

Beyond “Teaching to the Test”

RETHINKING ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSESSMENT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS



BETSY GILLILAND
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Principles
in Practice

TEACHING ENGLISH
LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Dear Reader,

As a former high school teacher, I remember the frustration I felt when the gap between Research (and that is, by the way, how I always thought of it: Research with a capital *R*) and my own practice seemed too wide to ever cross. Research studies—those sterile reports written by professional and university researchers—often seemed so out of touch with the issues that most concerned me when I walked into my classroom every day. These studies were easy to ignore, in part because they were so distant from my experiences and in part because I had no one to help me see how that research could impact my everyday practice.

Although research has come a long way since then, as more and more teachers take up classroom-based inquiry, this gap between research and practice unfortunately still exists. Quite frankly, it's hard for even the most committed classroom teachers to pick up a research article or book, figure out how that research might apply to their classroom, convince their administrators that a new way of teaching is called for, and put it into practice. While most good teachers instinctively know that there is something to be gained from reading research, who realistically has the time or energy for it?

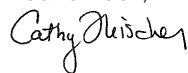
That gap informs the thinking behind this book imprint. Called Principles in Practice, the imprint publishes books that look carefully at the research-based principles and policies developed by NCTE and put those policies to the test in actual classrooms. The imprint naturally arises from one of the missions of NCTE: to develop policy for English language arts teachers. Over the years, many NCTE members have joined committees and commissions to study particular issues of concern to literacy educators. Their work has resulted in a variety of reports, research briefs, and policy statements designed both to inform teachers and to be used in lobbying efforts to create policy changes at the local, state, and national levels (reports that are available on NCTE's website, www.ncte.org).

Through this imprint, we are creating collections of books specifically designed to translate those research briefs and policy statements into classroom-based practice. The goal behind these books is to familiarize teachers with the issues behind certain concerns, lay out NCTE's policies on those issues, provide resources from research studies to support those policies, and—most of all—make those policies come alive for teacher-readers.

This book is part of the sixth series in the imprint, a series that focuses on teaching English language learners. Each book in this series focuses on a different aspect of this important topic and is organized in a similar way: immersing you first in the research principles surrounding the topic (as laid out by the *NCTE Position Paper on the Role of English Teachers in Educating English Language Learners*) and then taking you into actual classrooms, teacher discussions, and student work to see how the principles play out. Each book closes with a teacher-friendly annotated bibliography.

Good teaching *is* connected to strong research. We hope that these books help you continue the good teaching that you're doing, think hard about ways to adapt and adjust your practice, and grow even stronger in the vital work you do with kids every day.

Best of luck,



Cathy Fleischer

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Statement of Terminology and Glossary

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As authors of the various books in the Teaching English Language Learners strand of the NCTE Principles in Practice (PIP) imprint, we have made a concerted effort to use consistent terminology in these volumes. All of us have thought long and hard about the ways in which we label and describe bilingual and ELL students and the programs that often provide these students with additional support. Even so, readers will notice some variation in terms used to describe students, classrooms, and teaching practices. The concern over terminology is part of a long-standing discussion and trends in the labeling of these students, as well as of the fields that conduct research on teachers and students working across languages to teach and learn English. Often the shifting among terms leads to confusion and contention for teachers, administrators, teacher educators, and policymakers.

To address this confusion and tension, we begin each book in this strand with a glossary of common terms and acronyms that are part of current discussions about meeting the needs of these students in English language arts classrooms and beyond. For many readers, the terms themselves and the ongoing shift to new terms can be alienating, the jargon dividing readers into insiders and outsiders. But often the shift in terms has a great deal to do with both policy and issues of identity for students. For example, up until the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, most educational documents referred to these students as *bilingual* or *ESL*, both of which acknowledge that English is a second language and that a student has a first language as well.

The term *English language learner* was adopted with NCLB and brought into our schools and the larger public discourse. In fact, in 2002 the US Department of Education renamed the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs. It became the Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students, now identified simply as the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). The change indicated a shift away from acknowledging students' home languages or bilingual abilities. Close to two decades later, the term *English language learner* remains prominent in educational policy and in many textbooks geared toward teachers and teacher educators. Its prominence and familiarity in the literature makes it an accessible way to talk about these students. Yet, as we have heard from many students through the years, the term *English language learner* can also be limiting. As one student asked, "When do I stop being an English language learner and get to just be an English language user?" The term also works against efforts to acknowledge the competencies and linguistically sophisticated talents these students have as translators, bilingual speakers, and cross-cultural negotiators.

Statement of Terminology and Glossary

In these PIP volumes, we use the term *English language learner* as a way to reach out to readers who see and hear this term regularly used in their schools, in their hallways, and in other helpful books in the field. However, some of us also use the terms *multilingual* or *bilingual* in order to encourage a discussion of these young people not simply as novice English learners but as individuals with linguistic and academic competencies they have gained from bilingual/multilingual experiences and literacies.

Glossary

Bilingual, multilingual, or plurilingual: These terms refer to the ability to use (i.e., speak, write, and/or read) multiple languages. For many ELL-designated students in US schools, English is actually the third or fourth language they have learned, making *bilingual* not necessarily an accurate term.

Emergent bilingual: This term has been proposed as a more appropriate term than *LEP* or *ELL*, because it points to possibilities of developing bilingualism rather than focusing on language limits or deficiencies (García, 2009).

English as a foreign language (EFL): Refers to non-native English-speaking students who are learning English in a country where English is not the primary language.

English as an international language (EIL) or English as a lingua franca (ELF): These are terms used to refer to global conceptions of English, or English used for communication between members of various nations.

English as a second language (ESL): Readers may be most familiar with this term because it has been used as an overarching term for students, programs, and/or a field of study. Currently the term usually refers to programs of instruction (i.e., study of English in an English-speaking country); however, *ESL* was used in the past to refer to English language learning students.

English language learner (ELL): In keeping with the terminology used in the *NCTE Position Paper on the Role of English Teachers in Educating English Language Learners (ELLs)*, this PIP strand employs the term *ELL*, which is commonly used in secondary schools as the short form of *English language learner*. The term refers to a complex, heterogeneous range of students who are in the process of learning English.

