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Diversity within Second Language Learners

Jennifer Horos, Ed.S., N.C.S.P



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Disclosure Statement



- Jennifer Horos is an employee of The Stepping Stones Group.
- There are no other financial or non-financial relationships.

Purpose



School psychologists are expected to evaluate students from increasingly diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Due to the fact that students from diverse language backgrounds, especially those in the process of learning English, present with similar learning challenges as those who are suspected of having learning disabilities, school psychologists are faced with unique challenges. In order to meet the needs of their students, school psychologists must be prepared to identify common misconceptions among professionals with regard to language learning, identify cultural and language loading in the educational setting and assessment practices, and utilize tools and procedures that assist them in distinguishing between learning differences and learning disabilities within the ELL population.

Learning Objectives



- 1) Participants will recognize common misconceptions about language acquisition and language development as well as factors to be considered when supporting English Language Learners in multiple educational settings.
- 2) Participants will be able to identify cultural and language loading in both the educational setting and standardized assessment practices that continue to serve as impediments to nondiscriminatory assessment, personal growth, and academic success for diverse learners.
- 3) Participants will become familiarized with the most appropriate practices and tools as well as limitations with regard to assessment for learning disabilities and low incidence disabilities within the linguistically-diverse student population.

Introduction to English Language Learners and Language Development

- ★ What happens during Normal Language Acquisition
- ★ BICS vs. CALP
- ★ Common Problematic Misconceptions



What happens during Normal Language Acquisition?

- Interference/Transfer
- Silent Period
- Codeswitching
- Language Loss
- Accent, Dialect, Phonetic Patterns



Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)



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Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills are the language skills required for meaningful social interaction such as talking to peers in the cafeteria or playing on the playground.

These skills usually develop within six months to two years after a student begins learning a second language.



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Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)



Cognitive Academic Language is the language needed for academic and professional success related to listening, learning, reading, and writing.

On average, it takes 5-7 years to obtain “academic English,” which allows the student to compare and contrast, classify, evaluate, infer, and synthesize information presented in the classroom or read in a textbook.



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Common Misconceptions about language learning



- Effective instruction and assessment limitations are solely an issue of communicating in the student/examinee's native language
- Parents cannot do things at home that will teach/encourage learning strategies/skills
- Reading difficulty/difference is indicative of a SLD
- If students are able to speak with friends in social setting (i.e., recess) they should be able to understand academic lang and text
- ELL students should only read/write at home in English

None of these are true!

Common Outcome

(due to belief in the misconceptions)



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A student assumed to be proficient in English often performs poorly on standardized assessments when measured against English speaking peers...

While a student's social language may appear fluent and adequate in everyday conversation, professionals can often misinterpret the gap between social and academic language as a language-learning disability.

But a better explanation is BICS vs. CAL



Common Misconceptions about acculturation

- Simply by virtue of membership in a cultural group, a person will be able to deal with others of that population in a culturally competent way.
- That the Anglo or dominant culture is the U.S. culture, not simply a culture.
- That the key differences in culture are lifestyle, language, foods, and similar visible evidence of diversity, often taught in "diversity appreciation" classes in public schools.
- That cultural competence is something we each pick up, with time, by working with persons who are different from ourselves.
- That written information is more reliable, valid, and substantial than verbal information.

None of these are true!

Elliott, C., Adams, R., Ph.D, & Sockalingam, S., Ph.D. (2016, January 1). Multicultural Toolkit Summary. Retrieved November 19, 2018, from <http://www.awesomelibrary.org/multiculturaltoolkit-myths.html>

Support of English Language Learners: Cultural and Language Loading

Cultural Loading

The cultural load can be defined as the amount of culture-specific background knowledge embedded in a material.

The structure and design of intelligence and cognitive ability tests are actually based on the notion that there is an equivalent level of acculturation across the variables of age or grade for individuals on whom the test was standardized and on whom the test will be used.





Support of English Language Learners: Cultural and Language Loading (continued)

Language Loading

A language load is the amount a student is expected to comprehend instructions, formulate and verbalize responses, or otherwise use language ability in completing the expected task.



