

# Diagnostics

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## *Differential Diagnostics*

# How To Distinguish Between Language Differences & Language Disorders?

- Often SLA and related language issues are not thoroughly understood by team members
- Teams then tend to give only cursory attention to pre-referral strategies, moving prematurely to suspect disability
- Decision for evaluation based on faulty assumptions and deficit model perspective

Klingner & Harry, 2006

# How To Distinguish Between Language Differences & Language Disorders?

- Evaluate both languages for evidence of referral concerns
- Obtain longitudinal data to consider influence of language loss
- Consider SLA and acculturation factors as the cause of the referral concerns
- Provide evidence of referral concerns in the dominant language
- Obtain descriptive data not test scores

# How To Distinguish Between Language Differences & Language Disorders?

- Language factors: different linguistic backgrounds, continuum of proficiency skills across L1 & L2, language loss
- Educational factors: varying degrees of formal schooling in L1 & L2, varying degrees of exposure to standardized English
- Cultural factors: varying degrees of acculturation

# How to Distinguish Between Language Differences & Language Disorders?

Language proficiency assessment is the foundation for psychoeducational assessment of ELLs, before evaluation for suspected disability you must:

1. Determine primary home language
2. Determine language dominance
3. Determine L1 proficiency across domains, monitor for language loss
4. Determine L2 proficiency across domains
5. Determine SLA developmental stages, BICS/CAFLP
6. Remember: 3-5 years to develop speaking proficiency
7. Remember: 4-7+ years to develop reading, writing proficiency to achieve academically

***Evaluation without context of SLA and proficiency levels and without time for adequate instruction and exposure will yield false results*** Ortiz, 2009; Roseberry-McKibben, 2005

# How To Distinguish Between Language Differences & Language Disorders?

- Use dynamic assessment
- Use authentic assessment
- Use portfolio assessment
- Use narrative assessment
- Use interpreters/cultural brokers
- Track achievement with reliable and valid baseline measures and periodic probes

# How To Distinguish Between Language Differences & Language Disorders?

Use dynamic assessment to determine if and how learning is taking place, instead of testing for what the ELL knows and penalizing them for lack of knowledge

Guard against premature, culturally biased, superficial explanations and assumptions

RTI is entirely consistent with dynamic assessment and other authentic measures of learning

# Research To Practice

Slps continue to use standardized English tests more than authentic/informal procedures, even though:

- Standardized tests are normed on majority culture and language groups
- Research continues to discourage this form of testing for ELLs
- Legislation mandates against exclusive use of formal measures

# Psychometric Integrity:

## Culturally And Linguistically Biased Testing Assumptions

- Student will cooperate to the best of their ability
- Student is familiar with the formal testing situation
- Student will be comfortable with an unfamiliar adult (even if they speak L1) and be willing to talk and answer questions

# Psychometric Integrity

## Culturally And Linguistically Biased Testing Assumptions

- Student will understand and perform contrived and unfamiliar tasks
- L1 cultural rules for speaking and responding to adults are the same
- Student is literate in L1
- Student requires same processing time for responses - reality, L2 processing is a slower and more fragile cognitive process

# Psychometric Integrity

## Norming Bias

- ELL students generally not in norming samples or non-representative ELL populations
- Tendency to translate standardized English tests into L2 and then score according to norms

# Psychometric Integrity

## Content Bias

- Omit obviously biased or unfamiliar items (clothing, foods, money, electrical appliances, nursery rhymes, snow/weather, sports, holidays)
- Biased items reflects dominant culture referents, language, and knowledge

# Psychometric Integrity

## Content Bias

- Use school based contexts for test items
- Research shows that math word problems set in school context are more accessible than when set in home context (e.g., Counting notebooks, pencils vs. counting appliances) educational testing service, 2004

# How To Address Psychometric Integrity

## Test modifications

Administer standardized tests in non-standardized manner and report results accordingly:

- Give instructions in L1 and L2
- Rephrase confusing instructions
- Give extra samples and demonstrations
- Give extra time for responses
- Repeat items as necessary
- If a “wrong” answer is given, ask for and record student’s explanation, score correct if it would be correct in the L1 culture
- Qualify modifications in interpretation

# More Modifications

- Test beyond ceiling and below basal
- Complete testing in several sessions
- Use a dual scoring system, count responses as correct if given in either language
- Record evidence of code switching, especially at the semantic level
- Look for BICS:CALP gap
- Use standardized tests sparingly and in conjunction with assessment across settings
- Use tests as probes, using raw scores over time, do not score
- *Consult and plan with team prior to formal assessment to train and establish consistent modifications across team members*

