

CHAPTER 5



ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY



Before reflecting upon my assessment practices, I was not considering any language difficulties when giving students assessments. After having the chance to reflect on my biased assumptions and actions, I changed my assessments to fit the needs of my CLD students. Instead of written responses, multiple-choice quizzes, and cumulative tests on paper, I began to assess some students orally if needed. I also allowed students to show me what they knew by doing hands-on assessments that were more appropriate for students who struggled with language skills. Having visuals and experiments allowed my kinesthetic and visual learners the chance to express their knowledge and level of understanding without the stress of knowing all of the words and spellings that would be on a written test.

Morgan Walton, Second Grade Teacher. Reprinted with permission.



Chapter Outline

Three Dimensions of Language

- Form
- Content
- Use

Assessing Levels of Language Proficiency

- Formal Assessment of Language Proficiency
- Informal Assessment of Language Proficiency

Using Language Information to Inform Instruction

Programming-Related Issues: Assessment of Language Proficiency

- Identification
- Placement
- Monitoring
- Exit

Summary

Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Detail three dimensions of language that provide a foundation for language acquisition and learning.
- Hold informed conversations with administrators, colleagues, parents, and students about formal language assessments.
- Informally assess the language skills of your CLD students.
- Use language assessment results to inform your instructional planning and delivery.
- Provide an overview of the process used to identify, place, monitor, and exit students from language support services.

THREE DIMENSIONS OF LANGUAGE

As educators, language acquisition is the first concept that we grapple with as we begin helping students transition to their linguistic journey in a new language. However, the first question that we often ask of ourselves is, “How proficient is the student in his or her language abilities?” We want to have a baseline measure of students’ language abilities. Language acquisition and language proficiency are two related but distinct concepts that need to be unpacked as we think of assessments, interventions, and instructional decisions for students.

Language acquisition is the process of becoming successful at understanding and using a language. Although different theories exist to explain the phenomenon,

typically developing children are able to associate abstract features of a language they hear (or see) with inherent rules about the content, form, and use of that language (Bloom & Lahey, 1978; Wright & Kersner, 2015). For this natural process of first language acquisition to happen, children must be exposed to authentic communication and have opportunities to use the language for real purposes. Culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students likewise must have opportunities for authentic and purposeful use of English if they are to acquire the language.

Language proficiency, on the other hand, refers to students' ability to perform in a language. Four domains of language typically are assessed: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Ideally, the assessments we use to evaluate language proficiency yield results that inform our understanding of individual students' progress in English language acquisition.

A brief exploration of isolated features of language will support our ongoing discussion of the relationship between language proficiency—assessed through both formal and informal means—and language acquisition, which should be one of the targeted goals of our daily instruction. We will frame this exploration around the three dimensions of language: form, content, and use.

Form

Form is the structural aspect of language that involves attaching some symbol to the meaning being expressed. The symbol can include the spoken word, a picture, or a gestured sign. Form also refers to the structures we create by combining symbols such as words to make sentences (*syntax*). It includes additive forms, such as suffixes, that we add to words to refine the meaning of our message (*morphology*). It also includes the sounds and patterns of sounds in a language that we use to form words (*phonology*).

Syntax Syntax refers to language-appropriate word order. Chomsky (1968) has argued that all languages and dialects share a universal grammar. Humans are predisposed to attend to and develop detailed patterns of language. The features each group chooses to highlight, or mark, may differ but each is complex in its own way (Fenk-Oczlon & Fenk, 2014). Yet the conventions of “standard” English are among the benchmarks by which a person is deemed proficient in the United States. As with all skills, the ability to use English syntax in ways that reflect those of native speakers is acquired developmentally over time.

For example, young native English speakers, as well as new-to-English speakers who have yet to distinguish between subject and object pronouns, commonly produce sentences such as “Her went to the store.” CLD students who are acquiring a second language (L2) may initially combine L2 words and first language (L1) syntax patterns. For example, the Spanish sentence “Yo tengo un perro *chiquito*” (“I have a *little* dog”) is structured with the modifier following, rather than preceding, the noun. For this reason, many native Spanish speakers initially produce sentences such as “I have a dog *little*.” With time and experience, most CLD students can automatically differentiate these patterns as specific to only one or the other language.

Teachers often conduct assessments of syntax in their classrooms when they give students a set of words and ask to put them in order. Careful attention to students' responses enables educators to understand gaps in syntactical understanding. They then plan interventions and instructional practices accordingly.

Morphology Morphology refers to the rules and patterns for changing words to alter meaning by way of tense, person, number, and so forth. For instance, the addition of *ed* to most verbs tells us we are referring to a past event (“I walked”), but the addition of *s* to many verbs usually indicates a present-tense action by a third person (“She walks”). It violates the commonly accepted rules of English—and therefore sounds awkward—to say “I walks” or “She walk.” As with syntax, CLD students must not only master English morphological conventions but also differentiate those from the conventions of their first language.

Consider how additions of prefixes such as *dis* or *un* can completely change the meaning of a word (*disagree*, *untie*). Although students might be fully aware of the added prefix or suffix, they may not be able to grasp the changes in meaning as a result of the additions. As we support learners to attend to such additions to words, it is important to highlight contextual use of the words. This allows students to understand the meanings of the words themselves, as well as their constituent parts.

Phonology

Ms. Murillo presented Ezequiel with a quick set of prompts to check his knowledge of opposites.

Ms. Murillo: What is the opposite of *up*?

Ezequiel: Down.

Ms. Murillo: Empty?

Ezequiel: Full.

Ms. Murillo: Dead?

Ezequiel: Mom.

Ms. Murillo: (pause) . . . Um, not Daaaaaad . . . *dead*.

Ezequiel: Oh, alive!

Ms. Murillo: Heavy?

Ezequiel: Not heavy.

Ms. Murillo: False?

Ezequiel: Stands.

Ms. Murillo noted four out of five correct on Ezequiel’s chart. Which response did she consider incorrect? Ezequiel realized that *heavy* is an adjective with which it is appropriate to use the modifier *not*. Ms. Murillo knows this realization demonstrates an important element of linguistic comprehension but does not demonstrate Ezequiel’s ability to provide an appropriate opposite. By contrast, his most blatant “error” came when he heard Ms. Murillo say *falls* instead of the word *false*. Seemingly incorrect, Ezequiel’s response of *stands* is actually an appropriate opposite for the word he believed Ms. Murillo to have said: *falls*.

In this scenario, phonology lies at the root of the misunderstanding. Phonology refers to the sound system of a language, the manner in which phonemes (distinct sounds) can be combined to create meaning. Phonemes in one language may not be phonemes in another. If a sound is phonemic, it may change the meaning of a word.

For example, the sound /z/ (as in *zip*) is not a phoneme in Spanish. The Spanish language does spell words with the letter *z*, but the sound produced is like the English language *s*. For instance, *taza* (cup) sounds like *tasa*. There are no sounds in Spanish like the one English speakers associate with the letter *z*. Consequently, native Spanish speakers such as Ezequiel are not as attuned to distinctions between

ASSESSMENT IN ACTION 5.1

Assessments can provide invaluable insights into students' developing language skills. One area of assessment that is growing in importance and relevance is preassessment of phonological skills. Phonological skills refer to the student's ability to recognize, discriminate, and manipulate the sounds or sound units of language. Research on English speakers has shown that phonemic awareness skills are strongly predictive of literacy development (Yesil-Dagli, 2011).

For CLD students, phonological skills in the primary language have been found highly predictive of literacy success in both L1 and L2 (Branum-Martin, Tao, Garnaat, Bunta, & Francis, 2012; Durgunoglu, Nagy, & Hancin-Bhatt, 1993; Yeung & Chan, 2012). Because a child's brain has had more exposure to the sounds and patterns of his or her primary language, the child will often initially be more adept at demonstrating and learning these skills in that language (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010). Transfer of skills from one language to another suggests there is value in measuring and teaching these skills in whatever languages possible in a given setting (Cárdenas-Hagan, Carlson, & Pollard-Durodola, 2007; Kuo, Uchikoshi, Kim, & Yang, 2016; Luo, 2014; Sun-Alperin & Wang 2009).

Following are a few assessments that would be considered as point-in-time assessments. Even if conducted over time and incrementally, assessments such as these only give us a snapshot of students' skills. These assessments are beneficial, however, because they can point us in the direction of interventions and instructional practices that are likely to help students' advance in second language acquisition.

ASSESSMENT OF PHONEMIC AWARENESS FOR PRE- AND NONREADERS

1. Imitation of Auditory Patterns*

Instructions: Tap or knock X number of times. Encourage the child to imitate by saying, "Do this," and by using the equivalent saying in the child's native language (e.g., "Haz esto" for Spanish speakers), or by using gestures to convey the instruction. Note the child's response by recording the number of times he or she tapped.

	Student Taps
1. X	_____
2. XXX	_____
3. XXXX	_____
4. XX	_____
5. X	_____
6. XXX	_____
7. XX	_____
8. XXXX	_____

2. Syllable Segmentation with Physical Cues

This may be done using native language words, English words, nonsense words, or a combination of these. (Please circle stimuli types used for this task.)

Instructions: Say a word with the targeted number of syllables. Say it again slowly, tapping, clapping, or jumping once to each syllable count (e.g., Tap two times as you say "ca-sa" [Spanish for house] and three times as you say "bas-ket-ball"). Ask the child to join you. Once he or she can perform this task well in unison, have him or her imitate your performance with new words, tapping for each of the syllables. If this is easy, give the child words to segment independently. Use two to three words comprising the different numbers of syllables and note the child's responses. (Use "+" to indicate a correct response, and "-" to indicate an incorrect response.) Teachers can then use these data to inform their instruction of readiness skills.

(imitation)	L1	L2	Nonsense
1 syllable			
2 syllables			
3 syllables			
4 syllables			
(independent)	L1	L2	Nonsense
1 syllable			
2 syllables			
3 syllables			
4 syllables			

3. Auditory Discrimination

Instructions: The student will need to understand the concept of sameness. If the student is young, point to his or her shoes, nod, and say, "Same" ("Iguales" [Spanish translation], etc.). Then put your shoe next to one of the child's, shake your head, and say, "No, not same." Do this several times with environmental objects (e.g., pencils, blocks).

Using two identical objects such as blocks or pennies, touch each as you repeat the same word "car-car." Do this several times and model a "thumbs up" or nod as you affirm their sameness. Then take two dissimilar objects (e.g., a block and an eraser) and touch each for dissimilar words "car-milk." Shake your head and model "No, not same." It is not necessary for the student to use words such as *same*, *different*, or *not same* to perform this task. Any reliable gesture

ASSESSMENT IN ACTION 5.1 (*continued*)

(head shake/nod or thumbs up/down) will do.

Encourage the student to watch your mouth as you say the words and note if he or she can determine whether the following pairs of words are the same (head nod) or not (head shake).

		L1 words:
car-car	spoon-spoon	_____
milk-milk	spoon-soon	_____
candy-candy	chair-chair	_____
apple-dog	made-mad	_____
apple-apple	eat-eat	_____
banana-spoon	cup-come	_____

4. Structured Rhyming

An example of how to elicit structured and independent rhyming is included in a subsequent section of this chapter (see the Oral and Written Cloze Assessments section). Although it is not necessary to probe the student's skills using all stimuli types mentioned below, the distinction of language used will inform instructional planning for this student.

	L1	L2	Nonsense
Recognizes rhyme	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no
Selects rhyming word	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no
Offers rhyming word	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no

5. Sound-Syllable Blending

Instructions: To determine the level(s) at which the student is able to blend sound segments into words, you say variously sized segments of the word aloud, and the student then combines the segments to produce the whole word. You may need to begin by using something visual or tangible to demonstrate the desired behavior. For example, lay a token down for each syllable as you say "back-pack" or "wa-ter-fall." Then push the tokens together and say the entire word. The student's familiarity with the vocabulary will be a factor in his or her ability to understand the purpose of this task. Familiar words from the child's L1 and L2 as well as nonsense words can be used for this assessment. Children who are shy or not yet comfortable speaking the target language can demonstrate skills by pointing to the appropriate picture among a set provided by the teacher. Present several words for each of the

following three levels to discover the student's instructional readiness. Note the student's responses.

L1 L2 Nonsense

1. By syllable
("bu-tter-fly")
2. Initial sound
+ remainder
of word ("r-ock")
3. By sound
("d-e-s-k")

6. Phoneme/Syllable Deletion[†]

Instructions: This skill is often not evident in the preschool years but becomes very relevant for previously unschooled students or struggling early readers. This skill can also be demonstrated with colored blocks or other items to represent the sound or syllable segments being manipulated. To assess elision (the deletion of a sound or syllable), tell the student:

1. Say "hot dog." Student: "hot dog"
Now say it again, but don't say "hot." Student: "dog"
2. Say "hamburger." Student: "hamburger"
Say it again, but don't say "ham." Student: "burger"
3. Say "baloney." Student: "baloney"
Say it again, but don't say "low." Student: "bunny"
4. Say "bake." Student: "bake"
Now say it again, but don't say "b." Student: "ache"
(Be sure to pronounce sounds rather than say letter names.)
5. Say "meat." Student: "meat"
Now say it again, but don't say "t." Student: "me"
6. Say "cloud." Student: "cloud"
Now say it again, but don't say "k." Student: "loud"

Feel free to substitute words with similar patterns and expand on this list. Note below words and responses generated while assessing elision in the student's primary language:

Source: Selected items adapted from the **Spanish/English Preschool Screening Test* (Kayser, 1998) and the [†]Test of Auditory Analysis Skills (TAAS)(Rosner, 1993)

/s/ and /z/ as are native English speakers, for whom *zip* and *sip* are very different words with very different meanings.

