implementing four iterations of collaborative writing activities, I analyzed my entire data set in order to produce a local instruction theory and optimal instructional sequence for collaborative writing with ELLs in a first-grade classroom. This step will be discussed in more detail in the discussion (Chapter 7).

Trustworthiness

Following the guidelines of DBR, I was intimately involved in every aspect of this study, including the design, development, implementation, refinement, and evaluation. Taking this involvement into consideration, it can be challenging to make credible and trustworthy assertions (Barab & Squire, 2004); however, I followed established guidelines to ensure the trustworthiness of my study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). The following sections describe how my study conforms to the
expectations for establishing trustworthiness by addressing the following four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

**Credibility**

Credibility is one of most important criteria in establishing trustworthiness of a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure that the study measures what is intended, researchers are encouraged to follow numerous provisions, including *triangulation*, *member checks*, *prolonged engagement*, and *debriefing sessions* (Shenton, 2004). Triangulation involves the use of different data sources and methods which can be effective, as the weaknesses in one data source or method are compensated by the strength in another (McKenney, Nieveen, & van den Akker, 2006; Merriam, 1998). I used classroom observations, interviews and debriefing sessions, students’ written work, and a student survey to fulfill the provision of triangulation. In addition to triangulation, I implemented informal and formal member checks with Mrs. Cabana throughout the study (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994) to build credibility. I collaborated with her in every phase of the study (preparation and design, enactment and analysis, and redesign an evaluation) to verify that my interpretations of the data were plausible and to allow her the opportunity to judge the overall desirability of the intervention design (Walker, 2006).

Prolonged engagement was another approach that I used to ensure the credibility of my study. Many scholars recommend that the researcher develop an understanding of the research context and a relationship of trust with the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Prior to beginning my study, I had already been in the classroom for a few months as a graduate research assistant for a
different project. During this time, I developed an understanding of the classroom culture and I was able to foster an amicable relationship with Mrs. Cabana and her students.

The final provision that I followed for purposes of credibility was to debrief with my advisor and peers. This is a recommended practice as the debriefing sessions provide an opportunity for the researcher to gather fresh perspectives and test out developing ideas and interpretations (Shenton, 2004). I completed weekly debriefing sessions during our team’s research group meeting. My debriefing sessions were very helpful as my advisor and peers provided me with valuable feedback that often led to me to refine my methods and expand on my explanation of the research design.

**Transferability**

Transferability is concerned with demonstrating that findings from the study can be applied to other contexts (Merriam, 1998; Shenton, 2004). In DBR, the term *ecological validity* is often used in place of transferability; however, the meaning is the same (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006). In order to ensure the transferability of my study, I provided a thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994) of what happened in the study. I included details regarding the participants, the teaching-learning process, the design decisions, and the research results. In doing so, I provided information that can be used to support students’ learning in other classrooms (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006).

**Dependability**

Dependability involves the researcher using various techniques to show that if the study was repeated, using the same context, participants, and methods, findings would be similar (Shenton, 2004). By demonstrating credibility, the researcher implicitly
demonstrates dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). In DBR, this is often referred to as *virtual replicability*. In order for the study to meet the criteria of virtual replicability, the research must be reported in such a way that it can be retraced or virtually replicated by others (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006). In my own study, I provided a detailed account of my research methodology, including the design and implementation of the interventions, procedures for data collection and intervention refinement, and steps for conducting data analysis and evaluation. Additionally, I saved all data such as audio-recordings, field notes, teacher interviews, student artifacts, and student surveys.

**Confirmability**

The last of the four criteria for trustworthiness is confirmability which is concerned with the researcher’s objectivity. In other words, confirmability deals with the degree to which the findings are influenced by the experiences of the participants rather than the researcher’s positionality, preferences, or biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). To strengthen confirmability, I triangulated my data sources and kept an audit trail throughout the study (Merriam, 1998). The audit trail enabled me to provide a detailed explanation of the research decisions that I made throughout the study, because as Dey (1993) noted, “If we cannot expect others to replicate our account, the best we can do is explain how we arrived at our results” (p. 251).

Throughout this design-based research study, I acknowledged my biases and positionality, which is key for strengthening confirmability of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Fully aware that my background and experiences could affect my interpretation of the data that I was collecting and analyzing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), I made it a priority to be forthcoming about these things. As a white, bilingual female from
a middle-class family, I found it relatively easy to relate to Mrs. Cabana and the majority of the students in the first-grade classroom. The only difficulty I encountered was in connecting to students’ experiences as ELLs.

In addition to my upbringing and background, I knew that being a doctoral student in a language and literacy program could influence my beliefs and expectations for literacy instruction. My research questions indicate that I have a positive perception of collaborative writing and believe that it can be effective in scaffolding ELLs’ literacy development. As this certainly had an impact on my data analysis and evaluation, I made sure to seek out evidence disconfirming my findings. Additionally, as I mentioned above, I often met with my advisor and peers to ensure that my positionality and beliefs were not overtaking my data analysis. Finally, throughout my study, I incorporated various examples from the data, including verbatim transcripts from classroom observations and interviews, samples of students’ written work, and classroom artifacts.

Limitations

This study had some limitations, due in part to the nature of DBR. As design experiments are carried out in “the messy situations of actual learning environments” (Collins, Joseph, & Bielaczyc, 2004, p.19) there are many factors which impact the design implementation that cannot be controlled (Collins et al., 2004). For this study in particular, Mrs. Cabana and I encountered some minor scheduling difficulties because of the rigorous assessment schedule that is characteristic of the spring semester and takes away from instructional time. Additionally, student absences, frequent classroom visitors,
and interruptions posed challenges that Mrs. Cabana and I had to work around when implementing the collaborative writing activities.

In design-based research studies, the joint role of the researchers as designer and researcher can be challenging as they are not simply observing interactions, but they are actually “causing” them as well (Barab & Squire, 2004). I designed and observed each phase of this study with Mrs. Cabana, and in this joint role, I fully acknowledge that I could have passed over important ideas or concepts despite my efforts to systematically and thoroughly analyze the data. Although my role may have been a limiting factor, I made every effort to combat this by conducting frequent member checks and debriefing sessions with my advisor and peers.

Another limitation specific to this DBR study was the small sample size. As this study took place in one first-grade classroom, focusing on two ELL students, the findings cannot realistically be generalized to other contexts. However, the primary aim of DBR studies is not to generalize, but to propose a local instruction theory and identify an optimal instructional sequence that other teachers may reference for use in their own classrooms (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006).

A final limitation of this study was concerned with time. The first iteration of the collaborative writing activities was carried out in December and the second iteration followed about a month later in January. Following the second iteration, Mrs. Cabana went on maternity leave and was gone for approximately eight weeks. The third iteration started at the end of April, and the fourth iteration followed a few weeks later at the end of May. The lapse in time between the second and third iterations was unavoidable, but still caused some concern as the students could have forgotten the expectations for
participating in collaborative writing activities. To minimize these effects, Mrs. Cabana reviewed expectations for collaborative work prior to beginning the third iteration. In addition, because of the time lapse, Mrs. Cabana could have forgotten some of the details surrounding the first two iterations of the activities. I worked to prevent this from happening by conducting a midpoint interview with Mrs. Cabana upon her return from maternity leave. At the meeting, I provided her with a research recap sheet that contained the details of the first two iterations. This sheet helped her to recall important information about our design decisions and sparked ideas about ways to move forward and make improvements for the third iteration.

Despite these limitations, DBR is an emerging paradigm that is well-respected and gaining momentum in the field of classroom-based intervention studies. DBR studies, like the one presented here, can provide valuable insights into the learning and instruction that takes place in authentic contexts. As the DBR Collective (2003) argued, “design-based research can help create and extend knowledge about developing, enacting, and sustaining innovative learning environments” (p. 5).
Chapter Four: The Nature of ELLs’ Interactions When Participating in Collaborative Writing Activities

This chapter addresses the first research question: *What is the nature of first-grade ELLs’ interactions when participating in collaborative writing activities?* To begin, I present a holistic view of the different patterns of interaction that each focal student demonstrated throughout the four collaborative writing activities. I then discuss specific features of these interactional patterns, focusing on language functions and scaffolding occurrences. To conclude this chapter, I compare the two focal ELLs, drawing out similarities and differences between them and across the four collaborative writing activities.

**Determining Patterns of Interaction**

To evaluate the nature of ELL students’ interactions when participating in collaborative writing activities, I determined their patterns of interaction. These patterns of interaction capture the ways in which the two focal students worked with their assigned partner(s) to negotiate the writing tasks and produce written texts during four iterations of collaborative writing activities. Below I present a holistic view of Sara and A.J.’s patterns of interaction throughout the different activities.

**Sara and A.J.: The Conservative Artist and The Socialite**

The nature of Sara and A.J.’s interactions with their partners and group members was dynamic. Rather than exhibiting one static pattern of interaction, Sara and A.J. demonstrated mixed patterns of interaction as they worked with different peers across the four iterations of collaborative writing activities. By examining the level of equality and mutuality from each iteration, I identified three distinct patterns of interaction that Sara displayed with her peers and four distinct patterns for A.J. For Sara, these patterns of
interaction include collaborative (Iterations 1 and 4), dominant/passive-collective (Iteration 2), and expert/novices (Iteration 3). For A.J., these patterns of interaction include dominant/passive (Iteration 1), collective (Iteration 2), expert/novices (Iteration 3), and collaborative (Iteration 4). Table 5 presents these patterns of interaction that Sara, A.J., and their peers demonstrated in the four collaborative writing tasks.

Table 5

Patterns of Interaction for Sara and A.J. Across Four Collaborative Writing Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Iteration 1</th>
<th>Iteration 2</th>
<th>Iteration 3</th>
<th>Iteration 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>Dominant/Passive</td>
<td>Expert/Novices</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.J.</td>
<td>Dominant/Passive</td>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>Expert/Novices</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first iteration of collaborative writing activities during which each focal student was partnered with a peer, Sara and her partner, Juan, displayed a collaborative pattern of interaction. Both students were highly involved in the completion of the writing task, demonstrating a high degree of equality. In addition, both students exhibited a high degree of mutuality, each engaging with one another’s contributions. Though Sara and Juan initially had some difficulty when attempting to merge their ideas for one piece of the writing task, the rest of the interaction ran smoothly, with both students supporting each other through varied scaffolding moves. Compared to Sara and Ben, A.J and his partner, Bella, demonstrated a very different pattern of interaction in the first iteration. Both students were withdrawn during the writing activities. They were frequently off-task and engaged in social conversations unrelated to the writing task. Though the students did not complete their final written product, Bella did independently complete the graphic
organizer (planning sheet), which A.J. eventually copied. Based on these interactions, the students exhibited low levels of both equality and mutuality, resulting in a dominant/passive pattern of interaction.

In the second iteration of collaborative writing activities, Sara and A.J. continued working with a partner, but they were assigned different classmates. This iteration was distinctly different from the first in that Sara and her partner, Ben, began the activity demonstrating a dominant/passive pattern of interaction. With a moderate to low level of both equality and mutuality, Sara was withdrawn during this activity and made few contributions, despite Ben’s attempts to engage her in the assignment. On the second day of the collaborative writing activity, however, Sara and Ben began to show a more collective pattern of interaction. Both students made substantial contributions to the assignment and engaged with one another throughout the task, demonstrating an increased level of equality and mutuality. Unlike Sara and Ben, A.J. and his partner, Carol, displayed a collective pattern of interaction throughout both days of the writing activity for the second iteration. Because each student was assigned their own role in the task (“writer” or “doer”), their interactions were characterized by a high level of equality. Both students exhibited an equal degree of control, as they performed their own role, and they each contributed ideas for the writing ask. Additionally, both students remained engaged throughout the entire activity and provided some scaffolding for one another, which resulted in a high level of mutuality.

The third iteration of collaborative writing activities was unique in that Sara and A.J. were part of the same small group. In this small group, together with three of their peers, Carly, P.J., and Isaac, Sara and A.J. displayed an expert/novices pattern of
interaction. This pattern of interaction was due in large part to the context in which the activity was completed. Mrs. Cabana led this small group by guiding the students through each phase of the task and providing support while closely monitoring them along the way. This resulted in a moderate to low level of equality. However, as Mrs. Cabana continuously encouraged each student to actively contribute to the task, there was a high level of engagement, resulting in a moderate level of mutuality.

In the final iteration of collaborative writing activities, Sara and A.J. were each placed in a small group of three students. Sara and her partners, Julie and Gabe, exhibited a collaborative pattern of interaction. Though Sara began the activity deferring to Julie as the “expert”, that changed rather quickly as they progressed in the task. Overall, each of the students consistently contributed ideas for the writing task and at the same time, provided reciprocal responses and scaffolding moves for the ideas contributed by their peers, thus exemplifying high levels of both equality and mutuality. A.J. and his partners, Serena and Juan, also demonstrated a collaborative pattern of interaction for the final iteration of collaborative writing activities. The three students worked together on all parts of the task, willingly offering and engaging with each other’s ideas, thus demonstrating a high level of equality. Similar to Sara and her peers, there were multiple instances in which the students were able to scaffold each other’s efforts on the collaborative writing task, also showing a high level of mutuality.

Overall, Sara and A.J. each exhibited distinct patterns of interaction when working with different peers across the four collaborative writing activities. Sara, typically a more reserved student during whole-class interactions, was an active participant in the majority of the collaborative writing activities, contributing ideas,
engaging with her partners, and often providing scaffolding for her peers. In a similar manner, A.J. was highly engaged with his peers in each of four collaborative writing activities. However, as a naturally sociable student, his focus was not always on the writing task (e.g. Iteration 1). In the following section, I will discuss details of the dynamic interactions, focusing specifically on the language functions and scaffolding occurrences from each iteration of collaborative writing activities.

**Iteration 1: Narrative Recount**

The first collaborative writing activity was a narrative recount based on the focal text, *Legend of Old Befana* (dePaola, 1980). This text, described in Chapter 3, was read aloud and discussed as a whole class prior to students writing collaboratively with their assigned partner. On the first day of the collaborative writing, students were placed in pairs and given a graphic organizer which contained three sections: (a) beginning, (b) middle, and (c) end. Students were told to work together, section by section, to identify and write about the main events from the story. The second day, after completing the graphic organizer, Mrs. Cabana jointly constructed a model text with the entire class to demonstrate how students should transfer the events from their graphic organizer to their chart paper. Once the joint construction was completed, each pair of students met with Mrs. Cabana to complete a “quick edit,” during which time Mrs. Cabana and the students reviewed their graphic organizer, focusing on content, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. After editing, students were given a piece of chart paper to publish the final version of the text with their partner.
Sara and Juan – A Collaborative Effort

For this collaborative writing activity, Sara was partnered with Juan. Juan was a bilingual student (English/Spanish) who excelled in the magnet program and took part in the gifted classes for math and science. As an outgoing student, he frequently socialized with other students in the class but was also very focused on his academic work, which was reflected in his above grade-level assessment scores in both reading and writing (debriefing session, December 12, 2016). Though they seemed to be opposites in regard to social habits, Sara and Juan worked well together, demonstrating a collaborative pattern of interaction, as revealed in the language functions and scaffolding moves they performed throughout the collaborative writing task.

Language functions. Table 6 displays the language functions from Sara and Juan’s interactions throughout the writing task. This table shows that Sara and Juan produced a total of 121 language functions, 32 of which were classified as initiating behaviors and 89 of which were identified as responding behaviors. The unequal distribution of initiating and responding behaviors can be attributed to the students’ interactions with Mrs. Cabana throughout the writing activities. On the first day, as students worked to fill in their graphic organizer, Mrs. Cabana occasionally stopped by to provide support, encouraging them to use their resources, work collaboratively, and at times, giving them specific prompts to add details to their writing. On the second day, Sara and Juan interacted with Mrs. Cabana again during the “quick edit” session. During this time, Mrs. Cabana asked several direct questions (e.g. Does your sentence begin with a capital letter?) and gave many prompts, frequently resulting in students’ simple “Yes.”
or “No.” answers, which is reflected in their high number of answering (47) and stating (19) language functions.

Table 6

*Language Functions Performed by Sara and Juan – Iteration 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Functions</th>
<th>Sara</th>
<th>Juan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiating Behaviors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUBTOTAL</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responding Behaviors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreeing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborating</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUBTOTAL</strong></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FINAL TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from interactions with Mrs. Cabana, which contributed to their high number of responding behaviors, Sara and Juan’s participation in the discussion was relatively equal in regard to their initiating behaviors, with Sara performing 17 and Juan performing
15 of these behaviors. Their initiating behaviors were varied, but there was a high frequency of suggesting (11), stating (10), and questioning (7). These language functions are a reflection of Sara and Juan’s tendency to freely contribute their individual ideas during the writing task, often providing lengthy descriptions and reasons to support their ideas. With average utterance lengths of 7.3 words for Sara and 7.4 words for Juan, the discussions surrounding the writing tasks were quite detailed. The excerpt below exemplifies Sara and Juan’s rich discussions, with this particular exchange taking place prior to Mrs. Cabana intervening to assist them with the ‘Middle’ section of their graphic organizer.

Excerpt 1

1. **Sara**: I think, “In the middle, Old Befana woke up.” *(Suggesting)*
2. **Juan**: Old Befana woke up because of the star. *(Elaborating)*
3. **Sara**: Old Befana swept in the afternoon. *(Suggesting)*
4. **Juan**: We already did that. *(Disagreeing)* Let’s do another one. Let’s write a long one. Let’s write all the way to the bottom. *(Suggesting)*
5. **Juan**: What if we write, ‘In the middle of the night she woke up and the room was bright?’ *(Suggesting)*
6. **Sara**: That’s the same thing as the book. See? “In the middle of the night, Old Befana woke up and the room was bright.” See? It’s the same thing. *(Stating)*
7. **Juan**: Wait! I have the first one. “When Old Befana was sleeping she heard twinkling sounds.” *(Suggesting)*
8. **Sara**: It says tinkling, not twinkling. *(Stating)*
9. **Sara**: Why don’t we write this sentence? *(Questioning)*
10. **Juan**: No, no, no. I need to agree. *(Disagreeing)* We need to put *and* and there is no and in there. *(Stating)*
11. **Sara**: We can just put, “She heard bells dinging, it’s probably just the wined…” *(Suggesting)* (classroom observation, December 12, 2016)

The exchange above involves both initiating and responding behaviors as Sara and Juan attempted to negotiate the writing task. Both students made suggestions for the main event that took place in the middle of the story, but they had some difficulty coming to an agreement. While Juan suggested that they include information about “tinkling
sounds,” Sara expressed her desire to describe the “dinging bells.” Each student was intent on using his or her own idea for the writing task, but they had trouble seeing how similar their ideas were. Eventually, Mrs. Cabana was able to intervene and help them bring their ideas together to come to an agreement about what to write for the ‘Middle’ section. This allowed the students to move forward and continue working collaboratively on the writing task.

While Sara and Juan had a bit of difficulty coming to terms for the middle event of the story, the rest of their discussion surrounding the collaborative writing activities was quite productive. This is exemplified in the short excerpt below, in which the students were discussing what to write for the ‘Beginning’ section of the graphic organizer. Juan provided a suggestion for the first sentence, but then asked for Sara’s input for what they could “add to it.” Sara responded with her own suggestion, and the students were ultimately able to combine their ideas regarding the main events from the beginning of the story.

Excerpt 2

1. **Juan**: I was thinking that in the beginning, Old Befana swept. (**Suggesting**)
2. **Mrs. C**: Sara, do you like that idea? Do you think that’s a good idea? Is that something that happened in the beginning?
3. **Sara**: Yes. (**Answering**)
4. **Mrs. C**: Okay, now what else did Mrs. Cabana say that you should add to your writing?
5. **S&J**: and (**Answering**)
6. **Mrs. C**: And. So, what can that and be? Now, maybe you can ask Sara what she thinks.
7. **Juan**: What else can we add to it? (**Questioning**)
8. **Sara**: Mmmm…
9. **Mrs. C**: Remember, you can use your book. You can both look at it together. What’s something important about Old Befana?
10. **Sara**: and she was mean. (**Suggesting**)
11. **Mrs. C**: Okay. So now you both can write together. (classroom observation, December 12, 2016)
**Scaffolding moves.** Sara and Juan both performed various scaffolding moves which facilitated their completion of this collaborative writing activity. The first excerpt displayed above highlights the students’ mutual use of the advising move (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996), which is characterized by students offering ideas or giving specific recommendations for the writing task. Though the students had difficulty negotiating this piece of their text, they each continued to provide ideas, which were reflective of their joint commitment to the task. Apart from advising one another, Sara and Juan also scaffolded each other using the instructing move (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996). While this move can be used to provide “mini lessons” on various aspects of writing, both Sara and Juan used this to provide spelling instruction for each other. This move was used not only just when students elicited help from one another, but also in cases when their partner was not seeking assistance. This was especially the case with Juan, who intervened frequently to instruct Sara. The excerpt below illustrates Juan’s instructing moves as he guided Sara first in the spelling of the word *swept* and then in the spelling of the word *mean*. In the first case, Sara did not ask for help, but Juan elected to provide it anyway, though it turns out that the instruction he gave was incorrect. The word *mean* was a different case, as Sara elicited his assistance.

*Excerpt 3*

1. **Sara:** In the beginning, Old Befana…. Wait, what did you say again?  
2. **Juan:** Old Befana swept.  
3. **Juan:** No, that is wrong. It’s an -ed. It sounds like a ‘t’, but it’s an -ed. Did you put two e’s on swept?  
4. **Sara:** …  
5. **Juan:** What did you say?  
6. **Sara:** and she…  
7. **Juan:** She was cranky?  
8. **Sara:** No. And she was mean.  
9. **Sara:** Can I see how you wrote mean?
10. **Juan**: M-e-a-n. Because when there are two vowels next to each other the first one says its name. (classroom observation, December 12, 2016)

Though the excerpt above highlights Juan’s instructing moves, Sara also provided scaffolding for Juan in the same manner. In fact, he often requested her assistance, as seen in the two short exchanges below.

*Excerpt 4*

1. **Juan**: How do you spell leaves?
2. **Sara**: Oh my gosh. Leaves is l-e-v-e-s. (classroom observation, December 12, 2016)

*Excerpt 5*

1. **Juan**: Could you help me?
2. **Sara**: In the…l-n t-h-e (classroom observation, December 13, 2016)

The final scaffolding move identified in Sara and Juan’s interactions was maintaining direction (Wood et al., 1976). This scaffolding move was employed by Sara in two different instances, the first of which reflects her efforts to work collaboratively with Juan (“Wait, we aren’t going together.”), and the second of which shows her focus on moving forward with the task (“So, where do we start first?”). Taken together, these different scaffolding moves demonstrate the collective scaffolding (Donato, 1994) that took place throughout this collaborative writing activity. While Sara and Juan each acted as experts at certain points, they also both played the role of novices, which allowed them to serve as sources of new information for each other and guides through the different phases of this task.

**A.J. and Bella – Dominant/Passive Interactions**

While Sara was partnered with Juan for this first collaborative writing activity, A.J. worked with Bella. Bella was described by Mrs. Cabana as a “bright student” that
exceled in her academic work (debriefing session, December 12, 2016). Much like Juan, Bella was a bilingual student (English/Spanish) who scored above grade-level on assessments for reading and writing and participated in the gifted program for math and science. She was an active student who participated in an after-school dance program and frequently talked about playing with her brothers. A.J. and Bella seemed to get along well, as made evident by their numerous conversations about Christmas gifts, family members, and weekend plans during the time designated for the collaborative writing activity. Unfortunately, their social relationship did not extend to a strong, collaborative working relationship. Instead, A.J. and Bella demonstrated a dominant/passive pattern of interaction characterized by low levels of equality and mutuality.

**Language functions.** Table 7 displays the language functions from A.J. and Bella’s interactions throughout the writing task. This table shows that A.J. and Bella produced a total of 66 language functions, 17 of which were classified as initiating behaviors and 49 of which were identified as responding behaviors. Similar to Sara and Juan, the unequal distribution of initiating and responding behaviors can be attributed to the students’ interactions with Mrs. Cabana throughout the writing activities. On the first day, Mrs. Cabana stopped by a few times to check on A.J. and Bella’s progress with the writing task, but this typically resulted in her prompting them to refocus on the assignment. On the second day, A.J. and Bella completed the “quick edit” with Mrs. Cabana. They answered many direct questions (e.g. Does it end with a punctuation mark?) with simple “Yes.” or “No.” answers, which is why the answering (30) language function accounted for more than half of their responding behaviors.
Table 7

*Language Functions Performed by A.J. and Bella – Iteration 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Functions</th>
<th>A.J.</th>
<th>Bella</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiating</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUBTOTAL</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responding</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUBTOTAL</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FINAL TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The initiating behaviors displayed by A.J. and Bella tell an interesting story. Though Bella was the more dominant partner, she played that role quietly, as shown with her limited initiating behaviors (2) and low average utterance length of 3.0 words. In fact, she never discussed the writing task with A.J., apart from directing him to copy her writing or responding to his questions about spelling. Interestingly, she also did not discuss her writing with Mrs. Cabana, unless specifically prompted to do so. On the other hand, A.J. performed 15 initiating behaviors with an average utterance length of 5.5 words. The majority of these behaviors took place when he was questioning Bella about what to write for the different sections of the graphic organizer, often stating that he
could not read her cursive handwriting. Two illustrative examples of their interactions are below.

