LANGUAGE MATTERS: EXPLORING TEACHERS' CONCEPTUALIZATION OF LINGUISTICALLY INFORMED COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS-ALIGNED WRITING INSTRUCTION AS A MEANS OF DETERMINING EQUITABLE EDUCATION

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education in Education Policy, Organization and Leadership
with a concentration in Diversity and Equity in Education
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2022

Urbana, Illinois

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ABSTRACT

Equity has been conceptualized in several ways, but it could be said that for English Language Learners (ELLs), equity is realized by focusing on inputs which means providing access to high-quality teachers and instruction that utilizes students' assets to support meaningful access to content. Since trends indicate that policies have shifted ELL education to an inclusion model, and now the general educator will most likely provide the majority of academic support for ELLs (Harper & de Jong, 2009), and since recent reforms in K12 education specifically the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) intensified the need to understand the language requirements of schooling (Brisk & Zhang-Wu, 2016), exploring the knowledge and skills of mainstream teachers who work with ELLs are crucial to ensuring equity for ELLs. The WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework (2020) which promotes a functional approach to language development, emphasizing language as a purposeful, meaning-making resource supports states in increasing the consistency between standards and assessments for English language proficiency and general education, with the goal of ensuring that instruction offered by ELL teachers prepares students to engage in the language demands of mainstream classrooms (Desimone et al., 2019). The focus of this study is on the writing requirements specified in the Common Core State Standards, and it investigates how teachers' views of language influence their approach to CCSS-aligned writing teaching. Furthermore, instructors' practices will be investigated to see if their lessons reflect a WIDA-suggested Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) informed genre-based approach to language.

In memory of my father Charlie Haller, who wanted me to pursue my studies to the fullest extent possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am appreciative and thankful for the support of my dissertation chair, Dr. Denice Ward Hood who has offered many helpful suggestions as this work has proceeded through the various drafts which she willingly read. I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Tom Salsbury for his excellent guidance, encouragement, and patience. I am also very grateful for having an exceptional doctoral committee and wish to thank Drs. Dávila and Kang for their support and encouragement.

My very special thanks to my husband, Terrence Gryc, and my mother Michele Taggart-Haller. Their unwavering faith and confidence in my abilities are what helped me complete this degree. I would be remiss if I did not express my deepest gratitude to my daughters, Sarah, Katie, and Abbie who have been patient through all of my professional endeavors that have taken my time away from them. Thanks for your support and encouragement during the time that I was engaged in this study. They have followed my progress with great encouragement.

To my colleagues, friends, and family, I want to thank you all for your encouragement and inspiring words over the years. A special thank you goes to the teachers who took time out of their busy schedules to participate in this study; you are central to the results and for that and more, I thank you. I also want to give thanks to the district who granted me site approval. You all are appreciated!

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION AND KEY TERMS

Research indicates that each year the population of the United States becomes increasingly more diverse (Valdés & Castellón, 2011). According to Colby and Ortman (2015), population projections reveal that by 2044 more than half of all Americans will be members of a minority group and by 2060, one in five Americans will be foreign born citizens. Additionally, children of immigrants are the fastest-growing student demographic in American schools (Calderón et al., 2011). Currently, about one out of every ten students in the United States is learning English (Irwin et al., 2021). These students are often referred to as "English Language Learners," or ELLs, a classification that generally distinguishes them from students who speak English as their first language (Peregoy & Boyle, 2017). By definition though, ELLs are those who speak a language other than English at home and whose challenges in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding English may prevent them from meeting rigorous state academic requirements or succeeding in classes where English is the primary language of instruction (Sugarman, 2020). ELLs represent every major racial/ethnic group and include both U.S and foreign-born youth (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2017) and over 400 languages are spoken (Bialik et al., 2018) by the roughly 5 million ELLs in public schools (Irwin et al., 2021). Additionally, they come from various backgrounds with various prior schooling experiences and therefore have a wide range of strengths and needs.

As the number of ELLs continues to rise, the challenge of how to best meet the needs of this growing population has become more critical. Zhang-Wu (2017) asserts that “educational policies in recent decades have marginalized many culturally and linguistically diverse learners”

(p. 33). This is best evidenced by the fact that NCLB required ELLs to meet the same annual standards as their native English speaking peers by their third year in the United States (Zhang-Wu, 2017). Additionally, the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), requires all students including ELLs meet the expectation of using more academically demanding language (Bunch et al., 2015) in the CCSS's new required forms of academic writing. Mastering academic language is a challenge for all students, but it can be especially challenging for students like ELLs who may have limited exposure to this specialized language (Hakuta et al., 2013; Haneda, 2014). Furthermore, academic language has significant implications as it is believed to be one of the most important factors in the academic success of students (Francis et al., 2006). Consequently, academic language has been shown to be a major contributor to achievement gaps between ELLs and English-proficient students (August & Hakuta, 1997; August & Shanahan, 2008; Wong Fillmore, 2004), and teachers are not well equipped to help these ELLs learn effectively and achieve academic success (Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2018). It has been acknowledged that in order to prevent marginalization of this growing student population, teachers need to be appropriately prepared (Villegas et al., 2018).

Understanding Mainstream Teachers' Lack of Preparation

Many current mainstream teachers lack sufficient preparation in working with second language learners since the education of ELLs was up until recently regarded as the responsibility of ESL or bilingual education specialists (Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Changes rooted in NCLB led to a shift toward the inclusion of ELLs in mainstream classes (Villegas & Lucas, 2011). In the past, until they have developed sufficient proficiency to function in the mainstream classroom, ELLs have been typically served in English language development (ELD) programs with teachers who have had specialized training to provide individualized

instruction within the four language domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Villegas et al., 2018). The instruction of ELD programs has been aimed at equipping ELLs with the proficiency needed to function in the mainstream classroom and subsequently meeting the same academic standards as their native English peers. According to Villegas et al., (2018), due to both the growing number of ELLs which surpassed capacity of bilingual and ESL programs and the political momentum towards English-only educational policies, the practice of placing ELLs in specialized programs shifted toward a more inclusive model by the 1990's. Even if some schools still offer specialized programs, ELLs often receive only limited language instruction but spend the rest of the day in general education classrooms, often with teachers who are unqualified to teach them (Calderón et al., 2011). Although inclusion may appear to be a step toward greater equity, Villegas and Lucas (2011) argue that inclusion actually results in the exclusion of ELLs from full participation and success in schools. They contend that with inclusion, few mainstream teachers have had the opportunity to acquire skills in linguistically responsive teaching (Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Harper and de Jong (2009) echo the claim that inclusion practices raise serious equity concerns. They assert that when placed in mainstream classrooms without appropriate preparation of teachers and instructional accommodations, ELLs needs are often overlooked (Harper & de Jong, 2009). Despite the reality that ELLs differ greatly in terms of their characteristics and levels, many inclusion attempts have resulted in a one-size-fits-all approach to instruction (Harper & de Jong, 2009).

Efforts to Provide Appropriate Training

Because of large number of ELLs, the intense focus on academic language in the CCSS, and the limited role of supportive ELD programs, all teachers need to be adequately prepared to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students (de Jong & Harper, 2011). But as de Jong

& Harper, (2005) note, many simply believe that to effectively teach ELLs, one must merely apply certain practices. Teaching ELLs is more than "just good teaching"(de Jong & Harper, 2005, p. 102). In order to provide an equitable education for ELLs, Lucas and Villegas (2011) suggest a framework for linguistically responsive teaching that comprises orientations, dispositions, and instructional practices that teachers should implement. The orientations and dispositions include an understanding that language, culture, and identity are deeply interconnected; a value placed on linguistic diversity; and, importantly, an inclination to advocate for multilingual learners. Knowledge and skills for linguistically responsive teaching include (a) ways to learn about the linguistic and academic backgrounds of multilingual learners, (b) an understanding of and ability to apply key principles of second language learning, (c) the ability to identify the language demands of classroom tasks, and (d) a repertoire of strategies for scaffolding instruction. Furthermore, regardless of the type of program they are in or the language of instruction, linguistically responsive teachers consider students' multilingualism as a resource and support students' ability to draw on all of their linguistic resources for learning material. The knowledge and abilities presented in the linguistically responsive framework are a representation of important skills that mainstream content area teachers must know in order to assist ELLs in developing academic language proficiency. However, Lucas and Villegas (2010) assert that teachers of ELLs are not sufficiently prepared if responsive teaching principles do not explicitly attend to language as well. Teachers need to understand how content and language are intertwined (Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2018).

There are a variety of models that aim to help classroom teachers in addressing ELLs' content and language needs; however, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is perhaps one of the most popular research-based models for such integration. SIOP provides

learners with language-rich, grade-level content area instruction in English that is comprehensible (Echevarria et al., 2004). Specifically, the SIOP model identifies 30 important features of sheltered instruction under eight broad components with the creation of both content and language objectives for each lesson being essential (Echevarria et al., 2004). Within such a model the teacher strives to ensure that students have sufficient prior knowledge to engage with new curricular material within each lesson, and teachers adjust their speech and, when necessary, content material to ensure that ELLs understand key concepts. By examining the various SIOP components, it is reasonable to conclude that this model is concerned with instructional choices that ensure that all students have comprehensible access to the content, and this is led by language objectives. Language objectives, which are lesson objectives that are designed to support the linguistic development of students, may be an effective first step in ensuring that English learners have equitable access to the curriculum because they articulate the academic language functions and skills that students must master in order to fully engage in the lesson and achieve grade-level content standards (Echevarria et al., 2004). In order to create language objectives teachers must have linguistics awareness; that is, they must be able to examine the language demands of content. Linguistic awareness allows teachers to uncover language "barriers" in lessons by "making explicit what the native speaker already knows implicitly" (Ellis, 2012, p. 7). However, classroom teachers may struggle to identify language demands and subsequently write ineffective language objectives as they may not have linguistic awareness. In her study which provided training in the SIOP approach to construct language objectives, Regalla (2012) found that vocabulary was the primary emphasis of the teachers' language objectives, taking precedence over grammatical structures, academic norms,

and functional language. This tendency to concentrate primarily on vocabulary, suggests a lack of critical linguistic awareness.

The Call for a Language-Centered Approach

Few teachers have knowledge of how language and language learning factor in content learning, nor do they possess the grammatical and lexical knowledge required for text understanding; therefore, teachers are frequently ill-equipped to teach academic language because neither professional preparation nor professional development focuses on these aspects of languages (Heritage et al., 2007). Valdés et al. (2014) define teacher expertise as the knowledge teachers possess coupled with the ability to successfully employ it in situated practice. They assert that this expertise will be crucial to the success of the new demands made by the standards. One expertise that teachers need to develop to address the demands of the CCSS involves understanding the language used in instructional texts.

This focus on what teachers need to know about language can be traced to a position paper by applied linguists Lily Wong Fillmore and Catherine Snow (2000). In this paper, which became the first chapter of *What Teachers Need to Know about Language* (Adger et al., 2002, 2018), Wong Fillmore and Snow assert that teachers need to understand how language figures into academic learning, and how to provide the instructional support to help students acquire the related forms and structures. Some of the specific language topics Wong Fillmore and Snow (2000) outline in their original paper as essential for teachers to be aware of include understanding; the course of second language acquisition, the linguistic diversity of our society related to vernacular dialects, what academic English is, and what kind of instructional support is needed for learning English.

Schleppegrell (2004) echoes the call for teachers to have a more in depth understanding of the linguistic challenges of schooling in *The Language of Schooling.* Her text promotes a functional grammar approach which focuses on language as a meaning making resource, and not a collection of rules. More specifically, functional grammar deals with the way spoken and written language operate in various contexts. Schleppegrell (2004) uses Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as a conceptual framework to show "how different grammatical and discourse organizational choices result in different kinds of texts" (p. x). This attention to linguistic choices in school literacies is necessary for teachers to understand and convey. They must be able to guide ELLs in analyzing texts and engage them with metalanguage to help them understand how language works in these materials. Schleppegrell describes in detail the features of common genres of schooling and reviews some discipline specific language demands. Her analysis of how different content areas use specific grammatical elements leads to the conclusion that students' mastery of subject-specific texts depends on their mastery of grammatical features. It is because of this realization that she laments that "in the absence of an explicit focus on language, students from certain social class backgrounds continue to be privileged and others disadvantaged in learning, assessment, and promotion, perpetuating the obvious inequalities that exist today" (Schleppegrell, 2004, p. 3).

Following Schleppegrell, but taking a slightly different stance, Galguera (2011) argues for a shift away from emphasizing on language instruction for ELLs toward "language for academic purposes". Despite this move away from the need to focus on language solely for ELLs' benefit, Galguera still highlights the need to foster critical language awareness in pre-service teachers. He asserts that we should not just prepare teachers to work with a particular type of student like ELLs, but rather, teacher candidates should be capable of achieving certain

learning outcomes, specifically, promoting students' proficiency in using language for academic purposes. Like Schleppegrell, Galguera's notion of pedagogical language knowledge should provide teachers with "opportunities to examine specific functions of language in academic contexts and experience ways in which language is used to represent knowledge in classrooms as well as the power and status differences encoded in language" (Galguera, 2011, p. 90).

Bunch (2013) follows up on these previous studies as he also advocates for attention to be paid to mainstream teacher's knowledge about language. He cites the Common Core Standards and the intense role of language within them as a driving force behind the need to prepare teachers to address the linguistic needs of ELLs. Furthermore, he outlines the following definition for this construct of pedagogical language knowledge: "Knowledge of language directly related to disciplinary teaching and learning and situated in the particular (and multiple) contexts in which teaching, and learning take place" (Bunch, 2013, p. 307).

These theorists (Bunch, 2013; Galguera, 2011; Schleppegrell, 2004) advocate that pedagogical language knowledge is essential for teachers in linguistically diverse classrooms. This knowledge also aligns with several of *Achieve the Core's* recommendations that deal with the CCSS shifts. *Achieve the Core* suggests that teachers analyze complex texts to make ELLs aware of the academic language found in these texts. Moreover, explicitly teaching academic language is recommended (TESOL International Association, 2013); this cannot be accomplished if teachers do not possess the critical language awareness mentioned by the theorists discussed.

Statement of Problem

ELLs have historically lagged behind their peers in academic and literacy achievement, and the implementation of the CCSS, which requires all students to meet the expectation of using

more academically demanding language (Bunch et al., 2015) has compounded this reality. This lag is evidenced by both scores from CCSS aligned assessments and other national data. To measure students' progress against the Common Core, many states are utilizing assessments produced by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) or the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). It is clear from recent results on both assessments that ELLs are experiencing gaps as compared to English speaking peers. For example, data from reporting member states for the 2018-2019 grade 3 SBAC ELA summative assessment highlight that only 20.3 % of ELLs met benchmark compared to the 48.8 % overall (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, 2018). Similarly, on the PARCC, the grade 3 group statistics for the ELA summative mean scores were higher for non-English learners relative to English learner students (Pearson, 2019).

Because states use different tests (i.e., SBAC, PARCC, ACT) with different scales and set their proficiency thresholds at different levels, researchers often use results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP] often known as the "Nation's Report Card", to make comparisons between subgroups regarding achievement. Behuniak (2015) noted in a NAEP validity study that the role of NAEP was uncertain with the implementation of the CCSS given the reality that NAEP is not based on the CCSS, but on NAEP frameworks. However, in a study to review alignment between NAEP reading and writing and CCSS-ELA, Wixson et al. (2013) reported that they were "cautiously optimistic" that the NAEP could continue to function as a monitor of student achievement in an era of CCSS. They noted considerable overlap between NAEP and CCSS-ELA. Specifically, they identified that NAEP items aligned well with CCSS-ELA Anchor Standards 1–5, and that many of the NAEP short-constructed and extended-constructed response reading items are aligned with both CCSS-ELA reading and writing anchor

standards (Wixson et al., 2013). Alignment studies have also been conducted on the CCSS-Math and reported similar conclusions. Therefore, researchers have continued to rely on the NAEP to measure achievement and identify gaps, and consequently a recent study shows that the implementation of the CCSS has resulted in a "historic" drop in student achievement scores on the NAEP (Rebarber, 2019). According to The Common Core Debacle: Results from 2019 NAEP and Other Sources, in the decade preceding the adoption of CCSS throughout most of the United States in 2013, mathematics and reading NAEP scores for both fourth and eighth grade were gradually increasing at a steady rate; however, NAEP scores fell by a "statistically significant" amount between 2013 and 2019, following the implementation of CCSS (Rebarber, 2019). Moreover, reported test score declines were most severe among students in the bottom half of the student population (Rebarber, 2019), a category that ELLs may fall into. When looking at recent NAEP scores, it can be seen that ELLs do not perform as well as native English speakers. In 2017, the average reading score for ELL students in 4th grade was 37 points lower than the average score for their non-ELL peers, and the gap widens as students' progress through the grades, with the average reading score for ELL students in 8th grade 43 points lower than the average score for their non-ELL peers (McFarland et al., 2019). Moreover, Harris and Graham (2016) highlight that NAEP data show that writing performance for ELLs reflects only 5% performing at the proficient level and only 1% performing above the proficient level.

Despite these startling statistics, Saunders and Marcelletti (2013) contend that when examining ELL progress, focusing exclusively on current ELLs and ignoring recently exited ELLs risks overestimating the achievement difference between initial ELLs and English only peers. They further assert that disparity in content-area test performance between ELLs and non-ELLs is a "gap that can't go away" (Saunders & Marcelletti, 2013). This is because unlike

certain subpopulations (e.g., ethnic minorities), the designation of ELL is transitory for most students, resulting in a condition of continual flux as students transition in and out of this category. This category fluctuation complicates measuring subgroup growth since the highest-achieving students are likely to leave the ELL category each year (Robinson-Cimpian et al., 2016). The differences in success levels between ELLs who reclassified and those who did not were highlighted in Saunders and Marcelletti's (2013) analysis of statewide performance outcomes, emphasizing the issue of Long-Term English Learners. Although definitions may vary, the term long-term English learner (L-TEL) refers to English learners who have been enrolled in a U.S. school for about six years or more and are still not fluent in English and have significant deficits in academic skills (Olsen, 2010). Perhaps a better way to examine the progress of ELLs is to look at this subgroup of English learners. According to Hanover Research (2017) the number of L-TELs in US schools has continuously increased; an example of the growth of this ELL subgroup can been seen by looking at California's increase of L-TELs, which grew from 62 percent of all secondary school English learners in 2008 to 82 percent in 2016. This is important to note because L-TELs' overall school performance is low, and grade retention is prevalent, putting this subgroup at significant risk of having lower graduation rates. Huang et al. (2016) found that L-TELs in Arizona have a much lower graduation rate than any other language group- only 49% of L-TELS graduated in four years. These findings suggest that education officials and educators must identify and implement methods that meet the needs of various ELL contexts. What is commonly referred to as the "achievement gap" is actually an "opportunity gap"; thus, we need to create settings in which all students have the same opportunity to achieve and since developing academic English and content knowledge appears to

be essential for high school success, implementing effective practices needs to start at the elementary level.

Because of the intense focus on academic language in the CCSS, elementary classroom teachers need to be adequately prepared to work with ELLs. However, there is widespread lack of confidence among these teachers in regards to teaching the CCSS to ELLs (de Oliveira et al., 2014). In a survey of teachers in CCSS states, only 15% reported having been trained in teaching CCSS to specific student groups like ELLs (Education Week, 2014). However, many teachers are not adequately trained in writing instruction (Harris & Graham, 2016). In addition to the noted lack of preparation of working with ELLs, several studies, indicated that teachers overwhelmingly reported that they received little to no training on how to teach writing (Brindle et al., 2016; Ray et al., 2016; Troia & Graham, 2016). When studying third and fourth grade teachers' experiences, Brindle et al. (2016) noted that while reflecting on their college training, teachers reported feeling unprepared to teach writing with 76% indicating that they received little to no preparation in teaching writing in their undergraduate education classes. When pre-service, in-service, and personal preparation were all taken into account, responding teachers in the study conducted by Brindle et al. (2016) were more optimistic about their readiness, but they still rated their preparation to teach writing lower than their preparation to teach reading, math, science, and social studies. For ELLs to meet the writing demands of the CCSS, teachers need the pedagogical knowledge and skills to teach writing more effectively. Researchers who examined student writing deficiencies identified teacher preparedness as a factor contributing to low student writing levels (Başтuğ, 2016; Harris & Graham, 2016; Troia & Graham, 2016). Thus, the increased language demands of the Common Core State Standards (Bunch et al., 2014; Hakuta et al., 2013), as well as the limited research on how to effectively assist ELs as writers (de Oliveira

& Lan, 2014), necessitate a deeper knowledge of successful, language-focused techniques for teaching writing at an elementary level.

Rationale of the Study

The need to ensure that all teachers are prepared to work with ELLs has become more urgent not just because of shifting demographics, but also due to the standards shift that welcomed in the Common Core as the benchmark for what K-12 students should know and be able to do. These standards have significant demands in writing. When teachers lack the understanding of how to teach writing and lack confidence, writing instruction might not be emphasized and students' writing skills will likely suffer. Graham (2019), in a recent study of K-12 writing instruction, highlighted the importance of writing for success in school and life. He also pointed out that although writing is a fundamental goal of education, "many schools across the world do not achieve this objective, as an inordinate number of students do not acquire the writing skills needed for success in society today" (Graham, 2019, p. 277). Writing dictated by CCSS is governed by complex language structures. Since it has been acknowledged that achievement disparities stem from the lack of instructional focus on academic language, there is an argument for the need to make the linguistic structures of academic language explicit to ELLs, and as a result "there is a critical need to develop instructional approaches that target the development of academic language, particularly for ELLs who have reached higher levels of English proficiency but who continue to struggle with the standard curriculum and/or the content targeted by standardized tests" (Aguirre-Muñoz et al., 2008 p. 297).

In the district elementary schools that I work in, which are located in rural Washington State, ELLs transition through the English language development (ELD) program at an average rate of 3 years. State data from the 2018-2019 school year reveals that my district, referred to as

Rolling Hills District for this study, is on par with the state average as the median time-in-program was 3.5 years (Gallardo & Randall, 2020). For those students who stay in the ELD program for longer than the average time, it is often due to their scores on the writing portion of their state language assessment which becomes increasingly difficult with each grade level. This stall in language development, specifically within written language, and the call from researchers to provide instruction that makes academic language and literacies explicit (Estela Brisk, 2014; Gebhard, 2019a; Schleppegrell, 2004, 2018) has prompted my desire to connect with educators who teach writing in my districts' four elementary schools to determine what are their conceptions of linguistically informed writing instruction- specifically in regard to essential language aspects and scaffolding practices. Understanding how the notion of language instruction regarding CCSS writing demands is conceptualized could yield crucial information in supporting ELLs' academic achievement. The purpose of this research is to investigate teachers' perceptions of linguistically informed CCSS aligned writing instruction for multilingual learners. Because components of the WIDA framework will be employed in this study, the term multilingual learner, or MLL, which WIDA employs as part of its asset-based belief system to define all students who regularly exposed to and/or communicate in languages other than English, will be used henceforth instead of ELL.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following central question and sub-questions:

Central question: *How do teachers perceive linguistically informed CCSS-aligned writing instruction for multilingual learners, and how do these perceptions manifest in their practice?*

Sub-questions:

1) What are teachers' understandings of the linguistic features that must be highlighted and the

scaffolding practices that must be implemented in order to provide linguistically informed CCSS aligned writing instruction to multilingual learners?

