Relevant Issues Surrounding the Assessment of English Language Learning Children Suspected of Primary Language Impairment

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Agenda

• Disproportionality

• Guiding Principles: IDEA, ADE, and ASHA

• Survey

• Formal measures

• Informal measures

• Clinical uses of the BESA (Jessica)

• Family Perceptions of the IEP process (Alejandra).
My Research/Clinical Goals

1. Determine ‘how’ ELL kids are being referred and assessed in various districts nationwide.

2. Work with SLPs and district administrators in establishing best assessment practices.
My Research/Clinical Goals

• District administrators tend to be concerned about over- and under-identification of ELL kiddos...i.e. disproportionality.
Disproportionality

Definition:
Disproportionality exists when a group is in special education at a higher rate than the population average.

Federal databases show a statistically significant over-representation of language minority students, in comparison to English-only students, receiving speech and language therapy in the United States (Mullen & Schooling, 2010).
Disproportionality

The U.S. Census Bureau (2015) reports:

• By 2020 ethnically diverse kids 18 and under will comprise 50% of the U.S. population.

• By 2030 nearly 40% of kids 18 and under will speak a language other than English in the home.

Thus.....the challenge will be how best to conduct non-biased, ecologically valid assessments as the number of ELL school-aged children we assess increases.
Guiding Principles

In order to designate how ELL children with suspected speech-language impairment are assessed and treated, ASHA has put forth ethical guidelines:

Principle of Ethics 1, Rule E:

“...While providing services to linguistically diverse individuals may require the assistance of trained interpreters or other bilingual professionals, it is the responsibility of the professional to understand the influence of issues related to cultural and linguistic diversity (e.g., bilingualism). Ultimately, the professional is responsible for the appropriate diagnosis and treatment of speech and language disorders” (ASHA, 2013).
Guiding Principles

In addition ASHA’s *Key Points on Bilingual Service Delivery* indicate, “...use culturally and linguistically adapted test equivalents in both languages to compare potential deficits.” (ASHA, 2015).
Guiding Principles

IDEA - Assessments and other evaluation materials are administered “in the form most likely to yield accurate information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally.”

i.e. vary from standard testing procedures, when necessary.
Guiding Principles

In sum, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), Office of Civil Rights (OCR), Individuals with Disabilities in Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), and Preferred Practices of ASHA uniformly recommend the administration of speech-language assessments to ELL students in their L1 and English (L2).
Research Data

• Three records abstraction studies...
  
  – Found evidence of inconsistent patterns of assessment: An over-reliance on formal measures and minimal use of informal measures including parent interview data as well as use of interpreters.
Assessment Study - 2013

Data from a records review of ELL Latino students receiving speech-language services.

I reviewed the speech-language assessment reports of ALL Latino ELL students in one small district in California.

The district admin was as interested as I in understanding how students were assessed.

The district had been identified as having a disproportionate number of ELL students in SPED.
Assessment Study - 2013

I found that 69 out of the 70 ELL students in speech were assessed solely by way of standardized assessment tools.

Sixty (60) cases students were assessed in one language (L1 or L2) rather than both as suggested by IDEA, ASHA, and the California Department of Education.

Four (4) students were placed in a speech-language intervention program on the basis of a single CELF-4 sub-test score.

Four (4) were given language goals on the basis of articulation testing.
Assessment Study - 2013

Ten (10) were placed in speech with no consideration to primary language status and a majority without the support of an interpreter (n=69).

Considering these assessment practices may be questionable there is possibility that some of these students may indeed present with a language difference rather than language disorder
What we know...

• ELL children with SLI often present deficits in their first and second languages (Peña, Iglesias, & Lidz, 2001; Restrepo & Kruth, 2000).

• Paradis (2005) found that ELL children show similar characteristics to children with SLI when assessed by language tests that are not valid, reliable, and free of bias.

• Typically developing students learning English may be diagnosed as having a language disorder when, in reality, they are showing signs of typical second language.
Audience Survey

If you are mono-lingual English speaker (or do not speak the language of the bilingual child) which method do you use?

- Standardized tests in primary language (if Spanish) and English.
- Translated tests.
- Non-standardized measures in English.
- Non-standardized measures in all languages.
Audience Survey

Do you use information processing tasks?

Which types?
Audience Survey

Do you use an interpreter during your assessment?

If so, how?

