REFERRING AND EVALUATING LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT (LEP) STUDENTS FOR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Professional Practices

Determining the appropriateness of referring a limited English proficient (LEP) student to the special education referral committee is a difficult decision in light of the student’s limited proficiency in English, amount of formal education, and potential cultural differences. Care must be taken to determine whether learning and behavior problems demonstrated by the student indicate a disability or, instead, manifest cultural, experiential, and/or sociolinguistic differences. Historically, language-minority students have tended to overpopulate special education classes and the misdiagnosis of LEP students for special education has led to a number of lawsuits. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) provide protection against discrimination based upon race, color, or national origin. Decisions affecting students’ educational opportunities must be made fairly and accurately. The referral, evaluation, and placement decisions must be made based upon information that accurately reflects what the student knows or is able to do. These laws also prohibit the discriminatory denial of educational opportunities based upon race, color, or national origin. Thus a student may not be denied evaluation for special education services solely due to the lack of proficiency in English.

When an LEP student is experiencing academic difficulties, there are some important factors to consider before inferring that the student might have a disability. As with all students experiencing learning problems, one must look at the environment and strategies in place in the student’s regular classroom. This is particularly important with LEP students due to the following reasons:

1. Typical second language acquisition affects language skills as well as academic skill attainment.
   a. Language development/acquisition is affected by many cultural and social factors including socioeconomic status, family constellation, parental education background, country and culture of origin, and particulars of language exposure. In addition, physical factors such as motor and sensory impairments may affect language development.
   b. Language proficiency refers to the person’s competence and fluency in a language and is an absolute measure of linguistic abilities in that language. Language dominance refers to the language in which the child is more proficient at a particular time and implies a comparison to another language. To be kept in mind is that being dominant in one language does not necessarily imply proficiency in that language, as is the case for many LEP students.

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c. Research suggests that the higher the level of proficiency and literacy in the native language (L1), the faster and less problematic will be the acquisition of the second language (L2). Ideally and in most cases, the child exposed largely to one language prior to age 3 attains language development in the native language better and, consequently, also in L2. In the normal pattern, understanding L2 occurs prior to speaking L2 and therefore results in the “silent period” during which the child appears delayed in language usage. Language arrest refers to losses in L1 for a time period while the child is acquiring L2 and does not constitute a language disability by itself.

d. Sequential acquisition refers to the learning of L2 after mastering L1. Simultaneous acquisition refers to being exposed to the two languages before attaining proficiency in one. In general, simultaneous acquisition results in more problems attaining proficiency and dominance in either or both languages.

e. BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) is “conversational language,” the language used in context-embedded, interpersonal situations. Generally BICS is acquired within two years of exposure to L2. An effective informal way to determine the social language skills is by observing the language preferred in peer interactions.

f. CALPS (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency Skills) is more complex language used in context-reduced learning and academic situations. It is greatly influenced by the literacy level of the home, the educational background of the student, and the general cognitive abilities of the student. Full mastery is highly variable with the usual time period being approximately five years for average ability learners.

2. Cultural differences impact on the way education is viewed in the home and in the way the student behaves at school.

a. In some cultures, students may not speak out or ask questions. A lack of assertive behavior may signify deference rather than disinterest.

b. In some cultures, such as Asian cultures, lack of eye contact is a sign of respect for elders or authority figures and not a sign of anxiety or interpersonal problems.

c. Parents/guardians may not speak English, making it very difficult to assist with homework. No one may be available to check homework.

d. Oftentimes, “survival skills” may be more valued than “academic skills.”

e. Students may not have attended school every year, may have had a high number of absences, or may have attended many different schools.

**General Guidelines for the School-Based Intervention Team**

As with any student experiencing learning difficulties, the intervention team is an appropriate vehicle for the teacher to get assistance in dealing with the difficulties. It is at this time that the committee members collect and analyze information in order to assist in determining whether an LEP student’s problems are primarily related to his/her limited proficiency in English or whether a disability might be contributing to the student’s school difficulties. It is particularly important to gather data about the student’s background (including parental level of proficiency in L1 and L2), language acculturation level, sociolinguistic development, and response to the school and classroom environment. This should include information regarding the number of schools attended, interruptions in schooling, number of years in the U.S., language(s) used in former schools, school curricula, and methods of instruction in the regular classroom. Attached is a sample form used to obtain such information (Appendix A). The school psychologist should play an important role in
completing this process due to the knowledge he/she has regarding data collection, data interpretation, and differences due to socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic background. He/she should assist the teacher and/or team in employing a variety of intervention techniques within the general education classroom to accommodate the student’s language and cultural background and to help resolve his/her learning and behavior problems.

