Best Practices for the Assessment of Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Students
Amy Williams, Christine Bierman, & Krista Forand
Overview

- Overrepresentation of CLD students in special education
- Culture and mental health
- Second language acquisition process
- Acculturation
- Areas of inquiry during the interview
- The use of interpreters
- Measurement issues
- Relevant techniques
- Non-verbal measures
CLD Assessment Framework
Definitions

- Limited English Proficiency (LEP): significant difficulty speaking, reading, and writing English, and difficulty learning in the classroom or participating fully in society.
  - This definition is often interchanged with the term English Language Learner (ELL).
  - Being CLD and/or having LEP is not a disorder!

Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005
What did I just measure?

- Disorder
- Acculturation
- Language
Overrepresentation of CLD Students in Special Education

- Majority of the disproportionality is found in learning disabilities and behavioural categories, that rely on subjective evaluations.
- In BC, aboriginal students are almost four times more likely to be assigned to the severe behavior category (3.5%) than are non-aboriginal students (0.5%), but are underrepresented in the gifted category.

### Table 2. Students of specific ethnic groups assigned to special education categories compared to percentage of the ethnic groups in the total student population (British Columbia, 2000–2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>In total student population</th>
<th>In behaviour category</th>
<th>In severe learning disability category</th>
<th>In gifted category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-aboriginal</td>
<td>92.8%</td>
<td>&lt;3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overrepresentation of CLD Students in Special Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>2007/2008 Student Population</th>
<th>Served under IDEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considerations for Assessment

- Consider each child and family as unique, but use what you know about the child’s and family’s cultural background to guide you in the evaluation and in creating interventions.
- Do not use your knowledge of the family’s background to make sweeping generalizations or to probe into cultural practices not relevant to the assessment or interventions.
- Do not equate low SES with dysfunction.

Sattler & Hoge, 2006
Considerations for Assessment: Culture & Mental Health

- Canino & Spurlock (2000)
  - African Americans are likely to tolerate problems and are not inclined to explain or understand them if they have a strong religious orientation.
  - Puerto Ricans and Chinese individuals often express distress by somatization.

- Aloud & Rathur (2009)
  - Arab Muslim clients do not distinguish emotional or psychological distress from physical illness, and the majority of the population tends to somatize their illness.
  - Arab Muslims tend to tolerate mental health problems for a long time before considering any intervention.
Considerations for Assessment: Culture & Mental Health

- Haque-Khan (1997)
  - Although Muslim women in general were less likely to seek assistance for emotional and psychological problems, the less acculturated Muslim women were much less likely to seek services than were the highly acculturated Muslim women.

  - A significant relationship between acculturation level and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help among Asian international students in the US.
Considerations for Assessment: Culture & Mental Health

Li & Browne (2000) identified 3 main barriers for Asian Canadians accessing mental health services:

1. Asians who have immigrated to North America tend to associate mental illness with shame.
2. The vast majority of available mental health services are geared to the mainstream English-speaking population and are, therefore, inaccessible for clients of Asian backgrounds.
3. Asian immigrants experience racial discrimination when interacting with the mainstream service sector.
Considerations for Assessment: Cultural Expectations for Child Behaviour

- Expectations concerning children's development and behavior vary across cultures.
  - Culture may determine the threshold at which behaviour is considered problematic or deviant (Sattler & Hoge, 2006).
- Consider bias in diagnostic criteria
  - Hyperactivity may be overdiagnosed (parent checklists) in Chinese youth because some Chinese parents are especially intolerant of elevated activity levels (Sattler & Hoge, 2006).
Considerations for Assessment: Cultural Expectations for Child Behaviour

- Native American parents view children as autonomous and equal individuals with their own unique developmental pace. They tend not to interfere with what they consider to be the natural unfolding of development.

- These parents may be mistakenly viewed as detached and uninvolved.

Canino & Spurlock, 2000
Considerations for Assessment: Cultural Expectations for Child Behaviour

- Chen et al. 1998 study on behaviour inhibition in Chinese and Canadian toddlers:
  - Chinese toddlers were more inhibited than their Canadian age-mates.
  - Chinese and Canadian mothers differed in their socialization, values, parenting practices.
  - Child inhibition (i.e., shyness) was associated with mothers’ positive attitudes towards the child, including acceptance, lack of punitiveness, and encouragement of achievement among Chinese participants and with punishment and overprotectiveness among Canadian participants.
Cultural Competence

- Culturally competent psychologists:
  - Are culture affirmative rather than culture tolerant
  - Develop collaborative relationships with children and their caregivers
  - Show genuine interest in the family’s cultural background and are committed to tailoring services to their unique needs
  - Incorporate cultural factors into clinical assessment, case formulation, and treatment delivery
  - Avoid assumptions based on the client’s apparent culture
  - Are aware of their own prejudices and how that might potentially affect the collaborative relationship

