

CLD Corner—The Other View: Multicultural Evaluations Among Other Professions

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As individuals who work in the area of communication sciences and disorders, we always encounter a variety of situations in which we must collaborate with other professionals, both within the educational and healthcare settings. These collaborations become much more intricate when we have to diagnose and treat individuals from a background and socioeconomic status different from our own. Therefore, individuals working with clients and patients must become involved in interprofessional education (IPE) and interprofessional practice (IPP). The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA, 2018) defines IPE as “an activity that occurs when two or more professions

learn about, from, and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve outcomes for individuals and families whom we serve.” Additionally, ASHA indicates IPP occurs when a variety of service providers from different professional backgrounds provide comprehensive healthcare/educational services in order to deliver the highest quality of service for clients/patients, families, and communities.

More than half of speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are employed in educational settings, and SLPs are required to partake in IPP in order to improve services among students (ASHA, 2019). Some SLPs encounter differences in the evaluation process of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students when interacting with other professionals (e.g., diagnosticians, licensed specialists in school psychology, etc.). There are some professionals who decide to do an English-only language assessment because a student is English-dominant on a language dominance test like the Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey-3rd Edition (WMLS-3). Some SLPs question this practice, so what does the research say about best practices for other professions working with CLD populations?

Many researchers, such as Criselda Alvarado (2011), state, “An evaluation professional must have some basic fundamental knowledge regarding students who are culturally and linguistically diverse in order to understand the referral, determine the appropriate language and form of testing, select adequate tests, interpret the results in light of other information, and participate effectively in the decision-making process for the student.” This fundamental knowledge can be obtained by understanding the types of educational services rendered to CLD populations (i.e., dual-language programs, ESL, etc.), typical second language acquisition, and the impact of poverty on language learning. Additionally, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 2004, requires procedures to be in place in order to ensure tests and evaluations be both selected and administered so as not to be racially or culturally discriminatory. Therefore, Alvarado (2011) indicates best practice is for evaluators and/or interpreters to be fluent and literate in the languages spoken by the student, knowledgeable of the family’s culture, and trained on assessments and practices appropriate for a CLD evaluation.

In order to provide best practice and follow legal mandates, evaluators who assess second-language learners must first obtain information about an individual’s oral language proficiency in English and the student’s native language (Alvarado, 2011; Ortiz, 2002; Rhodes et al., 2005; IDEA, 1997, Sec. 300.534[b]). This will help determine the student’s language dominance, and it will provide a guide for the remainder of the assessment and interpretation of results. Parallel and statically equated oral language tests should be used in order to determine dominance (e.g., WMLS-3). Additionally, informal measures (e.g., narrative samples, evaluation of receptive vocabulary, etc.) may be used in order to assess languages other than English and Spanish, and it should be noted that informal or

non-standardized testing is not inferior to formal measures (Alvarado, 2011). It also has been recommended to obtain information about a student's Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS; describes the language abilities for conversational fluency) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP; describes the usage of language in a decontextualized academic setting) in order to know which type of language skills will be assessed by the chosen formal language measures (Rhodes et al., 2005; Ochoa, 2003; Ortiz, 2002).

The evaluator should take into consideration several factors when interpreting oral language proficiency among second-language learners. Oller and Eilers (2002) have found low language skills are related to low socioeconomic status, especially with vocabulary knowledge in early childhood years. The Native Language Loss Phenomenon also should be considered when interpreting oral language abilities. This phenomenon occurs when a second language is introduced; therefore, second-language learners may score low in the new language as well as below average in their native language, which they are losing or are no longer developing (Wilén, 2004; Alvarado 2011). Consequently, second-language learners' scores may be interpreted as delayed in both languages during the second-language acquisition process (Alvarado, 2011).

Translanguaging is a new concept that has emerged among bilingual research and was previously discussed in the [June 2019 CLD Corner article](#) of the *Communicologist*. Translanguaging "infers that the [student] uses one whole integrated language system rather than a separate language or named language (such as Spanish or English). That one whole language includes the vocabulary, morphosyntactic forms, and pragmatics fluidly and interchangeably and are used as needed or wanted according to the situation or the interaction listeners" (Garcia-Fullana & Payne, 2019). It should be noted that the child's unique translanguaging is not seen as inferior to using separate languages. It is also important to understand that the unique language is dynamic and may change in use of vocabulary and forms as the child continues to interact with and learn from the surrounding language environment. Therefore, the evaluator should analyze both languages as a whole in addition to using BICS and CALP to determine the direction of the evaluation.

Some evaluators may decide to do English-only testing when a second-language learner presents as "English-Proficient" in an oral language proficiency assessment. However, the evaluator should carefully assess the student's data because many language proficiency tests used within the assessment world only evaluate BICS. Therefore, a student who is given an English proficiency label using only BICS may be misdiagnosed as having a language-learning disability if the CALP has not been adequately assessed (Rosenberry-Mckibbin, 2002).

