Common Core
Bilingual and
English Language Learners
A Resource for Educators

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linguistic channels are open for use, which allows for free codeswitching and thus concentration on the topic, rather than struggling to find the words (García & Bartlett, 2007). Further, when bilingual learners are exposed to content instruction in the stronger language, they are more likely to grasp the concepts of instruction that will manifest in the second language as proficiency increases (Cummins, 1991).

**Benefits of Bilingualism**

In addition to the rather obvious notion that teaching children in their dominant language allows for greater curricular access, the cognitive benefits of balanced bilingualism and biliteracy may also have some bearing on meeting the CCSS. Specifically, the CCSS require students and teachers to pay strict attention to language, including its structure and use. Additionally, students must understand symbolic representation and solve cognitively challenging problems. In a recent meta-analysis of the cognitive correlates of bilingualism, Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, and Ungerleider (2010) found overall effects for bilingualism, irrespective of socioeconomic status, on two major areas: (1) metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness and (2) symbolic representation, attentional control, and problem solving. There are clear links to be made between the demands of the CCSS and the metalinguistic and cognitive correlates of well-developed bilingualism and biliteracy, which is often the goal of well-implemented bilingual programs.

**Conclusion**

High-quality bilingual education that promotes full development of two languages goes beyond just leveraging the native language of students in service of better English outcomes. It provides robust context to promote the demands of content and language learning of the CCSS by allowing students to use all their linguistic and cultural resources, while also preparing children to function in a global society.

■ **Nelson Flores and Ofelia García**

The CCSS have remained silent regarding bilingualism and bilingual education. The consequences of this silence are that the standards have been interpreted through an English-only lens. With the CCSS now in the initial stages of implementation, we have an opportunity to make bilingual education central to the conversation in ways that ensure that the CCSS build on—rather than ignore—the bilingualism of emergent bilingual (EB) students.

One way to do so is through the use of texts not only in English, but also in the students’ home languages. For example, standard 1 for Reading Literature and Reading for Information in grade 6 asks students to grapple “with works of exceptional craft and thought whose range extends across genres, cultures, and centuries.” Although it also mentions “seminal U.S. documents, the classics of American literature, and the timeless dramas of Shakespeare,” which would seem to indicate the need for an English-only approach, a bilingual education program can teach these texts in the home language, gaining, as the standard continues, “a reservoir of literary and cultural knowledge, references, and images; the ability to evaluate intricate arguments; and the capacity to surmount the challenges posed by complex texts.” In other words, students can build on the literacy abilities that they already have in their home language. They can also expand their understanding and learn to grapple with the craft and ideas in the texts, as they compare and contrast the bilingual texts.

Another way that the CCSS can be read in ways that build on the bilingualism of EB students is through an alignment of home language literacy development with the English language arts standards. Many EB students who are new to English are also emerging in their development of academic language, as used in U.S. schools. Therefore, many students will need scaffolding and differentiation to engage with grade-level texts even in their home language. The New York State Bilingual Common Core Initiative (NYSBCCI) is developing a resource that bilingual education teachers can use to meet the diverse needs of their students. The home language arts progressions are divided into five stages of literacy development: (1) entering, (2) emerging, (3) transitioning, (4) expanding, and (5) commanding. Each of these stages includes scaffolded performance indicators that outline the types of supports that students at this stage of academic literacy development in their home language need to engage with grade-level texts and to perform the language tasks that the CCSS in language arts demand.

Reflecting dynamic views of bilingualism that have emerged in recent years, the NYSBCCI is also developing new language arts progressions that bilingual teachers can use to identify appropriate scaffolds and supports to use with EBs at different levels of new language development, whether that be English for English language learners (ELLs)/EBs in transitional or dual language bilingual programs or another language for English-dominant EBs in dual language bilingual programs. Educators who view bilingualism as both a point of departure for language instruction and as a goal for all language learners can use both of these progressions creatively and in tandem in a wide range of bilingual instructional contexts.

Finally, the CCSS can be read in ways that build on the bilingualism of EB students by making their bilingual language practices central to the curriculum. For example, standard 6 for Speaking and Listening in grade 4 asks students to “differentiate between contexts that call for formal English and situations where informal discourse is appropriate.” EBs can be supported in achieving this standard by reflecting on the dynamic ways that they use their two languages throughout their day. They may speak a formal variety of their home language with their parents, engage in bilingual interactions with their siblings, and use informal English with their monolingual peers. By analyzing their lived experience they can begin to build bridges to the metalanguage that the standard demands.

