CHAPTER 4

Improving the Language and Literacy Assessment of Emergent Bilinguals

Georgia Earnest García
Christina P. DeNicolo

Brittany Grayson had taught second grade for 4 years at Castle Elementary School, and was well liked by students, parents, and staff. She was considered a very successful teacher in the midsize community where she lived and worked, and was known for her creativity, passion for learning, and effective teaching practices. Entering her fifth year of teaching, she was concerned about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; National Governors Association & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) and wondered how the standards and related assessments would affect her teaching. At the start of the school year, Brittany also learned that she would have many more students identified as emergent bilinguals than in previous years in her classroom. She was excited about the opportunity to work with linguistically diverse students and their families but began to worry that she did not know enough to be a truly effective teacher for all her students.

Our purpose in this chapter is to provide an overview of the types of assessments currently used to evaluate the language and literacy performance of emergent bilinguals—students who know one language at home and are acquiring a second language at school (García, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008), often referred to as English learners (ELs). Similar to

Brittany Grayson in the preceding vignette, many teachers across the United States are striving to align their instruction with the CCSS and want to further their understanding of the role of assessments in the effective instruction of bilingual and multilingual students.

When states and school districts receive federal funding to address the educational needs of emergent bilinguals, they are required to administer specific types of language and literacy assessments to these students (Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA], 2015; National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, [NCELA], 2006). For example, educational personnel have to use language proficiency assessments to determine emergent bilinguals' language dominance; their classification as limited English proficient; their placement in bilingual education, English as a second language (ESL), or all-English classrooms; and their progress in acquiring English. When emergent bilinguals are enrolled in a bilingual or ESL program, they often are given literacy achievement assessments in English and/or their native language to help determine when they should be exited from the program. Per federal law (ESSA, 2015; NCELA, 2006; No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 [NCLB], 2002), emergent bilinguals in grades 3–8, who have been in U.S. schools for more than 12 months, have to participate in their state's required reading/language arts standards-based assessment in English to show their yearly progress and attainment of reading and language arts in English.

In the past, states developed their own standards-based assessments to meet the federal requirement. However, with the advent of Race to the Top (The White House, 2014), many states are using assessments tied to the CCSS, which have been developed by state consortiums such as Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

We begin this chapter by first reviewing what is known about the different types of large-scale language and literacy assessments employed with emergent bilinguals. We define *large-scale assessments* as tests that do not vary test format and administrative and scoring procedures, and are administered to large groups of students. Next, we briefly discuss the role of response to intervention (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2008) in the assessment and instruction of emergent bilinguals. Then, we focus on Brittany Grayson and her classroom context. We provide a narrative to show how Brittany learned to use formative assessments to inform and differentiate her instruction. We conclude the chapter by presenting a set of recommendations for the appropriate selection, design, and use of language and literacy assessments with emergent bilinguals.

The Use of Large-Scale Language and Literacy Assessments with Emergent Bilinguals

Currently, states and school districts use large-scale language and literacy assessments with emergent bilinguals for a variety of purposes. Some of the assessments are norm-referenced, while others are standards-based, also known as criterion-referenced. Norm-referenced assessments usually are commercially produced and indicate how a student performs compared to other students. The test items specifically are chosen to help distribute student performance according to a bell curve distribution. The results sort students, so that only a small number of students score in the top and bottom percentiles, with the majority in the middle percentiles. An example of a norm-referenced English reading assessment is the Gates–MacGinitie Reading Tests (MacGinitie, MacGinitie, Dreyer, & Hughes, 2010); an example of a Spanish norm-referenced reading assessment is Logramos (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014).

Standards-based or criterion-referenced assessments involve establishing performance-based expectations or standards at different levels of performance (e.g., *needs improvement, basic, proficient*, and *advanced*) and evaluating student performance according to the attainment of the standards. Because every student who meets a standard or criterion is scored at that specific level, the tests are criterion-referenced. However, current standards-based assessments differ somewhat from criterion-referenced assessments. The former are linked to the CCSS, which are designed to advance or improve student instruction and performance, not just reflect them. The PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessments are examples of standards-based assessments tied to the CCSS.

Both norm-referenced and standards-based assessments are judged according to their *validity* (whether the assessment content appropriately reflects the construct, concept, or skill being measured), *reliability* (whether student performance on different versions of the same measure are consistent), and *fairness*, or the absence of linguistic and cultural biases in the construction of the test, test items, administration, scoring, interpretation, and reporting procedures (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education [AERA, APA, & NCME], 2014; Messick, 1994; Rivera & Collum, 2006). According to NCELA (2006), current federal rhetoric emphasizes the use of standards-based assessments to inform teacher instruction, because the teacher's curriculum and instruction are supposed to be aligned with the standards and assessments. In contrast, norm-referenced tests are viewed as sampling student performance. Next we discuss the varied uses of norm-referenced and standards-based assessments with emergent bilinguals.

Language Proficiency Assessments

Federal law requires school personnel to identify emergent bilinguals and evaluate their English language proficiency (ESSA, 2015; NCLB, 2002; U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The most common instrument used for identification purposes is the home language survey, which is administered to students' parents or guardians in the home language or English, depending on the adults' language proficiency. The Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA; 2015) has developed a toolkit to help school districts develop and use the home language survey. In the toolkit, the OELA recommends five questions for the home language survey:

1. "What language(s) are spoken in your home?"
2. "Which language did your child learn first?"
3. "Which language does your child use most frequently at home?"
4. "Which language do you most frequently speak to your child?"
5. "In what language would you prefer to get information from the school?" (p. 5)

The toolkit also provides examples of home language surveys that school districts may use in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Amharic, and Arabic.

