

A Second Lens on Formative Reading Assessment With Multilingual Students

Allison Briceño, Adria F. Klein

How might teachers take a deeper look at running records to better support multilingual students' language and literacy development?

After many years of working as reading specialists with young Spanish-speaking multilingual students, we began to understand some common strengths in these students' linguistic knowledge and identified ways that their home language (a strength they bring to literacy tasks) influences their reading. We noticed similar reading behaviors that were considered errors on informal reading inventories and running records of previously read texts, but over time, we grew to understand that those "errors" reflected students' strengths and current proficiency with English as they approximated book language. For example, when an emergent bilingual first grader read "grass green" instead of "green grass," Allison (first author) knew that he likely used this turn of phrase because adjectives follow nouns in Spanish and because of the initial visual similarity between the words. The student was drawing on and showing his current linguistic understanding.

Having determined a need to help teachers identify students' linguistic strengths, we completed a study and developed a tool to help teachers distinguish between language-related (LR) reading errors and more traditional reading errors. As Martínez (2018) suggested, we use the assets-oriented term *multilingual students* to refer to the students in this study. Employing second-language acquisition (SLA) research and running records as lenses, this article explores how teachers can recognize and draw on students' linguistic capital to challenge deficit notions that often surround multilingual students (Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006) and to facilitate multilingual students' literacy development from a perspective that values students' language capital (Yosso, 2005). More important than an accuracy rate, a deeper understanding of multilingual students' running records, such as the ability to distinguish

between LR approximations and traditional reading errors, could significantly help teachers support their multilingual students and therefore foster more equitable teaching in whole-group, Response to Intervention, or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support interventions.

In this article, we briefly review SLA research and running records and share a study in which we examined the types of LR "errors" that Spanish-speaking multilingual first graders made when re-reading instructional-level texts. We reframe these "errors" as assets-based LR approximations. Finally, we provide practical strategies teachers can employ to support multilingual students' reading and language acquisition.

When Students Are Emergent in Both Language and Literacy

Using both SLA research (e.g., Brown, 2013; Hakuta, 1976) and a complex literacy lens (Clay, 2001; Doyle, 2013), we explore how students who are emergent in both literacy and English use their linguistic knowledge in early reading. We show similarities among strategic learning behaviors in literacy and SLA and then discuss running records.

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Language and Literacy Acquisition

Understanding parallels among strategic behaviors in both language and literacy development helps when considering multilingual students' emergent literacy processing. There are similarities between negotiating meaning in text and negotiating meaning in conversation. When reading, students self-monitor and self-correct, actions that are supported by students' increasing fluency with English book language and print. Similarly, SLA has found that students self-adjust in conversation, correcting their oral errors. Comprehending is the primary goal of reading; an overemphasis on accuracy can result in reduced understanding (Brown, 2013; Pikulski & Chard, 2005). SLA's parallel argument states that the accuracy of a monolingual speaker is not necessarily an appropriate goal for an English learner. Instead, some researchers suggest that educators maintain high standards for English learners while focusing on an utterance's content rather than the form of language produced (Aukerman, 2007; Valdés, Capitelli, & Alvarez, 2011). In reading, this would translate to minimizing the importance of LR approximations that do not affect comprehension.

Listening skills are a predictor of future reading success (Lepola, Lynch, Kiuru, Laakkonen, & Niemi, 2016), and literacy interventions have been shown to be most effective for multilingual students at the lowest language levels, implying that their reading difficulties are actually language related (Burns et al., 2016; Helman, 2016). Another recent study had teachers use running records and guided reading with high school students who were non-English-speaking recent arrivals to the United States, and extraordinary gains were made in both the students' reading and the teachers' understanding of language and literacy development (Montero, Newmaster, & Ledger, 2014).

Using a Language Lens With Running Records

Afflerbach (2017) asked, "What do we assess when we assess reading?" (p. 2). A student's language is part of what is assessed. Close observation is essential for student growth (Lewis, 2018), and observa-

tion of students' reading development using running records is already part of many teachers' tool kits. We suggest using the same tool (running records) in a slightly different way or adding observations of language acquisition.