Language production “errors” are often recognizable as features of a person’s accent. However, teachers’ interpretation of student performance becomes more accurate when they are aware of ways phonological perception may influence what students hear and how they answer. This awareness also helps the teacher highlight pronunciation differences in strategic ways during daily lessons, especially when students are learning new content vocabulary.

Content

Teachers had come from different schools to staff a newly opened elementary school. The students were largely CLD learners who had been transferred from overcrowded schools in adjacent areas. Their principal, Ms. Houston, had been fortunate to attract many talented teachers to the new school. Within a month, however, the excitement began to wane.

It appeared that the students had widely varying skill levels. Many didn’t return homework and “lacked the oral language” needed to talk about content, much less learn new vocabulary at the recommended pace. Prescribed lessons entailed heavy use of repetitive response drills to help students remember the word definitions and examples provided by curricular scripts. Fidelity to scripts was promoted to ensure that all students received the same instruction, with nightly homework sheets to cement the skills. Teachers noticed that those students who *already* were successful participated the most, and with greater success.

Other students could repeat back the prompts used to teach, but they not discuss the material or apply concepts with any depth. It reminded Ms. Sami of how she only memorized terms long enough to pass the high school anatomy tests—until the chapter on skin. She had been to a dermatologist and she also liked having her nails done. Word parts like “derma” and “cutaneous” (cuticle!) hit home. This prompted Ms. Sami to wonder aloud, “Is it possible that all the structure designed to *equalize* access may actually be *impeding* some students’ more personal and powerful connections to the vocabulary words?”

Another teacher jumped in, “How do we know our families *don’t* have experiences with the concepts represented by academic vocabulary? I can’t tell you how many times a cognate or discussion of home experience has given instant *life* to “new” words. It’s so much more powerful than memorization. Besides, the only students completing the homework pages regularly are those who already find it easy, or have parents who do.” Others agreed.

Ms. Houston summarized, “So, I’m hearing a few themes. One is that the district-provided lessons don’t necessarily facilitate connection. The other is that homework may not be helping. In fact, many of you feel the practice sheets:

- Reinforce students’ self-perceptions as either a learner or a struggler
- Further disadvantage parents who have less time to sit with each child or who are less proficient in the school language
- Don’t significantly impact oral language development

These are keen observations. Homework is definitely an area we can adapt.” Together they decided to try something radically different. Students in all grades would have no homework assignments other than vocabulary, and the format of the vocabulary homework also would change.

Figure 5.1 Questions for Parent and Caregiver Conversations**Conference Dialogue Questions**

- What would you like me to know about your child?
- What are your child's interests?
- What activities does your child like to do?
- Does your child like to read?
- What excites you about your child?
- What does your child like to do with friends?
- How does your child feel about school?
- Where does your child feel the most success?
- What do you like to help your child with the most?
- If you could choose a goal for your child, what would it be?
- We need your help with homework. (*Describe the vocabulary activities and how those at home can help.*)

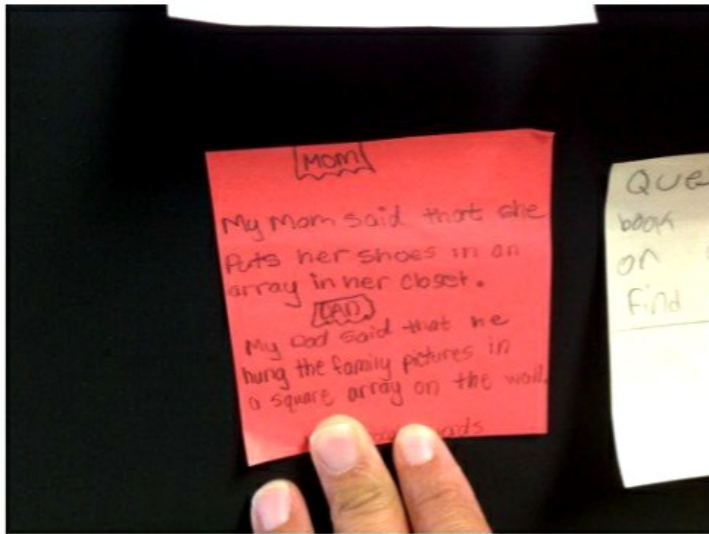
Source: Michele Ingenthron, Wichita, KS. Reprinted by permission.

Teachers used the subsequent fall conferences to learn more about students (see Figure 5.1) and gain insight to home language development. They explained the new homework approach to parents. A letter also was provided, translated into the languages spoken by area families (see Appendix B). Each week, all students would be assigned targeted vocabulary, just as before. Several teachers, however, wanted to add power by opening with a strategy to activate background knowledge. They were willing to share these ideas and experiences during professional development time. Insights gained during conferences and through activation could then be referenced while teachers presented the standard district materials and visuals.

There were minor differences in the formats used for home practice. In all cases, students had opportunities to learn and talk about the words before taking them home. Most homework involved taking home a graphic organizer, with individual or group notes developed during activation and connection in class. Students were not required to rewrite or memorize definitions. Instead, the only requirement was to go home and talk to a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, neighbor, or sibling. Students were to share their understanding of what these words meant and *listen* to the thoughts, examples, or questions parents had for each word. The parents' job was simply to talk, adding personal connections and home language words (or dramatizations) wherever possible for each idea. Above all, these conversations were to occur in the language of the home and heart.

The next morning, students had a chance to share with tablemates what they had learned or heard in those home discussions. Ideas were written on sticky notes, which were added to the vocabulary organizer or poster used by each class (see Figure 5.2). There was an immediate positive response from all stakeholders. Teachers noticed not just improved scores on weekly quizzes but increased oral and written use of the new words across settings. These were truly evidence-based results!

Figure 5.2 Assessment Artifact: Vocabulary Insights from Home



Students have the opportunity to talk to parents, caregivers, and others about their connections to words being studied at school. In this example, the student provided the perspectives of both parents on the word "array."

Images Source: Natasha Reyes, Wichita, KS. Used with permission.



Teachers can display, celebrate, and build upon home vocabulary connections during instruction. Doing so communicates the shared community of the class and the unity among parents, students, and teachers as they work toward common goals. Facilitating connections between background knowledge and the curriculum also promotes student comprehension and retention of learning.

The voices of the following teachers illustrate the benefits of the new homework policy for the learning community:

I have never had parents and kids so excited to do homework before. The parents can go home and have conversations with their kids and there's no right or wrong answer. It's just using the vocabulary. And we found that kids are vertically aligning their vocabulary K-5. That's the way the district is set up, so it's nice to have brothers and sisters able to have conversations about the same words and they can build relationships that way, too. So it's all about building relationships and making parents confident to talk to their kids at home.

Chelsea Johnson, Second Grade Teacher. Reprinted with permission.

I got a very positive response from parents and students about it. The students that even had behavior issues at home and school said, “I love it because I can sit with my mom or my dad and just talk, and I’m not in trouble.” And it’s very positive. Parents said that they loved it because it was stress free and even my student that had a lot of behavior issues said, “I love that my Dad will just talk to me and it’s one of the only times that we really do talk.” So it was a very positive experience in my classroom.

Bridget Lujano, Fifth Grade Teacher. Reprinted with permission.

This scenario illustrates the power of building vocabulary instruction upon the existing languages and experiences of students, families, and community members. It also highlights how teachers’ willingness to think outside the box can set into motion more effective teaching and learning practices. With relatively little effort, teachers were able to increase the relevance of their grade-level curriculum for students while also supporting stronger bonds within families and the community.

Most of us master the form (syntax, morphology, and phonology) of our primary languages as children. However, our skill with the content, or meaning, of language continues to develop and grow throughout our lives. *Semantics* relates to the meanings of words, phrases, and sentences. Meaning can be expressed by our choices of words, their endings or prefixes, and the order in which we arrange them. Therefore, most of us choose our words rather carefully based on the meanings we believe they hold and the message we want to convey in a given context. For teachers, it is important to remember that vocabulary, to a large extent, is gained and retained through interactions with people and print outside of educational settings. With this in mind, homework of the nature described in this section’s vignette is beneficial to advancing students’ (and families’) continually developing semantic knowledge.

Semantic knowledge is the most readily transferred aspect of language. It is much easier to connect the new form (word) with an already understood concept than it is to learn a concept one has never been exposed to (in a language not yet fully understood). Even if there is not an exact translation, every word has semantic features or meaning associations that function like Velcro hooks. These understandings provide added “stickiness” for new related words. The more words known in the native language, the easier it is to learn new words in *any* language.

As we teachers work to support students to develop semantic skills, we also must consider the difference between a child’s ability to make meaning when words are present in isolation versus when words are utilized within a context. If you have ever closely listened to English learners reading or performing on a proficiency test or a state assessment, you likely noticed the frustration they feel at times in their ability to understand the words and phrases within the context of a paragraph. With enough knowledge of phonological awareness and isolated discrepancies in

morphology, our language learners often are able to connect the isolated sounds to form words and the words to form sentences. However, these abilities do not guarantee that they have been able to master the art of the language, which lies in meaning making. We do not want to leave students stuck at the level of being “word callers.” We must continuously look for ways to support learners on their path toward greater understanding and comprehension.

assessment FREEZE FRAME 5.1



The more words known in the native language, the easier it is to learn new words in *any* language.

Use

CLD students are learning not only new sounds and words but also detailed, yet often unspoken “rules” about how such words can be marked and combined (or not) to communicate effectively with the new language “code.” Actual use of a language requires an understanding of how to use the language in varying contexts and for a multitude of purposes. *Pragmatics* refers to ways in which social context and experience influence the interpretation of language. Such influences depend on the speaker, listener, setting, and intent rather than on just the static meaning of the spoken words.

For example, depending on the people and their relationship, interaction style, situation, and nonverbal cues, the word *great* can be used as a sincerely positive or a sarcastically negative comment. Let’s consider a simple exchange:

Jack: It’s starting to rain.

Saul: Oh great.

This dialogue is difficult to interpret unless the author provides us with some context, along with descriptive or stylistic cues such as punctuation or italics to inform us about the pragmatic aspects of the message. The study of pragmatics encompasses a variety of both blatant and subtle, as well as verbal and nonverbal, features of language. These features can dramatically influence how a message is delivered and perceived. Most people generally understand language pragmatics as the appropriateness of the communication action or intent in context.

The pragmatics of a situation always should be considered an influence on a student’s response. For example, in many languages—including English—it can be considered redundant to repeat the subject of a question in the response. For most of us, “What is the boy doing?” will elicit a response that directly answers the question, such as “Riding a bike,” without the additional phrase “The boy is . . .” Unfortunately, it is common to find prompts requiring an artificial construction (e.g., repetition of the subject when the subject is already understood) on tests intended to measure a child’s content knowledge or language skills. Such prompts may penalize students who provide the more natural fragmented response.

Language is complex, and mere knowledge of its structure is insufficient. Language also is acquired at the level of *communicative competence*. Effective communication demands that we know what to say, when to say it, to whom to say it, and under what circumstances (Kayser, 2008). The answers to such questions typically lie in the dynamic norms of varying linguistic and social groups.

In addition, most speakers, regardless of background, shift their manner of speaking or style depending on the situation. To illustrate, depending on the formality of a workplace, it may seem unusual to hear someone speak to a boss in the same manner he or she would use with close friends or family. In addition to tone of voice, speakers who are *style shifting* also unconsciously adjust vocabulary, syntax, intonation, and grammar to fit the discourse style necessary for that particular setting or purpose. Style shifting is a sophisticated skill, and weaknesses in this area can be socially awkward. CLD students who demonstrate communicative competence are able to communicate effectively in a variety of social groups.

ASSESSING LEVELS OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Federal legislation often stipulates that schools must meet certain requirements in assessing the English language proficiency of CLD students. These criteria seek to enhance the alignment of instruction, learning, and assessment while increasing school and district accountability for student success. Standardized tests are usually a key component of recommended guidelines. This can move the focus of language assessment from communicative authenticity (informal assessments) to the type of validity attributed to well-developed standardized assessments (formal assessments). Both types of assessment provide important information for identification, placement, monitoring, and exit from language programs.

Formal Assessment of Language Proficiency

The formal assessment of CLD students whose primary language is not English has become a recurrent focus of policymaking, research, reform, and debate in education. Educational reform initiatives, especially those at the federal level, are often the impetus behind these trends in education. The most recent of these reform initiatives have advocated standardized formal assessments, the results of which are thought to be comparable across school districts and across states. Consequently, the emphasis of language programming for CLD students is increasingly grounded in standardized assessments of language proficiency.

A variety of formal assessments are available and have been used to assess different aspects of language proficiency. These generally include specific tasks designed to measure students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing capabilities. Most formal assessments are not conducted by classroom teachers and therefore are beyond the scope of this text. However, intuitive teachers of CLD students use the results of such assessments in planning and delivering accommodative classroom instruction. These teachers learn about the nature of formal assessments used by their school district, as well as general guidelines for interpreting the student outcome reports (results) generated by each type of assessment.

Table 5.1 provides examples of formal assessments of language proficiency. Classroom teachers are encouraged to visit the testing agency's website or contact the agency's commercial or institutional representative for more specific information about particular versions of formal standardized assessments. Teachers can also benefit from reading the work of researchers who strive to contextualize the assessment process for schools and educators who serve CLD students (e.g., Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005).

Formal standardized attempts to measure the *overall* language proficiency of emergent bilinguals often involve administering essentially monolingual tests in two or more languages (e.g., the native language and English). Although this approach to testing CLD students does provide information about separate language skills, these assessments may not tell us much about the larger body of language competencies a student may draw upon for learning. Emergent bilinguals develop language competencies that often reflect the intertwining of linguistic features from the native language and English (García, Ibarra Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017).