If the home language survey indicates that the child may be an emergent bilingual, then the child must be given a language proficiency test to determine his or her classification as a student who is an EL (ESSA, 2015; NCELA, 2006; U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Once a child is designated as an EL, federal law requires that his or her progress and attainment of English language proficiency be evaluated and reported on an annual basis.

According to federal regulations, the proficiency test(s) selected or developed by the state to classify students as ELs and to monitor their progress in acquiring English must be aligned with state standards in English language proficiency and must measure students' receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills in English (ESSA, 2015; NCELA, 2006; U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Although the assessment is supposed to include academic language proficiency by determining "conversational and academic English necessary to function on grade level, in both productive and receptive skills, in all-English classrooms" (NCLB, 2002), it is not to overlap with the required reading/language arts standards-based assessment in English that is administered to all students in grades 3–8 (ESSA, 2015; NCELA, 2006). Ideally, the assessment should evaluate

the social and academic English of emergent bilinguals at specific developmental stages.

In response to the federal requirement that states determine standards for emergent bilinguals' social and academic English proficiency development, and assess them accordingly, a number of states have combined efforts with the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) to develop a consortium entitled World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WiDA, 2012). WiDA (2015) has developed a standards-based English proficiency measure called Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS). As of 2015, 36 states and the District of Columbia have joined the consortium and are using ACCESS to evaluate the social and academic English language proficiency (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) of emergent bilinguals in the content domains of mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies.

Standards-based language proficiency assessments, including ACCESS, are relatively new to the assessment scene and have not been well investigated. For example, we do not know how well teachers can use ACCESS to inform their instruction. We also do not know to what extent the ACCESS scores of emergent bilinguals actually predict their future academic performance in all-English classrooms (García, McKoon, & August, 2006a, 2006b, 2008). In terms of validity, WiDA reports that a large sample of teachers who used ACCESS considered the cutoff scores for the different proficiency levels to be valid (i.e., accurately represent specific students' performance in English) (CAL/WIDA Partnership Activities, 2014). Another WiDA study found fairly high concurrent validity for emergent bilinguals' reading and writing performance on ACCESS (i.e., their ACCESS performance was consistent with their performance on other reading and writing measures), but lower concurrent validity for their speaking and listening performance (CAL/WIDA Partnership Activities, 2014).

Researchers who have examined commercial language proficiency tests have warned that there are at least three reasons that school districts should not rely solely on the use of a single language proficiency assessment to determine children's classification as ELs; their instructional placement in bilingual, ESL, or all-English classrooms; their attainment of English; or their reclassification as fluent English-proficient learners and exit from bilingual or ESL programs (García & Pearson, 1994; García et al., 2006a, 2006b, 2008). Given that we know very little about the validity, reliability, and fairness of standards-based language proficiency assessments, we strongly recommend that users of the state assessments pay attention to the following concerns.

First, language proficiency tests frequently emphasize skills that are related to the oral use of a language, such as *phonology* (knowledge of

the sound system), *morphology* (knowledge of meaningful word units; e.g., past tense markers or use of *-ed* as in *She died*), *syntax* (knowledge of grammar), and lexicon (vocabulary knowledge). As a result, their ability to indicate how well students marshal the individual skills to actually communicate in real-life and academic settings is limited (García et al., 2006a).

Second, although language proficiency tests generally sample how well students produce (speak and write) and comprehend oral and written language (listen and comprehend), they do not evaluate how well students use a language to understand academic instruction or to learn in an academic setting (García & Pearson, 1994; García et al., 2006a, 2006b, 2008). Several researchers have found that commercial language proficiency tests, such as the Language Assessment Scales (LAS; DeAvila & Duncan, 1988), do not predict the academic English reading of emergent bilinguals, as measured by standardized reading comprehension tests in English (Laesch & Van Kleeck, 1987). In a study with seventh-grade emergent bilinguals enrolled in sheltered social studies classrooms, Stevens, Butler, and Castellón-Wellington (2000) reported a significant but low-magnitude correlation between the students' LAS reading test scores in English and their performance on the social studies section of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), a standardized academic test. In fact, the students' LAS performance only accounted for 20% of the ITBS variance. Both sets of researchers warned that educational personnel should not use commercial language proficiency tests to evaluate students' academic language proficiency.

Third, language proficiency tests tend to be brief, because they are administered individually or in small groups and are time-consuming (NCELA, 2006). Due to their brevity, they do not present a very complete picture of the oral and written language use and development of emergent bilinguals.

An additional concern applicable to standards-based assessments, such as ACCESS (WiDA, 2015), is that teachers often do not get the language proficiency scores of their emergent bilinguals in time to use them to inform their instruction. For example, school districts tend to administer ACCESS to ongoing emergent bilinguals in the spring semester. Teachers typically do not receive the ACCESS scores until the following fall, after the emergent bilinguals who were tested have moved on to another grade and another teacher.

By combining data from other sources with the student's language proficiency test scores, a more complete picture of the student's language proficiencies in English and the native language is obtained. According to Kindler (2002), prior to the implementation of NCLB, three-fourths of the states or governing bodies (e.g., Guam, Puerto Rico) in the United

States reported that their districts used a range of measures for the eligibility decision. For example, they reported that to determine which children were ELs and should be placed in bilingual or ESL education, their school districts used a commercial language proficiency assessment—such as the LAS, IDEA Language Proficiency Tests (IDEA; 1994), or Woodcock–Muñoz Language Survey (Woodcock & Muñoz-Sandoval, 1993)—in combination with other sources of information, such as language samples, a normed- or criterion-referenced achievement test, a parent report, student grades and/or records, teacher interviews and/or observations, and referrals by educational personnel.

