CLDcorner

USING INTERPRETERS DURING ASSESSMENT,
PART 2: FRAMEWORK FOR CONDUCTING AN ASSESSMENT WITH AN INTERPRETER

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The Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CLD) Corner was created in an effort to provide information and respond to questions on cultural and linguistic diversity. Members of the Texas Speech-Language-Hearing (TSHA) Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Task Force answer questions. Members for the 2011-2012 year include **Ellen Stubbe Kester**, PhD, CCC-SLP (co-chair); **Margarita Limon-Ordonez**, MS, CCC-SLP (co-chair); **M. Ruth Fernandez**, PhD, CCC-SLP; **Rachel Aghara**, PhD, CCC-SLP; **Lisa Carver**, MA, CCC-SLP; **Tracey Gray**, MA, CCC-SLP; **Scott Prath**, MA, CCC-SLP; **Ivan Mejia**, MA, CCC-SLP; and **Sarah Panjwani**, BA. Submit your questions to ellen.kester@bilinguistics.com. Look for responses from the CLD Task Force on TSHA's website (www.txsha.org) and in the *Communicologist*.

> **THE CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY (CLD) TASK FORCE IS NOW OFFERING HALF- AND FULL-DAY TRAININGS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS, EDUCATION SERVICE CENTERS (ESCs), UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS, AND OTHER AGENCIES ON ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION WITH CLD POPULATIONS. FOR INFORMATION, CONTACT ELLEN KESTER AT ELLEN.KESTER@BILINGUISTICS.COM.**

The Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Task Force is committed to providing current and useful information to clinicians across the state to assist with providing services to the multicultural populations that speech-language pathologists (SLPs) serve in Texas. Based on U.S. Census data from 2010, the percentage of Texans who speak a language other than English in the home is 34.2%, which is significantly higher than the 20.1% of the total U.S. total population. Given this linguistic diversity, it is not surprising that as part of our scope of practice we are often asked to participate in the assessment of communication skills of individuals who speak more than one language. Federal and state laws decree that an appropriate evaluation of communication skills must include an assessment of each of the languages the individual is exposed to (IDEA, 2004). When the evaluating SLP does not speak the same language as the client, the use of a trained interpreter to conduct interviews with the family and assess the client's communication skills is an acceptable and appropriate way to collect the information needed to determine whether

the client has a communication disorder. This article will provide a framework for conducting an assessment with a trained interpreter using both formal and informal assessment techniques and also will

discuss some of the cultural factors and differences that may have an impact on both referral and assessment results.

In *Collaborating with Interpreters and Translators* (2002), Langdon and Cheng suggest following the acronym **RIOT** to structure a communication evaluation for children or adults with exposure to more than one language:

• **R: Review** (referral information, medical history, language exposure patterns, family background, teacher comments);

• **I: Interview** (conduct thorough interviews with parents, teachers, peers, and other family members, and gain insight into the perceptions of the client's strengths and weaknesses);

• **O: Observe** (observe the client interacting in multiple situations with different people); and

• **T: Test** (assess speech and language skills using informal assessments, language samples, and dynamic assessment procedures).

Since the purpose of language assessment is to examine how communication functions for an individual in meaningful speaking contexts (Mattes and Omark, 1991), the SLP must select appropriate materials and administer assessment tasks to assist with gathering this data. The use of formal standardized language tests is one way that SLPs typically complete part of a speech and language

assessment; however, for a client with limited English proficiency, these assessments often result in data that was obvious before the assessment (the client does not speak English fluently or the client has difficulty making wants and needs known in English). Additionally, individuals that comprise the standardization sample groups on norm-referenced tests are not representative of the client being tested and certainly do not reflect his or her linguistic experience. As a result, it is critical that if a formal language assessment is administered due to a procedural requirement such as district or agency policy that these standardized scores for an English assessment not be reported or used to make a decision about the bilingual or multilingual client's overall communication abilities (Langdon and Cheng, 2002, and Roseberry-McKibbin, 2008). Since standardized language assessments are also not available in every language that an SLP will encounter and translation of formal English language assessments only gives information about how English language skills imprint on another language, a more preferable approach to assessment of multilingual students would include using multiple sources of information, such as questionnaires, portfolios, language samples, and dynamic assessment (Goldstein, 2000).