2) In what ways do teachers' perceptions and practices reflect a SFL-informed genre-based approach to language development as advocated by the WIDA Framework?

3) In what ways are teachers' perceptions and practices impacted by their teaching background and/or experience

Theoretical Framework

Since language is typically the medium of instruction in U.S. schools, to effectively teach MLLs, researchers (Bunch, 2013; Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Schleppegrell, 2001, 2004, 2018; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2018) advocate for a pedagogical approach that addresses the role of language in the teaching of content. According to Fang (2020) a linguistically informed pedagogy recognizes language as the hidden curriculum of schooling and advocates explicit grammar instruction as a way to promote advanced literacy development and provide students with access to disciplinary genres. It encourages a distinct way of talking about language and text and offers teachers a set of tools as well as a metalanguage to engage students in examining how lexical and grammatical choices convey material, organize text, and express points of view in discipline- and genre-specific ways (Fang, 2020). Such a pedagogy, with its emphasis on how language is utilized in the construction of disciplinary meaning is crucial for students to understand the role of academic language in the texts they must construct (Fang, 2020). Additionally, this approach which acknowledges, responds to, and explicitly teaches the language structures of academic genres offers equitable access to content for all students but especially for multilingual learners. Linguistically informed instruction is supported by a pedagogy that is grounded in sound linguistic theory, responsive to student needs, and anchored

in relevant disciplinary experiences (Fang, 2020). Thus, the theoretical framework for this study is based on an approach that has been identified as being able to "demystify school-based language" (Santiago Schwarz & Hamman-Ortiz, 2020). This study utilizes Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) informed genre-based pedagogy. SFL, which was conceptualized by Michael Halliday is concerned with identifying the language in context that students need to understand to comprehend and construct academic texts. A SFL perspective on writing instruction focuses on how the language and structures of a writing task vary with respect to the genre of the text (Martin & Rose, 2008) and the ways teachers can make the academic language demands explicit to students, thereby allowing them to manipulate language to create meaning (Brisk et al., 2011). SFL is a theory and method of analysis that is used to identify the ways that meaning is made through language (Halliday, 1993), and analyzing the linguistic demands of academic language requires deconstruction into its constituent parts. According to de Oliveira and Lan (2014) "SFL helps students to know how to participate in dominant genre forms by providing explicit knowledge of the structure, linguistic choices, and cultural background of those text-types" (p. 26). In other words, understanding how situational context influences language use helps teachers and students to see the linguistic demands, patterns, and challenges. To elaborate, this theoretical viewpoint assumes that individuals use language for specific purposes, with certain audiences, and in specific sociocultural contexts. Different contexts necessitate different linguistic choices, resulting in different varieties of language, or different discourses referred to as *registers.* Specifically, the concept of *register* can be defined as the combination of lexical and grammatical aspects that characterizes the language used in a specific social context; this is an important concept in SFL (Halliday & Hassan, 1989, as cited in Hanada, 2014). Halliday (1978) explains the concept of register more clearly. When functioning within a specific context,

language users make choices within the variables of the register-field, tenor, and mode (Halliday, 1978). Language reflects the field or content of the text, and the tenor of a text which reflects the relationship between language users and the mode is the channel undertaken (e.g., spoken or written). Language, written or spoken, is always organized to achieve a specific goal that is inherently related to the social context (Halliday & Hasan, 2014). SFL provides a theoretical explanation for how and why language usage and structure vary depending on language users and social settings.

Key Terms

Argument–This text type is a key genre in the CCSS where there is a common emphasis on students formulating opinions and supporting those opinions with reasons and emphasis.

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive practice– A philosophical framework that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Dimensions of language –This refers to how linguistic system can be described along three dimensions: *discourse, sentence, and word/phrase*.

> *discourse:* discourse is the broadest dimension of language. Discourse imparts meaning across an entire text (oral, written, visual), supported by the sentence and word/phrase dimensions. To consider how a language user constructs a meaningful message, begin by looking at the discourse dimension and the overarching message to see how language is organized to communicate particular ideas, how language holds ideas together in a text (its cohesion), and how loosely or tightly language is packed (its density). In the discourse dimension, the text's purpose, such as explaining how or why something happens, shapes its organizational pattern. For example, typical discourse of

mathematical explanations may include a statement of solution to a problem, an explanation sequence, and an evaluation or justification of one's reasoning.

sentence: a sentence is a word or group of words that states, asks, commands, or explains an idea. As a dimension of language, sentences contribute to the grammatical complexity of a text. Language users make choices in how they express ideas and their interrelationships through clauses in various sentence types. These also help shape how a text is sequences and connected. A sentence can be simple, compound, or complex.

word/phrase: as a dimension of language, words and phrases add precision to communication. For example, language users strategically select *everyday, cross-disciplinary, or technical language*; employ multiple meanings and nuances of words and phrases; or play with their shades of meaning.

English language learner (ELL) – English language learners are students who receive English language development services, including those who have exited but are still being monitored. These students may be born abroad or in the United States to non-English speaking parents. These students often require specialized instruction to fully access the content in the traditional academic setting. This population of students includes those currently or formerly labeled as: Limited English Proficient (LEP), English as a Second Language (ESL) and linguistically diverse students.

ELL teachers –These teachers are specialists in the needs of ELLs. Their roles can look different depending on the program model of the district. They can provide some direct instruction to ELLs, offer some support within the classroom or provide coaching services to teachers.

Field- the topic or subject matter of a given text or discourse.

Funds of knowledge –This refers to cultural and community knowledge and strategies that families possess and utilize as they navigate their lives.

Genre–This refers to the socially-defined ways in which language (e.g., oral and written) is used to participate in particular contexts to serve specific purposes.

Genre-based pedagogy– This method focuses on discipline specific ways meanings are constructed in texts and uses genre as a way into understanding content knowledge.

General education teacher – For the purposes of this study, references to general education teachers will specifically be referring to classroom teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade who teach any content area (language arts, math, social studies, or science).

Ideation –This refers to the notion that language functions at a clause level, as creating and maintaining theories of experience and logic. The ideational metafunction of language is to realize the *field* or subject matter of a text.

Interpersonal– This metafunction establishes social identities, connections, power dynamics, attitudes, and emotions; this function is accomplished via tenor resources.

Lexico grammatical choices – This refers to the interdependence between grammatical and lexical (vocabulary) choices in a clause and overall text to convey meaning.

Mainstream teacher – This term is synonymous with general education teacher, as described above.

Mode –This is the manner in which a text is conveyed or forms of communication (e.g. oral, written, multimodal, etc.).

Multimodality – This is the disciplinary representation of knowledge articulated through verbal, media and visual modes.

Metalanguage –Schleppegrell (2016) refers to metalanguage as an instructional discourse strategy to help teachers and learners notice, analyze and interpret the form-meaning relationships within disciplinary academic registers. Metalanguage is both a thing (i.e.: parts of speech, rhetorical functions of language) and a process (a means to discuss and examine aspects of language that construe meaning).

Multilingual Learner (MLL) – This term is used by the WIDA consortia as part of its asset-based belief system to define all students who are regularly exposed to and/or communicate in languages other than English; this is the chosen term to be used in this study instead of ELL.

Register – This is the variation of language according to societal context realized through linguistic choices to convey ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings. In SFL, register is seen through field, tenor and mode.

Pedagogical language knowledge – This is teachers' knowledge of how language works and the language required to succeed in the content areas. It encompasses knowledge of language (including principles of second language acquisition, academic language usage, sociolinguistics and critical language awareness) and is deployed through metalinguistic interactions. The goal of such interactions might be to notice, analyze and interpret the meanings of subject area topics and texts as well as support students' development of academic registers

Semiotics – This refers to the study of signs and symbols for meaning making which includes linguistics symbols.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) –This theory developed by M.A.K Halliday regards language as a semiotic system whose main function is social and which also performs three

general metafunctions: the construal of experience (its ideational metafunction), the enactment of social relationships (its interpersonal metafunction), and self-organization (its textual function)

Teaching to Learning Cycle (TLC) – This framework developed by Martin and Rose (2005) is a recursive pedagogical cycle consisting of three phases: *deconstruction, joint construction and independent writing*. The first phase involves developing a learner's understanding of new subject matter (the Field) and the context of a particular genre or register, along with engaging learners in analysis of linguistic choices in selected texts. The second phase involves the co-creation of texts, and the third phase students independently construct texts.

Tenor –This refers to the interpersonal relationship between the writer and reader of a text.

CHAPTER II:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Due to the rising number of MLLs in the United States, their academic performances and determining the most effective teaching approaches has become more important, because all MLLs, regardless of their different backgrounds, must learn English while gaining an understanding of curricular material. Moreover, it has been noted that success in school is dependent on the development of academic language (AL) (Francis et al., 2006), which demands progressively complex language abilities at each grade level. Furthermore, academic language is particularly crucial to master in order to succeed in written composition, especially since the CCSS has shifted to a greater emphasis on evidence-based argumentative and informative writing, which necessitates a mastery of academic content and the accompanying language.

This study centers on the writing expectations outlined in Common Core State Standards and it examines the perceptions of language that tend to inform a teacher's approach to CCSS aligned academic writing instruction. Moreover, teachers' practice will be examined to determine if a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) informed genre-based approach to language as suggested by WIDA is evident in their lessons.

This review will begin with a discussion of why academic language is crucial for CCSS aligned writing. Then the topic of how academic language is conceptualized by various scholars will be briefly addressed. This will be followed by an overview of the WIDA Framework and its big idea of a functional approach to language development, which leads into discussing the notion of genre. Then the review proceeds to identifying a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) informed genre-based pedagogy and the Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC) as a framework

for analyzing teachers' abilities to provide writing instruction that addresses the language demands of academic genres. Next it will discuss the CCSS and the effects of their implementation on multilingual learners and teachers of these learners. Then, it will focus on discussing the various genres of CCSS writing and their specific features and requirements. The review will conclude by acknowledging that equity for MLLs entails inputs such as the pedagogical practices mentioned in the review.

Why is Academic Language Understanding Crucial for CCSS Writing?

As children progress through school, they are constantly exposed to new contexts that necessitate the acquisition of more abstract technical knowledge, as well as being expected to write about increasingly abstract topics (Schleppegrell & Christie, 2018). Schleppegrell and Christie (2018) summarize how writing develops across school subjects through years. They explore how writers may master the language of abstraction, which allows them to express concepts from school disciplines in the most effective way possible(Schleppegrell & Christie, 2018). They assert that grammar becomes noncongruent when the forms are used in grammatically metaphorical ways to shape meanings(Schleppegrell & Christie, 2018). According to Velázquez-Mendoza (2015) grammatical metaphor is a linguistic resource for condensing information by expressing actions, events, attributes, circumstances, and sentential relationships in an abstract, incongruent manner. This resource, typical of formal, academic language, contrasts with the more congruent method in which a language's grammar are conveyed orally (Velázquez-Mendoza, 2015) and occurs when concepts stated in one grammatical form (such as verbs) are represented in another grammatical form (such as nouns); this results in multiple ways of expressing a concept (Halliday, 1994). According to Halliday (1994) there are several sorts of grammatical metaphors, but nominalization is the most

prevalent; this is when writers make nouns out of things that aren't ordinarily nouns (such verbs or adjectives). Understanding grammatical metaphor requires a high level of linguistic competence, and grammatical metaphor is critical for academic writing since this form of non-congruent abstract realization is the single most important aspect of advanced literacy (Halliday, 1993; Schleppegrell, 2004; Columbi, 2006 in Velázquez-Mendoza, 2015). Maamuujav et al., (2021) also assert that greater linguistic competency and academic language proficiency are required for the higher-order analytical thinking abilities required in analyzing, interpreting, and writing academic texts. Thus, mastery of complete knowledge of and about academic language is required for establishing competency in academic writing (Maamuujav et al., 2021).

Conceptualizing Academic language

Challenge of Defining Academic Language

There is constant reference to the increased focus on academic language within the CCSS, along with the accompanying discussion surrounding the need for teachers to develop an awareness of this language of schooling leads to the question of what is included in this construct that is often referred to as academic English (AE) or academic language (AL). "One of most imperfectly understood and yet widely popular concepts in language education as well as teacher education is the notion of academic language" (Faltis, 2013, p. 3). Dicerbo et al. (2014) point out that since researchers have various theoretical viewpoints when analyzing language and schooling, conceptual frameworks differ in how they define AE language. To understand how the construct of AL is understood, a discussion of its origins is needed. The notion of AL developed out of research in the 1970s and 1980s that focused attention on the challenges of the language children engage with at school and how the language expectations at school differ from the language of the home and community for many children. Cummins (1979) made the

important distinction between cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) and basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS). Briefly, BICS which is also referred to as conversational language or social language are the language skills required to interact in social situations; they are considered to develop in a few years. CALP, however, refers to the facet of language proficiency which is strongly related to cognitive and academic skills associated with schooling, and mastery is said to take between 5 to 10 years (Cummins, 1979). Jensen and Thompson (2020) criticize Cummins' BICS/CALP theory asserting that by emphasizing the differences of these types of language, there is a failure to actually specify any distinguishing characteristics of CALP. The realization that so often "AL has been defined in contrast to what it is not – i.e., "casual" or "conversational" language –rather than by what it is" (Jensen & Thompson, 2020, p. 3) complicates the conceptualization of this notion.

Approaches to Understanding AL

Bailey and Huang (2011) note that "since Cummins' (1979, 1980) introduction of the distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), the academic English construct has been conceptualized at different linguistic levels, from lexical to discourse as well as on various dimensions, from cognitive to socio-cultural" (p. 348-349). As Brisk and Zhang-Wu (2016) contend, many researchers define AE based on the context of its use- the language needed to function in school. Uccelli et al. (2020) take a similar stance regarding the context of use as they defined academic language as the language in professional communities used "for shared reasoning, reflection and debate about ideas and perspectives" (p. 77). They further note that academic language is divided into two subconstructs: (1) discipline-specific academic language (for example, science or math-specific words such as gene, hypotenuse) and (2) cross-disciplinary academic language, which is

helpful in all topic areas (e.g., terms used across content areas: hypothesis) (Uccelli et al., 2020, p. 77).

Gottlieb and Ernst-Slavit (2014) acknowledge that many teachers believe that vocabulary is a main part of AE however they specifically state that it is “more than vocabulary or phrases pertinent to the topic at hand (p.5). Snow and Uccelli (2009) present a thorough summary of research on AE and define the unique characteristics that distinguish AE from non-school English, or what they refer to as ‘colloquial' language. According to the substantial AE literature, conversational English is characterized by ‘redundancy' and ‘wordiness,' whereas AE is defined by ‘conciseness.' Grammatical complexity is another dimension of contrast identified in Snow and Uccelli's (2009) list of defining elements of AE. While colloquial or non-school language employs simple grammar (e.g., ‘You heat water and it evaporates faster,' academic language is said to employ ‘complex' grammar (e.g., ‘If the water grows hotter, it evaporates faster). Snow (2014) later builds on the notion of the specific features of AL. Complex vocabulary forms, explicit discourse markers, information packing via nominalizations, embedded relative clauses, and subjectless passives, explicit references to epistemology, the linguistic construction of a distanced relation between speaker and audience, and the speaker's assumption of an authoritative stance are all frequently noted features of academic language (Snow, 2014). This view of AE is problematic as it often leads to viewing grammar as a prescribed set of rules rather than a means to achieve a purpose.

When language is viewed through the lens of having rules, then it leads to having a correct and incorrect form, which is troublesome. Spycher et al. (2020) confirm that some simply view AE as being “the proper or correct form of language” and assert that “if students perceive that there are correct and incorrect ways of using language in school, they may feel marginalized

and that there is no place for the rich linguistic assets they bring from their homes and communities" (Spycher et al., 2020, p. 90). Moreover, AE research, with its emphasis on the discourse and structural characteristics of AE, can give the impression, whether intentionally or unintentionally, that there are special 'cognitively demanding' features of AE that are absent from out-of-school varieties, reinforcing and perpetuating standard language ideology(MacSwan, 2020). Such prescriptive ideologies, which mandate that there is only one acceptable way to use languages and selectively favor certain linguistic practices while stigmatizing others, have been criticized by some researchers who have embraced additive approaches that promote students to maintain their minoritized linguistic practices while supporting the development of standardized language skills (Flores & Rosa, 2015). However, Flores and Rosa (2015) are cautious of all additive approaches as the conception of standardized language practices as objective sets of linguistic forms that are regarded to be appropriate for academic settings, lies at the core of many of these approaches.

Haneda (2014) points out that educational researchers using a functional approach to language evolved a totally distinct approach to AL which is based on Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Perhaps this is a result of the origins of the theory. Examining and resolving equity issues, such as how and why some groups of individuals face discrimination due to their language use was one of Halliday's primary goals in developing (SFL) (Harman, 2018). Institutional bias toward particular dialects and hybrid language practices, according to Halliday, is directly motivated by a societal intent to suppress some minorities' cultural identities (Harman, 2018). The socially and functionally oriented theory of SFL, as Harman (2018) explains, conceptualizes language as a flexible configuration of possibilities to enable meaning production in a variety of academic and social situations, aligning

with Halliday and Hasan's concerns about language variation inequities. Because SFL theory views all language use as a complex configuration of linguistic choices, it supports register and language variety equity (Harman, 2018). SFL considers the relationship between linguistic form and social context in school settings, concentrating on particular language choices that influence and are influenced by various goals and audiences unlike traditional approaches to grammar (Bunch, 2013). In other words, language is described as a resource for making meaning in this theoretical tradition, rather than as a set of rules for arranging discrete grammatical components. Therefore SFL views language development as an expansion of students' practice and metacognitive repertoires rather than the remediation of deficits (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003 cited in Molle & Wilfrid, 2021).

Although Cummins' view of AE is quite binary, he stated, that the distinction was intended "to draw educators' attention to the timelines and challenges that second language learners encounter as they attempt to catch up to their peers in academic aspects of the school language" (Cummins, 2008, p. 71). This is crucial since Zwiers (2014) calls academic language "the most complicated tool set in the world to learn how to use" (p. 1). Despite a history of fierce opposition of the BICS/CALP distinction in bilingual education, the concept served as the foundation for the academic language movement, which underpins policy initiatives such as the Common Core State Standards (Rolstad, MacSwan &Guzman, 2015 as cited in MacSwan, 2020). Since Achugar and Carpenter (2018) note that as the Common Core continues to gain popularity in schools, the demand for teachers who can support students in acquiring general academic and domain specific language will grow. If attention is not devoted to assisting MLLs in meeting the linguistic demands of CCSS academic writing, achievement gaps will widen. Equity is achieved through effectively teaching AL to all students, including minoritized learners

who may have had less exposure to AL language practices in the past (Jensen & Thompson, 2020). Schleppegrell (2012) echoes this call to action. With recognition that language minority students are not a homogeneous group, she points out that some of these students are MLLs, who are still learning the language across registers and modalities, while others are fluent In English yet from communities where English is not the main language of communication, thus their range of registers does not include those expected at school for various reasons (Schleppegrell, 2012). Thus, since children's experiences with language outside of school vary widely, it is critical that academic language registers become a focus of attention in the classroom. However, we must be careful to not promote AE as a superior linguistic form. "While mastery of AL is vital for academic success, it should not be positioned as the most privileged in relation to the other meaning-making resources at students' disposal (Haneda, 2014, p. 130). MacSwan (2020) advocates for a return to an asset-based approach to addressing school and home language differences, and SFL-based approaches can be utilized for this goal.

A Functional Approach to Language

The work of the WIDA Consortium, an educational organization that provides standards-based framework for MLLs, is informed in part by an SFL perspective on disciplinary literacy development (Gebhard, 2019). In late 2020, the Consortium revealed its revised English Language development Standards framework, 2020 Edition. The revised edition demonstrates a strong commitment to equity for multilingual learners by using students' linguistic and cultural resources, connecting subject and language in collaborative settings, and making language visible through a functional approach to language. According to WIDA (2020) "A functional approach to language development focuses on the purposeful use of language" (p.10). Schleppegrell (2013) claims that language provides a dynamic collection of tools that can be

utilized to acquire discipline concepts and practices; this metaphor of language as a toolbox is employed WIDA framework as well. The linguistic toolbox, like any toolbox, has a variety of tools that serve a variety of purposes; certain linguistic tools serve certain functions (WIDA, 2020).

According to Derewianka and Jones (2016), a functional model describes how language changes depending on the situation; it demonstrates how subject-specific language differs, how spoken language differs from written language, and how language differs while speaking with a friend versus giving a lecture. To clarify, according to WIDA (2020), we use language to represent the topic at hand, as well as the social roles and identities of people engaged; we use language to organize our ideas in certain ways, and to determine which words are most effective for our message. The context in which language is employed has an impact on the choices we make from the language system, and there are three major aspects in the context that influence our choices: the field, tenor, and mode (Derewianka & Jones, 2016). The field refers to content, which in a school setting this means that our language choices depend on the subject or topic being studied; as a result, the language used to discuss literature will differ from that used to express science principles (Derewianka & Jones, 2016). The tenor, according to Derewianka and Jones (2016), refers to the roles we assume and our relationships with others in the situation. Level of expertise, ethnic background, and gender all influence the tenor; therefore language choices differ based on these and other aspects (Derewianka & Jones, 2016). The mode of communication pertains to whether the communication is verbal, written, or visual (Derewianka & Jones, 2016). The register of the situation is determined by any combination of these contextual elements (field, tenor, and mode), and language choices vary greatly depending on the register (Derewianka & Jones, 2016).

Language is considered from and for its use in Systemic Functional Linguistic approaches, and all linguistic aspects are seen to fulfill functions in communication. (Llinares & Pastrana, 2013). In other words, language is not learned in isolation, but rather students learn the kind of language required to participate in the communicative purpose at hand; thus, teachers must focus attention on the language features relevant to a particular instructional activity. The explicit instruction of how language works can assist multilingual learners as they increase their language toolbox by expanding what they can do with language (WIDA, 2020). Within this functional approach, WIDA (2020) emphasizes the importance of multilingual learners' resources which should be seen as assets to be leveraged. Hanada (2014) supports this view with the call to intentionally access and utilize students' diverse linguistic, intellectual, and cultural resources as leverage for the development of academic communication, particularly AL. When using a functional approach, language development involves more than a linear process of increasingly precise structures; it becomes an extension of what multilingual learners can do with language in a variety of contexts that develops across the years of education (Christie & Derewianka, 2008 in WIDA, 2020).

The notion of 'Genre'

Whilst register focuses on linguistic choices made in response to a specific event, Derewianka and Jones (2016) contend that we should also look at the larger picture of language and culture. To meet a culture's needs, the language system evolves within that culture's context, and the purposes for which language is used in the culture are referred to as genres (Derewianka & Jones, 2016). Genre is described in this study as varieties of written text that help us comprehend the relationship between the text's social purpose and structure, which impact writers' language choices. This definition corresponds with Hyland's (2008) as they define genre

as “a term for grouping texts together, representing how writers typically use language to respond to recurring situations” (p. 544). Martin (2009) refers to genre “as a staged goal-oriented social process (p. 13), and Derewianka and Jones (2016) note that in educational settings, there are a variety of genres over which children must develop control in, in order to succeed academically. Language is utilized in each genre to construct meaning for a distinct goal through a different set of stages (Hodgson-Drysdale, 2016). These stages may also be thought of as organizational patterns, as Derewianka and Jones (2016) use the recount as an example of how this genre is structured in a predictable way, beginning with an orientation that explains who or what the text is about, followed by a description of the sequence of events. When we write, genre advises us that we must adhere to norms for organizing communications so that our readers can understand our intent and follow our thoughts (Hyland, 2008). Knowing the stages and language features of each genre is crucial for efficient instruction and this is why many educators have turned to genre-based approaches to writing instruction.