In terms of reclassifying a student as a fluent, English-proficient learner and exiting the student from a bilingual or ESL program into an all-English classroom, NCLB (2002) actually specifies that, in addition to the state standards-based language proficiency assessment used to evaluate students' attainment of English, states may include other criteria. According to NCELA (2006), the federal government anticipates that most states will add an achievement measure of some type. Prior to NCLB, it was common for states and governing bodies to use a range of assessments. For example, Kindler (2002) wrote that states and governing bodies reported using commercial and state-developed achievement tests, information from parents and other educational personnel, oral proficiency measures, student records and grades, and teacher interviews and observations. Some districts were known not to move students into the all-English classroom until the students indicated that they could perform at grade level by scoring at the 50th percentile on a standardized reading or language arts achievement test in English.

English Reading/Language Arts Achievement Tests

A number of cultural and linguistic test biases have been reported that could affect the use of norm-referenced and standards-based tests with emergent bilinguals (see García & Pearson, 1994; Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2008). For example, a serious problem in evaluating the English reading/language arts performance of emergent bilinguals is knowing when students are proficient enough in English to participate appropriately in large-scale reading/language arts achievement tests in English (Butler & Stevens, 2001; García et al., 2006a; Hakuta & Beatty, 2000). Butler and Stevens (2001) warn that when students are in the process of acquiring English, it is difficult to know whether their test scores on English tests accurately reflect their domain knowledge and skills or their limited English proficiency. The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999) emphasize that

the validity may be questioned when emergent bilinguals participate in a test that has been designed for fluent English speakers:

> The test user should investigate the validity of the score interpretations for test takers believed to have limited proficiency in the language of the test [because] the achievement, abilities, and traits of examinees who do not speak the language of the test as their primary language may be seriously mismeasured by the test. (p. 118)

The Standards further state that significant test bias occurs when emergent bilinguals participate in assessments normed on native English speakers:

> Test norms based on native speakers of English either should not be used with individuals whose first language is not English or such individuals' test results should be interpreted as reflecting in part current level of English proficiency rather than ability, potential, aptitude, or personality characteristics or symptomatology. (p. 91)

Unfortunately, few, if any, norm-referenced reading/language arts or vocabulary tests in English include emergent bilinguals as part of the norming populations (García et al., 2006a).

Researchers who have investigated the reading achievement test performance of emergent bilinguals have reported that their performance on English assessments may be misleading for a number of reasons. Several researchers have noted that due to differences in receptive and productive development, emergent bilinguals may reveal greater comprehension of English texts when they are allowed to answer questions or write their answers in their native language (García, 1991; Lee, 1986). Second-language learners, as compared with monolingual learners, also may need more time to complete reading tests in their second language, because they tend to process text more slowly (García, 1991; Mestre, 1984). The frequency of vocabulary items differs across languages and across regional dialects of the same language, so that the use of a vocabulary test in only one language may underestimate the vocabulary knowledge of bilingual students because they sometimes know different items in each of their languages (Fernández, Pearson, Umbel, Oller, & Molinet-Molina, 1992; Sattler & Altes, 1984). In a study that focused on the differential test performance of Spanish-speaking and monolingual English-speaking fifth and sixth graders who had been enrolled in the same classrooms, García (1991) reported a number of testing bias issues that resulted in the Spanish-speaking students' test performance underestimating their English reading comprehension. For

example, she found significant differences in the two groups of students' prior knowledge for the test passages and performance on questions that required students to integrate their prior knowledge with test information to answer the questions correctly. When differences in prior knowledge were statistically controlled, there was no significant difference between the two groups' performances on the test passages, although low and average readers from the Spanish-speaking group still performed more poorly on the questions that involved prior knowledge integration. The Spanish-speaking students knew significantly less of the vocabulary included in the test passages and questions, but even when they could figure out unfamiliar vocabulary in the passages, they frequently missed related questions, because they did not know the paraphrased vocabulary in the test items. When students were asked the test questions in Spanish, they revealed much greater comprehension of the English test passages.

In 2006, updated regulations for NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2006) stated that emergent bilinguals who have attended school in the United States for less than 12 months may be exempt from taking the state standards-based reading/language arts test in English on one occasion, although schools still are required to report how many students have been exempted. Also, in determining the annual scores of ELs, states and schools now may include the reading/language arts scores of former ELs who are considered to be fluently English proficient for up to 2 years after their reclassification.

Testing Accommodations

To offset some of the linguistic and cultural biases noted earlier, a number of states have experimented with testing accommodations. According to Rivera, Collum, Shafer Willner, and Sia (2006), testing accommodations involve changes to a test or to its testing context that do not make the test content or construct invalid. Testing accommodations are supposed "to provide support to emergent bilinguals in processing the language of the test without providing help on the test's content" (p. 6). Most important, the accommodation should not result in a "demonstrable advantage" for those who use it as compared with those who do not (p. 7). Most of the research on accommodations has involved simplification of the linguistic structure (e.g., reduced sentence complexity or simplification of non-content-oriented vocabulary), dictionaries (with simple definitions of noncontent words in English or definitions of noncontent words in the native language) and bilingual glossaries, dual-language tests (with side-by-side versions of the test in the two

languages), oral reading of the instructions or test items in English or the native language, allowing students to respond in the native language, and allowing additional time to take the test. At this point in time, most of the accommodations have occurred with tests of mathematics or science (García et al., 2006b; Rivera et al., 2006).

According to federal law (ESSA, 2015; NCLB, 2002), emergent bilinguals should be tested in language arts and reading with the "same academic assessments to measure the achievement of all students . . . [and] should be provided reasonable accommodations, including, to the extent practicable, assessments in the native language and form most likely to yield accurate data" (NCLB, 2002 Whether providing students with accommodations will help to offset their limited English proficiency while reading in English still is not known.

