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An Assets-Oriented, Formative Oral Language Assessment for Multilingual Students: The Oral Language Record

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Chapter 10
An Assets-Oriented, Formative Oral Language Assessment for Multilingual Students:
The Oral Language Record

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ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces an assets-oriented oral language formative assessment tool for use with multilingual students. The assessment tool, called the Oral Language Record (OLR), was developed to help teachers listen to, record, and analyze authentic student talk in a variety of settings. It provides valuable information about the vocabulary and language structures that students use, helps determine current instructional needs, provides a frame for capturing student talk, and documents growth over time. The OLR contains a continuum based on observable behaviors and an analysis tool that helps teachers determine next steps in instruction based on their observations. Used in conjunction with a student's writing sample and observation of the child's reading, the OLR provides a holistic view of a multilingual student's language and literacy acquisition, enabling the teacher to focus on the child's linguistic strengths to plan future instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Multilingual students (MSs) participate in a variety of school settings across the U.S. While some settings, such as Dual Language programs, are supportive of home language development, 97% or more of MSs are in English-only settings (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015) where they are asked to leave their home language at home and use only what schools consider to be "academic English" (Valdés, Capitelli, & Alvarez, 2011). MSs who are classified as English Learners in these monoglossic linguistic settings are

often considered "at risk" due to limiting English assessment measures that do not take the full range of their linguistic knowledge into account (Hakuta, 2011). Methods to accelerate students' English acquisition faster than the typical 4-7 years elude teachers and researchers alike (Goldenberg, 2008; Hakuta, 2011). This chapter proposes an assets-oriented perspective on the formative assessment of MSs' language.

Introduced herein, the Oral Language Record (OLR) is an assets-oriented formative assessment tool that builds on students' linguistic capital, or "the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). It is critical to value the different languages and varieties of languages that students bring to school – including register, accent, discourse style, lexical choices, syntax, non-verbal communication style, pragmatics, and the cultural aspects of language, such as whether or not it is respectful to look at an adult in the eye during conversation. By capturing students' authentic language, the OLR provides a means for exploring language through an assets-orientation.

The OLR is a formative assessment tool that classroom teachers or specialists can use anytime, in any setting. The goal of the OLR is to help teachers listen to, record, and analyze student interactions in a variety of settings, including whole group, small group, pairs, or with a teacher. This process provides valuable information about what language structures the student holds, helps determine current instructional needs, provides a frame for capturing student talk, and documents growth over time. The OLR contains a five-dimension continuum of language development based on observable behaviors and an analysis tool that helps teachers determine next steps in instruction based on their observations. There are a variety of ways to capture student talk, including paper and pencil, audio and video recording with phones, video cameras, iPad, iPod, digital recorders, etc. With practice, capturing and codifying oral language becomes easier and more valuable as a formative assessment process. Using this protocol consistently (e.g., monthly) with MSs provides documentation of growth and continually informs a teacher's next steps. Explicit attention to MSs' oral language is an important, but often neglected, method of social justice pedagogy.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide K-12 classroom teachers with an assets-oriented formative assessment tool that can be used and interpreted flexibly, anywhere, at any time. Based on classroom needs, we developed this tool with colleagues from the New Teacher Center and with financial support from the Hewlett Foundation. This chapter (1) briefly explains the components and administration of the Oral Language Record (OLR); (2) provides a case study of a first grade MS, Nicholas, and walks the reader through an assets-oriented analysis of his OLR; (3) makes connections to Nicholas' literacy development to show how his language strengths and needs were evidenced in his reading and writing; and (4) concludes with implications for instruction. First, we provide background on what the OLR is, explore research that shows the reciprocity among reading, writing and oral language, and reflect on how the OLR relates to MSs' academic success.

BACKGROUND

This section connects language assessment and instruction to equity to show the significance and purpose behind the OLR. The benefits and challenges of traditional language assessments are discussed, and we then briefly explain how the OLR addresses these challenges. Finally, the reciprocity of oral language, reading and writing is addressed to deepen understandings of the significance of language assessment and instruction. Since our focus is the K-12 classroom, we discuss assessment and instruction from a

classroom teacher's perspective rather than from the perspective of an English Language Development specialist or a Special Education teacher, who might have access to a wider range of assessment and instructional tools.

