

USING INTERPRETERS DURING ASSESSMENT • PART 1

By: **Lisa Carver, MA, CCC-SLP, Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Task Force Member**

The Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (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 Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (TSHA) CLD Task Force. 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; **Scott Prath**, MA, CCC-SLP; **Ivan Mejia**, MA, CCC-SLP; **Rachel Aghara**, PhD, CCC-SLP; **Lisa Carver**, MA, CCC-SLP; **Tracey Gray**, MA, CCC-SLP; **Sarah Panjwani**, BA; and **Stacy Thomas**, BS.

Submit your questions to ellen.kester@bilinguistics.com. Look for responses from the CLD Task Force on TSHA's website 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, UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS, AND OTHER AGENCIES ON ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION WITH CLD POPULATIONS. FOR INFORMATION, CONTACT ELLEN KESTER AT ELLEN.KESTER@BILINGUISTICS.COM.

Throughout 2012, the Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CLD) Task Force will present a series of articles in the CLD Corner that focus on the use of interpreters and models for assessment and intervention in languages that we encounter as professionals. Additionally, our series will continue to focus on varied languages we encounter in assessments.

The Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (TSHA) Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Task Force is committed to bringing practical advice and offering helpful solutions to clinicians across the state who serve a variety of culturally and linguistically diverse clients. According to information from the Texas Educational Agency, more than 16% of students

enrolled in public schools across the state are considered Limited English Proficient, and these English language learners collectively represent 127 different languages (www.tea.state.tx.us/index). Given the linguistic diversity of the population in Texas, it is highly likely that practicing speech-language pathologists (SLPs) will encounter clients who will require communication assessment and intervention in a language other than English. As professionals, it is the responsibility of the SLP to be prepared to provide the most comprehensive assessment possible, even when we do not speak the same language as the client or family. The use of an interpreter to assist with assessment or intervention is often the most viable option for clinicians when a bilingual SLP fluent in the language of the client is not available. Using an interpreter requires preparation, education, flexibility, and patience on the part of the SLP. This is the first in a series of two articles that will provide information for SLPs on collaborating with interpreters during assessment and intervention. The first article will present resources to assist with preparation for evaluations and discuss how to select and train an interpreter. The second article will address the framework for conducting an assessment with an interpreter, the cultural implications of working with interpreters, and the usage of the assessment data gathered to plan appropriate interventions.

The first step to completing an assessment in a language not spoken by the clinician is preparation. In order to effectively assess all areas of communication, the SLP will need to do some preliminary research to learn about the language and culture of the client to be assessed. A good place to begin online research is the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) website at www.asha.org under Multicultural Affairs and Resources, where a large amount of information can be accessed regarding specific languages, collaborating with interpreters, searchable collections of assessment tools by language, and guidelines for assessing a variety of disorders among bilinguals. Additionally, the website www.ethnologue.com provides basic information on all the languages of the world and is helpful in locating additional links to more specific queries about a language. It will be necessary for the SLP to gather basic information regarding the phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of a particular language in order to determine the best approach for

assessment. In addition, it also can be helpful to spend some time learning about nonverbal communication in the culture (such as gestures and proxemics) in order to avoid offending the client or family.

Some guidelines for selecting interpreters are provided by ASHA and state that interpreters should have at least a high-school education and adequate communication skills and also be able to relate to the culture of the group being assessed. In addition, Langdon and Cheng (2008) suggest in the book *Collaborating with Interpreters and Translators* that an interpreter's responsiveness, flexibility, motivation, and willingness to learn new information can be important factors to consider. It is also crucial to determine whether the interpreter can remain neutral and maintain confidentiality. Once the interpreter has been chosen, the SLP will educate the interpreter regarding the area of concern, how it will be assessed, and the responsibilities of the interpreter. Langdon and Cheng state that the responsibilities of the interpreter include having a high proficiency in both languages being assessed, efficient recall of auditory information, knowledge of both cultures including the significance of nonverbal communication, the ability to effectively convey the same meaning in both languages, knowledge of terminology that applies to the profession (i.e., speech-language pathology), familiarity with dialectical differences, and the ability to adapt to and process pronunciations or grammatical uses encountered with persons who have a communication impairment. The interpreter should be instructed to report exactly what the client says without making changes. The interpreter is also trained to record the client's responses using written notes, to limit use of nonverbal cues, and to use probes and cueing to determine what a client is able to do.

In a situation in which the SLP does not speak the language of the client, the interpreter serves as a bridge between the client and the SLP. The interpreter is the only person in the typical triad of the client, service provider, and interpreter who understands the messages as they are conveyed the first time around by each party (Langdon and Cheng, 2008). This unique position of the interpreter to bridge the communications of the SLP, the family, and the client makes adequate training one of the most important portions of the assessment. Ideally, this training would take place prior to the assessment. ★

References

- American Speech Language Hearing Association website: www.asha.org/practice/multicultural/
- Langdon, Henriette and Chen, Li-Rong Lilly. (2008). *Collaborating with Interpreters and Translators: A Guide for Communication Disorders Professionals*. Eau Claire, Wisconsin: Thinking Publications.
- Texas Educational Agency website: www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx
- Ethnologue website: www.ethnologue.com