Running records are used in different ways, such as daily assessment, benchmark assessment, and as part of informal reading inventories (Schwartz, 2005). The results of those assessments are used for a variety of purposes, including placing students in leveled reading instruction and intervention. However, there has been limited research on how to use formative reading assessments, such as running records, to support multilingual students (exceptions include Ascenzi-Moreno, 2016; Kabuto, 2016; Montero et al., 2014). Also, because running records of previously read text are intended to guide teaching, the skillful-

ness of a teacher's analysis can significantly affect the instruction a student receives (Clay, 2013; Fried, 2013; Kaye & Van Dyke, 2012).

Clay (1967) and Goodman (1969) developed ways to analyze students' oral reading by coding errors (Clay) or miscues (Goodman) as being acceptable or unacceptable for meaning and sentence structure usage and visually similar or dissimilar. Running records provide a standardized way to record reading behaviors of students reading aloud, as teachers code the four most often used sources of information (meaning, syntax, phonemic, and visual) students use at point of difficulty (Clay, 2013). These inferences from samples of reading behaviors contribute to our understanding of how a student is processing text at a certain point in time (Afflerbach, 2016). The standardized procedures and coding are intended to reduce the personal bias of the observer to a minimum (Clay, 1982, 2013). Running records are evidence of students' in-the-moment literacy processing, which becomes increasingly complex as students become more proficient readers (McGee, Kim, Nelson, & Fried, 2015).

The source of information students use most when learning to read is language (Clay, 1982, 2001). Students learn new language structures as they negotiate meaning in conversation and when reading (Clay, 2004). Less linguistic knowledge in English

PAUSE AND PONDER

- What data are you currently gathering from running records, and how are you using these data to inform instruction?
- What can you learn about your multilingual students' reading and language by taking a deeper look at their running records?
- What questions can you ask to provide more data-informed teaching for all of your students?

may make it difficult to predict text (Johnston, 1997), and unfamiliar book language may interfere with the reading process (Clay, 2001, 2004, 2013). For example, if a student is unfamiliar with a vocabulary word, she may be able to decode it, but decoding it will not help the student comprehend the text unless she also knows the word's meaning. Similarly, picture support may not be helpful if the vocabulary for what is represented in the picture is unknown. To ensure that multilingual students receive the most targeted instruction, it is important to differentiate LR approximations from literacy errors (Briceño & Klein, 2018).

The Study

In this study, we asked, What types of LR approximations do multilingual students make when reading? To begin answering this question, we collected weekly running records from nine reading interventionists. All of the teachers had between two and 15 years of experience as reading specialists, had completed a yearlong graduate training program focused on emergent literacy, and were highly experienced in administering and analyzing running records. Their training included a focus on coding and analyzing running records to provide instruction based on the close observation of reading behaviors. The teachers also received 18 hours of ongoing literacy professional development annually. All of the teachers in the study were monolingual, so their knowledge of the students' first language was not a factor.

The first-grade students spoke Spanish at home, were in English-only classrooms, and were being served by reading interventionists. We asked the teachers to collect one running record of a second reading of a text each week for up to 20 weeks. Thus, the texts analyzed fall within the late kindergarten and first-grade range (levels 3–16). The students were classified at the earlier two of three English proficiency stages, late emerging or early expanding, according to the California English language development (ELD) standards (California Department of Education, 2012).

To analyze the data, we first evaluated 123 running records, which had 649 individual errors, using the coding system for errors and self-corrections outlined by Clay (2013). Using the literature on emergent literacy and SLA, we individually coded all the running records with 96.8% inter-rater reliability. We then labeled as LR approximations the errors that, according to the literature, resulted from a student's developing English proficiency.