- Test administration.
- Translating tests.
- Informal measures.
- Parent/caregiver interview.

Do you find the information gleaned useful?

Does your district provide interpreters?
Audience Survey

Does your district mandate (prefer) you use standardized assessments?

Have you felt pressured to use these tests?
Audience Survey

After concluding the assessment of an ELL student how confident are you with your final diagnosis?
ASHA Survey

Do you conduct speech-language assessments in languages other than English?

No - a bilingual speech-language pathologist conducts all of my non-English assessments. (n=121).

Yes - (n=95)
ASHA Survey

Do you use information processing tasks as part of your assessment?

No (n=171)

Yes (n=41)
ASHA Survey

During times when you are a member of an assessment team, do you feel pressure to use standardized tools?

Yes - (n=120)
No - (n=80)
ASHA Survey

Does your district mandate you to use standardized assessment tools when assessing ELL students?
Yes - (n=93)
No  - (n=104)
ASHA Survey

During your graduate program, did you have coursework dedicated to the assessment of ELL students?

Yes - (n=68)
No - (n=132)
ASHA Survey

Do you believe that it is important that SLP programs require coursework in the area of assessing ELL students?

No (n=15)
Yes (n=188)
ASHA Survey

Do you believe that it is important that Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology programs require coursework in the area of assessment of ELL students?

Yes - (n=182)
No - (n=15)
ASHA Survey

Do you feel the issue of non-biased assessment of ELL students is important to study in our field?

No (n=3)

Yes (n=198)
Formal Measures

There are several Spanish versions of translated standardized tests, but these possess several psychometric problems.

Normed on mono-lingual Spanish-speaking children...not bilinguals!

Issues with dialect may come into play.
Formal Measures

To date, the BESA is the only culturally-appropriate test for Spanish-English speaking children residing in the U.S.

The normative sample is comprised of typically-developing bilingual Spanish-English speaking children from a variety of bilingual environments.
Jessica’s Study
Informal Assessment Recommendations

- Modifications to formal tests.
- The use of trained and skilled interpreters.
- In-depth parent/caregiver interview (including L1 exposure and use).
- Information processing tasks.
- Dynamic assessment.
- Language Sampling.
- Narrative skills in each language.
- Review of student portfolio data.
Modifications to Formal Tests

Considerations in Test Administration (Roseberry-McKibbin).

• Provide instructions in all languages.
• Use an interpreter or relative....
• Rephrase confusing instructions.
• Give extra examples to assure student understands the task.
• Repeat when necessary.
• If student answers incorrectly ask them to explain (and record) their explanations.
• Continue testing after the ceiling.
• Devote more than one session to assessment.
• Use a ‘dual’ scoring system: the score the child receives using the test manual and the score using responses in both languages.
Interpreters

• You can use interpreters to:
  • Gain information from parents/caregivers.
  • Conduct a brief “language” sample.
  • Be present and demonstrate each task.
Interpreters

• Make sure interpreters are well-trained and understand the purpose of the assessment if they are going to be involved in language sampling and/or assessing vocabulary.
Interpreters

• It would be ideal if interpreters are trained by the school district on characteristics of speech-language disorders, their role during the assessment and team meetings, terminology, etc.
Interpreters

It is important to supervise (and guide) the interpreter during all components of the assessment.

You can have the interpreter watch for:

- Delays in responses
- Use of gestures to replace words
- Perseveration, confusion
- Distractibility
- Speech and language errors in L1 and L2
Interpreters

Alejandra will present on parent perceptions of interpreters during the IEP process....
Parent Questionnaires


Child English as a Second Language Resource Centre: [http://www.chesl.ualberta.ca](http://www.chesl.ualberta.ca)
Parent Questionnaires

Language experience classification

(Peña, Gillam, Bedore, & Bohman, 2011)

**Functional monolingual English (FME)**
- 80% or more English input-output

**Bilingual English dominant (BED)**
- 60%–80% English input-output

**Balanced bilingual (BL)**
- 40%–60% input-output in each language

**Bilingual Spanish dominant (BSD)**
- 60%–80% Spanish input-output

**Functional monolingual Spanish (FMS)**
- 80% or more Spanish input-output.
## Language experience classification

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___hrs hear L1
___hrs hear L1
___% input

___hrs speak L1
___hrs speak L2
___% output

Average to calculate total
Information Processing Tasks

• Research has suggested that students with true LI have difficulty retaining the sequential order of information.

