

# **Multicultural Students with Special Language Needs**

---

---

***Practical Strategies for  
Assessment and Intervention***

◆ ***Sixth Edition***

**Celeste Roseberry-McKibbin, Ph.D., C.C.C.-SLP**

**Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders**

**California State University, Sacramento**



**Academic  
Communication  
Associates, Inc.**

**P. O. Box 4279  
Oceanside, CA 92052-4279**

*This book is dedicated to Mike for always being there!*

## About the Author

Dr. Celeste Roseberry-McKibbin is currently a Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders at California State University, Sacramento. In addition to teaching at the university level, she continues to work on a part-time basis as a speech-language pathologist in the public schools.

Dr. Roseberry-McKibbin lived in the Philippines for much of her childhood and came to live in the United States permanently at 17 years of age. She has lectured and given workshops nationally and internationally on issues relating to multicultural assessment and intervention. Her previous publications include textbooks, assessment instruments, and professional journal articles. She is a Fellow of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and has received ASHA's Honors of the Association and their Certificate of Recognition for Special Contributions in Multicultural Affairs. She also received the presidential Daily Point of Light Award for service to children experiencing poverty.

Information about Dr. Roseberry-McKibbin's literacy outreach to children is available at [lovetalkread.com](http://lovetalkread.com). She is on Instagram at [dr.celesteroseberry](https://www.instagram.com/dr.celesteroseberry) and TikTok as [@celesteroseberry](https://www.tiktok.com/@celesteroseberry). Check these online resources for video demonstrations and practical ideas for assessment and intervention.

---

◆ Book cover artwork and design by Hui Chi Chuang

***Multicultural Students with Special Language Needs*** - Sixth Edition

Copyright © 2022 by Academic Communication Associates, Inc.

All rights reserved. Pages designated as "reproducible" may be duplicated by the owner of this book for nonprofit educational use. No other part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording, or otherwise, without permission in writing from Academic Communication Associates, Inc.



**Academic  
Communication  
Associates, Inc.**

P. O. Box 4279  
Oceanside, CA 92052-4279

WEB: [www.ACAwebsite.com](http://www.ACAwebsite.com)

Telephone Order Line: (888) 758-9558

Fax: (760) 722-1625

Printed in the United States of America

International Standard Book Number: 978-1-57503-159-0

# Table of Contents

<b>Preface to the Sixth Edition</b> .....	v
<b>Part 1 - Cultural and Linguistic Variables Affecting Service Delivery</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter 1</b> - Learning About Cultural Diversity .....	3
<b>Chapter 2</b> - The Impact of Religious Differences .....	27
<b>Chapter 3</b> - Families from Mainstream Middle-Class Western Backgrounds ..	39
<b>Chapter 4</b> - Families from African American Backgrounds .....	57
<b>Chapter 5</b> - Families from Hispanic Backgrounds .....	83
<b>Chapter 6</b> - Families from Asian Backgrounds .....	109
<b>Chapter 7</b> - Families from Native American Backgrounds .....	133
<b>Chapter 8</b> - Families from Pacific Island Backgrounds .....	157
<b>Chapter 9</b> - Families from Middle Eastern Backgrounds .....	177
<b>Part 2 - Assessment of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students</b> .....	199
<b>Chapter 10</b> - Bilingualism and Second Language Learning .....	201
<b>Chapter 11</b> - Introduction to Assessment: Foundational Principles .....	229
<b>Chapter 12</b> - Ecologically Valid Assessment: Practical Strategies .....	263
<b>Part 3 - Intervention for Students with Special Needs</b> .....	295
<b>Chapter 13</b> - Foundations for Effective Service Delivery .....	297
<b>Chapter 14</b> - Practical Strategies for Intervention .....	329
<b>Chapter 15</b> - Working with Special Populations of Students with Disabilities	363
<b>Appendix - Sample Case History Form</b> .....	397
<b>References</b> .....	399
<b>Index</b> .....	423

## Preface to the Sixth Edition

Since publication of the previous edition of this book in 2018, significant historical events have changed our world forever. The World Literacy Foundation (2021) reported that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the closure of schools in more than 190 countries. The education of 1.27 billion children and youth was disrupted, and 63 million teachers in over 165 countries were impacted. The Covid-19 global pandemic brought to light the inequities and injustices in our society in a new and profound manner, exposing the oppression, exploitation, and marginalization of numerous groups of people. Challenges commonly experienced by populations from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were magnified during the pandemic.

Hate crimes against ethnic groups have been increasing, and more people are demanding sweeping societal changes. Asian populations in the U.S. experienced a large increase in hate crimes during the pandemic. The outbreak of war in Ukraine in February 2022 led to a refugee crisis and to hate crimes against Russians living in the U.S. Many children who come to the U.S. from other countries have experienced trauma that may affect how they respond to instruction in our schools. Recent world events have impacted my writing of the sixth edition of this book.

In addition to being a university professor, I work part-time as an itinerant speech-language pathologist in the public school system. I serve students ages 3-18. This includes Head Start students, preschoolers with moderate-severe disabilities, elementary school students, and adolescent sex offenders who are out of Juvenile Hall and living in group homes. Based on my work experiences with students and families from culturally diverse backgrounds, I feel a need to take a strong social justice stance, viewing speech-language pathology and other special education services through an equity lens.

The sixth edition of this book strongly emphasizes the concepts of equity, linguistic human rights, and social justice. Power imbalances that have resulted in discriminatory educational practices have been described by Cummins (2021):

There is a shameful history of racist practices designed to exclude Indigenous and minoritized students from educational and social advancement. These schools were permeated by what I called *coercive relations of power* where power is exercised by a dominant individual, group, or country to the detriment of a subordinated individual, group, or country...[we need] *collaborative relations of power* that reflect the sense of the term *power* that refers to being *enabled* or *empowered* to achieve more....power is not a fixed quantity, but is generated through interaction with others...[into] the *collaborative creation of power*. (p. ix)

Throughout the book, I have advocated passionately for the linguistic human rights of the English learner (EL) population in our schools. I encourage readers to value and leverage the experience backgrounds of students and their families by using a cultural wealth lens and a strengths-based approach to practice. We must move away from use of a “deficit model” in which cultural and linguistic differences are viewed as “problems” that interfere with learning.

In schools today, there is an increased emphasis on equity, inclusion, and interprofessional collaborative practice to best support the success and well-being of EL students, their families, and their communities. In the sixth edition of this book, I have added information about cultural continua and invited the reader to engage in self reflection. It is important for professionals to understand ways in which mainstream middle class Western cultural beliefs might color one’s perceptions of and attitudes toward culturally and linguistically diverse students and families.

Educational professionals who serve students with communication disorders and other special needs are being challenged to think creatively and strategically about best practices for assessing and teaching these students. Meeting the needs of the ever-increasing EL population is especially challenging for educational professionals who speak only English. How does one determine if a child’s learning problems can be attributed to limited proficiency in English or to a “disorder” that is affecting the ability to acquire language skills? Should instruction be provided in the home language, English, or in both languages? Can the language learning needs of the student be met within the general education curriculum or are the services of a speech-language pathologist needed? When ELs have Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), it becomes quite challenging for them to access the curriculum of the classroom, especially English Language Arts which emphasize oral and written academic language expression and comprehension.

Traditionally, the term *language impairment* has been used to describe the profile of children who show a delay in the onset of speaking. When they begin speaking, they show protracted development of all domains of language, with morphosyntactic development being disordered beyond what their general delay might indicate (Paradis et al., 2021). This is true for bilingual as well as monolingual children (Castilla-Earls et al., 2020, 2021). The term *Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)* has been used in the most recent literature to describe these children. These students often have deficits in perceptual-cognitive systems that are relevant for language learning. These systems include processing speed, some executive functions, and phonological short term memory. In this book, the two terms are used interchangeably.

Designing appropriate programs for the diverse population of multicultural students in our schools is a complicated puzzle that has many pieces. Close collaboration among classroom teachers, bilingual specialists, speech-language pathologists, and other professionals is necessary to put the pieces of the puzzle together in a way that will maximize learning of the language skills that are necessary for academic success and for effective communication in social contexts.

Students who speak a language or dialect other than Standard American English can be easily misidentified as having DLD if standardized tests are used as the sole basis for educational decisions. The language needs of students with “differences” resulting from limited exposure to the language of instruction should be met within the general education curriculum. Enrollment in speech and language therapy programs is appropriate only for students who have an impairment that affects their ability to acquire language skills.