Reconsidering Errors: LR Approximations

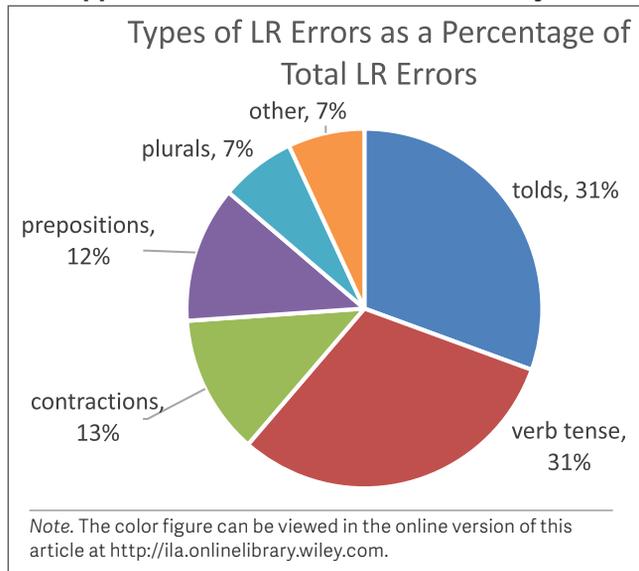
LR approximations are reading errors that are attributable to readers' language (the way they speak, the language structures they use, and the vocabulary they know) and how similar or different their language is from book language. For instance, an emergent multilingual student may read *he say* instead of *he said* if the student is not yet familiar with the irregular past tense of the verb. LR approximations are different from errors caused by difficulty with interpreting print, such as confusing *b* and *d*.

We found LR approximations to be plentiful: 95% of the multilingual students' running records contained LR approximations, and 54% of the errors students made were language related. LR approximations constituted between 44% and 69% of all errors for an individual multilingual student. Five types of LR approximations accounted for 93% of all LR approximations, and these are summarized in Figure 1.

Tolds

When students are unable to read a word and do not continue, the teacher tells them the word to keep the meaning and reading moving ahead. This is called a told, and two thirds of tolds were likely given because of unknown vocabulary words, such as *hunt*,

Figure 1
Percentages of Different Types of Language-Related (LR) Approximations Identified in This Study



sea, drawer, parrots, naughty, and island. The remaining tolds were likely a result of sentence structures that were not yet part of the multilingual students' language repertoire, such as the use of question words at the beginning of a sentence, the use of the conditional (e.g., *would*), and the use of sight words (e.g., *come, here*) at the beginning of a sentence or page. Figure 2 is an example of a student who required three tolds on a single page of text from *A Treasure Island* by Dawn McMillan (2001). The student also was hesitant about the word *pool* because the picture is not a swimming pool, but a tide pool at a beach. A student who has not had instruction or background experience regarding ocean life might not be familiar with vocabulary such as *starfish, seaweed, and crab*. Analyzing running records through a language lens can enable teachers to have a better understanding of students' vocabulary knowledge.

Impact on Comprehension. Although each told represents a missed opportunity for the student to problem solve (Fried, 2013), the impact on comprehension likely varied depending on the particular word, context, and how the teacher responded to the need for a told. During the running record, the convention is that the teacher is a neutral observer and may only say the word and let the student continue reading. After the student finishes the book,

however, the teacher may go back and explain unfamiliar words to build the student's vocabulary and support comprehension. Looking for additional clues in the text might help the reader learn to infer word meanings.

Verbs

Verb tenses comprised irregular verb tenses and regular verb tenses.

Irregular Verbs. The multilingual students in this study consistently used the present tense instead of the irregular past tense, reading, for example, *come* for *came*, *run* for *ran*, *wake* for *woke*, *hide* for *hid*, and *see* for *saw*. Irregular verbs can be a particular challenge for multilingual students (Rumelhart & McClelland, 1985), as the past tense *-ed* rule, which they are learning to use with other verbs, typically does not apply.

