



How Can Multilingual Learners and Their Teachers Make a Difference in Classroom Assessment?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Classroom assessment can be a powerful linguistic and culturally sustaining process for both multilingual learners¹ and their teachers. Integral to educational parity, classroom assessment can stimulate multilingual learner engagement and represent the interplay between content and language as a means of advancing student learning. At the other end of the spectrum, classroom assessment can be a tool that reinforces multilingual learners' academic deficits and underscores stark differences in their performance compared with that of other student groups. In this capacity, assessment can be viewed in a negative light with potentially adverse effects on multilingual learners and their teachers. Which of these perspectives do you align with?

This participatory white paper examines tensions in classroom assessment with the intent of demystifying purposes, practices, and policies for educators of multilingual learners in K-12 settings. United by a common experience of the novel coronavirus-19 and its variants, we revisit seven sets of competing ideas that were posed in the Center for Applied Linguistics' inaugural blog series, Multilingual Mysteries, in fall 2021. Table 1 captures the duality of some challenging assessment topics that educators confronted, and we addressed, during the throes of the global health pandemic.

TABLE 1. Classroom challenges in assessing multilingual learners

Assessment topic	Assessment challenge	Educator views	Classroom/school snapshot
The 'COVID slide'	Reduce or offset academic 'gaps'?	0 v. 100%	Second-grade classrooms
Testing	Increase or decrease its presence in assessment?	-----	A leadership team
Multimodalities	Don't incorporate or incorporate multiple means of communication?	9% v. 91%	Kindergarten dual-language immersion teachers
Translanguaging	Don't accept or accept as policy or pedagogy?	45% v. 55%	Middle school science department
Translation/transadaptation	Does not or does enhance equity for multilingual learners?	40% v. 60%	A newcomer center
Accountability	Don't or do include multiple languages?	11% v. 89%	A fourth-grade instructional team
Grading	Adopt uniform or different policies for multilingual learners?	14% v. 86%	Eighth-grade content and language teachers

First, we define classroom assessment, its specific attributes for multilingual learners, and the impact of COVID. Next, we consider how current assessment dilemmas might help stimulate change through classroom snapshots, self-reflection ("Picture This!"), and educator responses ("What Educators Say") to

inspire deep conversations among stakeholders and press for action. After identifying attributes of equitable assessment in linguistically and culturally sustainable classrooms, we close by presenting the modern roots of classroom assessment and our vision for multilingual learners. Ultimately, our goal is to urge teachers, other

¹ For the purpose of this paper, multilingual learners is an inclusive term that encompasses elementary and secondary students who have been adversely impacted by inequitable assessment policies and practices due to their exposure to or interaction in multiple languages and cultures.

educational leaders, and policymakers to play a more substantive role in classroom-related assessment and contribute to resolving ongoing assessment issues affecting multilingual learners.

What is your stance on classroom assessment?

Picture This! is a feature that invites self-reflection or conversation among colleagues. In essence, it offers a stimulus for contemplating your views on classroom assessment for multilingual learners in your setting. Here is the first introspective activity.



PICTURE THIS! A portrait of classroom assessment for multilingual learners

As a teacher, teacher educator, or member of a leadership team, what are your initial impressions of the seven controversial assessment dilemmas in Table 1? You may wish to weigh the pros and cons of each option with colleagues. Then, using the anchors in the second column, identify your position or that of your grade level/department, professional learning community, school, or district by placing the letter for each dilemma (A-G) on the continuum. Based on your placement of the seven letters, create and share your assessment portrait.

What Is Classroom Assessment?

Classroom assessment has come to occupy an increasingly visible and valued space as educators critically examine how it can be interwoven into instruction to support students' language and conceptual development (Davison & Leung, 2009). Envisioned as interactive and dynamic, the view of classroom assessment has been moving from one of technical qualities associated with producing scores (reflective of sociocognitive learning theory) to that of a socially embedded process associated with sociocultural learning theory (Bachman & Damböck, 2017; Kang & Furtak, 2021). To that end, we broadly define classroom assessment as what teachers and

students do on a continuous basis to plan, gather, analyze, and interpret information to improve teaching and learning (Gottlieb & Katz, 2020).