Suggestions:

- Observational data should be collected in a variety of settings, reflecting interactions with peers and adults. If possible, these observations should include comparisons with same-age culturally/linguistically similar and culturally/linguistically different peers.

- Meetings should be held with parents, using a qualified interpreter when necessary, to determine their perceptions of the problem, to discuss suggestions for helping the student, and to obtain information regarding background. Parents sometimes may feel too intimidated to attend a conference at the school. Home visits may therefore be necessary.

- Standardized screening instruments (e.g., Slosson, Kaufman) are generally not appropriate methods of obtaining academic functioning levels for LEP students due to the heavy reliance on language. Work samples and curriculum-based assessment are often more helpful in screening achievement levels and patterns.

- A language proficiency assessment should be administered if it has not been given within the past six months. LEP students have usually had proficiency testing through the school district’s LEP program. Consider the types of language skills being assessed, however, when interpreting those results. Oftentimes the assessment may only be assessing basic interpersonal communication skills. Beginning with the year 2001-2002, all LEP students have been administered the Idea Proficiency Test (IPT) at entry and every 12 months thereafter. The intervention teams should examine these results to assist in determining needs.

- Given the language difficulties, an LEP student generally is not referred to the special education referral committee unless he/she has been in an English speaking school for 2 years. This timeframe, of course, does not apply to those students who are exhibiting global developmental delays. This practice, however, should not be construed as a policy prohibiting the referral of an LEP student for a specific period of time as such a policy would be discriminatory.

The student should be referred for a special education assessment only when (1) it appears that sociocultural factors may not be the primary contributors to the student’s learning and/or behavioral problems and (2) the student has demonstrated insufficient progress in response to appropriate interventions and ESL instruction. Verification should be provided regarding the appropriateness of the school’s curriculum and the appropriateness of instruction provided to the student (continuity, proper sequencing, teaching of prerequisite skills). Documentation of the student’s problems across settings should be included, along with evidence that the student’s difficulties are present in both languages, and that he/she has not made satisfactory progress despite having received competent instruction (Garcia & Ortiz, 1988). Attached is a sample form that may be used by the school-based intervention team to ensure that all needed information has been collected before making a decision regarding referral, evaluation, and placement (Appendix B).
Issues Related to Evaluation

When the special education referral committee recommends an evaluation, the parents must be “fully informed of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought, in his or her native language, or other mode of communication” (IDEA 97). This includes providing the written procedural safeguards notice and the written prior notice in the parents’ dominant language unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. If forms are not available in the dominant language or if the parents are not literate, then an interpreter should be used to ensure informed consent. IDEA furthermore states that tests and other evaluation materials must be administered in the student’s dominant language or mode of communication unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. “When tests are used in making educational decisions for individual students, they should accurately measure the student’s abilities, knowledge, skills, and/or needs, and they should do so in ways that do not discriminate in violation of federal law on the basis of the student’s race, national origin, sex, or disability” (U.S. Dept of Education, 2000). Both Title VI and Part B (IDEA 97) require that a public agency ensure that students with limited English proficiency are not evaluated on the basis of criteria that essentially measure English language skills.

Competencies of the Examiner

If possible, the examiner in any testing situation should be proficient in the student’s dominant language or dialect, as well as trained in conducting bilingual assessments. It is often difficult, however, to find school psychologists fluent in all the languages spoken in the United States. A school psychologist who has been trained in understanding cultural diversity, in working with an interpreter, in ecological assessment, and in integrating language proficiency data, can be capable of assessing LEP students (GoPaul-McNicol, 1997). Mere possession of the ability to communicate with the child in his/her native language does not provide one with the necessary knowledge or skills with which to engage in nondiscriminatory assessment.