**Excerpt 6**

1. **Bella:** Okay, put swept. (**Directing**)
2. **A.J.:** Okay, I’m just going to erase this because I can’t see what I’m doing. (**Stating**)
3. **Bella:** Just put swept. (**Directing**)
4. **A.J.:** Swept. (**Repeating**)
5. **Bella:** And she did not let people in her house. (**Directing**)
6. **A.J.:** What does that say? I don’t know how to read cursive. (**Questioning/Stating**)
7. **Bella:** Beginning. (**Answering**)

1. **A.J.:** What is this? N or h? (**Questioning**)
2. **Bella:** This? That’s a k. (**Answering**)
3. **A.J.:** What is this? Is this a t? (**Questioning**)
4. **Bella:** First i and then a t. (**Answering**)
5. **A.J.:** I don’t even know what this says. What does this say? (**Stating/Questioning**)(classroom observation, December 13, 2016)

**Scaffolding moves.** There were very few instances of scaffolding during A.J. and Bella’s work on this collaborative writing task. In fact, the only scaffolding move identified was instructing (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996) and it was used exclusively by Bella when A.J. elicited her help, as demonstrated in the excerpt above. The absence of other scaffolding moves can be attributed to the nature of interactions during the two days of collaborative writing. Both students were off-task, often engaging in conversations unrelated to the writing assignment, which explains why there were no instances of maintaining direction (Wood et al., 1976) identified in their interactions. In addition, because Bella elected to complete the writing task on her own, neither student contributed ideas or specific recommendations for the writing task (advising; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996). Finally, because there was virtually no discussion surrounding the content of the writing task, there were no instances of elaborating (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005).
Iteration 2: “How-To” (Procedure)

The second collaborative writing activity was a “how-to” text, also known as a procedure. This specific activity was completed in conjunction with the mentor text, “Making Paper Shapes” (August et al., 2014). This particular text, described in Chapter 3, was read aloud, discussed, and used as a model during a joint construction activity prior to students writing collaboratively with their assigned partner. On the first day of the collaborative writing, Mrs. Cabana placed Sara and A.J. with a new partner and requested that the four students work with her at a small-group table in the back of the room.

Students were told that they would be the “writer” one day and the “doer” the other day. On the first day, Sara was the “writer” and her partner, Ben, was the “doer,” making a paper airplane. The second day, Sara was the “doer,” drawing a giraffe, and Ben was the “writer”. A.J. was the “writer” on the first day and his partner, Carol, was the “doer,” drawing a butterfly. The following day, A.J. was the “doer,” drawing a dragon, and Carol was the “writer.” On each day, the pairs were given a graphic organizer to complete their writing. The organizer had three sections: (a) topic sentence, (b) steps, and (c) conclusion. Though they had separate roles, Mrs. Cabana told the students to work together to discuss what they would write for each section. In addition, at the end of both days, Mrs. Cabana went through an editing process with each pair of students prior to them sharing their completed work with the small group.

Sara and Ben – A Changing Pattern of Interaction

For this collaborative writing activity, Sara was partnered with Ben. Ben was a new student to Sunnyside, recently arrived from Brazil. His home language was Portuguese, and although Mrs. Cabana suspected that he would qualify for ESOL
services, his home language survey did not indicate that he spoke a language other than English. As a result, he was never assessed. Ben was a very outgoing student, both socially and academically. He participated in several extra-curricular activities, such as soccer and karate, but he also remained engaged in his academic work, always completing his assignments and frequently volunteering to participate in class. On the first day of the collaborative writing activity, Sara and Ben exhibited a dominant/passive pattern of interaction. Sara was withdrawn and did not participate much, despite Ben’s efforts to include her in the conversation. Initially, Mrs. Cabana and I suspected that this was because their personalities were so different. However, their interaction changed a great deal on day two, as Sara became more involved with the writing task. This changing pattern of interaction, from dominant/passive to collective, was revealed in the language functions and scaffolding moves Sara and Ben performed during the two days of the collaborative writing task. It is important to note that the collective pattern of interaction from day two was different from a collaborative interaction because both students remained focused on their own roles, Sara as the “doer” and Ben as the “writer.” More specifically, Ben did not help Sara “do” the task and Sara did not help Ben “write,” though she did offer her input during the editing process.

**Language functions.** Table 8 shows the language functions from Sara and Ben’s interactions throughout this writing task. Because their pattern of interaction was so different on both days, the table reflects the language functions from day one and day two separately. On the first day of the activity, Sara and Ben produced 78 language functions, 14 of which were categorized as initiating behaviors and 64 which were classified as responding behaviors. These numbers increased on the second day, as Sara and Ben
produced 102 language functions, 17 of which were identified as initiating behaviors and 85 of which were classified as responding behaviors. The unequal distribution of initiating and responding behaviors on both days was once again due to students’ interactions with Mrs. Cabana, as they worked at a small table with her during the collaborative writing activity.

Table 8

*Language Functions Performed by Sara and Ben – Iteration 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Function</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sara (writer)</td>
<td>Ben (doer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUBTOTAL</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responding</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreeing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting</td>
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<td>SUBTOTAL</td>
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<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL TOTAL</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the first day of this collaborative writing activity, Ben was responsible for 50 of the responding behaviors, the majority of which were answering (33), stating (6), and suggesting (7) language functions. This number was more than triple the number of Sara’s responses on day one, which is a reflection of her withdrawn behavior. Though Ben and Mrs. Cabana tried to engage her in the discussion surrounding the writing task, she remained quiet the great majority of the time. It is worth noting, however, that Ben often interjected and spoke for Sara, even when Mrs. Cabana specifically questioned or prompted her. The excerpt below illustrates one of the many instances in which Ben interrupted to answer questions that were directed to Sara, this time in regard to making the wings of the paper airplane.

**Excerpt 7**

1. **Mrs. C:** Sara, what is he making there? What part of the plane?
   *italics used by author to emphasize to whom the question was directed*
2. **Ben:** The two wings.
3. **Mrs. C:** Do those look like the wings of an airplane?
4. **Sara:** …
5. **Mrs. C:** How many wings is he making?
6. **Sara:** Two.
7. **Mrs. C:** Two of them. And how did he make those wings?
8. **Ben:** Folding. (classroom observation, January 12, 2017)

On the second day with the changing pattern of interaction, Sara produced 51 responding behaviors while Ben only produced 34. The vast majority of Sara’s responses were classified as answering (39) and stating (8); however, Ben’s responses were a bit different, with a high number of stating (8), suggesting (9), and fewer answering (11). An illustrative example of their conversation from the second day is below.

**Excerpt 8**

1. **Mrs. C:** Which part of the giraffe is that?
2. **Sara:** The top. *(Answering)*
3. **Mrs. C**: The top. Okay, so now you talk about what she did. What was the first step that she did?
4. **Ben**: What was the first step you did? (**Questioning**)
5. **Sara**: I did the top of the giraffe. (**Answering**)
6. **Ben**: So, we did the top of the giraffe. (**Repeating**)
7. **Mrs. C**: Remember, these are directions you want to give someone. So, if I read them then I could draw a giraffe too. So, how could you tell them what to do?
8. **Ben**: You need to do the top. (**Suggesting**)
9. **Sara**: I think the capital Y. (**Stating**) (classroom observation, January 13, 2017)

The initiating behaviors on the first day were largely performed by Ben (14), with Sara only contributing once in this regard. As the dominant partner, Ben’s initiating behaviors were mostly directing (4) and questioning (5) language functions, with an average utterance length of 7.2 words. Though Ben attempted to draw Sara into the discussion numerous times, asking her if she agreed with his ideas or if she had ideas of her own, she still participated very little. The exchange below demonstrates the type of conversations typical of Sara and Ben on their first day of collaborative writing.

*Excerpt 9*

1. **Ben**: We can write like, “Did you ever make a paper airplane before?” (**Suggesting**)
2. **Sara**: …
3. **Mrs. C**: Do you like the idea of starting with a question instead of a statement like we did here. We’ve done that before where we ask the reader, “Have you ever done…”
4. **Ben**: “A paper airplane before?” (**Suggesting**) (**Questioning**)
5. **Sara**: Mmmmm…
6. **Ben**: This is how to make a paper airplane. Do you like that idea? (**Suggesting/Questioning**)
7. **Mrs. C**: Talk to Ben. He’s asking you a question. He’s asking if you like the idea of just writing a sentence, “This is how to make a paper airplane.”
8. **Sara**: Yes. (**Answering**)
9. **Ben**: Do you like, “Did you ever make a paper airplane before?” Do you like that idea? (**Questioning**)
10. **Sara**: …
11. **Ben**: Do you like that idea? (**Repeating**)
12. **Sara**: Yea. (**Answering**)
13. **Ben**: Okay, so let’s write. “Did – you – ever…” There’s an r at the end of ever. *(Directing/ Stating)*


On the second day, the initiating behaviors were much more balanced, with Sara producing eight and Ben producing nine of these behaviors. Ben still used questioning (4), but this time he did not perform any directing language functions. Rather, he incorporated stating language functions (3), which was also what Sara used the most during day two (5). The utterance length for Ben did not change significantly from day one to day two, but he still produced lengthier statements and questions compared to Sara - 6.6 words compared to Sara’s 5.1 words. The excerpt below captures the higher level of involvement from Sara on the second day.

**Excerpt 10**

1. Mrs. C: Okay, so what did you just do?
2. Sara: I drawed the ears. *(Answering)*
3. Mrs. C: Okay, so make sure you agree with what he’s going to write. Ben, make sure you tell her what you’re going to write.
4. Ben: You need to draw the ears. *(Suggesting)*
5. Mrs. C: Okay, do you think that’s good, Sara?
6. Sara: Yes. *(Answering)*
7. Sara: Ears since there are two. *(Directing)*
8. Sara: What about a period? *(Questioning)*
9. Mrs. C: Good job, Sara. Now do the next part so Ben can see what you are doing.

**Scaffolding moves.** As the dominant partner in the interaction on the first day of collaborative writing, Ben performed various scaffolding moves in his attempt to engage Sara in the activity. As can be seen in the first excerpt from above, Ben frequently used the advising move (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996) to offer his ideas and give specific recommendations for the writing. Though Sara did not provide reciprocal responses, with
the exception of “yes” and “yea,” Ben continued in his attempts. Once Sara agreed to
Ben’s idea for the topic sentence, he drew on the maintaining direction move (Wood et
al., 1976) to encourage her to get started on the writing (“Okay, so let’s write…”).
Additionally, Ben used the instructing move (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996) to guide
Sara through the spelling of the words ever and airplane.

As the pattern of interaction changed from dominant/passive to collective on day
two, Sara became much more involved in the task and frequently provided scaffolding for
Ben using the instructing move (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996). In fact, she led the entire
peer editing process, pointing out several different words that needed revision. The
exchange below captures her instruction.

Excerpt 11

1. Sara: Let’s fix the story.
2. Mrs. C: Okay, talk with Ben and go by each step and see if you agree.
3. Sara: Well, draw is d-r-a-w.
4. Sara: I think there’s more to fix.
5. Mrs. C: Okay, let him fix the ‘draw’ part and then you can go to the
   beginning and look again.
7. Mrs. C: Okay, but let’s look at the topic sentence first. Do you see anything
   that needs to be fixed, Ben or Sara?
8. Sara: The e in ever.
9. Mrs. C: Okay, tell Ben. Tell him how you think you spell the entire word.
10. Sara: E-v-e-r.
11. Mrs. C: Okay, so she is correct. Good job. Is there anything else to fix here?
12. Sara: There’s a silent e on this one.
13. Mrs. C: What word is that?
15. Mrs. C: So how do you think you spell nose?

A.J. and Carol – A Collective Pattern of Interaction

While Sara was partnered with Ben, A.J. worked with Carol to complete the
“how-to” writing task. Carol was a very active student who loved to participate and
contribute her thoughts during whole-class discussions and activities. She took part in the gifted program for math and science and worked hard in the magnet program, though she did not have extensive experience with Spanish (debriefing session, January 11, 2017). Although she liked to take the lead during her work with peers, A.J. still found a space for himself in their collaborative writing task, asking questions and making statements to ensure that he was able to complete his part of the assignment on each day. This was especially the case on the second day of writing when A.J. was designated as the “doer,” drawing a two-headed dragon. Because students were assigned distinct roles for each day of the writing task (“writer” vs. “doer”), they seemed to have a more individualistic approach to the writing assignment, focused on completing their assigned portion of the task. This approach resulted in moderate to high levels of equality and moderate to high levels of mutuality which resulted in a collective pattern of interaction.

It is important to note that this collective interaction was different from collaborative interaction because students remained focused on their individual roles. For example, on the first day, A.J. did not help “do” the task and Carol did not help “write.” Similarly, on the second day, Carol did not help “do” the task and A.J. did not help “write.” Though there was a bit of overlap in the editing process, both A.J. and Carol directly completed only their assigned role. The language functions and scaffolding occurrences described below exemplify A.J. and Carol’s collective pattern of interaction from this iteration of collaborative writing.

**Language functions.** Table 9 displays the language functions from A.J. and Carol’s interactions throughout this writing task. Because they performed different roles on each day, the table reflects the language functions from day one and day two
separately. During the first day of the activity, A.J. and Carol produced 61 language functions, 18 of which were initiating behaviors and 43 of which were categorized as responding behaviors. On the second day of the activity, A.J. and Carol produced significantly more language functions, 108 in total. Of those language functions, 38 were identified as initiating behaviors and 70 were classified as responding behaviors. The unequal distribution of students’ initiating and responding behaviors on both days can be attributed to their interactions with Mrs. Cabana, as they worked at a small-group table with her during both days of the collaborative writing activity.

Table 9

_Language Functions Performed by A.J. and Carol – Iteration 2_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Functions</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A.J.</td>
<td>Carol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(writer)</td>
<td>(doer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBTOTAL</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responding</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreeing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBTOTAL</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL TOTAL</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the first day, Carol performed 27 of the responding behaviors, mostly in the form of answering (9) and stating (10). This number was a bit higher than A.J.’s 16 responding behaviors, however that was due in part to her conversation with Mrs. Cabana during the editing portion of the activity on the first day. As A.J. moved a couple sentences around to avoid repeating one of the steps, Carol explained their reasoning to Mrs. Cabana. The exchange below highlights their conversation.

Excerpt 12

1. Mrs. C: What happened there?
2. Carol: We have to put it up there because we already did two wings. (Answering)
3. Mrs. C: Carol, what was it that it was missing?
4. Carol: It was two wings and then another one, but you only need two wings. (Answering)
5. Mrs. C: So first it was draw a wing. So, you are drawing one wing first?
6. Carol: No, draw two wings. (Answering)
7. Mrs. C: Okay, so instead of “a” it needs to be “two.” So, “Draw two wings.”
8. Carol: T-w-o. (Stating)
9. Mrs. C: A.J., what is happening here? What did you decide?
10. A.J.: Put the s for “wings.” (Answering)
11. Mrs. C: Okay, so you don’t need to do the other wing. Is that what it is?
13. Carol: And the one on the back, we have to erase this one. (Stating)
14. Mrs. C: Why?
15. Carol: Because we have to move it to the front. (Answering) (Because they condensed two steps into one for drawing the “wings,” there was a blank space on the front of the page.) (classroom observation, January 12, 2017)

The initiating behaviors from the first day were performed by both Carol (11) and A.J. (7). Carol produced a higher number of language functions and her average utterance length was also higher than that of A.J. (7.8 words compared to 5.3 words). Carol used the stating language function (7) as she identified the steps she was taking to complete the drawing of her butterfly. While A.J. did not perform as many initiating behaviors, he still used stating (4) and questioning (2) in order to clarify what Carol was doing so he
could complete his written portion of the task. The exchange below is demonstrative of
A.J. and Carol’s discussion surrounding the writing task on the first day of the activity.

Excerpt 13

1. **A.J.**: Draw a wing. I don’t know. (**Suggesting/Stat**ing)
2. **Carol**: D-r-a-w. Oh, so what are you going to do? (**Stating/Dir**ecting)
3. **Mrs. C**: Draw. Okay, so what are you going to do?
4. **Carol**: Two ‘n’s’ and a ‘g.’ (**Directing**)
5. **A.J.**: Isn’t it missing an i? (**Questioning**)
6. **Carol**: No. (**Answering**)
7. **Mrs. C**: Draw the wing and then draw the other wing. Good.
8. **A.J.**: I don’t know what to put here. (**Stating**)
9. **Carol**: I’ll tell you after. (**Stating**)
10. **Mrs. C**: Alright, can I see this so far. So, draw an oval. Draw a wing. Next, draw the other wing. And what was the fourth step you did?
11. **Carol**: Draw decorations. (**Answering**) (classroom observation, January 12, 2017)

On the second day, with A.J. as the “doer,” his responding behaviors increased.
The majority of these responses were in the form of answering (20) and stating (9), as he
discussed the different steps for drawing the two-headed dragon with Carol. Though
Carol did not produce as many responding behaviors on the second day (27), she was still
very active in the task and her average utterance length remained higher than that of A.J.
(5.7 words compared to 4.6 words). In addition, she produced 20 initiating behaviors
compared to A.J.’s 18. While both students incorporated the stating language function
(Carol, 10; A.J., 12), their other initiating behaviors differed. Whereas A.J. used directing
(5) to tell Carol what to do for the task, Carol used questioning (9) for purposes of
clarification. The excerpt below demonstrates A.J. and Carol’s interactions from the
second day.

Excerpt 14

1. **A.J.**: Next, do this. (**Directing**)
2. **Carol**: No, that’s the neck. We already did that. (**Disagreeing/Stat**ing)**
3. A.J.: Oh, well we have to do another neck. Just do it! I know what I’m doing. *(Stating/Directing)*
4. Carol: Why would you have two necks? *(Questioning)*
5. A.J.: Because it has two heads. *(Answering)*
6. Carol: Don’t we have to do another head? *(Questioning)*
7. A.J.: Yes! *(Answering)*
8. Mrs. C: A.J., explain to her what you just did.
9. A.J.: It’s another head. *(Stating)*
10. Carol: Draw another head (speaking as she writes on the paper). *(Stating)*
12. Carol: No, no period. *(Disagreeing)*
14. Carol: Oh yea. *(Agreeing)*
15. Mrs. C: A.J., draw the next step.
16. A.J.: This, remember. *(Stating)*
17. Carol: I already did the head. *(Stating)*

**Scaffolding moves.** Throughout the two days of collaborative writing, A.J. and Carol both performed various scaffolding moves which facilitated their completion of the writing activity. A.J. and Carol were both able to incorporate the instructing move (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996) to provide support for each other in the areas of spelling and punctuation. In addition, A.J. utilized the maintaining direction move (Wood et al., 1976) to keep Carol focused and to encourage her to move forward with the written portion of the activity. The two excerpts above capture these scaffolding moves. In the first exchange, Carol instructs A.J. how to spell the words *draw* and *wings*. In the second excerpt, A.J. instructs Carol to include a period at the end of her sentence. There is an additional excerpt below which highlights A.J.’s use of the maintaining direction move from day two of the collaborative writing activity.

**Excerpt 15**

2. Carol: Seriously? (laughing a bit)
4. Mrs. C: Okay, wrap up your dragon.
5. Carol: But we aren’t done. I already did 13 steps.
6. A.J.: We aren’t done yet!
7. Mrs. C: Okay, put the finishing touches on your dragon.

**Iteration 3: Informational (Report)**

The third collaborative writing activity was an informational text, also known as a descriptive report. The chapter book, *Dolphins at Daybreak* (Osborne, 1997), was used as a mentor text during this activity. Students participated in various activities in relation to this text for over two weeks, including guided reading, small-group reading, whole class discussions, and individual journal entries. The day before the collaborative writing activity began, Mrs. Cabana and the students completed a deconstruction of three short paragraphs about different ocean animals (octopus, anglerfish, purple sea urchin). The information about the octopus came from the *Dolphins at Daybreak* book so students were already familiar with that material, but the other two paragraphs about the anglerfish and purple sea urchin were new. In addition to the deconstruction activity, students also completed a graphic organizer to identify relevant information from the paragraphs. Mrs. Cabana guided students in completing the graphic organizer which contained the following categories: (a) ocean zone, (b) where it lives, (c) what it eats, (d) how it protects itself/enemies, and (e) how it looks and acts.

Students used this graphic organizer during the collaborative writing activity which spanned two days. On the first day, Mrs. Cabana identified five students, including Sara and A.J., to work with her at a small-group table in the back. Students were told they would be working together to write an informational text about the anglerfish, using the information from their graphic organizer to help them. Mrs. Cabana then instructed
students to select an index card which was labeled with a different piece of the paragraph (e.g. topic sentence, detail) that they would be responsible for writing. She then facilitated a group discussion to generate ideas for what could be written on each index card. Following the discussion, students wrote a sentence on their selected card. The first day of collaborative writing ended with two phases of editing. The first phase of editing was a peer edit and the second one was editing with Mrs. Cabana. For the second day of collaborative writing, the students came together again with Mrs. Cabana to jointly construct a conclusion for their writing. Afterward, students published their writing together by transferring the sentences on their index cards to a writing paper.

**Interactions of the Expert and Novices**

For this third iteration of collaborative writing, Sara and A.J. worked in the same small group together with their peers Carly, P.J., and Isaac. Carly was a bilingual (English/Spanish) student who Mrs. Cabana described as a “hard worker” and someone who was “well-liked” in the class (debriefing session, May 1, 2017). She did not take part in the gifted program, but she had “good grades” and worked well with her peers. P.J. was also a bilingual (English/Spanish) student who Mrs. Cabana described as “always willing to help” (debriefing session, May 1, 2017). He was very social and enjoyed interacting with his classmates. Though Isaac was also a bilingual student (debriefing session May 1, 2017), he was a bit different from Carly and P.J. in that he was not very social in class. Instead, he was a bit more reserved and fairly quiet during whole group activities and discussions. Mrs. Cabana did mention though that he played baseball and was active with his friends during recess time (debriefing session, May 1, 2017).

Working together with Mrs. Cabana, these students played the role of novices while Mrs.
Cabana served as the expert, guiding them through each phase of the writing process. Their pattern of interaction was made evident in the language functions and scaffolding occurrences they performed throughout the two days of writing their informational text.

**Language functions.** Table 10 shows the language functions from the small group’s interactions throughout the writing task. In total, the five students produced 158 language functions, 11 of which were initiating behaviors and 147 which were responding behaviors. The large disparity between the initiating and responding behaviors in this iteration speaks to Mrs. Cabana’s level of involvement in this writing activity. Throughout this task, Mrs. Cabana guided the students through each phase of the writing, often posing questions, prompting them to contribute ideas, and encouraging their involvement in the review and editing processes.

Table 10

*Language Functions Performed by Sara, A.J., Carly, P.J, and Isaac – Iteration 3*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Functions</th>
<th>Sara</th>
<th>A.J.</th>
<th>Carly</th>
<th>P.J.</th>
<th>Isaac</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiating</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUBTOTAL</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responding</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUBTOTAL</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FINAL TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The initiating behaviors performed by the students were mostly in the form of questioning (5), stating (3), and suggesting (3). Carly performed the great majority of these initiating behaviors (6), as she frequently asked questions for clarification and asked permission to complete various tasks in relation to the writing assignment (e.g. drawing). The other students’ initiating behaviors occurred at various times throughout the collaborative writing task, as they worked together to come up with ideas for the text. Though each student was assigned one specific sentence for the paragraph (Sara: topic sentence; A.J.: detail for how it looks; Carly: detail for what it eats; P.J.: detail for where it lives; Isaac: conclusion), Mrs. Cabana facilitated a group discussion about the content of each sentence, which allowed students to contribute their thoughts and assist their peers in coming up with a sentence for their assigned part of the paragraph. The excerpt below highlights the students and Mrs. Cabana’s interactions from the first day of the writing task in which they were focused on A.J.’s part of the paragraph, detail for how it looks.