When multilingual learners are part of the student population, classroom assessment becomes a complex undertaking. Attention must focus on

- ➔ Evidence of meeting learning targets for both content and language
- ➔ Sensitivity of classroom activities to students' languages, cultures, and ways of being
- ➔ Minimal presence of bias and sensitivity due to historical and experiential differences with those of White middle-class students

In essence, classroom assessment for multilingual learners must embrace an array of perspectives, offer opportunities to access and use multiple languages as resources, and include multimodal pathways for pursuing learning.

The Global Pandemic's Impact on Classroom Assessment for Multilingual Learners

The prominence of COVID since March 2020 and its resurgence in the form of the Omicron variant in fall 2021 places this synthesis of classroom assessment for multilingual learners in a unique context. In essence, it becomes a de facto state of education during one of the most perplexing global health crises of our time. In short, what is emerging from this unifying human experience is the transformation of our educational landscape.

Initially experiencing hope for the 2021-22 school year, educators soon became frustrated, disenchanted, and disheartened as multilingual learners and other students returned to school only to find themselves in puzzling ever-changing circumstances. Indeed, COVID has tremendously affected each of us, both personally and professionally. It has impacted multilingual learners and their families just as strongly, if not more so. As a result, strategic priorities for all educators—administrators, coaches, teachers, counselors, and paraprofessionals—have sharply shifted to mental health and social-emotional learning. Equity has emerged as a focal point for every facet of education.

Accordingly, professional learning has refocused to become more teacher-led (Berg, 2022), while classroom assessment has become more student-driven (Berger et al., 2014).

During this time, headlines tended to tout negative effects of this horrendous virus on the multilingual learner population. Studies described the COVID slide as ‘increasing segregation of Latino students’ that has hindered academic performance and amplified learning loss (Jacobson, 2022), absenteeism among English learners at disproportionate rates (Lehrer-Small, 2021), and emerging academic gaps for English language learners (University of Cincinnati online, 2021; Mitchell, 2020), to cite just a few examples. In contrast, the website ¡Colorín Colorado! and Breiseth (2020), in particular, offered and continue to share a tremendous number of community resources and forward-thinking strategies for guiding teachers and families of multilingual learners through these most challenging times. Indeed, we *can* cast a more positive light on multilingual learners and their families. Here’s an example of a strengths-based COVID-related scenario.

For these multilingual learners, every day began with a self-reflection on an accomplishment of the previous day (oral, written, or drawn) and a co-construction with their peers of a learning target. The two mothers nurtured the students’ languages, cultures, and emotions while highlighting multiliteracies (e.g., digital literacy, biliteracy, artistic literacy) at home and around the neighborhood. Upon returning to school, the second-grade teachers were so impressed by the confidence, motivation, and agency of these multilingual learners that they continued to reinforce home-school-community connections.

CHALLENGE #1

How can we offset the notion of the ‘COVID slide’ for multilingual learners through classroom assessment?



A classroom snapshot: Casting a positive light on the COVID experience for multilingual learners and their families

Many second-grade mothers at Chávez Elementary are essential workers, barely scraping by to meet basic family necessities. Living in close proximity to each other in a housing complex when COVID hit, they realized the benefits of banding together. It didn’t matter whether their children participated in the dual-language immersion program, English to speakers of other languages program, or general education program; all students were confined to home. Realizing the importance of educational continuity for these youngsters, eight multilingual learners formed a pod to share their languages, cultures, and knowledge. Two currently unemployed mothers facilitated learning for these students online, at home, and around the community.

In fall 2021, many educators assumed that students, especially multilingual learners, returned to school ‘behind’ with ‘academic gaps’ due to family situations and other factors attributed to the pandemic. Admittedly, there are well-known *equity gaps* due to language, income, race, and immigration status which have come into greater focus and *opportunity gaps* due to students’ lack of access to technology or lost time due to unreliable internet connections. Yet for many multilingual learners, this prolonged health disaster spurred enriched educational experiences at home and throughout the community in English and other languages, as in the classroom snapshot described above.

With the return to in-person learning at school has come the renewal of many prepandemic practices, including resumption of a testing mindset. Although “formative” assessment tools have been touted as a solution to capturing ‘learning loss’ during remote learning (Brookhart, 2020), we see no mention of how assessment in multiple languages can provide more accurate and complete information about multilingual learners. Schools should value the learning that has and is continuing to occur at home in multiple languages

to ascertain the true accomplishments of multilingual learners. Here are two suggestions that illustrate that connection.

