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Striving Toward Equitable Biliteracy Assessments in Hegemonic School Contexts

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Abstract

American schools today display unprecedented levels of diversity in regard to the linguistic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds of their student population. Increasingly, more American students are also emergent bilingual learners. Despite this fact, most of the standardized assessments used by schools have been designed and normed for English monolingual students. The lack of specific assessments created for emergent bilinguals provides teachers and other stakeholders with only a partial and often inaccurate view of the students' literacy growth as they develop proficiency in two languages. In this theoretical article, the authors explore how three complex characteristics of emergent biliteracy development interact: bilingual language proficiency, domains of language use, and language dominance. Then, they describe how teachers and school district leaders can begin to create more equitable assessment practices that are more closely aligned with the unique characteristics of biliteracy development admist largely hegemonic, monolingual school systems.

Introduction

The changing demographics of the student population are happening at a moment when demands for higher academic outcomes are being placed upon schools, especially after the adoption of the Common Core Standards by 46 states and the District of Columbia. In the midst of increasingly higher academic expectations, cultural and linguistic differences are widening between students and teachers. In particular, the number of students for whom English is not the first language has been growing steadily in the past decade. As of the school year 2012-2013, there were over four million public school students in grades K-12 in programs for English learners (ELs), representing 9.2 percent of the total student population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

For these students, Spanish is the most common first language but many other languages are represented as well. In fact, in five states (Alaska, Hawaii, Maine, Montana and Vermont) a language other than Spanish is the most prevalent among ELs (Ruíz Soto, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015). In Texas alone, over 120 languages are represented in schools (Texas Education Agency, n.d.). Nationally, as of the school year 2013-2014, 50 different languages are in the states' top five lists of the most frequently spoken languages among ELs. At the top of the list are Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Haitian Creole (Office of English Language Acquisition, 2015). While the number of ELs continues to grow, most schools report low numbers of bilingual education teachers (Center of Applied Linguistics, 2013). In fact, most states scramble to find certified or licensed teachers to work in Title III programs serving ELs (Office of English Language Acquisition, 2013). The U.S. Department of Education has listed bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) education as two of the most dire teacher shortage areas in the nation (Cross, 2016).

Although multiple terms have been used to refer to students whose home language is not English (García & Kleifgen, 2010; Wright, 2010), in this article we will use the expression *emergent bilinguals*. These are students "who speak a native language other than English and are in the dynamic process of developing bilingual and biliterate competencies […] with the support of their communities" (Reyes, 2006, p. 268). This departs from the terminology used in federal and states legislation that refers to these students as *limited English proficient* (LEP), thus depicting them under a deficit perspective (Wright, 2010). The term LEP disregards the fact that the students to whom the term refers already know at least one language and that they are in the process of adding English to their linguistic repertoire. The term, instead, focuses on the lack of English language mastery. The term emergent bilingual, in contrast, denotes a positive characteristic, namely the potential to develop bilingualism and add the English language to that linguistic repertoire. The term recognizes the range of languages that the student knows, thus acknowledging bilingualism as a cognitive and social resource (García, 2009). When applicable throughout the article, the authors will use the term English learner (EL) to refer to

the subset of emergent bilinguals who are not yet proficient in English according to state accountability language proficiency measures.

A major challenge facing emergent bilinguals is that most of the standardized assessments used across the United States have been designed and normed for English monolingual students. The lack of specific assessments created for emergent bilinguals provide teachers, districts, and departments of education with only a partial and often inaccurate view of the students' literacy growth as they develop proficiency in two languages (Escamilla, 2006; Gathercole, 2013a, 2013b). Tests developed for native English speakers are in fact language proficiency tests when used with non-native English speakers or bilingual students, therefore doing little in the way of measuring content knowledge (Menken, 2008). This is because emergent bilinguals must make sense of the language in the test as a prior necessary step to showing knowledge of the content areas. Education agencies across the United States seem to concede that students for whom English is not their primary language are at a disadvantage because they provide certain accommodations when taking standardized tests, such as extended time and translations of test directions. However, these accommodations are very problematic.