English learner (EL): This is the preferred term of the California Department of Education (and, increasingly, other states). California is the state with the largest number and percentage of emergent bilingual students enrolled in public schools. Over the past twenty years, California has moved from *LEP* to *ELL* and, most recently, from *ELL* to *EL*.

First language (L1) and second language (L2): *L1* has been used to refer to students' "mother tongue" or "home language" as they learn additional languages (referred to as *L2*).

Generation 1.5: This term, originally used in higher education, often refers to students who have been long-term residents in the United States but who were born abroad (al-

Statement of Terminology and Glossary

though the term is sometimes also used to refer to US-born children of recent immigrants). The designation of 1.5 describes their feelings of being culturally between first- and second-generation immigrants; they are often fluent in spoken English but may still be working to command aspects of written English, especially academic writing. As long-term residents, these students may reject *ESL* as a term that has been used to refer to recent immigrants to the United States.

Limited English proficiency (LEP): This abbreviation may be used in some educational contexts to refer to a designation used by the US Department of Education. Many scholars see this as a deficit term because of its focus on subtractive language (language that implies a deficiency) under a monolingual assumption of proficiency.

Long-term English language learner (LTELL): Currently in use in some states, this term refers to K–12 students who have been enrolled in US schools for many years and continue to be stuck with the ELL designation long past the time it should take for redesignation. Like Generation 1.5 students, LTELLs may have spent most if not all of their education in US schools. For a variety of reasons, including family mobility, inconsistent educational programs, and personal reasons, they have not had opportunities to learn academic language sufficiently to pass English language proficiency tests and other measures of proficiency for redesignation (Olsen, 2010).

Mainstream: This term is increasingly antiquated due to shifting demographics in the United States. In practice, it often refers to nonremedial, nonhonors, nonsheltered classes and programs. Sometimes it is used to refer to native or monolingual English speakers as a norm; changing demographics, however, mean that schools increasingly have a majority of culturally and linguistically diverse students, so it's been argued that a linguistically diverse classroom is the "New Mainstream" (Enright, 2011).

Monolingual: This term is used to refer to people who speak only one language, although often this label masks speakers' fluent use of multiple dialects, or variations, of English—an issue of particular concern when working with culturally diverse students who use other varieties of English (such as Hawai'i Pidgin or African American Vernacular) in their lives outside of school. The monolingual English label can mask these diverse students' need to learn academic English just as much as their immigrant classmates do. Much of what this PIP strand discusses is relevant to students who utilize multiple varieties of English; teachers can support these students by acknowledging their multilingualism and helping them learn to use English for academic and other purposes.

Native or non-native English speakers (NES, NNES): Some materials contrast native English speakers (NES) with non-native English speakers (NNES). As with *monolingual*, the term *native speaker* is increasingly unclear, given how many long-term ELLs speak English fluently without a "foreign" accent and yet technically have another world language as their home or first language.

Newcomer: Some school districts have separate one-year programs for "newcomers," or students who are newly arrived in the United States, in which students learn not just "surviv-

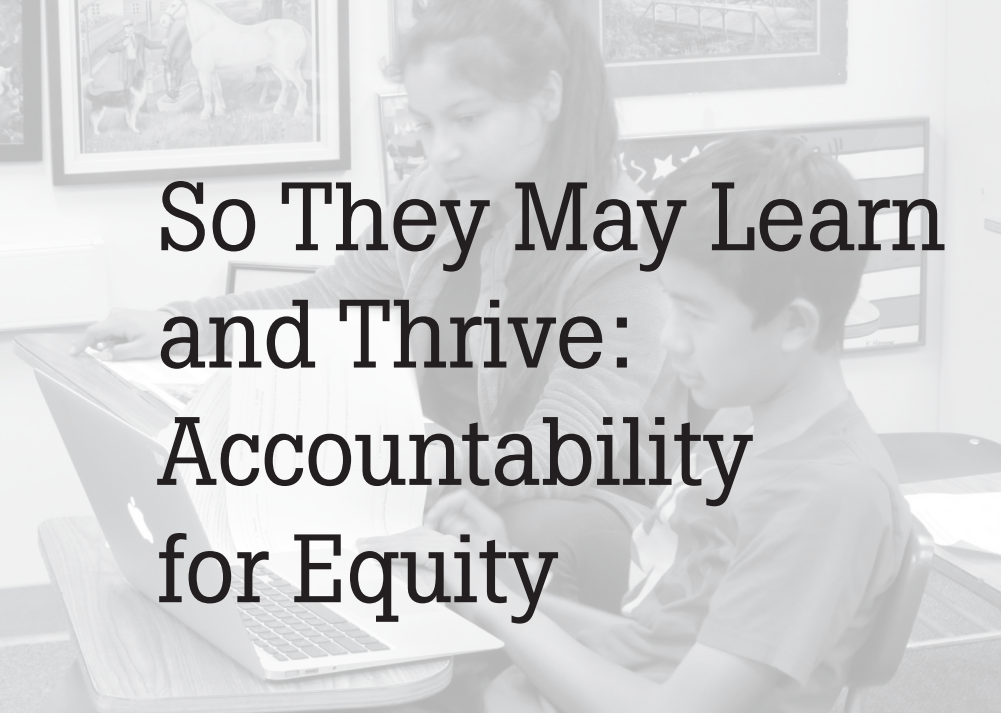
Statement of Terminology and Glossary

al” English, but also how school works in the United States. As the position statement discusses, it’s sometimes argued that newcomer programs benefit “low-level literacy immigrant students” and/or students with interrupted formal education who may have limited literacy in their first language (L1). Other newcomers may be fully literate in L1, especially by high school, and may or may not benefit from being isolated from the mainstream curriculum. For older students, the challenge is to move away from “low-level” ideas of literacy assessment that may discount the literacies of these students.

Resident or local bilingual, multilingual, or plurilingual: These terms are sometimes used to refer to students who reside in the United States (in contrast to those who are on student visas). Resident students may or may not be US citizens, others may not have permanent resident status, while still others may not have immigration documentation at all.