# Assessing Language Disorders In ELLs

- Accurate diagnosis of a language disorder for ELLs requires evidence of a disorder in both languages
- *A student is not LD in one language only*

Hamayan and D'amico, 1991

# What Does This Mean?

*Testing must therefore be done in first language (L1) and English (L2)*

Cheng & Langdon, 1994; Roseberry-McKibben, 1994; Operating Standards For Ohio's Schools Serving Children With Disabilities, 2002

# What Will L1 and L2 Test Results Tell Us?

- If “errors” or “problems ” are evidenced in L2 only and not L1, the student is most likely still learning English and does not have an underlying language disability
- If “errors” or “problems” are evidenced in both L1 and L2, a true underlying disability to learn and process *any* language may be diagnosed

# “Error” Analysis

- Errors of transfer and other cross-linguistic influences that must be analyzed within context of individual linguistic rules and culture of L1
- Errors can be on any or all levels of language: phonologic, syntactic, semantic, or pragmatic
- Distinguish between communication differences and language disorders by identifying language transfer and other second language learning phenomena

# What are Examples of Expected L2 Errors?

It is crucial to analyze L2 errors in order to determine if they evidence stages and characteristics of normal second language acquisition- across language levels of phonology, syntax, semantics, or pragmatics

# ERROR ANALYSIS

- Phonologic

L1 systems internalized by age 4; identify L1 phonology; consider dialectal differences; determine L1 phonemic influence on English; identify English sounds not part of L1 system; e.g., Spanish trills not in English; Arabic 9 phonemes not in English; Slavic languages no /th/

# ERROR ANALYSIS

- Syntactic

Pronominal confusion or deletion may reflect lack of structures in L1, e.g., Asian languages few pronouns; other languages have few articles; L1 sentence structure transfers to L2 (L1 Spanish-*la casa grande=the house big* vs. L1 French-*la grand maison=the big house*)

# ERROR ANALYSIS

- Semantic

Lack of cultural referents for L2 concepts often mistaken for word finding problems, memory or other learning issues; overgeneralization mistaken for weak vocabulary; false assumptions made that ELLs know the names of U.S. culture everyday objects like *locker, water fountain, etc.*

# ERROR ANALYSIS

- Pragmatic

Eye contact, proximity, gestures, feeding/eating, hygiene, play, child:adult and gender specific interactions, are all culturally bound;

Recent shift considers a greater emphasis on evaluation of pragmatic skills focusing on ability to function and communicate daily within the academic and social context;

Silent period confused with selective mutism

# Error Analysis

## Theory To Practice

- Identify L2 errors, across language levels
- Determine cross-linguistic influences from L1
- Identify features in L1 that are not in L2 and vice versa

# Error Analysis Relating to Literacy

- Directionality of written language and style of script
  - Arabic right to left; Asian characters
- Absence of written language
  - Native American oral tradition
- Value of oral vs. written language skills in prior schooling
  - China two years of instruction in reading and writing with little emphasis on oral production

# Error Analysis of Classroom Behaviors

False assumptions and negative perceptions reflect deficit model perspective

Classroom behaviors are culturally bound and also may reflect degree of prior schooling, or lack thereof

*Many of the same referral concerns for suspected LD or ADHD, among others, may have cultural implications*

Detailed by s. Ortiz (2005) on the next sequence of slides

# Error Analysis Of Classroom Behaviors

- *Slow to begin/finish tasks*

**Limited comprehension, unsure of where to start or how to complete/what sequence, what to do when finished, back and forth translation is a cognitively time consuming task**

# Error Analysis Of Classroom Behaviors

- *Forgetful*

Lack of comprehension, cannot retain what is not understood, memory compromised by lack of understanding

# Error Analysis Of Classroom Behaviors

- *Inattentive*

Not fully understanding what is said and lack of visual supports make focus difficult, ell does not know what to pay attention to, listening behaviors can look different, fatigue is common

# Error Analysis Of Classroom Behaviors

- *Hyperactive/impulsive*

Different cultural norms for classroom behavior, lack of experience in formal schooling, rules unknown

# Error Analysis Of Classroom Behaviors

- *Disruptive*

Excessive talking and copying may be attempts to understand what to do or what is going on, rules for asking for teacher help and working with peers

# Error Analysis Of Classroom Behaviors

- *Apathetic/always late to class*

May have never used lockers before, may be late consistently because they cannot remember how to use them and are embarrassed to ask