Certainly, providing emergent bilinguals with test instructions in their native languages or with glossaries or dictionaries for unfamiliar vocabulary in the assessment instructions, may help, as may extending the amount of time given for emergent bilinguals to complete the assessment or orally reading the assessment in English or the native language. However, it may be difficult to use the two accommodations most frequently cited with mathematics and science tests—simplified syntax and vocabulary—because these two constructs are an essential part of reading. Also, it is very doubtful that an assessment primarily based on monolingual native English-speaking students, even with accommodations, will be able to identify students who demonstrate the features of successful bilingual or second-language readers (see Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1995, 1996).

The Need for Native Language and Bilingual Assessments

Although not required, federal regulations allow school districts to test bilingual students in both of their languages (NCLB, 2002; NCELA, 2006). In fact, before emergent bilinguals can be placed in special education, federal law actually requires an assessment in the native language and English, unless the native language assessment is not feasible or possible (Ortiz & Artiles, 2010). To determine the academic progress of students enrolled in bilingual education programs, it seems especially important to evaluate students' literacy performance in the two languages, because they have been taught in both languages. Standard 13 from the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014) recognizes the importance of testing students in the language of instruction: "A test should be administered in the language that is most relevant and appropriate to the test purpose"

(p. 69). To help with this effort, WiDA (2015) currently is developing a standards-based language proficiency assessment in Spanish.

An important issue that has not been addressed by the federal government or assessment developers is the inability of monolingual assessments (i.e., separate assessments in English and the native language) to evaluate the bilingual capabilities of emergent bilinguals (Hopewell & Escamilla, 2014; Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003). O. García's (2009) heteroglossic theory of translanguaging proposes that bilingual students can marshal all of their linguistic resources when thinking, communicating, and interacting with text. Solano-Flores and Trumbull (2003) reported that it often is difficult to know in which language emergent bilinguals will do better on large-scale assessments—in their native language or their second-language, English. Their assessment studies indicated that emergent bilinguals sometimes answered test questions correctly in their native language but, on the same assessment, answered other test questions correctly in English. Solano-Flores and Trumbull called for bilingual assessments that provide emergent bilinguals with the opportunity to vary the language in which they respond to a test item.

The most recent Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing 2014 (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014) supports the call for bilingual assessments. It recommends that the bilingual development of emergent bilinguals be taken into account when their academic and language performances are evaluated. It states that it is erroneous to assume that emergent bilinguals "have developmental trajectories comparable to those of individuals who have been raised in an environment mediated by a single language and culture" (p. 53), and that we "need an understanding of an individual's type and degree of bilingualism or multilingualism" (p. 55).

There is empirical evidence to support the use of bilingual assessments. In a study that compared Spanish-speaking students who were successful bilingual readers with those who were less successful, Jiménez and his colleagues (1995, 1996) reported that successful readers had a uniform view of reading across Spanish and English and used bilingual strategies, whereas, the less successful readers thought they had to keep the two languages separate to succeed in English reading. G. E. García (1998) also found that fourth-grade emergent bilinguals who were successful readers in Spanish and English used unique bilingual strategies to demonstrate their comprehension of text (e.g., summary translating, paraphrasing what they had read in one language by using the other language, and code switching or code mixing). More recently, Hopewell and Escamilla (2014) showed that the reading performance of bilingual students who simultaneously developed reading in Spanish and English was misevaluated when a monolingual framework was used for their

assessment, with some students erroneously classified as being in need of special services. When they used their empirically informed trajectory toward bilingualism to evaluate the students' reading performance in English and Spanish, then more students performed satisfactorily and were not in need of special services.

Given these issues and findings, we are concerned about the decision of some school districts to administer PARCC three times per year to evaluate emergent bilinguals' academic growth in English. This decision will negatively impact emergent bilinguals in grades 3–8, who are enrolled in developmental or late-exit transitional bilingual education or dual language programs by overemphasizing their academic performance in English, and ignoring their academic performance in their native language and bilingual development.

Analyses of the CCSS already have shown that not all the standards are relevant to the language and literacy development and effective instruction of bilinguals (DeNicolo & García, 2014; G. E. García, 2012, 2013), which makes it problematic for teachers of emergent bilinguals to align their instruction with the CCSS and to effectively evaluate the language and literacy performance of their emergent bilinguals. In recognition of such problems, some school districts have identified and emphasized standards from the CCSS that are consistent with what is known about the language and literacy performance of emergent bilinguals (DeNicolo & García, 2014). In the next section, we discuss the use of assessments in response to intervention (RTI), a program that provides instructional support for students beyond what is given in the general education classroom.

Response to Intervention

RTI is a schoolwide, problem-solving approach designed to identify students in need of specific instructional interventions and support through the integration of assessment and instruction (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2008). RTI, which is used in over 36 states (Ortiz et al., 2011), employs a tiered approach to monitor student progress and differentiate instruction beginning with the general education classroom (Tier 1). School-based teams support teachers in identifying appropriate interventions beyond the classroom in Tiers 2 and 3.

For RTI to be effective with emergent bilinguals, it is important for the teachers in the Tier 1 classrooms (whether all English, bilingual, or ESL) to provide effective instruction for emergent bilinguals. The latter requires expertise in bilingual and second-language acquisition and instruction, as well as an understanding of students' cultures, home languages, and prior educational experiences. Such expertise and

knowledge increase the likelihood that at the onset of the identification process, teachers utilize instructional practices that are responsive to students' cultural and linguistic needs (Hoover & Klinger, 2011).

