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Evidence-Based Practices in Selecting & Using Standardized Tests: Considerations for Language Testing

Dr. Stacey Pavelko, CCC-SLP

Learner Outcomes

1. Describe testing considerations for English Learners
2. Describe how the culture of poverty could impact test selection
3. Describe how the cultural/linguistic load of a test could impact test selection
Advance Organizer

- Best Practices in Assessment
- How to use tests
- How to pick tests
  - Diagnostic Accuracy
  - Test Content
  - Considerations for Dialect and ELL
  - Cultural/Linguistic Load

Advance Organizer

Unique Areas for Consideration
- Language Variation & English Learners
- Culture of Poverty
- Cultural/Linguistic Load
SLP Goals for Assessment

1. Children with *Speech-Language Impairment* correctly identified as SLI
2. Children with *Speech-Language Impairment* inappropriately found “not impaired”
3. Children inappropriately identified as *Speech-Language Impairment*
4. Children without impairment found “not impaired”

Test Considerations

- Language Variation & English Language Learners
- Culture of Poverty
- Cultural/Linguistic Load
Use of Past Tense in Children with SLI
- Use of regular past tense lower than age- and language-matched controls
- Use of irregular past tense lower than age- and language-matched controls
- Less overgeneralization than controls

Pruitt & Oetting, 2009
Differences in Language Variation

African American English and Southern White English

- Mark regular past tense similarly to mainstream dialect
- Pay particular attention to:
  - Verbs that end in vowels
  - Verbs that end in non-stop consonants
- Over-regularizations similar to mainstream

“In a nutshell, the pattern of results across the English tests indicates that the areas of extreme difficulty for children with LI remain the same whether English is a child’s first or second language.”

Paradis, Schneider, & Sorenson Duncan, 2013
Test Norms

- Not appropriate for EL if not normed on EL participants

Culture of Poverty
Culture of Poverty


“Three-year-old children in professional families had a vocabulary as large as that of the *parents* in the study who were on welfare.”

---

### Early Language Experiences

**Quantitative Differences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Words heard per hour</th>
<th>Words heard in a 100-hour week</th>
<th>Words heard in a 5,200-hour year</th>
<th>Words heard in 4 years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Family</td>
<td>2,153</td>
<td>215,000</td>
<td>11 million</td>
<td>45 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Class Family</td>
<td>1,251</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>6 million</td>
<td>26 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare Family</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>62,000</td>
<td>3 million</td>
<td>13 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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*Hart & Risley (1995)*
## Early Language Experiences: Qualitative Differences

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Words heard per hour</th>
<th>Affirmatives per hour</th>
<th>Prohibitions per hour</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Professional family child</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working class child</td>
<td>1,251</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welfare child</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


## Cumulative Language Experiences: The 30 Million Word Difference

![Graph showing cumulative language experiences across different age groups and family backgrounds.](#)
The Effects of Weaknesses in Oral Language on Reading Growth

Consider Home Culture

- Locus of control for behavior
- Structure and use of routines
- Use of rigid time limits
- Temporal concepts
- Narrative Use (stories)
- Executive functioning skills
  - Planning
  - Self regulation
  - Choice making
Evidence Based Supports

- Preschool
  - Program development
  - Parent training sessions

- School age
  - Language supports
    - Explicit instruction on language variation
    - Narrative language skills
  - Choice making
  - Structure and routines

Vocabulary

- African American children (typically developing) from low income households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Name</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expressive Vocabulary Test</td>
<td>90.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPVT-III</td>
<td>91.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

McCabe & Champion, 2010
Cultural/Linguistic Load

Impact of Dialect, Culture and SES

- Is it a true measure of ability and achievement?
- Consider impact of
  - Language load
  - Cultural load
- What about the culture of poverty?
  - Executive functioning differences
  - Learning to “do school” – self regulation, self control, temporal concepts, vocabulary, etc
Culture and Language Load

- Consider and address in reports as appropriate:
  - Impact of Cultural Load
    - Prior knowledge
    - Temporal concepts
    - Common customs
    - Pragmatic norms

Research Shows . . .

- Culture and Language can impact a score by up to 35 pts

- Matrix of culture and language loads
  http://facpub.stjohns.edu/~flanagad/cross-battery/downloads/C-LTC%20and%20C-LIM%20-%20complete%20Packet.doc
Who lives in an igloo?

Is milk pink?
What is an Eclipse?
True or False

Due to the tremendous linguistic and cultural diversity in the world, every assessment tool is culturally or linguistically biased.

Resources


Resources


What’s Next?

**Other Testing Considerations**

Speech Sound Assessment