CLDcorner

WORKING WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS AND LEARNERS: OVERLAP, COLLABORATION, AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

By: TSHA CLD Committee

The CLD Corner was created in an effort to provide information and respond to questions on cultural and linguistic diversity. Questions are answered by members of the TSHA Committee on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity. Members for the 2015-2016 year include **Brittney Goodman Pettis**, *MS, CCC-SLP (co-chair);* **Raúl Prezas**, *PhD, CCC-SLP (co-chair);* **Amanda Ahmed**, *MA, CCC-SLP;* **Mary Bauman**, *MS, CCC-SLP;* **Phuong Lien Palafox**, *MS, CCC-SLP;* **Alisa Baron**, *MA, CCC-SLP;* **Raúl Rojas**, *PhD, CCC-SLP;* **Judy Martinez Villarreal**, *MS, CCC-SLP; and* **Ryann Akolkar**, *BA, (student representative). Submit your questions to tshcld@gmail.com, and look for responses from the CLD Committee on TSHA's website and in the* Communicologist.

As school-based speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are settling into a new school year, many practitioners across Texas face large caseloads that include a significant number of students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD). The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA, 2010a) reports that increased cultural and linguistic diversity is noteworthy in several settings, including educational settings from preschool through high school. These students may receive bilingual services, though many will receive support through English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. Although they are considered two distinct professions, the roles of the ESL teacher and the SLP cross and intertwine as both aim to support success in language development. Due to the partial overlap, SLPs could benefit from a deeper understanding of their involvement with the ESL teacher for students in both general education and special education, including creative strategies for increasing collaboration with these colleagues.

Provision of instruction in ESL by SLPs in school settings indicates that practitioners who possess the required knowledge and skills to provide ESL instruction in school settings may provide direct ESL instruction. SLPs who do not possess the requisite skills should not provide direct instruction in ESL but should collaborate with ESL instructors in providing pre-assessment, assessment, and/or intervention within school settings (ASHA, 2015).

While some SLPs may be qualified to provide ESL instruction, it is more likely the case that SLPs will find themselves working in schools with children on their caseload who are also receiving ESL services. So how do SLPs best identify and serve the students who are English language learners (ELLs)? What role do SLPs have in collaborating with ESL teachers in the schools, and how can this information help carry over into therapy sessions? This article is intended to provide insight into the overlapping areas of teaching ESL, strategies for successful communication and collaboration with ESL teachers, and effective service delivery in speech therapy for ELLs.

Before reviewing the overlap in the professional roles of the SLP and ESL teacher, it is important

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to consider the statistics of ELLs and special needs populations. In 2007, the U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics reported (U.S. Department of Education, 2007), "Students who speak a language other than English at home and speak English with difficulty may be in need of special services. In 2007, an estimated 11 million elementary and secondary students, or 21 percent of all such students, spoke a language other than English at home."

In Texas, the most recent data can be found in the table above.

Overlap of Duties

Considering the growing number of ELLs who are on SLP caseloads across Texas, overlap has become apparent especially in how it impacts both fields. Keeping this in mind, it is good to understand the similarities in the role of the SLP and ESL teacher in the school setting. A few key overlapping roles are listed below (ASHA, 2010b):

- Working across all levels (Pre-K to age 21)
- Ensuring educational relevance
- Providing unique contributions to curriculum
- Highlighting language/literacy
- Providing culturally competent services
- Assessment (in respective fields)
- Intervention
- Program design
- Data collection and analysis
- Compliance
- Collaboration with other school professionals (including community, families, and students)
- Advocacy

Although there are many similarities, one notable difference is that SLPs have a unique insight into a language difference versus a disorder and how that disorder may negatively impact students' ability to perform in the academic setting. SLPs also can advocate for further testing when there is suspicion of a disorder. Additionally, the ESL teacher often becomes the first to recognize when a student requires special services if there is no improvement in skills and/or when they recognize other symptoms typically not found in the ESL population.

Effective Service Delivery Models for Successful Collaboration and Communication

A key to increasing appropriate referrals of ELLs and achieving successful carryover therapy when those students are served in special education is to have an understanding of some of the many successful service delivery models for ELLs. Whether students receive push-in/inclusion services or the pull-out model for ESL instruction, there are a few co-working approaches and models for intervention to consider:

1. Training ESL Teachers on Dynamic Assessment to Determine a Child's Ability to Learn New Information

By training the ESL teacher to use a test-teach-retest model of dynamic assessment (Gutiérrez-Clellen & Peña, 2001), the ESL teacher can more effectively screen children and flag children who may be in need of more specialized support. In this model of dynamic assessment, the professional first identifies a specific skill a child has not learned and assesses their ability (test), targets that skill by providing explicit instruction via a mediated learning experience (MLE) (teach), and assesses the child's responsiveness and ability to transfer the learned skills in addition to the effort needed to teach that skill (retest).

The ESL teacher typically has the opportunity to work one-on-one with a child; therefore, they can use dynamic assessment practices to begin to extract difficulties that are related to acquiring English from those that might signal a possible underlying impairment. Moreover, the ESL teacher can then relay this information about a child's language learning potential to the SLP from the early stages of the referral process. Although classroom teachers are most often the primary voice to alert student monitoring teams of challenges with communication and academics, the ESL teacher is a great secondary source to initiate referrals and should improve the referral process overall. Additionally, this approach may be used with a child with lower levels of English proficiency, preventing the use of a "wait and see" approach that unfortunately leads to missed opportunities for support as years are given to acquire English before interventions may be considered.

