Title: Service Providers' Language Abilities Effecting their Clinical Experience with Children from Multilingual Backgrounds

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Introduction: The linguistic demographics of the general population reflects in those seeking Speech-Language Hearing services in the United States (U.S.; Kimble, 2013). Further, the linguistic demographics of the general population has changed since the mass immigration in 1970s. However; this changing demographic profile does not reflect within the working professionals in the field of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD; ASHA, 2019). Linguistic mismatch between Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) and their clients compromises the quality of services (Masiongale, 2009). For this reason, efforts in CSD focus on diversifying the SLPs and increase linguistic competencies among existing members (Cornish, 2011). Additionally, the CSD national organization has also released the revised code of ethics, position statements, scope of practice statements, preferred practice patterns, and practice guidelines for increasing linguistically competent service delivery (Riquelme, 2013). Although these attempts have resulted in slight increase in recruitment of bilingual SLPs, information on how the change affects quality of services remains unclear (Lowell et al., 2018). Further, the existing information on SLPs practices with individuals from linguistic diverse background predominately emerge from geographical locations with linguistic diversity higher than national average. In an attempt to understand the persisting challenges faced by SLPs that varied in linguistic abilities when working with linguistically diversity populations, the current study surveyed SLPs from the Midwestern region. We addressed two research questions:

1. What are the challenges noted by the Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) working with children from multilingual families from the midwestern regions?
2. Do the reported challenges differ based on their language abilities?

Method: 105 SLPs from seven Midwestern region completed an online survey via Qualtrics. The Survey gathered information on the SLPs' professional challenges associated with assessing children from linguistically diverse backgrounds. The participants were divided into three groups based on their self-reported language abilities: monolingual (n = 23; 22%), bilingual (n = 21; 20%), and multilingual (n = 61; 74%). The survey responses were analysed using Kruskal Wallis H test and descriptive analysis. A majority of the participants were males (61%), most participants identified racially as White (73%), majority of the bilingual (95%) and multilingual (74%) participants identified as Hispanic ethnicity, and participants caseload included individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. Common challenges reported by SLPs were indented using crosstab. The second research question was analysed using Kruskal Wallis H Test along with Bonferroni correction for multiple tests for pairwise comparison between the groups.

Results: All participants worked with interpreters but differed on their confidence. Participants reported their confidence working with interprets. While most of the participants reported confidence (61%), a significant number also reported anxiety (24%) while working with interpreters. Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed that the groups significantly differed from each other on their confidence levels when working with interpreters, (χ2 (2, N = 105) = 9.543, p = .008). Bonferroni correction for multiple test for pairwise comparison showed that bilingual SLPs significantly differed from multilingual SLPs (p = .021). The most common challenge was also associated with the interpreters, specifically, the lack of interpreters other than family members (64%). Although commonly, the groups also differed on their endorsement of the lack of interpreters apart from family members as a challenge (χ2 (2, N = 105) = 15.147, p = .001). Bonferroni correction for multiple tests for pairwise comparison revealed that monolingual SLPs significantly differed from bilingual SLPs (p = .003) and multilingual SLPs (p = .001). Other commonly noted challenges were absence of multilingual SLPs (63%), lack of their knowledge on the cultures of their clients (57%), and lack of standardized assessment materials in other than English languages (53%). Not only did the three groups significantly differed on individually endorsed challenges, they also significantly differed on their reported total number of challenges measured using the Kruskal Wallis H test. For individually endorsed challenges, the groups significantly differed on the lack of knowledge of the child's culture, (χ2 (2, N = 105) = 15.147, p = .001), the lack of development norms and standardized tools in language other than

English, χ2 (2, N = 105) = 10.992, p = .004), and the lack of guidelines within an English normed language assessment to use with multilingual children, χ2 (2, N = 105) = 15.299, p < .001).

Discussion: Experiences of SLPs working with children from multilingual families differed based on their language abilities. Monolingual SLPs' total endorsed challenges were lower than bilingual and multilingual SLPs. This pattern of response between the three groups of SLPs might relate to their varying knowledge on the impact of multilingual abilities during assessment (Chhuon & Sullivan, 2013). Contrary to our expectation, bilingual SLPs' responses on the survey also differed from multilingual SLPs. For instance, bilingual SLPs had greater number of endorsed challenges than multilingual SLPs. Further research is required for identifying the rationale for difference between bilingual and multilingual SLPs. Further, the availability of interpreters and SLPs confidence working with interpreters continues to remain as a challenge for SLPs (Isaac, 2005; Kritikos, 2003; Langdon, 2002; Quinto-Pozos et al., 2018; Roseberry-McKibbin et al., 2005). Other common challenges include lower number of available dedicated standardized assessment for multilingual clients and lack of guidelines for using assessment materials for assessing multilingual clients. Future research focusing on comparing bilingual and multilingual SLPs on clinical practices will highlight the benefits of learning additional language on cultural competences. Further, more assessment materials appropriate for multilingual clients is essential in providing culturally sensitive services.

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