For one, time may not be the issue preventing a student from performing well on a test and demonstrating knowledge. Assuredly, if the authors of this article, who do not know the Vietnamese language, were given extra time to take a test in Vietnamese, the results would not vary much when compared with a test without the additional time. As for the translations, the extent to which they assist ELs in understanding what is being asked or expected is also problematic, as these translations often fail to capture cultural and linguistic nuances that may exist in the original text. Furthermore, some states provide translation only for the instructions provided prior to taking the test, not for the test items themselves. This is the case, for example, in Arizona (Arizona Department of Education, 2014):

> Only the verbal directions stated by the Test Administrator and the written directions
> that the student is expected to read may be orally translated into the student's native
> language. The translation must be an exact translation, which is as close to verbatim as
> possible, and translation is to be provided on an as needed basis only. Students must
> request the translation. Translations that paraphrase, simplify, or clarify directions are
> not permitted. Written translations are not permitted. Translation of test items is not
> permitted.

The underlying assumption behind this practice is that bilingual students are able to reach equal competencies in both languages and, thus, can be tested in either language. However, we concur with Baker (2011) when he affirms that this is an unfair and inequitable practice emanating from a monolingual viewpoint that disregards the fact that bilinguals use the two languages in different situations

and unique ways. Instead, Baker (2011) proposes a holistic view of bilingualism in which the overall communicative competence of the student is measured. This comprises the "totality of the bilingual's language usage in all domains, whether this involves the choice of one language in a particular domain, or a mixing of these two languages" (Baker, 2011, p. 11).

In this article, we propose that to mitigate the educational disconnect created when students are tested in only one of their codified languages, formative and summative assessments reflecting the unique characteristics of emergent bilinguals ought to be used. This will allow teachers, school administrators, and departments of education to understand emergent bilinguals' language skills more accurately as well as make informed decisions for language program determination, program evaluation, and language impairment diagnosis (Barrueco, López, Ong, & Lozano, 2012). In sum, our purpose is to explore contemporary notions of biliteracy development with its corollaries to equitable biliteracy assessment practices in an educational context that is largely hegemonic, realizing that the suggestions presented here are the beginning iteration for educators who desire a more robust education for their students.

Multiliteracies and Translanguaging Pedagogies

To frame this discussion, we use the concept of multiliteracies to acknowledge that in the multilingual context of schools in the United States the "acquisition and use of language and literacies are inevitably bound up with asymmetrical relations of power between ethnolinguistic groups" (Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000, p. 1). Literacy practices are embedded in ideological and policy assumptions that are part of the "broader cultural conception of particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing in cultural contexts" (Street, 2003, p. 79). Also, while recognizing that today's schools are part of a wider globalization movement and the increasing preeminence of the English language in the world (García & Wei, 2014), we adopt the vision of a linguistically plural society where a pedagogy based on multiliteracies plays a fundamental role in the education of our students (LoBianco, 2000).

The notion of multiliteracies as a pedagogical approach was first coined in the 1990's by the New London Group and sought to incorporate the new modes of expression consequence of the changing social environment. These expressions stem from the multiplicity of communication channels and the growing cultural and linguistic diversity in the world (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; The New London Group, 1996). The latter is manifested in many ways, among them the rich linguistic context that most emergent bilinguals experience in schools and the communities where they live and which is the basis for the development of multiple literacies among these students.

A pedagogy of multiliteracies departs from the traditional approach to literacy education based on linguistics to include multimodal textual practices that combine linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and

spatial modes in the context of culturally inclusive practices (Mills, 2009; Takeuchi, 2015). These literacy expressions include reading and writing practices beyond the written text and contain modes of literacy based on sign, symbol, and code systems (Baker, 2011). In other words, meaning, thinking, and learning are linked to multiple modalities and not merely to words (Gee, 2007).