In addition to language proficiency, a major factor influencing the behavior of a student in any given test situation relates to cultural differences. To develop cross-cultural competencies, evaluators need to be well informed about a range of topics, including language development, second-language acquisition, culturally sensitive environmental and individual evaluation procedures, and nonbiased assessment techniques. The examiner needs to understand the construction, selection, use, and interpretation of tests, along with the strengths and limitations of norm-referenced tests. He/she needs to be skilled in assessing the degree to which bias is present in the school environment and in identifying techniques designed to reduce or eliminate the bias. The examiner should be knowledgeable regarding bilingual instructional programs. He/she should have knowledge of how a particular culture influences such things as test performance, school performance, classroom behavior, interpersonal skills, adaptive behavior, and have skill in using the cultural context to interpret any such data. The examiner must also be aware of the impact of migration and relocation. Often there are stressors in the student’s family such as unemployment and financial difficulties that affect school performance.

Test Selection and Standardization Issues

Special attention must be given to the careful selection and use of appropriate techniques and instruments given the student’s cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic background. There must be consideration given to reliability, validity, standards for administration, test interpretation, and test limitations. Problems with inadequate representation in standardization groups, inappropriate test
content, and questionable item relevancy have all been cited as significant difficulties with traditional standardized tests (Fradd, Barona, & Santos de Barona, 1989). To help control for sociocultural factors, the evaluation should not be limited only to formal assessment.

In measuring the knowledge and skills of LEP students, it is especially important that the tests actually measure the intended knowledge and skills and not other factors which are extraneous to the intended construct (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999). Any test that uses written or oral skills in English or in another language is, in part, a measure of those language skills. Tests used with individuals who have not sufficiently acquired the literacy or linguistic skills in the language of the test may not reflect the competencies intended to be measured. Thus it is important to reduce the confounding conditions in the test or testing conditions through accommodations, modifications, or, when possible, testing in the student’s dominant language.

A problem with the assessment of LEP students is that psychologists are essentially using monolingual tests to measure the abilities of bilingual students. Assessing ability in the second language (English) often yields lowered scores because the bilingual student has not had the same amount of language exposure as the test’s norming population. Testing in the native language, however, may also yield lowered scores because that test is normed on students who are “monolingual” speakers of that language. Bilingual individuals may not have had the native language actively maintained or may be experiencing the natural phenomenon of native language loss while English is being learned. When students start learning a second language, it is not unusual for them to plateau or even regress in the first language. Students who live in a bilingual world may not have had the same opportunities to expand their language skills in any one language as those who live in monolingual worlds. A related problem is that the bilingual student may experience a change in the method of processing information when the second language is learned subsequent to the first. Because there is very little known about the manner in which bilingualism affects cognitive processes and because theories regarding bilingualism are difficult to operationalize, there are currently no true methods of validly assessing or measuring bilingual ability. Bilingual ability is not merely the sum of the different language parts. Therefore it would be incorrect to assume that just because a student exhibits deficits in both languages that the student is in some way disabled.

There are tests available in Spanish, but even with those instruments, the examiner must ensure that the norms are appropriate for the particular student being tested. There are, however, new tests being published for use with LEP students, such as the WISC-IV Spanish (December 2004), that are being normed on bilingual populations. It is therefore advised that examiners consider those bilingual tests when selecting appropriate instruments. Appendix C is a list of tests presently available that may be appropriate for evaluating LEP students. Not all of them, however, have been normed on bilingual populations.

Accommodations

Accommodations may need to be made to the standardized procedures used to administer tests for bilingual students in order to better obtain information more validly reflecting the students’ mastery of the intended constructs. When considering accommodations, two questions should be examined: 1) What is being measured if conditions are changed from standardization? 2) What is being
measured if the conditions remain the same? The decision to use an accommodation or not should be determined by the goal of collecting test information that accurately and fairly represents the knowledge and skills of the student on the intended constructs (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2000). Accommodations may include paraphrasing or rewording instructions, repeating directions, using familiar vocabulary, providing a demonstration of how test tasks are to be performed, reading test items to the student, allowing the student to respond verbally rather than in writing, accepting student responses in any language, and giving fewer items per page. Processing information in the weaker language produces slower functioning. There may also be less importance placed on speed of performance in other cultures. Thus the LEP student should be given additional time for taking the test. If any such alterations are made to the testing, it is important to recognize that standardization has been broken, potentially limiting the usefulness and applicability of the test norms. Results should be cautiously interpreted and all alterations made to the testing procedures must be fully documented in the evaluation report. It is essential that other assessment approaches be an integral part of collecting information about the student.