Language Assessment and Instruction as Tools Toward Equity

While the most effective teachers always look for ways to engage and reach their minoritized and MSs, the current anti-immigrant political climate deepens the significance of this responsibility. At a time in history when many children –both documented and undocumented – fear for themselves, their families, and their friends, our efficacy as teachers is increasingly critical for MSs (Gándara, 2018). Yosso (2005) identified that children of all backgrounds bring cultural and linguistic capital to school, but the capital they bring is not always acknowledged in U.S. schools, which tend to foster monoglossic, monolingual norms. In a similar vein, Moll and colleagues (1992) found that incorporating minoritized students' funds of knowledge into classroom learning activities aided MSs by building on what they know and can do. The OLR is a tool that uses students' linguistic capital – their authentic language production – to help teachers identify and monitor students' English language acquisition from an assets perspective in order to challenge deficit notions that often surround MSs (Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006). The OLR enables teachers to more closely observe students' linguistic resources and facilitate their language and literacy development from a perspective that values students' home language capital (Yosso, 2005). Too often, immigrant and non-English speaking students are considered a problem – often someone else's problem – that need to be fixed (Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006). Teachers tend to be under-prepared to serve MSs effectively and collaborate with their families (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Samson & Lesaux, 2015), and may not want MSs in their classes (Reeves, 2006; Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004). As a result, MSs tend to be overrepresented in special education (Harry & Klinger, 2006) and continue to under-perform based on national assessments in relation to their English-speaking peers (Polat, Zarecky-Hodge, & Schreiber, 2016).

Discourse is a critical part of education (McNaughton, 2018); however, despite language being the number one predictor of students' academic success (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008), we have not developed reliable ways of assessing and teaching English to MSs. The field's lack of efficacy in this regard is a critical equity issue because language acquisition influences and underscores a student's ability to be academically successful. Schooling is dependent on language – comprehending a teacher, peers, or a textbook, connecting new knowledge to what is already known, and showing what was understood, orally or in writing. For example, language production is directly related to reading comprehension: The complexity of students' oral language at age 7 was a predictor of future reading comprehension (Oakhill & Cain, 2012). Conversely, elementary students who struggle with reading comprehension tend to have low oral language skills (Duke, Cartwright & Hilden, 2013). Nation, Cocksey, Taylor and Bishop (2010) found that poor comprehenders at age 8 specifically had a weakness in grammatical understanding. The relationship between language and reading is complex and not well understood (Holliman et al., 2014), but the clear evidence of this intimate relationship makes it imperative that accurate, reliable, and valid formative assessment tools are developed for classroom use. The link from assessment to instruction must be made clear for teachers; this is an issue of equity for MSs and their teachers.

Traditional Oral Language Assessment in the K-12 Classroom

The OLR resulted from two problems of classroom practice. First, an assets-oriented assessment that captures students' authentic oral language was not widely used. Second, the standardized language assessments that are used in schools do not provide usable formative or diagnostic information to teachers for instructional purposes. Romeo, Gentile, and Bernhardt (2008) explain:

Standardized tests of language proficiency are of little use to teachers as guides for addressing the needs of students on an individual basis. These tests generally occur once a year, in the early fall, and take a considerable amount of time and effort from teachers, not to mention money from school districts. Moreover, the results are often not reported until late Spring and do not provide teachers the information they need to shape instruction. (p. 1)

Consequently, unless districts, schools, or individual teachers find and implement their own language assessment, English Language Development (ELD) tends to be taught based on a curriculum rather than based on data that evidences students' needs.

One common type of formative language assessment is a sentence repetition task. During the assessment, the assessor reads a sentence aloud and the child is asked to repeat it exactly. The assessor notes any inconsistencies with the initial statement. This is a reliable, valid method for assessing oral language development (Clay, Gill, Glynn, McNaughton, & Salmon, 2007; Menyuk, 1969; Romeo et al., 2008). When students hear a sentence and accurately repeat it, they use the oral language structures with which they have significant familiarity; they comprehend what is said, even though they may not produce these structures in spontaneous speech (Clay, 2007). Thus, the task measures receptive syntax rather than productive language.