Educators need to evaluate their instructional programs to determine how these programs can be adapted to best serve the interests of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Speech-language pathologists especially need practical assessment strategies and resources to help them differentiate language difference from language impairment in ELs.

This book was written to provide speech-language pathologists and special education specialists with information about cultural differences and with practical strategies for assessing and identifying culturally and linguistically diverse students with speech and language impairments. Many of the challenges faced by educational professionals who work with culturally and linguistically diverse students are addressed:

- ***Increasing linguistic diversity within individual classrooms.*** Many schools throughout the U.S. have experienced dramatic increases in the number of languages spoken by students within individual classrooms. A single classroom may have students who speak Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic, and other languages. By the middle of the 21st century, approximately half of school-age children will come from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.
- ***Understanding the impact of poverty on school performance.*** Many more students are impacted by poverty today than in past years. Refugees who enter the U.S. often have limited resources. Suboptimal living conditions, limited access to medical care, and a variety of other problems can affect students' development and learning. School professionals often need to provide parents with sources of support to help them deal with problems that can affect their children's development and learning.
- ***Developing appropriate curriculum standards.*** Federal legislation continues to have a major impact on the educational services provided to students with special learning needs. Today's curriculum standards are designed to provide students with the sophisticated knowledge and thinking abilities necessary for careers in a globally competitive market. Learning these skills is often a challenge for EL students who have been identified as having DLD. Although it is important for students to develop language skills relevant to success within the classroom, it is also important for them to acquire the skills necessary to satisfy basic needs, communicate with family members, and interact in everyday social contexts.
- ***Understanding the impact of trauma in a student's background.*** An increasing number of students are coming to our classrooms with trauma-induced experience, and professionals need the skills to work effectively with these students. The sixth edition of the book includes new information on trauma-responsive intervention for students and families.

Major features of the sixth edition of this book are the following:

1. The content of this book has been updated based on recent research. Much of this new research has direct relevance to intervention with culturally diverse student populations. Research-based "best practices" are described for distinguishing language differences from problems that result from DLD.
2. To facilitate readability, much of the text in the book is presented in a bullet-point format. Rather than dealing with long paragraphs, many "Generation Z learners" (individuals born between 1996 and 2012) prefer that information be presented in short bits or chunks.
3. Study questions are included at the end of each chapter. Some of the questions are based on "case studies" and require readers to apply what they have learned in the chapter. These questions should facilitate learning of the "multicultural" competencies that are assessed on the Praxis exam for the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology.
4. Information is presented about cultural differences and the provision of intervention to cultural diverse student populations.
5. Research-based information is included that relates to learning more than one language and strategies for bilingual language intervention.
6. Issues are reviewed relating to the impact of poverty and trauma on school performance. As stated, recent world events have increased the number of refugee and immigrant students in the U.S., and many of these students and their families experience poverty, a history of trauma, or both.

7. Guidelines are presented for using alternative, scientifically supported methods of assessment. Research-based, reproducible tools are included that can be used to assess ELs. These forms are suitable for speakers of any language and can be helpful in identifying students with DLD. New reproducible forms have been added.
8. Strategies are described to help students develop language and literacy skills that are critical for success in mastering classroom curriculum standards, especially in the area of English Language Arts. A practical vocabulary teaching hierarchy with sample objectives is now included in the book. This easy-to-use hierarchy can be adapted to any vocabulary theme/category area.
9. New case study *Profiles* and *Experiential Insights* are included throughout the book to provide real-life examples of the experiences of individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These real-life experiences should help readers to think critically so that they can develop strategies for effective clinical practice when serving students from diverse backgrounds.
10. Suggestions are included for developing culturally responsive, collaborative approaches to instruction and for implementing Response to Intervention (RtI).
11. Power imbalances between majority and marginalized communities are addressed with suggestions for the collaboration of power between majority school personnel and members of the marginalized communities served.

It is my hope that readers will be able to use information from this book in a way that fosters the collaborative creation of power. By working in a collaborative manner with families and community members, we can implement culturally and linguistically responsive practices that will help all students to reach their full potential.

Finally, I feel it is important to mention a few of the people who provided valuable help and guidance during the writing of this book. I want to offer my sincere thanks to Larry Mattes and Patty Schuchardt for their detailed editorial work, helpful suggestions, and continued support over the years. This book would not exist without them.

Some of the “experiential insights” in this book were provided by my students in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at California State University, Sacramento. I am so grateful to these students for generously letting me share their experiences with readers of this book.

My husband Mike and my son Mark continue to be my greatest supporters and cheerleaders, shoving food under the study door and encouraging me to continually pursue my dreams of doing whatever I can to promote social justice and equity for all students and families. Most of all, I thank God for His gifts of life and health and strength; with Him, all things are possible.

# Chapter 1

# Learning About Cultural Diversity

---

---

*When learning about other cultures, it is important to understand that not all members of a culture have the same beliefs, values, or customs. Much heterogeneity exists within cultural groups. Although cultural norms tend to influence behavior, each individual and each family has unique experiences that influence beliefs, attitudes, and actions.*

## **Outline**

- **Understanding Cultural Diversity**
- **Cultural Competence**
- **Cultural Variables Influencing Behavior**
- **Considering Cultural Dimensions in Increasing Cultural Competence**
- **Working with Immigrants and Refugees**
- **General Background Information**
- **General Characteristics of Immigrants and Refugees**
- **Acculturation**
- **Difficulties Commonly Experienced by Immigrants/Refugees**
- **Potential Family Concerns**
- **Public Perceptions About Immigrants/Refugees**
- **Implications for Professionals**
- **Conclusion**



To meet the learning needs of a student population that is becoming increasingly more diverse, educational professionals must develop an understanding of cultural differences and how these differences affect interactions and learning in the classroom. The language most commonly spoken by English learners (ELs) is Spanish, followed by Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese, Somali, Russian, Portuguese, Haitian/Haitian Creole, and Hmong. In fall 2018, the percentage of public school students who were ELs ranged from 0.8 percent in West Virginia to 19.4 percent in California (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Professionals who provide services for special needs children face many challenges in their efforts to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate programs for these students.

For many years, individuals learning English were most commonly referred to as English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Many students in our schools today, however, have been exposed to more than two languages. Acronyms such as *EAL* (English as an Additional Language), *DLL* (Dual Language Learner), *ENL* (English as a New Language), and *EL* (English Learner) have become popular when referring to students learning English. The term **English Learner** (EL) is used in this book because it implies that English is one of a number of possible languages that a student is learning.

A continuing concern for professionals is the educational disparities experienced by many ELs in our schools (Paradis et al., 2021; Rosa-Lugo et al., 2020; Roseberry-McKibbin, 2022). Unfortunately, American schools frequently fail to provide adequate support for these students. Even typically-developing ELs who do not have documented special needs may struggle academically (Fumero & Tibi, 2020; Roseberry-McKibbin, 2020, 2021). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2020), only 9% of ELs nationwide met reading proficiency standards in fourth grade in 2017; 5% met reading proficiency standards in eighth grade. For many ELs, factors such as poverty, low parental education, and low second language (L2) skills increase the likelihood of difficulties in learning to read (Collins & Toppelberg, 2021; Mesa & Yeomans-Maldonado, 2021; Owens, 2020).

Some students come to school as ELs with little or no prior English exposure. Though many of these ELs become successful, others lag behind and never reach the achievement levels of monolingual English-speaking peers. Linguistic discrimination occurs when ELs are either under- or over-identified as having communication disorders or other special education needs. Linguistic discrimination also occurs when students in a school speak a language that is not supported.

Hyter and Salas-Provance (2019, p. 28) stressed that **linguistic human rights** should include the “right to your own language, to be educated in your own language, to have your language respected, and to have the right to learn another language.” Students may experience difficulty reaching their full potential in society if their linguistic human rights are violated.

Professionals need to support all students’ linguistic human rights through advocating for equity and justice. **Equity** means that all students have what they need, and that individuals with different or unequal needs should receive differential treatment to achieve results that are identical to those experienced by individuals from more advantaged backgrounds (Hyter & Salas-Provance, 2019; Palafox, 2019). Equity calls for differential allocation of resources to address inequality resulting from structural discrimination and racism (Mahendra et al., 2021). According to Mahendra et al. (2021, p. 9), “...**justice** refers to changing dysfunctional structures and providing everyone access to opportunities and resources needed for success.”

Working to establish equity can involve ensuring, as much as possible, that the linguistic human rights of students are not violated when identifying individuals with communication disorders and other special needs. As Paradis et al. (2021) stated, over- and under-identification can both be classified as *misidentification*. A primary goal of this book is to help professionals avoid misidentification of ELs. The over-referral of ELs for special education services is well documented (Campos, Hamilton, et al., 2020; Kohnert et al., 2021; Rosa-Lugo et al., 2020; Roseberry-McKibbin, 2020).