Along with a multiliteracies pedagogy, we also affirm a translanguaging pedagogy that aims to leverage students' total linguistic repertoire for communication and learning (García, Ibarra Johnson & Seltzer, 2017). By this, we mean to recommend assessment practices that move toward educators providing spaces for students to develop and employ their languages in a way that allows them to engage and comprehend rigorous concepts and thereby create invested bilingual identities (García et al., 2017). For the purposes of this article, it is important to note that (1) spoken and written languages can be acquired through multiple paths and at varying rates; (2) different ethnic and cultural groups may have distinctive views of what constitutes literacy practices, including literacy education in early childhood; (3) on some occasions, the language variety and literacy practices of one group are imposed on the rest of the groups in the context of the mainstream education system (Ek, Sánchez, & Guerra, 2015; Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000) so (4) striving toward equitable biliteracy assessments is an imperfect yet worthy endeavor (Valdés, 2017). We believe that dual-language programs are especially positioned to accomplish this by transmitting the counterhegemonic idea that the development of bilingual, biliterate, and cross-cultural skills are vital components of a global education.

Issues in the Assessment of Emergent Bilinguals

Traditionally, bilingual students have been assessed using tests normed for monolingual students (Baker, 2011). The underlying assumption of this practice is that bilingual students demonstrate equal competencies in both languages since bilinguals' languages develop as parallel monolinguals of each language. However, we concur with others (Baker, 2011; Escamilla, 2006; García, 2009) when they affirm that this is an inequitable practice that does not adequately display the complex language practices and proficiencies of emergent bilinguals. As Baker (2011) states, norm-referenced tests often reflect the language style and culture of White, middle-class Anglo test writers. For example, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) for eight grade included the term *NASA* four times in the Reading test (Texas Education Agency, n.d.). It is safe to assume that the vast majority of children raised in the United States have developed a strong familiarity with the term and the organization to which it refers through school and popular media (e.g., television and motion pictures). However, students with a recent arrival to the United States may not be as knowledgeable or informed regarding a term that is specific to the United States or even regarding the concept of space exploration.

A similar argument can be used with a question in the Mathematics portion of the STAAR test for sixth grade involving violin lessons. Do students familiar with the notion of violin lessons have an advantage when processing the information contained in the question? Are students who have never heard of paying for learning music at a disadvantage? We believe that the response is in the affirmative for both questions. The examples above illustrate the inherent cultural bias that emergent bilinguals face when taking standardized tests. As a result, decisions taken on the bases of results from norm-referenced tests may be inherently biased in the sense that these tests may not have been normed for bilingual students. This has the potential to limit the eligibility of emergent bilinguals who are labeled ELs by the state for certain educational services, such as programs for gifted and talented students that schools may offer.

Also, it is not only the language and concepts represented by language in the tests that may be a source of bias, but also the format of those tests. Standardized testing relies overly on a format based on multiple-choice questions. While this type of test is likely to be familiar for students who started their schooling in the United States, this may not be the case for students schooled in other countries. Furthermore, these types of tests are unable to measure all the different aspects of language, such as the nuances that may be present in spoken language (Baker, 2011; Escamilla et al., 2014). The very fact that students are required to demonstrate learning in mostly one or completely in one language defies a holistic, multilingual pedagogy. However, we believe that even within false dichotomous assessment contexts it is possible for educators to systematically enact evaluation practices that more closely approximate this counterhegemonic ideal.

Solutions for Assessment of Emergent Bilinguals: Considering Biliteracy Development

In order to embark on equitable assessments for emergent bilinguals, it is imperative to consider the unique nature of biliteracy development in the context of an English superiority ideology (García & Lei, 2014; Henderson & Palmer, 2015). Biliteracy, like monolingual literacy, is a multidimensional construct involving all language domains (listening, speaking, reading and writing). However, biliteracy development in schools is distinct in that it requires an integrated approach in which students are encouraged to use the totality of their linguistic and cultural resources (de Jong, 2011; Escamilla et al., 2014; García, 2009) in a variety of contexts with diverse language ideologies, from strictly monolingual and hybridized bilingual spaces (Henderson & Palmer, 2015). The constant, strategic, bidirectional interplay among these domains has an effect on students' biliteracy abilities and skills. The nature these biliteracy skills can be defined in relation to students' language proficiencies, domains, and dominance (Edwards, 2004; Grosjean & Li, 2013; Weinreich, 1968), which will be explored in the subsequent sections followed by recommendations for assessment.