Some formal language assessments have been developed to permit CLD students to demonstrate more holistic language knowledge and competency. Generally, this means that students are assessed in one language and are either simultaneously or sequentially prompted to provide missing or incorrect information in the alternate

Table 5.1 Formal Assessments of Language Proficiency

Assessment	Key Characteristics
The Dos Amigos Verbal Language Scale (Critchlow, 1996)	This assessment uses 85 pairs of opposites in Spanish and English to measure conceptual linguistic knowledge. Qualitative results provide information about relative proficiency in each language. The provision for qualitative interpretation also facilitates a more holistic picture of proficiency levels in the two languages as they are demonstrated separately and in unison.
Preschool Language Assessment Scale (Pre-LAS 2000) (Duncan & DeAvila, 1998)	This assessment is designed to measure the developing language and preliteracy skills of preschool-age children to inform the placement of these young language learners into the most appropriate classroom settings. It is available in English and Spanish.
Language Assessment Scale—Oral (LAS—O) (Duncan & DeAvila, 1990)	This assessment measures the listening and speaking skills of students in grades 1 through 6 and 7 through 12. Like the Pre-LAS, it is available in English or Spanish and is useful in assessing primary language development or to identify students for placement in, and exit from, bilingual/ESL programs. The LAS—O contains an optional observation form that can be completed by another examiner to further support or triangulate findings used to determine whether a student is ready for redesignation.
The Bilingual Verbal Ability Tests Normative Update (BVAT-NU) (Muñoz-Sandoval, Cummins, Alvaredo, Ruef, & Schrank, 2005)	This assessment takes into consideration both the native and second language and comprises three subtests from the Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement (Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001) that have been translated into 18 languages (now including Hmong and Navajo). The BVAT scoring software generates a report that differentiates among the student's bilingual verbal ability, student's cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) skills, and relative language proficiency in languages assessed.
Language Assessment Scale—Reading/Writing (LAS—R/W) (Duncan & DeAvila, 1990)	This assessment measures reading and writing skills in English or Spanish L1 ability levels. It may be used to identify students for placement in, and exit from, bilingual or ESL programs. The test combines selected response and writing sample evaluations to assess vocabulary, fluency, reading comprehension, mechanics, and usage.
IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) (Ballard & Tighe, 2004)	This assessment offers oral, reading, and writing versions available in Spanish and English. It is also designed to assess both social and academic language. Like other assessments of this type, the IPT may be used to measure primary language skills but is most often employed for the identification, placement, and (re)classification of CLD students who are acquiring English in appropriate classroom contexts.
Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey Revised (WMLS-R) (Woodcock, Muñoz-Sandoval, Ruef, & Alvaredo, 2005)	This assessment is another popular measure of Spanish and English that comes with a computerized scoring program. This scoring program generates a narrative that describes the CALP in English or Spanish, or the relative proficiency between languages if both versions of the test are administered.
Receptive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (ROWPVT) (Brownell, 2000b) and its companion, the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT) (Brownell, 2000)	These assessments, originally developed for English speakers, have been translated into Spanish and are normed on bilingual students in the United States. These assessments credit correct responses in either language (conceptual scoring) in addition to rating relative proficiency in Spanish and English.

(continued)

Table 5.1 (continued)

Assessment	Key Characteristics
Stanford English Language Proficiency 2 (SELP2) assessment (Harcourt Assessment, 2003)	This assessment measures the English listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills of K–12 students. Now with four forms, SELP 2 can be used at the beginning of the school year to establish a baseline and then administered periodically to obtain multiple data points to evaluate progress. SELP 2 assesses student language proficiency and mastery of skills included in the CCSS and WIDA standards and is a predictor of how well students will perform on high-stakes state assessments. If employed during the school year, results can be used to help prepare students in advance of the standardized testing required by states.

language. These approaches are based largely on Cummins's (1984, 1996) conceptualization of a bilingual person's *common underlying proficiency* (CUP). They operate on the theory that a CLD student's structural and communicative language knowledge is best demonstrated through assessment in contexts in which both languages are accessed, even though one language may be dominant.

These assessments are standardized and have been normed using performances of similar bilingual students under similar conditions. Such norming better accounts for relevant linguistic and cultural factors. Two assessments of this kind are the Dos Amigos Verbal Language Scale and the Bilingual Verbal Ability Tests Normative Update.

The Dos Amigos Verbal Language Scale (Critchlow, 1996) is easily administered and uses 85 pairs of opposites in Spanish and English to measure conceptual linguistic knowledge. Qualitative results provide information about relative proficiency in each language. The provision for qualitative interpretation also facilitates a more holistic picture of proficiency levels in the two languages as they are demonstrated separately and in unison. This is significant because bilingual students often exhibit a home and community vocabulary in the primary language that is broader than the academic vocabulary they can demonstrate in English. Therefore, assessing language proficiency in one language alone can provide misleading information about the student's overall vocabulary knowledge.

Analyzing response differences and performance can also demonstrate whether the student is accessing L1 knowledge to help him or her process concepts in L2. For instance, a student may correctly respond that "*blanco*" is the opposite of "*negro*." However, the same student may respond to the English prompt that the opposite of "*black*" is "*brown*." Such responses indicate that the student can use words to make the targeted conceptual connection in the L1 but does not yet grasp L2 words in ways that demonstrate a similar level of processing.

The Bilingual Verbal Ability Tests Normative Update (BVAT-NU) (Muñoz-Sandoval, Cummins, Alvaredo, Ruef, & Schrank, 2005) also takes into consideration both the native and second language and comprises three subtests from the Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement (Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001) that have been translated into eighteen languages (now including Hmong and Navajo). The BVAT scoring software generates a report that differentiates among the student's bilingual verbal ability, *cognitive academic language proficiency* (CALP) skills, and relative language proficiency in languages assessed.

For some CLD students who are acquiring a second language or are using their first language less, there may be a significant difference between their expressive and

receptive skills. This disparity may not show up on assessments that measure all language competencies with tasks requiring a verbal response. Being aware of this disparity can help the classroom teacher plan lessons that are comprehensible at higher levels and still provide necessary supports and modifications for verbal participation.

Examples of assessments developed to separate the receptive and expressive domains are the Receptive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (ROWPVT) (Brownell, 2000b) and its companion, the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT) (Brownell, 2000a). These assessments, originally developed for English speakers, have been translated into Spanish and are normed on bilingual students in the United States. Like the BVAT, these assessments credit correct responses in either language (conceptual scoring) in addition to rating relative proficiency in Spanish and English. More recent research suggests that total vocabulary (count of all correct words) may be an even more reliable measure of vocabulary growth in bilinguals than conceptual scores (Core, Hoff, Rumiche, & Señor, 2013). Situational priming and inhibition also impact bilingual students' ability to access words in L1 or L2 during naming tasks (Anaya, Peña, & Bedore, 2018). Because of the great variance in home language lexicons and experiences, caution is recommended in the interpretation of any formal measures of vocabulary.

Educators often are at a loss when determining the level of language proficiency of their English learners. Having knowledge of tests available and the potential of each to provide the necessary information for decision making related to program placement, services, and instruction is critical.

Teaching Tips:

- Use the findings of standardized tests to make decisions about necessary adaptations to the curriculum.
- Configure groups based on students' L1 and L2 proficiency to maximize oral language development.
- Use standardized test scores to set the baseline and create checklists to monitor student progress (more on this in the upcoming discussion of informal assessments).
- Create materials aligned with content standards that will be accessible to the student based on language proficiency.

State-Developed or State-Adopted Variations In response to state and federal accountability requirements, as well as historic inconsistency in state testing practices, there is a growing trend among states to develop (or subcontract the development of) their own assessments for English learners. For instance, Kansas uses one such tool called the Kansas English Language Proficiency Assessment 2 (KELPA2). KELPA2 assessments are divided into four parts corresponding with the four domains of the English Language Proficiency Standards: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. KELPA2 assessments are fully computer-based for students in 2nd grade and beyond. K–1 learners take a mostly computer-based exam, while also completing a small number of writing items using paper and pencil. KELPA2 assessments are implemented every spring, along with regular Kansas Assessment Program (KAP) summative assessments in English language arts and math.

Similarly, Texas uses the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). TELPAS fulfills federal requirements for assessing the English language proficiency of K–12 English learners in the four language domains: listening,

speaking, reading, and writing. TELPAS assesses students in alignment with the Texas English Language Proficiency Standards, which are part of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum.

Many states around the nation alternatively have joined a consortium. As a consortium member, the state has access to tools its schools can use to assess CLD students' language proficiency. The assessment results then are used to determine the extent of language services needed by each student.

For example, members of the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium use ACCESS for ELLs 2.0. This is a secure, large-scale English language proficiency assessment administered to K–12 students who have been identified as English learners. Developed by WIDA, ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 is aligned with the WIDA English Language Development Standards and assesses each of the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is given annually to monitor students' progress in acquiring academic English. ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 is only available to school districts within the states that are part of the WIDA consortium. This assessment serves multiple purposes for the states administering the test. First, it helps students and families understand learners' current levels of English language proficiency along the developmental continuum. Second, it serves as a measure for determining whether students are prepared to exit English language support programs. Third, it provides districts with information that helps them evaluate the effectiveness of their ESL/bilingual programs.

The ELPA 21 assessment is another large scale utilized by a group of consortia member states that designed and developed an assessment system for English learners. The system is based on English language proficiency standards and addresses the language demands needed for students to reach college and career readiness. This exam assesses students' English abilities in speaking, listening, reading, and writing and scores them according to different levels. It is administered at the beginning of the school year or at the time of a student's arrival at a new school system. The summative assessment is taken annually at the end of the school year by students who were designated as English learners. The results of the summative assessment are used to monitor students' progress in English language acquisition.

In short, different states use different English language proficiency assessments to identify, monitor, and exit their students from language services. States decide which assessment they will use, based on their own state-specific educational policies. All of these assessments are intended to provide insights into students' language levels and abilities across the four domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Interpreting Results Formal standardized assessments of second language proficiency generally measure a CLD student's competency with targeted skills such as reading, writing, speaking, or listening. The results are reasonably assumed to represent new learning and are used to compare individual or group growth toward the standard on which it is based. In best practice, second language proficiency assessments should rarely be interpreted to infer anything about a student's innate linguistic or cognitive abilities.

Unfortunately, the results of language proficiency assessments are not always interpreted cautiously, especially when the assessment is administered in the student's primary language. Although there are certainly reasons to gather information about an English learner's primary language, relying on formal assessments or inappropriate testing procedures can lead to erroneous findings, inaccurate assumptions, and the potentially harmful placement of the student.

For example, it is not uncommon for students who were raised in bilingual U.S. communities to perform poorly on language proficiency assessments (for languages other than English) that were developed and normed in countries outside the United States. This is especially true if these students received classroom instruction only in English. When combined with apparent evidence of a student's limited English proficiency, these results are sometimes misinterpreted to indicate innate language or learning problems.

In reality, the results more often reflect cross-cultural discontinuities or differing expectations and norms across educational systems. Educators should carefully examine the normative basis of such assessments to ensure that they are valid for the population (and specific backgrounds) of students served. By giving serious consideration to the appropriateness of assessments and by being knowledgeable about language acquisition variables, we help ensure that results actually lead to unbiased instructional decisions and practices.

It is also important to remember that not all standardized assessments of language proficiency are created equal. Some may be designed with vocabulary or constructs seemingly unrelated to classroom goals and objectives. Other problematic content or stimuli include culturally or experientially narrow items (e.g., picture prompts of men panning for gold), which inevitably measure content-area knowledge as well as language.

Effective teachers of CLD students are concerned as well with the currency of language proficiency assessments. They check to ensure that the pictures and references in an assessment are relevant to modern-day life. For example, classroom teachers often report that many students misidentify pictures of televisions and typewriters as computers. Others do not recognize pictures of corded phones or bar soap. Similarly, CLD students often arrive with varied experiences and provide alternate answers that make sense to them (and indeed demonstrate the targeted skills), only to have these answers marked incorrect on the assessment.

Examiners should scrutinize both the assessment and the student's performance. One can ask the student to explain answers different than those cited as "correct." Atypical responses may reflect either a culturally different interpretation of the prompt or a correct (albeit nontraditional) application of the targeted skills and understandings. For this reason, it is critical to be aware not only of what each assessment actually measures, but also the student skills the assessment might potentially fail to take into account.

When students take assessments, teachers can ask proctors to add anecdotal notes on students' performance behavior during implementation of the test. These notes on the academic and linguistic behaviors exhibited by a student during the assessment can provide valuable insights for the teacher. The teacher can consider both noted challenges and indications of the student's successful strategy use when planning instructional interventions and daily lessons.

As this chapter discusses, language can be defined in so many ways and along so many continua that there is no one, agreed-upon set of skills that truly reflects this amazing human gift. Therefore, it is not uncommon to find that different language assessment developers have chosen radically different tasks to measure the same skill (for example, language comprehension). This, along with the fact that many language assessment developers customize their assessments to align with individual state standards, reminds us that we must always

assessment FREEZE FRAME 5.2

Although there are certainly reasons to gather information about an English learner's primary language, relying on formal assessments or inappropriate testing procedures can lead to erroneous findings, inaccurate assumptions, and the potentially harmful placement of the student.

critically analyze and reflect on assessment results. The best way to know what our language proficiency assessments are—and *are not*—telling us, as well as how reliably they inform us about CLD student learning, is to consistently align their findings with those of other assessments of language performance and achievement.

Informal Assessment of Language Proficiency

Language is a rich and complex system of sounds, words, sentences, nuances, and gestures that is, by its very nature, reciprocal and spontaneous. Other than for distinct purposes, such as formal speeches, language is incredibly interactive and socially dynamic. For example, it is quite natural for teachers to adapt their style and pace or stop for clarification when reading to students who appear confused or inattentive. These subtleties, which make replicating language with technology so difficult, also hamper our use of formal assessments to measure a student's grasp of a language. Any time we seek to assess language, we must understand not only what our tests can tell us but also what they *cannot*. In this section, we discuss a variety of informal assessment techniques for developing a clearer picture of a CLD student's language profile and proficiency level.