While sentence repetition may appear to be a simple task of mimicking, syntactic processing and comprehension underlies the ability to repeat sentences. Very short utterances may be parroted back phonetically without attention to meaning, yet utterances that exceed the limits of working memory must be processed, and therefore comprehended, prior to repetition (Clay, 1971). The successful repetition of an orally stated sentence implies comprehension of the sentence (Menyuk, 1969; Van Moere, 2012). Knowing the intricacies of how language sounds directly influences literacy acquisition (Holliman et. al, 2014). In monolingual English speaking students prosodic sensitivity was shown to predict reading comprehension (Whalley & Hanson, 2006) and to have positive correlations with many aspects of reading, including phonemic awareness (rhyme and segmentation), vocabulary, and morphology, all of which influence reading and writing (Holliman et al., 2014). However, students over the age of approximately 7 years are more capable than younger students of repeating sentences that they do not comprehend (Clay, 1971; Menyuk, 1969). Therefore, usage of sentence repetition tasks with students is suggested primarily through grade 2 and not with older students. Also, sentence repetition assessments can be used no more often than every 8 weeks, so data cannot consistently be used for instructional purposes.

There are a number of reasons to assess oral language beyond sentence repetition. First, sentence repetition is limited in that it does not employ the functions of language, i.e., to communicate a child's thoughts, feelings and intentions (Wells, 1986). Second, a few students have the ability to reproduce a stream of sounds, even though they do not understand the meaning and underlying syntactical structure (Gentile, 2001). Alternatively, some children may feel inhibited by having to repeat something exactly as it is said and therefore do not demonstrate their full linguistic ability (Gentile, 2001). Repeating sen-

tences does not always measure the child's ability to independently control – and produce – the common structures of language, particularly among a variety of language functions (Gentile, 2001).

The OLR differs from other formative language assessments because it allows for analysis of the child's authentic language production and can be administered during regular classroom activities. Other language assessments, such as the Record of Oral Language (Clay, et al., 2015) and the Oral Language Acquisition Inventory (Gentile, 2003), require significant one-on-one attention and rely primarily on sentence repetition tasks that could have linguistic bias due to varying home languages, registers, regionalisms and dialects spoken by the child (Clay, 2007). In contrast, the OLR simply asks the teacher to capture a child's unique language during authentic classroom experiences and provides tools for analysis and determining next steps (Klein, Nemecek, Briceño, & Wray, 2013).

Because the OLR captures students' authentic language, it is better aligned to the mandated, summative English language assessments used in schools, which ask students to produce language about academic topics rather than repeat spoken sentences. For example, the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC) has a number of tasks in the "speaking" section of the assessment that capture a MS' ability to use the register of language needed in classrooms. The test guide states:

These task types provide authentic contexts for students to orally exchange information and ideas, offer and support opinions, and give presentations. The language students need to produce at school varies by the audience and the context in which speaking occurs. The different Speaking task types reflect this variation. (California Department of Education, 2018, p. 34)
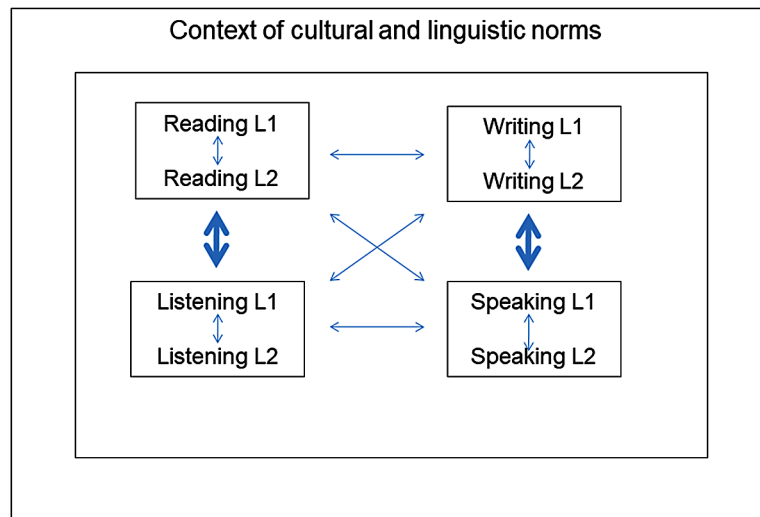
A more widely used assessment, WIDA's ACCESS, also emphasizes "academic English." The "Online Speaking Guidance" (WIDA, 2012) document for grades 4-5 emphasizes the importance of academic language and differentiates it from quotidian language, stating, "This assessment is a measure of a student's ability to produce spoken academic English, not conversational language." While there is no agreement about the definition of academic language (Valdés, 2004), teachers are mandated with the task of teaching it, and students whom the educational system defines as English Language Learners continue to be assessed on their academic language proficiency (Auckerman, 2007; Valdés et al., 2011).