Translating/Interpreting

When tests or evaluation materials are not available in the student’s dominant language, examiners may consider it necessary to use translations of English-language instruments. Because this practice is fraught with the possibility of misinterpretation, its use is discouraged. While it is not difficult to translate a test, it is impossible to translate psychometric properties from one language to another. A word in English does not necessarily have the same level of difficulty in other languages. A straight translation of a third-grade test of reading ability will not necessarily yield a third-grade reading test in the other language. There may also be problems with concepts that cannot be directly translated and concepts that may change meaning once translated into a different language. Current viewpoints indicate that a translated test is an inappropriate test as it may be measuring constructs and knowledge different from what was intended.

Although individuals with limited proficiency in the language of the test should ideally be tested by professionally trained, culturally knowledgeable, bilingual examiners, the use of qualified interpreters may be necessary in some situations. It is therefore necessary for school psychologists who will assess LEP students to develop competencies in the interpretation process. Some of these skills range from establishing rapport with the interpreter, knowing the kinds of information that tends to get lost during the interpretation procedure, understanding nonverbal communication clues, and recognizing the importance of securing accurate translation. Interpreters may substitute words, speak a different dialect, or engage in subtle prompting behaviors that may affect a student’s responses (Nuttall, Medinos-Landurand, & Goldman, 1984).

The examiner is responsible for insuring that the interpreter has the appropriate qualifications to assist properly. Adequate training is essential in order to defend the assessment practices to any degree. Section 9.11 of the Joint Standards (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999) states, “When an interpreter is used in testing, the interpreter should be fluent in both the language of the test and the examinee’s native language, should have expertise in translating, and should have a basic understanding of the assessment process.” It is necessary for the interpreter to understand the importance of following standardized procedures, how testing is conducted typically, and the importance of accurately conveying an examinee’s actual responses. It is recommended that the use
of an interpreter be referenced in the psychological report and that documentation of the interpreter’s training and qualifications be maintained by the school district. A sample documentation form is attached as Appendix D. In addition, the examiner should discuss the testing expectations with the interpreter, review the assessment practices noted on Appendix D, and provide a copy of the exact language to be interpreted prior to the actual assessment.

There does continue, however, to be no data to substantiate the assumption that it is possible to use an interpreter without severely and negatively affecting the standardization requisites, psychometric properties and the interpretation of test scores (President’s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 2000). The use of interpreters is often viewed as increasing the “fairness” of the testing, but that idea is very misleading. The norm group remains an obstacle to valid and reliable interpretation. The use of interpreters, however, may be beneficial in gathering qualitative information about performance. Interpreters, if properly trained, may help in ruling out various language-related problems, provide informative opinions regarding behaviors and development, and assist the examiner in better understanding the performance within the context of the individual’s culture.

Evaluation
Language Evaluation
The assessment of language proficiency needs to be the first one-to-one evaluation conducted with the LEP student because the language(s) used for subsequent assessments and the interpretations made of assessment results are based on these language competencies (Rogers, 1997). It is therefore necessary to consider the level of linguistic and literacy proficiencies of LEP students in both their home language and in English. Proficiency and dominance testing is important in test selection decisions and in deciding which accommodations to standardized testing conditions, if any, might be useful. This information is also important for test interpretation. Two students, testing at the same level in English and with the same native language, may have completely different test interpretations depending on the strength of their native language. Assessing proficiency in both languages is essential in order to determine if the student’s academic difficulties are due to an inherent disability versus normal second language acquisition effects. A true disability must be apparent in both languages; however, deficiency in both languages is not in and of itself necessarily indicative of a disability.