The value of informal assessment data frequently depends on the types and numbers of settings in which we observe the student's use of language—as well as the perspectives through which we interpret that language usage. For example, because language can be so situation-specific, it is unwise to assume that a single sample of CLD students' language is fully representative of their broader linguistic abilities. What CLD students may not be able to properly express in one language, manner of speaking, or situation, they may be perfectly capable of expressing in another.

Reflect back to the three dimensions of language we discussed earlier: form, content, and use. It is through the informal assessment of language proficiency that we can gauge more clearly how our students are progressing in their acquisition of English and in their understanding of these dimensions of language. We also can look for language performances that do not match our contextual expectations but might be quite appropriate from the perspective of a different cultural norm.

For instance, some children may feel that to answer questions with obvious answers is disrespectful, or they may avoid eye contact as a sign of respect, despite the teacher's insistence to "look at me when I'm talking to you." Other children may call out agreement or commentary as the teacher speaks. We all attend to different cultural norms that affect our communication style in various settings. How might we be judged if, while in church, we respond to the sermon in a manner appropriate for a football game? How many of us find "table talk" quite different at our own house than it is at the homes of our in-laws or neighbors?

Just as it takes any child time to learn the subtleties of when and what to say where, CLD students will, if not demeaned for their culture's rules, learn additional cultural norms for effectively communicating with multiple groups in multiple settings. Teacher actions that demonstrate concern for the affective side of learning, and especially language learning, are key to this process. Arnold (2009) defines

affect as the area of feelings, emotions, attitudes, moods, and beliefs that influence students' behavior. Students who feel supported and encouraged to take risks in their new language and communicative interactions will progress more quickly and easily along the path toward more proficient language use. As we explore informal ways of assessing language proficiency, consider how teachers can use such approaches to

assessment FREEZE FRAME 5.3

Any time we seek to assess language, we must understand not only what our tests can tell us but also what they *cannot*.

gather information—while simultaneously providing students with affirmation and assurances of their capacities, progress, and potential.

Home Language Surveys Linh’s kindergarten teacher referred her to the student intervention team because she was “still not speaking English in class.” The teacher felt something was very wrong because other teachers noted that Linh’s brother began speaking with peers “nearly right away” and their father was reportedly able to convey basic information in English to staff members. The teacher was concerned that Linh might be developmentally delayed.

In reviewing the home language survey, the intervention team quickly noted that, although the father had some English proficiency, Vietnamese was reported as the only language spoken in the home. This was logical because Linh’s mother did not speak English at all. Despite the initial impressions of the teacher, the team concluded that Linh probably was not developmentally delayed, but rather had had very limited exposure to English prior to her first preschool year.

The survey used in this school also asked about the dominant language of the child at home (in this case, Vietnamese) but did not ask for any information about the child’s perceived proficiency with that language. To meet Linh’s needs effectively and help her achieve in school, it was decided that the team needed more information about her first language proficiency and use.

In this scenario, a misunderstanding about language acquisition processes almost resulted in an inappropriate assessment of the student’s actual communicative competence. *Home language surveys*, such as the one depicted in Figure 5.3, are one of the most common ways that schools and districts gather initial

Figure 5.3 Home Language Survey

The home language survey is given as soon as a student from a diverse language or dialect background enrolls in the school district. Besides the date and the student’s name, additional information is gathered: country of origin, whether the student has been in a school in a language other than English, how long and in what language was the schooling, the student’s first language, etc. The home language survey is to be kept in the student’s cumulative file to inform all education personnel.

Date _____ School _____ Grade _____ Student’s Name _____

Parent or Guardian’s Name _____

1. What is the student’s country of origin? _____
2. What language did your child learn when first beginning to talk? _____
3. What language does your child most frequently use at home? _____
4. What language do you most frequently speak to your child? _____
5. What language does the primary caregiver speak to your child? _____
6. What is the language most frequently spoken at home? _____
7. Has the student had academic instruction in a language other _____
than English? Yes ☐ No ☐ How long? _____ Language? _____
8. Please describe the language understood by your child. (Check only one.) _____
 - a. ☐ Understands only the home language and no English.
 - b. ☐ Understand mostly the home language and some English. (and Spanish)
 - c. ☐ Understands the home language and English equally.
 - d. ☐ Understands mostly English and some of the home language.
 - e. ☐ Understands only English.
9. If available, in what language would you prefer to receive communication from the school? _____

Source: Collier, C. (2015). *Separating difference from disability workbook*. Ferndale, WA: CrossCultural Developmental Education Services. Page 36. Reprinted with permission.

information about the language(s) used in a student's home. These assessments of language proficiency help teachers understand more about students' level of exposure to English and their linguistic foundations in the primary language.

Home language surveys are included as informal assessments in this text because districts have considerable flexibility in the way they create and administer the survey. Federal mandates only ask that some sort of screener be used to determine which students need to be formally assessed for language proficiency. Home language surveys fulfill this purpose. Districts also administer home language surveys in informal ways. Parents frequently complete them at a welcome center or other location as part of the registration process.

Although home language surveys can serve a variety of additional purposes, they are generally the first and broadest step toward identifying students who may qualify for additional language services. When the home language survey indicates a primary language other than English is spoken in the home, the student is often referred. Postreferral assessments help determine whether a student is proficient enough in English to participate fully in classrooms where instruction is delivered only in English.

Whether home language surveys are simple or complex, school personnel who review them should bear in mind that some parents will lack the literacy skills (in either English or the first language, or both) to complete these forms without additional support. Other parents might misinterpret the meaning or intention of survey questions due to language dialects or translation quality. Some parents, unsure of the degree of trust they should place in school officials and systems, will require additional information about the process and its possible outcomes for their child before they will feel comfortable completing the survey.

Examiner Tips:

- Explain the survey's purpose.
- Ensure privacy of information.
- Explain how the results of the survey will be used.
- Provide assistance to parents in completing the survey.
- Verify the parents' interpretation of provided information during translator-assisted conferences. This effort provides valuable opportunities as you establish lines of communication with parents or guardians and seek additional information about the funds of knowledge students bring to class.

With conscientious use and interpretation, assessments such as the following similarly can be used in informal ways to elicit key information about primary language development.

- Bilingual Language Proficiency Questionnaire (Mattes & Santiago, 1985; Mattes & Nguyen, 1996)
- Communication and Play Screening Instruments (Kayser, 2008)
- Adapted, parent-friendly version of the Student Oral Language Observational Matrix (SOLOM) (California Department of Education, n.d.[a]) (see Figure 5.4 for adapted version in English and Appendix B for a Spanish translation)

Information gathered with these tools can allay the teacher's concerns about students who exhibit longer-than-expected silent periods. A *silent period* is part of the preproduction stage of the second language acquisition process (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). During this period, CLD students may communicate

Figure 5.4 Parent-Friendly Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM)

Parent/Teacher Language Observation (Adapted from the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix)					
Student's Name:				Grade:	Date:
Home Language(s):			Completed By (signature):		
	1	2	3	4	5
A. Comprehension	Doesn't appear to understand any conversation.	Has difficulty following everyday social conversation, even when words are spoken slowly and repeated.	Understands most of what is said at slower-than-normal speed with repetitions.	Understands nearly everything at normal speed, although occasional repetition may be necessary.	Understands everyday language and normal family conversation without difficulty.
B. Fluency	Speech is so limited that conversation is virtually impossible.	Student attempts to speak but has periods of silence due to limitations.	Speech in everyday conversation is frequently disrupted by the student's search for words.	Speech in everyday conversation is generally fluent, with occasional lapses while the student searches for the correct manner of expression.	Speech in everyday conversation is fluent and effortless.
C. Vocabulary	Vocabulary is so limited that conversation is virtually impossible.	Difficult to understand because of limited vocabulary and misuse words.	Student frequently uses wrong words: conversation somewhat limited because of inadequate vocabulary.	Occasional use of inappropriate terms and/or rephrasing of the ideas because of limited vocabulary.	Vocabulary and idioms approximately those of a native speaker.

(Continued)

Figure 5.4 (continued)

Parent/Teacher Language Observation (Adapted from the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix)					
Student's Name:				Grade:	Date:
Home Language(s):			Completed By (signature):		
	1	2	3	4	5
D. Pronunciation	Pronunciation problems so severe that speech is virtually unintelligible.	Difficult to understand because of pronunciation problems; must frequently repeat in order to be understood.	Concentration required of listener; occasional misunderstandings caused by pronunciation problems.	Always intelligible (understandable), although some sounds may be in error.	Pronunciation and intonation approximately those of a native speaker.
E. Grammar	Errors in grammar and word order are so severe that speech is virtually unintelligible.	Difficult to understand because of errors in grammar and word order. Rephrases or limits speech to basic patterns.	Frequent errors in grammar and word order. Sometimes hard to understand meaning.	Occasional errors in grammar or word order. Does not interfere with meaning.	Grammar and word order are approximately those of a native speaker.

Source: Adapted SOLOM, Natasha Reyes, Wichita, KS. Reprinted by permission.

in only nonverbal ways as they primarily listen to the new language and try to understand its patterns and rules before attempting to produce in that language.

When classroom teachers are aware of criteria incorporated on such assessment measures, they can better attend to language development throughout the instructional day. For example, a teacher who is familiar with the school district's language acquisition rubric is often much more aware of the need to develop descriptive vocabulary among CLD students. This teacher might then purposefully elicit words such as *crunchy*, *gooey*, *delicious*, *crisp*, or *sweet* during nonacademic periods of the day, such as snack time.

Home Visit Interviews

During a *home visit interview*, teachers asked a few more detailed questions about Linh's use of language in the home. The team was able to observe Linh's interactions with her family, who shared the same cultural and linguistic knowledge base. Because these assessments were conducted in Linh's language of comfort, they were more likely to yield genuine information about her true linguistic abilities.

The responses the teachers received and the language performance they observed indicated that Linh actually began speaking at an early age. She was able to speak in complete sentences, and she used language effectively to tell her parents about her day at school. These findings reassured the team that Linh possessed a strong language base rather than a possible developmental delay.

The home visit also provided additional information that her teacher could use to enhance the home-school connection. Aided by a translator, the teacher encouraged the parents to talk about and build on school topics they could glean from translated newsletters, notes, and Linh herself. The parents were reassured that doing so in the home language would facilitate Linh's classroom learning and confidence and enhance her ability to transfer her primary language skills to the new language.

The next month, during a class discussion on weather, Linh raised her hand excitedly to share, "My dad say Vietnam so much rain."

"Yes," the teacher replied, "Some places like Vietnam get much more rain than we do."

Along with other class members, Linh walked over to the globe to find Vietnam. Together, they talked about the weather in Vietnam, Mexico, Israel, and even Chicago, where Jason said his grandmother calls wind "the hawk." It was amazing how a few simple strategies for helping Linh's parents enrich her learning had such an impact on the learning experiences of others.

Observational data gathered through home visits can greatly enrich and validate findings from other types of language proficiency measures or surveys. Observing language use in context allows educators to see how students actually use the relatively decontextualized skills measured by formal tests. Seeking this kind of additional data was essential in Linh's case, as teachers felt they simply did not have enough information to make appropriate decisions about her instruction based solely on the home language survey. The team followed up the standard survey with a home visit interview, knowing that a genuine developmental delay or learning concern would be evident in Linh's home environment as well.

A parent or caregiver's observations of a child's language use in the home and with family can greatly inform the assessment process. Ideally, teachers will have the opportunity to meet with parents or caregivers at home. Parents and students often are more comfortable in their home environment, and such opportunities allow

educators to observe student behavior in a setting that is familiar and nonthreatening. Translators involved in this process should know the teacher's agenda for the meeting and should be trained (in both linguistic and cultural competencies) to provide parents/caregivers and the teacher a reliable interpretation of the messages exchanged.

A guide or prepared list of questions may be helpful, but the astute interviewer also invites parents to "tell me more" or to "think of a time when" the student demonstrated the skill being discussed. Checklists of communication functions (i.e., how the student uses language in context) are also useful for obtaining information about a student's overall communication proficiencies. Such checklists allow teachers to note the child's use of L2 at school and then probe parental perceptions about how the child uses language in the home or community. When a teacher has more clues about a student's particular language strengths and preferences, he or she can more appropriately accommodate that student's learning and L2 acquisition needs.

ACCOMMODATIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES 5.1

Ms. Kole used a simple checklist of communication functions (see Figure 5.5 and the related appendix resource) to quickly note language skills she had observed with CLD students in various classroom contexts.

Although Jean, a CLD student, was demonstrating several important skills, such as describing experiences and expressing imagination, he struggled to follow sequential directions in class. Ms. Kole doubted that language was a factor because Jean understood each step perfectly when instructions were broken down into smaller units. Therefore, she decided to explore other issues that might be involved.

During conference week, Ms. Kole met first with the French interpreter to discuss Jean's progress and her concerns before they met with Jean and his mother in the home. Ms. Kole also discussed the communication inventory with the interpreter so they were both aware of particular language skills to ask about in the home language setting.

Jean's mother was expecting them and left her supper to simmer while visiting with the guests from school—she was so pleased to meet them! After exchanging greetings with the teacher, Jean's mother turned to her son with several comments, and he headed over to the open kitchen. Ms. Kole noticed the interpreter watching him as she and Jean's mother resumed the conference. After a minute or two, Ms. Kole cleared her throat ever so slightly to regain the translator's attention. The translator smiled and told the

teacher that Jean had just carried out every one of the four things his mother told him to do in the kitchen, precisely as directed.

Momentarily putting the agenda aside, Ms. Kole commented on the interpreter's observation.

Ms. Kole: Some children have trouble following directions even when they try. Does Jean usually follow directions this well?

