

Integrating academic language, thinking, and content: Learning scaffolds for non-native speakers in the middle grades.

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Integrating academic language, thinking, and content: Learning scaffolds for non-native speakers in the middle grades

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Abstract

The purpose of this action research study was to explore possibilities for scaffolding academic language and historical thinking for non-native English speaking students in two middle school classrooms. The teaching approach focused on six dimensions of historical thinking: background knowledge, cause, effect, bias, empathy, and application. The following questions guided the observations and conclusions: (1) What types of instructional activities appear to develop historical thinking skills and related academic language among English Language Learners (ELLs)? (2) How can teaching for a writing assessment help to shape this thinking and language development? Results suggested that multi-modal scaffolds for both thinking and language, designed to help students succeed on a motivating assessment task, developed cognitive and communication skills.



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Keywords

English for academic purposes; Scaffolding; Action research; Middle school; Historical thinking

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Jeff Zwiars was recently awarded a doctorate in international multicultural education from the University of San Francisco. He has published two books on reading and academic thinking (Grades 6–12) with The International Reading Association. Currently, he is involved in teacher training projects in Ethiopia and Macedonia focusing on active teaching strategies, performance-based assessment and academic language development.

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