Invite multilingual learners to engage in self-assessment.

Students' social and emotional state affects their achievement. Therefore, educators and family members must be attuned to these influences on each student, including personal trauma and family hardships. Inviting multilingual learners to express their feelings, react to information, and air issues in the languages of their choice provides a glimpse into their world. Oral or written recordings in a journal, for example, can serve as a self-assessment tool that reveals a student's unique personalized account of learning and life.

Leverage students' multiple languages at home and school as viable resources for classroom assessment.

During COVID, many schools established or expanded their home and community partnerships to facilitate a seamless transition for multilingual learners and establish a built-in support system for families. By infusing these bi/multilingual connections into schoolwide professional learning, curriculum, instruction, and classroom assessment, the interdependence among home, school, and community has become stronger and deeper (Zacarian et al., 2021).

For some of us, it has taken adversity to open windows to view students outside of school walls. By becoming vested in advancing learning rather than measuring 'learning loss,' classroom assessment can direct us and our students toward meeting learning goals. We have a choice—to continue to persevere on closing multilingual learners' 'achievement gap' or determine each student's pathway and advancement towards grade-level success.

WHAT EDUCATORS SAY!

Do you see COVID as a net loss or a gain for multilingual learners' academic development?

In this blog, educators unanimously agreed on focusing classroom assessment on students' strengths rather than compensating for what's missing. That is, students' perceptions of success should be motivators to pursue more challenging endeavors to reach their individual learning goals. The classroom allows for more authentic assessment tools than standardized ones and subsequently can generate rich data that are useful beyond categorizing students.

One of the hallmarks of classroom assessment is allocating time for reflection and feedback. Picture This! offers an opportunity for you or a team of educators to think about the issue presented in an assessment challenge and take action based on your individual or collective position.



PICTURE THIS! Classroom assessment for multilingual learners: COVID considerations

How might you describe classroom assessment for multilingual learners before, during, and after COVID? As an outcome of the pandemic, how has technology changed your practices? How has the combination of face-to-face, hybrid, and remote contexts for learning altered your classroom assessment strategies? What has been most effective for you and your students during this time? How have you and multilingual learners evolved as assessment leaders? How are you applying lessons learned during COVID to your current assessment routines?

Augmenting Standardized Achievement Testing

The mid 1990s ushered in the institutionalization of accountability for student achievement. Established by U.S. federal legislation (i.e., Improving America's Schools Act, 1994), students have been taking standardized tests of literacy and numeracy, starting in grade 3, ever since. With the new millennium (i.e., No Child Left Behind, 2002), annual English language proficiency assessment for K-12 English learners joined the ranks of required measures. Some policymakers and practitioners have argued to abandon the piecemeal state of assessment that privileges standardized test scores and have posed an alternative: the adoption of an assessment model that is better aligned with teaching and learning. Let's contemplate how multilingual learners might fit into the design of a comprehensive cohesive assessment system.

CHALLENGE #2

How might we contextualize results of standardized achievement testing for multilingual learners?

If testing (rather than assessment) continues to prevail as what 'counts' for federal/state accountability, and districts/schools measure multilingual learners' progress from only a restricted compliance perspective—that is, from score to score—what serves as evidence of student learning is only one data source and one kind of metric. Shouldn't there be considerations for other purposes, audiences, and contexts for assessment to obtain a more inclusive picture of each student? One option to consider is how we might fold testing into an expanded assessment model reflective of a teaching and learning paradigm. Here are several possibilities for elevating the status of classroom assessment to produce data that are more representative of and equitable for multilingual learners.

Embed assessment *as, for, and of* learning into curriculum and instruction to gain an expansive view of student engagement.

Three approaches—assessment *as* learning (centering on student-student interaction), assessment *for* learning (highlighting student-teacher relationships), and assessment *of* learning (fostering teacher collaboration with student

input)—converge in forming a dynamic and inclusive assessment system (Gottlieb, 2016, 2021a, 2021b). When students contribute to determining and meeting unit-level expectations across assessment approaches, their linguistic and cultural assets become ingrained in the process, and high-stakes decisions are no longer contingent on a single data point.

Ensure that curriculum, instruction, and assessment form a seamless, intentional, meaningful, and aligned system.