Genre Based Pedagogy

The application of SFL in the classroom is typically realized through genre-based pedagogy. The WIDA Standards Framework through its categorization of language into four Key Language Uses: narrate, inform, explain, and argue provides an outline of language as a form of genre pedagogy. Genre-based pedagogy is a language-centered approach for writing instruction that is founded on the idea that all writing is about making decisions in order to successfully express a message to a specific audience. This approach is based on Michael Halliday's (1993) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which views language as a "set of resources for making meaning" rather than a set of rules (Rose & Martin, 2012, p. 21). Since a genre-based method of writing instruction emphasizes the language conventions that a piece of

writing must adhere to in order to be accepted by its intended audience, it can be especially useful for teachers who work with MLLs because these practitioners often recognize the need of supporting their multilingual writers in gaining academic language proficiency; however, they aren't always aware of which language features to highlight (Maamuujav & Olson, 2019).

The use of this approach has also been identified as one way to meet the goal of preparing MLLs for the advanced demands of the CCSS (Ramos, 2015). That is because genre-based pedagogy incorporates overt language instruction, and according to Ramos (2015) explicit teaching that explains the way language functions as a meaning-making resource to construct academic, authoritative, and well-organized essays may enable MLLS write such texts critically. In a genre approach to writing instruction, students learn to recognize the structural and linguistic components unique to each genre, allowing them to make informed choices in their own writing. Through this approach, we can provide multilingual learners with a framework for mastering academic language complexity; this approach, which employs the Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC), provides explicit language instruction rather than relying on students to understand and implement genre structures from exposure alone. The notion of "guidance through interaction in the context of shared experience" is central to the TLC (Rose & Martin, 2012, p. 58). This pedagogical method for designing instruction comprises three phrases: Deconstruction, Joint Construction and Independent Constructions (Rose & Martin, 2012). Teachers introduce mentor texts from a specific genre that students are expected to read and write about during Deconstruction. The teacher scaffolds students' understanding of language and meaning through demonstration, modeling, and discussions about the purpose, organization, and language features of the text (Derewianka & Jones, 2016 as cited in de Oliveira et al., 2020). The following phase is Joint Construction, in which the teacher and students collaborate to create a new text in the

same genre as the mentor text. Teachers share responsibility with students during this phase, acting as scribes, eliciting ideas from students to co-construct the text (Derewianka & Jones, 2016 as cited in de Oliveira et al., 2020). Students are prepared to work independently to develop their own texts in the specific genre during Independent Construction (de Oliveira & Lan, 2014). Unlike traditional grammatical techniques that focus on decontextualized grammatical features, de Oliveira and Lan (2014) point out that these three phases of the TLC begin with the full text as the unit in focus rather than the individual sentence. As a result teachers can help their students increase their knowledge and control of school genres across disciplines (de Oliveira & Lan, 2014).

One of the most essential aspects of the TLC, according to Estela Brisk (2014) is the development of metalanguage to discuss genre and language features of students writings. Forey (2020) calls metalanguage a "powerful navigational toolkit" (p. 2). This "toolkit" is crucial because to identify and describe semantic patterns, teachers and students must have language for talking about language in order to recognize, name, and manipulate the disciplinary linguistic features they encounter at school (Gebhard et al., 2014). Furthermore, it is necessary to have meaningful metalanguage that is relevant to supporting disciplinary learning goals in order for teachers to communicate directly about language and meaning with students and colleagues (Schleppegrell, 2018).

Using metalanguage is not a new concept. Moore and Schleppegrell (2014) point out that teachers and students use literary metalanguage (terms like symbol, metaphor, and characterization) to make sense of stories and debate the author's craft while reading and discussing literature. They also highlight that teachers frequently utilize conventional grammar's metalanguage to improve the "correctness" or "mechanics" of student writing when reacting to it

(Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014). Although these types of metalanguage are used frequently and fulfill different goals, Moore and Schleppegrell (2014) assert that neither offers students with powerful tools for understanding how linguistic choices affect the meanings that are created.

According to Gebhard et al., (2014) SFL metalanguage provides functional categories for language analysis rather than formal or structural categories. These categories enable examination of how language operates to build ideas or experiences, reflect and enact connections between speakers and listeners or readers and writers, and regulate information flow within a text and a communicative environment (Gebhard et al., 2014). Additionally, Brisk (2014) asserts that since metalanguage is used to label the resources that students need to employ to carry out their writing, the more specific the metalanguage, the more beneficial it is for students. To illustrate this, Brisk (2014) explains that every genre has a beginning, yet they can vary greatly in nature; therefore, using SFL terminology such as *orientation* for personal recounts or narratives or *claim* for an argument is more descriptive of the content in each stage of the text than generally used terms like *beginning, middle or end.* Brisk (2014) further clarifies why specific metalanguage is crucial by pointing out that many teachers encourage students to "add details," yet the term "details" can refer to a variety of things, including reasons, events, and adjectives; as a result, the term "detail" should be replaced with a more accurate term. Specific metalanguage can enhance both teachers' and students' linguistic awareness, deepening and strengthening their ability to critically analyze disciplinary discourse (Gebhard et al., 2014). Being able to critically analyze texts is crucial because being critical means that students realize that the linguistic choices they make have an impact on what others comprehend from what they say and write (Schleppegrell & Moore, 2018).

Multilingual learners can be provided a framework for understanding academic language complexity by employing genre theory, which uses the TLC and metalanguage. It is essential for MLLs to understand why and how genre, or Key Language Uses, as they are referred to in the WIDA Standards Framework, are utilized in academic language. This understanding can help students better comprehend the target language as well as the cultural demands of school texts (Brisk, 2012). Because of its emphasis on authentic language use, genre theory, as a component of a functional approach to language learning, is particularly relevant to the CCSS.

Common Core State Standards and Implications for MLLs and Teachers

With the CCSS, state officials developed and implemented a common set of standards in an effort to guarantee that all children in the United States graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in college, career, and life. Gebhard (2019) points out that compared to past standards, the CCSS are fundamentally more difficult. "The CCSS redefine the nature of literacy and numeracy across content areas by requiring more attention be paid to reading and writing disciplinary genres" (Gebhard, 2019a, p. 204). With their new shifts and practices, these standards started a new chapter in standards-based education in the United States.

Hakuta et al. (2013) discuss how these standards raise expectations for learning. They note that there are "heightened demands in terms of what students must be able to do with language as they engage in content area learning" (Hakuta et al., 2013, p. 453). These standards have implications for those acquiring English as an additional language and for the teachers tasked to teach them; acknowledging that, Stanford University in January of 2012, organized a group of experts to discuss specifically what challenges the standards present for MLLs. This initiative, referred to as the Understanding Language Project with its aim to heighten educator

awareness of the vital role of language in the CCSS (TESOL International Association, 2013) identified several new shifts in these standards. Hakuta et al. (2013) summarized the discussion of the Understanding Language Project. They note that within ELA, the CCSS establish guidelines for academic language use and literacy skills for students to effectively communicate in all domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). This includes: reading and comprehending literature and informational texts of increasing complexity to build knowledge, using evidence to inform and argue in writing; as well as using linguistic resources and conventions to achieve particular functions, purposes, and rhetorical effects (Hakuta et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the CCSS acknowledges that students must be able to apply certain aspects related to "knowledge of language". Specifically, students must be able to "apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style when reading or listening" (CCSSO & NGA, 2010, p. 54). Additionally, the CCSS expects that students "adapt their communication in relation to audience, task, purpose, and discipline. They set and adjust purpose for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use as warranted by the task" (CCSSO & NGA, 2010, p. 7). The CCSS for ELA in particular presents challenges for teachers who have MLLs in their classrooms due to the demands for engaging in discussions, expressing ideas clearly, reading and writing complex texts and using language at an advanced level (de Oliveira, 2016a). Moreover, attention is placed on writing as the main means of demonstrating and communicating knowledge clearly to an audience based on real and imagined experiences. Despite these increased demands, the standards do not give particular recommendations on how to teach academic genre language elements and organizational structures (Santiago Schwarz & Hamman-Ortiz, 2020), nor do they mention explicitly effective pedagogical practices regarding MLLs (de Oliveira, 2016a).

However, Achugar and Carpenter (2018) contend that this emphasis on academic language, choice, and context is consistent with a functional approach to language development.

Because of their ability to maintain dominant discourses at the risk of further marginalizing others, the CCSS has received much criticism. However, one potentially good aspect of these standards is that they mandate that all teachers be responsible for their students' disciplinary literacy growth (Harman, 2018b). Nevertheless, the CCSS expectations require teachers to have a knowledge base and pedagogical strategies for teaching literacy across disciplines to MLLs. *Achieve the Core*, a website launched by Student Achievement Partners, an organization founded by authors of the Common Core State Standards, has identified a continuum of expertise that teachers will need to develop to ensure that MLLs of differing backgrounds and proficiency levels can achieve the CCSS. *Achieve the Core* recommends that teachers analyze complex texts, make MLLs aware of academic language included in complex texts, and explicitly teach the academic language required to understand complex texts so that MLLs may use these texts to talk and write across content areas (TESOL International Association, 2013). These strategies are similar to those advocated by the WIDA Consortium. Analyzing oral and written texts is one of the most essential educational practices required to achieve the WIDA Consortium's ELD Standards. The goal of looking at texts is to find ways to make language more apparent for students and this type of linguistic analysis can help linguistically diverse students master the academic literacy practices that are needed in educational settings (Schulze, 2015).

CCSS Genres

To analyze CCSS aligned writings, one must first recognize the unique characteristics of each required text type. "The writing practices of a culture are characterized by recurrent forms

of texts used for specific purposes with specific discourse organization and language features" (Brisk & Parra, 2018, p. 128). According to Brisk and Parra (2018), each genre's goal is different, and it's accomplished through different stages of text structure and language usage. The Common Core describes the kinds of writing that are unique to certain situations and purposes (de Oliveira, 2016a). Like the WIDA Key Language Uses, the CCSS organize these different kinds of writing into three "text types": narrative, informative/explanatory, and argument (CCSSO & NGA, 2010 Appendix A) As the standards progress, more detail is added to each of the standards which is expanded into substandards. The CCSS expect students to be able to produce "clear and coherent writing" in which "the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (CCSSO & NGA, 2010 p. 18).

Narrative Writing

According to the CCSSO and NGA (2010) "Narrative writing conveys experience, either real or imaginary, and uses time as its deep structure" (p. 23). The objective of a fictional or personal narrative, according to Brisk and Zhang Wu (2016) is to create a pattern of events with a problematic or unexpected outcome that entertains and instructs. This pattern of recounts and fictional narratives Brisk and Zhang Wu (2016) point out begin with an orientation that identifies the main characters, setting, and time period of the story; this is followed by a series of events, which usually end in a conclusion. Visual details of scenes, objects, or people to depict specific actions, the use of dialogue and interior monologue to provide insight into the narrator's and characters' personalities and motives, and the manipulation of pace to highlight the significance of events and create tension and suspense are all aspects of this genre (CCSSO & NGA, 2010).

Informative/Explanatory Writing

The CCSS note that informational/explanatory writing correctly delivers information. This type of writing is used to improve readers' knowledge of a subject, to assist readers in better

understanding a technique or process, or to give readers with a better understanding of a concept (CCSSO & NGA, 2010). To communicate information, informational/explanatory writing employs several strategies, including naming, defining, characterizing, or distinguishing various types or components; contrasting or comparing ideas or concepts; and quoting an anecdote or a situation to illustrate a point (CCSSO & NGA, 2010). Procedures, reports, and explanations are all included in the CCSS informational/explanatory genre (Brisk, 2014).

Although procedures are included under the informative/explanatory text structure, the CCSS do not include specific standards to support this type of writing. Despite the cursory mention of procedures in Appendix A of the CCSS, Brisk (2014) asserts that they are a crucial genre to address as procedures are an essential element in the sequence of other scientific genres. Furthermore, procedure which has of the goal of giving instructions (Brisk & Zhang-Wu, 2016), is a good genre to start with students because the texts are short and stages clear (Brisk, 2014). Additionally since the verbs are not conjugated, it is easier for MLLs to construct (Brisk, 2014).

The majority of the standards in the informative/explanatory genre address the structure of reports (Brisk, 2014). According to Brisk and Zhang Wu (2016) the goal of a report is to organize information. Reports begin with a broad statement, which is followed by subtopics which group information in an organized and logical way, and end with a statement that is usually related to the first statement (Brisk, 2013). In order to convey factual information in a precise way, reports often include complex noun groups as well as proper nouns; additionally the use of present tense and adjectives and adverbs to describe are common elements (Brisk, 2014).

The goal of explanations, which share many characteristics with reports (Brisk, 2014), is to explain how or why things are as they are, or to examine how things operate (Brisk & Zhang-Wu, 2016). As noted in Appendix A of the CCSS “explanations provide information about

causes, contexts, and consequences of processes, phenomena, states of affairs, objects, terminology" (p. 23). There are numerous types of explanations, including sequential, causal, cyclical, factorial (Derewianka & Jones, 2012, as cited in Brisk & Zhang Wu, 2016), and explanations are usually found in science and history (Knapp & Watkins, 2005, as cited in Brisk, 2014). Knapp and Watkins (2005, as cited in Brisk, 2014) note that explanations, like reports, begin with a general statement that introduces the phenomenon by characterizing or classifying it. Moreover, technical, and abstract vocabulary, action verbs, present tense, passive voice, generalized participants, complex nominal groups, adverbials, and sentence complexes are all shared by explanations and reports (Brisk, 2014). These features are in addition to the topic knowledge that must be mastered make explanations a difficult genre.

Argumentative Writing

While the CCSS Writing Anchor Standards 1–4 identify three text forms for students to master, there is particular focus on argumentation. The CCSSO and the NGA (2010) specifically address this preference with the following: "While all three text types are important, the Standards put particular emphasis on students' ability to write sound arguments on substantive topics and issues, as this ability is critical to college and career emphasis" (CCSSO & NGA, 2010 p. 24).The Standards cite Graff (2003) as support of this notion that argumentative writing holds a particular significance. Graff (2003, as cited in CCSSO & NGA, 2010) refers to the reality that universities are cultures of argument and therefore to prepare students to engage in this dialogue, K-12 schools should work to ensure that its students understand and engage in argument literacy. Since "a key genre in the CCSS in which all K-12 learners must develop reading and writing competence is the argument genre" (Ramos, 2019, p. 49), this will be the genre of focus for this study.

At each grade level CCSS Writing Standard 1 clarifies the goals for the text type of arguments. While there are considerable differences among the grade levels in terms of expectations regarding the topic of focus, there is a common emphasis on students formulating opinions (Grades K-5) or claims (Grades 6-12) that can be logically supported in an organized manner with evidence and reasons. An argument according to the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) (2010), is defined as "a reasoned, logical way of demonstrating that the writer's position, belief, or conclusion is valid" (p. 23). Key features of an argument as noted by the NGA Center and CCSSO include: defending claims or judgments with text evidence statistics or definitions, and presenting a case with supporting ideas and opposing ideas (CCSSO & NGA, 2010). Other features that have been identified as central to the genre of arguments include its embodiment of an authoritative tone, use of a variety of sentence structures for effect-namely short sentences to emphasize key points and more complex sentences to make readers slow down so to reflect on the text's claims and evidence, utilization of modal auxiliaries (*should, must)* and employment of ambiguous words (Olson et al., 2015). Like any genre, a well-constructed argument according to the CCSS vision has very specific features that must be included to effectively convey its message to its intended audience.

Since the CCSS divides writing into three very broad text types: narrative, informational/explanatory, and argument, Brisk (2014) feels that this obscures, oversimplifies, and even misidentifies the range of academic genres. Santiago Schwarz and Hamman-Ortiz (2020) feel that this warrants the use of an SFL method for writing instruction as it offers teachers and students explicit information about the objective of each genre as well as the range of language options accessible to the writer to fulfill this purpose within a given situational

setting. As a result, utilizing an approach based on SFL theory may help instructors apply the CCSS by giving clarity on each of these widely defined text categories.

Cultural Variations in Genre

The structural organization of texts, and the anticipated language features for any given genre differ based on culture (Brisk, 2013). María Estela Brisk (2013) points out that for MLLs learning to write in their new target language of English also involves learning how to function in the new target culture. She asserts that writing instruction and the performance expectations vary in different cultures and for children who have already begun their study in their home country, there is a greater challenge learning to write in the new target culture. She elaborates on this with the following: "Culture defines all aspects of the language choices, including topic, relationship with the audience, specific features of the language of written text, as well as structural organization of texts and language features of various genres" (Brisk, 2013, p. 44).

The idea that cultural variations may be reflected in how genres are used can be noted when looking at narratives. Narratives are firmly established in culture and shared with children at home from an early age, whether through reading or oral storytelling; as a result, students' personal recounts and fictional narratives may have forms transferred from their culture thus making recount or narrative genres are challenging as well (McCabe & Bliss, 2003; Perez, 2004, as cited in Brisk, 2013). However, there is another genre that is perhaps even more influenced by culture. Kaplan's (1966) seminal work demonstrates this notion that cultural differences are noticeable in the employment of genres, particularly with relation to argument structures. He contends that logic is not universal as it evolves out of culture. His idea that the logic expressed through the organization of written text is culture-specific and that speakers of different languages may perceive the same reality in different ways is the basis of a contrastive rhetoric

approach. He identified some different approaches to logical expression, with Western cultures taking a more linear approach, Middle Eastern cultures a parallel technique, Chinese a spiral form, and speakers of Romance Languages such as Spanish a meandering, digressive style. Hirvala (2013) agrees that MLLs may be affected by different cultural norms and writing practices due to variances in how people understand and conduct argumentation across cultures and languages. Matsuda (1997) cautions against generalizing the rhetorical organizational patterns of second language writers; however, he does acknowledge that contrastive rhetoric can provide teachers with insights that can guide their decisions in developing curriculum and in responding to students' needs. Contrastive rhetoric clarifies how the rhetorical structures of a person's native language influence writing in the second language, and since different cultures may structure texts differently, students coming from these cultures may write in a way that is not congruent with CCSS expectations. Thus, illustrating the need for an SFL approach that "helps to account explicitly for the extralinguistic and linguistic demands of the task" (Brisk, 2013, p. 52). Furthermore, given the emphasis on argumentative reasoning in current educational standards in the United States, as well as the influence culture has on MLLs' ability to develop these linguistically sophisticated skills, this research's purpose to focus on argument in CCSS writing is strengthened.

Relevant SFL Studies

SFL-informed pedagogies were initially developed in Australia; however, several scholars (e.g., (Aguirre-Muñoz et al., 2015; Berg & Huang, 2015; Brisk et al., 2016; de Oliveira, 2016; Brisk, 2014; Harman, 2018; Schleppegrell, 2004) working in the United States are advocating for such approaches to address inequities associated with literacy development for MLLs (Gebhard, 2019). Several studies focus specifically on the use of SFL for improving

writing outcomes for MLLs. Gebhard et al. (2007) investigated argumentative text writing and revision in a fifth-grade classroom. Linguistic analysis of one student's letters to the principal about recess found that as the student moved through the drafts, focused linguistic feedback made the student more aware of the linguistic conventions related to argumentative genre. In their study, Aguirre-Muñoz et al. (2015) demonstrate that when given explicit but meaning-focused education, students as young as fourth grade can recognize the language elements of specific genres. The results of their study again exemplified that students' writing improved significantly over time with a functional linguistics approach to instruction, and the gains were attributed to a better mastery of the linguistic aspects (Aguirre-Muñoz et al., 2015). These studies have demonstrated the value of explicit instruction in a single genre via a pedagogy influenced by functional language analysis. Other scholars have also conducted in-depth studies on the effects of SFL on writing teaching. Brisk's and colleagues' (Brisk, 2012; Brisk et al., 2011, 2016; Brisk, 2014; Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2011) work has substantially aided in understanding the influence of SFL on second language writing, and much of their research focuses on how SFL-informed teacher education can aid MLLs in comprehending and producing academic genres. The existing research shows that students' writing can benefit from explicit language instruction and SFL teacher training can lead to teachers improved ability to design and reflect on instruction with an explicit focus on academic language/literacy development and discipline specific content learning (Huang et al., 2017). These results coupled with the WIDA's theoretical basis in a functional approach to language development which aims to offer guidance on how educators can design learning environments that promote language growth in the context of disciplinary learning, illustrate that SFL influenced approaches to writing are a way to strengthen teachers' instructional practices for multilingual learners (Molle et al., 2022).

Equity for MLLs

According to the Aspen Education & Society Program (AESP) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (2017), educational equity means "that every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, despite race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background, or family income" (p. 3). Hence, equity is not synonymous with equality as equality merely provides all students with the same materials and resources. Equity entails targeting resources based on the needs and circumstances of individual students in order to remove barriers and provide equal opportunity for students (AESP & CCSSO, 2017). Such a conceptualization of equity must focus the importance of inputs, as inputs such as "access to high-quality teachers, rigorous coursework, support services, and supportive school climates" all contribute to educational equity (AESP & CCSSO, 2017, p. 4). Therefore, when examining the experience of MLLs, one must attend to the inputs that are required to promote a more equitable learning environment, including teacher qualifications and pedagogical approaches.

Educational researchers have attempted to conceptualize what equity for MLLs should look like in today's US classrooms, with its rigorous expectations coming from new content and language development standards (e.g., Common Core State Standards [CCSS], WIDA, etc.). The importance of teacher qualifications continues to be highlighted, yet the focus of some is specifically on teachers acquiring linguistic expertise for instructional purposes. The notion that there is a knowledge base regarding how language works, and the language required to be successful in schools is the concept known as pedagogical language knowledge (PLK). This concept has been explored by several researchers (Bunch, 2013; Galguera, 2011; Schleppegrell, 2004; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2018) who contend that to address the complex instructional

needs of MLLs, teachers need to develop certain linguistic competence to aid in content and language learning. Strategies that require PLK have been highlighted by *Achieve the Core* as expertise that is crucial in helping MLLs meet the challenges of the CCSS (TESOL International Association, 2013). Consequently, in today's educational landscape, meaningful engagement with content learning that involves effective language interactions is required (Nordmeyer et al., 2021); however, this cannot be achieved if teachers lack PLK.

Although PLK is recognized as vital, Nordmeyer et al., (2021) raise concerns about how learning opportunities may be provided to allow MLLs to engage meaningfully with content. They note that serving MLLs who are acquiring both language and content in an equitable manner requires going beyond what was once considered "good teaching" and necessitates careful scaffolding (Nordmeyer et al., 2021). The WIDA Consortium advocates for pedagogical approaches like scaffolding along with explicitly focusing on academic language. The Consortium's attention to academic language is viewed by some researchers (Jensen & Thompson, 2020) as a possible solution for the inequitable education that minoritized students experience. Equity is achieved through effectively teaching AL to all students, including minoritized learners who may have had less exposure to AL language practices in the past (Jensen & Thompson, 2020). Jensen and Thompson (2020) identify four principles of equity in teaching MLLs which focus on developing students' metalinguistic awareness specifically their ability to analyze language and its various uses as well as expanding their understanding of how and why certain practices are used in specific contexts. This metalinguistic awareness is central to the mission of the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework (2020) and its use of a SFL based approach to language which aims to support students' genre and register

knowledge growth in order to assist them extend their discipline-specific literacy practice (Gebhard, 2019).