Proficiency

The term *bilingual* is applied to a person who has knowledge of two or more languages or a person who uses two or more languages (Grosjean & Li, 2013). The continuum of bilingualism is determined by proficiency (how much one knows the language) and language use (how much one uses the language with different people, places, and purposes). It is important to note that the concept of continuum denotes an infinite number of points exist in relation to biliterate contexts, the development of biliterate development in the individual, and the biliterate media, as stressed by Hornberger (2003). Far in the past are frameworks that considered bilinguals as either *balanced* or *unbalanced* individuals (Peal & Lambert, 1962). Rather, the concept of *dominant language* expresses more accurately the idea that for many bilinguals proficiency in one language is higher than in the other language in certain contexts (Butler & Hakuta, 2006).

Precisely, one of the primary misconceptions regarding bilinguals is that they are equally knowledgeable and furthermore have mastered their two or more languages to the same degree. In reality, however, "the majority of bilinguals do not have equal fluency in their languages, many have an accent in at least one of their languages and may have acquired their other languages when they were adolescents or adults" (Grosjean & Li, 2013, p. 20). It is imperative to note that a disparity between proficiency in the bilingual's languages is not an anomaly or necessarily a problem to be solved; rather it is a common characteristic of both emergent and adult bilinguals.

These different levels of proficiency have several direct implications in biliteracy assessment. First, in addition to assessing emergent bilinguals in both of their languages, experts in the field strongly recommended bilingual assessments should be normed on other emergent bilinguals (Gathercole, 2013a, 2013b). The need for bilingual norming can be explained on the basis of the emergent nature of biliteracy: emergent bilinguals from a monolingual view are by definition not proficient in the majority language (English in the United States). Thus, it is inaccurate to compare an emergent bilingual's English reading score or level to that of a monolingual English speaker (Hoff, 2013). As a result, Letts (2013) argues that the assessments used should be psychometrically sensitive and based on what is known about the stages of second language acquisition. For students in two-way dual-language programs this would mean English language development for those deemed native Spanish speakers and Spanish language development for those deemed native English speakers.[1] Doing so will inform teachers and school administrators about how much students know and what they are ready to learn next in relation

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[1] Later we discuss how designating students as native or non-native speakers with first and second languages is problematic. Until this discussion, we use the term native in italitcs when referring to research that includes this term.

to students' emergent languages as well as in relation to other emergent bilinguals. In other words, emergent bilinguals' biliteracy growth would be measured against other emergent bilinguals.

Nevertheless, norming biliteracy assessments using other emergent bilinguals becomes increasingly more complicated by the diversity within the emergent bilingual community (Gathercole Muller, 2013b; Hoff, 2013). Emergent bilinguals use their languages differently depending on how much of each language they hear at home, age of exposure to both languages, and the level of relation between the bilingual's language pairs in two-way dual-language programs.[2] In this context, emergent bilinguals who only hear the minority language at home will most likely develop English proficiency differently than emergent bilinguals who hear and speak both languages at home; likewise, a student deemed a *native* English speaker who is learning Spanish through a dual-language program will perform differently in English and Spanish than monolingual English and Spanish speakers.

Subsequently, Hoff (2013), Gathercole Muller (2013b) and others (e.g., Pérez-Tattam, Gathercole, Yayas, & Stadthagen-González, 2013; Place & Hoff, 2011) have argued that accurate bilingual assessment should include many norms that take into account the variables affecting academic and linguistic development. In the case of two-way dual language schools, this means creating norms in both languages for what are termed *native* English speakers learning Spanish and *native* Spanish speakers learning English, as well as students who represent a combination of language experiences in the home and community. In light of these complexities, it is vital that emergent bilinguals be provided with consistent, longitudinal normed-based biliteracy assessments on the differing characteristics affecting their biliteracy development. This will yield a greater understanding of the nature of biliteracy development while at the same time provide information with which to make more accurate inferences for instructional interventions, language program determination, and language program success.