Regardless of one's beliefs about academic language, the OLR could be helpful to a teacher in light of the WIDA. The sample speaking assessment for grades 4-5 asks students to make multiple hypotheses about a science experiment. To prepare for the WIDA, or to observe progress after it, a teacher might use the OLR with a student during a science experiment to determine the child's strengths and needs in this content area, and then develop an instructional plan. As is clear, there are many issues with traditional language assessments used in K-12 classrooms. The OLR is intended to fill the current gap by capturing students' authentic language production and by serving as a formative assessment for use at any time between summative assessments that are not helpful for instruction.

Reciprocity Among Language Domains

As Figure 1 shows, MSs have two (or more) languages to build upon – their home language(s) (one of which may be English) and English, the language of instruction. Both languages exist within sociocultural constructs and norms, and the domains of each language inform all the domains of all of one's languages, depending on how similar or different the languages are from one another (adapted from Klein, 1978).

Figure 1.

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┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Context of cultural and linguistic norms      │
│   ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────┐    │
│   │   ┌───────────────┐         ┌───────────────┐     │    │
│   │   │  Reading L1   │  ←────→  │   Writing L1  │     │    │
│   │   │  Reading L2   │         │   Writing L2  │     │    │
│   │   └───────────────┘         └───────────────┘     │    │
│   │        ↕       ╲       ╱        ↕                  │    │
│   │   ┌───────────────┐         ┌───────────────┐     │    │
│   │   │ Listening L1  │  ←────→  │  Speaking L1  │     │    │
│   │   │ Listening L2  │         │  Speaking L2  │     │    │
│   │   └───────────────┘         └───────────────┘     │    │
│   └──────────────────────────────────────────────────┘    │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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In Figure 1, L1 and L2 refer to the number of languages a child is in the process of acquiring, *not the sequence in which the languages were acquired*. The key idea is that both languages influence the other, regardless of order of acquisition or simultaneous acquisition.

While the grammars and syntax of the home language influence emergent reading acquisition, the wide diversity of the MS population adds to the complexity of identifying consistencies in *how* the first language influences MSs' English reading. Variables such as number of language(s) spoken, ages of acquisition, dialects and registers within each language, social class, education, parents' education level, age of second language acquisition, amount and age of exposure to each language, and the context in which each language is learned, are all relevant to English language and literacy development (Canagarajah, 2013).

Possibly as a result of the underlying foundation that language plays in both literacy and second language acquisition, parallel strategic behaviors exist between language and literacy development. For instance, learners negotiate meaning both in text and orally/aurally. Long (1996) showed that language learners use "interactional adjustments," such as asking clarifying questions, while conversing to better comprehend. In reading, the parallel for Long's (1996) "interactional adjustments" would be self-monitoring and self-correcting behaviors, which children learn to do with the help of the text as their fluency with English book language and facility with graphophonics improves (Clay, 1991). Children learn new language structures as they negotiate meaning both in conversation and through reading texts (Clay, 2004). Comprehending is the primary goal of reading; an overemphasis on accuracy can result in reduced understanding (Brown, 2013; Pikulski & Chard, 2005). A parallel argument from Second Language Acquisition states that the accuracy of a monolingual speaker is not necessarily an appropriate goal for a MS. Instead, some researchers suggest that educators maintain high standards for MSs while focusing on the content rather than the form of language produced (Alvarez, 2013; Aukerman, 2007; Valdés, Capitelli, & Alvarez, 2011). In reading, this would translate to minimizing the importance of LR approximations that do not affect comprehension (Briceño & Klein, 2018).