Summary

Equity in education requires creating a setting that ensures that every child has an equal chance for success; this entails providing students with tailored support that addresses their specific needs in order to remove possible obstacles to accessing the curriculum. Because of the growing population of multilingual learners in K-12 schools, providing instruction that supports these students development of academic language and advanced literacy practices has become an increasingly complex challenge (Aguirre-Muñoz et al., 2008). Moreover, the CCSS which outline what it means to be literate in the twenty-first century, requires all students to develop critical reading skills necessary for a deep understanding of complex texts, as well as critical writing skills necessary for writing about those texts (Olson et al., 2015). Furthermore, these standards require students entering middle school to produce clear, coherent, and well-developed writing, develop a complex topic with relevant examples and evidence using credible sources, and use precise language, domain specific vocabulary, and nuanced transitional devices to show relations between ideas (Maamuujav et al., 2021). However, the CCSS provide little guidance for how teachers should address the writing demands and expectations with MLLs (de Oliveira et al., 2014; Graham & Harris, 2015). This continues to create inequitable learning outcomes, and since scholars (Graham, 2019) have emphasized the significance of writing for academic and life success, attention needs to be paid to understanding pedagogical approaches that support this important skill. In the past, the approach to MLLs' instruction involved prioritizing English language development over exposure to grade level content until students had sufficient proficiency to manage mainstream instruction (Villegas et al., 2018). It is becoming clear though that the method of isolating English instruction is not effective nor is it equitable especially since

41 states have adopted the CCSS as the benchmark for what K-12 students should know and be able to do, and the academic writing required by those standards necessitates both higher order thinking capabilities as well as the ability to communicate ideas in a clear and cohesive manner using academic language (Maamuujav et al., 2021). Therefore, according to Bunch et al. (2015) supporting MLLs in meeting the CCSS's demands requires considering the role of language in academic practices—not to "teach" language forms and structures as isolated targets of instruction before students engage in academic practices, but rather to create well-scaffolded learning activities that develop language and literacy as MLLs are apprenticed into rigorous and meaningful standards based- instruction. Thus, in order to meet the linguistic needs of multilingual writers for academic writing, we must first comprehend the nature of academic discourse as well as its language features (Maamuujav et al., 2021). The nature of academic discourse is dictated by its genre, and language features also vary depending on the genre and its intended goal. As a result, employing an SFL-genre-based approach that leverages the TLC as proposed by the WIDA Framework is an effective method of instructing MLLs on how to interrelate linguistic features as well as functions in the context of the genre in which they write. By focusing on teachers' perceptions of linguistically informed writing instruction, this study will examine the relationship between teachers' understanding of the language-related knowledge involved with CCSS writing demands and the language-related scaffolding skills identified in the WIDA framework for an SFL-based functional approach to language development.

CHAPTER III:

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this inquiry was to better understand teachers' perceptions of linguistically informed CCSS aligned writing instruction for multilingual learners, as well as what linguistic features and scaffolding practices teachers felt should be implemented to support MLLs' writing, and how backgrounds, experiences, and thoughts influenced their classroom practice. Although numbers and statistics can capture aspects of these topics, they fall short of presenting the more abstract issues. As a result, the analytical style of this dissertation was based on the approach of qualitative research and was guided by the following central question and sub-questions:

Central question: *How do teachers perceive linguistically informed CCSS-aligned writing instruction for multilingual learners, and how do these perceptions manifest in their practice?*

Sub-questions:

1) What are teachers' understandings of the linguistic features that must be highlighted and the scaffolding practices that must be implemented in order to provide linguistically informed CCSS aligned writing instruction to multilingual learners?

2) In what ways do teachers' perceptions and practices reflect a SFL-informed genre-based approach to language development as advocated by the WIDA Framework?

3) In what ways are teachers' perceptions and practices impacted by their teaching background and/or experience

Research Design

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), qualitative research is "interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed; that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 15). The district of interest for this research experienced an increase in diversity with an accompanying rise in multilingual learners (MLLs). This shift in demographics led to many teachers feeling unprepared to work with the changing population, especially in meeting the academic language demands set forth by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Understanding how these teachers perceive linguistically informed and responsive teaching in regard to CCSS writing demands was a goal of this study. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2013), qualitative research is a situated activity in which the observer is positioned in the world. Qualitative research is a collection of interpretive and material practices that make the world "visible". In addition to understanding how teachers in this district make sense of their world-educating an increasingly linguistically diverse population in the era of more demanding state standards-this study hoped to make visible teachers' understandings of fundamental linguistic features and pedagogical approaches that could be effective in supporting MLLs with CCSS writing instruction. Moreover, this research also aimed to make apparent the relationship between teachers' perceptions and practices and their background and/or experience.

Qualitative research utilizes a natural setting in which data is collected in a setting where participants may experience a problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As mentioned above, the participants in this research were experiencing the problem of being appropriately prepared to teach the academic language demands of the CCSS to the increasingly linguistically diverse student population; thus, the natural setting was the classroom these educators work in. At the

field location, which was the classrooms/schools for this context, information is acquired by speaking directly to people and observing how they behave and act in their surroundings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Through these encounters, rich description emerges. Instead of statistics, words and visuals are utilized to explain what the researcher has discovered about the phenomena (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The advantage of qualitative methods is that they provide an in-depth understanding of beliefs, activity process, or one or more individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Perceptions and their origins can be unclear and analysis of these and the behaviors that result from perceptions cannot be thoroughly examined with quantitative measures. Creswell and Creswell (2018) note that qualitative researchers collect many types of data rather than relying on a single source. Since qualitative research uses multiple forms of data, the authenticity of the results is ensured. If themes are established based on the convergence of many sources of data or participant views, this procedure can be said to enhance validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data in this research which included interview transcripts, field notes from observations, and transcripts from stimulated recall interviews were all open-ended in form and provided different types of evidence. This evidence played an important part in clarifying the perceptions, beliefs, meanings, and actions attributed to participants with regard to their actual behaviors.

Research Methodology

This dissertation employed qualitative case study research. A definition of a case study as described by Yin (2018) is a method that investigates a current phenomenon (the "case") deeply and within its real-world environment, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be obvious. While qualitative case studies are frequently used, they are not easily described due to the variety of ways in which they might be interpreted. This research

reflects Patton's (2002) description of nested or layered case studies in which individual case studies can be integrated into larger studies of programs or organizations. Although this study set out to investigate multiple real-world examples (cases) involving teachers' perspectives and actions, the influence of contextual elements like district policies on teachers' behavior suggests that the research may also be understood as a single case study. Therefore, it could be said that it eventually became a case study of a single district, and as such, the final case had numerous layers, with the individual educators nestled together. According to Yin (2018), the research method of case study typically answers a "how" question. The guiding question for this study was: How do teachers perceive linguistically informed CCSS-aligned writing instruction for multilingual learners, and how do these perceptions manifest in their practice?

Multiple data points within this case study model were used to inform the research questions. "A major rationale for using multiple sources of evidence in case study research relates to the basic motive for doing a case study in the first place: to do an in-depth study of the phenomenon in its real-world context" (Yin, 2018, p. 127). Additionally, multiple sources of data give multiple measures of the same phenomenon, allowing data triangulation to narrow construct validity issues. Therefore, in this triangulation, the use of two or more forms of data collection is a very essential method of confirming the validity of results (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013).

Context of Site

The study was conducted in a rural school district in the Pacific Northwest- Rolling Hills District (pseudonym). In the 2020-2021 school year, Rolling Hills District had a total of 2,635 students in grades pre-K to 12 with a student-teacher ratio of about 17:1. The district consists of four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. In the school year 2020-2021,

the MLL population totaled 5%. Rolling Hills District implements an 'inclusive' classroom approach to education in which MLLs at the elementary level are placed in mainstream classroom settings while receiving supplemental English instruction in a pull-out or push-in format, and MLLs at the secondary level take one focused English Language Development (ELD) class to develop their language proficiency while also attending mainstream classes. In mainstream classrooms, students spend their time with their native English-speaking counterparts as well as other MLLs or former MLLs. The study took place in inclusive mainstream elementary classrooms focusing on the 4th and 5th-grade levels.

Participants

The study participants, who are identified by pseudonyms, were intentionally selected through purposeful, convenient sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It is helpful to utilize purposeful sampling when using multiple cases to focus on the depth of a phenomenon (Schoch, 2019). This logic is supported by Emmel (2013), who states that the goal of deliberate sampling is to choose data-rich situations that will best answer the research questions. Thus, in this case study research, purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to choose and learn from those deemed as promising in terms of the data they could provide. To recruit participants for the study, mainstream teachers (for the purposes of this dissertation, the term "mainstream teacher" describes those who are content teachers trained to teach specific grades) in grades 4-5 were identified from the intended site's email listserv. Participants were contacted through email and asked to participate. To be eligible, the individual must had been teaching 4th or 5th grade and had an MLL in their classroom.

The goal was for this multiple-case study to have a sample size of five to eight teachers. There is no prescribed number of cases to use in a multiple case study, but various viewpoints

examine the factors of depth, breadth, and manageability. According to Stake (2013) The benefits of a multi-case study will be reduced if fewer than four instances are chosen, or if more than ten are picked. Two or three instances do not demonstrate enough interaction across circumstances, but 15 or 30 cases provide more interactive originality than the study team can comprehend (Stake, 2013). Schoch (2019), contends that having three to four separate cases for comparison is probably the maximum cases that can reasonably be handled in multiple-case research. These considerations have factored into the researcher's determination of sample size for this study. Because one of the ways teachers' perceptions are realized is through their pedagogical choices and the act of teaching, it was required to observe the participants as they taught. In terms of scheduling interviews and observations, five to eight individuals seemed to be a manageable number for a multiple case study. Moreover, based on Stake's (2013) recommendations, this amount could provide sufficient data across contexts. The study had seven interested participants that filled out the consent form; however, one participant never scheduled an interview and was subsequently withdrawn from the study after lack of contact. Six individuals comprised the final sample.

Researcher's Reflexivity

Researchers in qualitative research can never be completely free of their perception of the experience. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) contend that with the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis there are inherent bias that can have an impact on the study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018) reflexivity is a key characteristic of qualitative research. Within such a qualitative approach, comments by the researcher are included about their role and their personal background and experiences which may hold potential for shaping their interpretations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Inevitably, my perceptions toward teachers'

preparation for working with MLLs has also been shaped by my background and experiences. In addition, my position in this research takes that of an insider standpoint. Thus as Ross (2017) asserts, insider qualitative research necessitates reflection on one's own identities, experiences, and perceptions in regard to what or person one is investigating.

I received my initial professional training at a university-based teacher preparation program when there were no prerequisites for teacher candidates to learn about culturally and linguistically diverse student instruction. I started my first position as an educator in August of 1998 with the title of Bilingual 1st Grade Teacher in Phoenix, Arizona; I had no preparation in working with multilingual learners despite the title I held. Therefore, I worked quite hard that first year to earn my English language endorsement. I switched jobs several times since that first role, but always remained in the field of English language education and have worked directly with K12 students as well as supporting their mainstream classroom teachers for the majority of my career. Prior to my current role, I earned an MA degree in TESOL, which contributed in the development of my expertise as a language specialist which I would utilize in contexts where language would be taught apart from content. This language specialist role is one that is fading from the K12 setting. Inclusion practices are the norm now for educating MLLs, therefore mainstream classroom teachers are the main support for these students.

While engaging in this research, I worked as an MLL Specialist/Instructional Coach where part of my role involved supporting mainstream teachers who often had no professional training in second language education but who were primarily responsible for instructing MLLs at their schools. When providing professional development (PD) and coaching to these educators they repeatedly expressed frustration and desperation about the growing number of MLLs in their classrooms and how unprepared they feel. Specifically, the district in the site of the study

places a significant focus on reading, which presents a significant challenge for the teachers who are responsible for teaching writing as well. This difficulty was compounded by the fact that, historically, there was a dearth of essential materials for writing. Because of my interactions with the teachers I supported, I became aware of the gaps in educator training as well as the limited exposure that many educators have to instructional strategies that offer language support to MLLs. These interactions and the site of study's lack of emphasis on writing instruction, inspired the focus of this study, as it was assumed that these variables contributed to the stall in language progression shown on MLLs' state language exams.

My interactions with the study's participants not only piqued my curiosity about the topic, but also allowed me to play the role of an insider researcher. Insider research is undertaken within a social group, organization, or culture in which the researcher also belongs to (Greene, 2014). I conducted this study at my home institution thus qualifying myself as an insider. According to Chavez (2008), insider researchers can be classified as whole insiders, who share several identities or significant experiences with the group under study, or partial insiders, who share a single identity with a certain degree of distance or detachment from the community. Based on this I may more accurately be considered a *partial insider.* For ten years I served in the capacity of an MLL Specialist and Instructional Coach in four elementary campuses within this school district. My position as an Instructional Coach allowed me to witness the frustrations that mainstream instructors have while attempting to support MLLs. However, this role may have influenced participants willingness to discuss their perceptions. To avoid having participants feeling obligated to affirm or conform to the researcher's own opinions, it is vital to preserve neutrality during the interview process; therefore, I worked to suppress beliefs in my interactions

with my participants. as well and am cognizant of the potential of personal bias swaying a researcher's interpretations.

The positionality of the insider researcher allows certain advantages and disadvantages. According to Ross (2017), some of these advantages that I experienced included: "ease of access to the field or participants; expediency of building rapport" (p. 327). However, I felt that in some instances I experienced some of the constraints. Because of the nature of the researcher-participant interaction, discussing essential aspects of the study might be uncomfortable (Chavez, 2008). Multiple participants initially seemed concerned to share their honest opinions about newly adopted writing materials and appeared self-conscious when they could not articulate what linguistically informed writing instruction involved. These struggles seemed in line with what Ross (2017) notes occurs when a researcher holds numerous positions that are unevenly placed with respect to subjects, complex issues of power may arise. Aware that power difficulties may arise, and cognizant of my own biases and personal views on the subject, in particular the fact that I have strong convictions about how writing should be taught, I approached this topic with caution. During interviews, I kept my distance from all conversations to avoid the chance of my ideas impacting the data's conclusion, so mitigating the problems associated with insider research.

Data Collection

In accordance with qualitative and case study research tradition (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2018) multiple data sources were utilized. The next section goes through the various types of data that were obtained during this study. Included are details on initial interviews, observations of each teacher in their classroom, as well as follow-up interviews and additional contextualizing data.

Interviews

In social science, the interview is perhaps the most extensively used methodological and research instrument; it is a mainstay of qualitative research (Edwards & Holland, 2020). Based on the belief that these data-gathering interactions provide access to the real core of social actors' motivations, experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and feelings, interviews have remained an unquestioned method (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Silverman, 2017; Whitaker & Atkinson, 2019 in Edwards &Holland, 2020). “The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 3). Because the research interview is a structured dialogue with a purpose that goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of ideas (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015), the process of this study followed an interview guide. The interview questions should be thoughtfully phrased and presented in a way that allows the research participant to freely discuss their thoughts (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015), therefore the guide included more appropriate open-ended questions to allow respondents to easily share their opinions. This semi-structured format which is typical in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) enabled the examination of certain themes with the participant but also allows for flexibility to engage in spontaneous discourse that could yield greater depth. Specific questions focused on identifying information about the teachers’ past experiences, including professional training, linguistic background, and familiarity with CCSS and working with MLLs. As needed, more information was elicited. These "probes," or questions or remarks that follow up on something previously asked, will give more clarification (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Originally it was thought that the interviews would take place at teachers’ school locations; however, scheduling participants from multiple sites along with COVID pandemic

uncertainties led to the decision to conduct and record interviews via Zoom. Gray et al. (2020) acknowledge that the development of new video conferencing platforms like Zoom provide qualitative researchers with novel data gathering options, and they point out that the most significant advantage to online video conferencing for qualitative research is accessibility to participants. Other benefits of using Zoom include the ability to securely record interviews (Archibald et al., 2019). Six in-service teachers were selected for initial interviews. Interviews were approximately 45-70 minutes in length. These semi-structured interviews, conducted via Zoom, sought to better understand teachers' notion of linguistically informed writing instruction by inquiring into completed coursework on language and writing, conceptions of linguistically informed instruction, and their views of the role of language in writing. Initial interviews were conducted from January to February 2022. For this study, live transcription was enabled during the zoom interviews, and the option to access the entire transcript was selected, allowing the transcript to be saved at the end of the meeting. When the interviews were finished, a draft of the interview had already been transcribed, which was fine-tuned while listening to a playback of the original interview that had been stored to a computer.

Observations

This study also utilized observational data, which as opposed to an interviewee's secondhand account of the world, reflects a direct experience with the phenomena of interest (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The researcher took on the stance of *observer as participant* where the researcher's role as information gather is known to the group (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The advantage of this relationship allows the researcher to record information as it occurs. While silently using a laptop computer from a discreet place in the classroom, myself as the researcher quietly took notes on teachers' activities, their interactions

with students, lesson implementation, and other associated contextual factors occurring in the classroom. The linguistically informed writing pedagogy observation protocol (see Appendix) and evidence collection are intended to further examine the research questions as well as concerns identified by the literature review. The observation protocol intended to aid in the next step of data collection-the stimulated recall interview. Dempsey (2010) notes that to effectively follow-up to an observation using then a rubric describing the important elements to observed activity should be developed. By creating such an outline, the researcher will acquire a better understanding of the remaining issues concerning processes in the subject under investigation (Dempsey, 2010). It is clear then that observations are also utilized to triangulate emergent results, which means they are used in combination with interviewing to substantiate the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Stimulated Recall Interview

Though essential for the aims of the proposed study, classroom observations may provide insufficient insights into the cognitive element of teaching. Therefore, an adapted stimulated recall interview (SRI) was used. According to Ryan and Gass (2012), stimulated recall is a technique for obtaining qualitative data on the thought processes involved with performing an action or participating in an event in which a stimulus is utilized to aid recall of these thinking processes. The most typical stimuli are video and audio recordings of task performance; however there may be additional options available (Bowles, 2019). In this study, transcripts from the lesson observation, notes on the observation protocol and the lesson plan were the stimulus for the SRI. In stimulated recall, the researcher refers to certain elements of the stimulus and asks the participant to indicate what he or she was thinking at the time (Bowles, 2019). In this study, the researcher devised open-ended probes to assist participants in remaining focused on the

reflecting on the lesson while eliciting how they highlighted linguistic features and provided scaffolding in their teaching practices but will not influence them to respond in a biased manner for the research. The goal is that through critical reflection and examination of their own practices, teachers will be able to identify how their actions reflect their understanding of linguistically informed writing instruction guided by a SFL-informed genre based pedagogy.

Data Coding

Data analysis and coding proceeded through the use MAXQDA (2022) Software. To gain a clearer idea about the various aspects of SFL genre-based pedagogy in teachers' practice, analysis began with deductive coding. Eight provisional codes were established prior to analysis. The development of these codes was guided by the principles of genre-based SFL pedagogy which utilized the Teaching Learning Cycle. The following eight codes created the start list: "Argumentative features", "Building the Field", "Deconstruction/Text Analysis", "Joint Construction", "Independent Construction", "Purpose of Writing", and "Explicit Language Instruction". These codes were created based on the WIDA Frameworks identified language features for the argument genre, as well as the stages of the Teaching Learning Cycle and evidence of explicit language instruction as recommended by researchers cited in the literature review.

When data did not fit into the eight pre-determined codes, the first cycle coding methods also employed inductive coding. As data were analyzed, a variety of codes, including structural, in-vivo, value, and attitude codes, were utilized. For structural coding, research questions were turned into a code. From the questions, the following codes were generated "Perceptions of Linguistically Informed Instruction" "Highlighted Language Features" "Scaffolding Practices" and "Teachers' Background and Experiences". Since this study was predominately concerned

with teachers' perceptions, values coding was employed to capture the subjective nature of teachers' experiences that was not highlighted with the start list codes. Codes and memos were analyzed to draw links and narrow the data set down to representative samples of teacher perspectives and pedagogical strategies about language instruction in writing. In addition, axial coding was employed to identify parts of the data that showed signs of being very substantial and relevant to the field of linguistically informed teaching. "Beliefs about writing and CCSS"; "SFL-informed genre-based approach"; "Scaffolding practices"; "Perceptions and Understandings"; "Impact of Background and Experiences" were the most prominent categories that emerged.

Ensuring Accuracy and Credibility

The value of a study is defined by how trustworthy or credible it is. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), credibility entails thoroughness in the study process. To ensure accurate and trustworthy data, In this study, credibility was enhanced by the use of member checking, asking participants to confirm the researcher's interpretation of their perceptions and practice, and through intercoder reliability (ICR), a metric that measures how well various coders agree on how the same data should be coded (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

Member checking is the most important strategy for eliminating the possibility of misinterpreting what participants say and do, and it's also a strong tool to identify one's own biases (Maxwell, 2013). Member checking enabled participants to offer input and, if necessary, make modifications. Participants were provided with copies of the completed analysis, which included highlighting each teacher's individual analysis. Participants were asked if they could respond with any comments they might have regarding the analysis. The specific objective was to determine if teachers agreed with the identified perceptions that may have influenced the

implementation of scaffolding practices in their classrooms, if any significant perceptions or understandings of linguistically responsive teaching were omitted, and if the teachers' experiences were misrepresented in any way. A few modifications were made based on the participants' input. The majority of these revisions consisted of clarifying their references to linguistic features or expanding on their logic to what was observed by offering background information to parts of the lesson or units that were not observed.