So how may educators of emergent bilinguals respond? In response to the need for more holistic biliteracy assessments that are normed on emergent bilinguals in dual language and other bilingual education programs, and after numerous studies, Escamilla and colleagues (2014) created grade level benchmark ranges for students' reading (Butvilofsky & Escamilla, 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2013b). These students were emergent bilinguals who participated in Literacy Squared ®, a comprehensive biliteracy program that maximizes the development of oracy, reading, writing, and metalanguage. According to the researchers, students whose English and Spanish reading levels fall within this grade level range for each language are in what they call the *biliteracy zone*. The biliteracy zone refers to the range in reading scores on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and *Evaluación del Desarrollo de Lecto-escritura*

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[2] Language pairs are students of the other language. In English/Spanish two-way dual language programs, native Spanish speakers are paired with native English speakers, forming a bilingual pair (Gómez, Freeman, & Freeman, 2005). The function of each member of the bilingual pair is to support each other academically and linguistically, acting as linguistic role models for each other.

(EDL), informal reading inventories originally normed on monolingual speakers of each language, that are considered grade-level scores for emergent bilinguals (Celebration Press, 2007a, 2007b). According to the researchers, this span in reading scores reflects the unique development of students who develop their language at different rates in a paired literacy model, shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Biliteracy Zone Grade Level Benchmarks

Grade	EDL2 Level (Spanish)	DRA2 Level (English)
k	A-6	A-2
1	12--16	8--10
2	18-28	12--16
3	30-38	18-28
4	40	30-38
5	50-60	40+

In particular, this biliteracy zone operates under the assumption that Latino emergent bilinguals' reading scores in Spanish may be slightly higher than their corresponding English, since the data to date shows this trend (Butvilofsky, Hopewell, Escamilla, & Sparrow, 2016). As such, instead of providing one cut-off score normed on a monolingual of English or Spanish, the biliteracy zone provides a range of scores in each language and each grade that is considered "on target" for students who will become biliterate over time. By doing so, the researchers have created a range of norms for students of Spanish-English speaking backgrounds. Students in Babino's (2017) exploratory comparative case study of two one-way dual language campuses' biliteracy trajectories also displayed a range in Spanish and English reading levels, with students' reading in each language spanning anywhere from six to 11 reading levels in second and third grade and five reading levels in fourth and fifth grades. Between both schools over the course of 4 years, between 70 to 96% of students demonstrated Spanish and English reading in the biliteracy zone.

Additionally, Babino's (2017) study further illustrates how Spanish-English reading levels may differ within the Latino bilingual population: the Spanish dominant, first generation, Latino bilinguals at César Chávez demonstrated a mean initial Spanish strength in reading that surpassed their English reading in second and third grades, while performing similarly in both languages in fourth and fifth grade. On the other hand, the students at Memorial, as second and third generation, first language bilinguals displayed identical mean reading scores in Spanish and English in second through fifth grades. Taken together, Escamilla and colleagues' (2014) biliteracy zones approach the ideal of more equitable

biliteracy assessments, while Babino's (2017) study also underscores the need for additional considerations in equitable assessment practices by more specific language experiences than the broad category of Latino bilinguals. In turn, equitable biliteracy assessment practices include psychometrically sensitive norms on other bilinguals, yet these norms should also account for the inherent heterogeneity of the emergent bilingual population.

Language Domains

Biliteracy development differs from monolingual literacy development not only in the way and rate that their languages develop, but also in the strategic use of their languages (García, 2009). Bilinguals often use their languages for different purposes in different situations (Grosjean, 2008; Myers-Scotton, 2006). Grosjean (2008) explains this phenomenon through the *complementarity principle* by which bilinguals use their languages for particular domains in life (siblings, parents, relatives, friends, work, recreation, school) to differing degrees.