Mom: Oh, yes. Back in Port-au-Prince, I could send him to my sister's apartment or to the market, and he always remembered all the things I said to do and get. He's a good boy.

Ms. Kole: That's great! I always forget things on my grocery list. How do you remember everything, Jean?

Jean: Sometimes my mother sings while she's doing her chores. So when she tells me lots of things to do, I make a song in my head, too. Hey, that rhymes!

Ms. Kole gained many valuable insights about how to work more effectively with Jean, such as using music and rhyme in the classroom as mnemonic devices.

Classroom teachers should always keep in mind that CLD student performance may be affected by variables other than language. Students of all cultures and linguistic backgrounds can benefit from the careful differentiation of instruction to meet their particular needs. ■



Figure 5.5 Communication Functions Checklist

Please indicate whether the following communicative behaviors are:

Observed (+)

Reported (R)

Not Observed (–)

Student Name: _____

	L1	L2
1. Student comments on actions of self or others.		
2. Student initiates conversations.		
3. Student maintains a topic in conversation.		
4. Student follows multipart directions.		
5. Student uses language to request (action/object, assistance, information, clarification, etc.).		
6. Student uses language to tell (needs, feelings, thoughts, answers to questions).		
7. Student describes experiences (retells events).		
8. Student predicts outcomes or describes solutions.		
9. Student expresses and supports opinions.		
10. Student uses language to express imaginative and creative thinking.		

Classroom-Based Measures Classroom-based measures of language proficiency provide the flexibility that teachers need to observe, document, and monitor students' use of language skills in low-risk, low-stress situations.

Checklists In addition to developing social language—or *basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS)*—CLD students must acquire the CALP necessary for classroom success. These language skills include but are not limited to inquiring, classifying, describing, comparing, contrasting, explaining, analyzing, inferring, supporting one's opinions, persuading, synthesizing, and evaluating. It is often easier and more authentic for a teacher to evaluate how students demonstrate language skills with activities and materials he or she already uses than it is to create unrelated or isolated assessments to measure the skills. The checklist depicted in Figure 5.6 provides examples of skills related to BICS and CALP development (see also the related appendix resource). Using a checklist such as this, teachers can observe a student in the course of daily instruction and update the checklist accordingly.

Anecdotal Logs Much can also be learned about the academic language proficiencies of students through *anecdotal logs*. These are important components of observational assessment. Although it is certainly easier to set aside distinct times and

Figure 5.6 BICS and CALP Checklist

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skill (BICS)		
L1	L2	Listening
☐	☐	Understands school/classroom routines
☐	☐	Responds, with little hesitation, when asked to perform a nonverbal task
☐	☐	Follows oral directions at the end of lesson (with familiarity and modeling)
☐	☐	Listens to peers when process is provided
☐	☐	Becomes distracted when lesson is not differentiated
☐	☐	Distinguishes sameness or difference between English sounds
L1	L2	Speaking
☐	☐	Is comfortable with groups speaking English
☐	☐	Communicates with peers in social settings
☐	☐	Responds to questions in class when the question is context embedded or the teacher provides scaffolding
☐	☐	Is able to retell a pictured, cued, or scaffolded story
☐	☐	Can describe the topic of the lesson using limited vocabulary
☐	☐	Struggles with concept retelling when topic is not contextualized
☐	☐	Withdraws when group discussions go beyond known vocabulary
☐	☐	Is eager to participate when language demands are supported
L1	L2	Reading
☐	☐	Recognizes common language of school
☐	☐	Recognizes environmental print (e.g., signs, logos, McDonald's)
☐	☐	Can match or read basic sight words
☐	☐	Reads best when material is contextualized
☐	☐	Demonstrates limited use of reading strategies
☐	☐	Volunteers to read when material is known
L1	L2	Writing
☐	☐	Writes personal information (e.g., name, address, phone number)
☐	☐	Writes with contextual and/or instructional scaffolding
☐	☐	Writes with some spelling errors
☐	☐	Writes with many spelling errors
☐	☐	Writes with moderate to high levels of syntax errors

(continued)

Figure 5.6 (continued)

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)		
L1	L2	Listening
☐	☐	Is able to carry out academic tasks without language support
☐	☐	Understands vocabulary in different content areas (e.g., <i>sum</i> in math vs. <i>some</i> in science)
☐	☐	Understands process/sequence across content areas
☐	☐	Uses selective attention when taking notes
☐	☐	Understands teacher idioms and humor
☐	☐	Understands English language functions
☐	☐	Comprehends teacher lecture, movies, and audiovisual presentations
L1	L2	Speaking
☐	☐	Asks/answers specific questions about topic of discussion
☐	☐	Uses temporal concepts (e.g., first, next, after) appropriately
☐	☐	Recognizes the need for, and seeks, clarification of academic tasks or discussion
☐	☐	Expresses rationale for opinion
☐	☐	Poses thoughtful questions
☐	☐	Actively participates in class activities and discussions
☐	☐	Volunteers to answer subject-matter questions of varying difficulty
L1	L2	Reading
☐	☐	Demonstrates knowledge and application of sound-symbol association
☐	☐	Demonstrates phonemic awareness skills such as sound blending, elision, and rhyming
☐	☐	Regards print with appropriate spatial skills and orientation (e.g., left to right, top to bottom)
☐	☐	Interprets written words and text as the print representation of speech
☐	☐	Understands differential use of text components (e.g., table of contents, glossary)
☐	☐	Reads for information and understanding
☐	☐	Reads independently to gather information of interest
L1	L2	Writing
☐	☐	Performs written tasks at levels required by the curriculum
☐	☐	Uses complex sentences appropriate for grade level
☐	☐	Writes from dictation
☐	☐	Writes for audience and purpose
☐	☐	Understands purposes and application of writing conventions
☐	☐	Uses writing as a tool for personal means (e.g., correspondence, notation, journaling)
☐	☐	Writes compellingly or creatively (e.g., editorials, poetry, lyrics, stories)

Source: Based on B. Bernhard & B. Loera (1992). Checklist of language skills for use with limited English proficient students. *Word of Mouth Newsletter*, 4(1). San Antonio, TX: Lauren Newton.

situations to observe specific students, those moments are unlikely to yield the quantity and richness of results one can achieve by also noting incidents that arise naturally during the school day. The possibilities for this sort of observation are unlimited, and the various systems creative teachers develop to record and manage such data never cease to amaze.

One example of an anecdotal log is a flip file, created by taping the top edge of overlapping index cards onto a clipboard (see Figure 5.7). Virtual or actual sticky notes can work as well. Each card lists a student's name and specific goals, if desired. As language-related or other significant actions are observed, the teacher writes a date and a short comment on that student's card. The cumulative

Figure 5.7 Assessment Artifact: Flip File

Goal 1: Works with L1 peers to understand target L2 vocabulary	Goal 1: Uses target L2 vocabulary in conversation
Goal 2: Shares orally in L1 during group discussions	Goal 2: Summarizes main points of group discussion
Benjamin	Sheri
Zoe	Shabina
Jorge	Susan
Mario	Carol
Amanda	Gabriela
Miki	Tonnie
Rachel	Gisela
Arun	Christian
Victoria	Cristina
Suzanne	Seong

VOICES from the FIELD 5.1

As a teacher I know that I cannot always rely on the assessments that are done two to three times per year. I have come to realize that I need a system in place where I can find out different abilities that my students possess. To do this, I have started doing lots of informal assessment, including taking anecdotal notes during the lesson. I usually keep a clipboard next to me with a chart with names of students on it and take quick notes regarding my students during the activity. I always go back to the notes at the end of the day as I am reviewing my students' work.

Cali Nossaman, Second Grade Teacher. Reprinted with permission.



assessment information from these cards/notes can then be used to inform decisions about group configurations, support rubric assessment, and share authentic evidence with parents or other evaluators.

Another type of anecdotal log calls for the teacher to write (either on computer or by hand) the class roster or targeted students' names on sheets of removable labels. These can also be positioned or transported on a clipboard. As interesting language behaviors occur—or do *not* occur (lack of expected behavior is also noteworthy)—the teacher jots the date and comment on that student's label. For example, "10/2, short sentences—small group" may allow the teacher to counter another individual's impression that "Lise doesn't talk." At the end of the day or week, these labels are moved to a page in the student's folder. This strategy (easily adapted for tablet technologies) builds a chronological and reproducible record of language acquisition in progress.

Matrices and Rubrics Tools such as matrices and rubrics may be used with either naturally occurring language samples or those elicited through story retelling or other more standardized contexts. Preexisting video or audio can also be rated to demonstrate growth, or lack thereof, to the present day. Because pragmatics and context influence the student's response, the teacher should note how the sample was obtained. This information assists reviewers as they interpret the results and compare them with other samples of the student's language.

Because the teacher can make more accurate and revealing observations once the student is more familiar with the teacher and setting, language observation rubrics may not be as informative for initial placement decisions as they are for monitoring ongoing growth and readiness for reclassification. Teachers who gather observational data frequently find it is a powerful tool for measuring learning over time. This ability to aid ongoing instructional planning is a distinct advantage over most formal measures of language, and there are many ways in which teachers can adapt rubrics to gather the specific type of information they need.

Although some classroom teachers prefer to use multiple sheets to note behaviors on different dates, others like to plot skills observed over time (by date) on the same page. Figure 5.8 illustrates one way of recording ongoing observations. Teachers who plot skills over time may then color-code data by setting (playground, large group, individual) or register (academic, social, with peer, or with adult) for a more holistic view of the student's language acquisition progress.

Figure 5.8 Plotted Skills

The teacher used the same rubric to plot Karina's expressive language skills observed in the fall and in the spring. From these results, the teacher can visually see the improvement in the student's message effectiveness, language structure, and pronunciation. Karina demonstrated the same level of skill with vocabulary at both points in time. The teacher then could use this information to focus efforts on promoting Karina's incorporation of vocabulary in her language production.

Expressive Communication Rubric

Student Name Karina T.

Date(s) Completed: X above 9/22/05 X below 2/28/06

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Message effectiveness	Unable to understand intent/meaning.	X Difficult to understand.	Able to understand most but not all of message. X	Message is easily understood.
Language structure	X Multiple errors with word order and grammar.	Noticeable errors but student able to convey aspects of the message. X	Uses mostly correct structures with some errors.	Use of language structures is similar to that of a native speaker.
Vocabulary	Incorrect word choices and/or limited vocabulary hinder social and academic communication.	X Relies on a limited range of vocabulary to communicate. X	Vocabulary is not usually conspicuous but is rarely specific or elaborate.	Varied types of words, including idioms, are used with facility.
Pronunciation	Speech is often unintelligible.	Speech is understandable with careful listening and known context.	X Speech is generally understandable to familiar and unfamiliar listeners.	Speech pronunciation is similar to that of a native speaker. X

Observational matrices and rubrics such as the Student Written Language Observation Matrix (SWLOM) (California Department of Education, n.d.[b]) are also helpful tools for assessing writing to inform placement decisions and track student progress. Teachers using such approaches may wish to identify representative yet varied samples of writing, such as narratives, journals, blogs, and social network pages, for different audiences before rating skills according to the matrix. Inconsistencies in performance, such as improved voice or sentence variety in journal or letter writing—compared with essay attempts—can give teachers ideas for

bridging strengths from one format to another (e.g., “Why don’t you start by writing a letter to Joe about your book, and then we’ll turn it into a book report”). These tools can also be adapted to rate a student’s writing ability in his or her primary language. Personnel who are trained with the matrix and are both fluent and literate in the student’s home language are able to most accurately interpret the data.

To monitor the overall growth in a student’s language abilities, teachers can use tools such as an adapted or adopted continuum of skills. In the example presented in Figure 5.9 (and the related appendix resource), benchmarks of language

ACCOMMODATIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES 5.2

Below is the story Miguel made up to narrate an eight-part wordless cartoon after viewing several times on a classroom tablet. Mr. Mahon let each student determine his or her own readiness to retell their version of the story to him. He used a rubric to note key elements and transcribed the stories of those he most wanted to monitor. If words were too unclear or indecipherable in the audio recording, he simply left blank lines (blanks) as placeholders in the transcription. Miguel had made significant progress and was now quite a talker.

Transcription of Miguel’s response:

“Yesterday Johnny was walking with the dog and he opened the door and the dog bark and Johnny put the dog inside his backpack.

Johnny came inside and his mom gave him cookie and he started, he hurt his stomach and he went to his room.

Johnny was in his room and he open his backpack and the dog came and he bite his sock, and he started to pull and his mom.

Johnny went to his room and he went to his bed and his mom came and the dog growled and his mom, is thinks it is Johnny’s stomach.

Johnny, he growled his stomach and his mom got idea and his mom went, get out of his room.

Johnny get up, waked up and he put the dog right next to that window.

His friends came and the friends got the dog and get the mitten and his mom is get upsets.

His mom said, “Let’s go to his bed,” and he went to his bed and his friends, Johnny

friends get away and the dog is so sad. And the mom give it medicine and he don’t like it. The End.”



How would you rate Miguel’s skills using the rubric provided in Figure 5.8? What are his strengths? His needs? How might this information aid planning for Miguel’s ongoing language development?