Tests of cognitive ability are constructed in ways that presume that a level of language proficiency is present in the average individual that is sufficient for the language load. When individuals who are not language disabled but are in fact limited in English proficiency or, for whatever reasons, are not developmentally equivalent in language proficiency to the norm group, the result will be bias.



Factors to be considered when supporting ELL students

Children in any given classroom may be very diverse both economically and culturally.

For this reason, it is often assumed that cultural factors in learning and assessment do not need to be considered in classrooms with diverse student population and/or within the ELL population.

FALSE! They do.



Factors to be considered (Continued) (Specific to Instruction)

Examples of cultural and linguistic loading in classroom practice:

- ★ verbal and written instructions,
- ★ background knowledge,
- ★ behavioral expectations,
- ★ social interaction and practice,
- ★ executive functioning skill development





Factors to be considered (Continued) (Specific to Family Involvement)



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If parents are not in contact with school officials and staff, it is not necessarily due to a lack of motivation or desire for involvement.

Rapport may be more challenging when a language and/or cultural barrier exists.

Factors may include:

- miscommunication due to language barrier,
- fear of disrespect towards authority figures, and
- parent prior school experience (or lack thereof).



It is important that a caregiver know and trust the person collecting the information in order for the results to have strong validity. At time, the team will need to work within the existing leadership structure of the community to develop a mutually acceptable method of collecting valid information. Team members may need to collect the information without pen in hand and in a comfortable place away from the informant's home or members of the home.

ASSESSMENT SPECIFICS: Most appropriate *practices* for assessing the linguistically-diverse student population



“NASP supports the rights of bilingual students who are referred for a psychoeducational evaluation to be assessed in their native languages when such evaluation will provide the most useful data to inform interventions. It should be noted that the use of ‘nonverbal’ tools or native language instruments are not automatic guarantees of reliable and valid data. Nonverbal tests rely on some form of effective communication between examiner and examinee, and may be as culturally loaded as verbal tests, thus limiting the validity of evaluation results.”



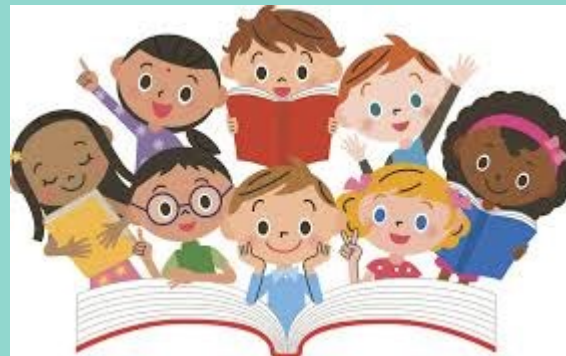
National Association of School Psychologists. (2015). The provision of school psychological services to bilingual students [Position statement]. Bethesda, MD: Author.

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ASSESSMENT SPECIFICS: Most appropriate *practices* for assessing the linguistically-diverse student population (continued)

“Furthermore, the norms for native language tests may not represent the types of ELLs typically found in U.S. schools, and very limited research exists on how U.S. bilingual students perform on tests in their native languages as opposed to English. Thus, collaboration among school, family, and community stakeholders will help improve evaluation practices and may assist in reducing potentially discriminatory assessment practices and inappropriate interpretation of test results.”



National Association of School Psychologists. (2015). The provision of school psychological services to bilingual students [Position statement]. Bethesda, MD: Author.



ASSESSMENT SPECIFICS: Most appropriate *practices*

Use caution with normative data



- ★ Unless a test were specifically normed with a sample of similar ELL children, the tests are still less accurate and valid for dual language learners who have been judged sufficiently fluent in English to be assessed in English.
- ★ Many normative samples have a smaller-than-expected representation of low-income and culturally or linguistically diverse population subgroups, as compared with the composition of the total population of young children.
- ★ For assessments targeted toward ELL populations, there also is the consideration as to whether the normative samples used were monolingual Spanish-speaking or bilingual children, or some combination of the two.