The dynamic assessment framework also increases the effectiveness of the ESL teacher's interventions with a student. The teaching component (or MLE) is based on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and incorporates strategies to support learning through structured, meaningful practice at an appropriate develop-

mental level. The use of specific, explicit strategies guides ELL students and identifies gaps between their current knowledge and the desired goal(s). Moreover, identifying specific skill levels provides feedback that enables the student to learn better. Through this process, students develop increased metacognitive skills that can help them feel more confident in their abilities and may equip them with cognitive tools to better navigate their experience of learning the English language.

For more information on dynamic assessment, please refer to Gutiérrez-Clellen and Peña (2001) as well as the links below:

• www.asha.org/practice/multicultural/issues/framework.htm

• www.asha.org/practice/multicultural/issues/components.htm

2. Providing Information for Classroom Teachers Who Are ESL-Certified

In most cases, school districts have a dedicated ESL teacher in place for service delivery. However, some Texas districts require that non-bilingual classroom teachers have ESL certification to meet the needs of the student population. With this model, the goal is for ESL support to be provided via instructional strategies used throughout the day with all students.

Strategies for supporting ESL-certified classroom teachers will be similar in many ways to the support SLPs provide within Response to Intervention (RtI) models. Procedures require that ESL teachers communicate with the campus student support team. The team, including the SLP, can describe specific language skills to target and ways to support acquisition of those specific skills. This collaborative approach may focus on working directly with an interventionist or paraprofessional to discuss strategies for targeting communication skills and monitoring progress. While targeting these skills, additional consideration should be given to selecting targets that would be most culturally appropriate (e.g., special holidays, knowing titles/names for relatives, greetings/closings).

The SLP can also alert the teacher, paraprofessional, or interventionist to signs indicating that a child's difficulties go beyond issues of second language learning. Some red flags that may indicate a possible underlying language learning disability include the following:

• Slower progress compared to peers with similar language background, experience, and educational opportunities

• Delays in development of first language or speech/language difficulties evident in first language (according to parents)

• Use of general, non-specific words (e.g., "that") rather than actual word

• Symptoms of possible mild neurological conditions that impact physical ability or fluency of speech (e.g., drooling, stuttering, or mispronouncing words that have common sounds

between L1 and L2)

• Reports or observations of students not "keeping up" with peers who are fluent in the native language during unstructured (social) time

• Difficulty organizing thoughts

3. Cross-Referencing Evaluations with ESL Professionals

This is a relatively new idea in the field of education in which the SLP and ESL teacher collaborate prior to an evaluation and decide which protocols to use. Collaboration also occurs before presenting findings to see where the greatest areas of overlap and differences occur. Some Texas school districts are currently implementing this model in the test phase. Results from collaborative assessment are compared by viewing the standard scores on a spreadsheet to determine if there is a gap between the language levels (difference/language acquisition) or a similar score in both languages across testing (e.g., identifying a disorder when scores in both languages are low compared to typically developing peers).

4. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)

This published program is a model that consists of eight interrelated components: lesson preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice/application, lesson delivery, and review/assessment (Echevarría & Short, 2011). Using instructional strategies connected to each of these components, teachers are able to design and deliver lessons that address the academic and linguistic needs of ELLs. Though initially designed to be used within a larger classroom setting, this model can be a useful resource for SLPs working with ELLs to further tailor therapy lessons for the limited English, language-impaired population.

5. Use of Social-Cognitive Models of Learning in Therapy

In order to increase the focus on functional skills and to harness the power of learning through natural environments, SLPs often incorporate elements of social-cognitive models into their practice. These models of learning can be used in direct therapy in both monolingual and bilingual settings, though students learning English would greatly benefit from application of these theories in other small group settings or when lessons are co-taught with ESL teachers.

• **Bandura's Social-Cognitive Theory.** This theory is applied to learning modeled behavior. It's the idea that people remember a sequence of events through observation (e.g., watching another person perform a communication activity;

therapist modeling how to order at a restaurant). Through this model, the person remembers the sequence of events and uses this information to guide subsequent behaviors (Bandura, 1993, 1997). Observing a model can also prompt the viewer to engage in behavior they already learned.

- **Vygotsky's Social-Cognitive Theory**. Vygotsky's theories stress the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978). Center to the social-cognitive theory was the idea that community plays an important role in the process of "making meaning."

Conclusion

Increased collaboration among professionals has become the expectation in education in recent years. Finding better and more effective ways to collaborate will help to narrow the achievement gap faced by the majority of ELLs in schools, lessen the overall time it takes to assess a child, and omit overlap of assessed areas.

As two specialists with different—though complementary—training related to language acquisition, SLPs and ESL teachers may form a unique team that will greatly benefit students acquiring English as a second language. Whether ESL teachers serve directly on individual campuses, serve in a more consultative role within a district, or are the main classroom teachers who have certification in ESL, partnership with a speech-language pathologist will create a mutually-beneficial professional relationship. Not only will the SLP gain knowledge from another field of expertise but the initial increase in time spent for collaboration will also pay off in other ways. Collaboration between the SLP and ESL teacher will reduce over-identification of students who were inappropriately referred, improve therapy practices and outcomes, increase effective language acquisition strategies for students, and create a team of language specialists striving to support students in their language learning. ★

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