*Excerpt 16*

1. **Mrs. C**: A.J., what detail do you have?
2. **A.J.**: How it looks. *(Answering)*
3. **Mrs. C**: So tell us what you are thinking.
4. **A.J.**: Mean. *(Suggesting)*
5. **Mrs. C**: The anglerfish looks mean. Is that information that you got from your chart?
6. **A.J.**: No. *(Answering)*
7. **Mrs. C**: Okay, well if you say it looks mean can you give us a detail from the chart that tells you why it looks mean?
8. **A.J.**: Uhhh…
9. **Mrs. C**: What does it have that makes it look mean?
10. **A.J.**: The face. *(Answering)*
11. **Mrs. C**: Its face. What about its face?
12. **Carly**: Oh, I know. The sharp teeth. *(Suggesting)*
13. **Mrs. C**: Is it the sharp teeth that makes you think that?
14. **A.J.**: Yea. *(Answering)*
15. **Mrs. C**: So he wants to write something like, ‘The anglerfish looks mean…’ because what?
16. **A.J.**: Because its teeth look scary. *(Suggesting)*
17. **Mrs. C**: Because of its scary sharp teeth.
18. **Mrs. C**: Does everyone like that sentence?
19. **Ss**: Yes. *(Answering)* *(classroom observation, May 2, 2017)*

The vast majority of the responding behaviors from the students were in the form of answering (107) and suggesting (26). Carly and P.J. performed more of these behaviors than the other students (Carly, 44; P.J., 35) and also appeared to contribute lengthier and more detailed responses with an average utterance length of 4.1 words for Carly and 4.8 words for P.J. Sara and A.J. also made numerous contributions to the activity in the form of responding behaviors (29 responses each); however, their average utterance length was 1.9 words for Sara and 2.1 words for A.J., indicating that their involvement was somewhat limited. Unfortunately, Isaac contributed far fewer times (14) which may have been because he was uncomfortable in this group setting. The exchange below captures the students’ interactions with Mrs. Cabana when trying to brainstorm ideas for a conclusion sentence on day two of the collaborative writing activity. Though Isaac was originally assigned this part of the paragraph, Mrs. Cabana elected to give him an additional detail sentence (how it acts) because she thought the conclusion was too difficult to complete individually *(debriefer session, May 2, 2017)*.

**Excerpt 17**

1. **Mrs. C**: So, what would be a feeling we have about the anglerfish? What do you feel about the anglerfish?
2. **P.J.**: If he attracts prey with his thing, he would feel very happy. *(Suggesting)*
3. **Mrs. C**: Yes, but what do you feel about the anglerfish? Now that we’ve read all this information what do we feel about the anglerfish?
4. **Carly**: I feel like it’s weird. *(Suggesting)*
5. **P.J.**: I feel like it’s an animal that needs to have food or he gets mad and if he gets mad he’s going to die. *(Suggesting)*
Mrs. C: Okay. So, we have “I feel like this is…”

Carly: “The weirdest sea animal.” (Suggesting)

Mrs. C: Okay, you feel that this is the weirdest sea animal. Okay, anybody else? What do you feel about this fish? Sara, what do you think about it? Would you like this animal as a pet?

Ss: No! (Answering)

Sara: It’s crazy. (Suggesting)

Mrs. C: Okay, it’s a crazy fish. Is it because it acts crazy or looks different?

Sara: …

Mrs. C: Okay, Carly, tell us your sentence again.

Carly: I feel that the anglerfish looks like the weirdest animal in the ocean. (Suggesting)

Mrs. C: Alright, so here we go. “We feel” like what? What were we talking about?

P.J.: The anglerfish. (Answering)

Mrs. C: The anglerfish. “We feel the anglerfish…”

Carly: “Is the scariest animal” (Stating – helping Mrs. C write the sentence they agreed on.)

Mrs. C: Scariest, weirdest… “We feel the anglerfish is the scariest and weirdest” what?

P.J.: “Sea animal” (Answering)

Mrs. C: Okay, “the weirdest sea animal”

A.J.: “In the ocean” (Stating – helpings Mrs. C write the sentence they agreed on.)

Mrs. C: Okay. “We feel the anglerfish is the scariest and weirdest sea animal in the ocean.” (classroom observation, May 3, 2017)

Scaffolding moves. There were few instances of peer-to-peer scaffolding during the small group’s work on this collaborative writing assignment. This can be attributed to Mrs. Cabana’s extensive involvement in the task. As the expert, she provided a great deal of scaffolding for the students, but there were times when each of the students used the advising move (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996) to provide suggestions and specific recommendations to their peers for different pieces of the writing task. There was also one instance in which Carly used the instructing move (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996) to assist in editing P.J.’s sentence. The three short excerpts below highlight a few of the different scaffolding occurrences from this activity.
The first is Carly’s use of the instructing move and the following two are advising moves used by A.J., Carly, and Isaac.

Excerpt 18

1. A.J.: I don’t know what this is.
2. Mrs. C: Called. So let’s look at this sentence – “It lives at the bottom of the ocean that is called the midnight zone.”
3. Carly: Just “called.”
4. Mrs. C: Okay, P.J., what we can do is take off ‘that is’ and we can just say, “It lives at the bottom of the ocean called the midnight zone.”

(classroom observation, May 2, 2017)

Excerpt 19

1. Mrs. C: Well, there is something missing about the anglerfish that we haven’t mentioned yet.
2. A.J.: The thingy
3. Mrs. C: The light on its head that looks like a fishing pole, right?
4. Carly: And the camouflage. It can camouflage.

(classroom observation, May 2, 2017)

Excerpt 20

1. Mrs. C: P.J., what is yours?
2. P.J.: Detail for where it lives.
3. Mrs. C: So what would you say?
4. P.J.: It lives in the rockiest, darkest part of the ocean.
5. Mrs. C: Did we put rocky there? Is that in our chart?
7. Mrs. C: Oh okay, do you want to add the midnight zone to it?

(classroom observation, May 2, 2017)

Iteration 4: Opinion (Argument)

The fourth and final collaborative writing activity was an opinion text based on the following prompt: Should our class visit Hawaii during summer vacation? The chapter book, *High Tide in Hawaii* (Osborne, 2003), was used as a source of information during this activity. Prior to the collaborative writing activity, students completed various activities in relation to the chapter book, including guided reading, whole class
discussions, and individual journal entries. The day before the collaborative writing, Mrs. Cabana and the students completed an extensive joint construction activity in which they wrote about Miami, highlighting the things that people can do, see, and eat in the city. This jointly constructed text served as an example the following day when students were divided into groups of three to complete the collaborative writing text on Hawaii.

On the first day of collaborative writing, Mrs. Cabana divided students into groups of three and then distributed five index cards to each group. She directed them to divide the cards amongst themselves (two students have two cards, one student has one card) to determine what pieces of the paragraph they would be responsible for writing (topic sentence, details, conclusion). Students were told to talk about the different pieces of the paragraph to help each other generate ideas before writing the sentence(s) on their index cards. On the second day, after students had written sentences on their index cards, Mrs. Cabana worked with each group individually to review and edit their writing for content, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. After editing, students were given a writing sheet to publish the final version of the text with their group members.

**Sara, Julie, and Gabe – A Collaborative Approach**

For this last iteration of collaborative writing, Sara worked in a group of three with Julie and Gabe. Julie was a bilingual (English/Spanish) student who did very well in the magnet program and participated in gifted classes for math and science. She was very social, and she and Sara had recently become friends, often working together in class and playing together during recess (debriefing session, May 22, 2017). Gabe was also a bilingual student (English/Spanish) who performed well in the magnet program. Though he did not take part in gifted classes, he still tested high in certain areas (e.g. reading) and
was very involved in whole class activities. He was also very friendly with his classmates and enjoyed taking the lead role, when possible (debriefing session, May 22, 2017). Though Julie and Gabe had more dominant personalities, they worked well with Sara, demonstrating a collaborative pattern of interaction. Their language functions and scaffolding moves reveal their joint efforts to complete the writing assignment.

**Language functions.** Table 11 displays the language functions from Sara, Julie, and Gabe’s interactions throughout the writing task. This table shows that these three students produced a total of 223 language functions, 44 of which were identified as initiating behaviors and 179 of which were categorized as responding behaviors. The students’ contributions were relatively equal with Sara producing 73 language functions, Julie producing 85, and Gabe producing 65. The unequal distribution of initiating and responding behaviors was due in large part to students’ interactions with Mrs. Cabana throughout the writing activities. On the first day, as students worked together to complete their part(s) of the paragraph (on index cards), Mrs. Cabana stopped by on a few occasions to review their completed sentences, encourage them to use their resources, and remind them to work collaboratively. At times, she also prompted them to add details to their writing. On the second day, students participated in a review and edit session with Mrs. Cabana which resulted in many responding behaviors, as they were reacting to her questions and prompts the majority of the time. This is reflected in their high number of answering (91) and stating (43) language functions.
### Table 11

*Language Functions Performed by Sara, Julie, and Gabe – Iteration 4*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sara</th>
<th>Julie</th>
<th>Gabe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiating</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUBTOTAL</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responding</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledging</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreeing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggesting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUBTOTAL</strong></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FINAL TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>73</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from interactions with Mrs. Cabana, which contributed to their high number of responding behaviors, Sara, Julie, and Gabe’s initiating behaviors for the writing task were a bit skewed. Sara contributed 22 initiating behaviors compared to Julie’s 14 and Gabe’s eight. The initiating behaviors from the group were varied, but there was a high frequency of stating (19), directing (10), and suggesting (8). Sara, the leader in initiating behaviors, contributed mostly in the form of stating (11) and suggesting (4) language
functions, while Julie used the directing (6) language function, and Gabe used the stating (4) language function.

These findings were a bit surprising, as Sara began the activity deferring to Julie as the “expert,” asking her questions and seeking her advice. (This explains Julie’s higher number of responding behaviors.) However, as shown by the frequency counts, this changed rather quickly, with Sara becoming more comfortable with the task. Interestingly, though Sara had the most initiating behaviors, her average utterance length was lower than the other students with 6.3 words compared to Julie’s 7.2 words and Gabe’s 7.8 words. The two excerpts below illustrate Sara’s shift in behavior. In the first exchange, she is requesting assistance from Julie to get started on the writing task. In the second exchange, she is taking initiative by making a suggestion about what Julie could include in her sentence for what can be seen in Hawaii.

**Excerpt 21**

1. **Julie**: Guys, we need to choose cards. Gabe, choose one, don’t look. *(Directing)*
2. **Gabe**: [Selects a card.]
3. **Julie**: Choose one, choose any. *(Directing)*
4. **Sara**: [Selects a card.]
5. **Sara**: I got two. *(Stating)*
6. **Julie**: So you got 1-2 sentences about Hawaii that you can do. And, I got 1-2 sentences that we could see. And you got 1-2 sentences that you could eat. Later we will do this one (referencing the topic sentence). *(Stating/Directing)*
7. **Sara**: Julie, I don’t get it. I don’t know what to do. *(Stating)*
8. **Julie**: Look back in your detail thingy. (Referencing journal entry) *(Directing)*
9. **Gabe**: You could eat poi. I’m already done with the sentence. *(Suggesting/Stating)*
10. **Sara**: I’m just going to write that you could go to a park. *(Stating)*
11. **Julie**: No. Look, you can hula dance, you could surf, you can do lots of stuff. *(Disagreeing/Suggesting)*
12. **Sara**: I’m going to write surfing and hula dancing. *(Stating)*
13. **Julie**: Gabe, you have to wait for us. We didn’t even start yet. *(Directing/Stating)*
14. **Gabe**: I already started. *(Stating)*
15. **Sara**: Is it what you like, Julie? *(Questioning)*
16. **Gabe**: No. *(Answering)*
17. **Julie**: What you can do. *(Answering)* (classroom observation, May 23, 2017)

*Excerpt 22*

1. **Sara**: The flowers are pretty colors. *(Suggesting)*
2. **Ss**: …
3. **Sara**: The flowers are pretty colors, guys. *(Repeating)*
4. **Julie**: Okay, maybe we can do that. Do you agree, Gabe? *(Stating/Questioning)*
5. **Gabe**: What? *(Questioning)*
6. **Julie**: And the flowers are pretty colors. *(Repeating)*
7. **Gabe**: Yes, and you can also put the colors. We can do the ones we think exist. *(Agreeing/Suggesting)* (classroom observation, May 23, 2017)

The second excerpt above shows how the students worked together throughout the writing activity to generate ideas for the different pieces of the paragraph. This behavior continued into the second day of collaborative writing as students reviewed and edited their paragraph and then moved on to complete the drawing for their writing. The exchange below highlights how the students worked together to come up with ideas for their drawing.

*Excerpt 23*

1. **Sara**: We could do just a picture of Hawaii with the ocean. *(Suggesting)*
2. **Gabe**: We can do a picture of me, Sara, and Julie in Hawaii. *(Suggesting)*
3. **Mrs. C**: Okay, so he wants to do a picture of Sara, Julie, and himself in Hawaii surrounded by…
4. **Gabe**: Yea, in the clothes of Hawaii. *(Elaborating)*
5. **Mrs. C**: Okay, so what would you draw?
6. **Gabe**: I’m gonna wear what the boys wear. *(Answering)*
7. **Julie**: And the girls could wear the hula skirts and the lei. *(Elaborating)*
8. **Mrs. C**: I like this idea.
9. **Sara**: Do we color? *(Questioning)*
10. **Mrs. C**: Yes! So each of you can draw a picture of yourself.
11. **Julie**: I’m going to be in the middle. *(Stating)*
12. **Mrs. C**: Good! Are you going to draw yourself in a blank space? What will be around you?
Scaffolding moves. There were numerous instances in which students scaffolded one another during the two days of collaborative writing. As shown in the excerpts above, Sara, Julie, and Gabe frequently contributed ideas to assist one another in completing the different parts of the paragraph. Their use of the advising move (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996) on both days of the collaborative writing activity went a long way in facilitating their joint completion of the task. On the second day, when meeting with Mrs. Cabana to review and edit their writing, students were able to use the instructing move (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996) to assist one another with spelling, punctuation, and other writing conventions (e.g. spacing between letters and words). The elaborating move (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005) was also used throughout this collaborative writing activity, as students built on one another’s ideas. An example is seen in the most recent exchange above when Julie elaborated on Gabe’s idea for the drawing. The last scaffolding move, maintaining direction (Wood et al., 1976), was used by Julie at the beginning of the writing task as she took charge to get everyone started, but Sara also used this move to get everyone focused and ready to complete the concluding sentence. In combination, these different scaffolding moves demonstrate the collective scaffolding (Donato, 1994) that took place throughout this collaborative writing activity. The two excerpts below demonstrate students’ use of the instructing move and Sara’s use of the maintaining direction move.

Excerpt 24

1. **Sara**: You can go surfing and you can Hula dance. (Reading detail 1 – what you can do in Hawaii)
2. **Mrs. C**: Okay, so let’s look at it. It starts off with a capital letter and it has a punctuation mark.
3. **Gabe**: Yea, but it’s a little letter.
4. **Mrs. C**: Okay, so you want to make the y a little more of a capital.
5. **Gabe**: Yea, and this is too close.
6. **Mrs. C**: Okay, so we have to practice our spacing. I also see a punctuation mark that doesn’t belong.
7. **Julie**: This one because its only one sentence.
8. **Mrs. C**: That’s right. Its only one sentence with two activities. So we can either make it two sentences or we can do one. Sara, what did you want to make this? Two sentences or one?
9. **Sara**: Two
10. **Mrs. C**: So what should we delete?
11. **Julie**: The small a. You have to do a big one for another sentence.
12. **Mrs. C**: Should we start the sentence with the word *and*?
13. **Ss**: No
14. **Mrs. C**: So what should we do with *and*?
15. **Gabe**: We should take it away and start with the word *you*.
16. **Mrs. C**: Okay, and capitalize the *you*. Okay, “You can go surfing. You can hula dance.” And how about this H in hula? Is that the name of a person, place, or thing?
17. **Sara**: It has to be lowercase.
18. **Mrs. C**: You agree, Julie?
19. **Julie**: Yea
20. **Mrs. C**: Alright, the word dance. You had said something about dance. What does it need at the end?
21. **Gabe**: It needs an *e* at the end.
22. **Sara**: Also, the *o* has to be together.
23. **Mrs. C**: Okay, so we’ll make it a little closer. (classroom observation, May 26, 2017)

Excerpt 25

1. **Sara**: We didn’t do the conclusion yet.
2. **Julie**: How about instead of sunshine state we could write coconut state? (Referencing an example from the joint construction activity.)
3. **Gabe**: No! Coconut state? Forget about it!
4. **Sara**: Let’s focus.
5. **Gabe**: I got it!
6. **Julie**: I got it!
7. **Sara**: No, let Julie talk.
8. **Julie**: “Hawaii is awesome so come enjoy it.”

**A.J., Serena, and Juan – A Collaborative Approach**

For the final iteration of collaborative writing, A.J. also worked in a group of three. His partners, Serena and Juan, both performed well in the magnet program and
took part in the gifted classes for math and science. As mentioned previously, Juan was a bilingual student (English/Spanish) who enjoyed socializing with his classmates but was also very focused on his academic work. Serena, though not bilingual, was also a social student who Mrs. Cabana described as “very bright” (debriefing session, May 22, 2017). She often volunteered in class and frequently acted in a lead role when working with her peers. In their work together, A.J., Serena, and Juan exhibited a collaborative pattern of interaction. The language functions and scaffolding moves produced by the three students reveal their joint commitment to the writing task.

**Language functions.** Table 12 presents the language functions performed by A.J., Serena, and Juan throughout the writing task. The table shows that the students produced a total of 223 language functions, 52 of which were categorized as initiating behaviors and 171 of which were identified as responding behaviors. The unequal distribution of initiating and responding behaviors was a result of students’ interactions with Mrs. Cabana throughout the two days of collaborative writing. On the second day, as students began working on their sentences for the different pieces of the paragraph, Mrs. Cabana occasionally stopped by to check on students’ progress, providing them with feedback and prompting them to include additional details. On the second day, Mrs. Cabana conducted a review and editing session with the small group, which resulted in numerous answering (54) and stating (39) language functions.
The language functions were distributed unequally across the three students, with Serena’s contributions far outweighing those of A.J. and Juan. Serena was responsible for 107 of the language functions, including 36 initiating behaviors with an average utterance length of 7.1 words, and 71 responding behaviors with an average utterance length of 4.8 words. A.J. and Juan, on the other hand, performed 69 and 47 language functions, respectively. Their initiating behaviors were equal with each student contributing eight,
however, their numbers differed for responding behaviors, with A.J. producing 61 and Juan producing 39.

This difference between A.J. and Juan, in regard to responding behaviors, can be attributed to Juan’s absence during the beginning of the collaborative writing activity on day two. The difference between Serena, A.J., and Juan was due in large part to Serena’s tendency to play the role of the facilitator, often tracking the group’s progress and making statements about what needed to be completed. An example of their interactions from the first day of collaborative writing is below. In this particular interaction, the students are establishing their opinion in relation to the assigned prompt about visiting Hawaii for summer vacation.

Excerpt 26

1. Mrs. C: Okay. So, what is your opinion?
2. Serena: Yes. (Answering)
3. A.J.: Yes. (Answering)
4. Juan: No. (Answering)
5. Serena: Yea, we got 2 out of 3 so yes. (Stating)
6. Juan: Wait, what about the tsunami? What about the poi? What if someone is allergic to it? (Questioning)
7. A.J.: There is a tsunami in our story. (Agreeing)
8. Serena: Okay guys, we won. (Stating)
9. Juan: It could be a big tsunami. (Elaborating)
10. Serena: Okay guys, stop. We won. (Repeating)
11. Mrs. C: Alright, what was the vote?
12. Serena: Yes. A.J. said yes, I said yes, and he said no. (Answering/Stating)

(classroom observation, May 23, 2017)

Despite Serena’s continued efforts to play the role of the facilitator, both A.J. and Juan were still able to make significant contributions to the writing task. They both made numerous suggestions and provided reciprocal responses for their peers’ contributions. In fact, Juan often offered very detailed ideas and responses, as made clear by his average utterance length of 7.8 words for initiating behaviors and 4.6 words for responding
behaviors. A.J. was not as detailed in his contributions though, with an average utterance length of 5.0 words for initiating behaviors and 3.4 words for responding behaviors. The excerpt below captures the students’ discussion surrounding the detail about what can be seen in Hawaii. All three students provided suggestions and conversed about their different ideas.

*Excerpt 27*

1. **Serena**: But which one do we do, what we can see, do, or eat? (**Questioning**)
2. **Juan**: I’ll go. (**Answering**)
3. **Juan**: We will see... (**Stating**)
4. **A.J.**: Bananas. (**Suggesting**)
5. **Serena**: Coconuts fall down from the palm trees. (**Suggesting**)
6. **Juan**: We will see flowers. (**Suggesting**)
7. **Serena**: We will see coconuts fall down from the trees. (**Repeating**)
8. **Juan**: No, that’s for do. We shake the trees and the coconuts fall down. We will see coconut trees. (**Disagreeing/Elaborating/Suggesting**)
9. **Serena**: Oh. (**Stating**)
10. **A.J.**: Flowery meadows. (**Suggesting**)
11. **Juan**: We will see coconut trees. (**Repeating**)
12. **A.J.**: And flowery meadows. (**Repeating**)
13. **Juan**: I’ll put a period and start another sentence. (**Stating**)
14. **Serena**: We will also see waterfalls. (**Suggesting**)
15. **Juan**: Wait! We can check our book to see because they said some things they see. (**Directing/Stating**)(classroom observation, May 23, 2017)

**Scaffolding moves.** A.J., Serena, and Juan provided scaffolding for each other numerous times throughout the collaborative writing activity. All three students used the advising move (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996) multiple times to contribute ideas and give specific recommendations in relation to the writing assignment. The excerpt above illustrates students’ use of this move. All three students were also able to draw on the instructing move (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996) to assist each other with spelling and punctuation. The exchange below shows both Juan and A.J. providing instruction on spelling for Serena, first for the word *fruits* and then for the word *shake*. The maintaining
direction scaffolding move (Wood et al., 1976) was used largely by Serena as she facilitated the group’s completion of the writing task. In the first excerpt above, she urges A.J. and Juan to move forward with the writing assignment after establishing their opinion for the text. She also used this move to check on their next steps for the assignment (e.g. Now what do we do?) and to make sure their writing was completed (e.g. Okay. Your turn, Juan.). Taken together, students’ use of these different scaffolding moves created an environment of collective scaffolding (Donato, 1994) in which students were able to serve as sources of information for one another.

Excerpt 28

1. Serena: We will shake the trees to make the coconuts fall off the tree.
2. Juan: We also will eat tropical…
4. Serena: Like bananas.
6. Mrs. C: Yea, I like that. Good team work.
7. Serena: We will also eat tropical fruits. How do you spell fruits?
8. Juan: F-r-u-i-t-s.
9. Mrs. C: Does that sound right to you too, A.J.?
10. A.J.: I don’t know.
11. Serena: I put f-r-u-i-t-s.
12. Mrs. C: That would be frust so switch the t and the s.
13. Serena: So we put “fruits like bananas, pineapples, and all sorts of other fruits?”
14. Mrs. C: Okay, it’s up to your group. A.J. and Juan, Serena needs help with ending the sentence. She would like to put something else there.
15. A.J.: Shack the tree? (Reading the sentence Serena already wrote.)
16. Serena: No, shake the tree.
17. Mrs. C: Oh, but he’s right. That word says ‘shack’ because it ends with a ‘ck.’ So, erase the c and what do you do to words to make the a say its name?
18. A.J.: e
19. Mrs. C: An e at the end, yes. So, s-h-a-k-e. Alright, I think you need to wrap up this sentence already.
A Comparison of Sara and A.J.’s Interactions

As illustrated in the four iterations of collaborative writing, the nature of Sara and A.J.’s interactions was dynamic and varied. Many factors influenced the students’ interactions, including their assigned partner(s), the nature of the writing assignment, Mrs. Cabana’s level of involvement, and various time constraints. In combination with these factors, students brought their knowledge and experiences, working styles and preferences, and personalities and motivations to each of the writing tasks. Together, these influential factors and students’ individual qualities gave rise to unique experiences for Sara and A.J. across each iteration of collaborative writing.

Joint Commitment to the Writing Tasks

Sara and A.J. both demonstrated a joint commitment to the writing task when working with their assigned partner(s) for multiple iterations of the collaborative writing activities. This joint commitment was demonstrated through their continuous engagement with their partner(s), both in their contributions to the writing task, and in the reciprocal responses and scaffolding moves they provided for their partner(s). For Sara, this joint commitment to the writing task was evident during the first and fourth iterations, as well as during the second day of the second iteration. A.J., on the other hand, revealed his joint commitment to the writing task during the second and fourth iterations.

Instances of Passive Participation

Sara and A.J. both had instances in which they played the role of a passive partner in dominant/passive patterns of interaction. For A.J., this occurred in the very first iteration of collaborative writing when he worked with Bella on the narrative recount task. He and Bella were both withdrawn from the writing task and were engaged in
conversation about topics unrelated to the assignment. Bella was the dominant partner in this interaction, but not in a direct manner. Rather than presenting her ideas aloud to A.J., she remained quiet and completed the writing activity without eliciting input from him. This was the case on both the first and second day of the collaborative writing activity.

Sara, on the other hand, played the passive role during the second iteration of collaborative writing when working with Ben on the “how-to” text. Their dominant/passive pattern of interaction was distinctly different from that of Sara and Juan, as Ben was very vocal about his ideas for the writing task. He continuously sought input from Sara, but he was largely unsuccessful in drawing her into the conversation. In addition, unlike A.J., Sara only remained a passive participant on the first day of the collaborative writing activity. On the second day, when she switched roles to be the “doer,” she became highly involved in the task which resulted in a collective pattern of interaction between her and Ben.