In their efforts to provide EL students with equal opportunities for an appropriate education, professionals must have an understanding of cultural characteristics and the impact that these characteristics have on students' performance in the classroom learning environment. Cultural behaviors and values affect how students interact with one another and how they respond to the learning experiences made available to them. An awareness of cultural differences is essential to ensure that students from EL backgrounds are provided with appropriate culturally responsive educational options and programs. It is also important for professionals to be aware of the impact that immigrant/refugee status may have on students and their families. A starting point is to understand basic terms and facts pertaining to cultural diversity.

## UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Culture can be viewed as a framework through which actions are filtered as individuals go about the business of daily living. Values are at the heart of culture; thus, when we study other cultures, it is important to examine their basic values. One of the dangers inherent in the study of any cultural group and its values is that stereotyping and overgeneralizing may occur. Stereotypes can be viewed as a means of categorizing others based on perceptions that are incomplete. A stereotype is an oversimplified, fixed image that we have of members of a group. A stereotype is an ending point. No effort is made to find out whether the individual in question fits the statement (e.g., "Members of the Hispanic community have large families.>").

When learning about other cultures, it is important to understand that not all members of a culture have the same beliefs, values, or customs; great heterogeneity exists within cultural groups. Cultural groups are dynamic and ever-changing. Although cultural norms tend to influence behavior, each individual and each family has unique experiences that influence beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. The following terms are relevant to the understanding of cultural differences:

- ❑ **Intersectionality** is a concept that addresses the multiple dimensions of identity and social systems as they intersect with each other and relate to inequality (e.g., genderism, racism, ageism, classism, and others). Students and families may come from a range of social groups whose structural inequalities can create marginalized identities (American Psychological Association, 2020; Wyatt, 2021).
- ❑ **Ethnocentrism** is the view that members of one's own culture do things the right way and that other ways of doing something are unnatural and inferior. Being marginalized can result from, among other things, ethnocentrism among members of the majority culture.
- ❑ **Cultural relativism** is the view that there is no single "right way" to do things. The goal is to understand other people's behavior within its cultural context.

It is my profound hope that the information in this book will provide readers with a sense of cultural relativism, not ethnocentrism. This is the goal of the culturally competent professional.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCE

**Cultural competence** (also called **cultural responsiveness**; Hyter & Salas-Provance, 2019) refers to the ability of professionals to respect, recognize, value, and honor the beliefs and values of the individuals and families being served. In addition, cultural competence involves engaging in continual self-assessment regarding cultural differences between professionals and their clients to ensure that these differences do not negatively impact the provision of services.

- ❑ Rosa-Lugo et al. (2020) stated that although the term cultural competence has been used interchangeably with other terms (cultural humility, cultural responsiveness), "they all refer to ways of thinking and behaving that enable members of one cultural, ethnic, or linguistic group to work effectively with members of another" (p. 9).

- ❑ Cultural competence includes valuing diversity, being conscious of the dynamics inherent in communication when cultures interact, and adapting to diversity and the cultural contexts of communities served.
- ❑ Competent care requires the provision of services that are responsive to and respectful of an individual's language, values, and preferences (ASHA, 2017).
- ❑ On our journey towards cultural competence, we need to be willing to accept that there is often no single right way to do things. Our cultural background influences how we expect others to act in specific situations.
- ❑ The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association has emphasized the importance of “cultural humility” which involves the recognition of limits, critical self-assessment, and ongoing acquisition of knowledge. Cultural humility promotes valuing clients as experts in their own lives. Cultural humility also encourages providers to evaluate their own biases and privilege while developing an interest in learning about the cultural background of their clients (ASHA, 2020).
- ❑ Parveen and Santhanam (2021) conducted a survey to examine the perceived competence of speech-language pathologists (SLPs) when faced with the task of providing services to a client who speaks a language that they do not speak. The data revealed that monolingual SLPs felt less competent in their knowledge of clients' cultures, home environments, and other parameters than did SLPs who spoke more than one language. They also found differences between interventionists' and clients' perceptions relating to what constitutes a disability and how they would react to the diagnosis. The results show the importance of maintaining an ongoing mind-set of cultural humility when delivering services to diverse students and their families.

Though cultural humility is an important component of cultural competence, it is not enough. The professional must possess knowledge about the client's culture and language (Crowley, et al., 2015). Helpful strategies for gaining this knowledge are listed in Table 1.1.

#### KEY TERMS

- **Culture** (defined in more detail later) is the shared beliefs, traditions, and values of a group of people that are used to define their social identity.
- **Race** is a classification that distinguishes groups of people from one another based on physical characteristics such as skin color. It is a statement about a person's biological attributes.
- **Ethnicity** is the social definition of groups of people based on shared ancestry and culture. Ethnicity includes race and also factors such as customs, nationality, language, and heritage.
- **Mainstream, middle-class Western culture (MMW)** refers to European-based cultures of the United States, Canada, Western Europe, New Zealand, and Australia (Paradis et al., 2021). Values of MMW culture include individual freedom, self-determination, and equality of all individuals.

#### CULTURAL VARIABLES INFLUENCING BEHAVIOR

Many variables influence the behavior of individuals within a culture. The manner in which services are provided may be influenced by general cultural practices in combination with variables unique to the individual. Thus, culturally responsive professionals must understand not only general characteristics of various cultural groups, but also the variables that interact to make each student

**Table 1.1**  
**Suggestions for Increasing Cultural Responsiveness**

1. **Team up with persons from the local cultural community who can act as mediators.** Utilizing the knowledge and skills of these individuals is generally the best way to obtain the information necessary to serve multicultural students and their families.
2. **Read as much as possible about the family's culture and language.** Such information may be gathered from local community libraries, university libraries, and individuals in the community who are from that cultural group.
3. **Visit students' homes.** Ascertain first that the family is willing to be visited, and choose times that are convenient for these visits.
4. **Evaluate your own assumptions and values.** Consider how your own assumptions and values influence your way of communicating information about students' achievements, instructional needs, and goals for school success.
5. **Consider the student's needs in the larger context of the family and community.** If you want the student to receive additional services above and beyond those available in the regular classroom, examine the student's needs within the context of the family as a whole. Be sure to include family members in the decision-making process.
6. **Consider the value system of the family when setting goals.** For example, educational professionals often stress the importance of helping students with physical disabilities become as independent as possible. However, in a particular child's culture, independence may not be emphasized or considered important; instead, family members may be expected to care for all of the student's needs. Intervention plans will not likely succeed unless the family's values and style of living are taken into account.
7. **Be aware that both verbal and nonverbal communication can affect a family's attitudes toward the school and the professionals working with the student.** Professionals need to show that they are truly interested in helping the family.
8. **Talk with individuals from a variety of cultural backgrounds.** Participate in social interactions with people whose cultural, ethnic, and linguistic origins are different from yours. This can be accomplished by attending holiday celebrations, community functions, etc.
9. **Ask students to share important aspects of their culture with you and other students.** Some students may not be comfortable talking about their cultural/language background. However, when students are willing to share, everyone benefits from this exchange.
10. **Learn some basic communication skills (e.g., vocabulary, simple phrases) in the student's language.** Many American professionals are monolingual English speakers. When these professionals begin learning a second language, their empathy for EL students may increase greatly. In addition, multicultural families appreciate professionals' efforts to relate to them, even if they speak only a few simple phrases of the family's home language.
11. **Be aware that students from different cultural backgrounds may begin school with different cultural assumptions about human relations and about the world.** These assumptions may cause conflict for the student initially. Professionals need to be sensitive to this possibility, especially for students who enter the country as immigrants or refugees.
12. **Learn to pronounce and use students' actual names rather than just "Americanized" versions of these names.** Show an interest in learning how to pronounce the student's name correctly.

and family unique within that cultural group. An understanding of these variables can be enhanced by communicating with family members and cultural mediators. Many families and cultural mediators appreciate the opportunity to share their lived experience and cultural values with others, especially professionals from the mainstream middle-class Western culture.

