



Cultural and linguistic diversity in speech-language pathology

Sarah Verdon, Helen L. Blake, Suzanne C. Hopf, Ben Phạm & Sharynne McLeod

To cite this article: Sarah Verdon, Helen L. Blake, Suzanne C. Hopf, Ben Phạm & Sharynne McLeod (2016) Cultural and linguistic diversity in speech-language pathology, International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 18:2, 109-110, DOI: [10.3109/17549507.2015.1122838](https://doi.org/10.3109/17549507.2015.1122838)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.3109/17549507.2015.1122838>



Published online: 16 Feb 2016.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 2753



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)



Citing articles: 3 [View citing articles](#)

EDITORIAL

Cultural and linguistic diversity in speech-language pathology

SARAH VERDON, HELEN L. BLAKE, SUZANNE C. HOPF, BEN PHẠM
& SHARYNNE MCLEOD

Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, NSW, Australia

Embracing cultural and linguistic diversity in speech-language pathology is a necessity of an increasingly globalized world. Currently, the research evidence upon which speech-language pathology practice is based is still largely drawn from western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic (WEIRD) societies; and assumptions are made that these data are generalizable to all human populations without consideration of the vast diversity that exists between societies (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). Across the world, professional bodies are recognizing the need for increased research regarding culturally and linguistically diverse populations to ensure that recommendations for practice are based upon the best available evidence (Goldstein, 2012; International Expert Panel on Multilingual Children's Speech, 2012; RCSLT Specific Interest Group in Bilingualism, 2007; Speech Pathology Australia, 2009).

This special issue of the *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* responds to the need for embracing cultural and linguistic diversity by providing data to support practice with diverse populations. Indeed, the impetus for the special issue was the number of manuscripts received by the editor-in-chief that addressed this need. Three key topics are covered in this special issue. These are: (1) the acquisition of speech and language in diverse languages; (2) the impact of the communicative environment and interlocutors upon multilingual children's language use; and (3) enhancing the identification of speech and language difficulties in multilingual speakers.

Speech and language acquisition is influenced by conversational context. As a result, patterns of speech and language acquisition vary depending on language exposure, proficiency and use. Understanding these patterns in diverse languages

is essential for SLPs' clinical decision-making, as highlighted in four papers in this special issue. Másdóttir and Stokes (2016) and Phạm and McLeod (2016) make critical advances in the understanding of speech acquisition and phonemic inventories in two languages for which these data have rarely been published in English: Icelandic and Vietnamese. The study of children's consonant acquisition in Icelandic (Másdóttir & Stokes, 2016) importantly adds further evidence to support studies in other languages (e.g., English: Dinnsen, Chin, Elbert, & Powell, 1990) that have found phonological acquisition in children is influenced by an implicational hierarchy of phonetic features. Phạm and McLeod (2016) acknowledge the rich diversity in one of the world's most commonly spoken native languages through a detailed description of the differences between the consonants, semivowels, vowels, diphthongs and tones for four main dialects of Vietnamese: Standard, Northern, Central and Southern. Whilst Han, Brebner, and McAllister (2016) and Klintö, Salameh, and Lohmander (2016) consider languages previously reported, the populations on which they focus are under-reported. Specifically, Han et al. (2016) discuss the complexities of speech and language acquisition in bidialectal and bilingual Chinese speakers and Klintö et al. (2016) describe the speech acquisition patterns of Swedish-speaking children with unilateral cleft lip and palate. All four papers enrich our understanding of speech and language acquisition and reinforce the need for careful consideration of every language in a speaker's repertoire when making clinical decisions.

The impact of the communicative environment and interlocutors upon multilingual children's language use are described in two papers. Dennaoui, Nicholls, O'Connor, Tarasuik, Kvalsvig, and Goldfeld (2016) and Rojas, Iglesias, Bunta, Goldstein, Goldenberg, and Reese (2016) support

claims that collecting information on both the speaker and the conversational environment, including conversational partners and their proficiency in each of the child's languages, needs to be a standard practice when obtaining a case history. Dennaoui et al. (2016) found that, for multilingual children in Australia, where English is typically the language of instruction and assessment, proficiency in English at the commencement of formal schooling is a significant predictor of their longitudinal academic success. Rojas et al. (2016) examines the impact of interlocutors upon multilingual speakers' expressive language skills in each of their languages. They report that increased expressive language skills in Spanish (their dominant language) were significantly related to interactions with their older siblings. However, expressive language skills in English (their additional language) were not only predicted by their interactions with older siblings, but also by their interactions with their peers and by their mothers' education level.