Additionally, as part of the problem-solving process of RTI, it is essential to assess emergent bilinguals in both their home language and English in the academic areas in which they are not progressing as expected based on curriculum standards. Literacy assessments in both languages allow for comparisons across languages and peer groups (bilinguals, English speakers, Spanish speakers), while providing information to assist in differentiating between language proficiency and learning issues (Ortiz et al., 2011). Valid assessments must be used in the second and third tiers. The latter means that the assessment instruments must be developed for bilinguals or include bilinguals in the norming group to ensure that performance interpretations are indicators of academic knowledge, not English-language proficiency. Last, the school-based team must include bilingual and/or ESL teachers, as well as parents, to determine accurately the learning needs of emergent bilinguals and the accuracy of assessment measures (Ortiz et al., 2011).

We now return to the case presented at the beginning of the chapter. We present a dialogue between Brittany Grayson and the instructional coach for her school district, María West, to examine how formative assessments can inform instruction by providing insight into emergent bilinguals' language and literacy development.

The Classroom Context: How Brittany Grayson Learned to Develop and Use Formative Assessments

To prepare for the school year, Brittany Grayson decided to meet with the instructional coach, María West, for guidance on how to teach and assess monolingual English-speaking students along with emergent bilinguals from several different language backgrounds. Brittany knew that the district was encouraging teachers to develop and use formative assessments tied to the CCSS to evaluate their students' performance and inform their instruction. She decided to ask María to work with her on using formative assessments as a way to document her students' language and literacy learning.

María informed Brittany that formative assessments are supposed to be integrated into her instruction, so that she can see how individual students are attaining the standards, and to provide information to differentiate her instruction (Hertitage, 2010; Osmundson, 2011). Ideally, formative assessments include student self-evaluation, so that students are aware of their own learning and motivated to improve it, and peer

evaluation to promote peer collaboration. Because Brittany's classroom included emergent bilinguals, María recommended that she pay attention to the state language proficiency standards identified on ACCESS and the language and literacy standards from the CCSS that the district had identified as appropriate for emergent bilinguals.

María told Brittany that she needed to develop a systematic way to document the progress all of her students were making toward learning outcomes in reading and writing. For emergent bilinguals, she also should systematically document the progress they were making in developing academic language proficiency in English across content areas. María explained, "Documenting progress toward both content and language objectives will lead to more effective instruction, because your instructional planning will not be based on curricular guides and tests that are developed for monolingual English-speaking students, but instead on emergent bilinguals' learning. I think you will feel more confident when you know that you have a way to understand the exact progress students are making toward the English language proficiency and literacy standards."

Brittany agreed. "It would be a big help because, in the past, when I was grading the unit tests that come with the language arts program for students who are monolingual English speakers, I was not sure if students misunderstood what the question was asking, the terminology, or the concept. I can only imagine how this will be magnified when I have students with a greater range of English proficiency levels."

"Exactly!" María exclaimed. "That is why we can never rely on one assessment to measure a student's learning. If the student is learning English at school, it becomes even more imperative to utilize formative assessments to guide our instruction in order to know if students are mastering the language and concepts being taught." María told Brittany that formative assessments of English language proficiency would involve assessing student's use of English when working with peers, responding to class discussions, or presenting information that is part of a project (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

Brittany nodded enthusiastically as María continued, "There are several types of formative assessments that provide essential information regarding the overall language arts development of bilingual students because they do not limit assessment to the evaluation of a narrow set of skills or processes. The more you gain experience working with emergent bilinguals, the more you can expand the types of formative assessments you use. For this school year, I recommend that you utilize three types of formative assessments for language arts: retelling records, anecdotal records with charts or checklists, and writing conference sheets with goals."

Retelling Records

Brittany jumped in, saying, "I already use retellings to assess students' comprehension of story elements, but I am not sure about how to do that if they are more proficient in another language."

María replied, "In discussing retellings we will talk about the value of students using their home languages in the classroom and the role of assessment in supporting biliteracy development. The degree of home language use may change as students develop proficiency in English and will depend on the instructional goals and the individual student."

"So, I am guessing the first step would be to learn about students' prior schooling experiences and literacy knowledge." Brittany said.

María explained. "Yes, if you do not speak the same language as your students, it will be more difficult to determine their level of comprehension when reading. Speaking with family members can provide you with information that will help you more accurately interpret a student's participation level and assist you as you plan for instruction. When families speak languages other than English at home, you will need to find ways to support home–school communication and to develop an understanding of your students' prior schooling experiences. If the school does not provide translation services, you can seek translation help from colleagues, districtwide parent liaisons, community agencies, older siblings, or relatives. Once a relationship and support for communicating across languages is established, you may be able to provide explanations of reading and writing goals in the native language and allow students to respond to activities in their home language. This also builds on one of your current teaching practices, connecting with community funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). You work hard to ensure that your teaching, curriculum, and parental involvement reflect and respect the cultural backgrounds of your students by dedicating time to get to know people in the community and identifying key elements of students' home culture that align with the curriculum. At the start of every school year, you interview family members to gain insight into the funds of knowledge or networks of information, resources, and practices that they maintain in their homes and communities (Moll et al., 1992). This information guides you in selecting instructional themes for the school year. This is a very time-consuming process, but it has enabled you to develop such a deep level of understanding of each of your students by drawing on the knowledge that each student possesses but may not have had the opportunity to share in school."