Vocabulary is a central component in MSs' reading development (August, Carlo, Dressler & Snow, 2005; Jiménez, 1994). In fact, Biemiller (2001) called vocabulary "the missing link" in reading and writing instruction in the schools. Lesaux and Harris (2015) note that both receptive and productive vocabularies exist to understand and communicate academic language, respectively. They define academic language as having high lexical diversity, including words that represent abstract, technical concepts, and words that carry content, such as nouns and adjectives. Vocabulary knowledge is not binary – a word is not necessarily either known or unknown. Rather, it exists on a continuum; the depth of knowledge of a given word can influence the sophistication with which one produces or interprets a given word (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013). Because their home language vocabulary is often not valued in schools, MSs' English vocabulary development (as measured by schools) is considered to lag that of their monolingual peers, compromising their literacy development (August et al., 2005; August & Shanahan, 2006). Since over 70 percent of English Learners in the U.S. speak Spanish at home (Ruiz Soto, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015), it is relevant that 76% of vocabulary words in fourth-grade science units were found to be English–Spanish cognates (Bravo, Hiebert & Pearson, 2007), as were 68% of the words judged to be difficult in middle grade texts (Carlo et al., 2004). Cognates have been found to support MSs' English vocabulary and reading comprehension (Dressler, Carlo, Snow, August & White, 2011; Jiménez, García & Pearson, 1995; Ramírez, Chen & Pasquarella, 2013). However, students do not necessarily notice cognates without explicit instruction (August et al., 2005; Nagy, 1995; Nagy, García, Durgunoglu, & Hancin-Bhatt, 1993), especially younger children (Kelley & Kohnert, 2012).

There is a need to incorporate a variety of techniques for teaching vocabulary, that is, a commitment to review and practice it, introducing vocabulary to support comprehension rather than just learning individual vocabulary words (August et al., 2005). One recent study included a 20-week vocabulary intervention for over 2,000 linguistically diverse students in urban settings. Instruction was predicated on informational text and included professional development for teachers in best practices for vocabulary instruction. The study showed significant gains for linguistically diverse students' vocabulary knowledge, morphological awareness skills, and comprehension of expository texts that included academic vocabulary, as well as students' performance on a standardized measure of written language skills (Lesaux, Kieffer, Kelley, & Harris, 2014). Again, the critical link between language and literacy was proven, if not well explained.

Like vocabulary, syntax may be considered a second missing link in MSs' literacy instruction. Since English is the foundation for reading, writing and learning in most US schools, syntactical development is critical to MSs' academic success. Language is the source of information relied upon most heavily by beginning readers and writers (Clay, 1982, 2001). MSs are asked to learn, read, and write in a language in English when their vocabulary and syntactical knowledge is still developing. What is often perceived in MSs as a literacy issue may instead be the result of developing linguistic knowledge of English, as literacy interventions have been shown to be most effective for MSs at the lowest language levels (Burns et al., 2016). Consequently, students' language levels can predict scores on emergent literacy skill assessments (Ostayan, 2016), sight word acquisition (Burns, & Helman, 2009), and future reading achievement (Lepola, Lynch, Kiuru, Laakkonen, & Niemi, 2016).

Not surprisingly, the validity of common classroom reading assessments, such as informal reading inventories, was recently called into question for use with MSs when a study found that Spanish-speaking MSs make common "language approximations" when reading (Briceño & Klein, 2018). These language approximations differ from traditional reading errors because they are based on the child's emerging knowledge of English rather than difficulties interpreting print. MSs' ability to anticipate text may be inhibited by their still developing syntactical, grammatical and vocabulary knowledge (Johnston, 1997;

Klein, Briceño, Nemecek, & Wray, 2011). And, if book language is unfamiliar, it may initially hinder the reading process (Clay, 2001; 2013). Difficulties with oral language also interfere with writing achievement since writing, like reading, is language-based (Shanahan, 2008). As a result of the deep, yet not well understood, relationship between oral language and academic success in school, an oral language assessment that helps teachers determine next instructional steps is a missing and critical piece of the assessment-to-instruction puzzle.

USING THE ORAL LANGUAGE RECORD

Issues, Controversies, Problems

Assessment of multilingual students has been very narrow in scope; the pattern that has been established is of a single repeated measure over spaced intervals. Several issues have not been considered in terms of data analysis. The research has mostly focused on assessment of English language acquisition either of a second or an additional language (Gentile, 2001; Romeo, Gentile & Berhardt, 2008) but has not taken into account several factors. The first is the use of multiple points of data drawn from three systems, oral language, reading, and writing, rather than a single aspect of a language or a literacy processing system. Secondly, assessments have not utilized commonly used formative assessments, such as the running record, for language development and behaviors (Briceño & Klein, 2018). Data are most commonly drawn from a single, repeated measure and not from the triangulation of data from oral language, reading and writing. This is now common practice in English reading but not with English Learners in acquiring English (Afflerbach, 2016). Finally, language assessments are often summative and do not help teachers instruct.