Researchers have used innovative approaches in three of the manuscripts in this special issue to measure language performance and facilitate the identification of speech and language difficulties in multilingual speakers. Holmström, Dahlgren-Sandberg, Salameh, and Nettelbladt (2016) report that multilingual children with language impairment developed lexical organization at a slower rate than typically-developing multilingual children and proposes lexical organization as a possible indicator of language impairment in multilingual speakers. Blumenfeld, Bobb, and Marian (2016) investigated verbal fluency among multilingual speakers and found that, while performances were similar between monolingual and multilingual speakers, language profiles, such as proficiency in languages, influenced multilinguals' performance on verbal fluency tasks. Kim, Ballard, and McCann (2016) investigate the effectiveness of using a bilingual speech screener (the Intelligibility in Context Scale: Korean-English) to identify speech difficulties in Korean-English speakers in New Zealand. Kim et al. (2016) found that a number of items on the ICS were significantly related to the percentage of consonants correct (PCC) in each language, indicating this may be a valid tool for screening for speech sound disorders in Korean-English speakers. Kim et al. (2016) also suggest choice of both speaking contexts and interlocutors can affect intelligibility ratings and, therefore, should be carefully considered when screening for intelligibility across languages.

Each of the papers in this special issue contributes new and unique data to the evidence base currently informing speech-language pathology practice with culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Through reflection upon the international perspectives provided in this issue, readers are encouraged to consider the implications of the findings for their

own practice and to embrace cultural and linguistic diversity in speech-language pathology.

References

- Blumenfeld, H., Bobb, S., & Marian, V. (2016). The role of language proficiency, cognate status, and word frequency in the assessment of Spanish-English bilinguals' verbal fluency. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 18, 90–201.
- Dennaoui, K., Nicholls, R., O'Connor, M., Tarasuiik, J., Kvalsvig, A., & Goldfeld, S. (2016). The English proficiency and academic language skills of Australian bilingual children during the primary school years. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 18, 157–165.
- Dinnsen, D., Chin, S., Elbert, M., & Powell, T. (1990). Some constraints on functionally disordered phonologies: Phonetic inventories and phonotactics. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 33, 28–37.
- Goldstein, B. A. (2012). *Research with culturally and linguistically diverse populations: Practice with little evidence*. Retrieved from <http://www.asha.org/Academic/questions/Research-With-Culturally-and-Linguistically-Diverse-Populations-Practice-With-Little-Evidence/>
- Han, W., Brebner, C., & McAllister, S. (2016). Redefining "Chinese" L1 in SLP: Considerations for the assessment of Chinese bilingual/dialectal language skills. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 18, 135–146.
- Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). The weirdest people in the world? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 33, 61–83.
- Holmström, K., Dahlgren-Sandberg, A., Salameh, E.-K., & Nettelbladt, U. (2016). A descriptive study of lexical organisation in bilingual children with language impairment: Developmental changes. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 18, 178–189.
- International Expert Panel on Multilingual Children's Speech. (2012). *Multilingual children with speech sound disorders: Position paper*. Bathurst, Australia: Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education, Charles Sturt University. Retrieved from <http://www.csu.edu.au/research/multilingual-speech/position-paper>
- Kim, J-H., Ballard, E., & McCann, C. (2016). Parent-rated measures of bilingual children's speech accuracy: Implications for a universal speech screen. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 18, 202–211.
- Klintö, K., Salameh, E.-K., & Lohmander, A. (2016). Phonology in Swedish-speaking 5-year-olds born with unilateral cleft lip and palate and the relationship with consonant production at 3 years of age. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 18, 147–156.
- Másdóttir, T., & Stokes, S. (2016). Influence of consonant frequency on Icelandic-speaking children's speech acquisition. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 18, 111–121.
- Phạm, B., & McLeod, S. (2016). Consonants, vowels, and tones across Vietnamese dialects. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 18, 122–134.
- RCSLT Specific Interest Group in Bilingualism. (2007). *Good practice for speech and language therapists working with clients from linguistic minority communities*. London, UK: The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.
- Rojas, R., Iglesias, A., Bunta, F., Goldstein, B., Goldenberg, C., & Reese, L. (2016). Interlocutor differential effects on the expressive language skills of Spanish-speaking English learners. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 18, 166–177.
- Speech Pathology Australia (2009). *Working in a culturally and linguistically diverse society: Position Paper*. Melbourne, Australia: Author.