María continued, "In addition to learning about the forms of knowledge that exist in the community, interviewing family members can provide valuable information to ensure that you accurately assess

the progress your bilingual students are making. Having a clear understanding of students' literacy knowledge better prepares you to support students' transfer of knowledge from their first language to the second or third language (Cummins, 1996). Ideally, instruction and assessment support the development of metalinguistic awareness by addressing the identification of cognates, false cognates, and differences in letter–sound correspondences across languages. Taking note of how students incorporate metalinguistic awareness as they read and write across content areas helps assess their biliteracy development (Valdés, 2001). Assessment that promotes students' use of their home language or dialect can provide teachers with valuable information regarding students' reading and writing."

María further explained, "Retellings are one form of formative assessment that can be done in the native language or in both the first and the second languages. When students provide an oral or written account of what they have read, it is referred to as a *retelling*. Retellings provide teachers with insight into students' comprehension of text and ability to identify story elements. Teachers can use the retelling to pose additional questions or readdress aspects of the story that were not accurately represented. G. E. García (1994) stresses the range of possibilities that exist with retellings. Teachers can have students retell with partners, respond using more than one language, or audio-record retellings in the home language so teachers can later seek translation support for the recording" (García, 1994).

Brittany responded enthusiastically. "I will definitely use retellings for reading comprehension assessment, but I have to tell you that I am not sure that I know what to do if students use their home language, aside from having someone else translate their responses. Could I encourage students to draw illustrations to accompany retellings that are not in English?"

María explained that some emergent bilinguals might have the oral-language skills in English to discuss their retellings. She suggested that in addition to drawing, students could act out what they had written, stressing that a retelling checklist could indicate the concepts that the drawings represented, or that the children had acted out (see Figure 4.1). Before moving on, María had one more bit of advice on native language use. "Brittany, keep in mind that when you encourage students to use their native language, you acknowledge the interconnectedness of culture, language, and learning. By inviting your students to teach you the languages they speak and/or are acquiring, you demonstrate your commitment and the value you place on bilingualism (Nieto, 2002). This sends a powerful message to all of your students and most likely will inspire your monolingual students to do the same!"

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Story/Book Title: _____

Rate the completeness of the retelling in terms of each of the following:				
Setting	**Partial**	**Complete**	**How demonstrated (English, native language, drawing, dramatization)**	**Comments**
Characters named and described				
Initiating event, goal, or problem				
Episodes or events to resolve problem or attain goal				
Solution to the problem or goal attainment				
How the narrative ends				

FIGURE 4.1. Retelling chart for narratives.

Anecdotal Records with Charts or Checklists

"Brittany," María asked, "Remember how we were discussing the aspects of your teaching that will be very important for working with emergent bilinguals? Talk to me about how you think instructional themes and building community will support your bilingual students."

Brittany took out her plan for the year. "We talked about thematic instruction, and how that allows me to teach vocabulary words that students will work with across content areas. It also provides more opportunities for students to form connections with prior learning, because they are working on the topic over time. From the first day of school, I strive to develop a real sense of community in the classroom and establish routines throughout the school day. Those are two areas that I think will support all of the students in my classroom."

María agreed. "The consistency and sense of safety developed will allow your second-language learners to feel comfortable, because they will know what to expect throughout the school day and the norms for participation in the classroom. When students dedicate less attention to wondering what will happen, they are able to focus on the language being used. Thematic instruction and routines also provide opportunities to monitor social and academic language development across content areas, but it requires planning; so you document language use and incorporate that information into lessons" (Stiggins, Arter, Chappius, & Chappius, 2004).

Brittany added, "One thing I could do is to start taking weekly anecdotal records of the informal talk during transitions, then use that for lesson planning on oral language development during calendar time."

María rephrased Brittany's suggestion. "Documenting students' social and academic language development by observing them as they participate in a range of activities can help you identify language use and the range of literacies they possess."

"I am not sure I understand what you mean by literacies," Brittany responded, starting to feel overwhelmed once again.

María explained, "Emergent bilinguals are extremely diverse, representing a wide range of experiences in school, varied levels of proficiency in English, and different home experiences (Zentella, 2005). Many were born in the United States, and others may have just arrived in the country. Some students may have been enrolled in a bilingual program in another school. I want you to keep in mind that although students may be identified as being part of one cultural group, such as Latino, that does not mean they have similar home experiences or backgrounds."

"Of course," Brittany replied. "Every family has its own practices and culture."

"Yes, just as we cannot assume that families all engage in the same cultural practices, we cannot assume that reading, writing, or talking has the same process or purpose across families. When we discussed your literacy block, we talked about the underlying ideologies that guide how individuals engage in literacy practices across the different areas of their lives. *Literacy* is a commonly used word, but it does not mean the same thing to everyone. Not all families engage in similar practices, but this does not mean they do not engage in literacy. You will be better able to understand your students' reading and writing abilities by observing their engagement in authentic literacy practices, activities that are meaningful and purposeful to the students. The language arts curriculum often centers on the skills that are necessary for reading and writing in English. Many multilingual students use very complex forms of literacy knowledge in their homes and communities. The work of Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, and Meza (2003) shows that many students translate complex documents and conversations for family members, yet rarely have the opportunity to build on these abilities in school. What are some literacy practices that you implement?"

"Well," Brittany pointed out, "one example is literature discussion groups, where students discuss their comprehension of texts. I follow Daniels's (1994) model, in which students select a text and utilize roles to engage in reading strategies such as forming connections, facilitating discussions, and highlighting significant events. I have found that when I provide a range of literature that is representative of the cultures in the classroom, students are highly motivated to participate in literature discussions."

María was thrilled with Brittany's understanding of culturally relevant texts. "In addition to the level of motivation, students are more apt to use their cultural and linguistic resources to support comprehension; this creates the opportunity for you to observe language use in the home language and English across all domains (Fránquiz & Reyes, 1998). Children's literature that is relevant to students' lives can serve as a vehicle to promote student identification of critical encounters in text, events in the story that have a high level of importance or impact on students, leading to longer discussions with periods of extended discourse (DeNicolo & Fránquiz, 2006). When students hold these discussions you can observe and document students' language use, comprehension of text, use of comprehension strategies, and oral and academic language development."