In Miguel’s case, Mr. Mahon provided the following ratings for performance on this task:

- Message effectiveness: 2–3
- Language structure: 2–3
- Vocabulary: 3
- Pronunciation 4

Considering Miguel’s performance on the narrative assessment, Mr. Mahon decided that his focus for the next month would be *language structure*, as this is the key area impacting *message effectiveness*. Mr. Mahon planned to address these skills first by ascertaining whether Miguel recognizes incomplete or vague sentences. This could easily be incorporated into a quick classwide game of “Which sentence sounds better, one or two?” If Miguel’s listening skills reveal underlying grammar recognition, Mr. Mahon will further support him this month by offering “better” or “worse” sounding alternatives to phrases Miguel uses in classroom work. This will serve to affirm both Miguel’s well-worded original sentences *and* his ability to select those that sound “better” to his competent ear. Mr. Mahon is confident that this is all Miguel would need to be then ready to self-rate and edit his own recorded stories. ■

Student Name: _____

	Preproduction	Early Production	Speech Emergence	Intermediate Fluency	Advanced Fluency
Date					
Listening	Cannot yet understand simple expressions or statements in English.	- Understands previously learned expressions. - Understands new vocabulary in context.	- Understands sentence-length speech. - Participates in conversation about simple information. - Understands a simple message. - Understands basic directions and instructions.	- Understands academic content. - Understands more complex directions and instructions. - Comprehends main idea. - Effectively participates in classroom discussions.	- Understands most of what is heard. - Understands and retells main idea and most details from oral presentations and conversations.
Date					
Speaking	Is not yet able to make any statements in English.	- Uses isolated words and learned phrases. - Uses vocabulary for classroom situations. - Expresses basic courtesies. - Asks very simple questions. - Makes statements using learned materials. - Asks and answers questions about basic needs.	- Asks and answers simple questions about academic content. - Talks about familiar topics. - Responds to simple statements. - Expresses self in simple situations (e.g., ordering a meal, introducing oneself, asking directions).	- Initiates, sustains, and closes a conversation. - Effectively participates in classroom discussions. - Gives reasons for agreeing or disagreeing. - Retells a story or event. - Compares and contrasts a variety of topics.	- Communicates facts and talks casually about topics of general interest using specific vocabulary. - Participates in age-appropriate academic, technical, and social conversations using English correctly.

acquisition in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are arranged in the order of the stages commonly associated with second language acquisition (i.e., preproduction, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency).

assessment FREEZE FRAME 5.4

Teachers who gather observational data frequently find it is a powerful tool for measuring learning over time.

Teachers who understand the skills involved in, and potentially elicited by, particular curricular activities find it much easier to assess after instruction whether students have demonstrated these skills, given appropriate opportunities and facilitation. Even in the absence of deliberate preplanning, it is often not difficult to note whether and when the hallmark skills of language development have been attained.

Narrative Assessment The conditions in which a student produces a sample of oral language can significantly affect how well this sample represents his or her actual language competence. Many linguists contrast a person's *language competence*—what she or he knows or can do—with *language performance*, how this knowledge is used in a particular circumstance (Byram, Holmes, & Savvides, 2013; Freeman & Freeman, 2014). The best measures of language proficiency elicit student performance that genuinely reflects language competence. In nearly all cases, this involves going beyond standardized assessments to demonstrate how students use language in authentic, real-life situations. Such opportunities easily found in the home with family and in unstructured social situations, can also exist at school when teachers create the right conditions. *Narrative assessments* often provide teachers with similar opportunities.

The ability to develop cohesive narratives (storytelling structures) is a critical component of second language acquisition for several reasons. Of primary interest to educators, this skill is essential for literacy development that goes beyond associating sounds with symbols/letters and decoding words out of context. An underlying knowledge of narrative forms and structures helps students better understand both written passages and orally presented material. This knowledge enables the reader to skim text for essential content, as well as comprehend narrative formats used to inform or persuade.

There are many ways to look at and sample narrative language. Assessing a CLD student's ability to produce narratives in the primary language can provide valuable insights into foundational knowledge and skills. As mentioned earlier, this information can greatly aid instructional planning, especially when paired with measures of narrative development in the second language.

Activities and techniques for eliciting student narratives can yield especially rich samples of language. However, the type and quality of sample a student produces depends on a variety of variables. Sometimes a teacher who is not fluent in the language or comfortable with the interaction patterns of the CLD student attempts to elicit conversation or narrative using prompts in the L1 that exhibit simplified grammar and vocabulary. Students perceive the teacher's limitations and naturally respond by simplifying their own vocabulary and sentence structures to better communicate with the teacher. Unfortunately, these efforts to facilitate communication may then be perceived as limitations of the student rather than the teacher. Such misperceptions can negatively affect a student's education because the teacher who believes a student's L1 skills are limited may fail to draw on the student's prior linguistic knowledge as a learning asset.

Contradictory perceptions that students are simultaneously low in overall language yet possess "enough English" to achieve can result in decisions and practices

that lead teachers away from the interventions most likely to resolve perceived learning concerns (i.e., L1 instruction, L2 accommodations). For this reason, it is important to note variables inherent to the situations in which we observe student language. Because we so often use language to assess language, it is always important to consider how the teacher's own language skills, speaking style, choice of wording, and subject of conversation may influence a student's response. The material a teacher uses to stimulate a response should also be familiar and meaningful to the student (Kayser, 2008).

Some narrative ratings also assess cohesion or *flow*. Student samples containing frequent word and grammar revisions (changes, false starts, self-corrections) are often perceived as evidence of poor vocabulary or language weakness. Because many English learners function bilingually, narrative reviewers should bear in mind insights from research on bilingual versus monolingual revision rates. Results of a study by Gámez and González (2017) compared the story structure complexity of bilingual students with those who were monolingual in English or Spanish. While using English or Spanish, the bilingual students used more revisions than others *as they increased narrative complexity*. Contrary to the perception of linguistic weakness or breakdown, these revisions were more positively correlated with word diversity and therefore considered evidence of deeper linguistic application.

Narrative tasks can yield terrific samples of language, or merely highlight the disconnect between prompts and purpose. Regardless of materials, educators will want to define the skill, behavior, or knowledge they hope to see evidence of in a sample. Which would you rate higher, the elaborate, well-developed story that is rife with grammar errors, or the incomplete retelling comprised of short, error-free statements? It depends on what you are assessing.

Awareness of the *what*, allows us to better recognize those capacities in real life. Teachers can be attuned to and inquire about evidence of narrative skills (e.g., telling jokes or stories, sharing anecdotes, describing movie plots) and proficiencies in other contexts. These insights prove especially valuable when assessing a relatively unschooled student.

Teaching Tips:

- Remember that asking students to “tell me a story” is often too vague, unless you provide the CLD student enough examples of the expected type of response.
- Provide samples or do a walk through (joint production) of an example story before expecting the student to generate his or her own original narrative from a prompt.
- Sources of inspiration for narratives can include wordless picture books, muted videos or computer stories, photos of class activities, and family photos.
- Topics might include popular movies, video game adventures, television shows (Spanish language novelas, for example, have clearer story lines than English language soap operas), current events (especially dramatic ones), or field trips.
- Wherever possible, document spontaneous narrative activities because they are often the best evidence of student skills. Significant events, such as playground fights, can elicit excellent (though unpleasant) examples of settings and characters with unique attention to sequence, antecedent, consequence, problem, solution, and alternate ending.

ACCOMMODATIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES 5.3



The importance of student familiarity with material used to prompt their narrative responses was underscored during a professional development exercise. Teachers from the dominant culture were asked to write narratives about photographs of familiar (e.g., Statue of Liberty) and unfamiliar (e.g., India's Red Fort) cultural icons. The following was excerpted from a participating teacher's reflection journal about the exercise.

When we began this assignment, I thought it was an interesting way to involve students in a group writing activity and something I might like to use in class. It seemed easy to think of words to describe the Statue of Liberty because I was so familiar with it and visited it last summer. Our group had fun brainstorming words and then writing the paragraph. I thought everyone was very proud of the symbolism the Statue of Liberty provides to the United States—a place of freedom, equality, beauty, diversity, opportunity and patriotism. I thought the paragraphs that each group wrote were extremely creative and enjoyable to hear.

As we looked at the second picture of the large stone building (India's Red Fort), I had a hard time thinking of descriptive words because I was unfamiliar with the building. Looking at it brought up no past experiences

or memories, no feelings or ideas. I wondered why this picture had been chosen for the activity, as it seemed no one in the group knew what it was. I thought it was more difficult to compose the paragraph and did not feel the excitement to read it or hear others read as I had felt about the first picture. When we were told that the second picture was an important patriotic symbol for another country, I thought this must be how English language learner (ELL) students feel when given similar assignments related to U.S. culture.

During another group's discussion of this activity, one teacher mentioned that, although she and other African Americans understood and appreciated the symbolism, not all would associate the Statue of Liberty with the idea of unequivocal freedom that was expressed by others. This comment enabled other teachers to see that perceptions and cultural experiences influence a student's ability to respond authentically (or as predicted by a teacher) to a given prompt. This scenario reminds us as teachers to reflect on the student's familiarity with images, settings, plot lines, and other elements that can affect his or her performance and lead to invalid interpretations of assessment results. ■

Story Retelling Assessment *Story retelling assessment* is another method of eliciting oral or written narratives from CLD students. Such tasks are a common component of language proficiency assessments. For some students, story retelling facilitates language production. The opportunity to hear a story first provides a model that students can use for retelling the story. These productions can reveal much about individual proficiency levels. Nonetheless, issues such as auditory memory, cultural norms, and task familiarity can confound the ability of other students to perform this essentially expressive task. Because factors other than targeted skills can have such a strong influence, some researchers argue against story retelling as a means of assessing linguistic ability (Gutierrez-Clellan & Quinn, 1993). This view is supported by the research of MacSwan, Rolstad, and Glass (2002), who found that 20% of the 38,887 Spanish-speaking students sampled for their study (students who took the Spanish version of the IDEA Proficiency Test—Preschool [IPT-P]) did not respond at all when prompted to retell a story. The inordinately high percentage of students who did not respond on this subtest suggests that teachers or examiners should consider alternative methods of eliciting narratives for students who don't perform under structured conditions.

In practice, there may be a number of reasons why students do not respond at all or with the desired detail when asked to retell a story they have just heard. For instance, it can seem artificial and pragmatically inappropriate for the student to restate details of a story that the evaluator has just told. Clearly, the evaluator already knows it! This obstacle can often be overcome by asking the student to retell the story to another person or a puppet, or to record it for someone else.

A student may also have an unclear understanding of the expected response. Students often wonder, “Is it the topic (what it’s about), the gist of what happened, or the whole thing that you want?” Being explicit about expectations and modeling an appropriate response help students better understand the task.

There may also be times when the conditions, story situation, or narrative format are culturally unfamiliar or uncomfortable for the student. Attending carefully to nonverbal signals from students and providing alternative conditions, stories with different plots, or stories with different narrative formats oftentimes can yield more desirable results. Teachers of CLD students who are reflective and creative are more likely to discover their students’ true proficiencies and needs.

Native Language Writing Samples When teachers assess academic language proficiency, they should keep in mind that, at times, it may be beneficial to allow students to use their native language to demonstrate content-area knowledge and skills. For example, Figure 5.10 illustrates one first-grade student’s writing that was produced when the teacher allowed her to write in Spanish. Students in the class worked in small groups to produce books about whales (*ballenas*), and this student participated fully by writing her page in Spanish. The writing sample enabled the teacher to determine that the learner, a newcomer to the school in the earliest stages of English language acquisition, could construct a nonfiction text. Although the student was still developing the English skills needed to complete the task in her second language, she possessed the cognitive, academic, and linguistic skills to respond adeptly to the task in her native language.

Oral and Written Cloze Assessments

First-grade teacher Mrs. Wesley asked Ms. Buremen, the ESL teacher, for help teaching students to rhyme. She had tried everything to encourage them, but most just “didn’t get it.” Ms. Buremen was happy to plan her next whole-class lesson around this challenge and started by reading the rhyme-laden book *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* (Nemeroff, 1985). She read the first line of each rhyme and showed the corresponding picture. Then, paying very close attention to cadence, she read the second line and paused ever so slightly before saying the final rhyming word.

By the fourth rhyme, some of the students were calling out the rhyming words. Mrs. Moran nodded and continued without breaking the gentle flow of the poem’s meter. To close the lesson, students used props to retell the story together as Ms. Buremen probed other language skills, such as sequence and vocabulary.

Mrs. Wesley took notes as Ms. Buremen started a new activity by laying four of the props from the story in a row. The broom, comb, bed, and chair provided a limited range of familiar responses from which the students could choose their rhymes.

Ms. Buremen: I like the way rhymes sound. Let’s see if we can make some of our own. *Wake up, wake up you sleepy head, it’s time now to get out of _____.*

Class: Bed!

Figure 5.10 Assessment Artifact: Primary Language CALP

Ballenas
 Todas las ballenas comen
 carne, pescado, medusa,
 Cangrejos y Focas. Las
 Ballenas Jorobadas comen
 plancton, estan grueso que
 cubre el agua como
 una alfombra verde
 hay peses que tienen
 plancton y las ballenas
 jorobadas se los comen
 y se sumerge bajo el
 agua

Source: Angela Sesti. Reprinted by permission.

Ms. Buremen: *If you're hungry, grab a pear, and then come sit down on a* _____.

Class: Chair!

Ms. Buremen: *But looking at this dirty room makes me want to use a* _____.

Class: Broom!

The students responded well to this oral cloze format. It provided semantic cues as well as auditory patterns and limited choices. By the end of the session, students were also having fun completing oral cloze rhymes *without* visible choices (e.g., *My little brother likes to eat. His favorite food to eat is* _____). Mrs. Wesley was pleased to learn that 90 percent of the spontaneous and sometimes silly responses produced actually rhymed. After listening to one another's choices, the students developed a word bank of possible answers (*meat, wheat, feet, seat, beet, and so forth*), some of which they were now generating without the scaffold of

an oral cloze prompt. By using this approach, Mrs. Wesley determined which students did not demonstrate language proficiency levels sufficient to support this skill and which students were ready to recognize auditory patterns, given appropriate methods and supports.

Oral and written *cloze assessments*, in which words are deleted intentionally from the larger passage or text, can be used in a variety of ways to gather information about the student's progress in language acquisition and content-area learning. According to A. A. Ortiz (2004), the elements of most languages are remarkably redundant. As a result, we can comprehend messages that are distorted or missing a number of elements (e.g., articles, prepositions) by accessing our prior knowledge and applying our understanding of the system for that language. Knowledge of language patterns appears to correlate highly with one's overall proficiency in that language. Eventually, the language learner senses the absence of mandated elements.

