Working with Multilingual Families: Myths and Best Practices

Christy Schweitzer, MA/CCC-SLP
Division of Speech Language Sciences and Disorders
Department of Neurology
Henry Ford Health System
Detroit, MI

AGENDA

- Overview of Multilingualism
- Assessment
- Intervention (How & Why?)
- Qualifying for Special Ed

OVERVIEW OF MULTILINGUALISM

- Definition: Having a high degree of proficiency in multiple languages

- Differing levels of proficiency
  - Rarely is an individual equally proficient in all languages
  - Amount of proficiency depends on exposure / use
  - Each language may serve a specific purpose

OVERVIEW OF MULTILINGUALISM

- Types of Multilingualism
  - Simultaneous (Learning more than one language at the same time)
    - 3 stages
      - Child combines words from both languages, Child combines grammatical structures
      - Separate vocabulary systems, however, the child applies the same grammatical rules to both vocabularies
      - Separate vocabulary systems and separate grammatical rules applied to the correct vocabulary

OVERVIEW OF MULTILINGUALISM

- Types of Multilingualism (cont…)
  - Sequential (Lang 2 learned after Lang 1)
    - Usually occurs after age 3 and is the result of school/social influence
    - Success in Lang 2 learning usually depends on speaker's attitude and motivation to learn
    - Speaker may use Lang 1 to learn Lang 2 (adults)
    - Lang 2 may be learned independently of Lang 1 (preschoolers suddenly exposed to Lang 2 in school)

Multilingual Language Development

- Children are born with the ability to learn ANY language.

- No language is any harder or easier to learn as a young child.

- During the 1st year of life, children's brains become accustomed to speech sounds in their own language and "weed out" their abilities to recognize / produce other sounds.

Multilingual Language Development

- Similar patterns of language development regardless of language

Sentences (with increasing grammar)

Phrases

Words
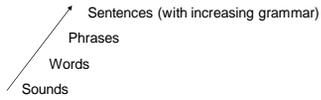
Sounds

- Language-specific variations
  - Specific speech sounds
  - Grammar structures

Multilingual Language Development

Overall principal of language development…

Child will do what is easiest first!

Common Multilingual Family Situations

- Complete multilingual environment—Everyone in family / environment uses all languages

- Partial multilingual environment—Parents speak both languages but grandparents only speak native language, or parents speak both languages but daycare provider only speaks English

Common Multilingual Family Situations

- Separate language use—Native language used at home with parents while English used with child at daycare / school

ASSESSMENT

- Need to provide appropriate and non-biased assessment

- Challenging because…
  - Most SLP's/clinicians NOT fluent in another language
  - Most clinicians NOT trained specifically in non-biased bilingual assessment
  - Many school systems require norm-referenced assessment

ASSESSMENT

- Standardized assessments
  - Is test available?
  - Is trained personnel available?

  - Can the parent / interpreter translate an English test into another language?

ASSESSMENT

- Alternative assessments
  - Descriptive approaches
    - Language sampling
    - Interviewing
    - Direct observations
  - Dynamic assessment (Patterson, Rodriguez, & Dale, 2013)
    - Assumes typically developing children fail some developmentally appropriate tasks due to lack of experience
    - TD children will make quick gains once exposed to task/skill
    - Children with language delays will not make such quick gains
    - 2 types: Mediated Learning & Graduated Prompting

ASSESSMENT

- Mediated learning
  - Similar to "RTI"
  - Test – Teach – Retest
  - Children with language delays will have more difficulty learning the new material even with direct instruction (Caesar & Kohler, 2007)
  - Results in greater accuracy of identification of language impairment than standardized assessment for preschool and school-age children from minority linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Patterson, Rodriguez, & Dale, 2013)

ASSESSMENT

- Graduated Prompting
  - Children are given novel language tasks
  - If they get it correct, they get feedback and explanation
  - If they get it wrong, they are given a series of prompts that give them increasingly specific information

ASSESSMENT

- Graduated Prompting example
  - Task: Child learning "ula"=red
    - Examiner: "We're going to learn new words! Here's an example."
    - Child shown 3 red items and 1 blue
    - E: "This is ula, this is ula, this is ula (points to reds)
    - Examiner shows child new set of 1 red and 2 blues
    - E: "Which is ula?"
    - If child points to red, examiner praises/reinforces
    - If child does not point to red, examiner prompts…
      - Prompt 1: Points to original 3 reds again ("This is ula…")
      - Prompt 2: "This is ula, this is ula, this is NOT ula…"