By increasing the uniformity and transparency of the coding process, ICR can provide assurance that specific measures were made to guarantee that the final analytic framework provides a trustworthy representation of the data (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). After coding the findings, I engaged an additional coder to guarantee the final analytic framework provided a reliable account of the data. A qualified multilingual learner educator with experience in a teacher education program was chosen because of their competence in the functional approach to language development and knowledge of MLL-appropriate writing instruction. During our meeting via zoom, I briefed the coder on the study, emailed them a summary of the relevant research which included the literature review, and provided them a list of codes and definitions to review. After that, they went through all of the findings and gave each one a code, but they did so without first observing how I had coded the findings. The match rate was 97 percent. It was revealed that several larger segments were separated out by the intercoder and coded differently. After review, it was determined that all nine findings that were categorized differently could have been dually-coded or in one case, a third code could was applied to the segment. The results are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Results of Intercoder Process

Segment	**Primary Researcher's Coding**	**Intercoder's Coding**	**Re-code**
I'm feeling very frustrated with the writing organization because they dedicate so much time to these structures that aren't as important in fifth grade. And then informational and opinion are at the very end, scheduled for the end of the school year and we're out of time, like and I've been following closely to the schedule like I might be two weeks off of the schedule total	Beliefs about Writing and CCSS/Feelings about teaching writing	Thoughts about or influence of district materials	
So, I feel like I like this curriculum. I like it even though it doesn't really explain it that well, but I think we've talked about it, like informally when especially like during personal narratives. Because we're like well the personal narrative so it's a true story that happened to us, so what you know, are we going to do first person or third person and that kind of stuff but nothing I feel like super explicit which I'm really sad to say, but um or like when we did our fiction writing some students,	SFL-informed genre-based approach /Argumentative features	SFL-informed genre-based approach /Purpose of writing	
Mostly, that it was just that an opinion or persuasive essay is really somebody's opinion and it's not necessarily the truth, I guess that is the main thing. But so like, I think bugs are creepy too, but does everybody you know	SFL-informed genre-based approach /Building the field	SFL-informed genre-based approach /Argumentative features	
As when I think that functional approach, I think of the things that the kids need will need to be able to function. So, when I hear when I hear that I just think of like what students are going to need to function in the classroom and function in society, *I guess, and I think that the best way to do that is probably through explicit and direct instruction of vocabulary and of common language*. Throughout our classroom and throughout our texts that we read and different situations that were in.	SFL-informed genre-based approach /Explicit Language Instruction	Perceptions and Understandings/Beliefs /Practices language features to highlight	

Table 3.1 (cont.)

yeah, I think we'd have to really focus more on things like theme and things like character development or progression, and so I think it would be a lot more. *A lot more analytical of the author's writing and author's purpose, which would then lead to us being a lot more purposeful with analyzing how the author wrote the text and why they did it that way*.	Perceptions and Understandings/Understanding of language learning	SFL-informed genre-based approach /Building the field	
you're not used to the different sounds that languages make and so like even when I'm at the airport now I feel like my ears attracted to different languages and now when I like travel places I can kind of like pinpoint I'll be like oh it's Portuguese like I know they're speaking Portuguese, even though like I don't know how to speak Portuguese, I can just tell it hey kind of sounds like Spanish and French but it's not Spanish and I I know it's not French so it must be Portuguese	Perceptions and Understandings/Understanding of language learning	Perceptions and Understandings/Perceptions of Challenges for MLLS	
So we really talked about the structure of that introduction paragraph, so you know, like what you saw with the topic sentence that draws the reader in. *Because they were really struggling with the difference between academic language and conversational language.*	Perceptions and Understandings/Beliefs /Practices language features to highlight	SFL-informed genre-based approach /Explicit Language Instruction	Perceptions and Understandings/Perceptions of Challenges for MLLS
It kind of feels like this writing curriculum is almost designed for like already English speakers. Because it feels like "What do you notice?" and, like some of those students who don't notice, it doesn't really support their learning. And it kind of just feels like you know, like, I feel, with grammar a lot of times as Oh, but that's wrong that's grammatically incorrect like, that's grammatically correct and people are like well why and you're just like well because it is it sounds wrong, whereas like nonnative English speakers. It doesn't sound wrong, and so they need that support like they need the actual rules.	Training and Resources Needed/Pedagogical Knowledge needed to teach writing	Thoughts about or influence of district materials	

Table 3.1 (cont.)

I really like this curriculum though and the fact that it produces so much work I have students who have asked for a second writing notebook like they've gone through a notebook which is really awesome. And I just and I don't know we'll see what our la scores are but I'm very nervous based on our practice has been that we talk about how much of this is like actually connecting to our fourth grade standards and I think my students are finding a love for reading and for writing, but I am I'm scared that our writing is not as structured as it's going to need to be four scores for the SBA.	Training and Resources Needed/Pedagogical Knowledge needed to teach writing	Thoughts about or influence of district materials	

Summary

Researchers must incorporate approaches into the study process that limit or prevent bias and increase the researcher's truthfulness regarding the phenomena in order to attain credibility. To assure the validity of this research, appropriate precautions were performed during and after data collection and analysis. In addition to gaining UIUC IRB approval, informing participants about the study's aim, their right to withdraw, and obtaining a signed informed consent form, to guarantee the accuracy and integrity of the findings, I addressed my positionality, employed member checking as well as an intercoder procedure.

CHAPTER IV:
ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

As previously established, the CCSS raise expectations for learning and have implications for multilingual learners as well as for the teachers who are responsible for instructing them (Hakuta et al., 2013). Furthermore, writing is increasingly emphasized as the primary means of demonstrating and communicating knowledge; however, despite these increased expectations, the standards make no specific recommendations on how to teach academic genre language elements and organizational structures (Santiago Schwarz & Hamman-Ortiz, 2020), nor do they mention explicitly effective pedagogical practices regarding MLLs (de Oliveira, 2016). Therefore, teachers are urged by researchers (Bunch, 2013; Galguera, 2011; Schleppegrell, 2004; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2018) to have a specific level of linguistic competency in order to help MLLs understand both material and language.

The purpose of the study was to explore how mainstream teachers perceive linguistically informed and responsive CCSS-aligned writing instruction for multilingual learners. The research questions were as follows:

Central question: *How do teachers perceive linguistically informed CCSS-aligned writing instruction for multilingual learners, and how do these perceptions manifest in their practice?*

Sub-questions:

1) What are teachers' understandings of the linguistic features that must be highlighted and the scaffolding practices that must be implemented in order to provide linguistically informed CCSS aligned writing instruction to multilingual learners?

2) In what ways do teachers' perceptions and practices reflect a SFL-informed genre-based approach to language development as advocated by the WIDA Framework?

3) In what ways are teachers' perceptions and practices impacted by their teaching background and/or experience

The data analysis for this study was based on thematic analysis, which according to Braun et al. (2019) is "an umbrella term, designating sometimes quite different approaches aimed at identifying patterns across qualitative datasets" (p. 844). Thematic analysis often results in a set of themes that explain the most apparent patterns in the data. These themes can be found using inductive procedures, in which the researcher looks for patterns in the data without any prior frame of reference, or deductive methods, in which a theoretical or conceptual framework provides a guiding structure (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Since this study utilizes Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) informed genre-based pedagogy the thematic analysis included a combination of inductive and deductive analysis.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) emphasize that being simultaneously active in both data collecting and data analysis is the preferred method in qualitative research. Thus, because qualitative data analysis is a nonlinear, iterative process (Lester et al., 2020), it is customary for researchers not to list out a sequential analytic method. Lester et al., (2020) provide a detailed procedure for thematic analysis, which will be utilized to aid in this study's simultaneous nature of the analytic process. Preparing and organizing data, transcribing data, becoming acquainted with the data corpus, memoing data, coding data, creating categories and themes from underlying coded portions, and making the analytic process transparent (Lester et al., 2020) are all part of the phases that will be involved in a series of iterative analytic cycles.

Since this was a multiple case study, cross-case analysis was utilized. In cross-case analysis, a systematic comparison exposes similarities and differences, as well as how they impact conclusions. Each example case was examined separately to compare the patterns

discovered, leading to theoretical conclusions. Furthermore, case comparison is an appropriate tool for isolating characteristics of teacher practices and dispositions that aid in illuminating how the focal construct is realized in the data. If all of the individual case studies turn out as expected, this would give persuasive evidence for the initial set of assumptions relevant to the overall multiple-case study (Yin, 2018).

In order to discover common themes that arose in addition to answering the research questions, both deductive and inductive processes were used to examine the data. In some circumstances to better align with a study's framework, a provisional list of codes can be chosen ahead of time (Saldaña, 2021). Eight provisional codes to identify aspects of the Systemic Functional Linguistics framework in the data were established prior to analysis. These codes were constructed based on the principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics genre-based pedagogy. In addition to eight codes from the start list, first cycle coding methods utilized inductive coding which is the process of analyzing raw data in order to group it into themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). More specifically, a combination of structural codes, in vivo codes, process codes, as well as values and attitude codes were applied (Saldaña, 2021). For interview transcripts, structural coding, known as anchor coding, is seen as more appropriate because it applies a conceptual phrase reflecting a topic of inquiry to a larger portion of the dataset, which relates directly back to a specific research question (Saldaña, 2021), and thus was used in the first cycle coding, which consisted of initial interviews. The initial round of coding established 35 codes. After first cycle coding, a round of second cycle focused coding or selective coding was implemented. In this round, the value code "embraces diversity" was combined with the attitude code "positive view of diversity," and since focused coding searches for the most common or significant codes to build the most prominent categories (Saldaña, 2021), organizing

the codes began. The salient categories that emerged were “Beliefs about writing and CCSS”; “SFL-informed genre-based approach”; “Scaffolding practices”; “Perceptions and Understandings”; “Background and Experiences”. Following focused coding, axial coding was applied. To synthesize and arrange data into more coherent, hierarchically organized categories and subcategories, axial coding provides a coding framework or template that gives emerging concepts and their possible link to other framework components dimension (Scott & Medaugh, 2017). After reviewing and conducting axial coding of the 374 previously coded parts, an intercoder was hired to conduct another round of coding. They were provided with the Introduction and Literature Review of the study, and then were given the codebook. In alignment with Saldaña's (2021) guidance, the codebook included brief content descriptions or brief data examples to explain the rationale behind the indicator. The results of the interrater coding revealed 97% agreement. To those who are primarily concerned with a statistical agreement, the 80-90 percent range appears to be a basic criterion (Saldaña, 2021).

Coding and analysis via the technique of analytic memoing (Saldaña, 2021), which consists of recording short reflections on my coding and themes in the data, occurred while data collection was still ongoing. Memoing assisted in the clarification of ideas regarding the subject of research. Then, inside each case, I conducted a structural and thematic analysis to find patterns, relationships, and themes in my participants' perceptions and practices. I looked for indications of an SFL genre-based pedagogy in the linguistic features emphasized and scaffolding practices used. Chapter Four presents the data in two sections. The first section pairs the research questions with a summary of the related data analysis, while the second section provides an examination of an additional theme that emerged overall from all participants.

Participants Descriptive Data

Gender The majority of the participants in this study were female. Five of the six participants were female, while only one was male. This was not intentional but a result of the makeup of the district faculty. This statistic correlates with recent data. According to current NCES data, 89 percent of American elementary school teachers are female, whereas 11% are male (Taie & Goldring, 2020).

Teacher Education Three participants reported they had taken two or more college courses focused on the needs of MLLs. Furthermore, these same three participants had an English Language Learner Endorsement on their state teaching certificate. Two of the participants had learned about the needs of MLLs in college but had not taken any courses specifically on the subject. One of the participants had no MLL-related courses and had received their master's in teaching online with an undergraduate major in communication with an advertising emphasis. All the participants reported that they had no courses specifically focused on the teaching of writing.

Years of Experience The majority of participants had 4-5 years of teaching experience. Two participants had zero to five years of experience.

Language Background Of the six participants interviewed for this study, the sample included three teacher educators who identified themselves as having been exposed to another language at a young age. The remaining three participants had no prior language experience other than their native language of English and high school language courses. Two of the three who said they had been exposed to another language as a child had a parent who spoke another language, while the third said they attended a dual language school when they were younger. None of them

claimed to be bilingual, but all three possessed an English learner endorsement on their state teaching certificate.

Table 4.1 Summary of Participants' Descriptive Data

Participant	Years Teaching Experience	Teacher Education	Language Background
Casey	5	English language endorsement	bilingual parent
Alex	5	no MLL-related courses	no prior language experience
Jordan	1	English language endorsement	attended dual-language elementary school
Jessie	4	learned about the needs of MLLs, but no specific courses on the subject.	no prior language experience
Taylor	5	learned about the needs of MLLs, but no specific courses on the subject.	no prior language experience
Sydney	2	English language endorsement	bilingual family

Central Research Question

Fang (2020) asserts that a linguistically informed and responsive approach sees language as the school's hidden curriculum and argues for explicit grammar instruction as a means of promoting advanced literacy development. It fosters a new way of thinking about language and text that enables students to make sense of what they are reading. Additionally, it equips teachers with tools and a metalanguage for involving students in understanding how lexical and grammatical choices communicate content, structure text, and infuse points of view in discipline- and genre-specific ways.

During the initial interview, participants were asked to describe their understanding of the notion of CCSS-aligned writing instruction for multilingual learners that is linguistically

informed and responsive. All of the participants reported being unfamiliar with the phrase linguistically informed /responsive, but the majority participants (n=5) attempted to convey what they felt it might mean. Throughout the interviews participants referred to aspects of supporting MLLs in their discussions and even mentioned elements of frameworks that support MLLs; however, only two participants sought to convey their thinking via the lens of writing instruction. The results of the analysis for this guiding question reveal that participants' comments imply that they did not understand the full scope of linguistically informed/responsive writing instruction, particularly Fang's (2020) and Schleppegrell's (2004) belief that language is a part of a hidden curriculum.

Casey's understanding of this approach as it relates to writing instruction addressed their belief that linguistically informed instruction entails having the expertise to examine what your students are doing, identifying their struggles, and determining precisely what to focus on. They felt it involves examining student work and then responding with the necessary resources. This understanding is crucial as de Jong (2013) notes that for teachers to be effective, they must have a repertoire of strategies for getting to know their students and techniques to scaffold their lessons. Although they were conscious of the fact that teachers must be able to recognize and support students' struggles, Casey was also conscious of their linguistic limitations, noting that knowing what resources to use was a source of difficulty, and concluding that this lack of knowledge hindered the responsive aspect of the instruction. As they put it poignantly, "You can't be responsive if you're not informed."

It was interesting to note that both Jordan and Taylor, who attended the same teacher preparation program, attempted to connect the terms linguistically informed and responsive teaching to their understanding of cultural responsiveness. This aligns with Lucas and Villegas'

(2013) conclusions that language-related issues are frequently overlooked in the broader discussion of culturally responsive teacher preparation. Jordan believed that since cultural responsiveness involves learning about other cultures, accepting them, and learning how to incorporate them, they concluded that with a focus on linguistics it would entail learning about different languages and perhaps some of their origins. As a first-year teacher, they reflected on their preservice training and on a discussion from one of their ESL endorsement classes, in which they learned that there are differences in the structure of different languages, and that having some background knowledge of those differences and being aware that they exist is part of being linguistically informed. Their understanding reflected an inclusion of what Lucas and Villegas (2011) incorporate into their knowledge and skills component of their linguistically responsive framework which is *Learning about MLL students' language backgrounds.* This is essential knowledge to have since it is necessary to understand the language background of MLLs in order to anticipate areas of learning tasks that will be challenging for them (Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Understanding an MLL's language background should also involve a grasp of the student's language progression as this knowledge will help teachers teach more effectively because it provides insight into which language problems will resolve naturally and which might need special invention (Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2018). However, even when considering the framework developed by Lucas and Villegas (2011), Jordan only addressed a portion of the necessary knowledge and skills for a linguistically responsive teacher; their understanding did not emphasize the need for understanding key principles of second language acquisition, deep and interconnected disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, or the orientations of a linguistically responsive teacher as required expertise.

Taylor acknowledged that while culturally responsive teaching is frequently referenced, they had never heard of linguistically informed teaching and like Jordan, they surmised that it must be related in some manner to culturally responsive teaching. They assumed it meant being responsive to students' and families' language and communication needs and then utilizing the tools necessary for success, such as translation tools, whether it's a conference or sending home, a newsletter in a different language, or simply being open and responsive to each student's and family's language needs. It is possible to say that this reference corresponds to the *Inclination to Advocate* for MLLs because advocacy can focus on a variety of concerns, including engaging MLLs' families (Lucas et al., 1990, as cited in Lucas & Villegas, 2011). While advocacy is a fundamental orientation for linguistically responsive teachers, it does not address many other language aspects that perpetuate inequities for MLLs in the classroom most notably the ability for educators to identify the language demands of schooling. Berg and Huang (2015) argue that successful schooling for all children requires a culturally responsive pedagogy that places a strong emphasis on the linguistic aspect, specifically academic language. Both Jordan and Taylor likened linguistically responsive teaching to culturally responsive pedagogy but failed to highlight the need for focus on linguistic aspects and academic language.

Applying their definition of the phrase linguistically informed/responsive as it pertains to instruction, Jessie centered their remarks around the notion of verbal scaffolding. Jessie's response mirrored the focused scaffolding for language development that the SIOP Model recommends as effective second language teaching in its Comprehensible Input component (Echevarria et al., 2004). Having been through SIOP training it was clear that Jessie's response stemmed from their understanding of Feature 10 from the SIOP Model which says that teachers should use speech appropriate for students' proficiency level (Echevarria et al., 2004).

By moderating the kind of language they use, teachers can make lessons more comprehensible, and more accessible. This was a key takeaway from Jessie; they believed that to be linguistically informed and responsive, teachers must be intentional with their word choice and speaking pace and cognizant of when they use language that isn't accessible to all their students, and then they must adjust their pace and word choice accordingly. This understanding also presented an additional illustration of the Linguistically Responsive Framework (LRT) Framework, as Lucas and Villegas (2011) note that to ease the stress of needing to digest fast-moving oral language in which academic knowledge is communicated, there are several strategies that can be employed by teachers including: “minimizing the use of idiomatic expressions and pause more frequently and for longer periods of time” (p. 66).

When asked to explain their understanding of linguistically informed and responsive writing instruction, Sydney expressed uncertainty, but indicated that they understood linguistic responsiveness to mean that you teach writing in a way that assists language learners in identifying patterns or that teachers are aware of the patterns in order to teach the students in a way that they can comprehend more of the structure of how to write. This perspective is most consistent with that of scholars who emphasize the importance of teachers focusing on the language of schooling. To give one example, Schleppegrell (2004) points out that students and teachers rarely pay attention to language patterns as the "hidden curriculum," preferring instead to concentrate on texts' contents rather than on the ways in which language conveys those contents (p.2). Schleppegrell (2004) goes on to say that by examining the characteristics of this hidden curriculum, we can uncover the patterns of language use that provide obstacles for children in the classroom. Sydney touched on the reality that in order to meet disciplinary writing demands, instructors must be well-versed in language and have a pedagogical framework that

allows students to understand explicitly and contextually about how language functions in written texts (Gebhard, 2019).

As noted, only one participant's views on linguistically informed instruction closely matched with academics' recommendations for how to approach content that is both complex and requires enhanced language skills. Implementing a linguistically informed, responsive, and embedded pedagogy requires a strong "linguistic subject knowledge" in English (Love, Macken-Horarik, & Horarik, 2015; Myhill et al. 2012 as cited in Fang, 2020 p. 84). At least three areas of knowledge are required for this pedagogical approach: (a) an understanding of how language use varies across academic disciplines and tasks; (b) the ability to identify and interpret language features characteristic of various disciplinary discourses and academic genres; and (c) command of a metalanguage that enables students to engage in explicit discussion about the ways English is used in the texts they read and write (Fang 2014; Schleppegrell 2018 in Fang, 2020). Although the majority of participants' perceptions did reflect some aspects of linguistically responsive teaching as advocated by Lucas and Villegas (2011) they failed to highlight the importance of explicit attention to linguistic structures and functions which Lucas et al., (2008) claim aids with second language acquisition, and which other researchers (Bunch, 2013; Galguera, 2011; Schleppegrell, 2004; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2018) assert will support MLLs in understanding content as well as language.

The second portion of this guiding question which aims to understand how perceptions manifest in practice is best answered through the analysis of sub questions two and three which explore the linguistic features teachers highlighted and the scaffolding practices they implemented and in what ways these practices reflect an SFL-informed genre-based approach to language development as advocated by the WIDA Framework.

Sub-question 1

Because there is often a strong association between instructors' beliefs and actions, establishing how participants' conceptions of being linguistically informed/responsive present themselves in their practice is essential for fully determining their understanding of this concept. Hence, the purpose of the first sub-question was to assess teachers' grasp of the linguistic aspects that must be emphasized and the scaffolding practices that must be employed in order to deliver linguistically informed, CCSS-aligned writing instruction to multilingual learners.

Understandings of the Linguistic Features That Must be Highlighted

Fang (2020) acknowledges that an emphasis on language has usually been interpreted as a concentration on aspects like grammar, or academic vocabulary. Throughout conversations, participants articulated their beliefs surrounding which language aspects they felt were crucial to highlight, and these references did not show that the participants possessed a deep understanding of language. Rather, an examination of interview transcripts verified Fang's (2020) conclusion about the components of language that instructors often concentrate on, and this was largely reflected in observations as well.

When asked what language aspects they might emphasize during writing instruction, Taylor stated in their initial interview that they've been going back to the basics and just breaking down what a paragraph is, while also focusing on how to construct a sentence. However, when observing their lesson, it became clear that vocabulary was a major focus. Per the teacher's manual, Taylor was using the specified mentor text (“Bugs are Creepy”) for what was lesson 1 of the opinion writing unit. With the class seated on the floor, the teacher directed their attention to the mentor text in their *Being a Writer* workbook and stated: “Before we start reading, let’s look at the vocab that’s in this. What’s an antenna? What might that mean?” As students began to

respond, the teacher wrote their definitions on the whiteboard easel, and then wrote the next word *miniature alien* to review and ask: “What is an alien?” Students responded and then the teacher asked, “So what would a miniature alien be? This discussion continued for one more word, and then the class began to read the mentor text aloud.

Taylor paused after paragraph two of “Bugs are Creepy” and asked, “Just from those two paragraphs, how does this author feel about bugs? She reaffirms a student and says “Yes, they don’t like them. They used strong words like I hate them, to tell us” This usage of the term "strong words" supports Schleppegrell’s (2004) discussion of how teachers have expectations for how students should use language in their classrooms. She posits that these expectations are often not defined in terms of grammar or discourse structure, but are instead communicated in terms of proclamations like “be explicit,” or “use the right words”(Schleppegrell, 2004, p. 25). But Schleppegrell (2004) goes on to say that these values are expressed through particular grammatical choices which Taylor failed to draw attention to. Despite their admission during their interview that they had been concentrating on how to construct sentences, it was surprising to discover that Taylor had singled out the statement "*I hate them*!" from the mentor text but did not elaborate on the sort of sentence that it exemplified. In her Chapter on Language Resources That Support Writing in her text *Engaging Students in Academic Literacies,* Brisk (2014) points out that exclamations reflect the emotions of a writer and authors use them to spark children’s enthusiasm about a topic. Taylor merely labeled this sentence as strong words and missed the opportunity to discuss the effective usage of an exclamation in an opinion piece.

Jordan provided their perspective on the aspects they emphasize when writing, citing the necessity to emphasize "punctuation" and "grammar stuff." When questioned what "grammar stuff" meant, they clarified that they meant subject-verb agreement and verb conjugation since

they observed that their two MLLs frequently utilize the present tense for verbs that should be in the past tense. Fang's (2020) argument that traditional grammar categories such as parts of speech, tense, voice, participles, subject-verb agreement (SVA), and syntactic structure have generally been the focus of grammar instruction coincides with this notation of features. Despite self-reported attentiveness to punctuation and grammar, Jordan's lesson also emphasized vocabulary. Their lesson objectives were for to students to be able to identify and use transition words in their persuasive writing. While reading the mentor text "Insects are Amazing", Jordan posed the question, "Did anybody see words that's purpose is to connect one idea to another?" Although transitions are crucial to emphasize in order to demonstrate coherence, selecting simply transitions as a means to connect writing ignores other techniques that might weave a text together. Cohesion can be achieved in various ways, but unless a teacher has heightened linguistic awareness, this may be something they fail to highlight. Referential cohesion, or the degree of overlap or recurrence of words or concepts across phrases, paragraphs, or the entire text, according to McNamara et al. (2010), can be used in addition to causal cohesion, which is the extent to which causal connections are represented openly through the use of connectives like transitions. Several instances where referential cohesion may have been emphasized were found after a thorough review of the mentor text "Insects Are Amazing". As you can see in the next six sentences, the usage of *insects* and the pronoun *they* is a good illustration of referential cohesiveness in this piece.