Ecklund & Johnson, 2007
Second Language Acquisition Process

**Theoretical understanding so we can avoid reaching inappropriate conclusions**

- But FIRST (L1): It takes 12 years for students to acquire their first language

**Birth - 5**
- Huge amounts of L1, phonology, vocabulary, grammar, semantics and pragmatics

**6-12**
- Complex skills such as reading, writing, and complex rules of morphology, syntax
- Elaboration of speech acts

**Continues over a person's lifetime**
- Expansion of vocabulary
Second Language Acquisition Process

**Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)**
- Language used in social and informal settings to carry on a conversation with another person
- Second language learners 2-4 years to acquire BICS

**Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)**
- Language skills needed to do homework
- Critical in order for the LEP student to make academic progress
- Second language learners 5-7 years

Cummings, 1984
Second Language Acquisition Process

In order for language-minority youth to be successful in school, their attainment of CALP in English (L2) is paramount

So how do second-language learners develop CALP in English?

- Limited English Proficient (LEP) students must first attain CALP in native language

- Greater development of L1, greater the probability that the child will develop a second language

- NOT given a sufficient opportunity to develop L1, the omission will have negative consequences on their L2 development and on their school performance

Cummins, 1984
Many school psychologists do not differentiate while conducting assessment

It takes the typical young immigrant schooled all in L2, 7-10 years or more to reach the 50th normal curve equivalent on standardized English-reading measure.

Take into consideration the educational trajectory of an LEP student in question with those of his or her same grade-level LEP peers.

Thomas & Collier, 1997
Second Language Acquisition Process

**Critical Questions:**

- Can the student’s difficulty in acquiring English proficiency be attributed to insufficient development in his or her first language?

- Can the student’s academic difficulties or failure in an English-only academic setting be attributed to his or her not having attained CALP in English?

- Was the student given ample instructional time in his or her first language to (a) develop CALP in this language and (b) demonstrate ability somewhat within the average range of academic performance?

Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005
Acculturation and Assessment

Unlike language, acculturation is not a variable that is as understood well by school psychologists.

It is not so much that the individual is from a different culture that creates the problem, but that the individual lacks knowledge of the culture that underlies the test.

This lack of cultural knowledge, or the process of acquiring it, is called acculturation.

“Although there is considerable research evidence suggesting that many intelligence and cognitive ability tests are technically sound, appropriately normed, and are not culturally biased, the are, nevertheless, culturally loaded (Flanagan & Ortiz, 2001, p. 220).
Acculturation and Assessment

Without a clear picture of acculturation factors unique to each individual being evaluated, it is difficult to arrive at accurate or defensible estimates of his or her true ability, skill, or knowledge.

Interview

- Focused and direct, semi-structured interview
- Not so much what questions need to be asked as it is \textit{of whom} should the question be asked
- Be upfront and clear about your intended purpose
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Sample Interview Questions for Evaluation of Acculturation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Use</td>
<td>What language do you feel most comfortable using in social situations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social affiliation</td>
<td>Are most of your friends people who have a similar background as you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Traditions</td>
<td>Have you begun to engage in any new or different traditions here in Canada?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural identity</td>
<td>Do you feel your child takes pride in his or her native culture and heritage?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived prejudice</td>
<td>Has your child had any problems in school because he or she is culturally different? Do you think people from your culture are discriminated against in any way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Socialization</td>
<td>Are you teaching your child about their native culture and heritage?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Values</td>
<td>Does your child’s behaviour seem consistent with or different from your culture?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview Process with CLD Students

Understanding the challenges students face on a daily basis, and often the startling resiliency they have developed in adapting to the demands of their unique situation

It is not the prerogative of the interviewer to determine the relevancy of the person chosen by the parent to accompany him or her during the interview

- A question of who and if they require an interpreter
  - May be important that the matriarch or patriarch of family to be present
  - Child’s father to be present in order to cultivate his involvement, interest, and approval of the evaluation process
  - Family advocate, spiritual leader, or community representative
Interview Process

Person-In-Culture Interview (PICI) (Berg-Cross & Zoppetti, 2008)

4 criteria that are relevant to all clients but of special use when assessing the multicultural client!

1. Know the client’s cultural-specific definition of deviancy
   • How does the issue impact your family?

2. Know what accepted norms of behavior are
   • How do members of your family express anger?

3. Be familiar with culturally acceptable methods of social influence (advice from an elder, healing rituals)
   • Who do you learn information from in your community?

4. Know what community resources are available to the client and which ones are likely to be used
**Interpreter vs. Translator**

**Interpreters**
- Responsible for oral transference of information

**Translators**
- Responsible for written transference of information

*School psychologists generally depend upon interpreters during the assessment process*
The Use of Interpreters

Caution
- Unintentional distortion of information during assessment process
- Loss of rapport
- Unintentional cuing
- Inaccurate translation of examinee’s responses
- Language issues (mixing of languages, change in meaning due to translation, dialectical and regional differences, lack of equivalent concepts).