Classroom assessment with multilingual learner engagement should be embedded in curriculum and instruction. When students interact with each other, (co)construct models, or access digital resources, teachers can assess learning firsthand. In the process, teachers should make every attempt to safeguard multilingual learners' languages, cultures, and identities. This more personalized classroom information, when coupled with reliable common grade-level or school-based data sensitive to multilingual learners, offers strong evidence to complement that of standardized achievement tests to form a robust assessment system.

Achievement testing is a federal mandate and a metric for comparing students' overall academic performance from year to year. While many believe that achievement testing for multilingual learners and other students should diminish as it interrupts instructional time, others see assessment as part of the classroom routine. Having multiple languages a mainstay of classrooms with multilingual learners can prove to be an effective barometer of instruction and assessment.



A classroom snapshot: Input from leadership during assessment for multilingual learners

The district's leadership team, composed of administrators and teachers, along with parent and student representatives, is undergoing its annual review of accountability measures. Given the growing demographic of multilingual learners, it has suggested expanding the scope of assessment beyond state requirements to represent its student diversity. The team selects three annual

projects that reflect student interests while teachers and coaches formulate a set of success criteria and grade-level committees serve as judges. These common schoolwide assessments, such as an Invention Convention, when coupled with representation from multiple languages and cultures, yield meaningful data and feedback for students, teachers, and families.

Invite multilingual learners to produce multimodal projects as evidence of learning with agreed-upon criteria of success.

When multilingual learners have input in constructing learning targets for multimodal assessment tasks, their likelihood of successful engagement improves. Equally important is having students contribute to crafting project descriptors that incorporate multimodalities to capture deep learning. In combining modes in various ways, from authoring bilingual picture books to designing websites, multilingual learners can show their creativity in their accomplishments across disciplines.

Acknowledge the use of multiple languages as a viable resource and communication channel in multimodal instruction and assessment.

Students today need to engage in increasingly complex and sophisticated spoken, written, and multimodal texts for different purposes, audiences, and topics. One such communication mode unique to multilingual learners is their interaction in multiple languages. When teachers adopt multiple languages as a multimodal resource for instruction and assessment, multilingual learners benefit immensely, not only academically, but also in helping to shape their identities.

Coupling print with other modes of communication involves knowing the concepts of a subject area, conveying text-based meaning, and attaching meaning to different modalities. Inviting the use of multimodalities signals a range of choices for students to explore their interests during instruction and assessment activities.



Multimodalities as Scaffolds for Learning

Multiple modes of communication look beyond language as the sole source of eliciting meaning; for example, multilingual learners, as other students, often rely on visuals and gestures as well as speech and written text (Kress, 2010). Multimodality, that is, the combined use of modes, allows students to use multiple means of communication to engage, interpret, represent, act, and express their ideas (WIDA, 2020). Grapin (2019) suggested that multiple modes are essential for engaging in disciplinary practices articulated in state academic content standards and allow multilingual learners to draw from a variety of meaning-making channels. In this challenge, we explore the use of multimodalities in assessment.

CHALLENGE #3

How might multimodalities be incorporated into testing and assessment for multilingual learners?

Print-dependent text is often thought of as the de facto mode of communication for comprehending and assessing written language, with multiple choice items still prevalent in high-stakes testing situations. For some educators, multilingual learners' reliance on multimodalities during assessment is considered a compensatory strategy. In contrast, others view multimodalities as a means of bolstering students' entrée to meaning through content. Here are several ways in which multimodalities can support classroom assessment.

WHAT EDUCATORS SAY!

Do you see multimodalities as harmful or beneficial to multilingual learners?

In this blog post, educators unanimously defended multimodalities as part of classroom instruction and assessment. Their rationale pointed to few constraints and urged support for inquiry-based learning, especially in content classes. It was further argued that multilingual learners should have opportunities to develop oracy, apply technology, and use multimedia, such as videos and audio slideshows, to facilitate their comprehension.

If we are constantly striving to optimize multilingual learners' opportunities to learn through a variety of communication channels, that practice should extend to assessment. If so, we should recognize that multimodalities enhance, rather than detract from, multilingual learners' ability to make sense of print. We should view multimodalities, including multiple language use, as language resources for multilingual learners to increase their access to content, accelerate attainment of goals, and show evidence of learning.