> I don't like when people call insects "bugs". That means that they bug them. Insects don't bug me. I actually think they are amazing. They are cool to watch, fun to play with, and interesting to learn about.
> Insects are very important because they help plants and animals.
>
> (*Being a Writer*, 2014, p. 559)

Gebhard (2019) refers to this referential cohesion in her discussion of the *textual function* of the systemic functional linguistic theory. She explains that the use of pronouns and near synonyms to keep the focus of a text on a certain topic helps govern the flow of ideas in texts to support coherence and cohesiveness, and asserts that students of all levels of language proficiency may be taught to recognize and utilize cohesive devices to increase their understanding and creation of various genres when writing for specific purposes and audiences using SFL-informed instruction (Gebhard, 2019).

Like Jordan, Casey emphasized the significance of grammar, but their response suggested that they were aware of teachers' lack of linguistic knowledge. One of the most notable takeaways from Casey's initial interview is their recognition that many teachers are incapable of explaining why a grammatical error is incorrect. When asked what linguistics features should be highlighted, Casey responded with grammar but added, "I think a lot of the time we know why something is incorrect, but we don't know why." They go on to describe how this affects instruction, pointing out that teachers might realize "oh that sentence sounds wrong so I'm going to fix it this way, but we don't actually know what we're fixing."

This echoes what Keith Folse, TESOL educator and author, notes in a 2009 interview. He states that the majority of teachers who are native English speakers are able to correct these errors immediately, but they are frequently unable to explain why these structures are wrong. Because native speakers never make these errors, they are never taught any standards for using these structures (Folse, 2009). Folse (2009) further asserts that when teachers are unfamiliar with ESL grammar concerns or how to communicate them, it can be detrimental to MLLs. He comments that if teachers are unable to respond to MLLs' grammar questions, the MLLs will not receive effective instruction or error correction, and their mistakes may become fossilized (Folse, 2009).

Therefore, according to de Jong and Harper (2011), mainstream teachers must be made aware of linguistic issues in order to support language scaffolding. “Teachers must be able to look *at* rather than *through* the language demands of the classroom” (de Jong & Harper, 2011, p. 87). If teachers are linguistically aware, then they can explain grammatical principles rather than simply correcting them. The result will be a stronger grasp of grammatical knowledge for MLLs, who will be more aware of how to speak and write in a variety of situations in order to accomplish your communicative goal effectively.

When asked if they did any other explicit teaching of language other than grammar in the context of writing instruction or focused on any other language aspects that they felt should be addressed in writing instruction, Casey's response reflected alignment with Fang's (2020) findings that highlighted an over emphasis on vocabulary. Nevertheless, upon observing their opinion lesson which had the objective of students will be able to identify structure of a persuasive essay, it was evident that vocabulary was not the only aspect of Casey’s focus. They also highlighted grammatical person, pointing out that often persuasive essays incorporate the pronoun *I* in them. When questioned during our follow-up interview on how they knew that the prevalence of *I* statements should be discussed, they said that this was their third-year teaching at this grade level and that they had previously utilized a different curriculum that had expressly centered a lesson on this occurrence.

Additionally, Casey stated that they had come to the realization that when it comes to teaching MLLs, the most common thing that teachers are concerned about is idioms, and they declared that teaching MLLs is more than just idioms. They are accurate that essential linguistic characteristics encompass more than idioms, yet when considered at a deeper level of complexity, idioms are important to emphasize. Maisa and Karunakaran (2013) emphasize the

significance of idioms in language usage, and their concept of idioms is far more comprehensive than that of the participants in our study. They regard idioms to be part of the formulaic language category with other multi-word prefabricated chunks like collocations and other fixed and semi-fixed expressions (Maisa & Karunakaran, 2013) whereas participants 2 and 4 reduced idioms to the same category as other types of figurative language like metaphors and similes. The ability to effectively employ formulaic language (including idioms) is the key to achieving native-like fluency, according to Maisa and Karunakaran (2013), because these sequences of words that have a strong tendency to occur together in discourse lack literal meaning and have unusual grammatical structures. Nevertheless, despite Casey's reference to this linguistic characteristic, their grasp of this concept demonstrates once more their limited linguistic expertise.

The linguistic aspects that teachers believed should be emphasized or that were actually highlighted demonstrated a propensity to focus on vocabulary and traditional grammatical categories, as well as a lack of expertise regarding linguistics. These findings are in line with research and suggest a need for additional support so that instruction can adequately address disciplinary language aspects.

Scaffolding Practices That Must Be Employed

Despite the teachers' limited language expertise, the types of scaffolding reported and observed were diverse, which is consistent with best practices for MLLs, according to Lucas and Villegas (2011), who highlight four types of instructional scaffolding that can help MLLs learn more effectively and efficiently. They identify, strategies that fall into the categories of extralinguistic supports, supplemental and modified texts, modified oral language and clear and explicit instructions, and they also assert that teachers who are linguistically responsive arrange instruction that involves the proper scaffolding for their students' development (Lucas &

Villegas, 2011). However, only a few reported and observed supports are consistent with the notion that each learner's experience will be unique and require an individualized approach. Despite the fact that all participants indicated the need for scaffolded teaching, the vast majority of them did so without discussing how second language learning concepts and MLLs' specific language backgrounds and proficiency levels factor into instructional decisions. Teachers may overlook the importance of language and its impact on students' academic achievement if they lack knowledge of second language acquisition and language proficiency, (de Jong and Harper, 2005). There were just two participants who indicated that the supports utilized to assist MLLs in writing should differ based on their level of proficiency. One in particular emphasized that scaffolds vary greatly depending on the individual, and they went on to explain that they might use sentence starters for one student or provide other students with a picture prompt containing detailed labels on the picture that they could use in their writing. Another participant, Jessie, re-iterated this recognition of the need of paying attention to students' language proficiency when they mentioned that sentence stems should be used to meet students who are learning English where they are at in their language competency. Although most of the participants did not directly relate theories of second language acquisition and MLLs' unique characteristics to their practice, the results suggested that they had prioritized scaffolding teaching to support MLLs' writing as can be seen by the following examples.

The usage of Anchor Charts or posters to remind students of crucial topics in class was one of the most often encountered scaffold in the classrooms. An anchor chart's primary function is to anchor instructors and students thoughts on a critical topic(Gentry & McNeel, 2016). Three of the six participants actively used an anchor chart in their lesson, whether it was produced beforehand or generated during the session. Anchor charts which are created with students are

useful because when students are part of the process, they refer to, talk about, and use the content for guidance (Gentry & McNeel, 2016). The types of charts noted were a “Things WE notice about persuasive essays” chart, "Tasty Topic Sentences" anchor chart with 3 types of hooks (question, description, interesting fact) and an "OREO" Writing an Opinion Essay Anchor chart (see Figure 4.1). Because Anchor Charts assist students in keeping information at the forefront of their thoughts and because they are permanent and visible displays, they are an excellent scaffold for all students, not only MLLs.

Sentence stems or frames were another type of scaffold that was frequently reported and observed. As a common scaffold for MLLs, sentence frames are utilized often because they provide explicit instruction in the language used in academic writing as well as examples of how language is employed in texts. Despite five of the six individuals reporting utilizing sentence frames, only two were seen employing them in practice. Jordan effectively implemented this scaffold with their newcomer during independent writing time. When students were seated at their desk, Jordan circulated over to their MLL, and said “okay I see this is your topic, let's start it off.” They then reminded their MLL that they talked about opinions this week and asked this student what his opinion was for his topic of “The Best Ice Cream Flavor”. The student had Oreo, and vanilla written on his paper. The teacher said, “I see you wrote Oreo and vanilla, which do you like better?” He replied “Oreo”. Jordan then responded “okay, great, Now we need to say this in a sentence.” Jordan gave an oral sentence frame, which was completed by the student with "Oreo is better than vanilla." Jordan then asked, "Do you want me to help you write this out?" The student shook his head no, and Jordan said they would be back to check on his work in a few minutes. Sentence frames, which provide a framework for ELLs to utilize the language they require for writing and speaking, are used to assist them in participating in

classroom learning (Carrier & Tatum, 2006). As can be seen, Jordan made an effort to aid their student in participating in writing by providing several different frames.

Giving students sentence frames is an excellent method to help them get started, but teachers should be cautioned against using them in excess. Carrier and Tatum (2006) note that sentence frames "should serve as an entry point" for MLLs (p. 287), and Hyland notes that "students will need to use them less and less as their confidence in writing and their competence in writing target genres grow" (p. 159). This is important for teachers to recognize because sentence stems, frames and starters can be misused and overused (Zwiers et al., 2014). Because they can interrupt a speaker's flow of thinking, and they train students how to only utilize certain terminology Zwiers et al. (2014) recommend that sentence frames and stems be used sparingly and quickly removed so that students can construct language on their own. Jessie's reported use aligned with this recommendation as they were cautious to use sentence stems with some genres. They indicated that when it comes to writing a narrative it's a lot harder to provide a sentence structure or sentence stems that still allow for them to be creative and express their ideas or experiences.

When looking at the utilization of scaffolds by individual participants, Jessie was the one who reported and utilized the most. A wide range of scaffolding measures were mentioned by Jessie. They noted using anchor charts, graphic organizers, example writings, as well as sentence stems or frames when appropriate to the genre structure. Furthermore, there was evidence of this variety reflected in their lesson observation as well as evidence of teacher scaffolding through modeling their own writing. During their opinion writing lesson on Plastic Pollution, students were reading a sample text and highlighting possible evidence to use in their essay. The lesson objective was to determine your opinion about ocean plastic pollution and write a topic sentence

for paragraph two of your plastic pollution essay. In response to the teacher's question: "As a reminder, in our opinion paragraphs, what does the topic sentence need to tell the reader?" A student responded: OREO, which was a reference to an anchor chart that was up on the classroom wall (see Figure 4.1).

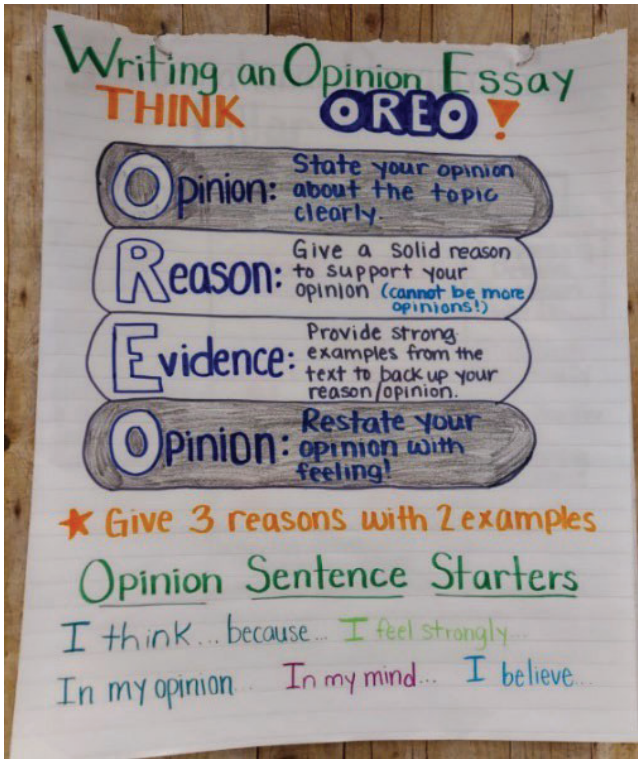

Figure 4.1 Example of Anchor Chart

The Teacher inquired as to which part of the OREO, and the student clarified their answer and stated "opinion". The teacher affirmed the student's response and said "Yes, your topic sentence needs to tell your opinion." The teacher then directed students to take out their graphic organizers (see figure 4.2) and then directed students to look at reason #2 topic sentence.

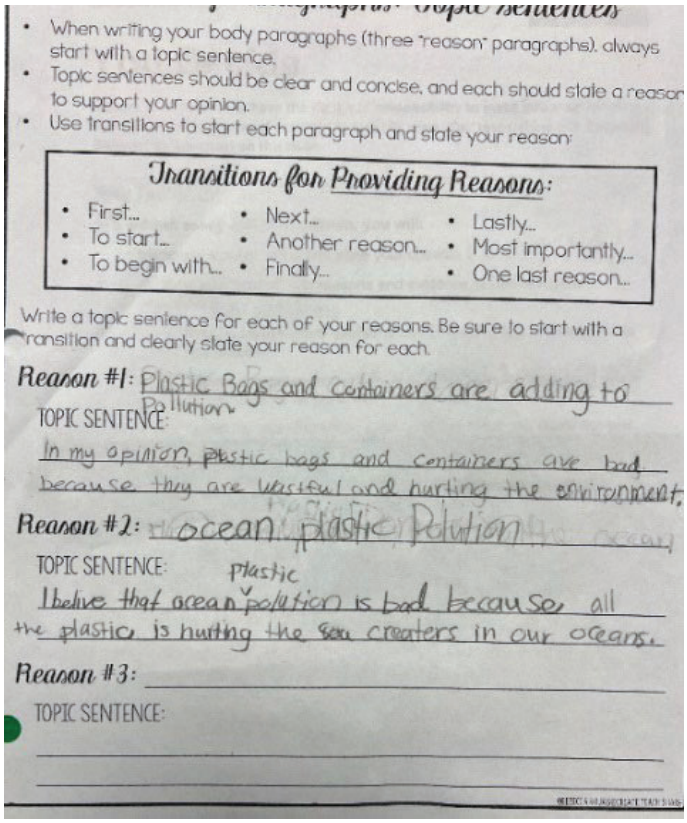

Figure 4.2 Example of Graphic Organizer

Graphic organizers are important to the teaching of writing as they combine linguistic and nonlinguistic representations (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014) and this teacher was cognizant of the significance of this tool as they carefully modeled its use throughout the lesson. According to Derewianka & Jones (2016) teachers must help students build and expand their field knowledge into more abstract subject-specific knowledge and associated language by supporting them in rearranging their information through exercises that require students to classify material using tools such as graphic organizers. This is what Jessie did as they worked through the graphic organizer. First, they verbalized their second reason why society must stop pollution. They wrote *Plastic pollution has spread to the ocean* and explained "That's a reason why we have to stop pollution, my opinion is why we have to stop pollution that I will write in my topic sentence which is *I believe that plastic pollution has spread to the ocean and is hurting our*

environment. Then Jessie clarified “That’s my topic sentence, so all of my examples will have to do with plastic pollution inside the ocean and how it is hurting the environment.” Modeling like this and the use of graphic organizers may help all students understand the structure and organization of a piece of writing (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014)

In addition to the most often reported scaffolds of anchor charts and sentence frames, additional scaffolding methods were identified but not observed; a few self-reported scaffolding techniques indicated, once again, the belief that vocabulary should be encouraged. For instance, Alex was evasive on the type of support they offered to students, stating simply that they "just helped them along and scaffolded a little bit with good words to use when trying to describe things", and another participant noted that their vocabulary was posted around the room for students to access. In spite of the fact that this was not the planned focus of this investigation, observations revealed that content and language objectives were not present and/ or not clearly aligned with lessons. It was intriguing to note this finding as two of the participants had been through SIOP training, and 3 additional of the participants have their ELL endorsement. Language objectives are yet another to support students. Gottlieb and Ernst-Slavit (2014) explain how a fifth-grade teacher at an urban school employs various scaffolding tactics, including differentiated objectives to help her MLLs be successful at learning. Mainstream teachers must create objectives that address the academic language demands of school settings and ultimately employ instructional practices and that correspond to the academic language demands identified (Lindahl & Watkins, 2014). It has been established, unfortunately, that due to a lack of linguistic knowledge among teachers, they struggle to create language objectives, or write language objectives that are only related to the introduction of new vocabulary (Regalla, 2012). It is difficult for teachers to develop successful literacy scaffolds when they do not have a clear

understanding of how language functions to construct discipline-specific meanings in the genres of writing they regularly expect students to produce (Gebhard, 2019).

Sub-question 2

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL), which is a meaning-based theory of language, has lately gained popularity in classrooms as an implementation framework for pedagogy. This is because the use of pedagogies that draw on SFL helps teachers gain a more in-depth understanding of language (de Oliveira & Smith, 2019). From an SFL lens, genres are means of expressing meaning that have particular culturally expected traits, and the WIDA ELD Standards Framework includes genre families or key uses as one of its main organizational components, which is congruent with the functional approach to language (Molle et al., 2022). In order to promote language learning, WIDA also advocates for teachers to use a cycle known as the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC) which is a process for planning and guiding instruction (Rose & Martin, 2012). Despite the fact that none of the teachers who participated in this study had received any formal training in the WIDA framework, one goal of this research was to see if any of their perceptions or instructional practices reflected the WIDA Framework's SFL-informed genre-based language development approach, which includes the TLC, in order to better determine how to build on preexisting practices, as the state where this research was conducted recently joined the WIDA Consortia. Therefore, Sub-question 2 aims to explores the ways teachers' perceptions and practices might reflect a SFL-informed genre-based approach to language development as advocated by the WIDA Framework.

Unfortunately, there is not an instrument or measurement tool designed to evaluate SFL-informed genre-based approach to writing in teacher practice. To support observation data, the linguistically informed writing pedagogy (LIWP) observational tool (see Appendix) was

developed. The three forms of meanings, or language metafunctions, identified by Halliday (textual, ideational, and interpersonal) which correlate to the register variables mode, field, and tenor are all reflected in the LIWP observational tool as they provide the basis for the different functional approaches to language. To create this tool, an extensive review of the literature was conducted to determine the features of SFL genre-based pedagogy that were recognized as being essential to provide support for academic and language development within writing. The purpose of this tool was to assist in recognizing dimensions of an SFL genre approach to writing that inform teachers' daily writing instruction. This observational tool includes: (a) likely features of the argumentative genre (Derewianka & Jones, 2016; Brisk, 2014; Gebhard, 2019b; Rose & Martin, 2012; Schleppegrell, 2004) (b) evidence of the teaching and learning cycle (Brisk, 2014; Gebhard, 2019; Rose & Martin, 2012) and (c) evidence of metalanguage (Brisk, 2014; Fang, 2020; Gebhard, 2019; Schleppegrell, 2018).

When investigating how instructors' perspectives reflect a genre-based approach guided by SFL, initial interview data showed a limited understanding of this method of language development. However, one participant, an MLL endorsed teacher shared that she believed that a functional approach to writing would encompass providing students with what they need to be able to function and they speculated that this would probably be through explicit and direct instruction of vocabulary. Despite the limited understanding, some evidence of aligned aspects were identified through both interview and observation data.

Making linguistic choices that communicate information and acknowledge the significance of relationships is a crucial aspect of academic language. Systemic functional linguistic theory gives a technique of identifying the grammatical and lexical aspects of academic language that make a particular text the type of text it is (Schleppegrell, 2004). Within

Halliday's theory of SFL, the idea of text/context dynamic is predicated on the principle that language is responsive to its situational context (Gebhard, 2019). According the Gebhard (2019) in the act of producing oral, written, or multimodal/multilingual text, language simultaneously performs three connected roles, according to Halliday's theory of language; these are the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. Analysis of sub question 2 will discuss these three aspects of Halliday's theory in addition to other aspects of a SFL-informed genre-based approach to language development with the incorporation of the Teaching Learning Cycle

This study's sub-question 1 focused on linguistic explicitness, or as Schleppegrell (2004) defines it, the capacity to draw on context-appropriate lexical resources. According to Schleppegrell (2004), this skill necessitates awareness of the social expectations of a task as well as command of the terminology required to precisely convey meanings. Thus, explicitness is reflected through grammatical aspects connected to the creation of the discourse field (Schleppegrell, 2004). Field choices represent the ideational function of Halliday's theory of SFL, and as the name implies, the ideational function constructs ideas and experiences (Gebhard, 2019). Building the field is also the first stage of the TLC and during the negotiation of field, students acquire subject-matter expertise in the discipline and topic of their writing (Brisk & Tian, 2019). In Jessie's class, these SFL-genre-based pedagogical features focusing on the field were evident. The students in Jessie's class had a "Plastic Pollution" folder which contained several articles that had been read regarding their topic of plastic pollution. On the day of the observation the students also watched a YouTube video entitled "The Insane True Scale of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch" and read an article on the same topic. They were given "blue notes" paper on which to collect information about plastic pollution, and the first part of the observed lesson was devoted to locating evidence that could be used to support their position on

the subject. As part of the TLC approach, teachers must carefully design several lessons to immerse students in a specific field of knowledge through engagement with images, video clips, and written materials (Gebhard, 2019). The Plastic Pollution folder, as well as the video and sample text from the observed session, demonstrated that Jessie had been building the field for several lessons, and according to Gebhard (2019) this stage "levels the playing field for students with different levels of background knowledge or language proficiency and proficiency" (p. 103).

The interpersonal function establishes social identities, connections, power dynamics, attitudes, and emotions; this function is accomplished via tenor resources (Gebhard, 2019). Brisk (2014) likens tenor to audience and voice, and this function is achieved through the use of grammatical persons, modality, and evaluative vocabulary. Upon observing Casey, discussion in their lesson reflected evidence of an SFL grammatical viewpoint and addressed the tenor of a piece. Their focus on the pronoun *I* in the mentor text " Bugs Are Creepy" aligns with SFL theory of grammar since the grammatical first person *I* it is typically a feature present in opinions, and according to Schleppegrell (2004), systemic functional theory facilitates the identification of grammatical features that distinguish one text type from another, and it also analyzes how linguistic choices are linked to the context in which they are utilized (Schleppegrell, 2004). However, Casey's explanation in the follow-up interview that explained why they highlighted this aspect merely expressed reference previous experience teaching this genre and a teacher note in the teacher's manual to use prompts starting with *I.*

Another feature that conveys tenor or voice is through the use of modality. Brisk (2014) cites Humphrey et al. 2012 in her creation of a table that indicates the different ways modality can be expressed. In addition to modal verbs (i.e., must, would), adverbials (i.e., certainly), and

adjectivals (i.e., certain), clauses and phrases like *I believe that,* and *I think that* show how writers take a position about a topic (Brisk, 2014). Jessie incorporated modality with their model topic sentence of *I believe that plastic pollution has spread to the ocean and is hurting our environment*; yet they did not appear to be aware of how this sentence exemplifies a language choice to convey their ideas while addressing the social context and their audience.

Analysis of Sub question 1 discussed linguistic features to highlight and transitions were mentioned by several participants. This reference illustrates incorporation of the textual function which manages the flow of ideas to support cohesion and coherence in discourse (Gebhard, 2019). Jordan specifically addressed connectiveness in their lesson on transitions. Students were instructed to identify and highlight transitions. When a student pointed out a transition, Jordan told the class that they would read the sentence without the transition to determine if it sounded connected. Then she said, "Turn to your partner and tell them which sounds better, the sentence with the transition or without the transition and explain why." Students raised their hands after the turn and talk and one student shared that the sentence with the transition sounded more connected because "The writing sounds more smooth." This activity of identifying transitions and excluding them to determine how the sentence would sound without them was repeated with a few additional examples. This lesson reflects a SFL-informed genre-based approach to language development specifically addressing the textual metafunction. However, the focus solely on transitions and the omission of other ways to smoothly add information or transition to a new topic implies a lack of understanding of how to highlight the textual function with various mode resources. As mentioned previously in the discussion of sub question 1, cohesion can be achieved in a variety of ways. However, if a teacher lacks advanced linguistic understanding, they may fail to emphasize the various grammatical resources that support

organizational structures in order to facilitate comprehension. Brisk (2014) notes that text connectives, reference ties and lexical ties are types of grammatical features that help a text come together. However, as stated earlier, reference ties, which mostly entail the use of pronouns to monitor actors without repeating the noun (Brisk, 2014), were completely disregarded in the analysis of the mentor text "Insects Are Amazing." The use of lexical ties or associated vocabulary, such as synonyms, antonyms, repetition, or words that typically occur together, is another method for connecting texts (Estela Brisk, 2014) but this technique was not addressed by participants either. Despite the understanding that texts need to be connected, crucial aspects of Halliday's SFL theory of language were not evident as transitions were the only mode resource highlighted as can be seen in Figures 4.3 and 4.4.