---

***Experiential Insight*** Nadia, university senior, speaker of Ukrainian, daughter of immigrants from Ukraine

Many Christians have fled from Ukraine to the U.S. due to religious persecution. We in the Slavic community tend to marry within the community to preserve our culture. We are very close knit and prefer to receive services from other members of the Slavic community rather than from mainstream American professionals. Schools in the U.S. are much less formal than in Ukraine, where teachers are very strict and we fear them. Disability is a touchy subject; parents may try to cover up a child's disability because they don't want to look bad. It might be hard to obtain accurate information from them. Remember that we have large families—children are very highly valued and must respect elders. Young children in our community don't go to day care or preschool—they are cared for by relatives. Sometimes older children will be taken out of school to care for younger ones. Marrying young is common—marrying at 17, 18, or 19 is not at all unusual. We frown upon premarital sex, and no one lives together without being married. There is no divorce. Church is a huge part of our lives; we don't participate in extracurricular activities because we devote all our spare time to church. At school, we hang out with church friends. Many of us don't mingle much with mainstream American students. We are generally quite conservative, and it's important to us to preserve our identity.

---

The following variables are important to consider when services are being provided to students and families:

1. Educational background of family members
2. Languages spoken
3. Length of residence in an area
4. Country of birth (immigrant vs. native born)
5. Reasons for immigration to the U.S.
6. Urban vs. rural background
7. Individual choice within the intrapersonal realm (e.g., idiosyncratic behavior)
8. Socioeconomic status/upward mobility in the country of origin
9. Socioeconomic status/upward class mobility in the U.S.
10. Age and gender
11. Religious beliefs and their impact on daily life activities
12. Neighborhood of residence and peer group
13. Degree of acculturation into mainstream American life
14. Generational membership (first, second, third generation)
15. Beliefs about health care and disabilities
16. The impact of trauma in the client's background, including the possible presence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

If a family has immigrated to the U.S., reasons for this immigration should be considered. It is also important to find out about generational patterns of immigration. To what extent are other relatives living in close proximity? To what extent are members of a cultural group marrying those from diverse ethnic backgrounds? These questions and all of the above factors need to be considered when professionals provide services to students and families from diverse cultural backgrounds.

## Chapter 9

# Families from Middle Eastern Backgrounds

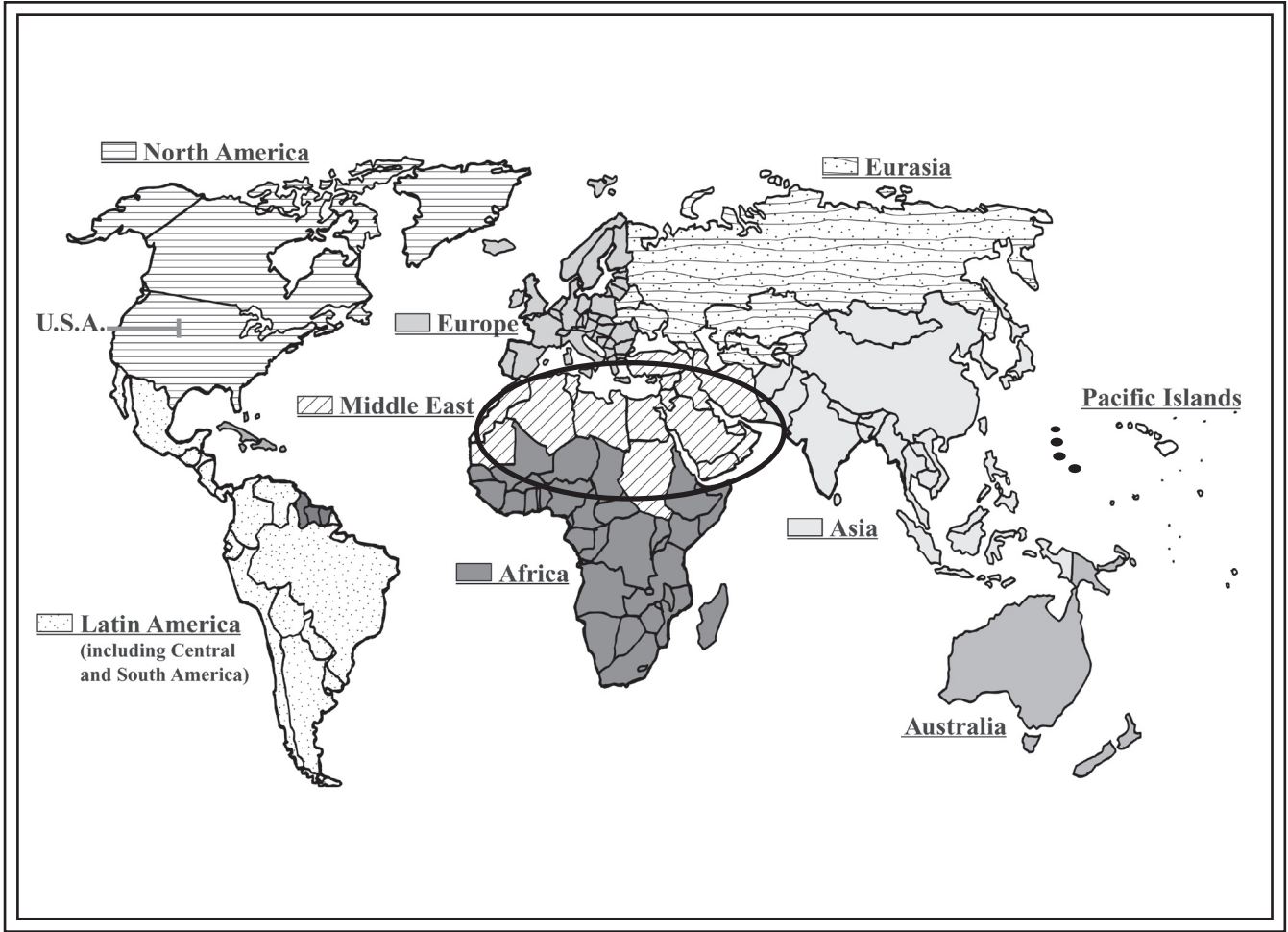
---

---

### **Outline**

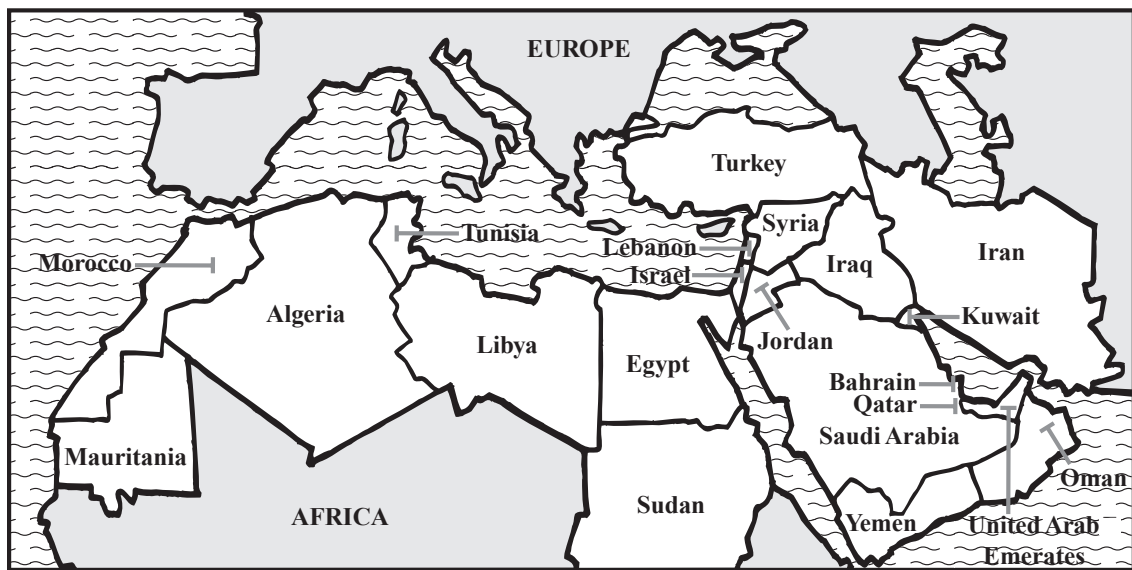
- **General Background Information**
- **Cultural Considerations**
- **Education and Literacy**
- **Health Care and Disabilities**
- **Middle Eastern Communication Styles**
- **Middle Eastern Language Considerations**
- **Implications for Professionals: Research-Based Recommendations for Service Delivery**





The Middle East is often called the cradle of civilization. Countries included in this area are Israel, Syria, Lebanon, the Occupied Territories, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Yemen, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Turkey, and Sudan, as shown in Figure 9.1. Because increasing numbers of immigrants from the Middle East have been arriving in the U.S. in the last few years, it is important to understand some basics about the culture and some specific research-based recommendations for culturally responsive assessment and intervention.