The Novice Role

Sara and A.J. both played a novice role during the third iteration of collaborative writing as they were part of the same small group working on the informational text. This shared experience in which Mrs. Cabana guided the students through each phase of the writing task resulted in both Sara and A.J.’s more withdrawn behavior. Though Mrs. Cabana closely monitored the students’ progress with the writing assignment and consistently encouraged them to remain engaged, it was evident that they did not have a great amount of control over the direction of the task, which resulted in a low level of equality. In addition, because of the high level of involvement from Mrs. Cabana, the
students did not perform any scaffolding moves for each other. Rather, Mrs. Cabana provided any scaffolding that was needed for students to successfully complete the task.

**Supporting Peers Through Scaffolding Moves**

Both Sara and A.J. performed various scaffolding moves throughout the collaborative writing activities to support their peers in completing the assigned tasks. Just as their patterns of interaction were varied, so too were the instances in which they executed scaffolding moves. The scaffolding moves that both Sara and A.J. provided to their partners ranged from advising to instructing to maintaining direction.

To start off, during the first iteration of collaborative writing, Sara incorporated all three identified scaffolding moves in her interaction with Juan. She frequently contributed ideas and made specific recommendations for writing, provided instruction on spelling and grammar, and maintained their focus on the writing task. These moves largely contributed to the collective scaffolding from that iteration. A.J.’s pattern of interaction in the first iteration was must different and he did not perform any scaffolding moves.

The second and third iterations were similar for Sara and A.J. In the second iteration, they each used the instructing move in their interactions with their partners to assist with spelling and other writing conventions. Apart from the instructing move, A.J. was also able to incorporate the maintaining focus move to keep his partner on track to finish the writing assignment. The third iteration was a unique situation in which they were both playing the role of novice, as mentioned previously. As such, during this iteration, neither Sara nor A.J. performed scaffolding moves.
The fourth and final iteration was filled with scaffolding moves from both Sara and A.J. They both engaged in rich discussions with their partners, in which they brought forward new ideas, gave instruction for spelling, capitalization, and other writing conventions, and kept everyone on task. These moves, employed by both Sara and A.J. in their respective groups, played a key role in the collective scaffolding exhibited by both groups during this last iteration of collaborative writing.

In summary, this comparison illuminates significant similarities and differences in Sara and A.J.’s interactions throughout the collaborative writing activities. Both Sara and A.J. demonstrated a joint commitment to the writing task during instances in which their interactions were of a collaborative or collective nature. In addition, both students played the role of a passive participant during which times their interactions took on more of a dominant/passive pattern. Sara and A.J. also both took on the role of a novice when working together in the same small group that was identified as an expert/novice interaction. In terms of scaffolding, both students performed the advising, instructing, and maintaining direction moves for their partner(s), but at various times, depending on the nature of their interactions.
Chapter Five: ELLs’ Written Texts Across the Collaborative Writing Activities

This chapter addresses the second research question: *How do the two focal ELL students’ written texts compare across the collaborative writing activities?* To begin, I provide an overall description of students’ written texts produced during the four collaborative writing activities. I then discuss specific features of these texts, focusing on the purpose, stages, and language structures of each genre. To conclude this chapter, I compare the two focal ELLs, drawing out similarities and differences between them and across the four collaborative writing activities.

Evaluating Written Texts

To compare Sara and A.J.’s written texts across the four iterations of collaborative writing, I first evaluated their texts in relation to the corresponding first-grade Florida writing standards. After this evaluation, I completed a genre-based analysis (Brisk, 2015) of each text. In doing so, I focused specifically on the purpose, stages, and language features of the genre. Using both the evaluation of the standard and the genre-based analysis, I was able to identify areas in which the focal students excelled and areas where they needed additional development and instruction. I present a holistic view of Sara and A.J.’s written texts produced throughout the four collaborative writing activities below.

Sara and A.J.: Developing Writers

Sara and A.J.’s written texts varied across the collaborative writing activities, as they were tasked with producing texts from four different genres. In some instances, Sara and A.J.’s texts revealed their clear understanding of the genre, including its purpose and stages, as well as their ability to control and implement different language features. However, in other cases, their texts showed that they needed further instruction or
revision in specific areas (e.g. text connectives). Both Sara and A.J. produced texts that ranged from a scale score of 2 (needs instruction) to 4 (meets standards) (Brisk, 2015). Table 13 displays the scores from the texts they produced in collaboration with their partners throughout the four writing tasks.

Table 13

**Evaluation of Sara and A.J.’s Written Texts Across Four Collaborative Writing Activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Iteration 1</th>
<th>Iteration 2</th>
<th>Iteration 3</th>
<th>Iteration 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>3 – Needs revision</td>
<td>3 - Needs revision; 2 - Needs instruction</td>
<td>4 - Meets standards</td>
<td>4 - Meets standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.J.</td>
<td>N/A - Incomplete</td>
<td>2 - Needs instruction; 3 - Needs revision</td>
<td>4 - Meets standards</td>
<td>4 - Meets standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first iteration of collaborative writing activities, Sara and Juan produced a narrative recount text that was evaluated at a Level 3 (needs revision). The completed text demonstrated the students’ understanding of the genre, including its purpose and the appropriate method for organization. In addition, the text revealed that Sara and Juan had established control over most of the essential language features of the genre. A.J. and Bella, on the other hand, did not complete their narrative recount text and I could therefore not evaluate it.

The second iteration of collaborative writing activities presented a unique situation in which each pair of students, Sara and Ben and A.J. and Carol, produced two texts each. Just as Sara and Ben demonstrated two unique patterns of interaction over the
two days of collaborative writing, they also produced two distinctly different texts. The first text was evaluated at a Level 3 (needs revision) while the second text was evaluated at a Level 2 (needs instruction). The first text demonstrated their understanding of the purpose and stages of the “how-to” genre and their ability to use the majority of the language features appropriately. The second text, however, revealed that the two students had difficulty with a couple of the essential language features. A.J. and Carol, though they demonstrated only one pattern of interaction throughout both days of the writing assignment, also produced two distinctly different texts. The first completed text was evaluated at a Level 2 (needs instruction) while the second text was determined to be at a Level 3 (needs revision). Both texts demonstrated A.J. and Carol’s understanding of the purpose and stages of the genre, however their use of the key language features differed from one text to the other.

Sara and A.J. worked together in the same small group for the third iteration of the collaborative writing activities and therefore only produced one text together. The text they produced was evaluated at a Level 4 (meets standards), as it exemplified their understanding of the purpose and stages of the informational genre and their ability to incorporate the essential language features associated with genre.

The fourth and final iteration of collaborative writing activities was focused on the opinion (argument) genre. The text produced by Sara, Julie, and Gabe was evaluated at a Level 4 (meets standards). The text showed the students’ understanding of the genre, including its purpose and stages. In addition, it showed their ability to incorporate the essential language features associated with the genre. A.J., Serena, and Juan produced a similar text in that it was also evaluated at a Level 4 (meets standards). These three
students demonstrated their understanding of the purpose and stages of the opinion genre, along with their capacity to use the appropriate language features related to the genre.

Overall, Sara and A.J. each produced texts with their partner(s) which demonstrated their developing writing skills across four different genres. In the following section, I will present a genre-based analysis of their texts from each of the collaborative writing activities. First, I will discuss the purpose, stages, and essential language features of each genre, as described by Brisk (2015). I will then present the texts that Sara and A.J. co-produced with their partner(s) from each of the four iterations. This will then lead into my analysis and comparison of the texts across the collaborative writing activities.

**Iteration 1: Narrative Recount**

The first collaborative writing activity was a narrative recount tied to the focal text *Legend of Old Befana* (dePaola, 1980). This particular genre is identified in the first-grade Florida writing standards as follows: “Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure” (Florida State University, 2017, LAFS.1.W.1.3). Many of the requirements highlighted in this standard are also featured in the purpose, stages, and language features identified by Brisk (2015). In fact, Brisk notes that the narrative recount begins with an orientation and then flows into a sequence of events and ends with a conclusion. Additionally, Brisk highlights important language features of the genre, including text connectives, adverbials of time, place and manner, reference ties to track participants, a variety of verb types, numerous adjectives to describe nouns, evaluative vocabulary, and the use of dialogue and clause complexes for students in upper elementary grades (3-5).
displays the purpose, stages, and language features of the narrative recount genre as presented by Brisk (2015).

Table 14

*Narrative Recount Genre Features*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose and Stages</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>To document a sequence of events and to evaluate their significance in some way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages</td>
<td>Title (if required by medium), Orientation (sometimes included in title), Sequence of Events, Conclusion (optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Features</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb Groups</td>
<td>Avoid repetition of the same generic verb. Variety of types that express what participants are doing, saying, thinking, feeling, sensing, and relational connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun Groups</td>
<td>(A) Describe nouns with adjectivals (B) Pack noun groups in place of multiple clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbials:</td>
<td>Place, time, manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Clause Complexes (grades 3-5):</td>
<td>Appropriate use, including appropriate relationships. Packing of simple clauses to make clause complexes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience:</td>
<td>Choice of amount of information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice:</td>
<td>Use of evaluative vocabulary; Grading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Connectives:</td>
<td>No overuse of connectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track Participants Through Reference Ties:</td>
<td>The referents for pronouns are clear and named.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Adapted from Brisk, 2015, (pp. 158-160).
Sara and Juan – A Promising Text

The narrative recount produced by Sara and Juan is captured in Figure 5, along with a plain text transcription. As shown in Table 14, the purpose of a recount is to document a sequence of events and to evaluate their significance in some way. The stages of the recount include an orientation, a sequence of events presented in the order in which they occurred, and an optional conclusion. The text produced by Sara and Juan includes an orientation in the form of a question to the reader, “Have you ever read the Legend of the Old Befana?” While orientations that directly address the reader are not typically found in published recounts, this is a common practice found in children’s writing (Brisk, 2015). In addition, in this case, Mrs. Cabana jointly constructed the orientation with the class on the second day of collaborative writing, prior to publishing.
Old Befana
By: Juan and Sara
Have you ever read the Legend of the Old Befana? In the beginning, Old Befana swept and she was mean. In the middle Old Befana herd the bells tinkling and saw the Three Kings. Finally, Old Befana got to childrens’ houses and left them cookies.

Figure 5. Sara and Juan’s narrative recount text.

Following the orientation, Sara and Juan present a sequence of events from the story, highlighting the three main events in the order in which they occurred. The final stage of this genre, the conclusion, is challenging for children. In fact, in their early
attempts at writing, they often omit the conclusion, or use something as simple as “the end” to close their recounts (Brisk, 2015). The text in this case ends with the sentence, “Finally, Old Befana got to children’s houses and left them cookies.” While this sentence is a closing for the series of events, and not the recount, this is an appropriate selection for the genre. Brisk explains that when writers opt to include a conclusion, they can do so with a feeling, an evaluation of the events, a thought, or one last event (2015).

There are numerous language features associated with this genre, and Sara and A.J. were able to successfully incorporate the vast majority of them in their text. To begin, Sara and A.J. wrote their narrative recount in the past tense and included numerous verbs to identify what the main character, Old Befana, was doing at different points in the story. These verbs include swept, herd, saw, got to, and left. This text also includes several nouns, including Old Befana, bells, the Three Kings, children’s houses, and cookies. Pronouns, or reference ties, are used with two of these nouns on separate occasions. The pronoun she is used once to replace Old Befana, while the pronoun them is used in place of children. These pronouns help the reader reference participants that were already named in the recount. In conjunction with these nouns and pronouns, texts from the recount genre should include adjectives to provide details and make the reading more enjoyable for the audience (Brisk, 2015). In this writing, Sara and Juan used the adjective mean to describe Old Befana in the beginning of the story. This adjective is also categorized as evaluative vocabulary because it illustrates the writers’ feelings about the main character.

Because the recount genre is used to document a sequence of events, adverbials of time and place are especially important, as they orient the reader to the events and move
the text forward. In this text, Sara and Juan used “In the beginning” and “In the middle” in order to denote the main events of the story. These adverbials of time, along with the time order word *finally*, served as the text connectives that helped the text come together. In addition to these text connectives, Sara and Juan were able to use a variety of sentence types in their writing. These varied sentences are typically not used until the higher grades (3-5), but the writers were able to incorporate one compound sentence and two additive clause complexes to identify details about the different events in the story. The compound sentence was used for beginning event of the story, “In the beginning, Old Befana swept and she was mean.” The two clause complexes were used for the middle and end events of the story, “In the middle Old Befana herd the bells tinkling and saw the Three Kings,” and “Finally, Old Befana got to childrens’ houses and left them cookies.”

Overall, Sara and Juan’s narrative recount was determined as meeting the associated Florida first-grade writing standard. In addition, in terms of the genre-based analysis, Sara and Juan’s text was evaluated at a Level 3. Their text was impressive on many levels, but it does need minor revisions to meet the expectations of the genre. As noted previously, the narrative recount genre is designed to guide a reader through a sequence of events, and as such, it requires details in the form of adjectives. Sara and Juan did not include adjectives in their text, apart from *mean*, which was found in the second sentence. In addition to the adjectives, the text could be improved by including more reference ties to avoid repeating *Old Befana*. These minor revisions would strengthen the text and easily move it to a Level 4, as it already includes the other language features associated with the genre.
Iteration 2: “How-to” (Procedure)

The second collaborative writing activity was a “how-to” text, also known as a procedure. This particular genre is unique as there is not a standard devoted specifically to this type of writing. Rather, it is mentioned only in relation to shared research and writing projects, as first-grade students are expected to “explore a number of ‘how-to’ books on a given topic and use them to write a sequence of instructions” (Florida State University, 2017, LAFS.1.W.3.7). The genre-based expectations put forth by Brisk (2015) are much more detailed than the Florida standards. To begin, the stages of a procedure text typically include a title, goal or aim, materials or requirements, method presented in sequential steps, and an optional evaluation (Butt et al., 2000). The essential language features of the genre include precise action verbs, a variety of adjectives and adverbs to make instructions specific, text connectives, and varied clause complexes for students in upper elementary grades (3-5). Table 15 displays the purpose, stages, and language features of the procedure genre as presented by Brisk (2015).
Table 15

Procedure Genre Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose and Stages</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>To give directions to accomplish a goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages</td>
<td>Title (if required by medium), Goal or aim (sometimes included in title), Materials or requirements, Method presented in a series of sequential steps, Evaluation or final comment (optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Features</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb Types</td>
<td>Use precise action verbs to indicate what needs to be done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun Groups</td>
<td>Various types of adjectives are used to give specificity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbials</td>
<td>Adverbs, especially of place and manner, are used to make the instructions specific.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clause Complexes</td>
<td>Finite and non-finite verbs to help specify instructions and pack information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(upper grades)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Connectives</td>
<td>Use of numbers or no text connectives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Brisk, 2015, pp. 97-98)

**Sara and Ben – Two Distinctly Different Texts**

During this iteration of collaborative writing, Sara and Ben produced two texts. The first text is shown in Figure 6 (first page only) and in plain text. The purpose of a procedure, as shown in Table 15, is to give directions to accomplish a goal. These directions are typically given in sequential steps following a title, goal or aim, and list of materials or requirements. After the steps are presented, there is often an evaluation or final comment from the author(s).
Did you ever make a paper airplane?

1. Fold the paper in half.
2. Open the paper.
3. Fold the corners to make the triangles.
4. Fold the paper in half.
5. Fold the two corners to make triangles.
6. Fold it again.
7. Fold the paper down to make the wings.

Your paper airplane is done and it’s ready to fly.

Figure 6. Sara and Ben’s first “how-to” text.

Sara and Ben’s first text began with a question, “Did you ever make a paper airplane?” This question addresses the reader as you which is typically only found in oral language, but it is not uncommon to see this in children’s writing (Brisk, 2015). Apart from directly addressing the reader, this question orients the reader to the goal of the procedure which is to make a paper airplane. Following this opening question, the writers present the method for making a paper airplane in a series of seven sequential steps. Sara
and Ben then bring their procedure text to a close with a final comment directed to the reader, “Your paper airplane is done and its ready to fly.” Though the writers did not include a title or list of materials in their text, those items were not listed on their graphic organizer, nor were they mentioned by Mrs. Cabana.

Sara and Ben were able to include many of the key language features from this genre in their first text. To start, the students used numbers to indicate the sequence of steps for making a paper airplane. Each of these steps begins with a precise action verb to specify what the reader needs to do. In addition to the precise action verbs, this genre requires that steps include specific details to give precision to instructions so that the reader may accurately follow the outlined steps (Brisk, 2015). The details are usually incorporated in the form of adjectivals and adverbials. Sara and Ben include the adverbial *in half* in steps one and four to specify how the paper should be folded and *two* in step five to identify the number of corners. The students also included three casual clause complexes in steps three, five, and seven to express the purpose for completing specific actions (e.g. to make the wings). In addition to the clause complexes, Sara and Ben closed out their procedure text with a compound sentence. This final sentence allowed the writers to add a comment in reference to the end product (paper airplane), which is a common practice in this genre (Brisk, 2015).

The second text produced by Sara and Ben is displayed in Figure 7 (first page of written text and drawing of giraffe) and in plain text below. Similar to their first text, Sara and Ben elected to begin their second text with a question directed to the reader, “Did you ever draw a Giraffe before?” This question orients the reader to the aim of the procedure which is to draw a giraffe. Following this opening question, the writers present
seven sequential steps for drawing a giraffe. The text ends with a simple sentence directed to the reader, “Your GiraFe is done.” Sara and Ben did not include a title or list of materials in this text either, but as stated before, these items were not listed on their graphic organizer or mentioned by Mrs. Cabana.

Did you ever draw a GiraFe Bifor?
  1. You nEEd to Draw the nose.
  2. You nEEd to Draw The eyes.
  3. You nEEd to Draw The ears.
  5. You nEEED to Draw The Body.
  7. You nEEEd to Draw the tail.

Your GiraFe is done.

Figure 7. Sara and Ben’s second “how-to” text and giraffe drawing.
Sara and Ben were able to include some of the key language features from this genre in their second text; however, there are distinct differences from their first text. To begin, Sara and Ben used numbers to indicate the sequence of steps for drawing a giraffe. Though this genre requires that writers use precise action verbs to indicate what needs to be done, each of the steps, with the exception of step six, starts with “You need to…” rather than the verb in the imperative tense. Unlike the first text, this second text does not include any adverbials to guide the reader in completing the steps; however, Sara and Ben do include one adjective of quantity in step six: “You Draw 4 legs.” While the students were able to include clause complexes in their first text, that is not a feature they incorporated in this second text.

Overall, Sara and Ben collectively produced two distinctly different texts. Despite these differences, it was determined that both texts met the generic Florida standard which only requires that they write “a sequence of instructions” (Florida State University, 2017, LAFS.1.W.3.7). In terms of the genre-based analysis, Sara and Ben’s first text was evaluated at a Level 3 while their second text was evaluated at a Level 2. Though the first text exceeded the grade-level genre expectations in many ways, there are still areas that require revisions in both texts. The first of the necessary revisions is vis-à-vis the authors’ voice. This genre requires a detached voice of instructions, which Brisk (2015) highlights as a particular challenge for students. In light of this requirement, Sara and Ben would need to revise their first text by rephrasing their opening question and their concluding remark which include references to the person following the instructions with you and your. The second text would require more extensive revisions as you or your is included in each part of the writing, from the opening question through the concluding sentence.
As such, it would be appropriate to provide the students with additional instruction regarding this language feature.

The second area that requires revision is the level of detail included in the steps. Though Sara and Ben included two adverbials in their first text and one adjective in their second text, there is still a lack of specificity in both texts. For example, step six in the first text states, “Fold it again,” but there is no indication of how “it” should be folded. Similarly, in step four of the second text, Sara and Ben direct the reader to draw the giraffe’s neck by stating, “You need to draw Giraffe’s neck.” This step does not include any details about the characteristics of the neck (e.g. long) or where it should be drawn in relation to the other body parts already mentioned. Sara and Ben could improve their texts significantly by making adjustments to the voice of the texts and by adding details to the various steps.

A.J. and Carol – Two Distinctly Different Texts

Like Sara and Ben, A.J. and Carol also produced two texts during this iteration of collaborative writing. Their first text is shown in Figure 8 (first page of written text and drawing of butterfly) and in plain text below. As seen in their text, the students elected to begin their procedure with a simple, detached statement, “This is how to draw a Butterfly.” This statement explicitly defines the goal or aim of the procedure: to provide the steps for how to draw a butterfly. After this opening statement, A.J. and Carol identify four sequential steps for drawing a butterfly. They bring their text to a close with another statement, but this time they do address the reader, “Now you have a Butterfly.” These students also did not include a title or list of materials in their procedure text, but as
mentioned previously, these items were not listed in the graphic organizer or required by Mrs. Cabana.

Figure 8. A.J. and Carol’s first “how-to” text and butterfly drawing.
In their first text, A.J. and Carol were able to include some of the key language features from this genre. To begin, A.J. and Carol used numbers to indicate the sequence of steps for drawing a giraffe, however, they also used text connectives in the form of *next* and *and* for steps three and four. This genre specifically calls for use of numbers or no text connectives (Brisk, 2015), and thus the use of both is repetitive. Each of the steps contains the same precise action verb *draw*, though steps three and four do not start with the verb due to the inclusion of the text connectives. As stated before, this genre requires specific details, most often in the form of adjectivals and adverbials, to give precision to instructions (Brisk, 2015). A.J. and Carol incorporate adjectives in the form of quantity in steps two and three (two wings, two antennae); however, adverbials are not seen in this first text. Though texts from this genre often include complex clauses, especially at the upper grades, that is not a feature A.J. and Carol were able to include in this first text.

The second text produced by A.J. and Carol is displayed in Figure 9 (first page of written text and drawing of dragon) and in plain text below. Similar to their first text, A.J. and Carol chose to begin their second text with a simple statement, however this time the statement was directed to the reader, “This is how you draw a dragon.” Though statements directed to the person following the instructions are only found in oral language (Brisk, 2015), this statement still serves its purpose in orienting the reader to the goal or aim of the procedure which is to provide the steps for drawing a dragon. Following this opening statement, the writers present 14 steps for drawing a dragon. The writing comes to a close with the statement, “This is how a dragon.” This concluding statement is confusing in that it is missing a verb; however the audio recordings indicate that A.J. and Carol intended to connect back to the opening statement by saying, “This is how you draw a
dragon.” As with the first text, A.J. and Carol did not include a title or list of materials, as they were not required by Mrs. Cabana or listed in the graphic organizer.

This is how you draw a dragon.
1. Draw tow ponte thingis to make the hed.
2. Draw teath in thos ponte thingis.
3. Draw a eye.
4. Draw a neka.
5. Draw anater neka becase it is a tow headed.
6. Draw anater head.
7. Draw a body.
8. Draw teth.
9. Draw a foot with clas.
10. Draw a wig.
11. Draw clas on the wing.
12. Draw anotr wing.

This is how a dragon.

Figure 9. A.J. and Carol’s second “how-to” text and dragon drawing.
The second text produced by A.J. and Carol is very different from their first text, as they were able to include more of the essential language features from the procedure genre in their writing. To start, A.J. and Carol used numbers to indicate the sequence of steps for drawing a dragon, but unlike the first text, they did not include any repetitive text connectives this time. Each of the steps begins with the precise action verb *draw* to specify what the reader needs to do. Of the 14 steps listed, eight of them include details which help guide the reader in completing the steps. Steps one and five include a causal clause to provide details regarding the purpose for completing that specific step (e.g. *to make the hed, because it is a tow headed [dragon]*). Steps two, nine, 11, and 13 include adverbials which denote the place and manner for drawing specific features of the dragon (e.g. *Draw spiks on the bak.*). Though A.J. and Carol provide details in many of their steps in the form of adverbials and clause complexes, they included few adjectives, *tow ponte*, and *tow headed*.

Overall, Carol and A.J. collectively produced two markedly different texts. Despite these differences, it was determined that both texts met the generic Florida standard which only requires that they write “a sequence of instructions” (Florida State University, 2017, LAFS.1.W.3.7). In terms of the genre-based analysis, A.J. and Carol’s first text was evaluated at a Level 2 while their second text was evaluated at a Level 3. The first text was missing some of the essential language features and required instruction and revisions in some areas, while the second text included more of the key language features, but still required revisions in a couple of areas. In both texts, A.J. and Carol had some difficulty using a detached voice to provide instructions for the reader. Though they did successfully omit the *you* in the opening statement for their first text, the
concluding statement for that same text included you. In addition, the second text contained you in the opening statement and while it was not included in the conclusion, it was determined from the audio recordings that the writers unintentionally omitted you draw from their final statement.

In addition to using a detached voice, both of A.J. and Carol’s texts require revisions in the way of details. Though their first text included two adjectives of quantity, they did not include adverbials or complex clauses of any kind. By incorporating additional details, their text would be greatly improved, especially as it only contains four steps for the readers to follow. The second text showed improvement in this area, as eight of the 14 steps included either a clause complex or adverbial to guide the reader through the steps of drawing a dragon. Though these details provided some clarity, there is still room for improvement and revision. For example, A.J. and Carol mention “tow ponte thingis” in the first two steps, but it’s unclear what the two pointy things are. Apart from making modifications to the voice of the texts and adding details to the different steps, A.J. and Carol’s first text requires instruction in terms of text connectives. While the students included numbers to identify the sequential steps, they also included two text connectives which resulted in repetition. The second text requires editing and revision in terms of spelling, as it contains many errors that could prevent the reader from correctly following the instructions. Both of these texts, as different as they are, could be significantly enhanced with these revisions.