Depending on the language community and individual, one language or combination of languages may be used with certain people and contexts. For instance, one language may be primarily used for informal, relational side of the continuum at home, while another language is predominantly used for work and academics, and then a combination of the languages with members of the community (Babino & Stewart, 2015, 2016). Due to this phenomenon, bilinguals may have more linguistic knowledge or comfort using one language for a specific domain but not for another (Grosjean, 2008; Montrul, 2015). This is especially true if a domain's language is highly specialized or context-dependent like certain family, religious, and academic activities. Furthermore, domain specific language use may also be a consequence of explicit and implicit language ideologies that subordinate languages other than English and disenfranchise its speakers (for a thorough discussion of this topic, see González-Carriedo, 2014, 2015). These societal pressures that position English as more valuable are ubiquitous even in one-way and two-way dual language programs that aim for parity of language development (Achugar, 2008; Potowski, 2007) and families that value bilingualism (Babino & Stewart, 2016). In turn, students' specific instructional program, language use at home, and in the community work in concert to develop the extent and scope of their language choices in certain domains. There is no homogenous bilingual language experience (Brubacker, 2009).

Due to these interrelating complexities of language proficiencies, domains, and ideologies, determining which language(s) to use when assessing the emergent bilingual is not obvious or simple; it's not always the language that school districts label as students' first or dominant language. This is because emergent bilinguals may have more content vocabulary in one language than in another—especially in dual language programs that reserve one language for certain subjects (Gómez, Freeman, &

Freeman, 2005), yet this may also occur for students who receive dual language instruction across all content areas (Babino & Stewart, 2016). No matter the dual language context, students and teachers would ideally engage in and harness both languages in a holistic language assessment like those mentioned in the previous recommendations; however, in contexts like state-mandated tests that are restricted to one language, the following recommendations may approximate more equitable practices by taking the idiosyncricies of the indiviudal bilingual into account. (Assessment recommendations that are not confined to one language are explored after the discussion of language dominance.)

The first approximation toward more equitable biliteracy assessment practices is acknowledging the distinctive interplay between a student's proficiencies and domain-based vocabularies. Principally, this means a student may take different tests in different languages. Just because a student displays a higher reading ability (as indicated by an informal reading inventory or state mandated test) in one language does not necessarly mean s/he would feel more confident and thus perform better on a content area test in that language. Students who participated in a one-way, 50/50 dual language program in Babino and Stewart's (2016) study explained preffering varying combinations of English and Spanish for their state-mandated tests due to the unique way they used and developed their languages. Some students reported preferring to take reading and math state-tests in English, while taking a writing test in Spanish; other students preferred taking reading and writing state-tests in Spanish, while taking math and science in English.

To respond to this highly dynamic and personalized language use, educators may create a bilingual profile, like those shared in García and colleagues' (2017) most recent work, to provide an at-a-glance view of students' unique language development, performances, and practices. Teachers must especially consider the proficiency levels and language use for all language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) for each language. In addition to recording students' biliteracy development, teachers may record and examine the content area formative and summative assessments in each language to gain a holistic sense of students' strengths across languages and content areas.

Then, in individual student conferences, teachers can probe/survey students' language practices by asking questions like: Is there one language you read more in than the other? What combination of languages do you normally speak at home? With whom and when? If you had to demonstrate what you know in the best way possible, is there one language in which you feel you can perform better for X test? All the while, teachers must keep in mind the hegemonic nature of English and its influence on students' language prefernces. Certainly, whether conscious or not, students and teachers feel pressure to choose English as a language of assessment in bilingual programs (Palmer & Lynch, 2008). However, by using the aforementioned data in combination with student conferences, teachers provide a critical heuristic for holistic biliteracy development and strategic language use for high-stakes testing. They

honor the totality of students' language development and performances and create space for conversations that highlight the complex use of their languages. Even when provided with the false dichotomy of which language to asses in, bilingual educators teach students how to deliberately leverage their langauges for their own advantage.