A classroom snapshot: Using multimodalities in assessing multilingual learners

The dual-language kindergarten has adopted play-based instruction and assessment where young children actively learn through interaction with each other and their environment. Three exploration stations are set up in the room: (1) 'let's express ourselves' with art supplies, writing tools, computers, audio tapes of bilingual books, and costumes; (2) 'let's solve problems,' with abacuses, puzzles, blocks, Legos, and plastic shapes and letters; and (3) 'let's get moving' with music, floor maps, traffic signs, modes of transport, and games.

This child-centered approach helps these young learners socialize while building their

self-regulation and confidence. Multilingual learners are encouraged to make language choices appropriate to the situation and show their conceptual development through actions, translanguaging, and multimodalities. Teachers witness the students' social-emotional, language, and academic development unobtrusively, documenting their learning and growth with observational narratives and checklists.

Translanguaging as an Assessment Construct

Translanguaging is a social activity between bilinguals with shared languages that revolves around natural interaction occurring in schools, homes, and communities. Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015) defined translanguaging as the "full idiolect or repertoire, which belongs only to the speaker," adding that "schools confuse the assessment of general linguistic proficiency, which is best manifested in bilinguals while translanguaging, with the testing of proficiency in a named language, which insists on inhibiting translanguaging" (p. 281).

CHALLENGE #4

Where does translanguaging fit into assessment?

As educators of bilingual/multilingual learners who both test and engage students in assessment, treating translanguaging within these spaces may prove challenging. If translanguaging is in fact tied directly to an individual's linguistic repertoire, then its application to a group setting, such as a classroom filled with students, could be tenuous. The following strategies can help clarify this instructional and assessment dilemma.

Co-construct an assessment and language policy to build shared ownership around translanguaging.

In designing and enacting a district's/school's mission and vision inclusive of multilingual learners, leadership councils, including teachers, community, and student members, should clarify the place of languages and languaging in instruction and assessment. Language policy

should address the role of translanguageing in school as a whole and for different instructional models. In turn, individual classrooms should have the latitude to craft their own policy contingent on the students' language practices.

Create a safe, inviting classroom community of learners that embraces multiple languages for instruction and assessment.

In warm and welcoming classrooms, educators should honor the individual language portraits and preferences of each multilingual learner. Communication in multiple languages, including translanguageing, should represent each multilingual learner's personal desire to use language as a sign of growing metalinguistic awareness and identity formation. As translanguageing is a personalized language practice, it should never be a force fit; multilingual learners, as participants in a classroom community, should have the freedom to use their own idiolect or linguistic repertoire.

If translanguageing is viewed as a natural flow between or among languages, then bilingual/multilingual learners should have the advantage of language choice in classrooms and schools, irrespective of the language(s) of instruction and assessment. Co-constructed classroom language policy by teachers and students should shape the parameters of language interaction for specified contexts.

assessment, some multilingual partners opt to produce an animated bilingual PowerPoint to present to the town council.

Translanguageing is often seen either as an acceptable or unacceptable practice rather than as a theory, a belief or stance, or a set of pedagogies (Leung & Valdés, 2019). In essence, it is a dimension of languaging, where language is viewed as a facilitator of cognitive processes (Swain, 2010). One application is classroom assessment, where multilingual students' linguistic and cultural capital is viewed as a strength when engaging in learning.

WHAT EDUCATORS SAY!

Is translanguageing a viable construct for classroom assessment?

This assessment challenge proved to be the most controversial, as educators were almost equally divided in maintaining the separation of languages and supporting the interaction among languages. Some believed that being bilingual means "training the brain to function completely in each language" or saw translanguageing as a compensatory strategy detrimental to long-term achievement. Others viewed translanguageing as a valid form of communication that enables bilinguals to "use a broader palette of colors to describe their world."



A classroom snapshot: Examining translanguageing in assessment

The science team at Pulaski Middle School is meeting with the bilingual data coach to co-plan its upcoming unit of learning. Student pairs will co-create an ecosystem and defend its potential impact on the community through a mural or artistic rendering, a rap or poem, or an oral presentation. After negotiating with their students, the teachers realize the importance of multilingual learners' patterns of language use, including translanguageing, as criteria in the product descriptors. As a result, for summative

The Role of Translation and Transadaptation in Assessment

Translation is a one-to-one equivalency from language to language while transadaptation considers the linguistic and cultural features of a test or text to make it a more authentic experience for multilingual learners. There are specific circumstances when translation or transadaptation in schools and classrooms are most appropriate. Let's investigate.

