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# 2022 Language Assessment Research Conference

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## Plenary – Alison Bailey

**Evolution  
of the  
academic  
language**



**construct: Impact on assessment of English  
proficiency in the classrooms of K-12 emergent**

# bilinguals

Sponsored by Educational Testing Service (ETS)

*Friday, September 16, 9:30-10:30am*

## Plenary Abstract

Much has changed since the seminal work of Cummins brought K-12 educators' attention to differences between the features of language used for academic content learning in formal classroom environments and the features of language more often used in informal, casual interaction. While considerations of how language might differ lexically, syntactically and organizationally inside and outside classrooms have had great influence on how we understand language usage in academic contexts, this formulation can be limiting. New speakers of English who are learning English alongside their L1 may draw on all their available linguistic and semiotic resources to make meaning. This presentation will trace how the academic language construct has evolved since that initial introduction of cognitive academic language proficiency and how it has been influenced by two key developments: 1) inclusion of disciplinary discourse practices inherent within academic content instruction (e.g., math, science) in current K-12 English language development standards, and 2) criticism of the academic language construct as unreflexively hegemonic. Both have drawn much needed attention to the communicative repertoires of emergent bilingual students that can be used as linguistic assets in the K-12 classroom and as meaningful targets of language assessment.

## Speaker Bio

Alison L. Bailey is Professor and Division Head of Human Development and Psychology in the Department of Education, University of California, Los

Angeles. As a developmental psycholinguist, her expertise includes developing language learning progressions with multilingual and English learners, and supporting teachers' academic language pedagogy and assessment practices. She has published widely in these areas, most recently in *Elementary School Journal*, *Narrative Inquiry*, *Language Testing*, *Language and Education*, *Theory into Practice*, *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, and *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*. Her latest book is *Progressing Students' Language Day by Day* (2019, Corwin Press). She is currently PI of three U.S. Department of Education funded ExCeL Peer Network projects focused on teacher professional learning with multilingual learners, and Co-PI of NSF and W.T. Grant Foundation grants. She is a co-author of the National Academy of Sciences' STEM and English Learners report, a member of the NAEP Standing Committee on Reading, co-chair of the NCME Classroom Assessment Committee, and a technical advisory committee member of several states and assessment organizations.

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