Regular Verbs. In most cases, multilingual students left off the verb ending, usually the past tense *-ed*. For example, they read *drop* for *dropped*, *like* for *liked*, *look* for *looked*, and *shout* for *shouted*. Although this was less frequent, multilingual students also dropped the *-ing* or *-s* ending, reading *shake* for *shaking* and *give* for *gives*. Figures 3 and 4 show two ways different multilingual students reading *The Missing*

Figure 2
Examples of Tolds in a Running Record

A Treasure Island, level 11, 177 words																																																							
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Figure 3
Example of a Multilingual Student Dropping the *-ed* Ending When Reading

The Missing Puppy, level 5, 67 words																																	
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Figure 4
Example of a Multilingual Student Overemphasizing the -ed Ending in a Text

The Missing Puppy, level 5, 67 words																																	
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Puppy by Michele Dufresene (2006) read *looked*, a very common word in early readers. In Figure 3, a student said *look* for *looked*, which may not have sounded incorrect to her. The second student, in Figure 4, read “look-ed” for *looked*, overemphasizing the -ed ending. She may not have known or remembered what the word *looked* sounds like when spoken.

Impact on Comprehension. In both English and Spanish, verb endings tell us who does the action (e.g., I/we/you/they walk, he/she/it walks) and identify when the action is done (past, present, or future). If a student is misreading endings, check that he or she knows who did the action and when the action happened (without reciting complex verb tense rules). Consistent conversations about the text could support the student’s understanding of oral and written language.

Multilingual students tend to acquire the -ing ending before the -ed and -s endings on verbs (Brown, 1973). As students begin acquiring linguistic rules such as the regular -ed endings, they may overgeneralize the rule, saying “singed” and “swimmed” instead of *sang* and *swam* (Rumelhart & McClelland, 1985). A student who knows the word *shake* might not understand *shook*, even if she read it accurately. Analyzing running records with a LR lens can enable teachers to identify what might be taught during an ELD lesson while focusing on comprehension rather than accuracy during reading instruction.

Contractions

Some multilingual students seemed not to notice contractions, reading it for it’s, I for I’ll, and that for that’s. Other students read two complete words instead of the contraction, such as *I am* instead of *I’m* and *I will* for *I’ll*, whereas still others did the opposite, reading the contractions instead of the two words (e.g., *won’t* instead of *will not*). In Figure 5, a student reading *I Feel Like a Dummy* by Judith Nadell (2009) said *was* for *wasn’t* and *did* for *didn’t*; therefore, she likely did not comprehend this page as intended.

Impact on Comprehension. Some LR contraction approximations likely affected comprehension, such as *can’t* for *can*, *wouldn’t* for *would*, and *did* for *don’t*. At other times, the contraction may not have significantly affected understanding, such as *I go* instead of *I’ll go*. Noting where learners are in the process of learning contractions is helpful for book selection and considering whether or not focusing on contractions at a particular moment in time would be most helpful for a particular student. Incorporating a language lens helps teachers to not overemphasize visual information and to consider the student’s language and literacy holistically when conferencing or planning instruction.

Prepositions

Multilingual students commonly mixed prepositions that shared some visual information, such as *on* and

Figure 5
Example of a Multilingual Student With an Emerging Understanding of Contractions

I Feel Like a Dummy, level 13, 211 words																																	
p. 4	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>was</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td> </tr> <tr> <td>But</td><td>Victor</td><td>wasn’t</td><td>proud</td><td>of</td><td>his.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>did</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td><td>✓</td> </tr> <tr> <td>His</td><td>snowflake</td><td>didn’t</td><td>look</td><td>like</td><td>a</td><td>snowflake!</td><td>Victor</td><td>was</td><td>upset.</td> </tr> </table>	✓	✓	was	✓	✓	✓	But	Victor	wasn’t	proud	of	his.	✓	✓	did	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	His	snowflake	didn’t	look	like	a	snowflake!	Victor	was	upset.
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in, of and for, and to and at. Sometimes the student monitored, knowing the preposition was incorrect, but was unable to self-correct. For example, one student read *for* for *around*, noticed the visual difference, and made multiple attempts to fix it but was unable to. In Figure 6, a student reading *Danny Looks for Abby* by Mia Coulton (2002) used the pictures (meaning) to determine the prepositions, saying *around* for *behind* on page 5, *under* for *behind* on page 6, and *under* for *in* on page 7. Note that the student successfully read *in* on page 4 when it matched her oral language. Although more attention needs to be given to visual information, she may not need to be retaught the individual word *in*.