CHALLENGE #5

Do translations and transadaptations serve as equity tools for assessing multilingual learners?

There is a belief that translating or transadapting assignments, tests, and quizzes offers equity for multilingual learners who are versed in two languages. With the heterogeneity of multilingual learners, however, some are bilingual and biliterate, and others may not have had those experiences. In addition, with translation can come misunderstanding of the nuances of language, such as idiomatic expressions or polysemous words, varying lengths of passages due to density of text, different ways of organizing ideas, and varying complexity of discourse.



A classroom snapshot: Considering translation in assessment

The Newcomer Center is a school within the larger high school where multilingual learners who are recent arrivals to the United States are paired with buddies of the same primary language. It is the center's policy that students may interact with each other and explore content in their preferred language(s). Project-based service learning encourages community outreach, and for many of these older newcomers this means the use of technology to assist in gaining meaning through translation and other computer applications.

Teachers and administrators who adopt the practice of translation assume that multilingual learners have entrée to content in their other language. As not all language programs for multilinguals, however, have the goal of biliteracy, translation should not necessarily be a de facto assessment strategy. It is of greater benefit to increase multilingual learner engagement in classroom instruction and assessment in multiple languages than to automatically resort to translation, as in the following suggestions.

Embed students' language resources into teaching and learning.

There should always be a variety of pathways for students to attain their learning goals on their journey to reaching grade-level expectations. Having accessibility to instructional assessment tasks through imagery, movement, technology, and, yes, multiple languages offers a range of possibilities to individualize multilingual learners' expressions of learning. Incorporating multiple languages into the fabric of instruction and assessment allows multilingual learners to grow at their own pace in one or more languages and gain agency in the process.

Trust students' preferred language use during instruction and assessment.

Authentic performance assessment is a hallmark of project-based learning where students engage in hands-on activities that fold into culminating products. It is advantageous for multilingual learners to have flexibility in researching their topics, producing initial drafts, or conducting interviews in their preferred languages, whether their teachers are multilingual or not. Some translation, such as bilingual glossaries, may be useful scaffolds, but multilingual learners should not become dependent on them.

Given that testing is a mainstay of school life, we might strive to improve the efficacy of assessment for multilingual learners. At times, transadaptation and translation of content tests may be appropriate, though it should not automatically be considered an effective equity strategy. Rather, teachers should consider supporting multilingual learners' decision-making power in selecting their preferred language(s) during assessment to maximize their true achievement.



WHAT EDUCATORS SAY!

Is translation appropriate for classroom assessment?

Most comments on this blog supported translation for multilingual learners. One educator remarked that multilingual learners who are biliterate should be able to leverage their knowledge in both languages to show their content learning. Another mentioned that an advantage of online testing is one of empowering multilingual learners who can have control of pop-up windows, for example, in their other language. It was felt that when decision-making in classroom assessment shifts to the students, they can determine the scaffolds, such as translation, to apply and gain confidence in seeing themselves as autonomous learners.



A classroom snapshot: Promoting multiple languages for local accountability

Fourth grade is a pivotal year at Lincoln School, as it is the first time that teachers, paraprofessionals, and the data coach analyze the results of the state standardized achievement tests along with the district's interim measures. Educators soon realize that these data are exclusively in English while the school's language and assessment policy encourages multilingual learners to utilize their multiple languages to deepen their learning. As a result, fourth-graders and their teachers meet to resolve this issue and together decide to create an assessment portfolio system to serve as a prototype for the school. In it, there are required entries from common assessment of grade-level projects that contribute to local accountability and individually selected entries that reflect the students' personal interests, languages, and cultures.

Test-driven accountability in English from federally mandated legislation dominates the educational arena. Without banning state testing altogether, but rather interpreting results through the lens of multilingual learners, let's imagine a more comprehensive system with a range of measures that represent the contributions of students and teachers. Here are some considerations to jumpstart the process.

Build in multilingual learners' likenesses into curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

There is not a single standardized assessment tool that can replace timely concrete feedback from a caring teacher. By drawing on the attributes and expertise of students, teachers can readily integrate multilingual learners' languages, cultures, and experiences into projects and products. Accentuating multilingual learners' assets and engaging students in identifying evidence of learning enable educators to design and enact linguistically and culturally sustainable curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Testing, Assessment, and Accountability

Accountability for student learning and growth through large-scale testing has been a centerpiece of the U.S. K-12 landscape for a generation of students and educators. During the same time, students and teachers have gained ground in becoming assessment literate. Yet, multilingual learners and their teachers continue to have to defend multiple language use as part of local accountability.