ASSESSMENT

- Graduated Prompting
  - Expectation is that children with language difficulties will continue to require the same prompting over time, while typically-developing children will need less prompting across trials (Patterson, Rodriguez, & Dale, 2013)

ASSESSMENT

- Alternative assessments (cont…)
  - Parent report
    - Parent concern may be one of the most reliable identifiers of language impairment in bilingual children (Caesar and Kohler, 2007)
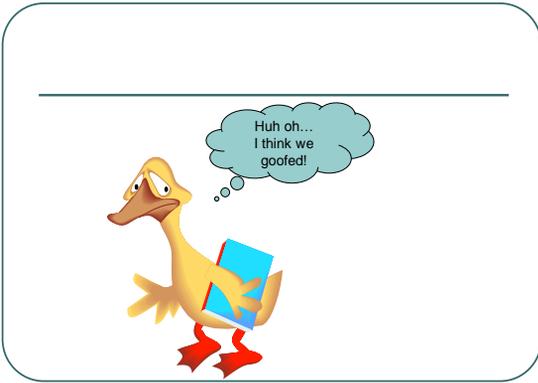
ASSESSMENT

- How are we doing???
  - Caesar & Kohler 2007
  - Questionnaire to 130 school-based SLPs on what methods they use most frequently to assess multilingual students

ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE	# of respondents	% of resp.
Peabody Picture Vocab Test -3	51	49.5
CELF-3	36	35
Language sampling	34	33
Exp. One-Word Pic Vocab Test-R	33	32
Parent / teacher interviews	23	22.3
Test of Lang Development (P or I)	19	18.4
Classroom observations	14	13.6
Recep One-Word Pic Vocab Test	13	12.6
Informal observation with peers	11	10.7
Expressive Vocab Test	10	9.7
Test for Aud Comp of Language	8	7.8

ASSESSMENT

- What's missing?
  - Dynamic Assessment
  - Observation of performance in ALL languages

- We are relying on standardized measures even though…
  - Most standardized tests are normed on majority culture/language
  - It has been shown to be ineffective in assessing language-minority children (Caesar & Kohler, 2007)

ASSESSMENT

- How alternative assessment might look in early intervention
  - Thorough case history (with information about the child from multiple sources and in multiple environments if possible)
  - Clinician-child informal interaction (using pictures, toys, etc)
  - Observation of parent-child interaction (using language(s) as they would at home)
  - Observation of child interacting with sibling or other individual if possible

ASSESSMENT

- Dynamic assessment:
  - If we model it, can the child do it?
  - How many models does he need?
  - Can he do the same task during the next session with fewer models?
  - Does he generalize concept to other tasks?

MULTILINGUAL INTERVENTION— Why??? How???

- Should we facilitate language intervention in English?

- Should we facilitate language intervention in the home language?

- How do we facilitate language development in the home language if we don't speak the home language?

MULTILINGUAL INTERVENTION—How???

- Parent training
  - Intervention administered by trained parents was generally as effective as intervention administered by SLPs. (Law, Garrett, and Nye, 2004 as cited in Kohnert et al. 2005)

  - Must focus on specific language facilitation strategies such as modeling, expansion, and imitation and should involve multiple instructional methods such as demonstration, coaching, role play, and constructive feedback

  - Must be MUCH MORE than just providing handouts

MULTILINGUAL INTERVENTION—How???

- Parent training
  - Training often takes place over multiple sessions and over several months to allow for change and growth in adult abilities as well as change in child's abilities

  - Parents will need support in how to use strategies not just in English, but in the other language as well

  - Great option when at least one parent speaks English effectively so parent and early interventionist can communicate effectively

  - If parents do not speak English, consider use of paraprofessional or some other trained community aid to act as translator

MULTILINGUAL INTERVENTION—How???

- Parenting training
  - Realize that some aspects of common language facilitation strategies (such as following child's lead) may not be consistent with some families' cultural values
    - One program does not fit all
    - Create a training program to fit the family

MULTILINGUAL INTERVENTION—How???

- Peer-mediated Intervention
  - Use typically developing peers or siblings
  - Excellent when cultural differences make adults less appropriate communicative partners
  - Pair child with a typically developing peer who speaks the same language
  - Early interventionist monitors and structures play situation for maximum language exposure to child

MULTILINGUAL INTERVENTION—How???