Impact on Comprehension. Prepositions show relations, such as time, place, direction, and with whom or what, so they can be important for comprehension. In this study, the impact of preposition approximations is unclear. Prepositions can be challenging for multilingual students (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005), as they perform many functions in English and the choice of preposition often seems

arbitrary (e.g., why do we get *on* a plane or bus but *in* a car?). When a multilingual student read *to* for *at*, or vice versa, or *into* for *onto*, it may not have affected comprehension and the student may not yet have been able to identify that the sentence was not structurally standard. Examining running records with a language lens enables teachers to consider the importance of LR approximations and respond in ways that are appropriate for the student's current literacy and language proficiency.

Plural -s on Nouns

Multilingual students read the singular instead of the plural, such as *flower* for *flowers* and *duck* for *ducks*. Students who speak languages that add -s to denote a plural (e.g., Spanish) are likely to acquire the plural -s in English sooner than students who speak languages that mark plurals in other ways, such as Mandarin and Japanese (Luk & Shirai, 2009). As Figure 7 shows, when reading *Ready for Lift Off* by Rachel Walker (2006), a multilingual student read *suit*, *helmet*, and *boot* instead of their plural forms.

Figure 6
Example of a Multilingual Student Using Meaning to Approximate Prepositions

Danny Looks for Abby, level 9, 120 words	
p. 4	✓ I ✓ looked ✓ in ✓ the ✓ shed. ✓ She ✓ was ✓ not ✓ there.
p. 5	✓ I ✓ looked ✓ around ✓ the ✓ shed. ✓ She ✓ was ✓ not ✓ there. ✓ Where ✓ was ✓ Abby?
p. 6	✓ I ✓ looked ✓ under ✓ the ✓ garbage ✓ can. ✓ She ✓ was ✓ not ✓ there.
p. 7	✓ I ✓ looked ✓ under ✓ the ✓ bushes. ✓ She ✓ was ✓ not ✓ there. ✓ Where ✓ was ✓ Abby?

Figure 7
Example of a Multilingual Student Omitting the Plural -s Marker

Ready for Lift-off, level 4, 45 words	
p. 2	✓ We ✓ put ✓ on ✓ our ✓ space ✓ suit suits.
p. 4	✓ We ✓ put ✓ on ✓ our ✓ helmet helmets.
p. 6	✓ We ✓ put ✓ on ✓ our ✓ boot boots.

Impact on Comprehension. The impact of leaving off the plural -s is difficult to determine and largely depends on the context. For example, the student who read *three bear* instead of *three bears* likely knows there are three. Other instances are less clear, and each student may interpret the text differently.

Instructional Implications for Teachers

This section provides suggestions for using running records more effectively with multilingual students, shares ideas for small-group reading instruction, and suggests ways to support students’ comprehension.

A Second Look at Running Record Patterns

After teachers do a traditional analysis of the meaning, structure, and visual information used (Clay, 2013), we suggest reanalyzing running records through a language lens to look for LR approximations:

- Tolds that were necessary because of unknown vocabulary or unfamiliar syntax
- Verb tense approximations
- Contractions

- Prepositions
- Plural -s approximations
- Other patterns of approximations that you think might be language related

Identifying LR reading approximations and differentiating them from other types of errors could lead to more efficient, effective, and equitable teaching. The Analysis of Language-Related Approximations Tool (see Figure 8) is intended to help teachers analyze running records with a language lens. We suggest collaborating with a colleague the first few times you complete this analysis.