**Iteration 3: Informational (Report)**

The third collaborative writing activity was an informational text, also known as a descriptive report (Martin & Rose, 2008). A report, as conceptualized in SFL, “is a
factual text used to organize and store information” (Butt et al., 2000, p. 238) and students at school are often expected to write these reports to show what they have learned. This genre is included in the Florida Standards which outlines the expectations for first-grade students as follows: Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure (Florida State University, 2017, LAFS.1.W.1.2). The genre-based expectations outlined by Brisk (2015) are similar in that the stages of a report include a title, general statement, information that is organized in bundles or subtopics, and an optional conclusion. The key language features of this genre include clear and generalized participants, nouns and adjectives that are connected to the topic of the report, adjectival and clause complexes to pack information and provide details about the topic, and cohesive paragraphs or sentences (for younger students). Table 16 displays the purpose, stages, and language features of the report genre as presented by Brisk (2015).
Table 16

Report Genre Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose and Stages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Organize information about a topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages</td>
<td>Title (if required by medium), General statement (identification and classification of the topic), Information (organized in bundles or subtopics), Conclusion (optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Features</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Are clear. If generalized, they are consistently used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun Groups &amp; Lexical Ties</td>
<td>Nouns and adjectives used are semantically connected to the topic of the report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectivals</td>
<td>To pack information – adjectives, prepositional phrases, embedded clauses with finite or non-finite verbs, adjective group after a relational verb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clause Complexes</td>
<td>To pack information. Meaning, conjunction, order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesive Paragraphs (Sentences)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from Brisk, 2015 (pp. 209-210)

An Impressive Text from the Small Group

During this iteration of collaborative writing, Sara and A.J. were placed in a small group together with three of their peers. As such, they contributed to the same collaboratively produced text. The descriptive report produced by Sara, A.J., Carly, P.J., and Isaac is captured in Figure 10, but it is also displayed in plain text below. As shown in Table 16, the purpose of a descriptive report is to organize information about a topic. In this case, the students completed a report on the anglerfish. As stated previously, the
stages of the recount include a title, general statement, information that is organized in bundles or subtopics, and an optional conclusion.

\textbf{My Ocean Animal Report}

\textit{Ocean Animal:} anglerfish

\textit{We learned about the anglerfish. The anglerfish looks scary because of its sharp teeth and its face. It lives at the bottom of the ocean called The Midnight zone. The anglerfish has a light on its head to attract prey to eat. The anglerfish eats smaller fish. We feel the anglerfish is the scariest and weirdest sea animal in the ocean.}

\textit{Figure 10.} Descriptive report written by Sara, A.J., Carly, P.J., and Isaac.

The text produced by the small group does not have a title per se, but it was completed on a writing paper which designated it as an “ocean animal report” and the students identified the “ocean animal” as the anglerfish. General statements, the typical
format for beginning these texts, can be fairly flexible for young writers, in that a question or a statement showing a friendlier voice (second person) can be used, as opposed to the authoritative voice (third person) used for older audiences (Brisk, 2015). In this text, the writers used the general statement to identify the topic in a straightforward manner, “We learned about the anglerfish.” While a statement presented in first person plural is atypical of this genre, it is not uncommon in children’s writing and in this case, it aligns with the first-person plural statement used in the conclusion.

The information in the text is presented in four distinct sentences about the anglerfish, each one describing a characteristic of the sea animal, including how it looks, where it lives, and what it eats. The fourth sentence, “The anglerfish has a light on its head to attract prey to eat” is the only exception in that it identifies how it looks, but also overlaps into its eating habits. In this genre, the conclusion is often used by young writers to address the audience or include a “fun fact” (Brisk, 2015). In this text, the writers concluded the paragraph by expressing an attitude about the anglerfish, “We feel the anglerfish is the scariest and weirdest sea animal in the ocean.”

There are various language features associated with this genre, and this small group of students was able to successfully incorporate all of them in their text. To begin, the writers and audience of this descriptive report are young children, which is reflected in both the amount of information presented and the way it is presented through relatively uncomplicated clauses and simple sentences. The focal participant of this text is the anglerfish and it is referred to in this way five times throughout the paragraph. Only one of the sentences uses the pronoun it to refer to the anglerfish. Though participants in this genre are usually generalized and in the plural form (Brisk, 2015), the students refer to
the anglerfish in the singular form based on guidance from their teacher, the mentor text they read and deconstructed, and the graphic organizer they completed based on the mentor text. There are typically few adjectives found in children’s informational writing, but those that are included often follow relational verbs (Brisk, 2015). This is seen in the concluding sentence as the writers identify the anglerfish as the “scariest and wierdest sea animal in the ocean.” The other adjectives in this text are connected to nouns (scary teeth, and smaller fish), which are semantically connected to the topic of the report. In addition to the adjectives in this text, the writers incorporated adverbials to provide details regarding place, including on its head and in the ocean.

To provide additional details, the writers included three clause complexes in their text. Though this feature is found mostly in upper elementary students’ writing, the students were able to use them here without any issues. The first clause complex is a finite construction to indicate causality (reason), “The anglerfish looks scary because of its sharp teeth and its face,” while the second is also a finite construction used to elaborate, “It lives at the bottom of The ocean called The MidNight zone.” The third is a non-finite construction used to indicate cause (purpose), “The anglerfish has a light on its head to attract prey to eat.”

In terms of cohesion, each of the sentences in this paragraph relates to the topic of the anglerfish, which is made clear by the continuous reference to the anglerfish and it. Two of the sentences seem to be related, as the writers describe how the light on the anglerfish’ head is used “to attract prey to eat,” and the following sentence identifies what the anglerfish eats. However, there is not a text connective used to clearly define this connection. The other sentences in the paragraph each present information on a
different characteristic of the anglerfish, a common feature of texts written about animals (Brisk, 2015).

Overall, this descriptive report was determined to meet the associated Florida first-grade writing standard. In addition, in terms of the genre-based analysis, Sara, A.J., Carly, P.J., and Isaac’s text was evaluated at a Level 4. Their text was impressive on many levels and though it could benefit from very minor revisions, it successfully meets, and in some cases, exceeds the standards put forth by Brisk (2015). Notably, the students incorporated clause complexes, which is a language feature associated with students at least two grade levels above them.

**Iteration 4: Opinion (Argument)**

The fourth and final collaborative writing activity was an opinion text, also known as an argument. Though some research claims that elementary school children are not ready for persuasive writing, many scholars contend that they are (Anderson, 2008; Wollman-Bonilla, 2000). Accordingly, this genre is required by the Florida Standard, as first-grade students are expected to “Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or name the book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure” (Florida State University, 2017, LAFS.1.W.1.1).

This standard aligns well with the genre-based expectations put forth by Brisk (2015). In fact, Brisk states that writers begin their opinion texts with a thesis statement, which they follow with reasons that support their statement. Then, they bring their text to a close with a reinforcement of their original statement. However, unlike the Florida writing standards, Brisk also highlights essential language features of the genre, including
generalized participants, use of technical vocabulary, sentences in the form of statements, use of third person, medium to low modality, evaluative vocabulary, and cohesive paragraphs or sentences (for younger students). Table 17 displays the purpose, stages, and language features of the argument genre as presented by Brisk (2015).

Table 17

*Argument Genre Features*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose and Stages</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>To persuade to do something or to believe about something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages</td>
<td>Title (if required by medium), Thesis statement or claim (background information if needed; preview of reasons), Reasons supported by evidence and organized in bundles or subtopics, Reinforcement of statement or position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Features</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalized Participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language choices</td>
<td>To describe reasons and evidence to demonstrate awareness of audience; use of technical vocabulary for evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of sentences (Statements preferred)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of person</td>
<td>Third person, except in letters and sermons where first and second person are used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality</td>
<td>Medium and low for adults (more respectful); High modality for adults addressing students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative vocabulary (Grading)</td>
<td>To express attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesive paragraphs (sentences)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from Brisk, 2015 (pp. 293-294)
Sara, Julie, and Gabe – An Assertive Text

During this iteration of collaborative writing, Sara, Julie, and Gabe worked together to produce an opinion text. Their completed text is shown in Figure 11 and in plain text below. As shown in Table 17, the purpose for opinion texts can vary. Young writers find it easier to focus on “to do” arguments, in which they persuade the reader to do something (Brisk, 2015). In this case, students were guided by the prompt, “In your opinion, should our class visit Hawaii during summer vacation?”

Figure 11. Sara, Julie, and Gabe’s opinion text.

We should go to Hawaii for summer vacation. We could go surfing. We could hula dance. We could eat poi in Hawaii. We could also eat bananas. We could use the coconut to drink coconut milk. We could see beautiful flowery meadows and colorful flowers. We could see beautiful blue ocean. Hawaii is awesome so come enjoy it.
Though there was no title provided for this text, Mrs. Cabana did not require one and there was not a designated space for it on their writing sheet. In general, this written text conforms to the stages of the argument genre. The students elected to begin their text with a claim in which they clearly state their position in relation to the prompt. While many students respond to prompts by saying “Yes,” or “No” (Brisk, 2015), these students avoided that problem and instead gave a clear statement in first person plural, using a verb of high modality (should): “We should go to Hawaii for summer vacation.” While first person plural is not as common in this genre, it can be used when writing is geared towards a young audience, indicating a more informal relationship (Brisk, 2015). The students continue their writing using first person plural as they outline the reasons that their class should visit Hawaii for summer vacation. These reasons are organized by three subtopics which were provided by Mrs. Cabana – things to do in Hawaii, things to see in Hawaii, and things to eat in Hawaii. These subtopics were selected based on the information available in the chapter book *High Tide in Hawaii* (Osborne, 2003) that they read prior to completing this assignment. The students end their text with a statement, “Hawaii is awesome so come enjoy it.” This statement is a bit confusing, as the verb “come” implies that the writers are already in Hawaii, which conflicts with their opening claim.

There are numerous language features associated with this genre, and Sara, Julie, and Gabe were able to successfully incorporate almost all of them in their text. To start, their text contains nine sentences, the majority of which are simple statements with only one clause. There are a couple of notable exceptions, however, including the complex clause with non-finite construction used to indicate cause (“We could use the coconut to
drink coconut milk.”) and the complex clause with the additive ‘and’ to provide further details about what can be seen in Hawaii (“We could see beautiful flowery meadows and colorful flowers.”)

Sara, Julie, and Gabe also incorporated vocabulary associated with Hawaii that would appeal to their audience, including surfing, hula dance, poi, coconut, flowery meadows, and ocean. Additionally, the students included a number of adjectives which reflect their positive attitude regarding the possibility of visiting Hawaii. Of these adjectives, there are two that are turned up in strength, including beautiful, rather than the more neutral version of pretty, and awesome instead of good.

In terms of cohesion, this text is organized and well structured, as the students begin with their claim and reinforce that claim at the end of their text. It should be noted, however, that there is no variation in the theme, or starting point, of the sentences that students used to provide their reasons in support of the claim that they should visit Hawaii. Instead, the students began each sentence with “We could...” This lack of variation is reflective of conversations, which are typically dominated by personal pronouns in the theme position (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), and thus it is not uncommon to see young children carry over this practice in their early written texts (Christie & Derewianka, 2008).

Overall, Sara, Julie, and Gabe’s opinion text was determined to meet the associated Florida first-grade writing standard. In addition, in terms of the genre-based analysis, their text was evaluated at a Level 4. Though the students did not use generalized participants, this is largely due to their use of first-person plural throughout the writing. For example, rather than saying “Hawaii has beautiful flowery meadows and
colorful flowers,” they state, “We could see beautiful flowery meadows and colorful flowers.” Their use of first-person plural rather than third person is reflective of their young audience and is therefore an appropriate language choice (Brisk, 2015). Apart from that, the students were able to produce a detailed and cohesive argument in support of their class going to Hawaii for summer vacation.

**A.J., Serena, and Juan – A Convincing Argument**

Like Sara, A.J. also worked in a small group of three to produce an opinion text about Hawaii. A.J., Serena, and Juan’s final text is displayed in Figure 12 and in plain text below. This small group also did not include a title for their text, but as stated before, it was not a requirement put forth by Mrs. Cabana. In general, this text follows the stages identified in the argument genre.

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Figure 12. A.J., Serena, and Juan’s opinion text.

Our class should visit Hawaii. Let’s go!! We could see coconut trees and flowery meadows. We could also see waterfalls, small villages, tall gray mountains, and misty clouds. We could all get our surfboards and we could surf on the wave we would have to watch out for the waves! We could shake the tree to make the coconuts fall off the tree. We could also eat tropical fruits like bananas and pineapples. It would be exciting to go to Hawaii!
The students began their writing with a statement followed by an exclamation, “Our class should visit Hawaii. Let’s go!!” This opening claim clearly shows their position in relation to the prompt, not only because of the exclamation, but also because they use a verb of high modality (should). Following this opening, the students provide the reasons they believe their class should visit Hawaii for summer vacation, organized by the three subtopics assigned by Mrs. Cabana - things to do in Hawaii, things to see in Hawaii, and things to eat in Hawaii. Each of their reasons begins with “We could…” However, as previously stated, first-person plural can be used when the writing is geared towards a young audience (Brisk, 2015). A.J., Serena, and Juan elected to close out their writing with another exclamation, “It would be exciting to go to Hawaii!”

There are various language features associated with this argument genre, and A.J., Serena, and Juan were able to successfully incorporate almost all of them in their writing. To begin, their text is comprised of nine sentences, though one is missing a punctuation mark. The sentences are varied and include two exclamations and numerous complex clauses. The first of the complex clauses is used to add details about what can be seen in Hawaii, “We could see coconut trees and flowery meadows.” This sentence is followed by another complex clause with the additive also to provide a list of several more things that can be seen in Hawaii, “We could also see waterfalls, small villages, tall gray mountains, and misty clouds.” The details that the students provide about things to do in Hawaii include one compound sentence, “We could all get our surfboards and we could surf on the wave,” while the information presented about eating in Hawaii is comprised of two sentences, both of which contain complex clauses. The first sentence, “We could shake the three to make the coconuts fall off the tree,” includes a complex clause with
non-finite construction used to indicate cause and the second is of finite construction used to elaborate on types of fruits, “We could also eat tropical fruits like bananas and pineapples.”

Apart from these varied sentence types, A.J., Serena, and Juan also incorporated vocabulary associated with Hawaii that would appeal to their young audience, such as coconut, flowery meadows, waterfalls, mountains, surfboards, surf, waves, and tropical fruits. Their text also contains several adjectives; however, they do not necessarily reflect a positive attitude. Instead, they are more neutral (e.g. small, tall, gray, misty). A notable exception to this is the closing sentence which describes the possibility of going to Hawaii as exciting, a stronger adjective when compared to a word such as fun.

In terms of cohesion, this text is organized and well structured, as the students put forth their claim at the beginning of their writing and then reinforce that claim with their concluding exclamatory sentence. Notably, there is no variation in the theme of the students’ sentences in which they provide their reasons to support their claim. Rather, each sentence begins with “We could…” This lack of variation can be attributed to students’ carrying over their conversational patterns, which are typically dominated by personal pronouns in the theme position (Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Overall, A.J., Serena, and Juan’s opinion text was determined to meet the associated Florida first-grade writing standard. In addition, in terms of the genre-based analysis, their text was evaluated at a Level 4. Though the students did not use generalized participants, this can be attributed to their use of first-person plural throughout the text. For example, rather than saying, “Hawaii has coconut trees and
flowery meadows,” they stated, “We could see coconut trees and flowery meadows.” As mentioned before, their use of first-person plural aligns with their young audience and is therefore a supported language choice (Brisk, 2015). The students, apart from using first person plural, were able to incorporate many detailed, complex sentences, which supported their argument in favor of going to Hawaii during summer vacation.

A Comparison of Sara and A.J.’s Written Texts

Sara and A.J.’s written texts varied across the four iterations of collaborative writing. Similar to their varied interactions presented in Chapter 4, there were many factors that influenced the students’ written texts. These factors included the students’ assigned partner(s), the parameters of the writing assignment, the level of involvement from Mrs. Cabana, and time constraints. In combination with these factors, students brought their knowledge and experiences, working styles and preferences, and personalities and motivations to each of the writing tasks. Taken together, these influential factors and students’ individual qualities led to Sara and A.J.’s varied texts across each iteration of collaborative writing.

Challenges with Voice

The texts produced by Sara and A.J. during the second and fourth iterations revealed that the students had some difficulty using the appropriate voice in their writing. The expectations for voice differed in each of the genres, which is why students may have struggled with this aspect of the writing. The procedure genre from the second iteration requires that writers use a detached voice of instructions, which Brisk (2015) identifies as a particular challenge for young writers. Sara and A.J. each included references to the person following the instructions with you and your in both their
openig statements/questions and closing remarks. The second text produced by Sara and her partner also included these references throughout the steps of the procedure which indicates their need for additional instruction regarding this language feature.

Genre-based expectations for argument texts require that writers use generalized participants along with the third person. The exception to this is in letters and sermons, where first and second person can be used. The argument texts produced by Sara and A.J. are both written in first-person plural. Sara’s group elected to begin eight of their nine sentences with the pronoun we, while A.J.’s group used we in six of their nine sentences. Though first-person plural is not commonly associated with opinion texts, Brisk (2015) notes that it is a reflection of a younger audience and is therefore an appropriate language choice. However, students could benefit from instruction in this area, as they will be required to produce arguments using third person as they progress through the elementary grades.

A Need for Additional Details

Though the genres differed across all four iterations of collaborative writing, the expectations for writers to include details remained constant. The narrative recount genre (Iteration 1) requires that writers incorporate adjectives in order to provide details about the different events and to make the reading more enjoyable for the audience (Brisk, 2015). The recount text that Sara and her partner produced was quite impressive, but the lack of details was identified as one of the principle areas for growth. As they identified the main events from The Legend of Old Befana, the students only included one adjective (mean) in the second sentence. While these missing details may be a reflection of their developing writing skills, it may also be due in part to their lack of audience awareness.
Because they read the text as an entire class and all students were assigned the same writing task, they could have been under the impression that the reader (Mrs. Cabana, in this case) would be familiar with the story and its events.

The procedure genre from the second iteration also requires that writers include details. These details, in the form of both adjectives and adverbials, are necessary to give precision to instructions so that the reader may accurately follow the outlined steps (Brisk, 2015). During this iteration, Sara and A.J. each produced texts that required additional details. Sara and her partner’s first text included two adverbials and two adjectives, but the steps for making a paper airplane were still vague. In their second text, Sara and her partner did not include any adverbials and only included one adjective of quantity. This lack of details made it difficult to follow the steps for drawing a giraffe. Similar to Sara’s second text, A.J. and his partner’s first text did not include any adverbials and just two adjectives of quantity. These limited details present a challenge for the reader attempting to follow the instructions for drawing a butterfly. A.J. and his partner’s second text was quite different in that they included adverbials in four of their steps to denote the place and manner for drawing specific features of the dragon (e.g. “Draw spiks on the bak.”). Despite this increase in adverbials, A.J. and his partner did not include any adjectives in their second text. Together, the texts produced by Sara and A.J. in this second iteration reveal that the students could benefit from additional instruction in the use of adverbials and adjectives in procedure texts.

**Exceeding Expectations with Clause Complexes**

Though Sara and A.J. encountered difficulties using the appropriate voice and incorporating sufficient details, their texts exceeded the genre expectations of their grade-
level in multiple iterations. In the first iteration, Sara and her partner were able to incorporate a compound sentence and two clause complexes with the additive *and* to express their ideas and provide details about the main events of the story. These varied sentence types are typically only found in recounts produced in the upper elementary grade levels (3-5) (Brisk, 2015), which is why this is such an impressive feature of their text.

In the second iteration, Sara and A.J. both completed two procedure texts with their partners, but they each produced one text which included clause complexes. For Sara and her partner, this was their first text focused on making a paper airplane. Three of their steps included a causal clause complex to express the purpose for completing that specific step. In addition, their concluding sentence was a compound sentence that they used to add a comment in reference to the paper airplane. A.J. and his partner included two causal clause complexes in their second writing focused on drawing a dragon. They used these clause complexes to provide details regarding the purpose for completing specific steps in the drawing. These varied sentence types are once again an impressive language feature, as young writers typically stick to simple clauses when giving directions in procedure texts (Brisk, 2015).

The third iteration was a special case in that Sara and A.J. worked together on the same descriptive report about the anglerfish. Working within their small group, the students were able to include three different clause complexes in their report. These clause complexes served different purposes in their text, including to indicate causality (reason, purpose) and to elaborate. Brisk (2015) notes the demanding nature of this genre and identifies complex clauses as a language feature typically used by older students to
express complex ideas in relation to the topic. Once again, as first graders, Sara, A.J., and their group members exceeded the grade-level expectations of this genre.

The fourth and final iteration of collaborative writing was focused on the argument genre. Sara and A.J. each produced high-quality opinion texts while working in their separate small groups. Sara and her partners utilized statements with simple clauses for the majority of their text; however, they did include two clause complexes in their text. The first was used to indicate cause and the other to add details about what can be seen in Hawaii. A.J. and his partners produced a very different text in that they included two exclamatory sentences, one compound sentence, and numerous complex clauses. These clause complexes took different forms. Three of them were used to add details or elaborate and the other one was used to indicate cause. These opinion texts once again demonstrated the students’ abilities to produce high-quality texts, incorporating language features above their grade level.

In summary, this comparison brings to light significant similarities and differences in Sara and A.J.’s written texts produced throughout the collaborative writing activities. Both Sara and A.J.’s texts demonstrated their difficulty with voice during the second and fourth iterations. Their texts also revealed that they needed to include additional details in the form of both adjectives and adverbials in multiple iterations. Finally, both students’ texts showcased their abilities to exceed grade-level expectations by incorporating varied sentence types and clause complexes, a language feature typically only seen in upper elementary students’ writing. Though each of their texts was produced in unique circumstances (e.g. different partners), there is still a clear sense of progression and development in the writing of both students.
Chapter Six: Scaffolding Collaborative Writing Activities

This chapter presents findings related to the third research question: In what ways can collaborative writing activities be scaffolded to support ELLs’ writing development in a diverse first-grade classroom? Findings are presented in the form of five main categories that were identified through analysis of classroom observations, field notes, debriefing sessions, and interviews. These categories are presented in the order in which they occurred during the collaborative writing activities (before, during, or after). Each category concludes with a summary of findings and a detailed explanation of how it connects to the research question.

Prepare Students to Write Collaboratively

Findings revealed that preparing students to write collaboratively was a crucial step in scaffolding the collaborative writing activities. Though students had experience with “buddy work” (interview, November 2, 2016), it became evident rather quickly that writing collaboratively was an entirely new dynamic. Mrs. Cabana frequently commented on the nature of collaborative writing and how it required students to utilize foundational communication skills, such as taking turns speaking and listening, and new behaviors, such as putting two ideas together. To prepare students to participate in the collaborative writing activities, Mrs. Cabana employed two specific strategies: (a) explicitly teaching collaborative behaviors and (b) modeling collaboration.

Explicitly Teach Collaborative Behaviors

Prior to starting the first collaborative writing activity, Mrs. Cabana engaged students in a whole-class discussion regarding the expectations for behavior when writing collaboratively. She directed students’ attention to the specific procedures and routines
associated with collaborative writing and emphasized the importance of taking turns to speak and listen to each other. Immediately before students began working, Mrs. Cabana recapped her discussion to ensure that everyone was aware of the expectations. As can be seen in the exchange below, students were still a little unclear about how collaborative writing was different from their other “buddy work.”

Excerpt 29

1. Mrs. C: Remember, you are buddies. When you work in buddies, what’s important? What’s important when you work in buddies?
2. Student 1: That you stay together.
3. Mrs. C: Say it again.
4. Student 1: That you stay together.
5. Mrs. C: You stay together. Remember, there are some things you can work fast at and some things you work slower at. Remember, the buddies have to stay together. Should your answers be the same?
7. Mrs. C: In this one?
8. Students: Yes.
9. Mrs. C: For this activity, yes, because you are writing together.
(classroom observation, December 12, 2016)

As students began the collaborative writing activity, Mrs. Cabana circulated the classroom to monitor their progress. She frequently provided prompts and directives to ensure that they were collaborating on the writing task (e.g. “Make sure you have the same things written on your page. That’s important since you are writing buddies.”). Despite her instructions, reminders, and prompts, students still encountered some difficulties when completing their assignment. Sara and Juan, though they demonstrated a collaborative pattern of interaction, required assistance merging their ideas for the second event of their narrative recount. In addition, A.J. and Bella did not complete the assigned writing task. Rather than discussing the narrative recount together, they spent the majority of their time engaging in social conversations.
Based on these observed behaviors, Mrs. Cabana determined that she would need to continuously provide explicit instruction on collaborative behaviors. As a result, Mrs. Cabana made time during each iteration of collaborative writing to remind students of the behavioral expectations associated with these activities. She also continued monitoring students’ progress and providing directives for them to stay on task, share their ideas for writing, and assist each other with various aspects of the writing process (e.g. spelling). The excerpt below highlights Mrs. Cabana’s interaction with Serena during the fourth iteration of collaborative writing. As can be seen, despite having participated in three previous iterations of collaborative writing, Serena was still having difficulty meeting the behavioral expectations for these activities.