Critical to distinguishing learning disabilities from linguistic differences is the assessment of a student’s academic language proficiency. In addition to evaluating interpersonal communication skills, assessments should also measure the literacy-related aspects of language. Cognitive academic language proficiency development is affected by age, ability level, previous schooling, language(s) of instruction, cultural experiences, and amount of exposure to the native language and English. A misconception is that the more time LEP students spend immersed in the second language, the faster that language may be learned. Generally, those students who have developed CALP in their native language are the first to develop academic proficiency in English (Wilens & Diaz, 1998). Students who are introduced to the second language prior to developing competence in the native language will generally take longer to obtain academic proficiency in English. It is essential to determine the CALP level in both English and the native language. These levels can be obtained from certain standardized language assessments, but it is also beneficial to obtain verifying information from informal language assessments. During the informal assessment, attention should
be given to the use of nonspecific vocabulary, poor topic maintenance, long response times, gaze inefficiency, nonfluency, inability to give appropriate information, and message inaccuracy. These behaviors should be compared during English-speaking situations and native language situations.

Environmental Evaluation
An environmental assessment is essential in helping the evaluator understand the environmental and instructional factors that influence a student’s performance. Much of this information should have been obtained during the prereferral, problem-solving process. The assessment should include an analysis of the student characteristics as well as the characteristics of the classroom, school, home, and community environments in which the student functions. Behavior that may be considered appropriate within the context of the home or community may not be construed similarly within the classroom (Rogers, 1997). Cultural mismatches in norms and expectations between the home and school may create confusion for the student and can affect day-to-day functioning in the classroom and academic progress. Techniques utilized for this evaluation include, but are not limited to, interviews with relevant individuals from school and home, observations, work samples, and evaluation of interventions/treatment procedures. This information should include determining whether the student has received adequate ESL instruction. Observations should be within a variety of instructional contexts and should include comparisons with same-age culturally/linguistically similar as well as culturally/linguistically different peers. Work samples can help assess the relationship between task requirements and the student’s skill. The assessment of the instructional environment should help to answer the following questions:

- Are the appropriate languages being used for instruction as based upon the student’s proficiency levels?
- Is the level of the language used in the instructional tasks comprehensible to the student?
- Are the classroom materials appropriate for the language and academic skills of the student?
- Does the student have the background knowledge to understand the content of the instructional materials?
- Can the student relate to the content of the instructional materials from a cultural perspective?
- Are instructional activities and materials used for the purposes of developing literacy skills? (Lopez, 1995)

If these questions are answered “no,” be cautious in the interpretation of the test results and in determining a disability. Consider additional interventions/modifications to address the above issues prior to determining eligibility for EC services.

Cognitive Assessment
There is no single instrument or procedure that can yield an accurate representation of all cognitive abilities. The information obtained through the language assessment, however, will help guide the selection of the cognitive assessment instruments to fit the unique characteristics and assessment needs of the referred LEP student. It is recommended that the examiner include verbal and non-verbal tests. Data indicate, however, that the verbal ability score may be depressed by one standard deviation for LEP students depending upon the student’s age, experience, and cultural background. The language proficiency results will assist in determining whether to use an English test or a test in the student’s native language. One test, however, the Bilingual Verbal Ability Tests (BVAT), is
comprised of three verbal ability subtests administered in a combination of English and the bilingual individual’s native language.

Evaluators have assumed that nonverbal tests are more culture fair than conventional intelligence scales because they eliminate the culture-loading dimension of tests that rely on verbal abilities (Rogers, 1997). Caution, however, should be exercised in interpreting the results of nonverbal assessments as the most valid estimate of the IQ of a bilingual student, especially if verbal ability data have not been collected in both languages. Despite appearances, these instruments may be hypersensitive to language background and performance on them may still be dependent upon the person’s familiarity with test-taking skills and with the test content (Lopez, 1995). LEP students have also been noted as having difficulty on timed tasks. Consideration should be given to students who may have visual processing deficits. In those cases, the use of nonverbal tests or scales alone may not be the best way to determine cognitive ability. The scores from the various nonverbal measures, however, do give excellent information that helps to support the hypotheses being developed from the information collected through other methods and sources.