Language Dominance

Interwoven throughout students' language proficiencies and uses over various domains is the concept of language dominance. While some researchers view language dominance as synonymous with language proficiency or the language(s) learned from birth (Silva-Corvalán & Treffers-Dallers, 2015), we define language dominance as how (in most cases) bilinguals' abilities in, use of, and values for their two or more languages differ, with one of the languages occupying a dominant position (Baker, 2011; Montrul, 2015). Thus, language dominance includes proficiency, but it is not limited to language proficiency; it also includes the amount of time over various domains and contexts that a bilingual uses his/her languages as well as the attitudes or beliefs that make up his/her language investments (Norton, 2013). When this is the case, bilinguals may spend more time across several domains speaking, reading, and writing in a dominant language.

Furthermore, it is critical to consider the position of each of his/her languages along the content and contexts of biliteracy continua (Hornberger, 2003). In the United States, a minority language like Spanish is often times located toward the contextualized, vernacular side of the biliteracy continuum, where the majority language is located toward a more decontextualized, literary dimension of the continuum. Due to English being a language of power and prestige at the macro level, this English leakage can permeate into the micro levels of schools and homes (Freeman, 1998; García & Wei, 2014). In light of the structural dynamics of English hegemony, bilingual communities (Hill, 1998) and individuals (Martínez, 2013) within the same community can have multiple even contradictory beliefs regarding their languages (Henderson & Palmer, 2015; Martínez, 2014). Their language ideologies, like their language proficiencies and use, are also multidimensional.

This was true for many of the 63 Latino bilingual fifth graders who participated in a one-way dual language school spoke mostly Spanish in kindergarten (Babino & Stewart, 2016). The students report through surveys and interviews preferring to use English in both social and academic domains—even those specifically designated as Spanish-only domains like church, Spanish class, and in and around the home with Spanish monolingual speakers. Student interviews revealed reasons for this English use including a lack of confidence in their academic Spanish. Another student reveals that while Spanish is "a little important," "English makes you a lot better in life." What's intriguing is that many students show a

preference for English at the same time they explicitly value both languages; 53 of 63 students state that Spanish is important and being bilingual is important.

Further problematizing students' stated English preference (or English dominance) is that most students in this study are still labeled EL by the state in fifth grade. In essence, as Babino and Stewart (2016) state, "they do not fully value the very asset that will maximize their English—Spanish […] achievement" (p. 21). Their language use and ideologies are more complex than the categories of dominance or no dominance, value or no value. Instead their nuanced language use and values fall along a continuum. As a whole, the students in this study highlight the dynamic tensions bilinguals experience as they negotiate their biliteracy development along the biliteracy contexts, content, and media continua. Even with reported hybridized language practices across domains and contexts, students preferred English as their dominant language; this is true despite still showing emergent English abilities according to the state and claiming investment in bilingualism.

To respond to the ever-present English dominance, educators systematically make space to value emergent bilinguals' two languages through the use of bilingual profile to capture holistic growth and aid in making language of assessment determinations for high-stakes, state-mandated tests. But what can educators do in the day-to-day school context that may more fully employ students' linguistic repertoire? Practitioners may first consider, as Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015) advise, the purpose of a particular assessment. If the purpose is to demonstrate content learning like on many subject matter formative and summative assessments, then students should be allowed to employ a variety of strategic, multilingual competencies consistent with a translanguaging pedagogy. This may mean the student expresses what he/she knows using any combination of languages and tools like videos, dictionaries, and the help of other students; or it may mean providing a variety of resources in both languages to develop depth in understanding and then choosing one language to display understanding. (Also see García, Ibarra Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017 for more ideas.) The aim here is for the bilingual to more accurately access and express what he/she knows in term of content (García, 2009). However, if the purpose of a particular assessment is to demonstrate proficiency in what are codified as autonomous languages, then a separation of languages is equitable (Otheguy et al., 2015) so long as these assessments are normed and furthermore psychometrically sensitive to the unique development of emergent bilinguals.