Sometimes it may appear that a multilingual student is not looking to the end of a word. Instead, the “error” may be a LR approximation. Check to see if the student is consistently leaving off verb endings and/or the plural -s but is reading to the end of other words. If so, it is possible that the “errors” are LR approximations instead of evidence of incomplete looking. The teaching would differ significantly depending on whether the error pattern is language related. If it is, the teacher might say, “Books say it this way.” Or, for students with more

Figure 8
Analysis of Language-Related (LR) Approximations Tool

Student _____ Date _____					
Text _____ Level _____ Fluency _____					
Accuracy rate _____ Accuracy excluding repeated LR approximations that did <i>not</i> affect meaning _____					
Type of LR approximation	Examples of approximations	Was meaning affected? (yes, no, unsure)	What source(s) of information was used?	What source(s) of information was neglected?	Other/ comments
Tolds					
Unknown vocabulary or familiar words used in new ways; structure					
Verb tense					
<i>(come/came, "look-ed"/looked)</i>					
Contractions					
<i>(I'm, doesn't)</i>					
Prepositions					
<i>(in/on, to/at)</i>					
Plural -s					
<i>(flower/flowers)</i>					

experience with English, the teacher may offer two alternatives and ask which sounds better. (Note that it is not helpful to ask if something sounds right if the student is unfamiliar with the structure or vocabulary word.) However, if the student is not looking through the word, the teacher might focus on left-to-right scanning of visual information and say, “Look at that word again and check it with your eyes,” or “Run your finger under that word and try again.”

A Second Look at Accuracy Rates

Although we must follow the specific rules of the benchmark assessments, consider calculating the accuracy rate with and without LR approximations during daily formative assessment. For example, if a multilingual student makes 10 errors on a 100-word text but eight of those errors are LR verb approximations, such as saying *come* for *comes* or *run* for *runs*, a teacher may want to calculate the accuracy rate two different ways:

1. Using the standard way, 10 errors out of 100 words equals 90% accuracy.
2. Count all instances of the same type of LR approximations (in this case, leaving off the inflection -s on verbs) as one. That would be two other errors plus one -s verb LR approximation (instead of eight), which equals three errors, or 97%. Does that mean the text was “easy”? Maybe not; it would depend on other factors, such as how the reading sounded and how well the student understood the text.

The two accuracy calculations give teachers a range of accuracy that takes a multilingual student’s language proficiency into account. A teacher can then decide to possibly use a higher-level text and provide more language scaffolding in the book introduction. This type of out-of-the-box thinking can help prevent students from being held back in reading. With multilingual students being overrepresented in special education (Harry & Klinger, 2006), identifying LR approximations and using an accuracy range may help us think more deeply about who we recommend for special education services and why.

A Second Look at Book Selection and Scaffolding

Consistent observation and notation of oral language (vocabulary and sentence structure) will allow a

teacher to become increasingly familiar with a student’s language patterns. Although many teachers know that multilingual students’ writing is evidence of their language patterns, their running records can be another lens into their language and literacy acquisition progress. For example, if the student does not control the third-person singular -s in her speech, she may struggle to read the final -s on verbs. This knowledge may affect a teacher’s book choice or introduction. If neglecting the final -s is a pattern but the student looks to the end of other words, a teacher may choose to ignore it in the moment to focus on comprehension, and teach -s explicitly in a designated ELD lesson.

Two students at the same reading level may have very different language needs. We must not group all multilingual students into one set of instructional guidelines, just as we cannot group all English speakers into one group. This study focused on Spanish speakers, so recommendations would need reconsideration for students with a different home language. In all cases, instruction should relate to the unique language development of each student. Multilingual students should also have the opportunity to select their own books at some point in the day, and a classroom library that includes culturally relevant books by authors with diverse backgrounds may increase students’ interest in reading (Moses, 2015).

For example, if a teacher knows that a multilingual student will not have significant background knowledge about ocean animals, he or she may choose not to use *A Treasure Island* until after teaching a unit on that topic, or he or she may choose to build the student’s vocabulary and background knowledge in a book introduction. Both options take the student’s current language knowledge into account and provide for opportunities to learn new language.

Teachers can provide a book introduction that scaffolds tricky language and consider language and level in book introductions. A book introduction might include familiar words that are used in new or different ways as well as unfamiliar vocabulary and tricky language structures, and the teacher may ask the student to practice new or unfamiliar language (Clay, 2005). At first, students should hear and practice saying new language structures before being asked to read or write them (Clay, 2004). Students may need to hear the correct language multiple times before being expected to produce it independently.