In the case of Nicholas, a first grader acquiring English, the Oral Language Record was taken of his retelling of a book previously read one time (Figure 2); the OLR shows his retelling.

The Oral Language Record indicates the condition of reading which serves in this case as a retelling after a first reading of the text. The first column of the OLR allows the teacher to indicate the time and setting when it occurred. The second column shows the teacher and/or partner prompting for the retelling. This is a literal transcription, as is the third column, where there is a transcription of the student's retelling, or the students' output. The last four columns are scores drawn from the five-dimension continuum of language development (Figure 3). The teacher looks for patterns in the transcription and analyzes the retelling for four areas: Language Type (L), Structure (S), Meaning (M), and Production (P) using a five-dimension continuum of language development.

In Nicholas's case, for Language Type he was scored at mostly 2 due to the social, unspecific nature of the language, with one three for a more complex statement. For Structure, he received a combination of 2 and 3, with one 4, as his utterances appear to be approaching standard structural usage. In the Meaning column, Nicholas received mostly 3s as his comments were relevant and meaningful in the context. Finally, for Production, Nicholas received N/A because he did not initiate any of the utterances, he was prompted for all of them. Note that this does not reflect a poor score, the action was simply unobserved.

Similarly, Nicholas' writing (Figure 4) added to the understanding of his strengths and needs. After writing and drawing his picture, Nicholas dictated his story as, "One day me dog got chase by a car." He uses more limited syntax and evidences less well developed sentence structure in his writing. Nicholas' strengths are in his use of the common story structure and prepositional phrase "One day," the helping

Figure 2.

Print Form

Oral Language Record

page 1 of 1

New Teacher Center

CCSS/Language Objective:

Student: Nicholas   Recorder: Wray/Nemecek   Date: 10/25/2013

Time Setting	Teacher/Partner Prompt	Focus Student's Talk/Language/Output	L	S	M	P
1:1 Familiar retell	I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about this story Guess what you don't have to read it you just have to look at the pictures and tell me what's happening	His mom got a fish and At Monday I went fishing with my mom	2	3	3	NA
	What's happening on the next page? Can you keep going? Just ell me whats happening in the story. Go to the next page. Just look at the picture. Just look at the picture. What's happening?	His dad gotta ...(?)... by the wind because the wind were pushing the fish (Points at something in room - Like that it look like a fish)	2	2	2	NA
	good noticing...what's happening on this page	His sister gotta fish because ...(?)... all the trees and he put his fish stick right here	2	2	3	NA
	whats happening on this page	Trying to get fish by putting those things (points) in their buckets	2	3	3	NA
		and all their family got fish. (Points) he gotta fish. He gotta a fish. But he didn't. He gotta fish. He gotta a fish. He gotta a fish. because it look like he dunna got a fish.	2	2	3	NA
	and look it here	and their walking over the bridge so they can find somewhere to get a fish	3	4	3	NA
		and right here he need to look at a fish so he can have a fishy again he got a fish	2	3	3	NA
		he got a fish he want to get a fish again	2	2	3	NA
	show me what was your favorite part of the story	i already told you this is my favorite part	2	2	3	NA
	but you didn't tell me why it was your favorite part	this is my favorite part when they are trying to find a place to get a fish	2	3	3	NA

Delete Last Row   Add New Row

See: Oral Language Continuum for Coding   **L**=Language Type **S**=Structure **M**=Meaning **P**=Production

verb "got," and the clear relationship between the text and his illustration. Nicholas' writing shows that further instruction might be helpful in the areas of possession (he wrote and said "me" for "my") and past tense ("chase" instead of "chased"). Because we are focused on Nicholas' language, we are temporarily ignoring concerns about spelling, handwriting, and writing conventions.