Figure 9.1



### GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- The Middle East stretches over a large area, approximately the size of the U.S., where the continents of Africa, Asia, and Europe come together.
- Most of the Middle East is comprised of deserts. The largest city in the Middle East is Cairo, Egypt.
- The largest country in the Middle East is Saudi Arabia. It is one million square miles in size, roughly one-third the size of the U.S. Saudi Arabia is often considered a bridge between Asia and the Western world.



- The Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina are located in Saudi Arabia. Thousands of Muslims journey to these cities annually (especially Mecca) to pray and worship.
- The Arab population in the Middle East is larger than that of any other group. Thus, the majority (but not all) of Middle Easterners are Arabs. Most of the people in the Middle East identify themselves as Arabs.
- The Middle East includes non-Arabic nations such as Iran, Israel, and Turkey. Not all Arabic nations are located in what is considered the Middle East. These nations include Egypt, Algeria, and Morocco (Insight Into Diversity, 2021).
- According to Campbell-Wilson (2012, p. 63):
  - ...[the term] Arab is best used within a cultural context...Arab countries are those in which the primary language is Arabic and the primary religion is Islam. Consequently, the Middle East makes up the greatest portion of the Arab world, a world that reflects one of Islam from an embryonic phenomenon into a vast sphere of influence and civilization.
- The Arab countries include Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Oman, the Comoro Islands, and Djibouti (Insight Into Diversity, 2021). These countries are situated in the Middle East and North Africa (Greer, 2020).
- The Arabic language provides a linguistic bond among the Arab countries. Anyone who speaks Arabic as a native is considered to be an Arab, no matter what country he or she is from. The term “Arab” is not based on race; Arabs have widely varied physical features. In this chapter, the terms “Arab” and “Middle Easterner” are used interchangeably (although readers need to be aware of the distinctions between the two groups.)
- The Arab population is a distinct ancestry group and is highly heterogeneous, composed of groups with different ethnic origins originally from North Africa and the Middle East.
- Key values for many Arabs include family and religion. Religion is an integral part of everyday life and activity.
- Approximately 92% of Arabs in the Middle East are Muslim (Ahmad, 2004). Most belong to the Sunni branch of Islam.
- It is important not to equate the terms “Arab” and “Muslim” (Khamis-Dakwar & Khattab, 2014). In Lebanon, approximately half of the population is Christian. Most residents of Israel are Jewish. Other religious groups include the Bahais, Zoroastrians, and Armenian Christians.
- The Bahai faith is derived from Islam, but Bahais take Bahauallah as their prophet and they emphasize modernization and equality. Bahais in Iran have been persecuted for their faith, and many Iranian Bahais have fled to other countries.

---

***Experiential Insight***

Habib, male, speaker of Farsi from Iran

I am of the Bahai faith, and was not able to find a job or attend university in Iran because of my religion. I fled to Turkey where I learned to speak Turkish. In Turkey, I was accepted as a believer of the Bahai faith, but could not find work because I was a refugee. Thus, I immigrated to the U.S. for increased opportunities.

---

- Many Middle Easterners live in small villages; less than half live in cities or large towns. There are small numbers of semi-nomadic or nomadic people who live in sparsely populated areas.
- Some nomads in Saudi Arabia are called “Bedouins” (Arabic for “people who live in the open country”); many of them are shepherds who live in clans and tribes.
- Middle Easterners in the U.S. are often stereotyped in negative ways (Al Zidjaly, 2012; Al-Naser, 2020; Ibrahim, 2021). These stereotypes are caused by several phenomena, which include actions in the U.S. and in Middle Eastern countries by extremist Muslim groups.
- Since the attacks of 9/11/01, Arabs in the U.S. have experienced an increase in problems related to discrimination. In addition, the current political climate in the U.S. has fostered increased hate crimes and attacks upon American Arabs (Abuelezam et al., 2018; Al-Naser, 2020; Ibrahim, 2021).
- The Arab American population in the U.S. grew by more than 72% between 2000 and 2010. The states with the highest numbers of Arab Americans are California, Michigan, and New York (Arab American Institute, 2017). In 2017, nearly 70,000 Arabs moved to the U.S. Today, there are approximately 3.7 million Arabs in the U.S. (Insight Into Diversity, 2021).

---

**Experiential Insight** Zoreh, university senior, speaker of Farsi, immigrant from Iran

We came to the U.S. from Iran when I was 9 years old. Iran is a very Islamic country—you do what your parents tell you to do. There is no middle class—you are either very rich or you are subsisting. As a woman, you must wear a hijab. People are very touch-oriented. For example, if you are talking to my mom, she will tap you repeatedly during the conversation.

I spoke only Farsi until we moved here. In Iran, we wore uniforms and there were separate schools for boys and girls. Our colleges are co-ed, but boys and girls sit on opposite sides of the room. When we arrived in the U.S., I was put into all-English classrooms in school. I spoke no English and used gestures to communicate. I had no friends and felt very isolated. Kids bullied me and called me a terrorist and camel-rider. There was so much name-calling! It went on for a very long time. Things became better for a while, but these days, with the current political climate, I feel the familiar fear rushing back. I feel like today, I am re-living the fears experienced by my 9-year-old self. I'm so scared every time I fly. It's really, really hard.

---

## CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

- In traditional Arab families in which Islam is the spiritual tradition, family members live out their roles as prescribed in the Koran.
- The family is the primary focus of loyalty for many Middle Easterners; families are usually considered the pillars of society. Children are loved and cherished.
- Families live near one another and spend much of their time together. If they come to the U.S. and experience a nuclear family situation, they may feel quite lonely and isolated (Al Khatib, 2017).
- Extended, multigenerational families are quite common. The achievements of any individual in the family affect how the family is perceived by others in the community. Loyalty to the family takes precedence over personal desires and needs (Arab Academy, 2021; Greer, 2020).

## Chapter 10

# Bilingualism and Second Language Learning

---

---

### **Outline**

- **Typical Processes of Second Language Acquisition**
- **Affective Variables in Second Language Acquisition**
- **Second Language Learning Styles and Strategies**
- **Types of Language Proficiency**
- **Issues in Bilingualism and Bilingual Education**
- **Conclusion**

It is imperative to understand typical phenomena involved in second language acquisition and bilingualism so that language differences can be distinguished from characteristics that are indicative of Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). In this chapter, these phenomena are described. Knowledge of typical second language acquisition and bilingual phenomena that may be incorrectly viewed as evidence of DLD will help prevent the misdiagnosis of typical learners who simply need more time and support to develop their English skills. As stated in Chapter 1, Hyter and Salas-Provance (2019, p. 28) defined linguistic human rights as “having the right to your own language, to be educated in your own language, to have your language respected, and to have the right to learn another language.” Students’ linguistic human rights are supported when they are not over-identified as qualifying for special education.

## TYPICAL PROCESSES OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The processes of second language acquisition in typically-developing students must be understood if one is to differentiate between language difference and DLD. Typical second language acquisition processes often result in differences that can impact communication (Brice, 2015; Cummins, 2021b). These differences need to be recognized as normal, typical behaviors for students who are in the process of acquiring English proficiency.

Students who are learning English often demonstrate specific difficulties that are similar to those commonly observed among students with DLD. Moreover, they are likely to perform significantly below the mean if norm-referenced English language tests are used in assessment. These students may appear to have DLD if their language background and environmental experiences are not considered (Vining & Henderson, 2020).

Familiarity with the processes commonly observed when children learn a second language will reduce the likelihood that children are inappropriately diagnosed as having DLD. Some of the most commonly observed behaviors are described below:

### 1. Transfer

*Transfer* refers to a process in which a communicative behavior from the first language is carried over into the second language. Also referred to as *cross-linguistic influence*, transfer can occur in all areas: syntax, morphology, phonology, pragmatics, and semantics (Brice, 2015; Kohnert et al., 2021). Transfer of word order rules from one language to another appears to be especially common (Paradis et al., 2021).

- Some speech and language characteristics from the first language may be carried over into the second language. For example, EL students often experience challenges acquiring grammatical morphemes when learning English (e.g. past tense *-ed*, plural *-s*, and present progressive *-ing*), resulting in omission of these morphemes. A Spanish-speaking student named Araceli, for example, once said to me, “Miss Roseberry, I like berry berry much espeech!” Araceli was showing transfer of Spanish syntax and phonology to English.
- Language patterns from the first language may influence how one phrases a particular message in the second language. In Visayan (a dialect spoken in the Philippines), “Ambot sa iya” literally translates to “I don’t know to you.” This expression is used by Filipino speakers to mean “I don’t know—it’s completely up to you.” A Filipino student who says, “I don’t know to you” could easily be diagnosed as having DLD if assessment personnel do not consider the influences of the first language on English production.