The CCSS claim the major goal to prepare students for the 21st century. The 21st century demands bilingual and multilingual competencies—competencies that EB students bring to the classroom. Rather than ignore these competencies, the CCSS must build on them to ensure that EBs are provided access to CCSS-aligned curricula to deepen understanding of texts and language use.
2.5 When we talk about language acquisition or language development, what is it that needs to be acquired?

- Suresh Canagarajah

The notion that the target for an English language learner (ELL) is native-like ultimate attainment has been questioned recently. This is an inappropriate goal for many reasons. ELLs aspire to be competent multilingual speakers who can adapt English to the language repertoires they bring with them and use it for their purposes in contexts of linguacultural diversity. As ELLs adapt English to their multilingual identities, values, and interests, English will take a form (i.e., accent, idioms, structure, and discourse) that is different from that of native speakers. Furthermore, the proficiency they require is not that of English as an all-purpose language, but one that is complementary to the functions of the other languages they possess. In this sense, English may serve academic, professional, or social functions that are specific to their needs, with the grammars and discourses relevant to those functions. As ELLs shuttle between diverse functions, communities, and languages according to their communicative needs, in practices resembling codeswitching, they will also merge language items from English with other languages in their repertoire, resembling modes of language mixing.

Beyond these considerations of language identity and communicative purpose, there are complex considerations for what it means to know a language in the context of recent forms of globalization, migration, digital communication, and transnational relations. The variety and mix of languages in any particular context are becoming unpredictable. An ELL from a Spanish background in the United States might be speaking to a Singaporean 1.5-generation child who speaks Singaporean English, with a mix of Chinese and Malay words and grammatical structures. ELLs should know how to negotiate intelligibility and achieve communicative success with interlocutors with whom very few language features are shared.

Like people, languages are also mobile. Scholars have therefore redefined languages as mobile resources rather than as immobile systems (Blommaert, 2010). What this means is that language is not inflexibly structured into a monolithic system, owned by native speakers and associated with a territory that is the natural habitat for it. Instead, we have resources that people borrow from diverse mobile languages and merge with other diverse resources from different locations and communities. As people engage in communicative activity, these resources become sedimented into grammars (Pennycook, 2010). Language norms thus evolve situationally through social practice.

From this perspective, acquisition of form in a clearly defined grammatical system of English is insufficient for contemporary communication. What ELLs need is a competence that enables them to shuttle between communities and contexts, negotiating diverse English varieties, borrowing new language resources, and merging them with their existing repertoires according to their identities, values, and interests as they achieve intelligibility and communicative success. This type of competence is becoming known as translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2013), different from the traditional monolingual competence that separates languages and targets native norms for ultimate attainment. For translanguaging competence, we have to go beyond acquisition of form to the development of a complex language awareness that would help ELLs negotiate the unpredictable mix of language resources in any given context. Such an awareness would include intercultural competence, sociolinguistic sensitivity, pragmatic understanding, and critical thinking (Kramsch, 2014)—all of which would enable ELLs to negotiate language diversity and unpredictability in contexts of globalisation and multilingualism.

The Language Valued at School

2.6 What do educators need to know about language as they make decisions about Common Core State Standards implementation?

- Ofelia García

The main point that educators preparing students who are developing English to meet the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) need to know is that there is no such thing as A language, or English or Spanish or Chinese. Of course, we speak and hear what we have learned to call English or Spanish, but A language, and especially what is known as “academic language,” is a societal construction. As speakers, we have language with features that are, or are not, socially accepted at different times and spaces and that have been societally assigned to what is called A language.

Once educators understand the difference between A language and language, then their teaching has to focus on leveraging and using the language practices that students possess to expand them to encompass using language in the ways of school. This is especially so in the case of bilingual students whose language practices include features that are most often excluded from monolingual instruction or separated rigidly in bilingual education. I have developed these understandings in proposing a theory of translanguaging (García, 2009b; García & Wei, 2014).

Language is not a system of discrete skill sets, but a series of social practices and actions that are embedded in a web of social relations. Language in school emerges from the actions of state policymakers with certain perspectives and ideological positioning. Language, then, has to be reappropriated by actual language users in schools, and educators have to imbue their instruction with a critical perspective about how language is used.