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So They May Learn and Thrive: Accountability for Equity

Consider these two scenarios:

Seventeen-year-old Manuel¹ is not doing well in school. He frequently dozes off when he should be reading silently from his textbook. When he turns in written assignments, instead of providing critical analysis of readings in the textbook, he just copies lines from the passages. His longer essays often contain sentences that are so garbled the main idea is completely missing. Manuel has attended school in the district since third grade, and even though he speaks fluently with teachers and peers, he is still classified as an English language learner. His English teacher, Renata McKay, dreads the year-end standardized tests because she is certain Manuel will either randomly fill in bubbles on the answer sheet or leave entire sections blank. At Roosevelt High School, Manuel's test scores will not only determine whether he is allowed to graduate next year, but they will also be used to evaluate Renata's teaching effectiveness.

At Chavez High School, fifteen-year-old Janice is doing well in school. After living in the United States for three years, she is classified as an “advanced English language learner” and is on track to be reclassified as “English fluent” within the next year. She loves to read young adult novels, especially when she can discuss the plot and characters with her three classmates who are also reading the same book. Although she freely admits that she is still learning English, she uses strategies she has learned from her teacher, Vik Singh, to analyze unfamiliar words and sentences and figure out what they mean. Janice regularly writes short texts about the books she has read and collaborates with classmates to analyze published texts and write essays that Vik displays on a bulletin board outside the classroom door. Every quarter, he invites the principal, the students’ parents, and other community members to stop by the classroom to read what his students have written. Although Janice’s standardized test scores are not fully reflective of what she has learned to do in class, these visitors can see that she is learning and that Vik is indeed an effective teacher.

These two hypothetical scenarios, reflective of many classrooms where we have taught and observed, raise essential questions in this age of accountability: What kind of accountability measures truly demonstrate multilingual² students’ learning? How do these measures reflect the planning and teaching that teachers do to help their students grow? Renata’s school administrators treat a single standardized test as all the evidence they need of both the students’ learning and the teacher’s effectiveness. Vik’s school, on the other hand, recognizes the limited information that one test can provide.

These accountability issues concern all of us—but become particularly challenging for mainstream English language arts (ELA) teachers who may have a handful of multilingual speakers in their classrooms. Concerned about accountability for *all*, these teachers may wrestle with finding the best ways to help students who already struggle with English.

We are teachers and teacher educators who believe deeply that language diversity is an asset and a valuable resource. As such, we are committed to supporting and developing the multilingualism of the students in our classrooms and the language pedagogies of our colleagues. Having worked with both mainstream and English language learner (ELL)-specialist teachers in diverse schools and universities for the past twenty years, we have seen how national and state-level accountability policies have changed and how teachers and students have been caught in the crosshairs. Though we doubt that policymakers intended to punish teachers for working with struggling students, we have seen how inappropriate tests have been used to make claims about students’ knowledge and teachers’ ability to teach. In terms of equity, we feel that these uses of assessment practices are unfair to both

the students, who do not have the language to access the content or demonstrate what they know, and the teachers, who are judged for their students' performance on tests that do not validly show what students have learned. In this book, we propose an approach that helps increase equitable access to the academic language and challenging content of assessment for multilingual learners.

We are writing this book as a companion to the *NCTE Position Paper on the Role of English Teachers in Educating English Language Learners* (which going forward we will refer to as the ELL Brief).

The book addresses accountability issues related to many of the sections covered in the ELL Brief, including “Knowledge of the Students,” “Teaching Language,” “Teaching Literacy: Reading,” “Teaching Literacy: Writing,” “Teaching Language and Content,” and “Selecting Materials.” The principles listed in each of these sections of the brief offer starting points for teachers as they plan for and teach literacy to their multilingual students within an institutional environment that is overwhelmingly focused on narrowly defined notions of accountability. One gap in the position paper, however, is consideration of how teachers in mainstream classrooms can evaluate language and literacy learning in ways that both support these students' growth and prepare them for the high-stakes tests that may affect their own, their teachers', and their schools' futures. This book intends to fill that gap, making connections between the ELL Brief's teaching recommendations and teachers' accountability concerns.

Our goal with this book is to help mainstream ELA teachers and other teachers working with diverse groups of learners find ways to help their multilingual students succeed—and to represent their learning through a variety of assessments: formative, summative, and standardized. We have found that when ELA teachers modify some of their curricular approaches by bringing in a greater emphasis on academic language, all students (fluent English speakers and multilingual learners alike) benefit. In the pages that follow, then, we describe how one approach familiar to most ELA teachers, genre-based instruction (GBI), can be amplified using the tools of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) that may be familiar to ELL teachers. Connecting these two approaches can create a comprehensive instructional program that supports ELLs in learning grade-level content and the academic language they need to access that content and demonstrate their learning on formative and summative assessments. We also illustrate how GBI and SFL further help teachers to support multilingual students in learning how to take standardized

Look at the rosters of your current or most recent classes. Which of these students are classified as ELLs? Which have been reclassified since enrolling in your school or district? Which students speak multiple languages in and out of school? How do you know?

Multilingual Student Profile

Azra

Although she is technically a senior, eighteen-year-old Azra is planning to stay in school for another year in order to take classes she needs for graduation and college preparation. She immigrated with her parents and older brother to California from Pakistan two years ago and started high school in the Newcomers English Language Development (ELD) class. Her teachers rapidly promoted her through the levels so that now she is in the highest level ELD class and will take a mainstream English class next year. Azra wears hijab, a traditional Muslim headscarf, with jeans and a T-shirt underneath. She enjoys reading novels written in Urdu and shares favorite quotations with her friends on Facebook. She writes poetry in Urdu with her sister. In Pakistan, her middle school teacher made a strong impression on her understanding of how to write for academic purposes: “She talks a lot about writing, like she said don’t just memorize things, first read them and understand them; if you don’t understand then ask me; if you don’t understand, you can ask me whatever you want. Then you can write it in your own words.” Azra has been studying English since second grade, learning vocabulary and reading short stories. During her advanced ELD class, she usually spends her class time working on the assignments and frequently finishes well before the end of the period. If she has assignments for her other classes, she will then proceed to pull out a US history or geometry textbook and do her homework. She plans to spend her summer break reading books.

tests without having to resort to mindless “teaching to the test,” another common problem that recent accountability measures have engendered.