Educational Evaluation
Problems obviously exist in assessing the educational achievement of LEP students. As a general rule, academic measures in English tend to measure bilingual students’ language proficiency in English and fail to assess achievement or knowledge of academic content (Figueroa, 1989). As with the cognitive assessment, use the language assessment information to help direct the choice of assessment instruments. In addition, consider the language that has been used to educate the student. If the student has never been educated in the native language, assessments are best conducted in English. If the student is learning in his/her native language, then assess in the native language. If the student has crossed over to English, you may need to assess in both languages. Generally, however, if the student has had academic instruction solely, or largely, in English, then assessing academic skills in the native language seldom provides much information of value. In addition to formal tests, always utilize curriculum based assessment strategies, criterion referenced tests, and/or portfolio assessments.

Adaptive Behavior Assessment/Behavioral Assessment
A major caution with students who are not culturally similar to the majority culture is in the assessments of adaptive behavior and behavior. The norm samples are not adequate comparison groups for this population due to different cultural expectations. In addition to depressed communication skills, Mexican and many other Latino males, for example, may score low on the daily living skills scale because “women’s work” is often considered unseemly by their fathers and their mothers want to show their caring attitude by performing such duties for their children. School psychologists should “incorporate different methods of adaptive behavior assessments, including traditional norm-referenced scales and alternative methods of assessment in order to obtain ecologically valid information about children’s functional strengths and limitations” (Harrison & Robinson, 1995). These alternative methods may include observations, interviews, self-reports, and sociometric techniques. They should be used across a number of settings (home, community, school). Throughout the process of assessing social and adaptive skills, the school psychologist can help minimize bias by comparing the performance of individual bilingual students to other students of the same age, socioeconomic level, and linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Lopez, 1995).
Interpretation of Test Results
The difficulty of gauging the cognitive and academic status of LEP students in schools is significant given the complex nature of emerging bilingualism. Differences in culture within any community are substantial and influence second language acquisition. Usually there is also an absence of a normative sample that can be used as a peer group. Thus the evaluation should include dynamic assessment whereby information is obtained through multiple procedures (e.g., interviews, observations, rating scales), not simply based on objective criteria based on national norms. Evaluators must attend to the overall picture of a student’s background and performance, using information obtained from multiple sources (parent, student, school personnel). Assessment also cannot be complete without an understanding of whether prior instruction has been adequate and appropriate. Examiners must seek to gain such skills as may be necessary to allow them to work in as equitable a manner as possible. There are, of course, no best practices that will entirely eliminate the influence of language and culture in situations where standardized tests are used. However, one can apply a careful, deliberate, and systematic approach that is specifically designed to reduce the potential discriminatory aspects of the assessment process. Subsequent interpretation must also be made within a broad, comprehensive framework for less discriminatory assessment.

General Guidelines for Evaluation and Test Interpretation
- Carefully evaluate the technical merits and qualities of an instrument before selecting it for use with a particular minority student.
- Use tests with demonstration, practice, and sample items, and tests that allow extended time limits.
- Test scores should not be used as the sole basis for identifying LEP students with disorders.
- The extent to which test performance is influenced by cultural and environmental factors unique to the individual being assessed needs to be explored.
- Test results should always be used in conjunction with information obtained from other areas, i.e., interviews, background information, natural communication samples, curriculum based assessment, portfolio assessment.
- Observe and note the student’s task approach and problem solving strategies.
- Observe/evaluate processing skills.
- Evaluate and interpret data qualitatively, not just quantitatively.
- Remember that there are many reasons, other than the presence of a disability, that a student will score poorly, including: (a) use of inappropriate instruments, (b) inappropriate adaptations or modifications, (c) poor testing conditions, (d) lack of test-wiseness, (e) lack of rapport, and (f) differences in cultural rules for interaction.
- Examine the data to answer questions such as the following (Wrigley):
  - Are there any overt variables that immediately explain the problematic behaviors in English?
  - Does the student exhibit the same types of problematic behaviors in the first language?
  - Is there evidence that the problematic behaviors noted in English can be explained according to normal second-language acquisition?
  - Is there evidence that the problematic behaviors noted in English can be explained according to cross-cultural interference or related cultural phenomena?
  - Is there any evidence that the problematic behaviors noted in English can be explained according to any bias effect that was in operation before, during, or after the referral?
References and Suggested Reading


