

CLD Corner: Q&A for the CLD Experts

The CLD Corner is a regular column written by members of the TSHA Task Force on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity.

The CLD Corner was created in an effort to respond to questions on cultural and linguistic diversity. Questions are answered by members of the TSHA task force on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity. Members for the 2006-2007 year include **Lynette Austin, Gina Glover, Becky González, Dolores Castor, Marie Belgodere, Gail Goodrich-Totten, Cynthia Garcia, Katsura Aoyama, Roxanna Ruiz-Felter** and **Michele Albornóz**. Submit your questions to slaustin@cebridge.net. Look for responses from the CLD Task Force on TSHA's website and in the *Communicologist*.

The 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 **Lynette Austin** at slaustin@cebridge.net or **Becky Gonzalez** at becky52@houston.rr.com.

QUESTION: I am a native English-speaker, but studied Spanish in college (I double majored in speech-language pathology and Spanish as an undergraduate). I have since lost some of my abilities due to a lack of opportunity to practice, but I am able to communicate and understand a lot. I know that it would be fairly easy to regain knowledge in Spanish with practice. My question is, am I able to provide services to people who speak Spanish, or do I still need an interpreter?

ANSWER: One of the criteria that ASHA sets for persons wishing to work as bilingual speech-language pathologists is "native or near native-like proficiency" in a second language. An individual can develop that native-like proficiency as a second language learner and it sounds as though you have laid the groundwork for that level of proficiency by your studies. It is also true that you can lose proficiency due to lack of use of the language. Another important ASHA criterion for bilingual speech-language pathologists is a strong knowledge base for practicing with bilingual speakers. It is crucial to have had coursework or studied in the areas of bilingual language development, second language acquisition, non-biased assessment, etc. in order to provide appropriate assessment and therapy. In summary, ASHA expects a bilingual speech-language pathologist to have both proficiency in the language and the theoretical background necessary for working with culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

So, how do you know if your current level of proficiency is adequate for practicing without an interpreter? Self-assessment is probably the key here. Your proficiency skills are most likely sufficient if you are able to listen to a child produce a narrative in Spanish, analyze the different components of that narrative, and provide that student with rich and flexible language input in the dynamic setting of therapy.

It appears that at this time, you are not quite at that point due to some loss of proficiency. It would not be the best plan to "practice" your Spanish on your students/clients in therapy as you regain skills. Your limited proficiency must not affect the quality of therapy offered to clients who speak Spanish. So what can you do? One plan could be initially to use interpreters

in your work while you polish your Spanish through practice with native speakers, an effective strategy if you go at it faithfully and if you have a good background in the language. This could be accomplished through volunteerism, participation in community or church groups, or participating in activities such as a Spanish-language book club (especially helpful if you are at a school with bilingual teachers). Another idea could be going to a short-term language-school during the summer, such as those found in Mexico, Costa Rica, or Spain, or you could enroll in a refresher course at a local university or community college program.

If you wish to have an outside and impartial assessment of your Spanish skills, you may want to sign up for the Texas Oral Proficiency Test (TOPT) which is required for bilingual education certification in the state of Texas. Although we don't have a similar requirement in order to practice as bilingual speech-language pathologists, many school districts are now asking bilingual special education personnel to take the test, especially if they are expecting to obtain a stipend for working with Spanish speakers. You can find out about the test on-line at the Texas Education Agency website (www.tea.state.tx.us).

Our task force has summarized more information in a document on the TSHA website (www.txsha.org/diversity_issues/cld_document.asp), which references additional books and materials that may be helpful.



Back to basics.

And she'll have you to thank for it. We're HCR Manor Care, a provider of rehabilitation and post-acute care. Whether our patients are suffering from illness or injury, we treat them as individuals and always let them know we understand their unique needs.

GREAT SLP OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE!

Looking for a rewarding career and not a job? Do you want to live somewhere exciting? Want a flexible schedule and great benefits? HCR Manor Care can help you find it all! We are a stable company which has been in business for over 40 years and have facilities in 33 states. We offer flexible scheduling options and a variety of work settings. HCR Manor Care cares about our employees and their personal and professional growth, whether it's through free CEUs, our loan repayment program, or our great PTO Benefits, we can help you achieve what you're looking for!

We have the following exciting opportunities available:
PTs, PTAs, OTs, OTAs, and SLPs
Full-Time, Part-Time & PRN

Please contact Julie Hill, Therapy Recruiter, 866-427-2004 ext. 130, Fax: 1-877-479-2652, E-mail: julie.hill@hcr-manorcare.com. Apply online at: www.hcr-manorcare.com. EEO/Drug-Free Employer

HCR·ManorCare

Heartland ■ ManorCare ■ Arden Courts

People. Strength. Commitment.