The CCSS do not seem to have a coherent language theory. On the one hand, the English Language Arts (ELA) Standards seem to support a view of language as human action in the standards related to reading, writing, speaking, and listening. But on the
other hand, the language standards seem to do totally the opposite, reinforcing the linear build-up of grammatical structures and vocabulary. While the reading, writing, speaking, and listening standards consider language as action and practice used in human relationships, the language standards emphasize language as a system of structures. The reading, writing, speaking, and listening standards do not (for the most part) decompose language into fragments that students are able to then "have," but as human action that they perform or "do" with others. The emphasis is on student participation in activity that simultaneously leads to increased understanding and more complex language use. But the language standards precisely propose that the knowledge of the conventions of standard English and vocabulary are isolated skills that can be acquired linearly.

The language theory inherent in the reading, writing, speaking, and listening standards is consonant with the ways in which language is used in the 21st century. Students are asked to use a greater variety of complex texts—oral, visual, quantitative, print, and nonprint—that technology has enabled. The purposes for which language is used have also changed—from recreation or factual declaration to analysis, interpretation, argument, and persuasion. Even language itself has gone from being acknowledged as simply the grammar and vocabulary of printed texts to include its many levels of meaning—figurative language, word relations, genres, and media. Finally, students are now being asked to perform language socially, through cooperative tasks. It is not enough to organize information on one's own and write as an individual. It is important to build on others' ideas, whether those of peers, teachers, or authors of texts, to find evidence to articulate one's own ideas, adjusting the presentation according to the different purposes or audiences. This in itself is a great leap forward from previous understandings of language.

And yet, the language theory inherent in the language standards takes a backward step. It proposes that there are a series of essential "rules" of English that must be taught explicitly. The language standards also suggest that language is simply a series of progressive skills.

The CCSS do not in any way connect the theory of language as human action that they formulate in their use of complex and content-rich texts and the grounding of language use in textual evidence, with that proposed in the language standards themselves. In seeing language as something to be "had" instead of something to be "done," the language standards particularly work against bilingual students whose language use is more complex and fluid than that of monolinguals.

If language is human action embodied in the social world of relationships, then educators must leverage the language practices that all bilingual students bring. Only then will bilingual students be able to extend their bilingual repertoire to also encompass the conventions of English that the CCSS require.

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2.6 What do educators need to know about language as they make CCSS implementation decisions?

**Aida Walqui**

The current emphasis on deep learning and new standards present educators with immense challenges and opportunities. One of the most promising arenas of action is the one related to understanding of language and its effect on English language learners' (ELLs') education. To transform classrooms into stimulating arenas where ideas are exchanged, problematized, built on, and enhanced, second language teachers need to revisit how they conceptualize language, and recognize how these conceptualizations influence their classroom behavior. Only then will they be able to reorient their teaching and realize their students' immense potential. With this purpose in mind I will outline two very different views of language—which guide pedagogical practice today—and will counter them with the view of language as action.

Traditionally, formal theories studied language as a system of systems: a morphological system focused on words and their formation, a phonological system composed of sounds arranged in patterns, and a grammatical system ruling how words are organized into sentences. Because learning to use the second language (L2) meant learning to use its language systems, L2 classes emphasized learners' correct use of the structural aspects of language. This formal view of language has had a long and pervasive influence in L2 teaching. It led to the sequencing of lessons along a supposed organization going from simpler to more complex structures, and to the idea that if students have not "mastered" these structures to be studied in a course they need to retake the course.

Functional theories of language—which started in the 1970s—shifted the focus of language studies to meaning, what is done as language is used. In L2 teaching, a positive impact of communicative language teaching was a move away from the centrality of form and correctness to fluency and getting things done. A limitation, however, was the emphasis on the discrete accomplishment of functions (e.g., how to suggest, how to compliment) rather than on discourse.

A third view of language proposes that language is an integral part of all human action and as such it is inseparable from physical, social, and symbolic action. In the following example, to begin her writing course, an English as a second language teacher has prepared a project that invites students to study four different cases of brain injury. Teams of four students will work on one article each. After careful and well-supported reading and discussion, students will share their notes in a new group of four. There they will also learn about three other cases. Each student will keep notes in a chart, which will be used later on to develop a compare/contrast essay. This is part of the reporting conversation in one group:

**Carlos:** His story was the beginning of the study of the biological basis of behavior.

**Rosalin:** OK, what happened to this person that caused brain impairment?

**Carlos:** A stumping rod may have penetrated Phineas Gage skull.

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1Student names are pseudonyms. The transcript comes from Stacia Crescenzi's class at Lanier High School in Austin, Texas, September 2009.
intentionality. Within the context of their subject area, every teacher is a language and literacy teacher; we all must "attend to language," the medium through which content learning occurs. To do this, teachers need resources and ongoing PD to transform these blueprints into content and language rich lessons.

