LET THE STUDENTS SPEAK

Identifying language disorder in children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

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“Language and culture cannot be separated. They are interrelated so intimately that one cannot speak of form, content, and use outside the context of culture.” (Kayser, 1996, p. 385).

“... language use is essentially a cultural phenomenon, both reflecting and transmitting deeply held cultural values and beliefs.” (van Kleeck, 1994, p 74)
Understanding culture

“... the shared, accumulated, and integrated set of learned beliefs, habits, attitudes and behaviours of a group or people or community... at once the context in which language is developed and used and the primary vehicle by which it is transmitted.”

Kohnert, (2008, p28)

We see the world through the filter of our own culture

We need to learn to recognise the ways in which our culture impacts on our views....
“Cultural self-awareness is the first step in intercultural effectiveness. Only when we examine the values, beliefs, and patterns of behavior that are a part of our own cultural identity can we distinguish truth from tradition.” Hanson (1998: 26)

Comparing cultures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anglo American</th>
<th>Asian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child centred family</td>
<td>Parent centred family</td>
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<td>Child talk is valued</td>
<td>Close physical contact rather than verbal interaction</td>
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<td>Active social lives</td>
<td>Infants seen as dependent</td>
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<td>Early development of independence</td>
<td>Parent defines law, child obeys</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participate in decision making</td>
<td>Group orientation, ‘face’</td>
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<td>Achievement, individuality</td>
<td>Humility, modesty</td>
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Reflect for a minute or two on the behaviours you expect of children.

How much do you think these expectations are based in your cultural background?
Factors affecting second language learning

- sequential or simultaneous development
- language learning history
  - age of exposure
  - languages spoken in the home — how much, by whom
- family attitudes to L1, English
- life experiences
- characteristics of languages

A quick comparison – Vietnamese and English

- Word level
  - Both languages have nouns, verbs, adjectives
  - Vietnamese has classifiers
  - Vietnamese pronouns are based on kinship terms
SYNTAX
- share SVO structure

CHARACTERISTICS OF VIETNAMESE
- adjectives follow the noun
- question words are added to the place which would be filled by the answer (e.g., Miss-she go store, Miss-she go where)
- negatives add 'no' before the verb – “I no eat”, or 'no correct' if the copula is used “It no correct be cat”
- tense is marked optionally by words which precede the verb
- plurality is not marked on the noun
- possession is optionally marked by ‘of’ (car (of) friend),

Typical processes in second language learning
- silent period
- interference / cross linguistic effects
- code mixing
- code switching

It takes time!
- Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) – 2 years
- Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) – 7 years

In the classroom
1. home-language use
2. nonverbal period
3. telegraphic and formulaic use
4. productive language use

Think about the questions you will need to ask about language in children from bilingual backgrounds.

The simple question

Language deficit or language difference?

Why the questions need to be asked – a true story.

Identifying language difficulties

Think about how a child from a CALD background presents in a classroom. Why might a teacher think the child has a language disorder?

The conundrum

- We need to be sure we don't mistake typical patterns of second language development for language learning disorder
- But we also need to be sure that we don't miss the signs of language learning disorder
The simple answer

“A child with language impairment should demonstrate limited performance in both languages, not only in English”
Gutierrez-Clellan & Simon-Cerejeirlo (2009, p239)

… but of course it’s not that simple.....

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So the gold standard is....

.... assess both languages.

- standardised English language tests disadvantage children from CALD backgrounds
- lack of normative information on LOTE
- lack of standardised tests in LOTE
- lack of bilingual speech pathologists

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Dynamic Assessment

“...dynamic assessment is designed to measure children’s latent capacities for change instead of their ability to perform a skill at a given point in time.”

Pena, Resendiz & Gillam (2007, p332)

Principles

“...children who show significant changes during the assessment, and who can maintain those changes, may not need language services. Their initial poor performance might suggest unfamiliarity with the test situation or culturally based language differences.”

Gutierrez-Clellan & Peña (2001, p213)

Evidence

- 3 groups – TD, LI, Con.
- Mixed ethnicity, but balanced
- Pretest – narrative retell
- 2 x 30 minute MLE sessions
- Post test
- All children showed higher post-test scores
- LI children showed the least gain
- TD children showed highest modifiability scores
- Best classification: narrative measures and modifiability scores

Theoretical underpinnings

- Vygotsky
- Zone of Proximal Development

Process

- Test – teach – retest
- Consider:
  - How the child learns
  - How much effort is needed to induce change
  - How much the child learns

Evidence

Ukrainetz, Harpel, Walsh & Coyle, 2000
- 23 Arapahoe / Shoshone children
- 8 weaker language, 15 stronger
- 2 MLE sessions
- Stronger language group - significantly higher modifiability score
- Stronger language group – significantly higher post-test scores on expressive test of categorisation
Compare like with like

“… it may be more informative to compare language measures of an ESL child who is suspected to have SLI with the English of his or her ESL peers rather than to the English of monolingual peers, either with or without SLI”

Paradis, (2005, p185)

What parents can tell us

Paradis, Emmerzael & Duncan (2010).

- ALDeQ
- Four sections - early milestones, current first language abilities, behaviour patterns and activity preferences
- 139TD ELL, 29 LI ELL
- Significant differences between TD and LI
- Specificity 96%, sensitivity 66%
- Early milestones was best discriminator

What parents can tell us

Making a difference
Key questions

- What advice should we give to parents?
- Which language should we use in intervention?
- How can we work with bilingual children?

What advice should we give to parents?

- Use only English
- Use your first language
- Use both

Some evidence on advice to parents

- Paradis et al. (2003)
  - 8 bilingual French-English children
  - 21 English monolingual children
  - 10 French monolingual children
  - Spontaneous language measures at 7 y

Bilingual children did not fare worse than their monolingual peers

“...a suspicion or diagnosis of language delay in a child raised bilingually should not call for a recommendation of elimination of either language... learning two languages does not cause additional delays in language acquisition.”


“... advice to parents in bilingual families to stop speaking one of the languages to their children can be harmful to children and is also unethical. The fact that parents are never advised to give up speaking the majority language also shows an ideological bias that is not professional.”

De Houwer (2009, p316)
Which language should we use intervention?

- Use English
- Use L1
- Use both

Recommendations: which language to use in intervention

- Treat the dominant language

Ask a different question

How can we best support both languages needed by bilingual children with PLD?

Kohnert, 2008

Summing up

- Looking at language in children from CALD backgrounds is complex.
- Development of English language skills will be supported by a strong foundation in the first language.
- Effective practice with clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will take considerably more time and resources than with clients whose culture and language the speech pathologist shares.

Speech Pathology Australia (2009, p4)

References