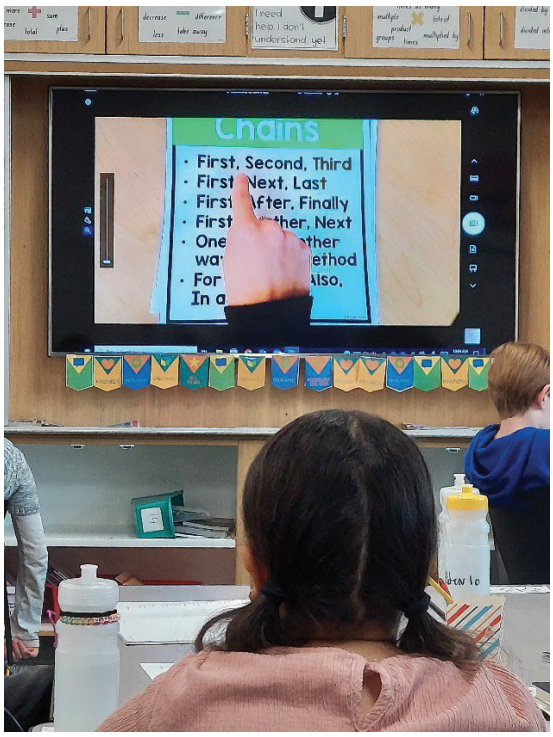

Figure 4.3

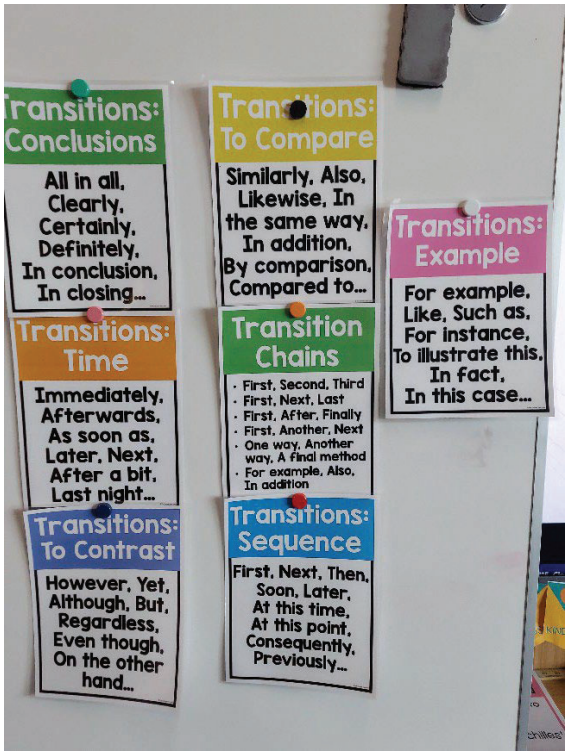

Figure 4.4

One aspect of a SFL genre approach infused with the Teaching Learning Cycle is the use of mentor texts. The TLC routinely uses mentor texts during genre education, and all six participants mentioned using them as well. Alex indicated that they used mentor texts to illustrate structure and specifically referenced opening, rising action, climax, and falling action of the narrative genre. Jordan indicated that they utilized mentor texts to try to break down what is the author trying to say. They clarified that they encourage students to examine the words authors employ and to consider why they might choose one word over another. Jordan also acknowledged using mentor texts to analyze the author's intent. Moreover, they posed some questions that instructors may ask students to stimulate their thinking. They might ask students, "What is the author's intent? Are they trying to inform us or persuade us? Despite their reported use of mentor texts, Jordan felt that they were overused in their current curriculum. “I think our curriculum spends a little too much time on those and not enough time, on the other parts of

writing. Because I know all of us in fourth grade are like well, we really need to be working on spelling or grammar, or just even like what you're writing should look like in a paragraph." These statements reveal Jordan's lack of awareness of the power of mentor texts and show that they do not employ mentor texts as described in the TLC to emphasize the aspects they identified as struggles for their current fourth graders. According to Gebhard (2019) the Deconstruction stage of the TLC can guide students in "noticing and naming how specific genres are structured and how authors make specific register choices to construct ideas (field), enact a tone (tenor) and manage the flow of information in their texts (mode)" (p. 104). The aspects that Jordan is concerned about specifically grammar and paragraph structure could be modeled with mentor texts through the use of the TLC which is a component of a SFL-informed pedagogical approach to writing. The next portion of Sub-question 2 analysis will particularly identify occurrences that reflect the stages of the TLC.

The first stage of the TLC is Building the Field, or ensuring that learners have sufficient background knowledge about the issue to be investigated (Ramos, 2019). For MLLs whose prior knowledge may be culturally different from the topics presented in school curricula, building a field is essential (Gibbons, 2015). As briefly mentioned, this process of building the field was evident in Jessie's class. Jessie started off their lesson by introducing the sample text "The Great Pacific Garbage Patch" and stated, "We will read together and pause if there is anything we need to highlight". Upon witnessing their lesson and usage of the text, it was determined that Jessie concentrated solely on using their sample text to locate evidence. During their follow-up interview when asked why they did not emphasize anything besides the facts they responded with the following:

> This time around, our unit it's much more like finding evidence that supports your opinion so it's not necessarily like a mentor text that they're shaping their writing off of, if that makes sense. But in cases where like we're using mentor texts to help format our own writing, that's when I would do that, when I would highlight like look at how they started this paragraph, or look at the look at that sentence starter they use or that transition phrase they use to show I'm moving on to the next idea that's when I would do that.

They further noted that when they highlight or underline those examples which might include identifying transition words that they then might discuss such aspects like how a transition word that differs from a verb. This discussion of their usage of mentor texts, which entails utilizing them to locate instances of the writing skill or component they are focusing is an illustration of the Deconstruction stage of the TLC, but their understanding that the model text is used for more than just highlighting language aspects illustrates the notion of Building the Field. According to Ramos (2019) by using a model text on the topic of focus, teachers can situate an introduction to the purpose and structure of a specific genre. Additionally, when the teacher does this, the genre of focus is presented in a contextualized manner that helps students understand the subject matter or build the field about the topic (Ramos, 2019); this is what Jessie was doing with their lesson.

Other instances of the TLC's Building the Field were noted but not observed. Jordan also indicated they used mentor texts to develop content knowledge or Build the Field with their claim that "we read a lot of books actually in writing as read aloud to kind of see how authors do their craft and then try to take some of those concepts and put it into our writing." Alex's lesson started off with what appeared to be an instance of Building the Field as they read the *TIME for Kids* article "Should plastic Straws be Banned?"; however, this text was not fully utilized or

referred back to in the lesson. Thus, Jessie's lesson was the only clear instance that reflected the TLC stage of Building the Field.

The Deconstruction phase of the TLC is linked by some (e.g. Ramos, 2019) with Building the field and others (e.g. Brisk et al., 2021) regard it as a distinct step. According to Brisk and Tian (2019) Deconstruction is a close analysis of mentor texts which aims to illustrate the aspects of the genre to be taught. Within the scope of this understanding, there were instances of text analysis that were both reported in interviews and observed in lessons. The following is an excerpt from the statement made by Taylor, which provides evidence of deconstruction. "So we've really been working on breaking down each part of an essay so like how would I introduce my opinion in a persuasive essay and how would I make it interesting to want to hook my reader. Oh, just focusing on each part of the essay and why it's going to be important to help persuade somebody." In another example, observation of Jordan showed that their lesson aligned with Brisk and Tian's (2021) notion of deconstruction. Their lesson involved identifying transitions and modeling how sentences would sound if those transitions were omitted. Deconstruction, according to Brisk and Tian (2021), is focused on a single element at a time, which is precisely what Jordan demonstrated with their concentration on transitions.

The next stage of the TLC is Joint Construction which has students and teachers working together to create a target genre text on the same topic (Ramos, 2019). Although I only observed one lesson that concentrated on one part of an argumentative essay (topic sentences), it appeared that Jessie's lesson involved Joint Construction. When Jessie modeled their second topic sentence for the pollution essay, it aligned with the Joint Construction goal of modeling how to approach the field content. However, according to Ramos (2019), the stage requires a collaborative effort in which both the teacher and students employ academic language resources to convey the

content, meet audience expectations, and present a coherent argument. Jessie worked through the graphic organizer scaffold, and talked through their thinking, but wrote the model topic sentence of *I believe that plastic pollution has spread to the ocean and is hurting our environment* without input from the students. Due to the absence of collaboration, the function of academic language resources could not be discussed explicitly. Since the objective of the Joint Construction stage is to give additional support for the usage of academic language resources for writing in a specific genre (de Oliveira & Lan, 2014) to align with the TLC, which is "at the heart of SFL-based genre pedagogy" (Ramos, 2019, p. 50), Jessie should have structured their approach so that students could have worked together to explore options and provide suggestions for how to present and develop arguments while the teacher serves as a scribe (Ramos, 2019).

In the last stage of the TLC, Independent Construction, students utilize what they have learned through scaffolded interactions with reading and writing in a specific genre to compose independently (de Oliveira & Lan, 2014). In several of the observed lessons in this study, students were engaged in Independent "Writing Time" as outlined in the *Being a Writer Teacher's Manual*, yet the activities they undertook did not correspond to the TLC stage of Independent Construction. To be aligned with Independent Construction, students must use the knowledge and experience gained through deconstruction and joint construction to independently compose their own writing (Brisk & Tian, 2019). In this stage, only Jordan's students wrote in accordance with the Independent Construction phase as can be seen by the following directions: "Before you go into your own writing today, think about what transitions you could add or change to make your writing look better, we're going to look at a lot more examples, and these will be on the whiteboard for you to reference."

WIDA's SFL-informed approach to writing education, which makes use of the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC), was unfamiliar to the participants, although some parts of this pedagogical approach were evident in the interviews and observations of this study. However, teacher comments on their practices suggested that they neither comprehended the theory behind their instructional choices nor how to precisely target MLLs using the natural scaffolds of this method. This is crucial to note because when used in conjunction with systemic functional linguistics genre-based pedagogy, the TLC gives teachers a clear path for helping MLLs and other students gain command over their academic language and literacy practices while still reaching grade-level subject objectives (Ramos, 2019).

Sub-question 3

For the final sub question which aimed to identify the ways are teachers' perceptions and practices might have been impacted by their teaching background and/or experience. Using the data related to participants from the beginning of this chapter, analysis will be presented to show whether different demographic components of teachers affected the results.

According to Martin and Strom (2016) knowing how teacher identity impacts MLL's learning is critical to improving educational opportunities for this student population. Martin and Strom's article, which is a review of empirical research on teacher identity and MLLs, analyzes how educators' identity in English-dominant teaching situations has been explored. According to their review of research, teachers' interactions with and instruction of ELs were influenced by four distinct features; awareness of one's cultural and linguistic identity, an understanding of the sociopolitical environment EL education is situated in, and an attitude toward advocacy for ELs were all included in this list (Martin & Strom, 2016). Another set of abilities lacking in instructors of English language learners in rural schools that goes beyond academics and that

should be addressed by professional development is the ability to relate to and communicate with students from varied cultural backgrounds (Freeman Field, 2008, as cited in Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). According to Freeman Field (2008, as cited in Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016), as a result of this handicap, many educators viewed cultural and linguistic diversity as a problem rather than as a resource that could be used to enhance instruction and learning opportunities. This was not an issue for the teachers in this study, as all six participants expressed a positive attitude toward diversity in one way or another. Casey stated unequivocally that an advantage of having diverse students is that "they bring a lot of different perspectives" to the classroom. In order to illustrate their point, they used the example of a Samoan student who identified as a male but had long hair, wore lipstick, and how he educated the class on the third gender- fa' afaine- that is found in the Samoan culture. Alex echoed the sentiment that diverse students' viewpoints positively add to the classroom culture when they commented on how even when discussions are about other groups in subjects like social studies, diverse students bring something to the understanding of the topic "in a very powerful way". Jordan voiced a similar stance with their assertion that diverse students "can provide valuable lessons to other classmates". Although all six participants displayed a positive mindset toward diversity, there was acknowledgement that this isn't always the case with all teachers. Additionally, even though they all had a positive outlook on diversity, none of the six educators went into detail about the ways in which they incorporated their students' primary languages or cultures into their lessons or instruction, nor did they seem to have a clear idea of what language aspects are crucial to highlight in writing instruction.

Teachers who take an English language learners course in their teacher education program and/or engage with English language learners during their student teaching assignments

are more equipped to work with these kids, according to Coady et al. (2011). Data was analyzed to examine if coursework and/or fieldwork with multilingual learners resulted in a significant improvement in linguistic feature identification and scaffolding techniques. Despite the fact that three participants were endorsed to support MLLs, there was no discernible difference in their grasp of the linguistic aspects that should be highlighted, nor did they demonstrate a deeper comprehension of linguistically responsive instruction. This is illustrated by Casey's acknowledgement that teachers frequently know why something is grammatically incorrect but cannot explain why. Furthermore, when asked what they believe is necessary to improve writing education, Casey identified the following: "The biggest thing really is just teacher knowledge of basic, I don't know like phonics, like grammar, I feel like we need more of an understanding from a teacher perspective." This further suggests that while having coursework to help MLLs, this training did not provide them with a sufficient basis in language understanding. Berg and Huang (2015) point out that the majority of studies examining the factors contributing to the professional development of classroom teachers in culturally and linguistically diverse settings place a strong emphasis on cultural responsiveness while paying little attention to the linguistic aspect of teaching. This finding was consistent with the experiences of the three participants who reported taking two or more college courses focusing on the requirements of MLLs and who also held an English Language Learner Endorsement on their state teaching credential. Their recollection of the linguistic aspects discussed in these courses revealed a limited scope of topics. One participant stated the following: "I remember we learned a lot about like I'm trying to remember the name of the concept, it kind of tied in different cultures and languages to teaching. You know how culture and the language you speak affect the way you see the world, and things like that." All three endorsed participants' main memory dealing with language was one in which

the primary emphasis was placed on language objectives. Although useful, it has already been noted that due to a lack of linguistic understanding, teachers often fail to develop acceptable language objectives (Regalla, 2012).

When looking at the impact of language background, the three participants who were exposed to another language at a young age were also coincidentally the same three participants who possessed an English learner endorsement on their state teaching certificate. Their language background did not seem to have any significant impact on their perceptions or practices. But although not observed, this background could likely have an impact on their interactions and their ability to relate to their MLLs. According to Kibler and Roman (2013) teachers' interactions with speakers of other languages may have a favorable effect on their interactions with English language learners. All three participants reported being exposed to a variety of language learners, shared feelings of insecurity regarding their proficiency in their other language and discussed language encounters that caused them anxiety; these experiences may have helped them to better comprehend the feelings of MLLs and how to make them comfortable in their classrooms.

Analysis of the participants teaching background and/or experience as a way to determine its influence on perception and practices revealed overall there was a positive view of diversity which may have led to a genuine endeavor to help MLLs, even if none of the six participants actively built on students' funds of knowledge. Nevertheless, it was surprising that three individuals had an English Language Learner Endorsement on their state teaching certificate, and the practice of utilizing students' language backgrounds as a scaffold was not discussed or modeled by them. In addition, the fact that their teacher preparation program only covered a narrow span of linguistic expertise draws attention to a severe problem. How can teachers who

are endorsed to work with MLLs support their colleagues who are not endorsed if they do not possess the appropriate linguistic expertise?

Emergent Theme:

Throughout the data analysis process, it was noticed that frequent references to the recently adopted district writing materials, *Being a Writer*, were made. Thus, the emergent theme "*The current district materials do not provide enough guidance for MLLs"* was recognized as a result of the numerous codes that addressed this concern.

Being a Writer is a component of the comprehensive ELA curriculum *Collaborative Literacy*, which seeks to engage students through autonomy and choice. In this program, students are introduced to a wide variety of genres through exemplary texts, and grammar, mechanics, and conventions are taught during the processes of revision and proofreading. With the *Being a Writer* curriculum, students learn and practice the skill and conventions of writing through a combination of a writing process approach and guided instruction.

The *Being a Writer* program is in its first year of implementation in the research site, and several of the teacher participants expressed concerns about its efficacy. One main area of concern for with this curriculum was regarding its guidance in supporting MLLs. Casey expressed that they felt that it was a writing program designed for those who already speak English. They commented that "What do you notice?" is a question that appears regularly in the program's scripts for teachers, and that such questions do not provide explicit guidance. They asserted that when students do not notice aspects of writing, it does not support their learning. Similar concerns were raised by Sydney regarding the lack of guidance. When asked in the final interview if they had anything further to add, Sydney specifically called attention to the district materials.

> One thing I'd like to comment on is the new materials, and it is difficult to specifically know what to support, I mean in a rubric, it says *Does the students writing communicate clearly, if not what's unclear? Does the student's piece describe an interesting personal experience*? *Does it use sensory details? Does it sometimes use transitional words and phrases? Does the piece have a strong opening and closing?* and if the answers are no, there's not a "Here's how to make it happen."

Sydney elaborated on their reservations with *Being a Writer* materials. They explained that with each lesson there is a "blurb" or teacher's note specifically to support language learners. They read the example which states *English language learners may benefit from hearing additional vocabulary defined,* but they pointed out that "There's nothing that says, you know, how to decide where exactly you need to start with teaching this concept to your language learners. It's just like Oh, they don't understand, then try this." When discussing the *Being a Writer* program with Jordan, they also commented on how the teacher's notes only address vocabulary. "Collaborative literacy will go oh here's some words that might be confusing to ELLs which is like okay, but like there's a lot of other words that are confusing as well."

It's alarming that a number of participants had the impression that the newly adopted materials have gaps, especially considering how strongly these educators rely on using them in their classrooms. "The curriculum and its associated materials are potential sources of this support, and they play important roles in teacher development" (Kauffman et al., 2002, p. 274); however *Being a Writer* does not seem to be offering adequate support for teachers and their MLLs. Like findings from previous studies where the majority of educators place a significant amount of reliance on commercial curriculum resources such as textbooks and teachers' manuals.

(Brophy, 1982; Goodlad, 1984; Woodward & Elliott, 1990 as cited in Kauffman et al., 2002), the teachers in this study also relied on their district's purchased resources.

Although recent research points out that the great majority of U.S. educators augment approved curricular materials with supplemental materials (Silver, 2022), only two participant's practices were in keeping with this finding. Jordan admitted that they consistently supplemented the materials stating that they are "kind of used to just throwing more tidbits in there" and Jessie was observed utilizing additional mentor texts and graphic organizers to enhance the *Being a Writer* unit. In a report published by WestEd, it was noted that teachers choose to supplement adopted materials when they need to fill in perceived gaps in school or district-adopted instructional materials or when materials assume knowledge that their students did not have (Marple et al., 2017). This finding is consistent with the reasons why the participants in this study felt the need to supplement, but although there was some consensus that it is necessary to enhance the district writing materials at the research site, a number of participants were uncertain as to what resources would be required to help teachers teach writing to MLLs effectively. For instance, Sydney questioned, "How do I provide an equitable experience for all of my class because they're all different and I don't even know if there's really a good answer." Jessie speculated that grade level appropriate writing samples might be useful, and Taylor noted that knowledge or "having a strong understanding of what's expected out of fourth grade level or any level they're teaching at. What's expected as far as structure of a paragraph and sentence wise; as far as conventions of a sentence and of writing"

This lack of guidance from adopted materials combined with the participant teachers' limited knowledge in how to specifically support MLLs in writing points to the need to provide training in additional methods. Early research indicates that even when teachers had negative

perceptions about textbooks and teachers' guides, they turned to those resources in the absence of any other supports (Ball & Feiman-Nemser, 1988). This is because “developing one's "own" plans requires a flexible understanding of the content to be learned as well as ideas about how children might be helped to learn it. This is a challenge even for highly experienced and knowledgeable teachers (Ball & Feiman-Nemser, 1988, p. 419).

Summary of Findings

In this chapter, qualitative analysis which provided information about teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the concept of linguistically informed and responsive CCSS writing, as well as the components of an SFL-informed genre-based approach to writing instruction that were already being implemented in their instruction were reviewed. Findings showed that there was a lack of understanding of the notion of linguistically informed and responsive writing instruction even among teachers with specific endorsements for working with MLLs. Furthermore, this study revealed that teachers had difficulty identifying the necessary linguistic features for specific genres and were unfamiliar with a functional approach to writing that incorporated the TLC. Moreover, teachers’ own words described their struggles regarding writing instruction and the support that is lacking in the newly adopted district materials. An investigation into teachers' teaching backgrounds and how it affects their perceptions and practices yielded no significant differences in knowledge or instruction related to CCSS aligned writing instruction for MLLs. Additional analysis indicated that the newly adopted district materials did not support teachers’ instruction of writing specifically for MLLs. These findings, along with the implications that stem from them, will be dissected further in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V:
DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to understand teachers' perceptions of linguistically informed and responsive CCSS aligned writing instruction for multilingual learners, as well as what linguistic features and scaffolding practices teachers felt should be implemented to support MLLs' writing, and how backgrounds, experiences, and thoughts might influence their classroom practice. This multiple case study examined the perceptions and practices of six participants. The participants in the study, which was conducted in a rural school system in the Pacific Northwest, were chosen specifically because they taught fourth or fifth grade and had an MLL in their classroom. The study was guided by the following central question and sub-questions:

Central question: *How do teachers perceive linguistically informed CCSS-aligned writing instruction for multilingual learners, and how do these perceptions manifest in their practice?*

Sub-questions:

1) What are teachers' understandings of the linguistic features that must be highlighted and the scaffolding practices that must be implemented in order to provide linguistically informed CCSS aligned writing instruction to multilingual learners?

2) In what ways do teachers' perceptions and practices reflect a SFL-informed genre-based approach to language development as advocated by the WIDA Framework?

3) In what ways are teachers' perceptions and practices impacted by their teaching background and/or experience

Data from interviews, observations, and documents utilized during the observed events (e.g., readings, anchor charts, and handouts delivered to students during observed lessons) were collected and analyzed to answer the study questions. In this chapter, the significant findings and

limitations of the study will be reviewed, and recommendations for future practice will be provided.

Discussion

Analysis showed that none of the participants had heard of the term linguistically informed or linguistically responsive teaching, but five out of six of the participants attempted to explain their understanding of this concept. Their perceptions included likening this concept to culturally responsive practices and several of the participants perceptions included portions of linguistically responsive teaching as advocated by Lucas and Villegas (2011), but did not address the importance of explicit attention to linguistic structures and functions which researchers (Bunch, 2013; Galguera, 2011; Schleppegrell, 2004; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2018) assert will support MLLs in understanding content as well as language and provide equitable access to grade level material.

Understanding how these perceptions of linguistically informed or linguistically responsive teaching manifested in practice was addressed through an examination of sub-questions two and three, which investigated the linguistic features highlighted by teachers and the scaffolding practices implemented by participants, as well as how these practices reflect an SFL-informed genre-based approach to language development as advocated by the WIDA Framework.