CHALLENGE #6

Is it counterintuitive to assess in multiple languages when accountability rests in English?

Although educators are keenly aware of surging numbers of multilingual learners (since 2000, there has been an increase of over a million identified 'English learners'), when states and districts enact accountability measures, there is often blatant neglect of these students' most precious assets, their languages and cultures, as avenues for learning. Simply stated, it is about time we leverage these students' linguistic strengths during instruction and assessment, whether instruction is in multiple languages or not.

Highlight data that are meaningful and useful to students and teachers.

Offering multilingual learners opportunities to shape and fulfill their own learning goals authenticates assessment in one or more languages. Although long-term projects might ultimately be in English, multilingual learners should be linguistically advantaged throughout the assessment process—for example, having opportunities to conduct research, view videos, interact with peers of their partner language, and self-reflect in multiple languages. In finding meaning in their own data, multilingual learners are more apt to be motivated to learn, build self-confidence, be agentive, and achieve new heights.

WHAT EDUCATORS SAY!

How can classroom assessment contribute to local accountability?

Most educators supported a balanced assessment system with an array of measures rather than relying on results from annual state testing in English as the mainstay for accountability. There was reference to the rich evidence in support of multiple languages for instruction and assessment (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017), as well as mention of the cognitive and social-emotional benefits for multilingual learners in having a comprehensive multilingual assessment system.

The Relationship Between Assessment and Grading

Grading is an evaluative marker that is applied to assessment results. Some educators believe that grading should be identical for all students with the same evaluation criteria and the same pathways to demonstrate success. In contrast, others feel that grading should be an extension of the personalization of learning, based on interaction and student choices. Whether criterion-referenced and anchored in standards or predicated on a classroom or school policy, grading must be transparent for students and families alike. Policy related to grading is often controversial in and of itself; when you add multilingual learners, the issue becomes multifaceted.

CHALLENGE #7

Is it equitable to have the same grading policy for all students, including multilingual learners?

Today's grading is an artifact of the time when "the ways we grade disproportionately favor[ed] students with privilege and harm[ed] students with less privilege—students of color, from low-income families, who receive special education services, and English learners" (Feldman, 2019, p. xxii). Let's reassess the role of grading in education in light of the drastic changes since March 2020 and contemplate whether we should dismantle what's in place, retain the status quo, or make adjustments for multilingual learners.



PICTURE THIS!

The relationship between grading and assessment for multilingual learners

It's the end of the semester; all the eighth-grade content teachers and the language specialist meet to determine students' high school placement, only to discover that each has a different grading practice. The social studies teacher weighs the constitution test heavily, the English language arts teacher invites multiple drafts for literature projects, while the mathematics teacher counts homework and extra credit. The district, on the other hand, is moving toward student goal setting and standards-referenced grading. Determining what constitutes a fair grading policy for multilingual learners who are in the midst of developing English alongside content is indeed messy.

Let's assume that grading continues to be a backbone of school life. Content and language teachers, as a community of practice, should band together to craft a uniform grading policy with multilingual learners in mind. Here are some principles to consider.

Negotiate grades according to agreed-upon learning goals and accompanying evidence of learning.

Student-led conferences are an ideal venue for gaining insight into students' lived experiences, histories, and social-emotional development. Together, multilingual learners and their teachers should review what students are learning, how they best learn, and in which languages they learn best. Students participating in dual-language immersion or developmental bilingual programs with the goal of biliteracy should discuss grading in accordance with the languages of instruction.

Gear grades, as assessment, to reflect learning over time rather than as an end in themselves.

Grades place a 'value' on the extent of student progress toward meeting grade-level expectations. Grades should reveal what students have accomplished, not serve a punitive purpose. For multilingual learners, this 'worthiness' must be assets driven as well as linguistically and culturally sensitive. Student input and negotiation is an important component of any grading policy.

WHAT EDUCATORS SAY!

How might we fairly grade multilingual learners?