• LI students have specific difficulties on tasks that require verbatim, immediate ordered recall.

• IP tasks circumvent problems associated with the bias in formal assessment tools.
Information Processing Tasks

Subtests of the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing

1. Memory for Digits.
2. Non-word Repetition.
3. Rapid Digit Naming.
5. Rapid Color Naming.
Information Processing Tasks - Research

• Stokes, Wong, Fletcher, & Leonard (2006). Non-word repetition and sentence repetition as clinical markers of specific language impairment: The case of Cantonese.


• These researchers found that Spanish-speaking students with reading disabilities performed poorly on Spanish short-term memory tasks...They concluded that word memory in the primary language predicts growth in second language reading
Information Processing Tasks - Research


• Retrieved 846 published studies on this topic for their meta-analysis; analyzed 28 of them...

• A strong and striking finding across studies...

• *Children with LI performed significantly poorer than age-matched typically-developing peers on non-word repetition tasks.*

• The group difference increased as the complexity of non-words increased.
Information Processing Tasks - Research

• Guiberson & Rodriguez (2013; *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*) compared non-word repetition skills of 3-5 year old Spanish-speaking children... some were LI and others typically-developing.

• The authors administered a Spanish non-word repetition task to both groups (3 to 5 non-word strings were used).

• LI children had non-word repetition scores that were significantly below those of typically-developing children.

• Conclusion: Non-word repetition tasks successfully differentiated between LI and typically-developing Spanish-speaking 3-5 year olds.
Information Processing Tasks

• According to Gutierrez-Clellen and Simon-Cereijido (2010) the clinical accuracy of non-word repetition tasks varies depending on the language(s) tested.

• Performance appeared to be related to individual differences in language use and exposure and importantly findings do not support a monolingual approach to the assessment of bilingual children with non-word repetition tasks, even if children appear fluent speakers in the language of testing.

• Non-word repetition may assist in the screening of Latino children if used bilingually and in combination with other clinical measures.
Information Processing Tasks

Roseberry-McKibbin (2014)

Reproducible Form 12.1 – Information Processing Tasks for ELLs.

IP tasks should only be used in combination with other assessment measures in BOTH languages.
Dynamic Assessment

DA is very similar to RtI...

We test a certain skill, teach that skill (if needed), and determine whether the child is able to learn that skill with ‘minimal’ mediation.

The idea is to determine whether a child will be able to learn via instruction.

A child with a language impairment in L1 will struggle even when explicit instructions are given.

Testing the limits:

• The goal is to find out what children can do and what they know.
  – i.e. during testing children may be provided with feedback, including explanations to help them understand why specific responses weren’t correct.

• They may be asked to explain how they arrived at some of their answers. This can help children understand why they are making mistakes so that they can self-correct.
Test-teach-retest:

• Initial testing is used to determine what the child knows and what the child does not know.

• Intervention focuses on teaching unknown items. The child is retested to see whether or not he or she has learned the newly-taught information.

• In other words, the child’s **modifiability** is evaluated. If the child requires considerably more support that peers from a similar culture and linguistic background, then the child may have an underlying LI.

• This format supported by researchers to hold the most promise for fair and accurate assessment of ELLs suspected of having LIs.
Dynamic Assessment

• Pro: DA evaluates a student’s ability to learn when provided with instruction. Not static like formal assessments!

• Con: While there are several studies demonstrating the potential for DA, SLPs will need to develop such approaches.

• There are tons of materials on Teacherspayteachers and Pintrest websites but I am not aware of materials being presented in other than English.

• In sum..

• Students with LI usually need more prompts, modeling, and repetition that their TD peers.

• Students with LI give responses that are off-topic or irrelevant...also show off task behaviors.

• Strategies that have worked with TD ELL students may not be effective with students who have LI....these students need a more ‘customized’ approach.
Dynamic Assessment

- There are several research articles explaining how to conduct DA:
  - Dynamic Assessment of Word Learning Skills by Kapantzoglou, Restrepo, & Thompson (2012).
DA – Video Links

- Elizabeth Pena
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChKF2OIszbw&list=PL513541E032A793B2

- Catherine Crowley
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VpdteTkpaQ
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQpYEM8MlBI
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZABNUzpaal4
Language Sampling

• Follow typical language sampling protocol.