Excerpt 30

10. Mrs. C: Okay, wait Serena. When we are sharing ideas, have you ever heard me say no? Have I ever said no to your idea?
12. Mrs. C: So when someone shares an idea, we can say “Oh I like that. How about we add or change or do this?” Okay?

Model Collaboration

Closely related to first strategy of explicitly teaching collaborative behaviors, findings also revealed that modeling collaboration was necessary for students to successfully participate in these activities. This modeling took on two forms, as Mrs. Cabana often walked students through the process of completing the different activities and also demonstrated how students should interact with their partners during the activities. During the first iteration of collaborative writing, Mrs. Cabana worked with a student volunteer to model the process for co-publishing the written text. Together, Mrs. Cabana and the student took turns transferring the topic sentence and three main events
from the planning sheet to the chart paper. When reflecting on this iteration of collaborative writing, Mrs. Cabana highlighted this modeling process as an essential part of implementing the collaborative writing activity:

What we did with this one before the kids got writing in their own pairs is that I was able to model it with another student which helped a lot. So we used, him and I, used the different colors. We wrote the topic sentence, he put in his sentence and wrote it out, and we took turns writing that way to have it on display for the other students to follow. (interview, April 6, 2017)

As time progressed, Mrs. Cabana continued to model the processes for participating in the different collaborative writing activities. For example, during the second iteration, Mrs. Cabana led the small group of students in jointly constructing a “how-to” text prior to them completing their own in pairs.

In addition to modeling the processes for completing the collaborative writing activities, Mrs. Cabana also made it a priority to model how students should interact with their peers during the different activities. As noted in her first interview, “We have to model a lot so there are times that groups will come up and we will model how to take turns, speak and listen” (November 2, 2016). In addition to modeling interactions as a whole-class, Mrs. Cabana also worked directly with the pairs or groups of students as they were completing the writing tasks. In this more intimate setting, Mrs. Cabana frequently encouraged students to appropriate her speech in order to facilitate a collaborative pattern of interaction. The excerpt below captures Mrs. Cabana working with Sara and Juan during the first collaborative writing activity.

Excerpt 31

1. **Mrs. C**: Have you decided what to write yet?
2. **Sara**: No.
3. **Mrs. C**: No. Okay. So, tell Sara what your idea is and see if she likes it and agrees to start that way.
4. **Juan:** …
5. **Mrs. C:** So, Juan, tell her, “I was thinking…”
6. **Juan:** I was thinking that in the beginning, Old Befana swept.
7. **Mrs. C:** Now Sara, do you like that idea? Do you think that’s a good idea? Is that something that happened in the beginning?
8. **Sara:** Yes.
9. **Mrs. C:** Okay, now what else did Mrs. Cabana say that you should add to your writing?
10. **S&J:** And
11. **Mrs. C:** And. So, what can that and be? Now, maybe you can ask Sara what she thinks.
12. **Juan:** What else can we add to it?
13. **Sara:** Mmmm…
14. **Mrs. C:** Remember, you can use your book. You can both look at it together. What’s something important about Old Befana?
15. **Sara:** And she was mean. (classroom observation, December 12, 2016)

In the exchange above, Mrs. Cabana encouraged Sara and Juan to work together to determine the best way to start their narrative recount. She provided Juan with a sentence starter to share his idea with Sara and then directed him to ask Sara for her input. After Mrs. Cabana moved on to assist other students, Sara and Juan continued working together, engaging in a rich discussion about the next part of their recount text. This modeling continued throughout the subsequent iterations of collaborative writing.

The brief exchange below highlights Mrs. Cabana’s work with A.J. and Carol during the second iteration. Though Carol asked Mrs. Cabana for assistance in spelling a word, Mrs. Cabana encouraged her to consult with her partner, A.J. At the same time, Mrs. Cabana reminded them that as “buddies,” they should be helping each other with the writing task.

*Excerpt 32*

1. **Carol:** Do I just write *i* for an eye?
2. **Mrs. C:** Well, ask A.J. what he thinks.
3. **A.J.:** I don’t think you write a *i* for eye. I don’t think that’s how you spell eye.
4. **Mrs. C:** Okay, maybe ask A.J. how he thinks it should be spelled.
5. **Carol:** How do you think it is spelled?
6. **A.J.:** I don’t know, but I don’t think it’s just an i.
7. **Mrs. C:** Well you are buddies, so I think you should make your best guess together and then I can help you at the end. (classroom observation, January 13, 2017)

**Summary of Preparing Students to Write Collaboratively**

Findings showed that preparing students to write collaboratively was key for their successful participation in the four iterations of collaborative writing activities. By explicitly teaching and modeling collaborative behaviors, Mrs. Cabana strived to provide students with the support they needed to work collaboratively with their peers. Though Mrs. Cabana made a concentrated effort to support students in this way during each iteration of collaborative writing, it proved to be an ongoing process of development for students. In the final interview in which Mrs. Cabana reflected on this aspect of collaborative writing, she stated:

I think that’s hard for them. You know, how to contribute or when to know that maybe their idea is not, not that it’s not the best, but that it could be worked on, or how can we collaborate and put two ideas together. But that is also the age – taking turns, being first, those are all things they are working on. (May 30, 2017)

**Utilize Planned Scaffolds**

Findings indicated that utilizing planned scaffolds was integral for scaffolding the collaborative writing activities. These planned scaffolds were varied and encompassed the ways in which the writing goals were identified, the ways the classroom was organized, and the ways that tasks were selected and sequenced. To identify appropriate writing goals, Mrs. Cabana was purposeful in acknowledging and drawing on students’ prior knowledge and experiences. Additionally, when organizing the classroom for the various collaborative writing activities, Mrs. Cabana carefully considered the most effective participant structures and the inclusion of various semiotic systems. Finally,
Mrs. Cabana made it a priority to select and sequence tasks in such a way that students were able to progress step-by-step in the writing tasks.

**Students’ Prior Knowledge and Experiences**

When planning for the various collaborative writing activities, Mrs. Cabana consistently reflected on students’ varying levels of knowledge and experiences in relation to the writing tasks. While she was very conscious about valuing their unique funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005), she also made it a point to provide shared experiences (Painter, 1986) that students could build on when participating in the writing activities. One way she created these shared experiences was by drawing on a particular focal text for each of the collaborative writing tasks. For example, in the second iteration of collaborative writing, Mrs. Cabana and the small group of students read and discussed the short text “Making Paper Shapes” (August et al., 2014) to familiarize themselves with the “how-to” genre. Reading and discussing this text together provided a similar knowledge base that Mrs. Cabana and the students could reference when participating in the collaborative writing activities.

In addition to using this focal text, Mrs. Cabana and the students jointly constructed a text about getting ready for school. This topic was intentionally selected by Mrs. Cabana, as all students could relate to it and could provide input for the writing. Mrs. Cabana described these activities as “helpful” in the second interview.

So, in this one, they started off with that “how-to” article about making paper shapes. We used that to sort of look at the features of a how-to text which was very helpful, they had a model to look at. From that reading we were able to then think of, we used it to then be able to think of and brainstorm ideas. The following day, what we did was we sat down and we all, using the information that we had before about having a shared experience that really made me think what the kids have in common, so what we did was a how-to writing together informally on a sheet of paper where we talked about getting ready for school. (April 6, 2017)
Similar to the second iteration of collaborative writing, Mrs. Cabana and the class jointly constructed a text about Miami prior to completing the fourth and final collaborative writing task. As before, the topic of Miami was intentionally selected in order to provide all students with the same opportunity to contribute to the writing task. Mrs. Cabana then used this shared joint construction experience as a reference point when introducing students to the collaborative writing task.

_Excerpt 33_

1. **Mrs. C**: Okay, now someone asked if this is about Hawaii or Miami. Look at your topic today. Your topic is…
2. **Students**: Hawaii
3. **Mrs. C**: The one we did about Miami was so that you had an example, so you had something we already did together. So, you’ve already done this. You planned for an opinion. You found details already and you’ve written it together. So you are doing the same exact thing we did yesterday, but this time in a small group and we will work on the writing all week long and share it on Friday. (classroom observation, May 23, 2017)

By creating these different shared experiences for her students, Mrs. Cabana was able to ensure that students had a similar body of knowledge and experiences to draw from when working together on the different collaborative writing activities.

**Participant Structures**

One of the most challenging aspects in planning for the collaborative writing activities was the selection of participant structures. Not only was Mrs. Cabana concerned with the setup of the pairs/groups (pairs vs. small group), but also with the group dynamics in terms of students’ personalities. Mrs. Cabana expressed her concerns about this aspect of collaborative work in the very first interview, stating:

Well sometimes the leader, the stronger one, can overshadow the other student. The ELL child, for example, if I see they are someone who is not overconfident, I have to be conscious of that because then they will just do whatever the other
person says which is okay in some respects, but I don’t like them to feel inferior. So when it’s that kind of grouping, I am a little bit closer to those teams to see how they are interacting and to make sure the other person is sharing back. (November 2, 2016)

During the first iteration of collaborative writing, students were placed in pairs, according to their levels of achievement on previous reading and writing assessments. Specifically, Mrs. Cabana paired each focal ELL student with a high-achieving non-ELL peer. While Sara and her partner, Juan, collaborated very well and produced a high-quality text together, A.J. and Bella had some difficulties. According to Mrs. Cabana, “They really got along well, and they were just talking a lot and it was a giddy time for them which was great to see them happy and engaging, but not really on topic” (interview, April 6, 2017).

Based on these observed interactions, Mrs. Cabana elected to implement a different participant structure for the second iteration. Rather than having students work in pairs across the room, she arranged for the two focal ELL students to work in pairs (with a different non-ELL peer) at a small-group table with her. This time, the partners were selected based on achievement levels and personality, as Mrs. Cabana wished to avoid the type of interactions seen with A.J. and Bella in the first iteration. Though Sara and her partner Ben demonstrated a dominant/passive pattern of interaction on the first day, they were able to move to a collective interaction on the second day. Additionally, A.J. and his partner Carol were able to work collectively throughout both days of the collaborative writing. When reflecting on this participant structure, Mrs. Cabana noted:

That student [A.J.] was much more engaged the second time around and participating more the second time around so that was a good pairing, but again I think it was just more about not the skill level in English or reading, but more about personality traits. So, in this whole process, you know you always read the research that says you should pair the highs and lows, but I think a bigger factor
in dealing with ELL students is personality type. Like who can get them to feel comfortable and to engage in conversation. (interview, April 6, 2017)

Based on the observed interactions between the two focal students and their non-ELL partners in the second iteration, Mrs. Cabana elected to continue with a small group structure for the third collaborative writing activity. She found it advantageous to have the students working at the small-group table in the second iteration, as she was able to more closely monitor their collaborative interactions (debriefing session, January 13, 2017). However, rather than dividing students in pairs, she identified a small group of five students (two focal ELLs and three non-ELL peers) that she would oversee during their production of the collaboratively produced informational text. Though Mrs. Cabana found it beneficial to work in small groups, she also felt that groups of five were too large. In the interview she commented:

I was there sitting with the five students and they were able to communicate and share their ideas. They were all able to hear each other, and then when picking five students per group, I was able to do the whole class in a week, but it was a little too large. (May 30, 2017)

Because Mrs. Cabana was happy with the small group dynamic in the third iteration, she chose to continue with this structure in the final iteration, but with groups of three students rather than five. She also prioritized students’ personalities when identifying participants for the groups of three. Both of the focal ELL students’ small groups exhibited a collaborative pattern of interaction and produced high-quality texts. In discussing this specific iteration with Mrs. Cabana, she expressed her happiness in finding a nice balance for her students.

You know, it’s kind of a balancing act…finding the right pairs and groups. I think this was a good set up though. I don’t know if it’s the time of year that they were able to work better with threes. I think that threes is interesting because it gives them enough of an opportunity to, you know if they don’t agree on something,
then they have a third to vote so it makes it easier for decision making for them. I think it’s more comfortable for the students because there aren’t too many personalities involved. (May 30, 2017)

Throughout the four collaborative writing activities, it became clear that different participant structures afforded different group dynamics. By modifying the participant structures, Mrs. Cabana was able to provide different levels of support for her ELL students, as needed.

**Semiotic Systems**

In addition to organizing the classroom by purposefully selecting the participant structures, Mrs. Cabana also provided students with multiple sources of information to aid in their completion of the collaborative writing tasks. These multiple sources of information, or semiotic systems, included charts, graphic organizers, and images that students were able to reference throughout their work on the collaborative writing assignments. The third iteration is an especially rich example of how Mrs. Cabana used these additional semiotic systems to support students’ writing. During the third iteration of collaborative writing, students were tasked with producing an informational text about the anglerfish. Mrs. Cabana provided students with multiple sources of information, including short texts about ocean animals, pictures of these animals, and a graphic organizer for students to input the information about the ocean animals (Figure 13 shows Mrs. Cabana’s version of the completed graphic organizer). Because this was a new genre for students, there was a bit of a learning curve for students to understand how to draw on these sources of information to write their text. The excerpt below highlights Mrs. Cabana’s interactions with students during this iteration as she constantly reminded them to reference their chart.
Excerpt 34

1. **Mrs. C:** Well look at your chart, what does it say? Smaller fish. According to our information it would eat smaller fish. Is everyone okay with that sentence, The anglerfish eats smaller fish?
2. **Students:** Yes.
3. **Mrs. C:** A.J., what detail do you have?
4. **A.J.:** How it looks.
5. **Mrs. C:** So tell us what you are thinking.
6. **A.J.:** Mean.
7. **Mrs. C:** The anglerfish looks mean. Is that information that you got from your chart?
8. **A.J.:** No.
9. **Mrs. C:** Okay, well if you say it looks mean can you give us a detail from the chart that tells you why it looks mean?
10. **A.J.:** Uhhh...
11. **Mrs. C:** What does it have that makes it look mean?
12. **A.J.:** The face. (classroom observation, May 2, 2017)

![Figure 13. Mrs. Cabana’s completed graphic organizer on ocean animals.](image)

Though the students required some additional support in using these semiotic systems, Mrs. Cabana described how she liked this particular activity.
First to get the information, I liked the organizing the information on the chart, having multiple texts on one chart was good for them and something they will see in the future on upper grade levels. I thought bringing it down to their level was good. I also like the connection we did with the text, *Dolphins at Daybreak*, the octopus, and then having the other pieces of information about the sea animals because it’s a topic that the kids like. So, when we did the writing activity, obviously to have the chart and to have one word in the chart was great because they had to come up with their own sentences. (interview, May 30, 2017)

By incorporating these additional semiotic systems, Mrs. Cabana was able to support students throughout the different collaborative writing activities. The various charts, images, and graphic organizers gave students access to similar messages and information from different sources which facilitated their completion of the writing tasks.

**Task Selection and Sequence**

A major component in planning for the collaborative writing activities was selecting appropriate tasks and sequencing them in such a way that the learning outcome for each one served as the building block for the next. Though the final task for each iteration was predetermined as a collaboratively written text, the activities leading up to these texts were crafted to enable students to move step-by-step towards an in-depth understanding of the written genre. Though Mrs. Cabana carefully sequenced the tasks for each iteration, the activities from Iteration 4 serve as an illustrative example of how Mrs. Cabana was able to carefully scaffold the tasks leading to the collaboratively written opinion text.

As mentioned previously, Mrs. Cabana and the students worked with the focal chapter book, *High Tide in Hawaii* (Osborne, 2003), during the fourth round of collaborative writing activities. To begin, Mrs. Cabana and the students engaged in various guided reading activities surrounding the first five chapters of the book. During these three days, the students participated in a picture walk, contributed to multiple
discussions surrounding the main characters, setting, and events of the different chapters, and completed various journal entries. Across the three days, Mrs. Cabana and the students also compiled a list of important information about Hawaii, according to what they read in their chapter book. This list was then referenced when Mrs. Cabana asked students to write their opinion text about visiting Hawaii for summer vacation. These various activities built off of each other to scaffold students’ comprehension of the text and successful completion of the collaborative writing task. For example, after reading the first two chapters, Mrs. Cabana led students in a whole-class discussion to highlight important vocabulary terms (e.g. cliff, meadow) that they came across in the text. She drew sketches on the board and labeled them to help students visualize what a cliff is and what a mountain peak looks like. This discussion and the visuals scaffolded students’ understanding of the landscape of Hawaii. Their knowledge about the landscape of Hawaii then served as the base for their opinion text in which they highlighted various details about Hawaii, including “how it looks.”

Apart from these various activities that scaffolded students’ comprehension of the chapter book, Mrs. Cabana engaged the students in a joint construction activity which oriented them to the opinion genre, including the purpose, stages, and common language features. This jointly constructed text about Miami served as a support structure (or scaffolding) for the opinion text that students later produced about Hawaii. The Miami text (see Figure 14) contained the same details that were required in the Hawaii text – things you can do, see, and eat in the city.
By selecting and sequencing tasks in this way, Mrs. Cabana was able to provide students with valuable learning experiences that scaffolded their comprehension of the chapter book and understanding and application of the opinion genre.

**Summary of Utilizing Planned Scaffolds**

Findings revealed that utilizing planned scaffolds was vital for students’ successful participation in the four iterations of collaborative writing. By valuing student’s prior knowledge and building shared experiences for all students, Mrs. Cabana
was able to create appropriate writing goals for everyone. In addition, by striving to select
effective participant structures and incorporating additional semiotic systems, Mrs.
Cabana was able to organize the classroom in such a way that facilitated students’
completion of the collaborative writing tasks. Though identifying the best participant
structures proved to be difficult, Mrs. Cabana came to the conclusion that it was key to
consider students’ personalities.

The threes worked out nicely because it’s a good balance and the personalities is a
big deal. I don’t know. I feel like this time around, it’s not so much if they are a
high reader and writer or not, but maybe it’s about students who are helpful and
who complete their work. (interview, May 30, 2017)

Finally, by selecting and sequencing tasks appropriately, Mrs. Cabana was able to
scaffold students’ step-by-step progression in the various collaborative writing tasks.

**Employ Interactional Scaffolds**

Findings showed that employing interactional scaffolds was essential in
scaffolding the collaborative writing activities. These interactional scaffolds were used by
Mrs. Cabana in real time, based on what occurred in classroom discourse. In using these
scaffolds, she was able to provide ELL students with the support they needed to engage
with their partner(s) and actively participate in the collaborative writing activities.
Oftentimes, Mrs. Cabana probed students to elicit additional details for their writing and
to assist them in merging their ideas. Additionally, she frequently appropriated student
language, repeated, and recasted it into more academic language so as to assist students in
producing a text that aligned with the writing goals.

**Eliciting Details to Shape Writing**

As students worked in pairs or small groups throughout each of the four
collaborative writing activities, Mrs. Cabana continuously monitored students’ progress
and employed interactional scaffolds, as needed. In the exchange below, Mrs. Cabana is talking with Sara and Juan about the final event for their narrative recount text (Iteration 1). The students have a good starting point, but Mrs. Cabana probes them to elicit additional details about why Old Befana is going to the children’s houses and what she leaves behind. Sara and Juan’s final text shows that they applied what they discussed with Mrs. Cabana in their writing with their ending, “Finally, Old Befana got to childrens’ houses and left them cookies.”

Excerpt 35

1. Mrs. C: What did you decide for the ending?
2. Sara: Finally, Old Befana got to the children’s houses.
3. Mrs. C: Okay, but why is she going to their houses?
4. Juan: To give them the treats.
5. Mrs. C: Who is she looking for?
7. Mrs. C: Finally, Old Befana got to the houses and she’s looking for…
8. Sara: The baby.
9. Mrs. C: And what does she do when she gets to their houses? What does she leave them?
10. Sara: Cookies
11. Mrs. C: Okay, she leaves them cookies. I love that! (classroom observation, December 12, 2016)

An additional illustrative example of Mrs. Cabana’s use of interactional scaffolds comes from the fourth iteration when she worked with A.J.’s group to come up with an appropriate conclusion for their opinion text about Hawaii. As can be seen in the excerpt below, A.J. had some difficulty with the conclusion. Rather than providing an overall thought or feeling about Hawaii, he was focused on using surfing in his final sentence. Because surfing was already included in one of the detail sentences, Mrs. Cabana attempted to lead him in a different direction. She was successful in her attempts as A.J. and his group members ended their text with, “It would be exciting to go to Hawaii!”
Excerpt 36

1. Mrs. C: And now the conclusion. The conclusion is a thought or feeling about the topic, about Hawaii. What do we think and feel about Hawaii. A.J., we will start with you since this is your card. What do you think or feel about Hawaii from what you’ve read so far?
2. Serena: Like Hawaii is awesome.
4. Mrs. C: Well you don’t want to tell me another detail, right? Surfing is another detail. What do you think or feel about Hawaii. When you hear all this stuff about it, all the details we’ve written about it, what it looks like, what you can do there?
5. A.J.: You can surf there.
6. Mrs. C: Yes. So when you think about surfing somewhere, how does that make you feel?
8. Mrs. C: Going to that place would be what?
10. Mrs. C: I like that word! No one has used that word yet. So, give me a sentence.
11. A.J.: It would be exciting to surf in Hawaii.
12. Mrs. C: But remember, you aren’t just telling me about surfing in Hawaii. Because these sentences were about surfing, eating, things to do. So, it would be exciting to…
13. A.J.: Like to…
14. Mrs. C: It would be exciting to what?
15. A.J.: I don’t know.
16. Mrs. C: It would be exciting to go to Disney World?
17. A.J.: No! It would be exciting to go to Hawaii and surfing.
18. Serena: It would be exciting to go to Hawaii because there are many things to do.
19. Mrs. C: But you already told me there are many things to do and you told me what they are. This is just an ending. Look at ours, Miami is awesome so come and enjoy the sunshine state’ (referencing jointly constructed text). It doesn’t have to be a long sentence. It’s just your feeling about it. So, if you think Hawaii would be exciting…
20. Serena: Hawaii exciting
22. A.J.: It would be exciting to go to Hawaii (classroom observation, May 23, 2017)

As she reflected on the different iterations of collaborative writing, Mrs. Cabana touched on the importance of being able to monitor and interact with students in this way.
She mentioned the challenge of having students work in pairs (Iteration 1), as she was unable to circulate as much as she wanted with 11 pairs of students in the class.

It was difficult then for me to sit with a group and work with my students in a small group and also have them writing because I wasn’t able to circulate enough. So I think that we are fortunate enough to have a lot of volunteers here so if I wanted to do this in a short amount of time, I would take advantage, and maybe use some of the parent volunteers to just sort of walk around for me. (April 6, 2017)

**Over-Scaffolding**

One of the difficult aspects of employing interactional scaffolds, especially with ELLs, is finding the right balance to avoid over-scaffolding. This over-scaffolding from the teacher can result in missed learning opportunities for students, as they are deterred from working through the writing task with their peers and instead rely solely on guidance from the teacher. Though it could be argued that Mrs. Cabana provided too much input in the third iteration of collaborative writing, one must also consider that students were working with the informational genre for the first time.

**Summary of Employing Interactional Scaffolds**

Findings indicated that employing interactional scaffolds was key for students’ successful participation in the four iterations of collaborative writing. As students worked through the activities, Mrs. Cabana consistently monitored their progress and provided support, as needed. This support frequently took the form of interactional scaffolds, with Mrs. Cabana probing students’ responses to elicit additional details for their writing and assist them in shaping their ideas for the text. Mrs. Cabana understood the importance of providing this in-the-moment support for students and made it a priority to do so in each iteration of collaborative writing.
Facilitate the Revision Process

Findings revealed that facilitating the revision process was vital for scaffolding the collaborative writing activities. This revision process took place within each iteration of collaborative writing, as students completed their assigned writing tasks. Though each task was different, Mrs. Cabana made it a priority to involve students in some form of editing, whether it was with peers or with her during what she referred to as a “quick edit” session (Iteration 1).

Editing with Peers

Mrs. Cabana provided students with the opportunity to participate in a peer edit process for the third and fourth iterations of collaborative writing. Though she guided students through this process and provided her input, she encouraged students to take a lead role in identifying errors and making suggestions for necessary revisions. During the peer editing for the third iteration, the students exchanged index cards with their group members to review the sentences they had each written. Though students had discussed each sentence within their small group prior to writing, this edit gave them a chance to provide feedback to their peers regarding content, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The excerpt below captures Mrs. Cabana’s interactions with the small group as they began working through this peer editing process.