Most educators favored grading based on student progress toward learning goals, taking unique situations and individual student factors into consideration, in lieu of having a strict uniform grading policy. That is, rather than having a uniform scale, it was proposed that grading should be individualized for each multilingual learner, especially for newcomers. In addition, multilingual learners should have multiple points of entry rather than one pathway to grading and should represent their learning through multiple modes.

Classroom Assessment: Looking Back, Looking Forward

The roots of present-day classroom assessment revert to the beginning of this millennium. The seminal research of Black and Wiliam (1998) sparked the rise in the status of classroom assessment, while Stiggins and Chappuis (2011), among others, proposed and advocated for student-involved assessment *for learning*. O'Malley and Valdez Pierce's (1996) groundbreaking book on authentic assessment for English language learners underscored the importance of performance assessment within the classroom routine. Grounded in the premise that teaching and learning is social in nature and therefore must be interactive, the research undeniably attributes growth in student achievement to classroom assessment for formative purposes.

To summarize, classroom assessment is envisioned as a student-driven dynamic process that is often interchangeable with and indistinguishable from instruction. In classrooms where linguistic and cultural relevance prevails, all students are viewed as learners with inherent strengths, and teachers are advocates who leverage each student's assets to gently push their learning forward. Table 2 highlights the contributions of multilingual learners and their teachers to enhancing and sustaining assessment equity.



TABLE 2. Attributes of linguistically and culturally sustainable classroom assessment

Absolutely!	In infusing assessment equity into classrooms,
	Students' languages and cultures help shape the classroom community of practice.
	Students have choice and voice in making assessment-related decisions that lead to their agency and empowerment.
	Students' languages, cultures, and histories are represented in instructional and assessment materials.
	Students help craft their learning targets and determine evidence of meeting them based on standards, the purpose for assessment, the topic, and the audience.
	Students' lived experiences and traditions jumpstart classroom discussion of subject-area topics that are integrated into instruction and assessment.
	Students have varied pathways to learning and show evidence of learning in multimodal ways (orally, visually, kinesthetically, digitally).
	Students' multiple perspectives and views are affirmed in instruction and assessment.
	Students are invited to use their linguistic resources (including translanguaging) to interpret and express their ideas and understandings during instruction and assessment.
	Students have access to scaffolds (e.g., translations/transadaptations and multimodalities) to optimize their linguistic and conceptual development.
	Students' 'funds of identity' and families' 'funds of knowledge' serve as instructional and assessment exemplars.
	Students collaborate and interact with each other to respectfully share their opinions during instruction and assessment.
	Students engage in instruction and assessment activities that are personally meaningful.
	Students contribute to criteria of success (and grading) and have multiple opportunities to show their learning.
	Students' cross-cultural interactions are a natural social dynamic acknowledged as an instructional and assessment practice.
	Students' interests and passions are directly tied to instruction and assessment.

In reconceptualizing educational policy and practice in a post-pandemic world, we have illustrated how classroom assessment can serve as a vehicle for empowering multilingual learners, their families, and teachers. In doing so, we have underscored the epic importance of incorporating the assets of multilingual learners as represented in their languages, cultures, and histories into teaching and learning.



PICTURE THIS! Re-envisioning classroom assessment for multilingual learners

With colleagues, take time to revisit your initial impressions of the seven controversial assessment topics described in the first Picture This! Describe potential changes in your position for your classroom, grade level/department, professional learning community, school, district, or network. Revisit your assessment portrait with a critical eye and then formulate an action plan to scale up strengths-based classroom assessment for multilingual learners in your setting.

On February 21, 2022, International Mother Language Day, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) issued a compelling article on *Why mother language-based education is essential*. Let's join this platform on supporting multilingualism for peaceful and sustainable societies worldwide. In contributing some small part, as educators, let's also commit to undertaking the reframing of assessment practices to better reflect the reality of the multilingual learner experience.



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ABOUT CAL

The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1959. Headquartered in Washington, DC, CAL has earned an international reputation for its contributions to the fields of bilingual and dual-language education, English as a second language, world languages education, language policy, assessment, immigrant and refugee integration, literacy, dialect studies, and the education of linguistically and culturally diverse adults and children. CAL's mission is to promote language learning and cultural understanding by serving as a trusted resource for research, services, and policy analysis. Through its work, CAL seeks solutions to issues involving language and culture as they relate to access and equity in education and society around the globe.

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