Espinosa, L. (2015, December 01). Assessment for Young ELLs: Strengths and Limitations in Current Practices. Retrieved from <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/assessment-young-ells-strengths-and-limitations-current-practices>

ASSESSMENT SPECIFICS: Most appropriate *tools* for assessing the linguistically-diverse student population

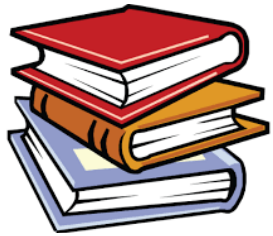
CHC Factors Assessed

Short Term Memory (Gsm);
Long Term Retrieval (Glr);
Fluid Reasoning (Gf);
Visual Spatial (Gv);
Crystallized Abilities (Gc);
Auditory Processing (Ga);
Processing Speed (Gs)



Cognitive test batteries KEEP IN MIND...

An evaluation of children with learning problems must consider measures of working memory, attention, executive function, and comprehension (listening and written), particularly for children who do not respond to intervention.



Commonly Used Tests with English Language Learners



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Test	Language(s)	CHC Factors
Woodcock Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities--Third Ed. (Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001).	English	Gsm; Glr; Gf; Gv; Gc; Ga; Gs
Bateria III Pruebas de Habilidades Cognitivas (Mather & Woodcock, 2005).	Spanish	Gc; Gf; Gsm; Glr; Ga; Gv; Gs
Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children -- Second Edition. (Kaufman & Kaufman, 2004).	~English ~Spanish Instructions ~Nonverbal	Gc; Gf; Gsm; Glr; Gv
Wechsler Intelligence Test for Children - Fifth Edition (Wechsler, 2014)	Available in: English & Spanish	Gc; Gf; Gsm; Gv; Gs; Glr
Differential Abilities Scale - Second Edition (Elliot, 2007)	~English ~Spanish-Instructions	Gc; Gf; Gsm; Glr; Ga; Gv

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Assessment Practices:

Evaluating DIFFERENCE vs. DISORDER



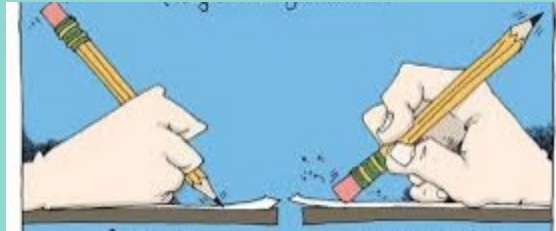
Nondiscriminatory interpretation: the examiner must be able to defend claims of test score construct validity.

“All scores should be interpreted with extreme caution” is not a defensible argument.

Assessment Practices:

Evaluating DIFFERENCE vs. DISORDER (continued)

“The usual purpose of testing is to identify deficits in ability (i.e., low scores)



Validity is more of a concern for low scores than average/higher scores because:

- Test performances in the average range are NOT likely a chance finding and strongly suggests average ability (i.e., no deficits in ability)*
- Test performances that are below average MAY be a chance finding because of experiential or developmental differences and thus do not automatically confirm below average ability (i.e., possible deficits in ability)”*

Ortiz, S. O., Ph.D. (2018, November 18). Assessment of English Language Learners for Specific Learning Disabilities: Language Development, Difference, and Disorder. Lecture presented at ODE/Cosa Special Education Annual Conference in Hilton Eugene 66 East 6th Avenue, Eugene, Oregon. Retrieved from <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/2015fallconference/evaluation.pdf>

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Assessment Practices:

Evaluating DIFFERENCE vs. DISORDER (continued)