To bring these ideas to life, we present stories of teachers who have used these tools to modify their instruction in ways that any teacher can incorporate into day-to-day teaching. We do not want you to feel like you need to create completely separate lessons or assessments for your multilingual learners, nor that you need to study for an entirely new credential in order to make language and content accessible to language learners. Instead, we want to show how teachers with little additional training beyond their English language arts credentials were able to identify the core language structures students would need to know within standards-based literacy lessons (reading and/or writing) and to design learning experiences that both taught the language and content and allowed them to assess how well their multilingual students had learned the language and content.

Accountability as a concept is a good thing. A functioning society depends on holding people accountable for their behavior and actions. The past decades have shown what happens when some of the largest and most trusted institutions—financial, government, and corporate—have weakly enforced accountability systems. We have seen scandal, corruption, and mismanagement as a result of lax accountability. Accountability can prevent problems and be proactive through holding institutions responsible for their labor, environmental, and civil rights practices. Unfortunately, accountability can also be misappropriated. Schools, for example, are institutions within which accountability systems are necessary, and yet these systems have often caused more damage than good.

Why is this so? Accountability in preK–12 education is too often limited to externally designed and

scored assessments that result in externally determined rewards and consequences. These measures, as any teacher can tell you, represent a snapshot, and often not a very good one, of what students are able to do at a single moment in time. Most state-mandated assessments measure standards-based proficiency instead of measuring growth toward proficiency, thereby painting an incomplete picture of both students' skill levels and teachers' efficacy. Annual state tests rarely (if ever) capture students' full range of knowledge, and as we stress in this book, they have been shown repeatedly not to illustrate fairly what culturally and linguistically diverse students know and can do. As accountability tools, externally designed and scored assessments are not responsive to the people at the heart of schools: the students—and in particular, linguistically diverse students. We wrote this book to reimagine accountability by exploring ways that we as teachers can hold *ourselves* accountable for teaching and assessing our students' learning. We focus in particular on mainstream teachers' accountability for the language and literacy development of English language learners and other multilingual students, a growing population of students with significant linguistic and cultural assets.

We view accountability as a positive, internal, and classroom contextualized process, a way to learn about our practices and the impact of our practices on our students' learning. We believe that when we hold *ourselves* accountable for assessing our students' growth, and focus on our own professional learning as a result, accountability is no longer something that is done *to* us but is instead in our locus of control. We see accountability as a key factor in promoting equitable educational opportunities for *all* students, but especially for the English language learners in our classrooms and our schools.

Our central argument in this book is that authentic, formative assessments are important for accountability and that assessment and instruction are interdependent. Classroom teachers as well as site-based support staff play an essential role in assessing the academic progress of English language learners, and we believe that teachers can make realistic, feasible shifts in their instructional practices to support

Definitions

Accountability in teaching multilingual learners means taking responsibility for helping students learn what they need to know (content and language) for success in school and life.

Assessment means identifying all students' strengths and learning needs across the academic year. Formative assessment happens throughout every unit as you check informally on how well students understand the learning objectives and then adjust your instruction to ensure that all students have access to course content and academic language and skills. Summative assessment occurs at the end of a unit or term when you check to see how much of the objectives students have learned.

Equity means ensuring that *all* students have access to challenging grade-level content, academic language, and literacy skills, as well as providing appropriate assessments that allow *all* students to demonstrate their growth, knowledge, and skills.

multilingual students' learning. Thus, in addition to externally designed and scored assessments, accountability is located in teachers' daily instructional and ongoing formative assessment practices, both of which develop the assets and serve the needs of the students in our classrooms. With careful attention to curriculum planning, all teachers can support, guide, assess, and document their students' growth through well-designed learning experiences and ongoing formative assessment.

We hope that as teachers, we can see ourselves as the primary agents of accountability, and as a result, we will feel empowered to avoid the external pressures that often drive teaching in the wrong direction for English language learners. Accountability for equity means supporting multilingual students as they access challenging and relevant grade-level content and demonstrate their knowledge in meaningful ways.

What Is Accountability?

Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines *accountability* as “an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions.” This definition fits well with what we advocate in this book. Although accountability in the preK–12 education of English language learners is typically measured through externally designed assessment scores, teachers should also play a leading role.

What does this definition of accountability mean for teachers of English language learners? We argue along with researchers Alison Bailey and Patricia Carroll (2015) that in addition to externally designed and scored formal tests, all teachers play a major role in assessing the literacy and language development of English language learners. Because assessment and instruction are inextricably linked, being accountable for teaching English language learners includes providing a variety of language supports, academically challenging critical thinking experiences, and ongoing formative assessment; these types of iterative assessments not only improve teaching and learning opportunities for students but also propel teachers toward continued professional development. We think of accountability as arising out of these multiple experiences: it is located in a teacher's continuous cycle of well-designed, responsive instruction and ongoing formative assessment, which includes observations of students' interactions with their classmates and participation in class, interviews and conferences with students about course concepts, and “moment-to-moment . . . contingent instructional responses to students' immediate learning needs” (Bailey & Carroll, 2015, p. 268). Through ongoing formative assessment, teachers can respond quickly to provide students with feedback at the moment they need support. Furthermore, ongoing formative assessment allows teachers to notice areas where ELL students need individualized language or content support in ways that are different from the needs of the fluent English

speakers in the class. Such practices, accompanied by other curricular and professional support, have been shown to improve ELL students' performance on formal assessments (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010).

Thus, we situate accountability in the real practices of classroom teachers as they engage in an iterative process of identifying language demands, articulating language objectives, designing language supports for critical thinking, and engaging in the ongoing formative assessment of English learners. These processes provide information for improved teaching practices and a window into teachers' own professional development needs.

Accountability for What?