Brittany realized that she would really need to observe students systematically while they were engaged in independent or group activities. "How will I keep track of all that during literature discussion groups? As much as I train students on how to work collaboratively, I still need to check in periodically with each group to keep them on track."

María explained that with a checklist, she could sit with each group weekly and document what they were doing during specific parts of the conversation, as well as collect the students' role sheets. "You could plan for what you are going to observe and record prior to the literature discussion group, being sure to provide space to record any unexpected information. Documentation that is systematic will provide you with a deeper understanding of ways that students interact with text, because you can observe patterns of language use and inconsistencies between written and oral discourse (Pérez & Torres-Guzmán, 2002). Use of the checklist also will give you a range of evidence of what they have not yet mastered" (Nathenson-Mejía, 1992).

Brittany still looked doubtful, and María was prepared once again to provide her with guidance. "Based on what I have read, I suggest creating an anecdotal record chart that is designed for observation of the strategies or skills being covered in instruction or that are ongoing, such as prior knowledge and language use. The anecdotal notes are recorded under the corresponding section. You could focus on a small number of students each day, covering the entire class each week (Pierce, 2001). You may also at times choose to use anecdotal records to focus on specific students, writing longer narratives regarding their engagement and participation across a range of literacy activities." María showed Brittany an anecdotal record chart (see Figure 4.2) that a teacher, with the aid of a bilingual teaching assistant, had used to document three emergent bilingual students' vocabulary use, reading comprehension and language use, and small-group participation during a small-group literature discussion about a story read in English.

Writing Conferences with Teacher and Student Goals

"OK," said Brittany, "I am going to use retellings for reading comprehension and anecdotal records for documenting social and academic language development, as well as recording students' strategy use. What do you recommend for writing?"

María said, "Well, let's look at how you can develop a high level of cognizance regarding each student's progress in writing, ensuring that students are aware of their own learning. I know it was difficult last year to have a writer's workshop, but conferences are a great time for providing explicit feedback, which is critical to the academic progress of bilingual students (Reyes, 1992). One of the criticisms of the writing process approach is that students are expected to improve their writing by discussing their work with peers and their teacher. Students who are learning English as a second language at school may not view suggestions for improving their writing as instruction. If teachers take off points

Student	Use of vocabulary words: English (E), Spanish (S)	Use of comprehension strategies: Sequence	Language use and text comprehension notes	General notes
Carina	Mill (E) Cortar (S) Secar (S) Sembrar (S) First (E) Second (E)	Described sequence of story without support.	Used English and Spanish to participate. Showed she understood the story.	Carina was eager to answer questions, able to read text easily and recalled sequence.
Marcos	Ponio (S) Huevo (S) Tomate (S) Oven (E) Dish (E)	Not yet.	When Carina explained that he put bread in the oven, he used English to recall seeing dish placed in oven.	Appeared distracted when students began discussing.
Viviana	Hen (E) Found (E) Seed (E)	Recalled first event: the hen found a seed.	Made a connection in Spanish: Mi mamá hizó un pastel (My mom baked a cake.)	

FIGURE 4.2. Anecdotal record chart.

without explaining exactly what was incorrect, students may unknowingly assume that their language use is correct and/or fail to question what could be improved in their writing. It is crucial that teachers identify errors or miscues in students' reading, writing, and comprehension and explain why the error is an error. Even if writing rubrics are used, it may be difficult for emergent bilinguals to know if they are meeting the criteria for the genre of writing they are learning."

"Through writing conferences, for example, emergent bilinguals can develop an understanding of their own writing, misunderstandings regarding word meaning, or negative transfer from their home language. In this approach, formative assessment once again becomes a tool for teachers and students to develop awareness regarding language. Students can identify what they need to do to improve their writing and how and why they are using a particular word, letter combination, or grammatical construct. In writing conferences, teachers can record their goals for individual student's writing and the student's goals, revisiting whether the student has attained the two sets of goals in the next conference (see Figure 4.3). Teachers also can help students to develop their

own individual proofing and writing checklists by recording the words, grammar, or writing features that individual students are working on, creating a type of self-assessment."

Brittany said, "As much as I would love to talk about self-assessment and other forms of formative assessment, I may have to hold off until second semester! For now, I am going to collect, record, and use what we have talked about: retellings in the first language and English; anecdotal records with charts and checklists to document oral language use during transitions, comprehension strategies, and students' vocabulary use; and writing conferences with teacher and student goals to provide specific feedback to each student. As I compile all the data on students at the end of each week or biweekly, it will not only make lesson planning easier, but I will have a wealth of information to share with students, parents, and other teachers."

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Title or Brief Description of Writing Sample:

Teacher Goals for Student:

Student Goals for Self:

Teacher and Student Plans for Attaining the Goals:

FIGURE 4.3. Writing conference sheet with teacher and student goals.

Recommendations

We have organized our recommendations so that we first discuss the selection and use of language and literacy assessments for high-stakes decisions about the education of emergent bilinguals (e.g., their identification as ELs, instructional placement, annual progress in attaining English, reclassification and exiting decision from bilingual or ESL education, annual reading/language arts achievement, and placement in RTI). Then, we provide recommendations for the use of formative assessments with emergent bilinguals in the classroom.