• Obtain a sample in both languages.

• Ask a bilingual SLP or knowledgeable professional who speaks the primary language to listen to the sample and give their impressions.

• Remember that grammatical errors in English may be the results of language transfer from L1.
Language Sampling

The SALT 2010: bilingual SE Version (Miller & Iglesias, 2010).

http://www.saltsoftware.com/salt/softwareproducts/
Language Sampling

- Roseberry-McKibbin (2014)

- Reproducible Form 12.2 – Informal Measure of Oral Language Skills for ELLs.
DA - Fictional Narratives

Wordless books - Mayer and Mayer’s *One Frog Too Many* and *Frog, Where Are You?* Familiar plot – easy point of reference.

Develop *who, what, where, when* and *why* questions prior assessment.

Provide a list of transition words:

- First, second, next, after that, finally...(If appropriate provide some idioms).

Wordless book data sheet.
DA – Fictional Narratives

Tell the story and have the list of “Wh” questions and transition words available for the student.

– Similar to reading to students except you teach child to differentiate relevant and irrelevant information as well as how to formulate ideas more clearly.
Pre- and post-test gains can be obtained in five steps:

1. The student summarizes the story facts.
2. The student makes inferences about the story.
3. The student organizes the information they obtained and selects “best” inferences or the story facts.
4. The student evaluates their answers to the questions.
5. The student restates their answers with increased accuracy and precision.
DA – Fictional Narratives

• Roseberry-McKibbin (2014) - Reproducible Form 12.3 – Brief Narrative Assessment Checklist.

• Roseberry-McKibbin (2014) - Reproducible Form 12.4 – Comprehension of Narratives.
DA – Fictional Narratives

• The child can create a story, or the clinician can tell a story and ask the child to tell it back (150 words for 5-8 year olds).

  — Roseberry-Mckibbin (2014)
When the student tells a story - Roseberry-McKibbin (2014)

• Does she organize it in such a way that the listener understands the general story sequence?

• Does she give comments or explanations that are relevant or irrelevant to the story?

• If the student is re-telling a story originally told by the speech-language pathologist, does she remember both major and specific details?

• Does the student use appropriate syntax and vocabulary, even in L1?
So we know that..

• Assessment of children’s narrative skills is very promising for differentiating language difference from language disorder in ELL students.
Review of Portfolio Data

Review child’s classroom work.

– Samples of written student work, such as stories, completed forms, exercise sheets, and descriptions.

– Drawings representing student content knowledge and proficiencies.

– Tapes of oral work, such as role-playing, presentations, or an oral account of a trip.

– Teacher descriptions of student accomplishments, such as performance on oral tasks
Let’s look at some cases...
Case 1

Sheldon
Sheldon is a 5 year old kindergartener born in the U.S. His parents are first generation immigrants from Mexico. Only Spanish is spoken in the home; English only at school. Sheldon was fitted with binaural cochlear implants July 2013. He was assessed with English only assessments (PLS4, OWLS II, PPVT, EOQPVT). All of his standard scores were in the 50’s.

What ‘tools’ would you use?
Case 2

Penny
Penny is a 9 year old enrolled in 4th grade (English-only class) who emigrated from Mexico at the age of 5. Penny attended kindergarten in Arizona but moved in the middle of that year when her parents found better jobs in California. She has learned English quite well but her teacher reports that Penny struggles in reading comprehension and writing. She speaks Spanish to her parents and some relatives who live nearby, but she talks to her siblings in both English and Spanish.

What ‘tools’ would you use?
Case 3

Raj
Raj is a 13 year old enrolled in 8th grade who emigrated from Indian when he was 12. He was taught in both Urdu and English before moving to the U.S. He lives with his parents but has immediate family members (aunt, uncle and cousins) nearby. He spends most of his free time playing video games and watching TV. He reported that his cousins help him with English terms he misses when watching TV. Raj’s classroom teachers report that Raj struggles in all academic areas with math being his weakest area. Raj’s parents would like Raj’s speech and language assessed as they reported his Urdu being weak.

What ‘tools’ would you use?
In Summary...

- The assessment of ELL students requires a bit of artistry, science and patience.

- It is important to tailor the assessment to the ‘individualized’ needs of students.

- These practices will help you differentiate ‘disorder’ from ‘difference.’