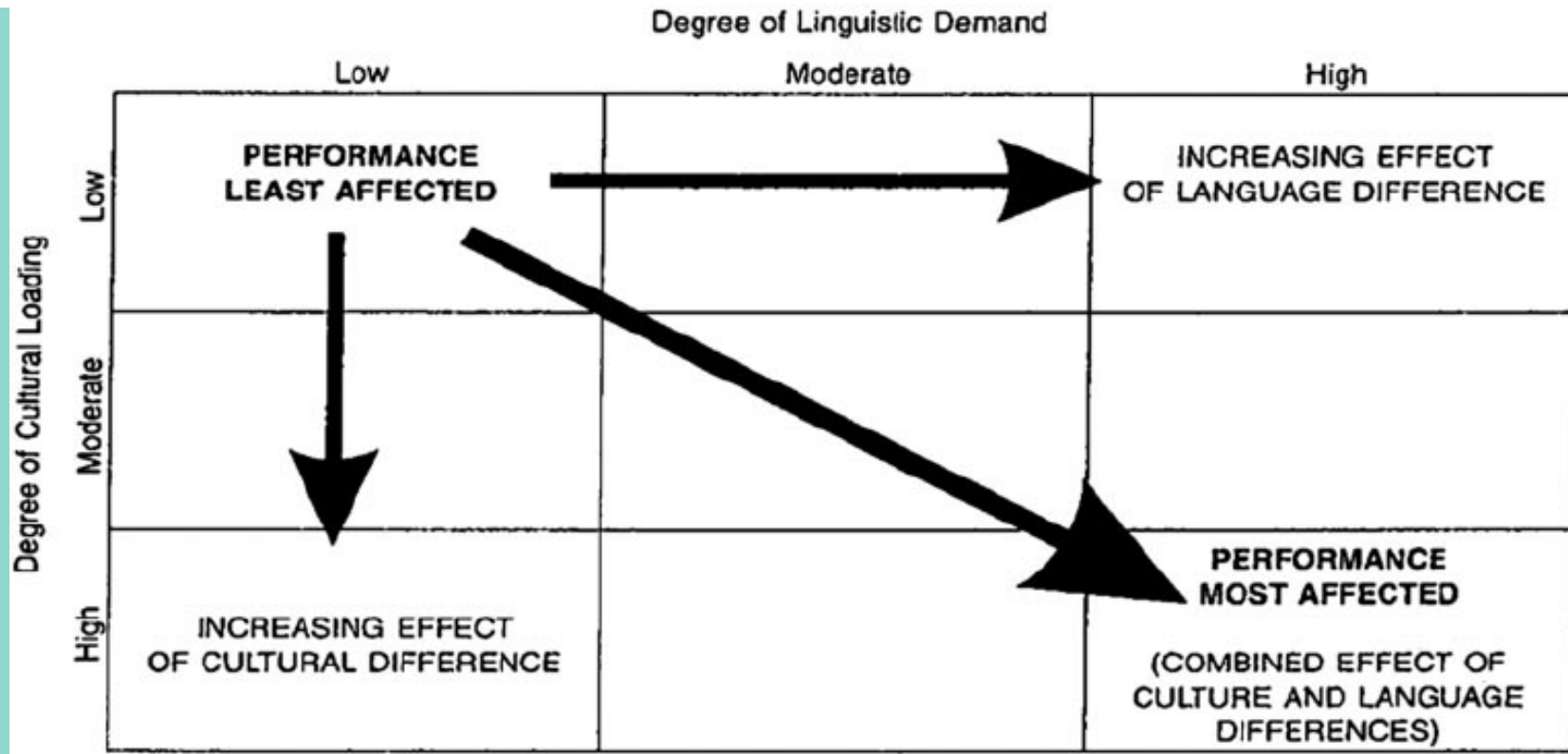
Recommendation: Evaluate test score validity utilizing research and research-based tools.

The Culture-Language Interpretive Matrix (C-LIM) can be a useful tool.





Culture-Language Interpretive Matrix (C-LIM)



Rhodes, R. L., Ochoa, S. H., & Ortiz, S. O. (2005). *Assessing culturally and linguistically diverse students: A practical guide*. New York: Guilford Press.

(PDF) Examination of the cross-battery approach for the cognitive assessment of children and youth from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228497938_Examination_of_the_cross-battery_approach_for_the_cognitive_assessment_of_children_and_youth_from_diverse_linguistic_and_cultural_backgrounds [accessed Nov 21 2018].