- Multilingual intervention is not "ONE SIZE FITS ALL"

- Primary goal is to help the child gain exposure to meaningful and developmentally appropriate use of his home language
  - Be creative
  - Use whatever resources are available
  - Your job is not to have all the answers…but to help the family find the best way to help their child

MULTILINGUAL INTERVENTION—Why???

- Social-emotional and educational advantages of learning language spoken by parents in addition to English
  - Communication of family values
  - Sense of identity
  - Closer parent-child relationships
  - Increased job/career opportunities
  - Increased cognitive processing abilities

MULTILINGUAL INTERVENTION—Why???

- Theory that children must reach a min threshold of language ability in home lang in order to reap benefits of multilingualism later in life (Puig 2010)

- Risk of regression or incomplete acquisition of home language if only English is supported during early intervention (Kohnert et al. 2005)
  - Children with language delay learn language more slowly, therefore, they need MORE exposure to their first language to learn, not less

MULTILINGUAL INTERVENTION—Why???

- Does supporting home language mean sacrificing English? (Kohnert et al 2005)
  - Comparison study of typically developing children from Kindergarten through Junior High in various areas of academic achievement
    - Spanish-only preschool
    - Spanish-speaking children in English-focused preschool
    - English-speaking children in Head Start type program
    - English-speaking children from middle class families

MULTILINGUAL INTERVENTION—Why???

- Does supporting home language mean sacrificing English? (Kohnert et al 2005)
  - English-speaking children from middle class performed best academically, HOWEVER, children from Spanish-only preschool out-performed English-only children from Head Start and Spanish-speaking children in English preschool

MULTILINGUAL INTERVENTION—Why???

- Can children with language delay learn 2 languages?
  - 7-yr old Canadian children with lang. imp. with consistent exposure to French and English did as well as their monolingual lang. imp. peers (Paradis et al. 2003 in Kohnert et al. 2005)
  - Bilingual 1st graders with low oral lang scores. One group received vocab intervention in Spanish, then English. 2nd group received intervention in Eng only.
    - Bilingual group learned vocab in English and Spanish faster than monolingual group learned vocab in English only (Perozzi and Sanchez 1992 in Kohnert et al. 2005)

MULTILINGUAL INTERVENTION—Why???

- Do skills transfer between languages?
  - In young children, there is no evidence to suggest that one language transfers automatically to the other.
  - In young children, the home language is susceptible to stoppage of growth or even regression when not actively engaged.
  - Absence of strong foundation of home language leads to further academic risks later in life.

MULTILINGUAL INTERVENTION—Why???

- Do skills transfer between languages?
  - Spanish oral language as predictor of English phonological awareness in Hispanic Head Start preschoolers (Lopez & Greenfield, 2004 in Kohnert et al. 2005)
    - English proficiency greatest predictor
    - Spanish proficiency and Spanish phonological awareness also significant predictors
  - This suggests that in older children, having a strong home language leads to subsequent gains in English

MULTILINGUAL INTERVENTION—Why???

- What about codeswitching?
  - Switching languages between topics, sentences, and even within sentences
  - Is typical occurrence within adult multilingual interactions
  - Does not represent delay or disorder in children
  - May be the primary speech pattern within a family

MULTILINGUAL INTERVENTION—Why???

- What about codeswitching?
  - Professionals often suggest families "stick to one language"
    - Implies codeswitching is bad
    - Implies that families are capable of using only one language
    - Increased cognitive demands on adults inhibits parents' ability to provide language-rich environment (*Three Little Pigs scenerio)*

QUALIFYING FOR SPEC ED

- Standardized test in English   Hmmm???

- English standardized test translated by parent / interpreter   YIKES!!!

- Standardized test in child's home language (if test and administrator available)   Better…

QUALIFYING FOR SPEC ED

- Informal measures to determine estimated functional age and use that to determine eligibility   HOORAY!!!

  - District may have to set separate eligibility parameters for children assessed in this manner.

  - For 2.5-3 year old, SS on PLS-4 of <60 yields age equivalent of <18 months. Therefore, children between 2.5 and 3 functioning below 18 month level qualify for services.

QUALIFYING FOR SPEC ED

- Recommendations if norm-referenced assessment required
  - Give standardized assessment as able

  - Qualify the results of your assessment in your report, indicating that they may not reflect the child's true abilities.

  - Use informal measures including observation, dynamic assessment, and parent report to either substantiate results of formal assessment or suggest a more accurate level of functioning.

  - Encourage district policy-makers to re-evaluate assessment requirements for multilingual children.

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cschwei1@hfhs.org

QUESTIONS???