The Selection and Use of Assessments for High-Stakes Decisions

1. Although the federal government requires states that receive federal funding to use an assessment tied to English-language proficiency standards to identify emergent bilinguals, evaluate their English-language proficiency for placement decisions, and assess their annual attainment of English, due to the limitations of any single measure, we strongly encourage educational personnel to combine the findings of the standards-based assessment with those of other assessments (e.g., parental report; scores on commercial language proficiency assessments and literacy achievement tests; language samples of students' writing, speaking, and reading performance; and formative assessments).

2. Because students' proficiency and academic performance in their native language are factors that need to be taken into account in the placement decision and in helping to determine whether students have acquired appropriate content/domain knowledge that can be transferred to English, we strongly encourage educational personnel also to base their decisions and evaluations on results from native-language measures (commercial language proficiency and literacy achievement tests; language samples of students' writing, speaking, and reading performance; and formative assessments).

3. For exiting decisions, it is imperative that educational personnel base their decisions on more than the standards-based language proficiency assessment. Because it is difficult to know from any one assessment how well emergent bilinguals will do in all-English classrooms, we recommend that educational personnel rely on achievement measures (norm-referenced and standards-based), and formative assessments. Students' reading, writing, listening, and speaking performance in English and their content domain performance in English and in the native language, especially when they are enrolled in bilingual education, all need to be taken into account.

4. Educational personnel need to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the large-scale assessments (norm-referenced and standards-based) that are available. For this reason, we recommend that in selecting assessments, educational personnel first read the evaluations of specific assessments published in *The Nineteenth Mental Measurements Yearbook* (Carlson, Geisinger, & Jonson, 2014). The evaluations indicate the validity, reliability, and appropriateness of various assessments and to what extent they have been norm-referenced or based on the performance of various subgroups, such as emergent bilinguals. We also recommend that district and state personnel insist on a federal research agenda that investigates the validity, reliability, and fairness of standards-based language and reading/achievement arts assessments, such as PARCC and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, for emergent bilinguals.

5. Even though standards-based reading/language arts achievement assessments used by the states are supposed to be aligned with the teacher's curriculum and instruction, it is important for educational personnel to realize that the CCSS (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) are based on the instruction and performance of monolingual, native English-speaking students. As such, tests aligned with the CCSS do not tell teachers how to teach this material so that it is relevant for emergent bilinguals. Also, because the tests cannot differentiate between students' developing proficiency in English and their reading performance in English, it is important for educational personnel to use appropriate testing accommodations. Because federal regulations specify that it is possible to use reading/language arts tests in the native language (NCELA, 2006), states and districts should include a measure of students' reading/language arts achievement in the native language, especially when instruction in the native language occurs.

6. As long as it exists, educational personnel need to take advantage of the 1-year English reading/language arts testing exemption for emergent bilinguals in grades 3–8 who have been in the United States for less than 1 year. Per federal regulations (U.S. Department of Education, 2006), when reporting their annual English reading/language arts test scores for emergent bilinguals, they also should include the scores of fluent English-proficient students after they have been classified as emergent bilinguals for the time period allowed by federal law (under NCLB, it was 2 years).

7. In terms of RTI, educational personnel need to assess students in their native language and English, pay attention to whether they are receiving the best possible instruction in Tier 1, and make sure that

bilingual and ESL teachers, along with the students' parents or guardians are included on the school-based team making the RTI decision. If the parents or guardians are not proficient in English, then the meetings about the RTI decision need to be held in the native language (when possible) with interpreters for the school staff. When it is not possible to hold the meetings in the native language, then interpreters need to be provided for the parents or guardians.

8. States and school districts need to lobby the federal government to pursue the development and use of bilingual assessments for the largest language groups. In establishing the use of such assessments to evaluate and predict bilingual students' future academic performance, a research agenda is needed that documents how bilingual students' progress in their English-language development and content-area development across their two languages.

The Use of Formative Assessments to Inform and Differentiate Instruction

1. It is essential for school district personnel and school personnel in districts and schools where emergent bilinguals are enrolled to be informed about bilingual and ESL education; second-language and native-language literacy acquisition and instruction; and the cultural, linguistic, and literacies knowledge and experiences of emergent bilingual students and their families. Educational personnel who specifically interact with and teach emergent bilinguals certainly need to use such knowledge and expertise to plan instruction, develop formative assessments, and interpret student performance. However, because effective instruction of emergent bilinguals requires a schoolwide commitment to serve the educational needs of *all* students, it is imperative for the entire school staff to receive training and preparation in educating emergent bilinguals.

2. Classrooms rich in instructional activities that require all students (including emergent bilinguals) to take risks and think, talk, read, write, and problem-solve are ideal for the use of formative assessments. With the addition of systematic recording, many of the instructional activities can be turned into formative assessments.

3. Emergent bilinguals are likely to think, interact, and use more than one language to communicate, read, write, and learn. Therefore, regardless of the instructional setting (bilingual, ESL, all English), it is important to give emergent bilinguals the opportunity to demonstrate their learning through their native language and English and through the use of bilingual strategies (e.g., code mixing and code switching).

4. Teachers should be provided professional staff development on how to develop and implement formative assessments, so that they can learn more about the language and literacy development and performance of their emergent bilingual students. The end goals are for them to use the information gained from formative assessments to differentiate their instruction, guide student learning, and support peer collaboration.

Concluding Remarks

In closing, we encourage all teachers to approach their work with emergent bilinguals with the same enthusiasm and quest for knowledge as Brittany Grayson. Just as María West guided Brittany through aspects of her instruction that would enable her to develop and use formative assessments to monitor language and literacy development, as well as content learning, parents and community members should be accessed as resources to guide teachers on how to incorporate community literacy, wisdom, and practices into the classroom. When educational personnel take the time to learn about emergent bilinguals, then it is much easier for them to make informed decisions about language and literacy assessments.

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