- When the second language is not the language of the student's social milieu, transfer is greater. Thus, when ELs produce errors in English, it is important to consider the possibility that these errors result from language transfer or from the student's limited experience in using English.
- Bilingual paraprofessionals who speak the dialect spoken by the student can be of great assistance in helping the professional determine the presence of first language transfer.

## 2. Fossilization

**Fossilization** occurs when specific second language "errors" remain firmly entrenched despite strong proficiency in the second language (British Council, 2021).

- These errors are often observed among individuals who have been speaking a second language for many years. For example, a fluent English-speaking individual from Cuba was heard to habitually say, "the news are that..." This same individual, however, had flawless grammar most of the time. In another example, a speaker from Spain with excellent English frequently said "clothies" rather than "clothes" when talking about clothing.
- Fossilized items can be idiosyncratic to a student or can be common within a linguistic community. Fossilized items may occur because of the inconsistencies of the English language. For example, irregular past tense and plural forms may be fossilized (e.g., "My foots are sore.") because they are inconsistent.
- Students' use of fossilized items should not be viewed as a sign of DLD. It is more important to focus on the student's ability to communicate meaning appropriately than on the ability to use flawless English morphology and syntax.

---

### *Experiential Insight*

Fely, female speaker of Tagalog, Philippines

We arrived in the U.S. when I was 13. The only difficulty I have to this day (now 37 years old) is correct use of subject pronouns "he" and "she." In Tagalog, we only use "siya" as the pronoun for both genders. This is actually a Filipino error that we all make, no matter how long we have been in the U.S.

---

## 3. Silent Period

Some students, when learning a second language, go through a **silent period** in which there is much listening/comprehension and little output (Laslocky, 2021; The Education Alliance, 2021). These students are learning the rules of the language during this silent period; they may be covertly rehearsing what they are hearing (Garcia-Arena, 2021).

- The silent period can last anywhere from three to six months, although estimates vary.
- Practitioners might be led to believe that a student has an expressive language delay, when in reality the student's attention is focused on learning the language. Generally, the younger the child is when exposure to the second language occurs, the longer the silent period lasts (Paradis et al., 2021).
- Children exposed to a second language during their preschool years may have a silent period that lasts for months. It is my clinical experience that teachers and caregivers often become concerned that children have an expressive language delay when in reality, they are going through a typical silent period and building comprehension skills.

- ❑ Unfortunately, traumatic experiences may negatively impact communication skills in children (Hyter, 2020; Paradis et al., 2021). For example, children may have been separated from their parents, experienced forced relocation, or undergone other traumatic events. They may not be talking because of their history of trauma. In these cases, it is necessary to work with a professional team that includes mental health care professionals.

### Profile

---

Arisbel R., a 3-year-old Spanish-speaking girl, was brought to a local preschool where only English was spoken. According to Arisbel's mother, Arisbel had no problems acquiring Spanish, and her Spanish language skills were commensurate with those of her siblings. However, the preschool teachers contacted the local SLP after two months because Arisbel "isn't talking and we think she might have a language delay."

Arisbel was assessed in Spanish in both the home and preschool settings. An extensive case history was collected from Arisbel's caregivers. Based on the information obtained, the SLP concluded that Arisbel was a typically-developing language learner who was going through the "silent period" that is often observed when young children are beginning to learn a new language. Ten months later, Arisbel was making functional use of the second language and interacting effectively with the other children in the preschool setting.

---

## 4. Interlanguage

Paradis et al. (2021) defined *interlanguage* as the period in second language development that extends from the time that the learner starts to use language productively until the time that the individual reaches a competence level similar to that of a native speaker. Paradis (2007, p. 2) described interlanguage as "...a dynamic system balancing first language transfer processes with target language developmental processes that gradually moves closer to the target language system."

- ❑ When learning a second language, the learner tests hypotheses about how language works and forms a personal set of rules for using language. The individual's production changes over time as language is experienced in different contexts.
- ❑ EL students in the interlanguage stage frequently make inconsistent errors. Inconsistent errors reflect the progress that the student is making in learning a new language and should not be viewed as evidence of DLD.
- ❑ In the example below, a 5-year-old child makes inconsistent language errors when talking about toy farm animals that she is playing with:

First the cows going to walk over there. There are three pig eating, and they standing by the cats. I don't know why those cat aren't hungry, but they not hungry. Oh, the horses are run now—I think they scared of the dog that are chasing. The horse run into the barn to hide from the dogs.

Although the errors observed are common among children with DLD, this particular student made these errors because she is in the interlanguage stage of learning English.

# Chapter 11

## Introduction to Assessment: Foundational Principles

---

---

### Outline

- The Diagnostic Dilemma
- Diagnostic Pie
- Legal Considerations
- The Pre-Evaluation Process
- Non-biased Assessment and Standardized Tests
- Formal Test Assumptions
- Sources of Bias in Standardized Testing
- Considerations in Test Selection
- Considerations in Test Administration
- Considerations in Test Interpretation
- Use of Interpreters
- Conclusion



## THE DIAGNOSTIC DILEMMA

When professionals are confronted with English learners (ELs) who appear to be struggling in school, the cause of the “learning problem” is often difficult to determine. Does the student have a Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), or is the student merely manifesting language differences resulting from limited exposure to English?

Children with DLD show a delay in the onset of expressive language. When they begin speaking, they show protracted development of all domains of language; morphosyntactic delays are especially prominent. These children have reduced vocabulary, difficulty learning new words, reduced lexical diversity in narrative language samples, and reduced semantic knowledge in the absence of other clinical conditions such as intellectual disability (Castilla-Earls et al., 2021; Kan et al., 2020; Paradis et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2021). Table 11.1 includes a comprehensive list of characteristics that have been found among children with DLD from language groups that speak English, Cantonese, Spanish, Estonian, Swedish, Vietnamese, Dutch, French, German, Hebrew, Mandarin, Arabic, and various other languages.

Language differences are typical behaviors that are commonly observed among second language learners. Transfer from the primary language to English results in differences in speech sound production, vocabulary, sentence structure, and other aspects of language. Unfortunately, students with commonly observed language differences have often been misidentified as having DLD or even speech sound disorders (Kohnert et al., 2021; Paradis et al., 2021; Rosa-Lugo et al., 2020; Roseberry-McKibbin, 2020).

The “DLD” diagnosis is appropriate only for students with disabilities affecting their underlying ability to learn language. In this chapter and the one that follows, strategies are presented to help professionals accurately identify DLD in students who are learning English. By using these strategies, professionals will be able to reduce the likelihood that students will be misidentified. As shared in a previous chapter, misidentification can take two forms. First, students who do not have disabilities sometimes are overidentified as having disabilities and then placed inappropriately into special education. Second, students who genuinely have disabilities sometimes “slip through the cracks” and are not provided with appropriate, culturally responsive services that help them succeed academically and, eventually, vocationally. The practical, research-based strategies described in this book will help professionals avoid misidentification of EL students. By examining the impact of the environment on students’ performance, EL students are less likely to be misidentified as having disabilities.

### ***Language Difference vs. Developmental Language Disorder: Impact of the Environment***

Bloom and Lahey (1978) defined language as a system of symbols used to represent concepts formed through exposure and experience. Exposure and experience are critical for success in acquiring a language. Children must hear language and must be provided with experience using it in both oral and written form.

Teachers typically assume that students entering school have had opportunities to listen to stories, to explore books, to cut with scissors, to color pictures with crayons, and to use language for a variety of purposes. It is assumed that children have been taken to stores, parks, zoos, libraries, and other places in the community.