In reading, Nicholas is able to decode and read in a fairly fluent and phrased manner, belying his comprehension of text due to his current understanding of English. His decoding ability had been fooling his teacher, who called us in to work with Nicholas when she expertly noted the disconnect between what she observed as his reading level based on his decoding skills and his speaking and writing abilities at that point in time. Without this triangulation of a student's oral language, reading and writing, instruction will be planned without a responsive understanding of dynamic assessment. As Clay (2001) says: "If we harness the established power of children's oral language to literacy learning from the beginning, so that literacy knowledge and oral language processing power move forward together, linked and patterned from the start, that will surely be more powerful" (p. 95).

Using these formative assessment data, the teacher then uses the Oral Language Analysis and Planning Tool (Figure 5). The data are gathered, recorded, analyzed then used in the planning. This responsive teaching cycle is a missing piece in most instruction of students acquiring English. In looking at Nicholas, it is clear his strengths fall in each of the areas of Language Type (L), Structure (S), Meaning (M),

Figure 3.

Figure 4.

and Production (P). However, his vocabulary usage depends on what he knows orally more than what he read; even though he read with a reasonable degree of fluency, he was unable to use his reading to strengthen his oral language. This mismatch is telling and guides the teacher to plan based on analysis of observed language behaviors. Even more importantly, prior to our use of the OLR, the data of language used in retelling had not been used to inform the next instructional steps in reading books.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers need to have a clear understanding of how language develops, the common structures of English, and how these structures are acquired by children who are learning to read and write (Clay, 1991). Clay stresses that reading is a receptive process, writing is an expressive process, and effective oral language development needs to emphasize the connection between the two. Consistently using the OLR on a variety of students can help teachers better observe individual progress and also notice patterns across students that can influence their instruction and enable them to better support MSs.

While there are a variety of rules that students need to learn when learning English, years of research have shown that it is critical that teachers employ *meaning-based instructional practices*, such as how to use cognates and morphemes to support students' reading comprehension (Cisco & Padrón, 2012; Cummins, 2008; Goldenberg, 2008; Lubliner & Hiebert, 2011; Lucido et al., 2009; Montelongo et al.,

Figure 5.

New Teacher Center — Oral Language Analysis and Planning Tool			PAGE 1 OF 1
Student: _____		Date: _____	
Teacher: _____		Grade: _____	

	What can student do/strength?	What does the student need?	Instructional Move(s)
Language Type			
Structure			
Meaning			
Production			

CRA Professional Development Institute, November 2013   (www.newteachercenter.org)   13

2011). In addition to being a more effective teaching method, meaning-based skills may also be a more accurate way to assess students' ability to gain meaning from text (Kieffer, 2013; Montecillo Leider et al., 2013). When understanding is not at the core of instruction, students may learn specific rules but not how language comes together to form meaning. This results in students who, like Nicholas, learn to decode text but do not understand what they are reading or how to communicate about what they are learning.

In addition to using cognates and morphology to support MSs', Lesaux and Harris (2015) have a variety of suggestions for vocabulary teaching and learning. They suggest studying a small set of words deeply in order to understand nuances and the range of meanings synonyms might have, such as the difference between big, large, huge, and enormous. Developing an understanding of nuance and range of meanings not only provides students with a wider vocabulary but also enables them to more accurately represent their ideas in speech and writing. A second strategy Lesaux and Harris suggest is developing explicit word-learning strategies so that students have known, familiar actions they can take at point of difficulty. These actions may be different in reading than when listening to a lecture or speaking with someone; the key idea is that MSs identify unknown words that are important to their understanding and take action to define those words. Finally, requiring students to use content language is critical – they need to be both receptive and productive learners of content. Students can create projects that require content language production and share their learning with their peers.

While the above strategies focus on vocabulary learning, developing standard structures common in book reading is also critical. Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) and the Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) methods both suggest the use of sentence patterning charts, which explicitly address grammatical features such as verb and noun agreement, placement of adjectives, and where prepositional phrases can be placed in a sentence (Deussen, Autio, Roccograndi, & Hanita, 2014; Manship, Farber, Smith, & Drummond, 2016). Similarly, Explicit Instructional Conversations about Language (Briceño, 2014) at point of confusion can help students understand why English works the way it does, and contrastive analysis (Lado, 1957) can be used to show similarities and differences between two languages when the teacher has some knowledge of a child's first language.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

While we have found that the OLR supports teachers' efforts to scaffold MS' language and literacy learning, there are many opportunities for future research. However, it is imperative to emphasize the importance of an assets-orientation in future studies. Researchers are not objective reporters of facts. Everything from the way a study is planned to the way the results are reported reflect the researcher's perspective on the topic. We implore the field to address MSs from a perspective that values their cultural and linguistic assets.