For example, a book introduction for *A Treasure Island* might include an explanation of the multiple-meaning word *pool* and its meaning as a tide pool. Other early readers begin questions with high-frequency words such as *is*, *do*, and *can*. A student may know the word *can* in one context (“I can play”) but not expect to see it at the beginning of a sentence (“Can you play?”). Teachers can use students’ oral language, writing, or previous running records to determine what to include in a book introduction.

Flexibility with language develops over time, and reading is one way to provide students with exposure to new language structures and vocabulary. As students become increasingly proficient in English, they encounter more complex structures, so new approximations may occur; this is a sign of progress (Schleppegrell & Go, 2007).

Using Both Language and Literacy to Check for Understanding

Simple conversations about books will often provide a lot of information about what a student did and did not understand (Clay, 2013). In addition, analyzing running records for LR approximations can help a teacher identify potential sources of misunderstanding. Teachers can ask themselves five questions about how a student’s language influenced their reading:

1. How do the tols inform me about the student’s language? For example, if a vocabulary word is new, does the student have their concept in another language, or is the concept new as well (e.g., *tide pool*)?
2. Are the verb tenses confusing? If a student is misreading verb endings, ask questions that make her think about what action is happening to whom and when (past, present, future). Conversations about text can help build language and comprehension. Discussions about verb tense rules, however, typically do not help and can be done in another part of the day, such as ELD.
3. Were the contraction or preposition approximations important for understanding? For example, if a student read *does* instead of *doesn’t*, he or she might have misunderstood the text. However, the common approximation *in* for *on* (and vice versa) may be less likely to lead to confusion. Checking in about the story related to these particular approximations might shed light on students’ understandings.
4. Am I emphasizing understanding or accuracy? Applications of SLA theory have shown that some aspects of multilingual students’ language develops in a somewhat predictable fashion. Knowing this can help teachers focus on what is important at a specific time in a student’s language and literacy development. When accuracy is emphasized over fluency and comprehension, a student’s understanding of the text may be hindered (Pikulski & Chard, 2005).
5. Can the student understand my teacher language? Clay (2013) reminded us to adapt the complexity of our own language so it is understandable to students. Consider whether you are asking understandable questions that allow multilingual students to show what they know.

Because the goal of reading is to comprehend text, always ask yourself, What did the student understand, and how do I know? In most cases, asking students to retell or asking a few open-ended questions will give you a better idea of what they understood.

Limitations and Conclusion

As with any study, it is important to clarify what this study does *not* tell us. For instance, one limitation is the sole focus on Spanish-speaking multilingual students, who compose 71% of the United States’ English learners (Ruiz Soto, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015). Teachers often have students from multiple language backgrounds; although the patterns between different linguistic groups and different individual students may differ, the need to consider the role of students’ language in their literacy development is consistent. Finally, when analyzing running records, teachers must use their observational skills to infer students’ processing (Afflerbach, 2016); the process is reliant on noticing patterns.

It is critical that we begin to use running records and other formative assessments in culturally relevant, assets-oriented ways (Kabuto, 2016), such as taking a second look at the concept of reading “errors” and reframing them as LR approximations when the student’s reading differs from the text because of linguistic differences. A language lens helps teachers simultaneously identify what might be taught during a designated ELD lesson and focus on comprehension rather than accuracy during reading instruction. Using the analysis tool in this

TAKE ACTION!

1. Talk with colleagues about how running records are being used at your school.
2. Begin to analyze running records with a language lens using the Analysis of Language-Related Approximations Tool (see Figure 8).
3. Use the analysis to think about book selection, book introductions, and the type of scaffolding to use.
4. Observe results on an ongoing basis, and continue to adjust instruction.

article and the five questions given will help teachers think more deeply about how to guide instruction from a strengths-based orientation and perceive multilingualism as an asset.

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