There are multiple ways to construct oral and written cloze assessments. When a fixed ratio format is used, every *nth* (e.g., seventh) word is deleted throughout the passage. This is generally used to sample a student's more holistic knowledge of the language. However, teachers can choose to omit certain types of words, such as pronouns or past-tense verbs, to measure particular aspects of morphologic and syntactic development. Figure 5.11 is an example of a teacher-created, fixed-ratio cloze assessment in which every eighth word is deleted. Oral cloze assessments are especially powerful and highly adaptable ways to gather information about a student's emerging language acquisition and mastery of skills. They can help a student bridge simple recognition of language patterns with the emergence of new expressive skills. They also work well with story retelling to assess comprehension of auditory or text input.

Teachers can follow up reading a story by asking students to "help me with the story." The teacher retells the story using an oral cloze format with regularly spaced pauses. At each pause, he or she gestures to students, asking them to fill in the missing word. Pacing is important for maintaining a natural flow and supporting student comprehension. Many CLD students initially unresponsive to story retelling tasks do well with this approach. When students provide appropriate answers, they demonstrate both comprehension and retention of the original material.

Figure 5.11 Assessment Artifact: Written Cloze

Word Bank				
was	Zoo	Zebras	And	to
and	And	Little	Feet	elephants
they	with	Monkeys	To	

On a hot and sunny day, Leticia _____ her mother decided to go to the _____. They brought sunglasses, bottles of drinking water, _____ a camera. The first exhibit they saw _____ the home of two gray elephants. The _____ were enormous! They had huge ears, big _____, and very long trunks. Next they went _____ the building where the monkeys lived. Some _____ were busy eating and others were playing _____ old tires. Leticia's favorite monkey was the _____ baby monkey. Leticia and her mother continued _____ visit the many animals in the zoo. _____ took pictures of the lions, tigers, and _____. At the end of the trip, Leticia _____ her mother were both very tired.

Listening Skills Assessments

Josue and Abram are working as a team to help their sophomore ESL class win a pizza party—but the students will win pizza only when everyone in the class successfully completes the task. The students are highly motivated as each person in each pair takes turns being the *giver* or *receiver* of directions. The partners are separated by a piece of cardboard so that neither can see what the other is doing.

Josue and Abram's first attempt to arrange five geometric shapes identically ended in surprise disaster. As they worked together, they felt sure they would win. However, they didn't realize until the final moment that failure to clarify had led to fundamental misunderstandings neither had recognized.

Their teacher, Mr. Sing, loved it when students discovered these moments for themselves. He had often wondered how frequently miscommunications occur in teaching and learning. Over the years, Mr. Sing had noted with concern how many CLD students did not actively listen or seek clarification regarding unfamiliar, ambiguous, or confusing material. He had begun to speculate on whether the students had become accustomed to simply "getting the gist," even though their language skills had developed sufficiently for deeper comprehension.

As a rule, Mr. Sing praised those students who asked for definitions of unfamiliar words as he taught, and he at times intentionally used nonsensical terms just to see who was listening. He encouraged all his students to ask clarifying questions because he believed it was the students' job to listen with their *mind* as well as *ears*—to listen to understand, recognize when they did not comprehend, and do something about it.

Josue and Abram had been watching other teams win and lose just as they had, but they were ready to try again. Josue considered the twenty shapes of varied form, size, and color. He needed to use only five. It seemed so easy.

Josue: Take the big yellow rectangle and put it in the middle.

Abram: The one that looks like a box or a French fry?

Josue: The rectangle. It's long from top to bottom and skinny side to side.

Yeah, it looks kinda like a French fry.

Abram: Okay, I got it. Put it in the middle?

Josue: Yeah. (*Remembering another team's problem*) Make it vertical.

Abram: Vertical?

Josue: Vertical is up and down like a basketball pole.

Abram: Okay, I put the big, yellow rectangle up and down, vertical . . . in the middle.

Josue: Take the medium-size purple circle and put it on top.

Abram: On top of what? The paper?

Josue: Put the purple circle on top of the yellow rectangle.

Abram: On top . . . in the middle?

Josue: No, not laying on it . . . on top . . . *above* it, like a lollipop.

By the time all five pieces were in place, Abram and Josue had practiced academic listening and natural clarification skills, with repetition that was natural to the context of the activity. Mr. Sing assessed Abram as having grown so much in clarification ability that he planned to pair Abram next with Saul, who still did not recognize communication breakdowns. The students were becoming more aware of their own learning because they were motivated to earn the pizza party. Mr. Sing planned to later add a sphere, rhombus, cylinder, cube, and cone to their list of choices for this exercise.

Like Mr. Sing, many teachers find it easier to plan language assessment when they are able to identify the linguistic demands of their curriculum. Listening skills can be assessed in a variety of contexts, but observers should be acutely aware of environmental cues that can facilitate comprehension. When CLD students are unable to adequately comprehend the language of instruction, direction, or assessment, they more keenly attend to available physical, interpersonal, and nonverbal cues. Although this serves as a testament to their resourcefulness, it can also prompt the teacher to overestimate a student's L2 competencies and subsequently misinterpret his or her academic struggles. Conversely, when provided accommodative teaching, some students may, in fact, understand the material far better than their oral or written responses suggest.

Wherever possible, teachers should require CLD students to demonstrate listening skills in ways that do not involve spoken language (e.g., perform a task or make a physical signal of understanding). If, for example, a student's understanding of a story is evaluated solely on his or her ability to retell it or to answer questions (especially in L2), the teacher will likely find it nearly impossible to distinguish between the student's oral language skills and his or her comprehension. This is especially important when students are verbally limited in L2, but it also applies to the performance of seemingly fluent CLD students and native English speakers. Although students may be talkative, it can be difficult to determine whether these students really understood the targeted material. Therefore, careful evaluation of CLD students' listening skills includes tasks that do not combine performance and skills in other domains, as well as those that do.

The specifics of these tasks will, of course, vary greatly by grade level but may include:

1. Following oral instructions:
 - Give students simple one-step directions such as, "Get out a crayon."
 - Add modifiers such as, "Get out a *blue* crayon."
 - Increase the number of steps such as, "Open your health book and turn to page 14."
 - Gradually incorporate linguistic concepts (*of, unless, however, whether*, and so on) such as, "*Unless* you brought your lunch today, please line up at the door."
 - Direct students to perform an experiment or create a product while checking to see how students respond to step-by-step instructions. This process better assesses listening skills than does providing detailed instructions all at once (the latter is often a memory issue rather than a language issue).
 - Ask students to relay instructions to a peer in the L2. Alternatively, separate L2 *listening* skills from L2 *verbal* skills by having the student relay his or her understanding of L2 instructions to a peer in the L1.
2. Responding to questions:
 - Students answer yes or no questions orally, with a head shake or nod, or thumbs up/thumbs down.
 - Provide the CLD student with a closed set of responses from which to orally or physically select an answer (e.g., pictures, words, or sentences from which to choose; questions phrased with modeled choices such as, "Who invented the light bulb, Edison or Einstein?").
3. Demonstrating curricular learning:
 - Have students identify main characters, story sequence, problem/resolution, or content-area answers by pointing to or otherwise nonverbally selecting depictions of the appropriate response.

- Direct students to create a picture or product representing a core concept.
- Have students use graphic organizers to display their understanding of concepts or relationships using pictures or writing.

Among the more authentic ways to assess the listening skills of a CLD student are situations in which the student's ability to perform a task requires him or her to integrate listening skills and clarification strategies effectively. The scenario with Josue and Abram illustrated this type of activity. *Barrier games* are among the more broadly referred to *information gap activities* that compel students to draw on and value active listening skills that are not commonly addressed in traditional classrooms. Barrier games require one student to give another student directions to perform a task or to replicate a design, despite a physical barrier (e.g., open file folder, piece of cardboard) that prevents each student from seeing the other's referent. One of the most powerful features of barrier activities is that, after initial training and modeling, students can engage in skill building with very little input or interference from the teacher.

Oral Skills Assessments Oral language acquisition is part of the human development process that occurs naturally through authentic communication. What we often tend to overlook is the fact that oral language is not so much a biological inheritance, but a cultural product. Children acquire increasing levels of language skills as they develop throughout their lives. With each linguistic interaction, they gather information and feedback regarding pronunciation, word order, word meanings, idiomatic expressions, and effective as well as ineffective ways of expressing needs, desires, and so forth *within a particular culture*. Learners process this information in largely subconscious ways. We later apply in our own speech language patterns and frames we've heard used by others. Oral language development is an ongoing process that requires repeated, meaningful practice.

Language is a vehicle or tool for communicating ideas, and this is true for both oral and written language production. Students' cultural backgrounds play an integral role as they become increasingly active members of classroom activities and conversations. Culture influences how we interpret the language we hear and read, and it shapes how we express our own ideas (as well as the ideas themselves). English learners benefit from plentiful opportunities to interact with peers and share their unique perspectives about the curriculum and about themselves.

Formal oral skills assessment can provide a starting point for teachers as they gauge where their students' language skills are. However, from there such assessments should be considered as benchmarks to determine how students are progressing in response to daily instruction. Informal assessments of oral skills, on the other hand, can do much to inform teachers about how they might structure individual learning opportunities in the classroom.

Oral language samples often are most reflective of students' actual skills when they are gleaned in connection to daily lessons. Because oral production of language can be context reduced, where students have to form their oral language by relying heavily on their cognitive abilities, it is critical that we provide students with a context or structure to support their expansion of language. Personal connections to a recently discussed topic or an engaging book read with the class can provide a conceptual foundation for students as they harness their cognitive energy to produce oral language.

Free recall or a picture prompt can be used to elicit an oral language sample. The teacher simply asks the student to recall events from a story or events from their day (i.e., provide a context). Because the goal is for the student's response to reflect oral language abilities, it is critical that the recall or the retelling task occur as soon as possible after the event takes place or after the story is read, so the assessment does not end up becoming a test of memory.

The following illustrates a sample procedure:

1. After you have finished reading a picture book to students, choose a picture and select the device you will use to record the student's language.
2. Have the student share with you what is happening in the picture. You may prompt the student by saying, "Tell me a story about this picture" or "Using complete sentences, tell me three things you can share with me about this picture."
3. You may further prompt the child by saying, "Tell me more," or "What else can you say?" Remember to keep the prompts open ended, so the prompts do not lead students to the answers or anticipated language.
4. Transcribe the student's entire response.
5. You may create a checklist or use an oral language rubric (see Figure 5.12) to gauge students' oral language skills.

Figure 5.12 Sample Oral Language Rubric

Oral Language Rubric	
Name:	_____
Grade:	_____
Syntax:	
4—	Uses appropriate syntax of the English language with complex sentences. Grammar is used correctly. Appropriate use of tenses in the sentences.
3—	Uses appropriate syntax of the English language with simple sentences. Grammar is used correctly. Switches the tenses as inserting them in sentences.
2—	Uses correct English syntax for very simple sentences. Inappropriate use of grammar and tenses in sentences.
1—	Uses very little correct syntax of the English language. No complete sentences used.
Vocabulary:	
4—	Uses many descriptive words and adjectives. Uses a variety of words to explain thought process.
3—	Uses basic language consisting mostly of nouns and verbs with some use of descriptive words and adjectives.
2—	Uses very simple, basic language and short phrases consisting mostly of nouns and verbs with little use of adjectives.
1—	Uses only isolated words to describe the picture and/or unable to do any retelling.
Fluency:	
4—	Uses lots of connected, descriptive details when talking about the visual and/or the story. Oral sharing is well organized and well thought out.
3—	Uses some descriptive details while talking about the visual and/or the story. Oral retelling is somewhat organized.
2—	Uses only a simple sentence or two when talking about the visual and/or the story. Oral retelling is very limited.
1—	Uses simple labels with one or two words (e.g., rock, boy) for elements in the visual and/or the story.

Consistent and meaningful practice with oral language builds students' listening skills and increases their desire to use language for other purposes as well, such as reading and writing. Through the different opportunities that teachers provide, students can learn to use English to articulate their words and express their thoughts clearly. The following activities can be used to support learners as they enhance their oral language skills, along with their listening, reading, and writing skills.

Phrase It and Stick It

Grade Level: 2–6

Materials:

- Pictures representing the topics being covered in the class
- Set of sentence starters or stems to guide students' phrase development (optional)
 - Sentence starters/stems can be created and provided to students if they struggle to come up with an original phrase. These starters/stems might require that students only have to add an original word to complete the phrase.
- Sticky notes

Directions:

1. Explain to the students that we will work on an activity that helps us practice our oral language skills. Our task is to create an original phrase in response to the pictures we see. The phrase might explain what the picture is about or what is in the picture.
 - For instance, in response to a picture of a house, the original phrase might be "*A mighty house.*"
2. Place students in small groups, and give each group a set of two or three pictures that reflect the topic being covered or the book being read.
3. Have each small group select one of the visuals.
4. Ask each student to think of an original phrase in response to their group's picture.
5. Have students take turns sharing their original phrases with group members.
6. After each student has shared their own original phrase, give each group sticky notes (enough for each student to have one).
7. At this point, the task for each student is to choose any *one* of the original phrases shared by anyone in the small group and write it on the sticky note.
8. Then have students add their sticky notes to the picture.
9. Have groups repeat this process for all the pictures.
10. Next have each group select one picture that they will use to share out to the class their sticky note phrases.
11. Recap for students by explaining that in this activity, they started with sharing and building oral language and then transitioned toward advancing their own writing.