Well-written language development standards should provide models of language performance in a variety of instructional contexts, especially, but not exclusively, core subject areas like language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. At their heart, these "performance models" illustrate language features or language functions, which are words or phrases that serve as examples of how we use language in practical ways to achieve a communicative purpose. "Describe" or "explain" are straightforward examples of language functions. Performance models should clearly link to classroom discourse, and, therefore, state and common content standards because these are the primary drivers of curriculum and lesson planning. Gottlieb and Ernst-Slavit (2014) remind us that content and language standards work together to "provide a full complement of grade-level content and language outcomes" (p. 16).

Language development standards, as delineated through language performance models, are illustrative of or tied to developmental milestones or benchmarks so that teachers can distinguish between what beginning, intermediate, and advanced language use looks like and where ELLs will likely move next in terms of increasingly complex language competencies. Lastly, but importantly, performance models should encourage teachers to scaffold language within socioculturally responsive contexts, in keeping with what Vygotsky (1978) called the "zone of proximal development."

Language development standards function within standards and assessment systems, and therefore have the potential to inform ongoing classroom-based formative assessment. Because performance models provide examples of language at particular benchmarks or levels, they become tools for assessment, indicative of language progress within content-area contexts. Here, in particular, teachers will likely need interpretive tools and PD to assist them in becoming good judges or "raters" of ELL progress. National assessment consortia can play a crucial role in developing quality resources and PD tools consistent with language development and content standards that support teachers in improving instruction and monitoring growth.

While a significant departure from generic language instruction, using content-infused language development standards to guide instruction is just the beginning. In today's evolving world of work and increasingly diverse populous, we undoubtedly need students to become bilingual and biliterate. But we also hear the term "multiliterate" applied to students' abilities to handle a multiplicity of formats for making meaning beyond the traditional printed English word; this is the context of preparing students for 21st-century college and career opportunities. Language development standards serve to ensure that teachers "attend to language" in every content area and springboard expansive ways of making classrooms rich in language and literacy learning.

1.9 How should we refer to students who are acquiring English as an additional language?

- Ofelia Garcia

U.S. students developing English as an additional language have always been described as lacking language and knowledge, and have seldom been recognized for the qualities they possess. Instead of having their potential acknowledged, they are marginalized, made inferior, and seen as limited. By naming them from a deficit perspective, such as limited English proficient (LEP) students or English language learners (ELLs), their capacities are ignored, and the possibility of schools building a multilingual U.S. citizenry is suppressed.

I argue that we should always refer to students who are acquiring English as emergent bilinguals (EBs). Viewing them through a lens of promise, rather than deficiency, enables educators and policymakers to recognize their potential, while at the same time naming bilingualism as an important goal for U.S. society. Additionally, insisting on the emergence of bilingualism challenges old notions of language and bilingualism that are important in our globalized world. In what follows I discuss these three reasons for my preference of the term EB.

EB is a term full of future and promise, but it also recognizes the present. It acknowledges what students already have—their standards in other ways of using words and other knowledge frameworks. It leverages the students' existing standards so that other language features and other ways of understanding can emerge. Using EB, rather than ELL, acknowledges that isolating English from the students' conceptual and linguistic repertoire cannot possibly result in English language learning or in meeting content standards.

By naming bilingualism as an important goal and aspiration, the term EB moves us forward from the conversations we have had in the last half century. The remedial bilingual mentality of the past is no longer applicable in our globalized world. The transnationalism of migrants all over the world, as well as the simultaneity of interactions through sophisticated technology, have long ago debunked monolingualism as the end product of education and an educated elite. Immigrant students are in a privileged position to take on their roles as bilingual U.S. citizens. Naming their home language practices as a talent would mean that educators would no longer see these students as limited or deficient. It would also mean that the goal of a U.S. education would shift from a remedial one of simply teaching English to an expansive one of developing educated bilinguals.

