

Question: Where can I get appropriate norms for a child who speaks Spanish at home and English at school?

Norms on language acquisition are available for English speakers and for Spanish speakers. Unfortunately, norms do not exist for students who speak Spanish at home and English at school. In part, no normative data are available because each child will differ in how they acquire and use two languages. When assessing a student who speaks English at school and Spanish at home, an SLP must understand how this child acquired two languages. In addition, the SLP

must be cognizant that the degree/spectrum of bilingualism is different for each individual. Consider the following when assessing such a student:

1. Obtain detailed information on the student's background. Consider the following:
 - Educational factors such as: When did the child first go to school? In what countries has the child been educated? Has schooling been interrupted? Have there been frequent moves from school to school and/or school district to school district which might influence consistency in curriculum being taught? In what language has the child been educated?
 - Language factors such as: How long did the child speak only one language? What languages are spoken to him in the home? What language is most frequently used by the parents with the child? What language does the child use most frequently with siblings? What language does the child use in social situations?
 - Cultural/environmental factors such as: How long has the child been in the United States? Does the child return to his native country often? To what degree are native traditions valued? To what degree is acculturation and assimilation valued?
 - Medical factors such as nutrition, trauma or injury, illnesses, hearing, and vision. Developmental milestones for first words, sentences, feeding, walking.
2. Plan a battery of formal and informal tests that are culturally appropriate and take into account the information you learned in #1. Test in both the native language and English.
3. Remember, the value of the information gathered during the assessment process is determined by how such information is interpreted. Therefore, information on the standardized testing, the stages of second language acquisition and the stages of language development are good guidelines to utilize when analyzing data. Be sure to consider the student's experiential background and motivational influences as well.

Resources:

Kayser, H. (1998). Singular Publishing Group, Inc., pp. 82-91 Assessment & Intervention Resource for Hispanic Children.

Cummins, J. (1984). Bilingual and Special Education: Issues in Assessment & Pedagogy. San Diego: College-Hill.

Hamayan, E.V., & Damico, J.S. (1991). Limiting Bias in the Assessment of Bilingual Students. Austin, TX: Pro Ed.