Observing Students:

As students are working, document their oral language production as they create original phrases. Consider the way students use grammar, tenses, adjectives, and

so forth in their language production. You can also do an authentic error analysis of students' language production in real time. As they are creating phrases, gauge the kinds of errors they are making and record your findings.

Differentiating Instruction:

- Jot down notes about the patterns of errors students are making in their language production. These notes will support your instructional conversations and language modeling in subsequent lessons.
- Focus on students' written language development as they transfer original phrases to the sticky notes. Your knowledge of students' strengths and challenges can inform decisions about supportive group configurations.
- For students who are able to complete the activity with relative ease, encourage them to try to link together all the sticky note ideas to create a connected description of the picture. Phrases should be arranged so that they make sense syntactically as well as semantically. This extension can be taken a step farther by your asking students to write this connected description.

Additional Notes:

This activity can be repeated as often as desired throughout the academic school year.

I Learn, I Extend, I Remember

Grade Level: 5–8

Materials:

- Curricular materials
- Blank pieces of paper (one per student)
- Writing utensils

Directions:

- Have students begin by using a blank piece of paper to create a three-column chart for taking notes. They can simply fold a piece of paper to create three columns or you can give them a template with three columns drawn on it.
- Next have students write at the top of the first column, "What did I/we learn?"; at the top of second column, "How did we learn it?"; and at the top of third column, "How can I connect it to the outside world?"
- As you read the book or cover the lesson material, have students stop at strategic points and add their ideas to the three-column notes.
 - At each stopping point, have students first share what they learned in their small groups.
 - After students have orally synthesized what they have learned and how they learned it, ask them to transfer their thoughts onto the three-column chart. Providing the opportunity to complete this process orally first will result in students generating and recording a much more elaborated response.
 - Another way to support students to orally express and expand upon their thoughts is to have students first record a visual depiction of their learnings

in the first column and then describe their visuals orally to their small group. Subsequently, students can expand their documentation by adding writing to accompany the visuals on their three-column notes.

- Next have students discuss real-world applications of their learning. Have students add their ideas to the chart as they discuss. Be sure to emphasize these connections during your instructional conversations with students (small groups, whole class, and individuals).

Observing Students:

As students work on their activity, observe them and listen to their discussions so you can see how their oral language is evolving. You can integrate a simple oral language development checklist to gauge how your students are developing over time.

Make sure to ask probing questions. As you ask questions, again allow students to first discuss the answers as partners or small groups. Through these conversations, you can hear the kind of language students are using to form their arguments.

The activity itself can become a form of formative assessment for language development as students attend to the task. Collect the chart from students at the end of the lesson to see how their writing is progressing. Give them feedback on their writing skills to support continued development.

Differentiating Instruction:

- Through concurrent discussions while the activity is unfolding, you will be able to provide instructional support based on the formative data you are gathering.
- As the activity progresses, consider the degree to which your students are making appropriate gains toward the associated outcomes. Make adjustments during the course of the activity to redirect learning, as needed.
- Your observation of challenges and successes during group and partner work will inform how you redirect the interaction component of future activities.

Additional Notes:

This activity can be utilized within any content area to support students' comprehension and retention of the curricular material. It is ideal for prompting students to extend their ideas to real-world applications. This activity also supports the teacher's informal assessment of students' language skills in real time.

Marketed Instructional Materials Although spontaneous human language is dynamic and best assessed in authentic, interactive contexts, students must also learn to mediate the more structured language of academic instruction and curricular texts. Talented teachers find multiple ways to use marketed materials. The key is always to begin with a firm grasp of the desired outcome or benefit. The prevalence of fun, colorful, ready-made activities can steer us toward products that don't meet our needs or can't be modified or adapted for individual gain. On face value they are convenient—"everything you need" in one book, box, or link. Minutes gained in lesson planning are lost tenfold by lack of instructional benefit.

Avoid activities for the sake of activities. Instead, consider whether the task complexity and/or scaffolding can be easily targeted, tracked, and incrementally ratcheted to measure and advance language growth. The student's performance on similar tasks over time may also be cited as indicators of progress monitoring for the purposes of response to intervention (to be discussed in Chapter 7).

Teaching Tips:

When purposefully selecting marketed materials, consider:

- What skills are important for my students to gain, strengthen, or practice?
- Do these materials foster deeper connections to particular concepts, or application of skills?
- Can the materials be used to create or support a strategy my students use to aid their own learning?
- Are the stimuli used (pictures, reading level, experience assumptions) appropriate for my students?
- Will use of this material be inclusive (adaptable), or stratifying?
- What will I learn by observing my students use of this material?
- How will insights gained inform my instruction?

USING LANGUAGE INFORMATION TO INFORM INSTRUCTION

Throughout this chapter, we have presented an in-depth review of both formal and informal assessment tests, tools, and strategies that can be used in practice. These assessments can provide educators with information on the language acquisition and proficiency of the learner. Our individual context and role as an educator often determine how and when we use particular assessments, and for what purposes.

In this chapter, we have tried to provide a blueprint for making decisions on diagnostic assessments, placement, instruction, and ongoing monitoring. Standardized assessment must always be approached with caution, given the multitude of variables that can influence scores as well as the high-stakes nature of many educational decisions. Informal, ongoing assessments can provide us with a closer look at the potential of the learner within different situational contexts.

Language acquisition is a dynamic process influenced by a student's unique biography as well as the teaching and learning context. We always must remember that assessment and instruction are interrelated. Assessment provides a baseline, or the point of departure, for making decisions about what is best for the learner. With regular use, assessments can allow us to chart growth as students continue to progress on their language acquisition journeys. What happens between each data point—daily instruction—is at the heart of the language acquisition process. Classroom instruction can either help accelerate language development or inhibit progress.

Teachers can increase the effectiveness of their daily instruction by using language assessment results in the following ways:

- Plan specific activities and strategies for students, to build on identified strengths and target areas for growth.
- Plan appropriate interventions for students.
- Place students in pairs and small groups that ensure a balance of challenge and support.
- Implement scaffolds during instruction to bolster language comprehension and production.
- Gauge what is working during instruction and what needs to be adapted or modified.
- Make adjustments to grouping configurations.
- Monitor effectiveness of interventions.

Regardless of professional role or context, understanding language assessment is essential when serving CLD students. As educators, our knowledge, action, and advocacy often determine the quality of our students' educational journeys.

PROGRAMMING-RELATED ISSUES: ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Issues of placement and programming for CLD students who are acquiring English as a second language are topics beyond the scope of this text. Nonetheless, the results of assessing language proficiency can aid decision making associated with these issues. Therefore, the following discussion highlights how language proficiency assessment is relevant to the identification, placement, monitoring, and exit of CLD students. This discussion is by no means exhaustive, but it provides a synopsis of issues that should be considered.

Identification

Assessing English language proficiency is critical in determining whether a CLD student can participate in the curriculum without additional supports. This determination should be, but is not always, based on a combination of factors. Standardized assessment results, informal assessment outcomes, observation, and parent and teacher input all serve to inform our understanding of a student's language abilities. Students whose English language proficiency does not meet stated criteria are often identified as limited English proficient and, as a result, are entitled to instructional modifications and access to language programs designed to alleviate language issues in content-area learning.

Placement

Careful consideration of language proficiency data and academic skills, combined with knowledge of available programs (e.g., transitional bilingual, dual language, content-based ESL), is necessary for identifying the setting that will provide the CLD student maximum access to the curriculum. The appropriateness of student placement is determined through ongoing assessment of language acquisition, social adjustment, and curricular learning.

Monitoring

Alternate versions of formal assessments that can be readministered at midyear provide a useful update on student progress and can be used to help determine whether to reassign a student to grade-level classes. Informal assessment approaches and other forms of data gathering discussed earlier are also vital in helping teachers monitor student status and progress relative to changing curricular demands.

Exit

The redesignation of CLD students has the potential to affect perceived student or program success. Students must typically meet language proficiency and academic criteria to be exited from the English learner (EL) designation. Because higher-performing students who exit a language program are continually replaced by lower-proficiency students entering the program, it is nearly impossible for this group as a whole to demonstrate the type of progress required by state or federal mandates.

ASSESSMENT IN ACTION 5.2

Teachers can use a portfolio to document a CLD student's development in all four language domains (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing). A portfolio is the most comprehensive method of

understanding the students' linguistic assets and needs. The following checklist provides possible items to be included in the ongoing assessment and monitoring of language skills.

Portfolio/Cumulative Folder Checklist

Items to Be Included			Date
Home Visit Interview or Parent Survey on Language Use			
Home Language Survey			
Initial Language Test (e.g., LAS)			
Subsequent Language Tests	Grade	Score	
	Kindergarten	/	
	First	/	
	Second	/	
	Third	/	
	Fourth	/	
	Fifth	/	
CLD Student Biography Card or Background Survey			
Informal BICS Evaluation (L1 and L2)			
Informal CALP Evaluation (L1 and L2)			
Native Language:			
• Literacy Screening (Grades K–5)			
• Reading Benchmark (Grades 3–5)			
• Writing Sample (Grades 3–5)			
English Language:			
• Literacy Screening (Grades K–5)			
• Reading Levels (Grades 3–5)			
• Early Writing Assessment			
Cognitive Learning Strategy Use (classroom observation notes)			

Historically, such a scenario has tempted states to enact policies to keep redesignated students in this EL category for up to 2 years (Abedi, 2004), or simply delay the redesignation of qualified students. This practice effectively denies otherwise capable students access to a more appropriate and challenging curriculum (Abedi & Dietel, 2004).

Today, federal law requires local education agencies (LEAs) to submit to their states data on the number and percentage of EL students who:

- Are making progress toward English language proficiency
- Attain proficiency needed to exit EL services, and
- Have been classified as EL for more than 5 years

Additionally, LEAs must also provide information regarding the number and percentage of former English learners who meet academic content standards for 4 years after exiting English development programs. The rationale for this is to ensure that the overriding emphasis of programming for English learners relates to academic access.

Educators are well advised to consider multilevel educational and linguistic criteria, rather than political agendas, to determine when students are ready to participate in the full curriculum of an English-only classroom environment. Central to these considerations is the acknowledgement that data regarding reclassification and achievement reflect not only on the English learners described, but also on the degree to which instructional methods used are effective in the promotion of language proficiency and academic success.

SUMMARY

This chapter explored the language dimensions of form, content, and use. These dimensions serve as the foundation for discussions related to students' language acquisition processes. They also inform our ability to interpret and make use of results from language proficiency measures, including both formal and informal assessments.

The purpose of increased accountability related to the language development of English learners is to ensure that all children have a legitimate opportunity to succeed in school. We want to make certain that the educational needs of CLD students are not brushed aside. Educational reform efforts attempt to target inequities in student learning through measures that hold schools and districts accountable for student academic success. Nevertheless, this drive for accountability fosters an increased emphasis on standardized testing—an effort that often fails to measure relevant progress or achieve intended results.

Informal language assessments help to fill in the gaps of our understanding related to what students know and are able to do with language. They allow the teacher to connect language use to the daily realities of the classroom, authentic text, and students' lives. Informal assessments allow us to capture language samples during the

course of student communication in settings that are low-risk and in ways that account for students' affect.

Classroom teachers ultimately have the privilege and responsibility of helping students open new doors to communicating with the world. Remembering that language develops best when students have opportunities to use their linguistic skills for authentic, purposeful communication is key to creating contextualized and meaningful language development experiences. Through interaction and dialogue with peers, CLD students gain and share valuable insights into the curriculum, themselves, and the world beyond the classroom.

In order for students to reach their linguistic potentials, educators at all levels must coordinate their efforts. From initial intake of students to the school or district, to the identification of English learners, to the subsequent formal assessment of their language proficiency, to placement in language assistance services and programs, to teachers' development and use of informal assessments, to their creative use of assessment results to inform their responsive instruction of individual students—CLD students look to us as educational professionals to support them on this language acquisition journey.

KEY CONCEPTS

Anecdotal logs	Communicative competence	Phonemic awareness
Barrier games	Home language surveys	Phonology
Basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS)	Home visit interviews	Pragmatics
Cloze assessments	Information gap activities	Semantics
Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)	Language competence	Silent period
Common underlying proficiency (CUP)	Language performance	Story retelling assessment
	Morphology	Style shifting
	Narrative assessment	Syntax

PROFESSIONAL CONVERSATIONS ON PRACTICE

1. Discuss why classroom teachers of CLD students should understand the form, content, and use of language. What implications does this knowledge have for their professional practice with CLD students?
2. Discuss why classroom teachers of CLD students should use home visits. What are some advantages of home visits for CLD parents and guardians?
3. Discuss types of formal assessments of language proficiency. What is the importance of ensuring that these assessments have been normed on similar English learners, assessed under similar conditions?
4. Discuss types of informal assessments of language proficiency. With which are you most comfortable? Which do you intend to emphasize with students as a result of reading this chapter?

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW AND REFLECTION

1. What are syntax, morphology, phonology, semantics, and pragmatics? Briefly describe each.
2. What are at least three formal standardized assessments of language proficiency? List and briefly describe each.
3. Why have some states developed their own formal standardized assessments of English language proficiency?
4. What are the purposes of home language surveys for data collection? List and describe each.
5. What are at least three advantages of a home visit interview for collecting data about the background experiences and language proficiency of a CLD student? List and describe each.
6. How can the pragmatics of languages make it difficult to assess CLD students in English?
7. Why might it be difficult to rely on a single sample of a CLD student's performance on a narrative assessment task? What can teachers do to gain the most accurate data from narrative assessments?
8. What are the advantages of matrices or rubrics for informally collecting data about language proficiency?
9. What are potential problems with story retelling as a means for informally assessing language proficiencies of CLD students? What can classroom teachers do to avoid these pitfalls?
10. How can assessing the English language (L2) proficiency of a CLD student benefit the teacher in planning and delivering classroom instruction? List at least three benefits and briefly describe each.