Wrigley, P. G. *Difference or disorder? Does Jose belong in special education?* Inservice papers. Region IV Comprehensive Center/Eastern Stream Center on Resources and Training (ESCORT).
Appendix A

LEA: ____________________________
School: ________________________

Questionnaire for LEP Students Referred to the School Intervention Team

Name: ____________________________  D.O.B.: ________________  Grade: ______

Country of Origin: ________________  Information Obtained From: ________________________________

Interviewer: ________________  Position: ________________  Date ________________________

Results of English proficiency tests (completed within the last 6 months)______________________

I. School History
1. Total number of years in the U.S. _____ Has the student been in the U.S. continuously or intermittently?

2. Primary language spoken by student to:
   Parents __________  Siblings __________  Peers __________  Others __________

3. Primary home language __________  List all languages spoken ________________________

4. Can student read and/or write in another language? To what extent?_____________________

5. At what age was the student introduced to English?______________________________

6. Total years of formal instruction in:  U.S.__________  In native country ________________

7. Number of schools attended in U.S. ________________

8. Grades retained ______ Grades skipped _______ State reasons why_______________________

9. History of enrollment in bilingual classes, ESL program, or special education? If so, describe when and where ________________________________

10. How is this student different from others of similar educational and cultural backgrounds (academically and socially)? ____________________________

11. Complete the following checklist (E for English and L1 for native language):

   Speaking  Reading  Writing
   _____ uses one-word answers  _____ understands words  _____ writes one-word answers
   _____ speaks in phrases  _____ understands phrases  _____ writes in phrases
   _____ speaks in sentences  _____ understands sentences  _____ writes sentences
   _____ speaks fluently  _____ understands paragraphs  _____ writes at grade level

12. Describe academic strengths and weaknesses, in both languages, if possible:

   ______________________________________________________________________________

   Additional Comments:
II. Family History
1. Where did the parents spend their childhood?
2. Do the parents speak/read/write English?
3. Highest grade of school completed by: Father_________ Mother __________
4. Are parents literate in own native language? __________________________
5. How well does the student speak the native language in the home as compared to other children in the family?
6. Describe any history of learning difficulties in the family
7. How are difficulties in learning viewed in the culture?
8. How does the child’s progress compare to that of siblings (academically and socially)?
9. Describe any behavioral problems exhibited by the child (i.e., temper tantrums, lying, stealing, fighting, arguing)
10. Describe major life events which may have impacted on the child’s life (ex., separation from family, refugee camp, loss of family members, change in social status)

Additional Comments:

III. Health History
1. Describe any medical problems associated with pregnancy/delivery:
2. Was the child premature? _______ If yes, how many weeks early? __________
3. Did the child experience any difficulty at birth?
4. Note developmental milestones as compared to siblings/peers:
   Early  | Same Time | Late  | (Age)
   Talking |   |   |   |
   Walking |   |   |   |
   Toilet Training |   |   |   |
5. Describe medical history and treatment (hospitalizations, surgeries, medications, high fevers, repeated ear infections, accidents, head injury, seizures, etc.)
6. Has the child ever had any vision or hearing difficulties?
7. Is the child currently being seen for any medical problems or taking any medication?
8. Describe any health concerns within the family (major health problems, medications, unusual illnesses, etc.)

Additional Comments:
Appendix B

LEA: __________________________
School: ________________________

**LEP Checklist**

*This checklist is designed to help the intervention team make an informed decision about whether to refer the student to the special education referral committee. Use this form in conjunction with the LEP Questionnaire and RE-1 forms when making the decision. Attach this checklist and the LEP Questionnaire to the RE-1.*

Name: _________________________________ Date of Birth: ________________________

School: ________________________________ Date: ________________________________

Has the prereferral intervention team done the following? (involve English as a Second Language teacher, Speech/Language Pathologist, and School Psychologist)

___ 1. Waited a sufficient period of time for adjustment and adaptation to the school setting (usually 2 years of consistent English instruction unless global delays are evident).

