

Pigeonhole Questions and Comments
Paper 5. Heritage & Bailey

Q: Could you briefly describe how the data were collected?

A: Sessions were conducted one-on-one with an interviewer in English and took place in a quiet room or hallway on school grounds during the school day. Each session was audio recorded. The explanation data were generated using a task that was designed to elicit language for either a social routine (i.e., teeth cleaning) or mathematical reasoning. Specifically, for the mathematics explanations, the students were expected to interact with mathematical concepts of counting and cardinality and express their reasoning orally. Students were presented with a quantity of Unifix cubes (plastic interlocking blocks) and asked to find the total number of cubes. After providing an answer, students were asked to respond orally to a series of prompts that culminated in the elicitation of explanations analyzed for this study, namely “Pretend you are talking to a classmate who has never done this activity. When you're ready, tell him/her how to use the cubes to find out how many there are and why using the cubes this way helps him/her. The language and cognitive demands associated with this prompt are deliberately designed to be decontextualized, requiring students to explain their process to a hypothetical student who was not present to witness their completion of the task.

Q: Doesn't your notion of planning eliminate student-initiated learning, student-centered learning, or student democracy, recognizing that a student's built in syllabus is unpredictable?

A: I'm assuming this question refers to planning for assessment and I don't believe that it eliminates any of the above. Teachers need to be intentional about gathering evidence of learning as it is developing and to do so, they need to have clear learning goals and criteria about what successful learning entails. Evidence of language learning comes from interaction or purposeful written work, which students can initiate. Interaction is student centered because the students are the drivers of the interaction and with clear goals and criteria students can judge their own learning status and provide feedback to others, which is consistent with student democracy.

Q: With the perspective of learning progressions, why would you be limited to only planned assessments? Why wouldn't a teacher also want to capitalize on learnable spontaneous moments?

A: In the reference to planned assessment, we are not referring to assessment as an instrument which the plural “assessments” in the question implies. Rather, we conceptualize assessment as evidence gathering during the course of teaching and learning that provides both teachers and learners with information about how learning is developing. When teachers intentional about attending to learning as it is developing, they are in fact generating teachable moments. This does not preclude evidence arising spontaneously from what students are saying or writing.

Q: What were the criteria to classify the students' explanation responses into 4 levels in your profession model?

A: The features in each explanation were coded by trained graduate assistants as being at one of four points on a progression: Not evident (i.e., not yet detectable, may use only language from the prompt, or non-English response), Emergent (i.e., occurs infrequently/intermittently; incomplete; no repertoire of types), Developing (i.e., occurs more often; more complete; a small repertoire of types), to Controlled (i.e., occurs where expected or in obligatory contexts; complete; broad repertoire of types; most often used accurately) Note that conventional or accurate usage is not taken into account while language is still emergent or developing, in line with notions of “flawed” language being anticipated at these phases of development (e.g., Valdés, 2005).

Q: Can you give some examples about teachers' understanding of DLLP and interpretation and use of student discourses in terms of student learning progression?

A: Teachers focused on discourse connectors to help students connect ideas in written and oral discourse in both ELA and math. Teachers used the learning progression as a framework for interpreting their evidence of student discourse and making decisions about next steps to develop discourse. All the teachers we worked with reported that the DLLP assisted them to increase their understanding of discourse features and to be intentional about focusing on student discourse.

Q: How does stamina fit under "discourse"?

A: It is evidence of a mental model with use of sufficient detail and elaboration for the listener to make meaning - consequently it requires organization of language beyond the level of the word or sentence.

For more information on the DLLP:

The Role of Language Learning Progressions in Improved Instruction and Assessment of English Language Learners (pages 480-506) Alison L. Bailey and Margaret Heritage

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