For school-age children, checklists from the TSHA eligibility templates can be incorporated into the parent interview using and

The Top 10 Tips for Working with Interpreters During Assessment and Therapy

1. Establish and agree to ground rules
   - How to run the session
   - Number of sentences at a time
   - Confirmation of jargon/idioms (Avoid it!)
   - When to take breaks

2. Brief the interpreter prior to the session
   - Who, what, why
   - Specific terminology
   - Format
   - Your job and what you are looking for

3. Familiarize the interpreter with the agenda
   - Best if your interpreter has some experience in education, special education, and speech-language disorders
   - Important for interpreter to know what you need

4. Avoid verbal humor

5. Plan your time carefully (allow twice the time)

6. Do not rush, speak slowly and clearly, and provide pauses for the interpreter

7. An interpreter should never translate emotions conveyed through body language

8. An interpreter should never answer questions on your behalf

9. Always ask the interpreter their opinion after the session

10. An interpreter should never alter what you say

interpreter and thus assist with gathering information about the parent's perception of the child's areas of strengths and weaknesses. Criterion-referenced assessments such as the *Informal Multicultural Communication Measure* (copyright 1991 by Academic Communication Associates and included in the appendix of *Speech and Language Assessment for the Bilingual Handicapped 2nd Edition*, Mattes and Omark, 1991) can be translated with the help of an interpreter and examine how a client is able to communicate in several functional situations such as giving personal information, following simple directions, labeling objects and naming their functions, making comparisons, and solving simple problems. Other criterion-referenced tests, such as the *Spanish Language Assessment Procedures (SLAP),* can be translated into the child's language with the help of an interpreter. The *SLAP* includes general tasks such as identifying pictures, naming body parts and colors, responding to verbal directions, and a variety of other language tasks that include picture stimuli, instructions, and lists of materials that will be needed for each task.

For preschool-age children, using manipulatives, objects, and age-appropriate toys during a play-based arena assessment allows for communication behaviors to be observed and facilitated by the SLP via the interpreter. For this approach to yield the most valuable information, materials should be carefully selected and presented to assess particular language concepts and probe the child's communication skills. The interpreter is trained and coached to present information by accurately interpreting what the SLP says and reporting the exact words the child uses to respond. By using a dynamic assessment approach, the SLP can also gather information about how a client learns new concepts and separates experience from his or her ability (Goldstein, 2000). This approach uses a test-teach-retest approach to observe the client's potential when given the opportunity to learn a new skill and could be used effectively with a trained interpreter.

Using a combination of these assessment techniques and the help of a trained interpreter allows the SLP to gather information about how a client communicates in all the languages he or she speaks.

After the evaluation, the SLP analyzes all the information gathered and is ultimately responsible for determining whether the individual demonstrates communication impairment in all the languages that he or she speaks or a communication difference in which the first language shows a pattern of normal development and English skills are emerging. It is very important to consider the client's linguistic experiences, such as when the second language was introduced, whether the speaker continues to use the first language in communicative situations often, or whether the client is experiencing the process of attrition that occurs as use of the first language decreases.

Langdon and Cheng (2002) suggested several cultural factors to consider when planning evaluations for multilingual students, including personal/personality factors (how attitude, motivation, anxiety, and self-consciousness affect learning a second language), adjustment issues (such as integrating into a new society and the historical, sociological, and political components that are part of the decision that lead to a new language exposure for the family), use of each language (English may only be used at school or work and the student may have limited exposure to English at home), difficult discourse (the student may not yet have the bicultural skills to pick up on expected social cues or know what is culturally appropriate in different situations), home-school differences (what is valued at home, such as respecting elders by listening and obeying, may be distinctly different than what is valued at school, such as participating in classroom discussions), learning styles (does the child learn well in a group or prefer to study alone), nonverbal cues (eye gaze, physical contact, and body language are important aspects of nonverbal communication), code switching (the use of two languages within the same utterance, sometimes due to lack of vocabulary in one of the languages), and language loss (natural loss of an infrequently used language). These cultural factors and the amount that each one influences a client's communication skills should be taken into account when planning an assessment for a student that will require an interpreter. ★

References

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