Diagnosticians and Licensed Specialists in School Psychology use two models in the aid of selecting the appropriate assessments when evaluating a student for a specific learning disability. One is the Ochoa and Ortiz Multidimensional Assessment Model for Bilingual Individuals (MAMBI; Rhodes et al., 2005), and the other is the Bilingual Cross-Battery Psycho-Educational Testing Table (Alvarado, 2011). Alvarado stated that the two models based test selections on the following variables: language profile, instructional programming/history (i.e., English, native language, bilingual), current age or grade level, type of assessment appropriate for a CLD student (i.e., non-verbal assessment, bilingual testing, etc.), and availability of assessments in the target language. Even when the latter models are not used, the previously named variables always should be taken into consideration when selecting appropriate tests for a CLD individual.

In order to further understand the CLD evaluation process among other professions, a Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP), Leah Cook, MA, LSSP, NCSP, and a bilingual LSSP, Lisa Ding, MA, LSSP, NCSP, were interviewed by a bilingual SLP. Responses to questions are summarized with additional thoughts from the SLP included as takeaways.

When receiving a multilingual child referral, what questions do you first ask yourself?

It is important to initially gauge the student's English proficiency in the classroom and learn about their language background and acquisition. Additional factors to consider include their non-English-

speaking home or geographic area, recent immigrant/high-mobility/migrant status, limited/sporadic school attendance, attendance at multiple schools over a short period of time, age, grade level, and educational history. More questions should be asked about their education. Has this student received their education in a one-way or two-way dual-language classroom? Has the student received bilingual supports? Is the student currently receiving bilingual supports? When did the student transition to English-only instruction? Has the student received all of their education in the United States? If educated in a different country, were there any gaps in enrollment/was enrollment continuous? Looking at which standardized measures are the best non-biased choice for testing is another point to consider.

- **SLP Takeaway:** Ask about both the *quantity* and *quality* of exposure for both receptive and expressive language abilities, in addition to possible language attrition. Consider how dynamic language can be for bilingual speakers and how context shifts occur over time. There are evaluation tools that may be considered better than others when assessing a multilingual speaker. Talk with the LSSP/diagnostician/psychologist about which tools would be a good choice for the child. For example, language-reduced tests are helpful in the evaluation of multilingual individuals and may provide better estimates of true functioning. Having additional knowledge about the tools used is helpful.

Do you have to test for language dominance?

LSSPs do not necessarily have to determine dominant language; however, they must address the second language within their testing. Assessing for language dominance is a practice that is *not* necessary, but it can guide testing. When discussing language dominance, it is best practice to look at the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) scores. The TELPAS assessment results provide a measure of progress, indicating annually where each English Language Learner is on a continuum of English language development designed for second-language learners. Talk to the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) and get information from teachers to obtain a more in-depth picture of the child's/student's abilities. For instance, asking about which language skills the child is working on is helpful (i.e., letter sounds) in relation to their educational background.

- **SLP Takeaway:** You can assist the LSSP in gathering information to better describe the speaker's language abilities and gain a more accurate picture. You can discuss the importance of the concept, *translanguaging*, and how it relates to language dominance.

What should an SLP know about language-dominance testing?

When using standardized tests, the possible *practice effect* should be considered. The practice effect is when a child can learn concepts from the initial assessment during the timeframe between testing sessions. Some testing requires students to be first tested in English, and for any items missed, they are then later tested in their native language. Another factor to consider is the assumption that if a student knows a word in English, they must know it in their native language as well. This does not take into account their entire language framework or time exposed to their second language. Lack of exposure to test items due to socioeconomic status, cultural differences, and outdated pictures also should be a consideration.

- **SLP Takeaway:** The SLP has a key role in this stage to advocate for the child's CLD needs. Talk to the LSSP about any concerns with testing measures. Talk about what language dominance testing will determine. If a student has severe articulation errors, offer to be present during testing to assist the LSSP. This time can give you a chance to see the child's performance during standardized testing and discuss the importance of understanding the child's entire language system rather than only one language.

What issues come up during testing when working with interpreters?

When using an interpreter, LSSPs also must educate the interpreter in proper test administration. Important items can get lost in translation very easily or misinterpreted. Occasionally, the interpreter has given the student the answers of the tests. This affects the validity and reliability of the assessment. At times, having both an interpreter and the LSSP present can cause the student to be hesitant to respond due to the number of people in the room. Students also tend to “shut down” when they do not know the answers in their native language with the interpreter present. The child can become frustrated and answer “I don’t know” in English. Additionally, the child may have their own implicit bias to consider, which may impact their performance. For instance, a child won’t speak their native language to a non-native speaker who looks or sounds different from them. They may react differently to a speaker with a different dialect from their own (e.g., Vietnamese from Northern Vietnam versus Central or Southern Vietnam; Puerto Rican Spanish dialect versus Mexican dialect or Castilian Spanish).