For what are teachers to be held accountable? In one sense, we should be accountable *to our schools* by supporting our students to perform to the best of their abilities on standardized tests and to demonstrate their ability to meet standards-based expectations for their grade level. In another—and we believe more important—sense, we are accountable *to our students*, which means making it possible for students to thrive socially, emotionally, and academically by developing language skills, content knowledge, and learning in a variety of areas that may not be evidenced from one isolated test-taking experience. The overreliance on standardized test scores has been widely criticized in more than a decade of research. While we do address preparing multilingual students for high-stakes standardized assessments (in Chapter 6), we suggest that to truly engage and prepare linguistically diverse students for the future, we must focus less on external measures of accountability and more on internal accountability processes through our own teaching and ongoing formative assessment practices.

As classroom teachers, we know that tests can tell us some important things about our students, but research has also documented how school districts with high percentages of immigrant multilingual students have been pressured to “teach to the test” (Jones, Jones, & Hargrove, 2003; Plank & Condliffe, 2013) even as other studies have shown that state standardized tests are often invalid for ELLs (Abedi & Gándara, 2006; Menken, 2010). Research on the impact of high-stakes testing suggests that an overemphasis on teaching to the test in schools with struggling students and multilingual learners leads to test-prep skill drills rather than lifelong literacy learning.

Teaching to the test can be especially harmful to multilingual students. A review of research on high-stakes assessments given during the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era found that few tests were normed or validated for use with ELLs (Solórzano, 2008). What this means is that in many cases, the complex language used on tests prevents students from understanding what they are supposed to

Multilingual Student Profile

Onasis

Fifteen-year-old Onasis has dark hair gelled into haphazard spikes. He speaks English with a strong Spanish accent, but his ninth-grade teachers don't know that he was actually born in Los Angeles. He began school in California, first learning to read and write in English. Then, when he was in third grade, his parents moved to Mexico and he had to take up reading and writing in Spanish. His family returned to California when he was in eighth grade. He says it is easy to read and write in both languages, although he prefers writing in English. He reads books and magazines in English regularly every week. He also maintains an account on a Mexican social network, where he posts messages to his friends from elementary school. He is studying guitar and hopes to study rumba flamenca in Spain after high school in order to become a professional musician. In class, Onasis participates actively in both the official and unofficial conversations, frequently asking the teachers questions and also rotating in his seat to talk in Spanish with the other boys. He works diligently and wants to understand everything he is reading. When choosing topics for writing, he opts for challenges in order to impress the teachers rather than taking the easy choice. He recognizes, however, that his teachers may not be aware of how much English he actually knows: "I know a lot of English, but my accent's not good. That's why I started from the first, second level." A strategic student, he makes use of his high school's Learning Center, visiting the tutors for help two or three times a week.

do or from showing their knowledge of the content (Abedi, 2010; Abedi & Gándara, 2006). Problems also arise when tests are written with assumptions of students' cultural knowledge. Multilingual students often do not have an equal opportunity to learn the content through high-quality resources or from well-prepared teachers. These problems are multiplied when the test scores are used for purposes beyond those originally intended—such as placement into academic tracks and grade-level retention. While multilingual students may not score well on standardized tests, other assessments (such as portfolios or first language testing) show that they have knowledge and skills that are not revealed through the tests (Solórzano, 2008). Clearly, a single test cannot capture the wide range of multilingual students' abilities and assets.

Multilingual students' preparation for high-stakes assessments and the achievement gap between their performance and that of other students remain of high concern for teachers, schools, and states. State standards have been common since the 1990s, when federal policy (in response to renewed concern about the declining quality of American education) prioritized states' voluntary setting of academic content and performance standards (Goals 2000: Educate America Act, 1994). The 2001 No Child Left Behind legislation highlighted state standards, making them a pillar of the act's emphasis on the federal government's role in monitoring education. As you have likely experienced, NCLB added additional mandates that states create assessments to determine students' progress toward the standards and disaggregate their test score data, reporting scores from subgroups of students, including various ethnic groups, special education students, and English language learners. These regulations were intended to bring greater fairness to students who previously had not received a challenging curriculum; because they were to be tested with the same assessments as native English

speakers, their schools would have to teach English learners to the same standards (Shaul & Ganson, 2005). An unintended but powerful outcome of the testing requirement, however, was that schools with high percentages of multilingual students wound up teaching to the test, focusing on rote memorization of facts rather than deeper understanding of concepts.

Just as the numbers of multilingual students in classrooms across the United States are increasing, new standards and assessment policies at the national and state levels are placing even greater importance on the success of these students in school. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) introduced new tests and new standards that offer little guidance to teachers working with multilingual learners (TESOL, 2013; Valdés, Kibler, & Walqui, 2014). The CCSS were conceived as a remedy to the widely differing requirements of the earlier state standards, which did not allow comparison across states and often did not present a coherent learning trajectory across grade levels. In the English language arts, the CCSS present three overarching shifts from earlier standards with respect to how literacy and academic language are conceptualized:

- Regular practice with complex text and academic language;
- Reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational; and
- Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction. (Student Achievement Partners, 2015)

These shifts mean that teaching in general is undergoing a conceptual reframing to focus more deeply on literacy and language over surface-level information.

The latest reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act, takes a few steps back from the centralized concerns of No Child Left Behind but nevertheless continues to pressure teachers of English language learners to prepare their students for high-stakes tests. The new law, which goes into effect for the 2017–18 academic year, still requires annual testing to evaluate student progress toward high academic standards, but it allows states greater flexibility both in which challenging standards they choose (Common Core is one option) and in how they measure accountability, barring a complete reliance on standardized test scores. State goals must include “proficiency on tests, English-language proficiency, and graduation rates” (Klein, 2015, “Goals” para. 2). ELLs’ test scores must be reported separately from those of other subgroups and are fully counted alongside their English-fluent peers after only two years in US schools, ignoring research showing that ELL students’ content knowledge cannot be distinguished from their English language proficiency until they have achieved academic language proficiency (Carnock, 2015). Although there will be additional developments as the new policy comes into effect, teachers

of ELLs remain concerned that they must not only teach their students academic and social English, but also prepare them for further tests and new standards and curriculum.