We can suggest a number of specific future studies that would move the field forward. First, we have yet to determine whether the OLR is equally effective as an assessment when students interact with the teacher versus with a peer or in a small group. A correlation study that links students' running records and writing samples to their OLR assessments would show a deeper link between MSs' literacy and oral (productive) language acquisition. A large-scale study of this type might enable researchers to identify a few common language acquisition pathways that MSs share on their journey to proficiency in English oral language and literacy. Findings that identify developmental pathways might influence future curriculum development and enable teachers to better support MSs. Most helpful to teachers

might be a research-proven teaching plan that lists common language approximations and for each, a variety of instructional practices a teacher might use during designated and integrated ELD to move the child forward in their language learning. To aid with the consistent over-identification of EL students for special education services, an analysis of the OLR combined with a battery of literacy assessments can help teachers determine whether a child's limited progress is due to an emergent understanding of the English language or if a literacy processing difficulty might exist. Finally, it would be important to develop other assets-oriented language assessments to help defeat persistent negative attitudes toward MSs (Reeves, 2006).

CONCLUSION

As Nicholas' case study evidences, the OLR is an assets-oriented, valuable oral assessment tool that can help teachers better serve their MSs. The OLR is available free online at Hameray Publishing (https://www.hameraypublishing.com/pages/oral-language-assessment) and is an assessment and instructional resource that teachers can use to identify students' current linguistic strengths and next steps for instruction. Allowing for frequent formative assessment, the OLR enables teachers to better identify MS' progress and address their linguistic needs, therefore enabling more effective and efficient teaching.

The research shows direct and explicit links between a child's English proficiency and English literacy achievements. Since language and literacy are the foundation of learning in U.S. schools and English proficiency is the number one predictor of MSs' academic success (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008), formative assessment about MSs' language and literacy development is critical in a teacher's daily struggle to meet all students' needs. As was evident from Nicholas' case study, a tool like the OLR, used in combination with literacy assessments, can guide teachers to target their instruction more accurately based on students' current assets and needs. The triangulation of data from oral language, reading, and writing provides a holistic view of a MS' language and literacy progress; individually assessing any one language domain while neglecting the others provides only a superficial, one-dimensional perspective and can be misleading. Importantly, triangulating data enables teachers to build on what MS already know and can do in one language domain and help them transfer that knowledge to another. For example, Nicholas has strong decoding skills in reading but was not transferring that phonic knowledge to his writing. Helping students to see the reciprocity among language domains can accelerate their literacy and language acquisition (Clay, 1991, 2013).

Since the OLR is assets-oriented, it fills a hole in the current language assessment landscape. As a formative assessment, it can inform teachers' day-to-day instruction. It also empowers teachers to determine whether students are using the "academic language" of the classroom based on their own instruction rather than allowing external test writers and evaluators to make that determination. As we showed with Nicholas, teachers can evaluate an OLR in conjunction with literacy assessments, such as a writing sample and running record, to get a broader sense of a child's language and literacy development. Comparing across language domains might enable a teacher to identify whether or not a child has a literacy processing difficulty that is unrelated to their language acquisition. Explicit attention to MSs' language progress is an important, yet often overlooked, form of social justice pedagogy that all teachers could incorporate into their daily instruction and assessment plans.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Linguistic Capital: The concept of valuing the different languages and registers (including non-standard syntax and lexicon) students bring to school and viewing students' home language(s) through an assets-orientation. Yosso (2005) developed the concept.

Meaning-Based Instructional Practices: Teaching practices that maintain understanding and a sense of meaning at the core of the instruction. Examples include use of cognates and morphology, and a focus on meaning during reading and writing instruction.

Multilingual Student: Any student who speaks more than one language; many multilingual students are considered English learners in school until they achieve the required English fluency.

Oral Language Record (OLR): An open source, online formative assessment used to capture students' authentic talk for analysis regarding further instructional needs.

Running Record: An oral reading assessment tool that can be used formatively or summatively to observe and analyze students' oral reading behaviors.

Syntax: The set of rules, principles, and processes that govern the structure of sentences in a given language, usually including word order.