ASSESSMENT SPECIFICS (continued)

More on *Most Appropriate Practices*

- One cognitive assessment is almost always not enough.
Example: Referring to the table above = Since K-ABC does not include *Ga* and *Gs*, must have additional data.
- Use the C-LIM Culture-Language Interpretive Matrix – is there a clear decline in performance as a function of level of acculturation and English-language proficiency?



Assessment Practices: Evaluation for SLD

Cross battery assessment
is a ***necessity***
when the evaluator's objective is
to determine that deficits
(are not language-specific, and)
exist in both languages.





ASSESSMENT SPECIFICS

More on *Most Appropriate Practices* (continued)



Find out

“whether a disability exists that can account for the reported or observed problems”

Two main components considered when deciding whether or not eligibility criteria is met:

- 1) Presence of a psychological or physical deficiency
- 2) Evidence of substantial impairment in activities of daily life functioning, such as learning

ASSESSMENT SPECIFICS

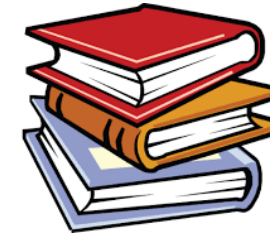
More on *Most Appropriate Practices* (continued)



Considerations:

- ★ Experiential background, including cultural and linguistic factors
[i.e., proficiency in the primary language, English development support in the family, community variables, response to intervention implementation, program of instruction (e.g., bilingual instruction/ELD supports)]
- ★ Nondiscriminatory analysis of the patterns seen in all of the data collected during assessment
- ★ Potential for school success. What is this student's average range? Is s/he capable of performing academically in accordance with what would be expected given what is known about her/his development, education, cultural, and linguistic background?
- ★ Is motivation a factor?
- ★ Life experiences, limits of acculturation, negative impact of cultural diversity

Review Questions for self-assessment:



- ★ What are some common misconceptions about language acquisition and language development?
- ★ What do we need to consider when supporting English Language Learners in multiple educational settings?
- ★ What is cultural loading?
- ★ What is and language loading?
- ★ What does cultural and language loading have to do with classroom instruction? What does cultural and language loading have to do with nondiscriminatory assessment?
- ★ What are appropriate practices and assessment tools with the linguistically-diverse student population?



Conclusion: Resources and Recommendations



~~~~~RECOMMENDED RESOURCE~~~~~

www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/diversity/cultural-competence/diversity-websites

~~~~~REFERENCES~~~~~

Elliott, C., Adams, R., Ph.D, & Sockalingam, S., Ph.D. (2016, January 1). Multicultural Toolkit Summary. Retrieved November 19, 2018, from <http://www.awesomelibrary.org/multiculturaltoolkit-myths.html>

Flanagan, D.P., Ortiz, S.O., Alfonso, V. C. (2007) Essentials of Cross Battery Assessment, Second Edition. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Klotz, M.B. & Canter, A., (2006, April) Culturally Competent Assessment and Consultation. Retrieved November 19, 2018, from <https://www.nasponline.org>

National Association of School Psychologists. (2015). The provision of school psychological services to bilingual students [Position statement]. Bethesda, MD: Author.

Conclusion:

Resources and Recommendations (continued)

Olvera, P., & Cerrillo-Gomez, L. (2010, March). A bilingual (English & Spanish) psychoeducational assessment MODEL grounded in Cattell-Horn Carroll (CHC) Theory: Introduction and application of MODEL through case study discussion. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the California Association of School Psychologists, Santa Clara, CA.

Ortiz, S. O., Ph.D. (2018, November 18). Assessment of English Language Learners for Specific Learning Disabilities: Language Development, Difference, and Disorder. Lecture presented at ODE/Cosa Special Education Annual Conference in Hilton Eugene 66 East 6th Avenue, Eugene, Oregon. Retrieved from <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/2015fallconference/evaluation.pdf>

Semrud-Clikeman, M. (2005). Neuropsychological aspects for evaluating learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 38(6), 563-568. Retrieved November 19, 2018.

Academy

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