___ 2. Administered the English proficiency test to assess reading, writing, listening, and speaking within the last six months. Results: __________________________________________

___ 3. Established the most proficient language for assessment? What is the most proficient language? __________________________

___ 4. Identified cultural differences and how they impact school performance.

___ 5. Met with parents, using an interpreter if necessary, to discuss their suggestions for helping the student and to obtain information regarding background information.

___ 6. Implemented regular classroom interventions developed in consultation with the ESL teacher and documented the results.

___ 7. Provided hearing/vision exams and evaluated the results.

___ 8. Pinpointed the student’s academic strengths and weaknesses in both languages if possible. (Please attach work samples to illustrate)

___ 9. Systematically observed the student in a variety of interactions with peers and adults in different settings.

___ 10. Systematically compared and contrasted the student’s home and school behaviors, language use, and confidence.

___ 11. Provided ESL instruction and documented the rate of learning.
Appendix C

Instruments Available for Assessment of LEP Students

The following list includes some of the tests available that may be appropriate for evaluating LEP students, to be selected at the discretion of the school psychologist. This list is not all-inclusive or limiting.

**Intellectual Ability/Cognitive:**


*Bilingual Verbal Ability Tests* (1998) – This test measures English language proficiency and combined overall verbal ability. It is comprised of 3 subtests from WJ-R Cognitive and is currently available in English with equivalent versions in 18 other languages.


*Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children, 2nd Edition* (2004) – Nonverbal scale can be useful for lower functioning and/or culturally different students.

*Leiter International Performance Scale -Revised* (1997) – This is a completely nonverbal test that emphasizes fluid intelligence.

*Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales, Fifth Edition* (2003) – The enhanced nonverbal/low verbal content may make it appropriate for some students, especially younger ones.

*Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test* (1998) – This test is standardized to be administered completely through gestures.

*Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fourth Edition – Spanish* (December 2004) – This test is both a translation and adaptation of the WISC-IV. The language seems accessible to Spanish speakers from various countries and visuals appear largely culturally unbiased.

**Language Development/Proficiency:**


These tests are very useful in assessing the student’s natural language pattern by allowing responses in both languages. They are co-normed on a national sample of Spanish-bilingual individuals.

Spanish Language Assessment Procedures (Larry Mattes) – Criterion referenced assessment of language and articulation skills.

Stanford English Language Proficiency Test – Measures English language acquisition with standards-based approach.

Test de Vocabulario en Imagenes Peabody (1986) – Spanish version of the PPVT-R.

Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery – Revised (1991) – Available in English and in Spanish that allow comparisons between these languages.


Achievement/Developmental:


Battelle Developmental Inventory – 2nd Edition (Fall 2004) – a norm-referenced assessment of developmental milestones in children from birth through age 7 years, 11 months.


Bracken Basic Concept Scale, Revised (1998) – Spanish edition of the record form assesses the same concepts as in English with adapted or modified, not directly translated, items.

Brigance Assessment of Basic Skills – Spanish Edition – May use to quickly identify dominant language and academic skill level.

Merrill-Palmer-Revised Scales of Development (2004) – a norm-referenced assessment in five major areas for children from 1 month to 6 ½ years.


Adaptive Behavior/Behavior Rating Scales – There are several translations available, although standardization is on the English version, so validity and reliability are questionable.

- *Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales* (1984) – Survey Form and Reports to Parents are available in Spanish (VABS-II currently being standardized)
Appendix D

Documentation of Interpreter Qualifications

LEA/School District: ____________________________________________________________

Interpreter’s Name: _____________________________   Phone Number: __________________
Address: ______________________________________________________________________

A. Language(s) in which interpreter is fluent: _________________________________________

B. Previous experience interpreting: ________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

C. The interpreter has been informed of the following assessment practices:
   ___ establishing rapport with student
   ___ cuing appropriately
   ___ securing an accurate translation
   ___ being aware of dialect differences
   ___ maintaining confidentiality
   ___ following standardized procedures
   ___ reviewing assessment methods prior to the evaluation
   ___ disclosing dual relationships and other potential conflicts

________________________________     _______________________
Interpreter’s Signature            Date

________________________________   _______________________
Trainer's/Examiner's Signature          Date