Finally, the term EB signals an emergence of new understanding about language and bilingualism. Language has been increasingly seen as an emergent, complex, and adaptive system. Language is always emerging in creative ways as speakers interact with one another. For EBs, new ways of using language are always interacting with their own inner speech and the voices of others in their communities and families. Bilingualism cannot emerge unless it does so dynamically with other voices, extending the students' language repertoire instead of severing it from its roots. Thus, the term EB also proposes
an understanding of these students’ language practices that goes beyond two separate languages. It embraces an epistemology of translanguaging that posits that bilinguals develop only one language repertoire with features that are societally assigned to one language or another. This translanguaging epistemology can only then change the ways in which we educate these students.

Because of its potential for capturing the capacities of bilingual students, acknowledging the potential of bilingualism for U.S. society, and transforming the ways in which we educate students who are developing English, the term EB should be embraced by the U.S. educational system.

- **Maria Santos**

LEP, ELLs, or EB, what is in a label and why do we need to be careful with the words we use to describe students? The labels placed on students who are acquiring English as an additional language can create mindsets, define opportunities, and determine investments. Labels not only affect how students are educated, they can also influence how students perceive themselves.

The LEP label tells us that a student is deficient in English as a determinant. It characterizes the student as lacking in English, a lack that needs to be fixed. The label negates any strengths students possess in other languages or any funds of knowledge they have related to academics. This labeling can constrain the educational program students receive, resulting in the programming of students into interventions that simplify language and isolate them from the academic and language demands of the Common Core. This branding can also create a negative stereotype for students acquiring English and lead to lower levels of engagement and effort with academic text. The label can also promote remedial education instead of grade level developmental opportunities in the core academics. As a result of this branding, investments are made in English language development (ELD) and remediation, which often lead to pulling students out of core academic learning opportunities.

The ELL label presents us with students who are developing in one language. It is growth focused and characterizes the students as learners of one language. This label has an ELD priority and is not invested in growing literacies in students’ home languages. The parameters for growth are constrained to English and are minimally focused on core academic subjects. The label promotes attention to ELD in the educational programming as a priority for the students, resulting in labeling investments that prioritize ELD as stand-alone courses or as pull-out supports.

The EB label values the development of literacies in languages as well as in academics. The term embodies the characterization of students as learners of two languages and is growth focused, promoting the use of two languages in academic development. It recognizes the complexity of the learner’s experience and affirms assets drawn from both languages. The aspiration is to develop literacies in both languages. The investment in both languages requires resources and expertise in at least two languages.

A more powerful label would be *emergent biliterate cross-cultural student*, which would not only value the development of literacies and academics in two languages but would have the goal of developing fully literate students, in addition to acknowledging the complexity of making sense of ideas and perspectives across cultures. The educational programs would be designed to build students’ capacity to read, write, communicate, and understand thoughts and ideas in two languages and from diverse cultural perspectives.

The terms LEP and ELL identify a population of students in relation to the English language, narrowing and isolating language development from the complexity of understanding and meaning making. These two labels simplify and compartmentalize the learning exercise to the vocabulary, structures, and forms of languages. They are silent on cross-cultural understanding, which requires significant attention to critical thinking from the learner. The term EB more fully captures the language and academic demand of giving students the opportunity to participate in learning aligned to the Common Core. Yet EB falls short of promoting biliteracy, a highly valued skill in today’s international and highly competitive economic society.

Labels are powerful and can be used as “frames” for negative mindsets/beliefs and to promote a deficit model of learners. Conversely, labels have the ability to flip this paradigm so that the frame is neutral or positive, benefiting the learner, creating a growth mindset, and bringing the language and culture of the learner as an asset to the forefront. The ways people, especially those in positions of power, use language lead to social consequences that either engage or marginalize those who do not conform to the established norms of a monolingual society. As I stated previously, these labels create mindsets, define opportunities and determine investments; these labels give those in power the position and permission to take action and create policies (investments) that benefit or are detrimental to this population of learners.

1.10 How have different groups of English language learners/emergent bilinguals been categorized and what issues are raised by these categorizations?

- **Nelson Flores**

Official categories, such as English language learner (ELL), gloss over the tremendous diversity that exists within this large and heterogeneous group. They also erase the fact that these students are emergent bilinguals (EBs) who engage in translanguaging on a daily basis as they negotiate meaning in the many cultural contexts that they navigate. Unfortunately, these translanguaging practices are negative by a dichotomous view of language that positions some language practices as “academic” and others as “nonacademic.” The result of this dichotomy is a failure to treat the dynamic bilingualism of ELLs as a vehicle for supporting their engagement with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

The stigmatization of the dynamic bilingualism of ELLs is perhaps best illustrated by the classification of a subgroup of these students as “non-nons”—nonspeakers of both