Long-Term Implications

Our discussion of language proficiency, domains, and dominance illustrates the multifaceted, dynamic nature of biliteracy development. We see how a bilingual's "first language" is not always his/her dominant language, the one with more proficiency, domain use, and value. Due to the structural power of English and pervasive, complex language ideologies, a bilingual's dominant language may wax or wane

to varying degrees in the course of the life span. In one study (Grosjean, 2010), a participant's language dominance changed four times over 50 years, with his second language serving as his dominant language for 10 years at two different points in his life. Thus, in addition to having varying levels of proficiency and language use in each language, bilinguals may also change their language dominance over the course of their lives.

This discussion of language proficiency and language use is especially salient for language programs that often rely on first and second language designations to consider language dominance. As shown here, it is far more precise to consider one's holistic bilingual proficiencies, dominant language use in general, and the domain use in particular before considering the language(s) of assessment. For this reason, recent scholarship is seriously questioning the use of the terms *first language*, *second language, and native language proficiency* (Cook 2008; García, 2009; Valdés, 2005).

For instructors and other stakeholders of dual-language programs that seek dynamic biliteracy as the goal of their program, it is wise to not assume that a student who shows comparably high levels of literacy in both languages will necessarily maintain his/her high biliteracy through subsequent years of participation in the program (Babino, 2017; Gathercole, 2013b). Instead, they should continue to assess growth and maintenance of biliteracy skills for the entire duration of the program, making any necessary program and instructional changes to protect and promote the minority language. This may include changing a dual language model from 50/50 to 90/10 in order to provide more opportunities to develop the minority language. Yet, it could also mean school leadership creating space for educators to discuss campus-wide parity of language goals (Collier & Thomas, 2014; García, et al., 2017).

Key for educators, who wish to exemplify a multiliteracies and translanguaging pedagogy, is to create classroom ecologies that allow students to make explicit connections within and among their languages (Escamilla et al., 2014). Including space for self-reflection and explicit discussions about the power structures that privilege English above Spanish is equally integral. Palmer (2017) especially urges teachers to "not be afraid to intervene to correct [power] imbalances and ensure equity in the moment" (p. 173). She explains that these power imbalances can come in the form of how students are positioned as those with or without power in the classroom as well as how language is used in the classroom, school, and greater community. To this point, bilingual teachers in dual language programs may scaffold instruction for academic minority language development in order to provide students with the linguistic capital to battle the hegemony of English. Yet, they may also extend students' learning from that of their two languages to include learning specific strategies for leveraging their dynamic bilingualism (García et al., 2017).

Conclusion

An understanding of language proficiency and use leads to the realization that defining equitable biliteracy assessments is a multilayered, intricate endeavor. Language proficiency exists along a continuum of proficiency and dominance, which can be strongly influenced by language use and ideologies over time. Nowhere is the complexity of language proficiency more clearly seen than through biliteracy development. It is evident that schools have a need for theoretically driven and psychometrically sensitive biliteracy assessments. This type of assessment is possible when classroom practices and the assessment of students account for the specific characteristics that emergent bilinguals display. Any attempt to implement a pedagogy based on the concept of multiliteracies ought to consider the multilingual characteristics of schools.

The journey toward equitable biliteracy assessments starts with viewing biliteracy development as a unique phenomenon. In addition to assessing students in two languages, there is need to norm assessments on other emergent bilinguals, taking the distinct, dynamic nature of biliteracy development of this heterogeneous group into account. Yet, equitable biliteracy assessment practices also include critical conversations through intentionally created spaces to teach students how to harness their languages to their own advantage. Doing so will provide all educational stakeholders with a more holistic, precise view of emergent bilinguals' proficiencies and learning and in turn create ample linguistic and cultural capital for a more just democracy. With the rise in the emergent bilinguals in the U.S. population, educators and researchers alike cannot afford to not make great strides toward enacting more equitable biliteracy assessments. While a beginning iternation, the suggestions proposed in this article more closely approximate the biliteracy assessment practices our multiliteracies and translanguaging pedagogies envision.

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