According to Fang (2020), it is often understood that a focus on language means a concentration on features such as grammar or academic vocabulary. Throughout the course of the dialogues, participants voiced their opinions regarding which facets of language they believed should be brought to the forefront; nonetheless, these references did not demonstrate that the participants possessed a profound comprehension of language. Rather, an analysis of

interview transcripts supported the conclusion that Fang (2020) reached on the aspects of language that teachers frequently emphasize, and this was substantially reflected in the observations as well. It became clear that teachers' emphasis on vocabulary and traditional grammatical categories was a sign of both a lack of linguistic expertise and call to draw attention to the need for more support for instruction to appropriately address disciplinary language issues.

This study found that the majority of the participants described and were observed providing multiple scaffolds in an attempt to support MLLs. However, these scaffolds did not fully address the linguistic needs of MLLs. This supports Gebhard's (2019) claim that a lack of knowledge about how language works to generate discipline-specific meanings in the types of writing genres teachers commonly anticipate their students to produce makes it difficult for teachers to develop successful literacy scaffolds.

When analyzing sub-question 2, it was noted that although the participants were not familiar with WIDA's SFL-informed approach to writing instruction, which makes use of the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC), some aspects of this pedagogical method were visible in the interviews and observations that were conducted for this study. However, remarks made by teachers regarding their practices revealed that the instructors did not understand the theory that supported their instructional choices, nor did they understand how to properly target MLLs utilizing the natural scaffolds that were provided by this strategy. Furthermore, analysis into the participants backgrounds revealed that even though three participants were certified to support MLLs, there was no notable difference in their understanding of the linguistic characteristics that should be emphasized, nor did they display a stronger understanding of linguistically responsive training.

Limitations

This study is one of the few that uses the WIDA framework to investigate teachers' language knowledge. However, because to the limited size of the sample, this research does not provide any predictive metrics that can be generalized. Due to the fact that the research was carried out at two schools located inside the same rural city, it is impossible to draw conclusions about the perceptions and practices that are prevalent among teachers in other parts of the country. In addition, because of time constraints, the scope of the investigation in the current study was limited to investigating teachers' understanding of linguistically informed writing instruction through one genre (argumentative), across two grade levels, and in the span of one academic term.

Recommendations

This study helped advance understanding of the relationship between teachers' perceptions and practice in regard to linguistically informed instruction at the site of study. The results of this study could include implications for pedagogy and teacher education within the context. More specifically since it clarified teachers' understandings of what aspects of language should be highlighted, it illustrated a mismatch between their perceptions and what the CCSS necessitates and what the WIDA Framework advocates for. Thus, the knowledge gained through this study could provide guidance in aligning the district's writing instruction to the CCSS language demands. Specifically, the results from this research could be used to develop professional development initiatives to support the WIDA ELD Standards Framework which promotes equitable teaching for MLLs through explicit language instruction based on a functional approach to language development.

The participants in this study had a limited understanding of language. They focused on traditional grammatical aspects and missed opportunities to highlight linguistics features that would improve students understanding of and creation of specific genres. Moreover, all participants in this study expressed a sense of unpreparedness when it came to teaching writing to MLLs. Jordan's worrisome remarks of "Honestly, I don't feel the most equipped when it comes to writing specifically for MLLs" is problematic because it shows that teachers are not receiving adequate training that provides students access to disciplinary genres and this poses a barrier to teaching writing. This indicates a greater need for training that helps teachers understand the role that linguistic features play in content learning, and in language and literacy development. The teachers in this study seemed to possess a conventional, decontextualized view of grammar which Gebhard (2019) asserts pays little regard to meaning or function, imposes rigid norms and conventions that skilled language users frequently ignore, and does not actually empower readers and writers. According to Maamuujav and Olson (2019), teachers should develop language objectives "that are not limited to grammatical forms, but that emphasize both language functions in an academic discourse and linguistic choices that consider audience expectations and school-based genre conventions" (p. 5). Furthermore, a strong writing curriculum, according to Schleppegrell and Christie (2018), involves students in disciplinary tasks that require purposeful use of language resources and in order to attain this goal, students must have a thorough understanding of genre. They further claim that "learning that different language choices are functional for achieving different goals supports students to write in ways that activate their own voices and creativity, drawing on ways of making meaning that they choose deliberately to achieve their own rhetorical purposes" (Schleppegrell & Christie, 2018, p. 143). Both of these statements reinforce the idea that helping MLLs requires a genre-based

approach, and according to Gebhard (2019), teaching disciplinary literacy from an SFL viewpoint provides teachers with a new way of thinking about grammar, which is significantly different from the conventional understanding of grammar. Additionally, an increasing number of educators see Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as an effective way of providing students with the means to access complex academic and cultural literacies, as well as the tools to challenge underlying ideologies of language majority discourses, to address the interests and academic needs of multilingual learners (Harman, 2018).

Schleppegrell's (2004) claim that numerous teachers are ill-equipped to convey the linguistic demands of schooling to students was surprisingly true for all participants in this study including the three of the six participants who had endorsements on their teaching certificates to work with MLLs. This leads to the conclusion that such endorsement programs should be reviewed to determine how much emphasis is placed on linguistic understanding compared to cultural understanding. According to Berg and Huang (2015), teachers' linguistic sensitivity must be developed in an attempt to deliver culturally responsive and linguistically sensitive instruction in order to assist students' academic success. As previously established, effective teaching for MLLs involves explicitly developing academic language skills, and this involves more than just vocabulary. Since the three endorsed participants struggled to identify key linguistic aspects of the genre's presented, this supports the notion that the importance of teacher efficacy in the classroom necessitates an examination of how best to design and deliver English language learner endorsement courses (Jimenez-Silva et al., 2012).

Teachers in the mainstream must develop their instructional repertoire in order to scaffold writing instruction for MLLs. Key uses of academic language allow the recognition, utilization, and development of linguistic resources by educators and students, and direct access to academic

language development for educators is one way to help ensure educational equity (Gottlieb & Castro, 2017). Developing teachers' knowledge of language in relation to writing could be accomplished by employing the WIDA framework and its related resources, including annotated texts and proficiency levels delineating domains of discourse, in order to provide different learners with equitable access to demanding CCSS writing. In addition, teachers should be trained in how to construct instructional activities that teach explicitly the linguistic features of key genres. Understanding "the linguistic elements that make up the [formal] registers of schooling" is crucial to students' academic writing development (Schleppegrell, 2001, p. 431). According to Santiago Schwartz and Hamman-Ortiz (2020), utilizing SFL-informed approaches to writing instruction helps teachers meet the demands of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and an SFL-informed paradigm, such as the one recommended by WIDA, could serve to democratize opportunities for MLLs to build school-based ways of knowing and academic literacy abilities to demonstrate them.

In spite of these assertions, incorporating SFL into writing programs can be challenging for trainers and overwhelming for teachers, necessitating careful consideration of professional development. The findings of the research make it abundantly clear that explicit language instruction within context is required, and one familiar strategy for teaching language explicitly is the utilization of language objectives. Since many K-12 institutions have already implemented SIOP training, which emphasizes the importance of language objectives to develop academic language, it may be beneficial to build upon this instructional practice when implementing training to aid teachers in supporting MLLs.

Function-driven Academic Language Objectives (ALOs) are the result of "noticing" and "forecasting," terms coined by Benegas and Stolptad (2020) to describe the process of

determining where students are having difficulty with language and what they will need to know on a linguistic (word, sentence, discourse) level to fully engage with content. Developing ALOs that are driven by their functions requires a multi-stage process, and the WIDA Framework's resources can be quite useful in creating effective ALOs for writing instruction. Before deciding on a primary academic language focus for an ALO, it's important to take stock of language demands (Benegas & Stolptad, 2020). Academic language can be deconstructed into bricks, mortar, and buildings using the SWEL Model developed by Benegas and Stolpestad (2020), which builds upon the work of Dutro and Moran's (2003) bricks and mortar framework and Zwiers' (2008) study of academic language. Bricks are items at the word level; the general utility vocabulary required for constructing sentences and paragraphs is mortar words and phrases, and buildings are the combination of the two to create the text type (Benegas & Stolptad, 2020). This analogy corresponds to WIDA's three dimensions of language: discourse, sentence, and word/sentence, and in using such a framework, one can conduct an inventory of academic language and determine which language levels and domains require explicit attention. To create an ALO, teachers should be encouraged to ask themselves questions such as, *What language modality will my students be engaging in? Is this language mode interpretive (listening, reading, or writing) or expressive (speaking, presenting, or writing)? What dimension (word/phrase, sentence, and discourse) of language will I need to focus on?*

After considering these questions, the WIDA Framework can assist educators in developing ALOs. To start, teachers can find the WIDA standards page that corresponds to their instruction. Section 3 of Framework: Grade-Level Cluster Materials is structured so that teachers can easily find pages to reference based on grade bands (i.e., 6-8), standards (i.e., WIDA ELD STANDARD 4 Language for Science), and key language use (i.e., narrate). Language

expectations (both interpretative and expressive) will be listed on the page, followed by Language Functions and Sample Language Features. WIDA created Language Features to provide educators with related, specific English language skills that can support students when engaging in each language function and by including one of the features identified by WIDA as pertinent to that function, you can provide your students with appropriate language objectives that address various dimensions of language.

In addition to having function-driven language objectives, the language objective must include language support. Language supports are instructional strategies and materials that are used to provide learners with the language structure, vocabulary, or genre-specific language that they require to learn within the discipline. Graphic organizers and anchor charts are two examples of language supports and both of these were observed with the participants of this study. This practice is already widely used by teachers, so highlighting its effectiveness within the construction of ALOs can be readily applied.

Another way to easily support teachers in explicitly addressing language is by introducing them to the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC). Because the TLC employs the well-known gradual release of responsibility model of instruction, where cognitive work is gradually and intentionally transferred from teacher to student through a structured sequence of interrelated stages and scaffolded activities, teachers may find it easier to implement this practice. The TLC includes explicit instruction on language choices and text. Throughout the TLC, mentor or model texts chosen by the teacher are used to help students work within their 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky, 1978) by establishing field knowledge, grammatically informed text analysis, guided practice, and independent practice. According to de Oliveira and Westerlund (2021), the success of having all students write in the expected genres

depends on the strict adherence to these stages. “Just giving students a topic or prompt and asking them to write is not teaching writing but assessing what students already are able to do with writing” (de Oliveira & Westerlund, 2021, p. 8).

These simple practices are important because teachers are able to recognize and build upon a language learner's full potential when students are explicitly taught the language required for a task and when language supports are in place to demonstrate their learning. As the number of MLLs in the United States continues to rise, teachers must be prepared to provide effective instruction that meets the language needs of their linguistically diverse students while also adhering to the CCSS. It is acknowledged that an effective strategy for achieving this combines language instruction with content, and the WIDA Framework embraces this concept. Teachers can use the Framework to create ALOs as a way to implement explicit language instruction. The WIDA framework can be helpful because it clearly identifies language demands in terms of functions and features, which is often beyond the linguistic awareness of classroom teachers, who then write ineffective language objectives. According to Echevarria et al. (2004), language objectives are a crucial first step in ensuring that the content can be made more accessible and equitable to students of all linguistic backgrounds (Echevarria et al., 2004). They are crucial because “We cannot cognitively process concepts that we do not have words for” (Benegas & Stolptad, 2020, p. 3), and inequitable education cannot be provided if we do not foster MLLs' cognitive development.

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APPENDIX A: IRB EXEMPTION

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research & Innovation
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
805 W. Pennsylvania Ave., MC-095
Urbana, IL 61801-4822

Notice of Exempt Determination

November 8, 2021

Principal Investigator	Denice Hood
CC	Isabel Haller-Gryc
Protocol Title	*Exploring Teachers' Conceptualization of Linguistically Informed CCSS Aligned Writing Instruction for English Language Learners*
Protocol Number	22423
Funding Source	Unfunded
Review Category	Exempt 1
Determination Date	November 8, 2021
Closure Date	November 7, 2026

This letter authorizes the use of human subjects in the above protocol. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) has reviewed your application and determined the criteria for exemption have been met.

The Principal Investigator of this study is responsible for:

- Conducting research in a manner consistent with the requirements of the University and federal regulations found at 45 CFR 46.
- Requesting approval from the IRB prior to implementing major modifications.
- Notifying OPRS of any problems involving human subjects, including unanticipated events, participant complaints, or protocol deviations.
- Notifying OPRS of the completion of the study.

Changes to an **exempt** protocol are only required if substantive modifications are requested and/or the changes requested may affect the exempt status.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN
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APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Initial Interview Protocol

Participant Number_____ Grade Level_____ Date of Interview_____

Thank you for meeting with me and agreeing to participate in this study. As we discussed in reviewing the consent documents, this study is for my doctoral dissertation at the University of Illinois. The purpose of this interview is to learn about your experiences as an educator, your preparation and experience working with English language learners/multilingual learners (ELLs/MLLs). Your responses will provide valuable insight and are helpful to me as the purpose of my study is to understand how teachers perceive linguistically informed Common Core writing for ELLs, and how these perceptions are realized in teachers' lessons. I would like to record this interview session even though I am taking notes. Do I have your permission to record this interview? The recording will be deleted after it has been transcribed. I intend to use the information you provide in my research and writing. However, your name and all identifying information will be kept anonymous. What you tell me will remain confidential. I hope you will feel free to be candid in your responses. If you say anything during this session that you would like me to omit, just let me know and I will do so. Are you comfortable beginning the interview now? Do I have your permission to record this interview? The recording will be deleted after it has been transcribed.

Script: The first part of the interview is about your teacher and language background, experiences with culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and ELLs/MLLs

Teacher Background

- What grades/subjects are you certified to teach?
- Including this year, how many years have you been teaching?
- As part of your teacher education program, did you take a class in linguistics?
- As part of your teacher education program, have you taken a course devoted to working with MLLs?

Language history

- Do you speak languages other than English, and if so, which one(s)?
- Have you spoken this language since you were a child?
- Do you consider yourself a bilingual speaker, if so, why?
- Did you learn a foreign language in school? If so, which one(s)

Experiences with Diverse Groups

- Can you describe experiences you have had with people from language and culture backgrounds that are different than your own?
- Have you ever traveled to locations where the primary language was different than your own? What was your experience?

- Can you describe your experiences with diversity in your K–12 schools?
- What advantages and disadvantages do the diverse student groups bring to your school and community?

Working with ELL students

- For how long have you been teaching MLL students?
- How many MLL students do you currently have in your class?
- Have you received any professional development opportunities at this school to help you teach MLL students? If so, please describe them

Script: The second part of the interview is about your training and background related to writing instruction and your familiarity with the Common Core State Writing Standards along with your teaching of writing aligned to these standards

Common Core State Writing Standards and Teaching

- Describe what writing instruction looks like in your classroom.
- What do you feel the role of the teacher is in the writing classroom?
- How would you describe your familiarity with the Common Core State Writing Standards?
- The common core focuses writing on 3 different text types: arguments to support claims, informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly, and narratives to develop real or imagined experiences. Which text type do you feel the most comfortable teaching? Please explain why
- What specific challenges have you encountered while teaching CCSS aligned writing to MLLs?
- How many courses did you have in your undergraduate and/or graduate education program specific to teaching writing effectively?
- What specific trainings have you received to aide in teaching writing effectively?
- How do you feel about your ability to teach writing that aligns with the CCSS?
- What resources, if any, are needed in order for you to teach writing more effectively?
- What pedagogical knowledge or instructional strategies do you feel are effective to teach writing to MLLs that aligns with the CCSS standards?
- What are some ways students are made aware of the success criteria or expectations for a writing genre?
- Describe some specific challenges you have noticed in your MLL students' CCSS aligned writings
- Explain how you address these challenges with your writing instruction
- What do you feel is needed to improve MLLs writing instruction and student writing performance at the elementary level?

Script: In this next set of questions, we will discuss aspects related to linguistically informed/responsive teaching and the new Washington English language development standards framework

- Please describe your understanding of linguistically informed/responsive teaching.
- How would you describe your familiarity with WIDA Framework and its accompanying ELD Standards?
- Describe your familiarity with the concept of a functional approach to language development.
- The notion that there is a knowledge base regarding how language works, and the language required to be successful in schools is the concept known as pedagogical language knowledge. This concept has been explored by several researchers who contend that to address the complex instructional needs of ELLs/MLLs, teachers need to develop certain linguistic competence. Describe your understanding of the disciplinary language knowledge involved in CCSS writing tasks that you feel teachers should be aware of.
- This idea of pedagogical language knowledge aligns with several of Achieve the Core's recommendations that deal with the CCSS shifts. For example, Achieve the Core suggests that teachers analyze complex texts to make ELLS/MLLs aware of the academic language found in these texts. Describe your understanding of how to analyze texts in the context of writing instruction.
- Explicitly teaching academic language is also recommended as a way to support MLLs in understanding and using academic language(TESOL International Association, 2013). Please share your techniques with teaching academic language explicitly in the context of writing instruction.
- How do you decide on what language aspects to address within your writing instruction?
- What opportunities do students have to become familiar with the language expectations of a writing assignment?
- How do you scaffold your ELLs/MLLs writing?
- How do you determine what to focus on when reviewing student writing?
- What kinds of observations do you make about student writing? What kinds of feedback do you give based on these observations?

Script: We are nearing our time together in this interview.

- What else would you like to share about you as a writing teacher of MLLs?

Adapted Stimulated Recall Protocol

Participant Number_____ Grade Level_____ Date of Interview_____

I'd like to thank you for letting me observe you teach and making time for a brief conversation now. As I have mentioned to you before, your responses will provide valuable insight and are helpful to me as the purpose of my study is to understand how teachers perceive the language features and scaffolding practices that are necessary to support Common Core writing for MLLs, and how these perceptions are realized in teachers' lessons. The purpose of this final interview is to discuss the lesson that I observed. I would like to ask a few questions about how the lesson went, and specifically, the aspects of language that you addressed and approaches that you used to meet the needs of MLLs in your writing classroom. I will be recording this interview session and taking notes. I intend to use the information you provide in my research and writing. Again, if you say anything during this session that you would like me to omit, just let me know and I will do so. Are you comfortable beginning the interview now?

General Reflective Questions

Where were you in the progression of the unit/piece of writing?
What were the learning objectives for this lesson? What did you want your students to grasp/and or produce?
Could you briefly discuss the different aspects of your instructional delivery (e.g., activities, grouping of students, materials and resources), and to what extent they were effective?
Tell me what specific language features you addressed during your writing instruction.
What did you do to scaffold their writing?
How did this practice fit in with your teaching of writing overall?

Stimulated Recall Questions

What were your thoughts of doing this activity?
What were you thinking when you decided to do this?
Why did you decide to do that?

APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

	**LINGUISTICALLY INFORMED WRITING PEDAGOGY CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOOL**	**Principles of Linguistically Informed Writing Pedagogy:** • an understanding of how language use varies across academic disciplines and tasks (Estela Brisk, 2014; Fang, 2020) • the ability to identify and explicitly teach language features characteristic of various disciplinary discourses and academic genres (Estela Brisk, 2014; Fang, 2020) • utilizes the Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC) (Estela Brisk, 2014; Rose & Martin, 2012) • utilizes a metalanguage for engaging students in explicit discussion about the ways English is used in the texts they read and write (Estela Brisk, 2014; Fang, 2020; Schleppegrell, 2018)

Explanation of Linguistically Informed Writing Pedagogy:
Since language is the medium of all instruction, to effectively teach multilingual learners (MLLs), researchers (Bunch, 2013; Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Schleppegrell, 2001, 2004, 2018; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2018) advocate for a pedagogical approach that addresses the role of language in the content teaching. This study promotes a linguistically informed pedagogy to writing to support MLLS with the construction of Common Core State Standards-aligned texts. According to Fang (2020), a linguistically informed pedagogy recognizes language as the hidden curriculum of schooling and advocates explicit grammar instruction as a way to promote advanced literacy development and provide students with access to disciplinary genres. It encourages a distinct way of talking about language and "it provides teachers with a set of tools and a metalanguage for engaging students in analyzing how lexical and grammatical choices simultaneously present content, organize text, and infuse points of view in discipline- and genre-specific ways(Fang, 2020, p. 75). Such a pedagogy, with its emphasis on how language is utilized in the construction of disciplinary meaning, is crucial for students to understand the role of academic language in the texts they must construct (Fang, 2020). Additionally, this approach which acknowledges, responds to, and explicitly teaches the language structures of academic genres offers equitable access to content for all students but especially for multilingual learners. This tool will be used to note teachers' observable practices of linguistically informed writing pedagogy.

OBSERVABLE LANGUAGE ASPECTS & TEACHING PRACTICES

IDENTIFIES & EXPLICITLY TEACHES LANGUAGE FEATURES OF ACADEMIC GENRES

Indicator	Elements	Notes
Likely Features of Argumentative Genre	**Purpose** • To persuade to do something or believe something **Text Structure** • Thesis or claim – background information if needed/preview of reasons • Reasons supported by evidence • Reinforcement of position **Aspects of Language** • Generalized Participants • Language choices to describe reasons and evidence demonstrate awareness of audience • Use of technical vocabulary for evidence • Evaluative language (*That is a ridiculous idea proposed by the foolish children.* (negative) • Graduation (turning up or down the intensity) *Cats make excellent house pets.* (up) I *make a tiny puncture.* (down) • Grammatical Person- first person for familiar letter writing; second person familiar or personal; third person for authoritative • Types of Sentences- Statements-authoritative; questions -less authoritative; exclamations-playful • Modality-obligation, possibility, probability (grades 4-8) • Cohesive Paragraphs	

EVIDENCE OF THE TEACHING LEARNING CYCLE		
Indicator	**Possible Examples**	**Notes**
Building Knowledge of Field sample activities aim to help students understand the content that will be used in the writing	• a brainstorm • a photo diary or storyboard • a flow chart or other visual aid • think-pair-share activities	
Deconstructing the Text Sample activities provide explicit instructions and examples of the what the final text should look like	• shared reading of a sample text (highlighted and annotated) • completing a cloze exercise of a sample text • completing a textual rearrangement, which requires the students to assemble a jumbled text into the correct order. • complete an evaluation of two sample texts (differentiate between texts) • color-coding each of the elements of the text	
Joint Construction of the text create an environment where teacher/students can jointly write a portion of or a few examples of the text type	• model how to approach the field content • verbalize the choices being made as he or she selects materials and writes the text • invite the learner or learners to evaluate and contribute to the emerging text	
Independent Construction encourages students to participate independently while providing scaffolding and feedback	• initiate the individual (guided) writing • establish routine consultation with teacher and peers to shape discourse • editing, rework, further feedback and finalization • personal reflection on degree of success	
EVIDENCE OF METALANGUAGE		
Indicator	**Possible Examples**	**Notes**
Use of Metalanguage engages students in explicit discussion about the ways English is used in the texts they read and write	• notices, names, disciplinary linguistic patterns-(i.e. nominalization) • analyzes verbs by denoting the processes of doing, thinking/feeling, being/having, saying, etc.) • analyzes nouns by denoting participants in various roles – actor/agent, etc. • analyzes adjectives • analyzes adverbs and prepositional phrases by denoting circumstance of time, space, manner, cause, degree etc. • names genre moves and register features (i.e., narrative- "orientation", "complication," and "resolution")	