Excerpt 37

1. **Mrs. C**: Okay, let’s number the cards so we don’t forget the order we decided. Here’s what I’m going to do now. I’m going to give you a different card. I want you to look at the card and you need to check the sentence for a capital letter. If it doesn’t begin with a capital letter, then you need to use your pen to write a capital letter on top of it. What do we need to look for next?

2. **P.J.**: A punctuation mark.

3. **Mrs. C**: A punctuation mark. So look right now. If it’s a telling sentence, then it’s a period. Now the word anglerfish. Anglerfish should be one word. So,
look at the person that you have. If they wrote anglerfish and it looks like two words we need to fix that. Let me know if your anglerfish looks like two words or one word.

4. **Carly**: Should anglerfish have a capital letter?

5. **Mrs. C**: You tell me.

6. **Carly**: Uhhh, yes.

7. **Mrs. C**: How many of you think it should have a capital letter?

8. **Students**: [Raise hands.]

9. **Mrs. C**: No, it’s a kind of fish. If his name was Harry the Anglerfish then maybe, but it should be a lowercase a here. So look at anglerfish and make sure it’s a lowercase a. Then read the sentence to yourself and find any words that you think might be misspelled and you can ask the group. (classroom observation, May 2, 2017)

Mrs. Cabana reflected positively on this peer editing opportunity in her final interview.

She stated:

> It [peer editing] was very interesting. The kids were able to jump in and they were all able to see the sentence and sort of fix it together and I thought that was good too that they would point out some of the mistakes themselves. (May 30, 2017)

**“Quick Edit” Sessions**

The “quick edit” session was a process in which students worked directly with Mrs. Cabana to first review the content of their writing, and then to check for proper spelling, punctuation marks, and capitalization together. Mrs. Cabana engaged students in the “quick edit” during the first and second iterations of collaborative writing. By completing this “quick edit,” Mrs. Cabana was able to check-in on students’ progress to ensure that they understood the writing assignment and were prepared to publish the final version of their text. She commented:

> With this writing we also then took their plan sheet since in their plan sheet they were already writing it as a sentence for the beginning, middle, and end and we did a quick edit with them for just some key words which helped a lot. It gave me a chance to just make sure they understood the events in order. (interview, April 6, 2017)
The exchange below highlights a portion of Mrs. Cabana’s “quick edit” session with Sara and Juan from the first iteration.

Excerpt 38

1. **Mrs. C:** Does your sentence begin with a capital letter?
2. **Juan:** Yes.
3. **Mrs. C:** How about yours, Sara?
4. **Sara:** Yes.
5. **Mrs. C:** Did it end with a punctuation mark?
6. **Juan:** Yes.
7. **Mrs. C:** Okay, what about yours, Sara?
8. **Sara:** Yes.
9. **Mrs. C:** Old Befana is a name of a character so her name should be…?
10. **Sara:** …
11. **Mrs. C:** What do you do to Sara? What kind of letter does your name start with?
12. **Sara:** S.
13. **Mrs. C:** Yes, but what kind of s?
14. **Sara:** Capital.
15. **Mrs. C:** Yes, good, because it’s your name. So, let’s look at Old Befana. Is the O and the B capitalized?
16. **Sara:** …
17. **Mrs. C:** The O is, but I’m going to make the B a capital for you so make sure on your chart paper you use a capital B. (classroom observation, December 13, 2016)

During this exchange, Mrs. Cabana focused on punctuation and capitalization from Sara and Juan’s first sentence. She related the need to capitalize the main character’s name to Sara capitalizing her own name, which made it easier for her to understand the capitalization rules. Walking through each sentence in this way allowed Sara and Juan to easily participate in the editing process.

**Summary of Facilitating the Revision Process**

Findings showed that facilitating the revision process was an essential component of students’ participation in the collaborative writing activities. Mrs. Cabana provided students the opportunity to participate in editing activities prior to publishing their written
texts during each iteration of collaborative writing. These editing activities took the form of a “quick edit” session led by Mrs. Cabana for the first two iterations and then evolved into peer editing for the third and fourth iterations. Both forms of editing proved to be beneficial, as Mrs. Cabana was able to check students’ progress and invite them to identify mistakes and recommend changes.

**Share and Debrief**

Findings indicated that providing students with an opportunity to share and debrief about their collaboratively produced texts was a key step in scaffolding the collaborative writing activities. Mrs. Cabana often encouraged students to share their work with the class, but she also made it a point to hang it up around the room and post it on the class website for parents to review. Students were often motivated when Mrs. Cabana reminded them of the possibility of sharing their work on the website. The excerpt below shows Mrs. Cabana conversing with Sara, Julie, and Gabe during the fourth iteration of collaborative writing. The group of students seemed hesitant to finish their work, but eagerly agreed to complete the drawing when Mrs. Cabana reminded them that it would be part of the class site.

*Excerpt 39*

1. **Mrs. C**: Perfect, when Julie finishes up you can work on the picture.  
2. **Gabe**: I’m not drawing.  
3. **Mrs. C**: Oh, really? Well, Sara, do you want to draw?  
4. **Sara**: Ummm…no.  
5. **Mrs. C**: Don’t forget I’m going to put it on Shutterfly.  
6. **Julie**: Okay, I’ll draw.  
7. **Sara**: Me too! (classroom observation, May 26, 2017)

In addition to encouraging students to share their work, Mrs. Cabana also made it a point to debrief after each collaborative writing activity. In some instances, this
involved Mrs. Cabana asking students what they liked or disliked about the writing tasks, but in other cases it involved Mrs. Cabana providing additional instruction and guidance in relation to the completed writing assignments. For example, after students completed the second iteration of collaborative writing, Mrs. Cabana talked with Sara, Ben, A.J., and Carol extensively about additional options for writing “how-to” texts.

Excerpt 40

1. Mrs. C: Boys and girls, I am so impressed with your writing. I think if you were going to write this again, the only thing I would keep in mind is that when you are telling someone what to draw, it might be good to include some shape words. Like, ‘Draw a triangle to make the head’
2. Carol: Like they did in the airplane one?
3. Mrs. C: Yes, like ‘Draw an oval’ or ‘They should look like rectangles.’ Because that will give someone a better idea so shapes is another thing that you can include when you are doing writing like this. You can also go to the library and ask Mrs. P. to show you the “how-to” draw books. Those will be good examples for you. Now that you’ve seen different kinds of “how to” this week, how to make the puppy origami, the peanut butter jelly sandwich, the igloo one in science...What did all of those have?
5. Mrs. C: But…
7. Mrs. C: They had how to and steps. Yours does too, but what did those have that your writing right now might not have? What is your writing missing that we saw in those other writings?
8. Students: …
9. Mrs. C: I’ll give you a hint. It’s not words. What could you add to your writing that would help someone understand it more?
11. Mrs. C: Getting warmer…
12. Mrs. C: Let’s find the origami reading we did together. What do they have there?
14. Mrs. C: Well that’s a word, but what else do you see besides the word?
15. Carol: A topic sentence.
16. Mrs. C: Those are words. On those pages we see words and numbers, but what else?
18. Mrs. C: What is this paper?
20. **Mrs. C:** But what is that? Is that an illustration? I know it’s a paper, but it’s a what of a paper?

21. **Sara:** A picture.

22. **Mrs. C:** A picture of a paper! Do you think it would be helpful to maybe make a small drawing of the steps so that the person knows what you’re talking about?

23. **Sara:** Yes.

24. **Mrs. C:** Could that help someone?

25. **Students:** Yes.

26. **Mrs. C:** Could we take what you did and label it? For example, yours that is very detailed (referencing dragon), can we look and see ‘Draw pointed things to make a head.’ Could I also do something like this, like maybe draw a line, almost like a label, and put *step 1.* Could I do that?

27. **Students:** Yea.

28. **Mrs. C:** So, “Draw teeth in those pointy things” – can I put *step 2* beside that?

29. **Students:** Yea.

30. **Mrs. C:** Yes. Do you think that would help the reader understand what they need to make next?

31. **Students:** Yea.

32. **Mrs. C:** How about here, the paper airplane one from yesterday. “Fold the paper in half” – can I show a piece of paper and maybe draw the dotted line to show where to fold?

33. **Students:** Yea.

34. **Mrs. C:** So, when we have something that is really difficult we could label it and that would help the reader. (classroom observation, January 13, 2017)

In the exchange above, Mrs. Cabana provides students with further instruction about the “how-to” genre. Specifically, she explains to students that they can include “shape words,” small drawings, and labels to help their readers follow the steps in their “how-to” texts. She takes this a step further by writing labels on the illustration of the dragon (see Figure 9) and drawing small images next to the instructions about making the paper airplane (see Figure 6). This extended instruction was a means for students to reflect on their writing and to gain insight about producing stronger procedure texts in the future.
Summary of Sharing and Debriefing

Findings showed that providing opportunities for students to share their texts in various formats and debriefing with them after each iteration of collaborative writing was key for their successful participation in the four collaborative writing activities. Mrs. Cabana continuously encouraged students to share their writing with the class and also frequently made it available on the class’ website for their families to view. This was a source of motivation for the students as was illustrated in the brief exchange above. Though Mrs. Cabana was unable to conduct extensive debriefing sessions after each iteration, she made it a priority to, at minimum, engage students in a reflective conversation in which they were able to talk about their participation in the writing tasks.

Summary of Scaffolding Collaborative Writing Activities

Overall, findings revealed five distinct categories which capture the ways in which the collaborative writing activities were scaffolded to support ELLs’ writing development in this first-grade classroom. These categories were presented in the order in which they occurred, before, during, or after the collaborative writing activities. Before the activities, Mrs. Cabana prepared students to write collaboratively by explicitly teaching collaborative behaviors and modeling collaboration. Additionally, Mrs. Cabana utilized planned scaffolds to design and structure the different collaborative writing activities. She was purposeful in considering students’ prior knowledge and experiences, the most effective participant structures, the incorporation of semiotic systems, and the selection and sequence of tasks. During the collaborative writing activities, Mrs. Cabana employed interactional scaffolds to support students’ in producing a high-quality text that aligned with the writing goals. She often elicited additional details from students by
appropriating their language, repeating it, and recasting it into language more appropriate for the task. In addition, Mrs. Cabana facilitated the revision process by engaging students in peer editing or “quick edit” sessions. These editing opportunities allowed students to identify their own errors and make suggestions for revisions. Finally, after the collaborative writing activities were completed, Mrs. Cabana encouraged students to share their final product. She frequently posted students’ work around the room and made it available on the classroom website for parents to view. In addition, Mrs. Cabana invited students to participate in a discussion to debrief about the writing activities after they were completed. She typically asked students how they felt about the activity and, at times, offered suggestions for future writing tasks of the same genre.
Chapter Seven: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore how collaborative writing activities can be used in support of ELLs’ writing development in the context of a culturally and linguistically diverse first-grade classroom. Using DBR methods (Brown, 1992; Collins, 1992; Cobb et al., 2003) in conjunction with comparative case study (Stake, 2006), this study focused on two ELL students throughout four iterations of collaborative writing. By closely following these students to analyze their interactions and collaboratively produced texts, this study highlighted students’ dynamic participation in collaborative writing activities. Additionally, by thoroughly evaluating each iteration of collaborative writing, this study illuminated the ways these activities can be scaffolded to support ELLs’ writing development. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the nature of first-grade students’ (ELLs and their partners/group members) interactions when participating in collaborative writing activities?
2. How do the two focal ELL students’ written texts compare across the collaborative writing activities?
3. In what ways can collaborative writing activities be scaffolded to support ELLs’ writing development in a diverse first-grade classroom?

In this chapter, I first discuss the significance of the findings that emerged relative to existing research literature on second language writing, with a special focus on collaborative writing. I then highlight the implications of these findings for both practice and research.
Contributions to Understanding How Collaborative Writing Activities Support ELLs’ Writing Development

The findings of this study support and expand on the limited available research on writing development and instruction for ELLs. More specifically, the findings of this study add to the developing body of literature on collaborative writing with ELLs. The majority of the literature available in this area has focused on students at the university level (e.g. Li & Kim, 2016; Storch, 2005, 2011); however, some studies have emerged at the elementary level (e.g. Ferguson-Patrick, 2007; González et al., 2013; Roberts & Eady, 2012).

Although there is a growing body of literature at the elementary level, very few of these studies have focused on ELLs. Consequently, this study adds great value to the literature in this area, as I examined two focal ELL students’ participation across four iterations of collaborative writing. In addition, previous collaborative writing studies from the elementary level have largely focused on either students’ interactions (e.g. Chung & Walsh, 2006; Jones, 2003; Vass, 2007) or their written texts (e.g. Li et al., 2014; Woo et al., 2013), but few have looked at both within the same study. Moreover, very few studies have examined the ways that collaborative writing activities can be scaffolded for young students. As a result, this study expands our focus on collaborative writing by examining ELL students’ interactions, their collaboratively produced texts, and the ways in which the collaborative writing activities can be scaffolded in support of their writing development.

ELLs’ Interactions During Collaborative Writing Activities

In line with previous research, ELL students’ interactions were dynamic across the four iterations of collaborative writing. There were instances in which students
exhibited a collaborative pattern of interaction, characterized by high levels of equality and mutuality. Students contributed equally to the task while remaining highly engaged with one another’s ideas, often providing scaffolding for each other throughout the task. This is similar to the symmetrical relationship identified by Chung and Walsh (2006), the complementary roles identified by Jones (2003), the collective approach identified by Li and Kim (2016), and the collaborative approach identified by Storch (2002).

There were also instances in which students demonstrated a dominant/passive pattern of interaction with their partners. With a moderate to low level of both equality and mutuality, these particular interactions typically revealed students’ withdrawn behavior and unequal contributions to the task. This pattern of interaction is similar to the asymmetrical relationship identified by Chung and Walsh (2006), the active/withdrawn pattern identified by Li and Kim (2016), and the dominant/passive pattern identified by Storch (2002).

In addition to the collaborative and dominant/passive patterns of interaction, students also exhibited a collective pattern of interaction, which is comparative to the collaborative approach identified by Li and Kim (2016). During these collective interactions, students remained highly engaged in the task and contributed significantly within their particular role, which led to high levels of both equality and mutuality. The final pattern of interaction demonstrated during the collaborative writing activities was the expert/novices pattern (Storch, 2002). Because there was an expert in this interaction, there was a low level of equality, as the novices did not have an equal degree of control over the writing task. There was, however, a moderate to high level of mutuality, as the expert and novices alike remained engaged in the task.
This study contributes to our current understanding of collaborative writing with ELLs by identifying these four distinct patterns of interaction: (1) collaborative, (2) collective, (3) dominant/passive, and (4) expert/novices. By closely examining the language functions and scaffolding behaviors that students exhibited in each of these instances, it is evident that the collaborative and collective interactions were the richest in terms of students’ participation and engagement. Students made significant contributions to the writing and continuously provided reciprocal responses and scaffolding moves for their partners, which revealed their joint commitment to the writing tasks. There were many factors that facilitated these collaborative and collective patterns of interaction; however, findings from this study emphasize the impact of partner selection, the nature of the writing task, and the level of involvement from the teacher.

**Partner selection.** Partner selection is highlighted in previous research as one of the most challenging aspects of implementing collaborative writing activities (e.g. Chung & Walsh, 2006; Ferguson-Patrick, 2007; Gonzalez et al., 2008; Li et al., 2012; Yarrow & Topping, 2001). In this study, the teacher first selected partners for the focal students based on their standing in the class. She purposefully identified “high performers,” in terms of their scores on standardized assessments, to work with the focal ELLs. While this selection process resulted in a collaborative pattern of interaction for Sara and Juan, the outcome was much different for A.J. and Bella, who demonstrated a dominant/passive pattern of interaction and did not complete their assigned task.

These results led the teacher to reconsider her selection process for the subsequent iterations. Rather than identifying partners solely based on their assessment scores, she began taking into account students’ personalities. By considering students’ personalities
and their established relationships with their classmates, the teacher was able to facilitate rich interactions, especially during the fourth iteration. This iteration was unique in that Sara was paired with her friend, Julie. Though Mrs. Cabana hesitated to put the students together, it turned out to be a productive working relationship for both of them. This study, therefore, demonstrates the need to pay attention to personality when selecting partners for collaborative writing activities.

**The nature of the writing task.** Another factor which impacted students’ patterns of interaction was the nature of the writing task and students’ prior experience with the genre. This was especially apparent in the second iteration. In this iteration, Sara and Ben demonstrated a dominant/passive pattern of interaction prior to moving to a more collective pattern. The first day of the task, Sara was responsible for writing the text while Ben made a paper airplane. Sara was unfamiliar with the process for making a paper airplane, which she told the teacher during one of their many exchanges. The second day of the task, Sara was responsible for drawing a giraffe while Ben wrote the text. On this day, Sara was very active and remained highly engaged with Ben throughout the task. I attribute their evolving pattern of interaction to Sara’s level of familiarity with the task. While she was quiet and reserved on the first day, she was much more comfortable and confident on the second day, which is why her participation increased significantly. These findings speak to the importance of selecting a topic for collaborative writing with which students have previous experience.

**Teacher involvement.** The level of involvement from the teacher was an additional factor that appeared to have a significant impact on students’ patterns of interaction across the four collaborative writing activities. Though the teacher monitored
students’ progress as they worked in pairs/groups in each iteration, she elected to sit with the small group to walk them through each step of the writing task during the third collaborative writing activity. This decision was driven by the fact that the students were producing an informational text for the first time. Though students still had the opportunity to contribute their ideas to the text, the teacher largely controlled the writing process, as she prompted students to complete each step of the task. This level of involvement from the teacher resulted in an expert/novices pattern of interaction. While students remained engaged with the task, they did not have the opportunity to scaffold one another or to determine the direction of their writing. This finding suggests that teachers must carefully consider their level of involvement and how it might impact the students’ interactions. As seen in other iterations from this study and in accordance with previous research (e.g. Chung & Walsh, 2006; Ferguson-Patrick, 2007), when students are given enough time and space, they are often able to negotiate the writing task themselves.

Absence of L1. It is interesting to note that although Sara was paired with a bilingual student (English/Spanish) for three of the four iterations, she did not make use of her home language at any time during her interactions. A.J. was also paired with a bilingual student (English/Spanish) for three of the four iterations, and there was only one instance in which he used Spanish with his partner. When discussing the drawing for the opinion text on Hawaii, A.J. directed Juan to complete his part of the drawing. He stated, “Now draw me. You should draw me horrible.” Juan replied by laughing and saying, “Okay, I’ll draw you horrible.” Other than that minimal exchange, no other Spanish was used. I suspect that this is because of the structure of the students’ schedule. As students
were part of the magnet program, they received 90 minutes of foreign language (Spanish) instruction daily. Additionally, they had a set time for *contenido*, in which they were taught social sciences in Spanish. I believe that the students kept their work in the day during which when they worked in Spanish.

**ELLs’ Written Texts**

This study also contributes to our understanding of the texts that ELL students are capable of producing when writing collaboratively. Different from previous research on collaborative writing (e.g. Roberts & Eady, 2012; Yarrow & Topping, 2001), an SFL genre-based analysis (Brisk, 2015) was used to evaluate students’ texts. This analysis revealed that students’ texts varied across the four collaborative writing activities. In some instances, their texts showed their clear understanding of the genre, including its purpose and stages, as well as their ability to control and implement different language features. However, in other cases, their texts revealed that they needed further instruction or revision in particular areas. Specifically, students had some difficulty using an appropriate voice and incorporating sufficient details in their writing.

These findings align with previous research which has demonstrated that young writers struggle with voice in different genres (Brisk, 2012; Christie & Derewianka, 2008). At the same time, however, students also included clause complexes in many of their texts, which is a feature more commonly seen in writing from students in upper-elementary grade levels (Brisk, 2015). Overall, students demonstrated their ability to acquire the genres to which they were exposed and had opportunities to use (Chapman, 1994, 2002; Donovan, 2001; Wollman-Bonilla, 2000). In addition, their texts revealed
their capacity to differentiate between genres and produce complex texts, outside of simple statements (Ackerman, 2016; Donovan & Smolkin, 2002).

Though the SFL genre-based analysis used in this study is unique to this study on collaborative writing, the findings here align with other research which has used this lens to evaluate ELL students’ writing produced in the context of the TLC. Similar to previous studies, the focal ELLs were able to draw on a wide range of linguistic resources, incorporate content-specific vocabulary, and utilize varied temporal connectors in many of their texts (e.g. Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2011; de Oliveira & Lan, 2014; Gebhard et al., 2014; Shin, 2016).

Although a comparison between students’ writing before and after the collaborative writing activities is out of the scope of this study, Mrs. Cabana did provide her perspective on this matter in our last interview together (May 30, 2017). She stated that she had seen a clear development in students’ writing, and she was confident that they were writing at or above grade-level. She specifically touched on the improved organization and voice in students’ writing, commenting that she was not seeing “choppy sentences anymore” (interview, May 30, 2017).

The improvement in student writing reflects what is shown in many of the previous collaborative writing studies which utilized pre- and post-tests for purposes of evaluation (Hertz-Lazarowitz & Bar-Natan, 2002; Li et al., 2014; Nixon & Topping, 2001; Topping et al., 2000; Woo et al., 2013). Other collaborative writing studies took a different approach to analysis and evaluated students’ texts based on linguistic resources (Roberts & Eady, 2012) and micro-skills, such as punctuation marks (Wong et al., 2011).
Altogether, these findings emphasize students’ abilities to collaboratively produce texts which meet, and oftentimes, exceed the grade-level genre expectations.

**Scaffolding Collaborative Writing Activities**

This study adds strength to the research literature on collaborative writing, as it outlines specific ways that collaborative writing activities were scaffolded to support ELLs’ writing development. Though a few studies have implemented a scaffolded writing process to guide students through collaborative writing activities, the studies provided minimal details regarding the teacher’s role. Instead, they focused on the sequence in which students completed the collaborative writing activities (Nixon & Topping, 2001; Topping et al., 2000; Wong et al. 2011; Yarrow & Topping, 2001). This study, on the other hand, identified the specific ways that the teacher was able to scaffold the collaborative writing activities before, during, and after each iteration. Presenting the scaffolding behaviors in this structured and detailed manner differs from other studies which have attempted to shed light on the teacher’s role in collaborative writing activities (Ferguson-Patrick, 2007; Roberts & Eady, 2012).

**Before collaborative writing.** Findings revealed that prior to implementing the collaborative writing activities, it was crucial for Mrs. Cabana to prepare the students to write collaboratively. This preparation took the form of the teacher explicitly teaching effective collaborative behaviors and modeling them, when appropriate. Though Mrs. Cabana made an effort to prepare students prior to each iteration of collaborative writing, students appeared to still be developing collaborative skills, even in the last iteration of writing activities. Previous research on collaborative writing supports these findings, as
many scholars have highlighted the need to prepare students to write collaboratively (e.g. Chung & Walsh, 2006; Rojas-Drummond et al., 2008; Storch, 2011).

In addition to preparing students to write collaboratively, findings also showed that it was integral for Mrs. Cabana to utilize planned scaffolds when supporting collaborative writing activities. These planned scaffolds included (a) valuing student’s prior knowledge and building shared experiences for all students, (b) selecting effective participant structures and incorporating additional semiotic systems, and (c) identifying and sequencing tasks in such a way that students were able to progress step-by-step in the writing tasks.

The majority of prior research on collaborative writing does not provide detailed contextual information that would align with this finding; however, there are a few notable exceptions related to participant structures and task sequencing. Several studies showed that students encountered difficulties when collaborating with their partners (e.g. Ferguson-Patrick, 2007; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Li et al., 2012). Other studies put forth specific recommendations for participant structures, such as pairing students with peers with which they have an established relationship (Chung & Walsh, 2006), allowing students to select their own partners (Roberts & Eady, 2012), and paying close attention to personality (Yarrow & Topping, 2001). Though many studies did not provide details regarding the writing task, some researchers did provide a detailed task sequence (Nixon & Topping, 2001; Roberts & Eady, 2012; Topping et al., 2000; Wong et al. 2011; Yarrow & Topping, 2001) or, at minimum, the assigned topics for the collaborative writing tasks (Woo et al., 2011, 2013).
During collaborative writing. Findings showed that during the collaborative writing activities, the teacher employed interactional scaffolds which were essential in supporting the collaborative writing activities for the ELL students. Mrs. Cabana used the interactional scaffolds in real time, based on what arose in classroom discourse. She frequently probed students to elicit additional details for their writing and to assist them in combining their ideas. Additionally, she frequently appropriated student language, repeated it, and recasted it into more academic language so as to assist students in producing a text that aligned with the writing goals. This finding is unique to the research literature, as it provides insightful details about the teacher’s involvement and specific interactions with students which is not available in other studies. Previous research has called for teachers to monitor students’ progress during collaborative writing (Nixon & Topping, 2001; Storch, 2011), but the details of this monitoring are vague. Studies that go a bit further in discussing the teacher’s role still only provide minimal details, stating that the teacher should provide timely feedback, prompt students to work with their peers, and correct them, as needed (Topping et al., 2000; Woo et al., 2013; Yarrow & Topping, 2001).