Sattler & Hoge, 2006

Important Issues
- Limited information regarding the use of interpreters
- School psychologists receive little to no training in the use of interpreters
- Interpreters themselves often do not receive training

Ochoa, Gonzalez, Galarza, & Guillemard, 1996
The Use of Interpreters

Skills and Training

- Fluent in both English and child/parent’s native language
- Part of the multidisciplinary team
- Familiar with terms and concepts used by school psychologists
- Familiar with knowledge of assessment process
- Adherence to ethical guidelines
- Cultural and linguistic expertise
- Knowledge of the interpretation process
Measurement Issues

Cultural Bias vs. Cultural Loading
- Test development; level of acculturation vs. true abilities
- Familiarity/experience with mainstream culture (specific items on a test or subtest)

Linguistic Bias vs. Linguistic Demand
- Assumption of English language proficiency
- Level of English language proficiency required to understand instructions/task

Norm Sample Inclusion vs. Representation
- Representative of general population; uncontrolled variables: level of acculturation and level of English language proficiency
- Racial inclusion does not equal “cultural fairness” (Rhodes et al., 2005)
Relevant Techniques

- Culture-Language Test Classification (C-LTC)
- Culture-Language Interpretive Matrix (C-LIM)

Important components
- Degree of cultural loading
- Degree of linguistic demand

Purpose
- Bias – reduced
- Validity - increased
Culture-Language Test Classification (C-LTC)

- **Cultural Loading Classification**
  - Task content
  - Nature of expected response
  - Verbal and nonverbal communication between examiner/examinee

- **Linguistic Demand Classification**
  - Verbal vs. nonverbal language requirements – examiner
  - Receptive language requirements – examinee
  - Expressive language requirements - examinee

Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005
## Culture-Language Test Classification (C-LTC)

### Degree of Linguistic Demand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Cultural Loading</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Matrix Reasoning (Gv)</td>
<td>Block Design (Gv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cancellation (Gs)</td>
<td>Symbol Search (Gs)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Digit Span (Gsm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coding (Gs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arithmetic (Gq)</td>
<td>Picture Concepts (Gc, Gf)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td>Picture Completion (Gc, Gv)</td>
<td>Information (Gc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Similarities (Gc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary (Gc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension (Gc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Word Reasoning (Gc, Gf)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ortiz, 2004
Culture-Language Test Classification (C-LTC)

- Test Selection and Interpretation
  - Evaluation of subtest suitability
  - Evaluation of test performance (influence of language and/or culture)
  - Evaluation of test results (influence of acculturation and/or English-language proficiency)
## Culture-Language Interpretive Matrix (C-LIM)

### Degree of Linguistic Demand

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Performance least affected</td>
<td></td>
<td>Increasing effect of language difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Increasing effect of cultural difference</td>
<td></td>
<td>Performance most affected (combined effect of culture and language differences)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Flanagan and Ortiz, 2001
Nonverbal Measures

- Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test (UNIT)
- Leiter International Performance Scale Revised (Leiter-R)
- Wechsler Nonverbal Scale of Ability (WNV)
- Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (CTONI-2)
- Differential Ability Scales, Second Edition (DAS-II) – nonverbal component
- Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children, Second Edition (KABC-II) – nonverbal scale
Nonverbal Measures - Limitations

- Still rely on nonverbal communication between examiner and examinee - cultural undertones

- Instructions and task expectations – degree of nonverbal receptive language (e.g., Block Design) (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005)

- Like verbal measures, nonverbal measures can include cultural loading

- “require analytic reasoning abilities that are more fully developed through formal education” (Canino & Spurlock, 2000, p. 94).
Behavior Measures - Translations

- ADHD Symptoms Rating Scale (ADHD-SRS)
- Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)
- Youth Self-Report (YSR)
- Conners’ Rating Scales (Conners 3; CBRS)
- Millon Adolescent Personality Inventory (MAPI)
- Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory (MACI)
Summary

- Proper conceptualization: second language acquisition, BISC & CALP, and acculturation
- The Interview Process: build on your foundational interview skills & include specifics for the culturally and linguistically diverse student
- The use of interpreters: clear as mud
- Measurement Issues: Know what is being measured
- Techniques: C-LTC & C-LIM
- Be honest and up front, genuine, and respectful
Case

- Jose
- Grade 6; eleven years old
- Just moved from Columbia last month
- First language is Spanish; has been learning English for the past six months (private tutor)
- Mother passed away last year (severe illness); lives with father; no siblings
- Gets along well with adults; has few friends his own age; often eats by himself at lunch
- Difficulty paying attention in class; difficulty with organization; often forgets school supplies and homework; rarely participates in class
- Frequently absent (once or twice a week)
- Works with ELL teacher in small group setting every other day; has confided in her that he is very sad about his mother’s death
References