- **SLP Takeaway:** Check in with your LSSP and discuss implicit bias on all sides, including the child/parent/assessor, and how it pertains to testing. Work with the LSSP to educate interpreters during the testing process.

During testing, how do you take into account language and cultural differences?

LSSPs have to be sensitive to cultural and language diversity when testing. Often, norming makes one assume this is covered. However, it is important to look beyond standardized measures by noting any difference and educating yourself on language differences and typical articulation errors due to native language influence when testing. Any errors noted must be detailed in the report. An LSSP follows their clinical judgment and must transparently explain any discrepancies in the report. Being cognizant of bilingual students and challenges they may face during testing is important. Therefore, using test batteries and subtests that eliminate or minimize verbal requirements is preferred. This makes the instrument more reliable for children who are diverse in terms of linguistic, cultural, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as those who have language disabilities, autistic disorder, or hearing problems.

- **SLP Takeaway:** The SLP can serve as an advocate to encourage the LSSP to do their own research about language difference/disorder error patterns and complete a thorough interview with parents. It is important to look at the accumulation of all data to make any determinations. Encourage the LSSP to keep going back to probe teacher and parents for more information if necessary. Give examples of cultural differences to consider. For instance, temporal concepts can be viewed differently in other cultures, and adaptive living skills can be assessed as low due to cultural differences. Additionally, African American English (AAE), dialectical differences, and geographical background should be considered. The LSSP should look at more than just standard scores when determining eligibility.

What are some challenges that can occur when implementing cross-battery assessment?

SLPs should work closely with the LSSP to determine which areas need further testing, including narrow abilities. A true cross-battery assessment can use a variety of subtests to look at narrow abilities. SLPs will often administer an entire standardized measure when it is not actually necessary. Closer collaboration between professionals is vital.

- **SLP Takeaway:** Educate yourself on cross-battery assessment, cognitive areas “the G’s” (Comprehension/Knowledge *Gc*; Fluid Reasoning *Gf*; Long-Term Retrieval *Gl*; Short-Term Retrieval *Gsm*; Processing Speed *Gs*; Auditory Processing *Ga*; and Visual Processing *Gv*), and how to best collaborate with your LSSP/diagnostician/psychologist. Discuss the best tools and subtests to use in order to gain additional information.

What are some aspects to consider when making recommendations and accommodations?

Take cultural differences into account, look at language exposure, and note if there was an opportunity to talk to parents and teachers when making accommodations. If too many are given, people do not always follow them. Making sure the recommendations are achievable and specific to the child is essential. The SLP should work with the LSSP to determine the recommended placement of the child (i.e., schedule, least restrictive environment, etc.). Written goals should not focus on accumulating language skills due to lack of exposure. For instance, an Arabic student was given a writing goal; however, the student has only had exposure to Arabic script. This is not an appropriate goal for this child. A child's strengths and needs should guide goal formation.

- **SLP Takeaway:** Take a look at all recommendations made and ensure cultural and linguistic differences are taken into account. Offer support to teachers with appropriate goal formation.

LSSPs and diagnosticians have similar views and opinions to those of SLPs when providing best practice to individuals from CLD backgrounds. Evaluators should always take into consideration multiple factors when interpreting evaluation data and should not make a clinical decision for individuals from CLD backgrounds when only one language has been evaluated or considered. As we evolve in our practice, it is important we continue to expand our knowledge of other professions and their views on different subjects in order to provide the best interprofessional services to any client/student.

Educational Resources

Information about multicultural evaluation best practice

http://www.educationeval.com/files/Best_Practices_2011.pdf

Miscellaneous articles for multicultural evaluations

<http://www.educationeval.com/articles>

The Cattell-Horn-Carroll Theory of Cognitive Abilities

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/9781118660584.e5e0431>

XBA Then and Now

<http://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=1401009>

Texas Association of School Psychologists

<https://www.txasp.org/>

The National Association of School Psychologists

<https://www.nasponline.org/>

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*The CLD Corner was created in an effort to provide information and respond to questions on cultural and linguistic diversity (CLD). Questions are answered by members of the TSHA Committee on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity. Members for the 2019-2020 year include **Andrea Hughes**, MS, CCC-SLP (co-chair); **Irmgard R. Payne**, MS, CCC-SLP (co-chair); **Mary Bauman-Forkner**, MS, CCC-SLP; **Isabel Garcia-Fullana**, MA, CCC-SLP; **Daniel Ibarra**, MS, CCC-SLP; **Amy Leal Truong**, BS, (graduate student member); **Mirza J. Lugo-Neris**, PhD, CCC-SLP; **Maria Resendiz**, PhD, CCC-SLP; **Diana Vega Torres**, BS, (graduate student member); **Chaya Woolcock**, MS, CCC-SLP; and **Adanna Burrell**, MS, CCC-SLP. Please submit your questions to TSHACLDC@gmail.com and look for responses from the CLD Committee on TSHA's website and in the Communicologist.*
