Dyslexia Assessment
Of English Language Learners
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Objectives
- Best practices in assessment for English Language Learners
- How Dyslexia manifests in different orthographies
- Bilingual Dyslexia Evaluation overview
- Assessment resources

What do we know about best practices in assessment for ELLs?
Foundational Knowledge

• Second Language Acquisition Theory: Cummins “Iceberg Model”

The Iceberg Analogy
Surface Level
L1 surface
L2 surface
Common Underlying Proficiency
Control/Operating System

Foundational Knowledge

Bilingual & ESL Education Models

Which program models reduce the number of “at-risk” students?

Dual Language:
• ELLs: 6% at risk,

Late Exit Bilingual w/Content ESL
ELLs: 11% at risk

Early Exit Bilingual w/Content ESL
ELLs: 27% at risk

Early Exit Bilingual w/Traditional (pull-out)ESL
ELLs: 41% at risk

Percentages from: Cross-Battery Assessment with Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Individuals: Samuel Ortiz, St. John’s University.
Foundational Knowledge

RtI and ELLs:

“effective and appropriate,” assessment as well as instruction must be both linguistically and culturally congruent.

Adapted from: A Cultural, Linguistic, and Ecological Framework for Response to Intervention with English Language Learners, www.nccrest.org

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Foundational Knowledge

RtI and ELLs:

Language development (both in the native and second language) is critical to intervention success… without it students will not “catch up”

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Foundational Knowledge

• Students should have a solid foundation in Spanish phonemic awareness and phonics
• Instructional design
  • Phonemic Awareness & Phonics – English
  • Fluency & Comprehension – Spanish
  • Vocabulary – English & Spanish
• Use Spanish as a teaching tool
• Do not reteach what they already know

(Dr. Elsa Cardenas-Hagan)

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Foundational Knowledge

• Culturally Responsive Assessment includes the environment that surrounds the child
  • Parents
  • Teachers
  • Tutors
  • Language Exposure; Language of Instruction
  • What are the strengths and weaknesses of the child?
  • What are the strengths and weakness of the situation?

Assessment of oral language proficiency is not just important - but essential when evaluating an ELL student

• Levels of proficiency in both L1 and L2
• Receptive and Expressive language skills
• Language exposure (home & school)

• For all students, disability is only one of many factors that can cause students to struggle with reading
  • Most students need: direct, explicit reading instruction including the phonologic, morphologic and orthographic structure of language.
Foundational Knowledge

• Because many children struggle to learn to read...
• Attempt classroom interventions first
• Interventions can actually change the way the brain processes information
• Dyslexia is a Tier III service
  • (see flowchart in State Handbook)

Foundational Knowledge Review

• Pair & Share with a partner one of the following statements
  • Culturally Responsive Assessment includes...
  • Assessment of oral language proficiency is important because...
  • Knowledge of second-language acquisition and Bilingual/ESL program models helps....

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT DYSLEXIA?
Phonological Dyslexics
Phonological dyslexics have problems storing and utilizing phonological information in memory and in sounding out unfamiliar words.

Surface Dyslexics
Surface dyslexics have relatively normal phonological skills, but difficulty learning to recognize the spelling patterns in printed words quickly and automatically.

Mixed Dyslexics
- Mixed dyslexics have both types of problems and hence a more severe reading difficulty.
- Phonological & orthographic processing are both impaired.
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Double Deficit

- Double Deficit Hypothesis
- Maryanne Wolf

Phonological Deficit + Rapid Naming Deficit (RAN testing)
≡ Double Deficit

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Subtypes

Share with your partner the answers to the following questions:

- What did you learn about dyslexia?
- Will all students with dyslexia have the same characteristics?

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Dyslexia in other languages...

- Does dyslexia exist in other languages?

**YES!**
Orthography
- Written system of a language
  - Shallow (Transparent) - regular phoneme/grapheme correspondence
  - Deep (Opaque) - irregular phoneme/grapheme correspondence
  - Logographic - graphemes represent meaning, rather than individual sounds

Dyslexia across languages
Dyslexia in deep orthographies:
- Heavy demand on phonological processing skills due to multiple sounds for single grapheme
- Early and marked difficulty with reading at the word level
- Fluency and comprehension show fewer problems once basic decoding has been mastered.

Dyslexia in other languages
- Dyslexia in shallow orthographies:
  - Less demand on phonological processing skills due to regular (one-to-one) phoneme/grapheme correspondence
  - Less difficulty with reading at the word level
  - More difficulty with fluency and comprehension
Dyslexia in other languages

- Dyslexia in logographic orthographies:
  - More emphasis on orthographic awareness and motor memory
  - Phonological awareness is less important than in alphabetic systems, but deficits in PA are still seen

Common Characteristics

- Deficits in phonological processing are seen in all orthographies
  - (may be less pronounced in logographic/shallow language)
- Rapid naming deficits are seen in all orthographies
- Shallow orthographies (Spanish) manifest more difficulties with fluency and comprehension
- Deep orthographies (English) manifest more difficulties with decoding at the word level
Definitions

- **Dominant Language**—the language spoken by the student most effectively and productively relative to his/her other language(s).
- **Oral Language Proficiency**—level of the student's ability to comprehend and speak a language.
- **Primary Language**—language the person first learned, or the language which is spoken in the person’s home.