These changes are especially challenging to implement for teachers of multilingual learners, as one significant gap in the CCSS is a lack of information about how the new standards relate to the education of students who are still learning English. Without any defined specifics for standards or pedagogy, individual states are expected to create or revise their English language proficiency development standards to address English language learner needs. These standards are important because they establish expectations for students' progress through school and the forms and levels of English they learn (Valdés et al., 2014). While the CCSS consortium provides a short resource guide for teachers on its website, the standards provide no clear connections to individual grade-level standards and leave pedagogical and content decisions to individual teachers, which means that it is now more important than ever for teachers to feel comfortable differentiating their instruction to address the varied learning needs of their multilingual students.

If you are a classroom teacher concerned about how best to ensure the success of all your students, including your multilingual learners, these changes may require substantial adaptations to both curriculum and instruction. Our argument in this book, though, is this: teachers who approach accountability as an internal, classroom contextualized process of teaching and formative assessment can help their ELL students survive and thrive. In the coming chapters, we illustrate how teachers hold themselves accountable for assessing learning by supporting their multilingual students to think critically about texts and communicate their thinking verbally, in writing, and across modalities through a variety of language types including academic English.

Accountability to Whom?

Of all of the stakeholders to whom the education system is accountable, including the public (taxpayers and local residents); federal, state, and local governments; school leadership; students; and the families of students and their communities, we focus primarily on teachers' accountability *to students* (see Table 1.1). Holding ourselves accountable to our students means providing them with equitable access to challenging curricula and thoughtful literacy practices, maintaining their linguistic diversity, and supporting students in reaching their future goals.

As teachers are well aware, however, school districts too often lose sight of this notion of accountability to students and focus instead on accountability to outsiders. The external pressures that this kind of accountability creates can lead to a primary focus on the test performances of students who traditionally score at

Table 1.1. Ways to Be Accountable to Stakeholders

Accountability to whom?	Demonstrated through . . .	Where addressed in this book
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuing language diversity as an asset and resource • Focusing on real-world literacy • Preparing for college and career • Focusing on genres of school and life • Engaging with culturally diverse and respectful texts • Teaching how to take tests (show what they already know) 	} Chapters 3, 4, & 5 } Chapter 6
School (teachers and administrators)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing ELLs for literacy in subject areas • Identifying and addressing language demands, setting language objectives, and providing relevant and targeted language supports • Developing shared metalanguage for talking about language within genres across subject areas and grade levels • Discussing ELL students' test results and planning scaffolds and accommodations • Demonstrating ELL students' learning through alternative assessment forms 	} Chapters 3, 4, & 5 } Chapters 2, 3, 4, & 5 } Chapter 7
District and state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test scores • Other formal assessments • College and career readiness 	} Chapter 6
Community (and parents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing language and content knowledge growth • Showing that ELLs can do more than take tests • Emphasizing progress and growth • Bringing families in to learn about assessment policy and how to support students 	} Chapter 7

the lower end of standardized measures, a focus that can backfire for students who want to learn and teachers who want to help them. Because low-scoring schools tend to have higher proportions of ethnic and linguistic minority students, school-level accountability measures affect these students at greater levels as well (Jones et al., 2003). To raise test scores, schools may refocus the curriculum to better prepare students for taking high-stakes tests (Hillocks, 2002; Menken, 2006, 2008). Since the tests usually measure discrete, basic skills, instruction often focuses on those same skills, ignoring higher-order critical thinking that does not appear on the tests (Anson, 2008; Applebee & Langer, 2009; Hillocks, 2003; Jones et al., 2003).

We want to avoid such situations by designing rich learning experiences that promote language development and content knowledge within the expectations of

the mainstream curriculum, as well as build community and interpersonal social skills among students. Additionally, we can supplement information from standardized test scores with well-documented information about our students' growth and learning from classroom-contextualized formative assessment. The scenarios we present in this book, illustrating actual classroom practice, take into account the external systems to which teachers are held accountable: parents, principals, district policies, and others. However, the teachers we describe are focused on holding themselves accountable *to their students*, particularly their English language learners.

Accountability How?

Accountability is measured in multiple ways. Some external accountability systems use data from policy-mandated standardized tests (yearly tests, English language proficiency tests, and high school exit exams) and statistics (graduation and promotion rates, college-going rates, and adequate yearly progress). Accountability is also

How many forms of assessment (including tests) are you required to administer in a given academic year? Which are mandated by the state? By the district? Which have high stakes for your students? For you? For your school? What do you and your school site colleagues do with the data from these tests?

addressed through fulfillment of curricular requirements (district pacing guides and benchmark assignments). Other measures to hold schools accountable include student and parent satisfaction surveys.

Formal tests of standards mastery continue to be a focus under the 2015 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Every Student Succeeds), and, as with NCLB, students designated as English language learners must take those tests for school and state accountability purposes.

Two consortia, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), have designed CCSS-aligned assessments for students in both math and English language arts at most grade levels. Both groups have second language expert consultants on their development and validation teams. Test designers closely aligned the new standards and the assessments: "This means that the linguistic and academic demands of the new Standards—which in many cases are more rigorous than previous state standards—will also be present in the assessments, which most states require ELLs to take after very limited exemption periods" (Valdés et al., 2014, p. 6). Some states (like Michigan) are developing their own tests that include similar linguistic and academic challenges for multilingual learners.

Federal policy has no set criteria for English language proficiency levels or for redesignation of students as English fluent. These criteria may be established at the state or district level, meaning that students of equivalent proficiency may be

placed differently depending on where they attend school (Valdés et al., 2014). One attempt to clarify proficiency expectations has been provided by the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment consortium (WIDA), which created CCSS-aligned ELD standards for thirty-one states and territories. Other states (like California) have adopted their own ELD standards to align with CCSS expectations. These standards are assessed through tests administered to multilingual students when they first enroll at a school and then annually until their scores indicate they have achieved sufficient English language proficiency to participate fully in grade-level academic work. One challenge for these students is that they must take both content assessments and English language proficiency assessments—twice as many tests as English-fluent students (Valdés et al., 2014).