Some students come from backgrounds in which they have had all of these experiences. Other students who immigrate to the U.S. may have traveled to a variety of countries and may speak and write several languages. These students can greatly enrich their schools and classrooms through



**Table 11.1**  
**Universal Indicators of Language Impairment**

1. Slower acquisition of language milestones than siblings in primary language (parent report). Universal norms: *12 months*—first spoken word; *18 months*—50 spoken words and the child is putting two words together; *24 months*—200-300 spoken words and the child is speaking mostly in short phrases.
2. Difficulty communicating at home in the primary language
3. Reliance on gestures rather than speech to communicate
4. Family history of special education/learning difficulties
5. Deficits in vocabulary; word retrieval problems and use of general all-purpose (GAP) nouns and verbs instead of more precise vocabulary
6. Verbal and written definitions of words are vague and lack detail
7. Difficulty describing the function of objects (e.g., “What is this used for? What do you do with it?”)
8. Short mean length of utterance; sentences that are too short and simple for the child’s age, even in the primary language
9. Specific difficulty with morphology in both the first language and English, especially verb tense
10. Working memory deficits (e.g., repeating a sequence of digits or nonwords )
11. Lack of organization, structure, and sequence in spoken and written language; difficulty conveying thoughts; poor narrative skills
12. Inordinate slowness in responding to requests; long latencies or pauses before answering
13. General disorganization and confusion, including prolonged difficulty with basic routines
14. Difficulty paying attention
15. Need for frequent repetition and prompts during instruction
16. Need for a program of instruction that is more structured than that used with most similar peers
17. Inappropriate social use of language (e.g., interrupts frequently, digresses from topic, is insensitive to the needs or communication goals of conversational partners, cannot stay on the topic of discussion, cannot take turns in conversation)
18. Difficulty interacting with peers from a similar cultural and linguistic background
19. Overall communication skills that are substantially poorer than those of similar peers

Sources: Castilla-Earls et al., 2020; DeAnda et al., 2022; Fumero & Wood, 2022; Gray et al., 2022; Guiberson et al., 2021; Kan et al., 2020; Kohnert et al., 2021; Mendoza et al., 2021; Owens, 2020; Paradis et al., 2021; Petersen et al., 2020; Rosa-Lugo et al., 2020; Roseberry-McKibbin, 2020, 2021; Roseberry-McKibbin et al., 2023; Schwob & Skoruppa, 2022; Taha et al., 2021; Urm & Tulviste, 2021; Wang et al., 2022; Westernoff et al., 2021

sharing their languages, cultural backgrounds, and experiences when they interact with mainstream American students in the school setting (Westernoff et al., 2021).

Other students, however, have had limited opportunities to participate in experiences involving literacy, enrichment, and general language stimulation. These students and their families may be non-literate for one or more reasons. Perhaps family members have not had the opportunity to attend school or their experience in school was constrained by a lack of resources.

There are some students who come from backgrounds in which there is no written form of the language. In the Netherlands, for example, some students speak Berber languages that do not have a tradition of literacy. These students frequently struggle in school. Some Native American groups and speakers of Haitian Creole have predominantly oral traditions with no formal written language.

I have stated throughout this book that, unfortunately, members of some culturally and linguistically diverse groups experience poverty in much greater numbers than members of the mainstream middle-class Western culture in the U.S. It is imperative that professionals remember that poverty has a strong impact on children's school performance. Poverty coupled with lack of knowledge of English can have a major influence on students' performance in school, even in the absence of DLD.

As mentioned previously, some students have experienced much trauma in their lives. This trauma can have a profound impact on their ability to learn and benefit from services offered by schools. It is important for appropriate mental health care professionals to support these students and their families. SLPs can be part of the team that supports these students and families as well. Specific ideas for trauma-informed intervention will be presented in Chapter 13.

Another issue that impacts many EL students is lack of preschool experience. When children come to kindergarten not speaking English, not having preschool experience, and experiencing poverty, the task of succeeding in school can be challenging, especially when these students are in classes with students who have had a rich variety of opportunities to experience language and literacy.

In a study by Winsler et al. (2012), 13,191 ethnically diverse, at-risk children were studied to identify predictors of delayed entry into kindergarten and kindergarten retention. Delayed entry into kindergarten was not common. Students entered kindergarten at age 5, a typical expectation. These researchers, however, discovered that EL children who experienced poverty and who lacked preschool experience were more likely than other children to be retained in kindergarten because of problems experienced in school.

Educators are confronted with the challenge of disentangling the variables of poverty, EL status, possible DLD, trauma exposure, cultural differences, and other factors that may impact students' performance and cause them to experience challenges in the classroom. Educators must work together, using principles of interprofessional collaborative practice, to support these students and their families.

The World Health Organization (WHO; 2010) defined *interprofessional collaborative practice* as a strategy in which health care workers from different professional backgrounds work together with students, families, and communities to deliver the highest quality of care across settings. Using the mandates set forward by WHO, educators need to collaboratively evaluate students who experience academic challenges due to the variables shared above and/or to the challenges created by true underlying disabilities.

If students' background experiences are different from those of most other students in the school system, they may exhibit language behaviors that stand out as being "problematic." For example, students from backgrounds of poverty and those who have had limited exposure to books may struggle because their backgrounds have not provided them with the literacy foundation that the mainstream middle-class Western culture-oriented schools expect. Key points to remember are the following:

- When difficulties observed in school result from a mismatch between the student's environment and the school's expectations, professionals might assume that there is something inherently "wrong" with the student, viewing the student through a deficit lens.

## Chapter 12

# Ecologically Valid Assessment: Practical Strategies

---

---

### **Outline**

- **Non-biased Alternatives to Standardized Tests**
- **Dynamic Assessment of Language-Learning Ability**
- **Language Sampling**
- **Use of Narratives and Story Retelling**
- **Assessment of Perceptual-Cognitive Skills**
- **Assessment of Associated Motor Behaviors**
- **Conclusion**

## NON-BIASED ALTERNATIVES TO STANDARDIZED TESTS

Problems commonly encountered when norm-referenced tests are used in the identification of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations were reviewed in the previous chapter. When assessing multicultural student populations for the presence of Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), many experts recommend the use of nonstandardized, informal measures, also called alternative assessment measures, either alone or in conjunction with standardized formal tests (Kohnert et al., 2021; Mattes & Saldaña-Illingworth, 2009; Mdlalo, 2017; Rosa-Lugo et al., 2020; Schwob & Skoruppa, 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Students from culturally and linguistically diverse populations should never be identified as having DLD based solely on scores from standardized, norm-referenced instruments. Identification of DLD must result from triangulation of data from multiple assessment sources.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there is no federal U.S. law that requires the administration of formal, standardized measures in the special education assessment of students. When used within a team approach to assessment, qualitative alternative measures provide equitable, valid, and nondiscriminatory information about the student's development and actual use of language skills. By using a combination of formal and alternative assessment measures, school professionals are better able to identify those students who are truly in need of special education services (see Figure 12.1).

Data obtained from survey research has shown that many public school SLPs have concerns related to the use of formal, standardized assessment instruments in distinguishing language differences from DLD (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Kimble, 2013; Kraemer et al., 2013; Roseberry-McKibbin et al., 2005). This chapter includes research evidence to support the use of informal, nonstandardized, alternative assessment procedures as well as practical strategies for using these tools. The reproducible assessment tools in this chapter can be used with speakers of any language to facilitate that accurate identification of students with DLD.