Educational Background

- Previous School Information
  - Current & previous educational programs, identifying all programming since student started school
    - (especially alternative language programming).
- Language proficiency testing
  - (over time if available)
- Attendance
- Testing done by school

Oral Language Proficiency & Dominance Testing

- Formal oral language testing should never be the only information used to determine oral language proficiency and dominance. Other information that may used include:
  - Home Language Survey
  - Teacher checklist
  - Previous and current language proficiency testing
  - Parent information on child’s language skills
  - Student interview on language use and exposure
Oral Language Proficiency & Dominance Testing

- Oral language testing should usually be conducted in both languages of the student.
- Strive for parallel oral language testing because test results in the two languages will usually be compared to determine dominance.
- Be aware that oral language tests may measure different aspects of language.

Determine dominance by comparing oral language totals in English and other language.

- If dominance is unclear, analyze tasks by level of language complexity. Determine if on the more complex aspects of language, a dominant language is indicated.
**Academic Testing**

- English academic testing is almost always done unless student is newly immigrated within the last few months.
- Academic testing in the other language is usually conducted if student has been exposed to academic instruction for one year or more.
- Be aware that academic instruction can be received in other settings besides school.

**Dyslexia Program Standards**

State Handbook Primary Characteristics:
- Difficulty reading real words in isolation
- Difficulty accurately decoding nonsense words
- Slow, inaccurate or labored oral reading (fluency)
- Difficulty learning to spell

Also difficulty with:
- Development of phonological awareness skills;
- Learning the names of letters and sounds
- Phonological memory
- Rapid naming of objects, colors or letters

- Are the deficits unexpected in relation to other skills?
  - (Oral language comprehension)

**Key Points for Bilingual Assessment**

- Basic Word Recognition may be high due to Spanish orthography
- Fluency is usually a better predictor + comprehension
- Rapid naming may be a more consistent area of weakness than phonological skills
Key Points
• Don’t neglect English testing:
• Need to formally establish if the student is Negligible English speaker (TELPAS or other assessment)
• Otherwise- English skills should be assessed

Profile
• Dyslexia assessment is similar to an oral language discrepancy model...is listening comprehension strong relative to decoding?
• BUT
• Have to factor effect of second-language on overall language proficiency
  • EXPOSURE
  • ATTRITION
  • BICS & CALP

Examples- Student A
• (Spanish-only scores- Bateria III)
• Letter-Word ID (word recognition)- 102
• Reading Fluency- 77
• Reading Comprehension- 89
• Word Attack (nonsense words)- 85
• Phonemic Awareness- 89
• Listening Comprehension- 112
• Rapid Naming- 83
Example- Spanish & English

- STUDENT B
- English- WJ-III
- Letter-Word ID (word recognition)- 87
- Reading Fluency- 82
- Reading Comprehension- 88
- Word Attack- 85
- Phonemic Awareness- 89
- Listening Comprehension- 86
- Rapid Naming- 82

Example- Spanish & English

- STUDENT B
- Spanish- Bateria III
- Letter-Word ID (word recognition)- 107
- Reading Fluency- 92
- Reading Comprehension- 89
- Word Attack- 91
- Phonemic Awareness- 97
- Listening Comprehension- 90
- Rapid Naming- 102

Resources

- Profiles from Region 10
- Profiles from Special Education Evaluators Leadership Network (Criselda Alvarado)
Discussion ....

Acknowledgments

- Assessing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students: Samuel Ortiz, Salvador H. Ochoa, Robert L. Rhodes
- Cross-Battery Assessment: Flanagan & Ortiz
- Dyslexia in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students: Criselda Alvarado
- Preventing Reading Failure by Ensuring Effective Reading Instruction: Barbara R. Foorman, Jack M. Fletcher, David J. Francis
- Treating Dyslexia and Other Reading Disabilities With Research-Based Approaches: Louisa Moats
- (RAN) and Reading Fluency: Implications for Understanding and Treatment of Reading Disabilities, Elizabeth S. Norton and Maryanne Wolf
- Orthographic and phonological processing in Chinese dyslexic children: an ERP study on sentence reading. Department of Psychology, Peking University; Meng, Tian, Jiao, Zhou
- Dyslexia Assessment Profiles: Region 10 ESC
- State Dyslexia Handbook, TEA