While it is beyond the scope of this book to challenge national, state, and district testing policies, we argue that individual teachers do have the power to change their classroom assessment practices in order to be accountable to their multilingual students in ways that facilitate students' development of academic language and content learning. Furthermore, while almost all of our multilingual students will still have to take high-stakes tests, what we describe in this book can help them learn the language and literacy they need to perform to the best of their abilities on those tests.

Unpacking the Policy Brief

How do the principles of the ELL Brief connect to these ideas about accountability and assessment? Here we review the relevant sections of the brief and preview how the three teachers at the center of Chapters 3, 4, and 5 incorporated these principles into their day-to-day work of planning, teaching, and assessing multilingual students.

In thinking about equity in terms of helping all students access challenging grade level curricula and demonstrate their learning, it's clear that language is central for multilingual students. Language is how information is communicated, in written and oral forms, so even if students have knowledge of a concept, if they don't have appropriate words in which to express that knowledge, they cannot show what they know. In the section titled "Teaching Language," the ELL Brief stresses, "Second language learners need to develop academic proficiency in English to master content-area subjects" (p. xi). We argue that an equitable approach to helping students develop academic proficiency includes making language explicit through supporting not only students' knowledge *about* grammar and vocabulary but also their ability to *apply* grammar and vocabulary in reading, writing, and speaking.

While we assume that English teachers already have knowledge of the structures of the English language and have experience marking students' writing for errors, we also know that teachers often become frustrated because these practices seem futile—no matter how much grammar you teach and mark, students continue making errors. We hope with this book to introduce an alternative approach to talking about language with *all* students so that multilingual learners especially will develop a contextualized understanding of how words work within sentences and texts. In spite of its esoteric-sounding name, systemic functional linguistics actually provides concrete tools that allow teachers who are not linguists to help students see how grammar functions in the real world, how language is used differently across genres and text types, and how they can use language appropriately in their own writing and communication. Although this book does not provide a complete

how-to guide to SFL, we hope that the examples show how its concepts can be integrated into mainstream classrooms without requiring teachers to take on extensive training. We define key concepts in Chapter 2, and then in Chapter 3, we demonstrate how a focus on language allowed Rachel Easton's students to analyze how authors construct arguments by linking ideas within a thesis statement and across a text.

In terms of accessing academic content, reading is an essential but also challenging skill for multilingual students both inside and out of school. Reading in middle and high school is much more than simply decoding letters into words and following stories. As they progress through the grade levels and into college, students need to be able to read increasingly faster and more accurately. They need to be able to understand not only what *is* in the text but also what is *not* included, what the author is suggesting, and what discourses the author draws on. The section of the ELL Brief titled "Teaching Literacy: Reading" recommends including both intensive (close attention to detail) and extensive (focus on reading more) reading in the ELA curriculum. In this book, we describe how the focal teachers use genre-based instruction to provide students with opportunities to read extensively within a given genre and to examine the

Multilingual Student Profile

Junko

Eighth grader Junko moved to Hawai'i with her parents and younger sister when she was ten years old. Her father works for the American branch of his Japanese company, which requires him to stay late at work often. Junko enjoys art and history classes at school but doesn't really like going to her after-school Japanese language classes, where she practices writing essays and reading grade-level books in Japanese in preparation for her family's return to Japan in a few years. Although her father uses English at work, her mother primarily takes care of the children and socializes with other Japanese-speaking mothers whose children are in the after-school language program. As a result, Junko is responsible for interpreting when her mother needs to conduct more complicated transactions at the bank or doctor's office. She frequently reads and translates important mail for her mother as well and sometimes writes responses in English when her mother dictates to her in Japanese.

language features and structures of texts within and across genres through intensive attention to shorter texts. Rather than isolating features in skill exercises and worksheets, the teachers continued to draw on full-length real-world texts as they guided students' understanding of language features within the texts. Concepts from SFL allow teachers and students to discuss these language features in context, build comprehension, and transition from reading to writing. In Chapter 4, we see how Gary Miller's class learned about the concept of voice through analyzing the language of greeting cards and then applied that knowledge to reading literary texts. With such a thorough understanding of how texts are created, multilingual students are better able to understand prompts and tasks on standardized tests and consequently demonstrate their knowledge.

GBI further supports the ELL Brief's assertion that reading and writing are best taught together, through content, with attention to language. The section titled "Teaching Literacy: Writing" provides recommendations for teaching writing that allow ELL students to practice writing in ways that draw on their assets and that give them ways to learn how to write within specific genres. In terms of assessment, collaborative and process writing to widely varied prompts within GBI, accompanied by teacher and peer feedback, gives multilingual students frequent opportunities to see how they are progressing and where they need to practice writing. Just as the ELL Brief recommends that teachers offer explicit and clear feedback on both strengths and areas for improvement, Talia Fenton (in Chapter 6) used formative assessment practices to support her students' collaborative development of a rubric and peer response to written texts.

Revisiting the scenarios at the beginning of the chapter, we see that Vik Singh draws on the principles discussed in the ELL Brief, giving Janice and her classmates multiple opportunities to read real-world texts for a variety of purposes, to collaborate in their writing process, and to share their writing with real audiences beyond the classroom. Vik reads students' writing frequently and offers feedback that helps them know where to make changes as well as where they are succeeding. In her fear of being evaluated based on her students' standardized test scores, Renata McKay, on the other hand, focuses her teaching on preparing students for those same tests. She relies on the textbook for reading assignments and model essays; her writing prompts are based on the year-end timed test, on which students must write individually and without prior preparation. Because the students will not have an opportunity to revise their timed essays, Renata gives them feedback primarily in the form of a score on the district's standardized rubric and a list of the errors they made. It's no wonder that Manuel feels like it isn't worth the effort to try to decode the stories in the textbook or write an essay based on a text he doesn't understand.

Overview of the Book

The purpose of this book is to support mainstream and ESL teachers as well as teachers in other support positions to design language-rich literacy lessons and build formative assessment into daily classroom practices in order to be accountable to their multilingual students. In Chapter 2 we provide a theoretical framework for the teachers' approach to instructional design and assessment: genre-based instruction and systemic functional linguistics. A genre-based instructional focus involves students in thinking critically about texts and their uses for different purposes, audiences, content topics, and contexts. Further, this approach is discovery based, meaning that students are detectives, analysts, and thinkers, as opposed to blank slates receiving teacher-provided information. Used within GBI lessons, SFL gives teachers and students accessible frameworks and terminology for talking about and understanding how language is used in genre-specific ways within the texts they read and write. These interrelated approaches, while useful for all students, are particularly important for ELLs, who need explicit attention to core language structures in written texts as they develop their receptive and productive English language abilities.