### ***Advantages of Alternative Assessment***

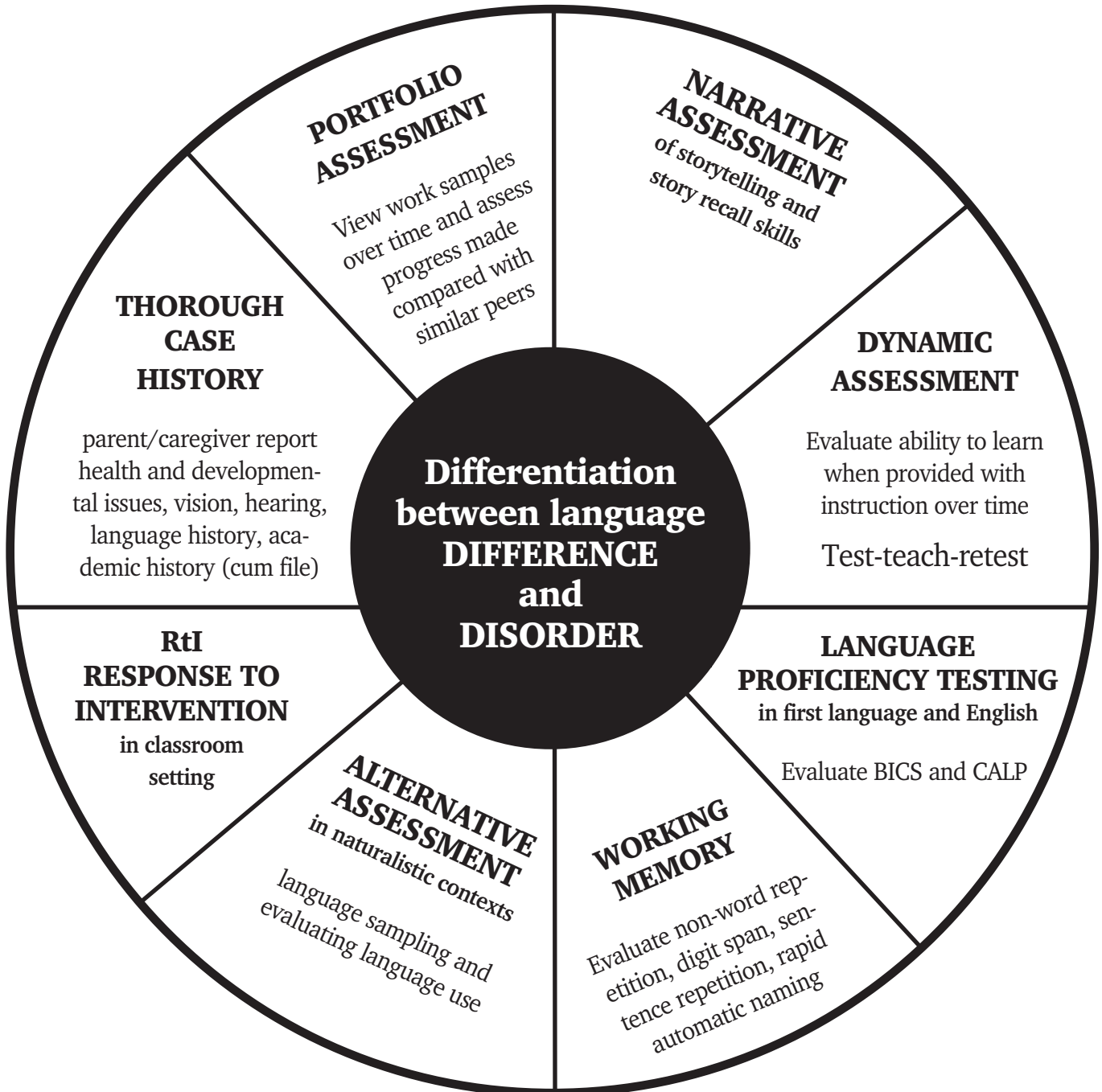
Alternative assessment measures help circumvent the test bias issues that are inherent in the use of standardized, norm-referenced measures and provide useful information to professionals that will not be obtained in a rigid, formal testing environment (Moore & Montgomery, 2018; Roseberry-McKibbin, 2020; Wyatt, 2021). Use of these measures benefits professionals in a variety of ways:

1. ***Professionals are able to evaluate the student's functioning in real-life contexts.*** Formal testing seldom taps students' individualized, functional skills in their own environments. Using alternative measures permits ecologically valid assessment, which considers the environment, home, and culture of the child and family.
2. ***The assessment process can be individualized based on observed behavior, yielding data that is helpful in distinguishing language differences from DLD.*** If the diagnosis is DLD, data from alternative measures facilitates the identification of specific areas in which intervention is needed.
3. ***Assessment data can be collected from multiple sources in a variety of contexts.*** Synthesizing information by triangulating data from multiple sources helps professionals to make accurate diagnoses (Castilla-Earls et al., 2020; Gonzalez & Hamilton, 2020).
4. ***Performance can be evaluated in relation to the demands of the curriculum.*** For example, it is important to examine the extent to which the student has mastered the concepts necessary to understand lessons being taught within the classroom (Rosa-Lugo et al., 2020).

Figure 12.1

**TEAM APPROACH TO COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT**

**ASSESSMENT WHEEL FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS**



5. ***Educational decisions can be based on how the student responds to instruction.*** In contrast to standardized, norm-referenced tests which generally assess previously acquired knowledge (influenced by environmental experiences) at a specific point in time, alternative measures make it possible to examine behavior in actual learning situations (Guiberson et al., 2021).
6. ***Environmental variables can be identified that may cause typically-developing EL students to appear as though they have DLD.*** Poverty, lack of preschool experience, interrupted schooling, and limited literacy opportunities are among the many environmental variables that may affect the development of basic language skills.

### **General Strategies for Using Alternative Assessments**

When alternative assessment procedures are used, communication skills can be evaluated based on performance in a variety of settings over a period of time. These procedures make it possible to evaluate language in relation to students' previous experiences. They also make it possible to identify specific problems that students are experiencing when they are presented with opportunities to learn new information.

Students who have underlying DLD will show evidence of difficulty learning new information, even in situations in which culturally and linguistically appropriate instruction is provided. By examining how students respond to instruction, SLPs and other professionals will be able to more accurately identify individuals who are truly in need of special education services (Campos, Hamilton, et al., 2020; Gonzalez & Hamilton, 2020; Mattes & Saldaña-Illingsworth, 2008; Rosa-Lugo et al., 2020).

When assessing culturally and linguistically diverse student populations in school settings, the following strategies are suggested:

1. ***Determine the student's level of language functioning and performance in the classroom setting.*** A curriculum-based assessment is important to determine how the child uses language in academic contexts. In addition, the student's use of social language in the classroom can be evaluated.
2. ***Use a dynamic approach to assessment.*** Evaluate the student's ability to learn over time when provided with instruction. This is highly preferable to a static approach in which the student is tested in one or two assessment sessions. Take advantage of the IDEA (2004) concept of Response to Intervention (RtI), described later in this chapter.
3. ***Evaluate the student's ability to learn new language skills.*** Because so many students have had limited exposure to mainstream school concepts and vocabulary, they often have difficulty in formal testing situations. Thus, professionals should evaluate ability to learn rather than focusing only on identifying the student's current level of functioning. Students who have typical underlying language-learning ability but limited experiences will generally learn new language rules readily, while students with DLD will have difficulty learning language rules. Students with disabilities usually require more repetition in their instructional programs than students who are developing language in the typical manner.
4. ***Collect observational data in a variety of naturalistic contexts.*** It is important to evaluate the student's ability to interact in everyday situations. The use of multiple observations in naturalistic settings makes it possible to obtain information about the student's overall communication behavior in a variety of situations. Professionals can observe students in the classroom, at recess, at lunch, in the library, in the home, and in other settings.
5. ***Use questionnaires to obtain information from individuals who interact with the student.*** Parents, other caregivers, teachers, and others can provide information about specific problems that the student is experiencing. The English Learner Pre-Assessment form presented in



the previous chapter, can be used to collect valuable information about the student's communication functioning in daily contexts.

6. *Assess the student's ability to construct narratives and to remember stories that have been heard.*
7. *Use natural language samples.* These samples can be used to evaluate students' communication skills as language is used in various settings.
8. *Review the student's school performance records.* A review of the student's cumulative record file often yields helpful information. Form 11.3 in the previous chapter can be used to record information obtained when reviewing students' cumulative files. I find it especially salient to read teachers' comments on report cards. I look for themes over the years. For example, a pattern of teacher comments about difficulties with listening, speaking, reading, and writing is a strong indication that the student has an underlying disability.

The use of language samples, observational techniques, and alternative assessment measures will increase the likelihood that students with DLD are accurately identified and that culturally and linguistically appropriate programs of instruction are developed to meet their needs. These measures make it possible to plan intervention programs based on how the student functions in the classroom and in various social contexts.

In this chapter, alternative assessment strategies are described that can be used in the identification of EL students with potential DLD. Specific research studies are cited that explain the scientific underpinnings for these practical strategies.

## DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE-LEARNING ABILITY

### ***Theory Underlying Dynamic Assessment***

Professionals who wish to evaluate students' language-learning ability must first understand the theory underlying dynamic assessment. Reuven Feuerstein, a Romanian philosopher/practitioner/scholar, developed the Theory of Structural Cognitive Modifiability. This theory was based on many years of experience working with low-functioning children from over 70 cultures. He worked with Holocaust survivors, children from concentration camps, and immigrants from Persia, Morocco, and the former Soviet Union, among others. Feuerstein's theory gave birth to the Learning Potential Assessment Device (LPAD). The major tenets of Feuerstein's theory and the LPAD are summarized here:

- Conventional tests and most other current methods of assessment are static measures that passively catalog students' current knowledge and measure their level of functioning at one point in time. These tests accept a student's current level of functioning as a predictor of how well the student will function in the future.
- The LPAD is designed to assess what the student can achieve with active help from a more knowledgeable person, often referred to as the child's "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1962).
- The LPAD focuses on students' ability to profit from learning experiences when presented with instructional activities in which they are able to apply their problem-solving ability and to demonstrate that they can improve their performance. Thus, students may be able to demonstrate problem solving skills that probably would not become evident in a formal test situation. This approach makes it possible to observe performance in natural learning contexts and, therefore, provides useful information about the student's ability to profit from instruction.