In addition to employing interactional scaffolds during the collaborative writing activities, the teacher also facilitated the revision process with students. Findings indicated that this step appeared to be key for scaffolding the collaborative writing in each of the four iterations. This revision process took place in the form of peer editing, or what Mrs. Cabana termed a “quick edit” session. This finding is similar to previous research which has highlighted peer editing as an important part of the collaborative writing process (e.g. Nixon & Topping, 2001; Li et al., 2014; Rojas-Drummond et al.,
2008; Woo et al., 2013); however, it is unique in that it adds the teacher-student editing component (“quick edit” session), which is not found in other collaborative writing studies.

**After collaborative writing.** Findings revealed that after collaborative writing activities were completed, it was important for the teacher to provide students with an opportunity to share and debrief about their collaboratively produced texts. In line with previous research, Mrs. Cabana encouraged students to share their work with the entire class, including her and the other students (Chung & Walsh, 2006; Nixon & Topping, 2001; Woo et al., 2011). In addition, at times, Mrs. Cabana posted students’ work to their class website which allowed for parents and other interested individuals to take note of students’ achievements. This is similar to other studies in which the teacher provided students with a forum for sharing their work with individuals outside of the classroom (Rojas-Drummond et al., 2008). In terms of debriefing, Mrs. Cabana was purposeful in engaging students in a discussion about each of the collaborative writing activities. Though she did not go into great detail after each iteration, she was able to sit with students and talk quite extensively after the second iteration. During this debriefing session, she was able to highlight the strengths in students’ work and options for making it even stronger in the future. This is rather unique to the research literature on collaborative writing, as only one previous study mentioned a debriefing conversation (Roberts & Eady, 2012), which took place as a whole-class discussion following the collaborative writing activity.

Overall, these findings emphasize the specific ways that collaborative writing activities can be scaffolded to support young ELL students’ writing development. As
such, this study serves as a much-needed addition to the research literature available on collaborative writing. These findings also contribute significantly to the optimal instruction sequence presented in the following section.

**Implications for Practice**

Based on the outcomes of this study, and in accordance with the aims of DBR, I established a local instruction theory and corresponding optimal instruction sequence (DBR Collective, 2003; Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006). While the theory and instruction sequence are highly contextualized to these specific ELL students in this particular first-grade classroom, other teachers may reference them or draw on them for use in their own classrooms in order to positively impact the teaching and learning of their culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The local instruction theory that arose from this study concerns the use of collaborative writing as a means of supporting ELLs’ writing development. Specifically, based on the findings presented here, I propose that collaborative writing activities can be purposefully scaffolded in order to support ELLs’ writing development in various genres. The instructional sequences of the collaborative writing activities varied from one iteration to the next, however, the optimal instructional sequence presented below was created based on a thorough analysis of each iteration. This optimal instructional sequence is comprised of the following five steps: (1) introduce the collaborative writing process; (2) design and implement the collaborative writing activity within the context of the TLC; (3) monitor students’ progress; (4) involve students in the editing process; and (5) allow students to share and debrief. Though the instructional sequence is presented in steps, it should be noted that writing is cyclical, nonlinear, and iterative in nature, and
thus, I encourage teachers to go back and forth between the steps as needed in order to meet the needs of their students.

**Step 1: Introduce the Collaborative Writing Process**

Introducing students to collaborative writing and preparing them to take part in these types of activities is essential. Collaborative writing is not familiar to most students, especially at such a young age, which is why preparation is an indispensable step to ensure that students will be able to participate effectively in these activities. To begin, the classroom teacher should explain what collaborative writing is and the purpose it serves. The best approach to this explanation is to explicitly teach collaborative behaviors and model them, when possible.

For example, the teacher may choose to jointly construct a model text with student volunteers to demonstrate each phase of the collaborative writing activity for the whole class. This joint construction process would expose students to interactions appropriate for this type of activity, including how they should listen to their partners, appreciate their partner’s ideas, and then offer their own. This particular step is one that teachers will need to revisit as students become acclimated to writing in this way. As shown in this study, this is especially true for young students who are still in the process of building foundational collaborative skills (e.g. taking turns to speak).

**Step 2: Design and Implement the Collaborative Writing Activity Within the Context of the TLC**

The second step, after introducing students to collaborative writing, is to design and implement the activities within the context of the TLC. Situating the collaborative writing activity within the TLC ensures that students will have some exposure and practice with the genre prior to writing with their partner(s). While all phases of the TLC
are beneficial, the teacher can select which phases to incorporate, based on the students’ needs and classroom constraints (e.g. time, curriculum, testing). In this particular study, the teacher purposefully incorporated both the deconstruction and joint construction phases during the second iteration because the students did not have experience with the “how-to” genre. However, during the first iteration, she elected to complete only the joint construction phase, as students had previous experience working with narratives and the narrative recount genre.

After completing selected phases of the TLC, the teacher will need to select the pairs or small groups for the collaborative writing activity. This selection process is very important and will require some strategic decision making on the part of the teacher. As shown in this study and in previous research (e.g. Chung & Walsh, 2006), personality and students’ established relationships should be considered when pairing students. In addition, the teacher will have to identify the appropriate participant structure. For example, in this study the teacher used pairs (Iterations 1 and 2), small groups of three (Iteration 4), and a small group of five students (Iteration 3). Findings from this study revealed that the small groups of three were the most effective for this particular instructional context; however, this is something that teachers will have to determine based on their own unique classroom and students.

Depending on the specific participant structures, the teacher will then need to identify the most effective approach for the collaborative writing activity. For example, in the first and second iterations of this study, the teacher provided students with a graphic organizer that laid out each required piece of the writing. In the third and fourth iterations, she gave students index cards that were labeled with the different pieces of the
paragraph they needed to write. While each approach was different, they both fulfilled the same purpose in guiding students through the writing task. The teacher will need to select the best approach for their specific context while keeping in mind the needs of their students.

**Step 3: Monitor Students’ Progress**

As students begin writing collaboratively in pairs or groups, it will be vital for the teacher to monitor their progress and intervene, when necessary. As this study showed, the teacher can vary his or her level of involvement, based on the demands of the writing task. For example, Mrs. Cabana circulated and checked in on students periodically during the first and fourth iterations. This allowed her to review their progress, assist them in merging their ideas, encourage them to add details to their writing, and more. For the second and third iterations, her level of involvement was much higher, as she sat at the same table with students while they completed the writing task. This was a conscious choice that she made based on students’ inexperience with both collaborative writing and the genres from these iterations. By sitting with students, she was able to take them step-by-step through the different stages of the genre, making sure that they were collaborating with their partners and using the various language features appropriately.

Whether checking in with students periodically or sitting with them at the same table, the teacher should make a concentrated effort to employ interactional scaffolds when monitoring students’ progress throughout the writing task. These scaffolds can engage students in instructional conversations about appropriate ideas for their writing task, how they might add details, and the best way to make needed changes or improvements to their writing. By using scaffolding moves such as appropriation, cued
elicitation, recasting, or elaboration, the teacher will be able to provide students with the support they need to participate effectively in the collaborative writing activities.

**Step 4: Involve Students in the Editing Process**

Prior to students creating a final version of their collaboratively written text, the teacher will need to walk them through an editing process. This process can take the form of teacher-supervised peer editing or a more traditional editing session in which the teacher leads the editing process with the students. Both approaches provide the teacher with an opportunity to take a closer look at students’ writing to ensure that they have a grasp on both the content and the genre expectations. This process also gives students a chance to potentially identify and correct their own errors and propose ideas to strengthen their writing.

**Step 5: Allow Students to Share and Debrief**

After students have published their written texts, it is key for the classroom teacher to provide a platform for students to share their work. By sharing their work, students are able to not only showcase what they have completed, but they are also able to receive feedback and praise from their peers, teacher, parents, and other individuals. Though the teacher may just have students present their work to the class, they may also be able to distribute it on a broader platform, as seen in this study when the teacher posted students’ work to the class website.

Though a full debriefing session is not always feasible, it is a step I recommend that teachers use to wrap up the collaborative writing activity. These debriefing sessions are a helpful practice for acknowledging students’ achievements and providing them with suggestions for future writing. This was demonstrated at the end of the second
collaborative writing activity when Mrs. Cabana walked students through the “how-to”
texts they produced and highlighted different approaches they could use in the future,
such as adding small images and labels.

This optimal instruction sequence captures the most effective approach to
implementing collaborative writing activities with young ELL students, as put forth based
on the outcomes of this study. Though each instructional context is unique, teachers can
use these steps as a guide to incorporate the collaborative writing activities in their
classrooms.

Implications for Research

In addition to providing insights into how collaborative writing can be used in
support of ELLs’ writing development, this study also reveals avenues for further
exploration. This dissertation examined first-grade ELLs’ interactions during
collaborative writing activities along with the texts they produced collaboratively with
their partners in great depth. Additionally, this study explored the ways in which the
collaborative writing activities were scaffolded to support the writing development of
these first-grade ELL students. As such, the findings from this study are highly
contextualized to this specific instructional context. Therefore, additional research is
needed to capture different contexts, students, and writing tasks. As this study focused on
two first-grade ESOL students, both of whom were designated as level four, it would be
beneficial to investigate collaborative writing with students of other grade levels and
ESOL level designations. It would also be advantageous to explore collaborative writing
in different disciplines with varying genres, such as sequential explanations in science or
historical recounts in social studies.
While this study revealed students’ rich and dynamic patterns of interaction when writing collaboratively, examining the influence of these interactions on individual writing was out of the scope of this study. It would therefore be valuable for future studies to establish connections between students’ individual writing development and their interactions during collaborative writing. One way this could be achieved would be by comparing the features of collaboratively produced texts with features of individual texts written after the collaborative writing activity. An additional approach would be to compare students’ individually produced texts from before and after the collaborative writing activity (e.g. Nixon & Topping, 2001).

Moving forward, it will be important to consider the possibility of using technology with collaborative writing activities. While some studies have explored wiki-based collaborative writing (e.g. Li & Kim, 2016; Woo et al., 2013), there is still more to be learned about the advantages of using a technology platform with young ELL students. Moreover, further research can explore multimodal collaborative writing with young ELL students, as recent studies have shown that allowing students to draw on multiple modes can provide them with unique opportunities to create meaning (Pacheco & Smith, 2015; Smith, 2014).

Future research can also promote translanguaging (García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017; García & Wei, 2014) in the context of collaborative writing activities. While the two focal ELL students did not draw on their L1 during the collaborative writing activities presented here, it would be beneficial to encourage students to make use of all of their linguistic resources (Garcia et al., 2017) in future studies. While the vast majority of previous research on collaborative writing has not included this component, other
studies have shown the many affordances of translanguaging for the writing development of culturally and linguistically diverse students (e.g. Velasco & García, 2014; Zapata & Laman, 2016).

**Conclusion**

By exploring the nature of ELL students’ interactions when writing collaboratively and examining their collaboratively produced texts, this study sheds light on the collaborative writing process and how it can support ELLs’ writing development. Across the four iterations of collaborative writing, students demonstrated rich and dynamic patterns of interaction in which they often provided scaffolds to support one another. In addition, students were able to collaboratively produce high-quality texts that met, and often, exceeded grade-level genre expectations. The collaborative writing process was further illuminated by investigating the ways in which the collaborative writing activities were scaffolded before, during, and after each iteration. Though each iteration was distinct, all four iterations demonstrated how collaborative writing activities can be used to support ELLs’ writing development.
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Appendix A
Interview Guide - Teacher Interview #1

**Introduction:** Hello Mrs. Cabana (pseudonym), Thank you so much for agreeing to complete this interview with me today. I think it’s important to explain what we will be doing today, and I can also answer any questions you may have. I am currently a doctoral student in the Language and Literacy Learning in Multilingual Settings (LLLMS) PhD program in the Department of Teaching and Learning at the University of Miami and I am completing my dissertation. I am interested in the collaborative writing process and how this process might be beneficial to students, especially English language learners (ELLs). The interview that we are completing today will later become part of my dissertation. I will be recording this interview and taking notes, but you should know that this interview is confidential, and your name will not be used in the write-up. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Please take as much time as you need to answer these questions and provide as many details as possible.

**Questions:**

1. How long have you been teaching?
   a. Which subjects and grades have you taught?
   b. How long have you been at Sunset Elementary? What roles have you had in this school?

2. Please describe the demographics of the student population in your classroom.
   a. How many ELLs do you have?
      i. Where are they from and what are their first languages?
      ii. How long have they lived in the U.S.?
      iii. Do they speak English at home?
      iv. Are their parents fluent speakers of English and/or literate in English?

3. Can you please describe your classroom climate?
   a. How did you foster such a climate?

4. What literacy practices do you employ that are directly aimed at the literacy development of your ELLs?
   a. What have you tried? Are there things that did not work?
   b. Which ones do you think are the most effective?

5. What has your experience been with collaborative work among students?
   a. What are some pros/cons?
   b. Do you feel that it is beneficial?
   c. Do you typically assign partners/groups or do you let them choose for themselves?
Appendix B
Interview Guide - Teacher Interviews #2 and #3

Introduction: You have recently implemented writing instructional units (WIUs) in your first-grade classroom, encompassing multiple teaching and learning activities and focusing on various genres. Within each of these units, you carried out collaborative writing activities that we designed together, in connection to a focal text. The purpose of this interview is to get your impressions and opinions on the collaborative writing activities that were designed and carried out within each of the WIUs. I greatly appreciate your participation in this interview! I will be recording this interview and taking notes for future analysis. Do you have any questions before we get started?

Questions:

1. Please talk about your impressions and opinions of the collaborative writing activities.
   a. What do you consider to be the strengths of the activities? Why?
   b. What are some of the weaknesses? Why?
2. How well do you think the ELL students interacted with you and their peers during these collaborative writing activities?
3. What are your thoughts on the students’ collaboratively produced texts?
4. Do you think these collaborative writing activities supported your ELLs’ writing development? If so, how?
5. Moving forward, what would you change in regard to the design of the collaborative writing activities?
6. Is there anything else you would like to add?
Appendix C

Collaborative Writing – Recap (Interview #3)

**Iteration 1:** Narrative Recount

**Date(s):** 12/12 and 12/13

**Participant Structure:** Pairs - A.J. and Bella / Sara and Juan

**Brief Description:**

**Day 1** - Students read *The Old Befana* (prior to this activity) and were asked to work in pairs to write about the story. The planning sheet had spaces for beginning, middle, and end events from the story. Students completed the planning sheet with their assigned partner.

**Day 2** – Mrs. Cabana introduces the “Quick Edit” to the students where they will be called to the table to work with her to review what they have for their planning sheet. After the edit students receive a chart paper to write their final product together. Mrs. Cabana also works with a volunteer (Matt) to complete an example of what the final product will look like.

**Pros:** ?

**Cons:** ?

**Things to change moving forward:** ?
**Iteration 2:** Procedure ("How-to")

**Date(s):** 1/11, 1/12, 1/13

**Participant Structure:** Pairs - A.J. and Carol / Sara and Ben

**Brief Description:**

**Day 1** – Mrs. Cabana works w/ students (small group) as they read the short “how-to” story titled, “Making Paper Shapes.” (Deconstruction) Students discuss the title, headings, pictures, etc. before reading the entire story. Students take turns reading the different parts of the story. Mrs. Cabana works with them stopping to check for comprehension, relate to personal experiences, etc.

After reading the story, Mrs. Cabana asks students to think about things they are good at that they would be able to show someone the steps for completing. Students brainstorm ideas – drawing, making paper shapes, etc. Mrs. Cabana writes down their ideas on a paper that everyone can see. Then they all work together to write the steps for getting ready for school. (Joint Construction)

**Day 2** – Mrs. Cabana completes a recap with students to discuss the “Making Paper Shapes” text and the text they jointly wrote together about getting ready for school. Mrs. Cabana explains the collaborative writing activity for the day. Each pair receives a graphic organizer with a space for a topic sentence, steps for the procedure, and a closing statement. She explains that today one student will be the writer and the other will be the doer. Tomorrow they will switch roles. After students complete the activity, they share their writing with each other.

**Day 3** – Mrs. Cabana describes the same collaborative writing activity again and explains that students will switch roles this time so the student that was the writer yesterday will be the doer today and vice versa. Students once again share their writing with each other after completion.

**Pros:** ?

**Cons:** ?

**Things to change moving forward:** ?
Writing a How-To

Topic Sentence:
Did you ever draw a giraffe before?

Write down the steps.

1. You need to draw the nose.
2. You need to draw the eyes.
3. You need to draw the ears.
4. You need to draw giraffe's neck.
5. You need to draw the body.
6. You draw 4 legs.
7. You need to draw the tail.

Conclusion:
Your giraffe is done.
Iteration 3: Informational Text

Date(s): 5/1, 5/2, 5/3

Participant Structure: Small Group (Mrs. Cabana as facilitator/group lead) - A.J., Sara, P.J., Carly, and Issac

Brief Description:

Day 1 – Mrs. Cabana leads students to review the informational text in *Dolphins at Daybreak* that provides details about the octopus. As students read over the information from the text, Mrs. Cabana encourages students to identify the details that belong in the information chart posted on the white board. After filling in the information about the octopus, students are given a handout with information about the anglerfish and the purple sea urchin. Mrs. Cabana works with students to deconstruct the text about the anglerfish to identify where it lives, how it protects itself, how it looks, and what it eats. She then asks students for these details to put in the chart. After this is completed, students work in pairs to complete the deconstruction of the purple sea urchin text. After working in pairs, Mrs. Cabana calls everyone back together to review the details they found. With the last few minutes in class, students receive their own chart to fill out with the details already shown on the shared chart on the board.

Day 2 – Mrs. Cabana calls a small group of students together to work on a writing activity. The group consists of A.J., Sara, Carly, P.J., and Isaac. Before beginning the writing activity, Mrs. Cabana gives students time to finish filling in their charts (from yesterday), with a special focus on the information about the anglerfish. Mrs. Cabana then tells students they will be participating in a writing game in which they all contribute to one text. She distributes index cards with a certain part of the paragraph designated for students to complete. [Sara – topic, A.J. – detail (how it looks), Carly – detail (what it eats), Isaac – conclusion, P.J. – detail (lives)] Students participate in a group discussion (facilitated by Mrs. Cabana) to brainstorm what each group member should write about on their cards. Students then take a few minutes to write their sentence on the index card provided. Once completed, Mrs. Cabana lines up the cards all together and asks students if they are happy with what they have written. Once everyone has agreed she redistributes cards for peer editing. After peer editing, Mrs. Cabana works with each student individually to make the correct edits.

Day 3 – Mrs. Cabana explains to students that they will “publish” their joint text by combining the writing from the index cards on one paper. Mrs. Cabana works with each student to ensure that they transfer their sentence correctly from the card to the paper. The students then contribute ideas for a “feeling conclusion” since Isaac’s sentence was changed to be a detail. After all sentences have been transferred, everyone reads the paragraph out loud together. Mrs. Cabana then asks for students to work together to draw an appropriate picture. Finally, Mrs. Cabana asks for everyone to contribute their thoughts about the final version of the paragraph (and illustration).

Pros: ?

Cons: ?
Things to change moving forward: ?

My Ocean Animal Report

Student Name:
Ocean Animal: Anglerfish

We learned about the anglerfish. The anglerfish looks scary because of its sharp teeth and its face. It lives at the bottom of the ocean near the Midnight Zone. The anglerfish has a light on its head to attract prey. The anglerfish eat smaller fish. We feel the anglerfish is the scarcest and poorest sea animal in the ocean.
Iteration 4: Argument Text (Opinion)

Date(s): 5/22, 5/23, and 5/26 (Reading chapters 1-5 took place 5/16, 5/18, 5/19)

Participant Structure: Small Group – A.J., Juan, Serena / Sara, Julie, Gabe

Day 1 – Mrs. Cabana instructs students to draw a picture that represents something you like to do, see, or eat, in Miami with the title, “Visiting Miami.” After the students have some time, Mrs. Cabana gives everyone a post-it note and states, “On the post-it note write one or two words of the place or the thing that you are seeing, doing, or eating in your picture.” She then calls each table of students to the board so they can categorize their post-it note as ‘See,’ ‘Do,’ or ‘Eat.’ Mrs. Cabana then goes over the post-it note responses with the entire class to identify four of the items that students identified. The four items include - swimming, Disney Land, the park, and the restaurant. Mrs. Cabana gives each table one of the items and tells them they will write a sentence about it. The students are told to brainstorm their ideas as a table, select a writer, and write a complete sentence to be used in the joint writing. Mrs. Cabana explains the opinion genre and works with students (as an entire class) to come up with a topic sentence. She then calls for a representative from each table to come forth with their completed sentence. The representative reads the sentence out loud and Mrs. Cabana writes it on the chart paper. After each sentence has been written, Mrs. Cabana brainstorms a conclusion sentence with the entire class.

Day 2 – Mrs. Cabana reminds students of what they did yesterday for the joint construction writing about Miami. She then explains that today they will write in groups of 3 about the following topic - “In your opinion, should our class visit Hawaii during summer vacation?” Mrs. Cabana divides students into groups (A.J., Juan, Serena / Sara, Julie, Gabe) and distributes small pieces of paper (topic, detail 1 (see), detail 2 (do), detail 3 (eat), conclusion) where they will each write sentences for their joint writing. Mrs. Cabana instructs students to decide within their groups who will write each sentence (2 students will write 2 sentences; 1 student will write 1 sentence) and to brainstorm ideas together before writing their sentences. She circulates to assist the various groups and to encourage conversation/input from all group members. After students are “done,” Mrs. Cabana sits with them to review the sentences, ask if everyone is in agreement with the sentences (like/dislike, add/modify, etc.), and decides on order for final writing.

Day 3 – The groups work together today to “publish” their writing. Mrs. Cabana completes edits with each group and instructs students to write their final draft on the designated paper. Each student takes turns to add their sentences to the paper. After completing the writing piece, the students work together to draw a picture. After completion, Mrs. Cabana comes over to view the final product and asks the students to read their final product to her in unison.

Pros:?

Cons:?

Things to change in the future:?
Appendix D
Collaborative Writing Texts

**WIU 1: Narrative recount**

Sara and Juan -

*Old Befana*

By: Juan and Sara

Have you ever read the Legend of the Old Befana? In the beginning, Old Befana swept and she was mean. In the middle Old Befana herd the bells tinkling and saw the Three Kings. Finally, Old Befana got to childrens’ houses and left them cookies.

**WIU 2: “How-to” (Procedure)**

A.J. and Carol –

TEXT 1:

**Topic Sentence:** This is how to draw a Butterfly.

**Write down the steps.**

5. *Draw a olvel.*
7. *Next Draw two anttenas.*
8. *And Draw decorashons.*

**Conclusion:** Now you have a Butterfly.

TEXT 2:

**Topic Sentence:** This is how you drae a dragen.

**Write down the steps.**

15. *Draw tow ponte thingis to make the hed.*
17. *Draw a eye.*
18. *Draw a neka.*
19. *Draw anater neka becase it is a tow headed.*
20. *Draw anater head.*
22. *Draw teth.*
23. *Draw a foot with clas.*
24. *Draw a wig.*
25. Draw clas on the wing.
27. Draw spiks on the bak.

Conclusion: This is how a dragon.

Sara and Ben –

TEXT 1:

Topic Sentence: Did you ever make a paper airplane?

Write down the steps.

8. Fold the paper in half.
9. Open the paper.
10. Fold the corners to make the trianglos.
11. Fold the paper in half.
12. Fold the two corners to make triangols.
13. Fold it again.
14. Fold the paper down to make the wings.

Conclusion: Your paper airplain is Done and its ready to fly.

TEXT 2:

Topic Sentence: Did you ever draw a Giraffe Bifor?

Write down the steps.

8. You nEEd to Draw the nose.
9. You nEEd to Draw The eyes.
10. You nEEd to Draw The ears.
11. You nEEd to Draw Giraffes neck.
12. You nEED to Draw the Body.
14. You nEED to Draw

Conclusion: Your Giraffe is done.

WIU 3: Informational

Sara, A.J., Carly, P.J., and Isaac –

My Ocean Animal Report

Ocean Animal: anglerfish
We learned about the anglerfish. The anglerfish looks scary because of its sharp teeth and its face. It lives at the bottom of The ocean called The MidNight zone. The anglerfish has a light on its head to attract prey to eat. The anglerfish eats smaller fish. We feel the anglerfish is the scariest and weirdest sea animal in the ocean.

**WIU 4: Opinion (Argument)**

A.J., Serena, and Juan –

Our class should visit Hawaii. Let’s go!! We could see coconut trees and flowery meadows. We could also see waterfalls, small villages, tall gray mountains, and misty clouds. We could all get our surfboards and we could surf on the wave we would have to watch out for the waves! We could shake the tree to make the coconuts fall off the tree. We could also eat tropical fruits like bananas and pineapples. It would be exciting to go to Hawaii!

Sara, Julie, and Gabe –

We should go to Hawaii for summer vacation. We could go surfing. We could hula dance. We could eat poi in Hawaii. We could also eat bananas. We could use the coconut to drink coconut milk. We could see beautiful flowery meadows and colorful flowers. We could see beautiful blue ocean. Hawaii is awesome so come enjoy it.