In Chapters 3 through 5, we illustrate how three middle school English teachers designed instructional experiences that included language supports and opportunities for ELL students to think critically and communicate their thinking verbally, in writing, and through other modalities. The teachers we present in these chapters were engaged in ongoing formative assessment to evaluate students' growth and to inform their practices. By documenting growth through portfolios, running records, and regular curriculum-embedded assessments, Rachel, Gary, and Talia collected and shared meaningful evidence that was critical to understanding their students' growth.

In Chapter 6, we return to larger-scale accountability concerns with the performance of ELLs on high-stakes standardized tests. While throughout the book we highlight how teacher practices can support and evaluate multilingual students' learning of the skills and practices emphasized in the new standards, in this chapter we turn specifically to standardized testing and ways that the genre-based instructional focus we discuss can also be employed to prepare students for high-stakes assessments. In wrapping up the book, Chapter 7 takes the classroom principles discussed throughout and shows how teachers can communicate their approach to accountability to stakeholders outside the classroom. We suggest ways that classroom teachers and principals can demonstrate that the ELLs at their school are learning, even if their test scores are not as high as those of other students.

Background on the Scenarios

The three teachers whose classrooms are featured in this book are Rachel Easton, Talia Fenton, and Gary Miller. All three are National Writing Project (NWP) teacher consultants who engaged in a three-year, practice-based professional development opportunity based on the lesson study model for teacher professional development described in Chapter 7. Much of the teaching in the scenarios illustrated in Chapters 3 through 5 was designed and adapted by these teachers (and two others) throughout their involvement with the lesson study. Rachel, Talia, and Gary had each conducted teacher inquiry in an area of writing instruction and were considered by the NWP local affiliate and their school site administrators to be committed to ongoing improvement in writing instruction. The teachers formed a professional learning community to further develop writing pedagogy across their culturally, linguistically, economically, and geographically diverse middle school classrooms. Talia and Rachel both taught eighth grade in urban districts with culturally and linguistically diverse students, most of whom came from low-income communities. Gary taught sixth grade in a small rural school district where most of the English language learners were bilingual L1 Spanish speakers. The diverse classroom settings provided opportunities for the teachers to observe one another teaching in classrooms and communities that varied in community and student demographics. In Chapters 3 through 5, we also reference the invaluable work of the two other teachers in the lesson study, Laura and Elizabeth, whose students were not primarily English language learners and therefore not a focus in this book (see Pella [2011] for more about the teachers and their participation in the lesson study).

As the detailed descriptions of these three teachers' instructional practices show, focusing on language within GBI allows teachers to maintain a level of accountability to their students by explicitly teaching how academic language is used in texts and how texts can be structured for maximum impact on the standardized assessments that are necessary to demonstrate accountability to the school and district. Such an emphasis on language as it is used in real-world texts provides access to content and allows multilingual learners to demonstrate, just as their English-fluent classmates do, what they have learned and what they are able to do through reading, writing, and speaking.

We believe that as teachers view accountability for student learning as a window into their own professional learning, they will understand that practice-based learning models such as lesson study, action research, and collaborative inquiry hold great promise for teachers to develop their knowledge base for teaching English language learners. Providing critical thinking and multimodal learning

opportunities for linguistically diverse students was prioritized as teachers planned, taught, and reflected on their language and literacy instruction. The scenarios in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this book show the teachers at work, “Giving *all* kids,” as Rachel says, “especially ELLs, high-quality learning experiences.”

Teaching English Language Learners

(adapted from the *NCTE Position Paper on the Role of English Teachers in Educating English Language Learners [ELLs]*)

What knowledge and skills do mainstream teachers need in order to develop effective curricula that engage English language learners, develop their academic skills, and help them negotiate their identities as bilingual learners? This position paper addresses the language and literacy needs of these learners as they participate and learn in mainstream ELA classes. Specifically, it addresses ways teachers can help these students develop English as well as ways they can support their students' bilingualism.

The growing population of English language learners in our schools and the diversity of these students continue to challenge teachers. Federal, state, and local policies have addressed the education of bilingual learners by implementing different types of programs. Still, for a variety of reasons, the majority of ELLs find themselves in mainstream classrooms taught by teachers with little or no formal professional development in teaching such students. Although improving the education of ELLs has been proposed as a pressing national educational priority, many teachers are not adequately prepared to work with a linguistically diverse student population.

Connected to a strong research base, the position paper offers approaches to teaching that center on:

- Knowledge of Students
- Teaching Language
- Teaching Literacy: Reading
- Teaching Literacy: Writing
- Teaching Language and Content
- Selecting Materials

The word accountability is everywhere in education today, but it means different things to different people. Speaking directly to teachers who work closely with English language learners, Betsy Gilliland and Shannon Pella examine essential questions in this age of accountability: What kind of accountability measures truly demonstrate multilingual students' learning? How do these measures reflect the planning and teaching that teachers do to help their students grow?

Gilliland and Pella take readers into the classrooms of middle and high school teachers to illustrate accountability practices that exemplify the principles outlined in the *NCTE Position Paper on the Role of English Teachers in Educating English Language Learners (ELLs)*. What does accountability mean when teaching ELLs? In one sense, teacher support of student performance on standardized tests is accountability to grade-level standards. More important, however, teachers and schools are also accountable to the students through equitable access to the curriculum and real-world literacy.

This book gives teachers the background and strategies to make their teaching and support equitable for ELLs. Examining how teachers can support learners' reading, writing, and academic language development, and illustrated with examples of real teachers at work, the authors explain teaching for accountability, formative and summative assessment, and preparation for high-stakes testing, as well as provide suggestions for teaching, guiding questions for discussion, and resource recommendations.

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