

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

IDENTIFYING DIFFERENCE FROM DISABILITY

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ABSTRACT

Over-identification of ELLs in special education and related services is a common, yet avoidable, problem. Assessment and eligibility determinations are complex processes that require thinking outside of the parameters of any one standardized test. This presentation will explain how appropriate and research-based assessment methods will assist teachers and members of the CST in accurately identifying a difference from a disability.

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

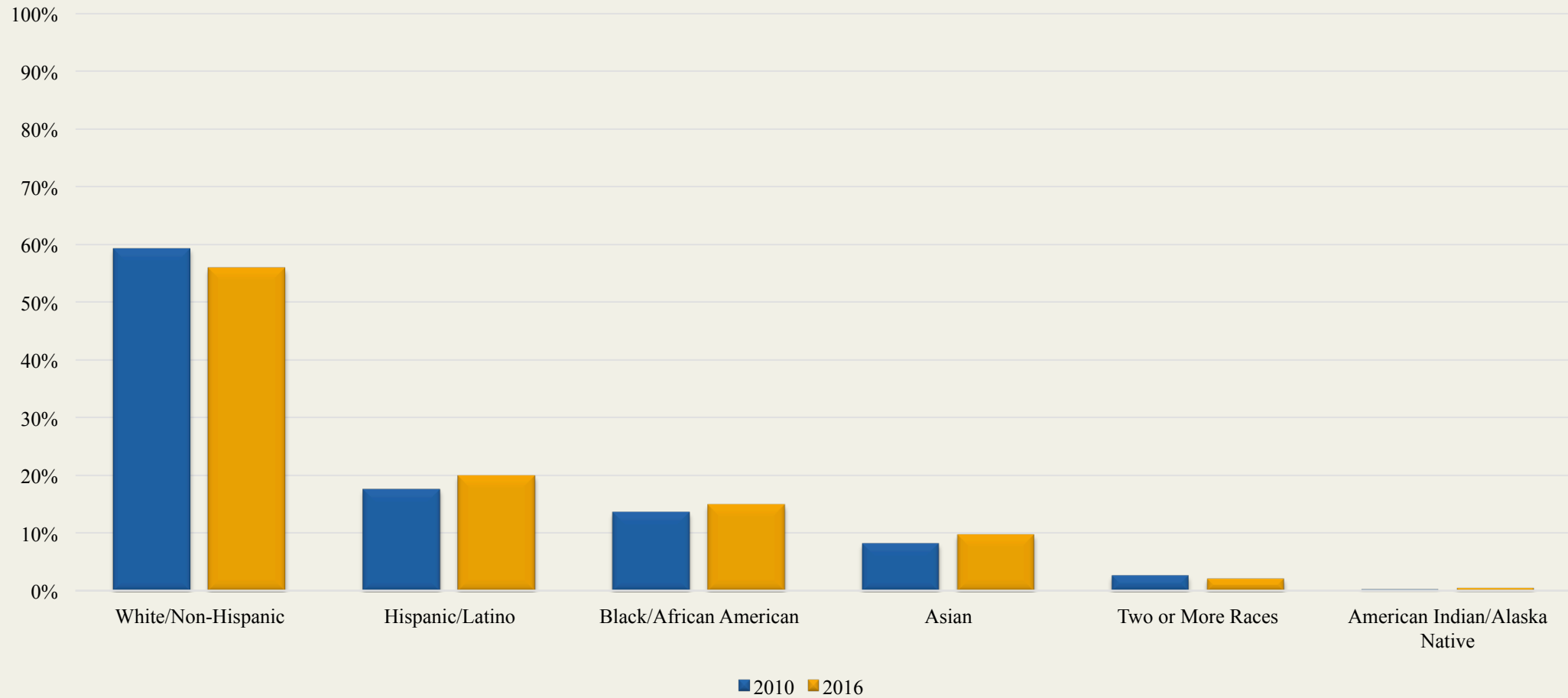
- Discuss NJ's cultural and linguistic diversity
- Specify federal and state laws in appropriate and unbiased assessment
- Explain the importance of accurately identifying a speech, language and/or learning difference from a disability
- Describe methods that can be used to differentiate a difference from a disability

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

- Child-rearing practices
- Ethnicity
- Experience
- Gender/gender identification
- Generational views
- Nonverbal behaviors
- Perceptions and beliefs about age and disability
- Race
- Religion
- Rules of interaction
- Sexual orientation
- Socioeconomic status
- Oral, written, and/or manual language use

(ASHA, n.d.)

RACIAL & ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN NJ



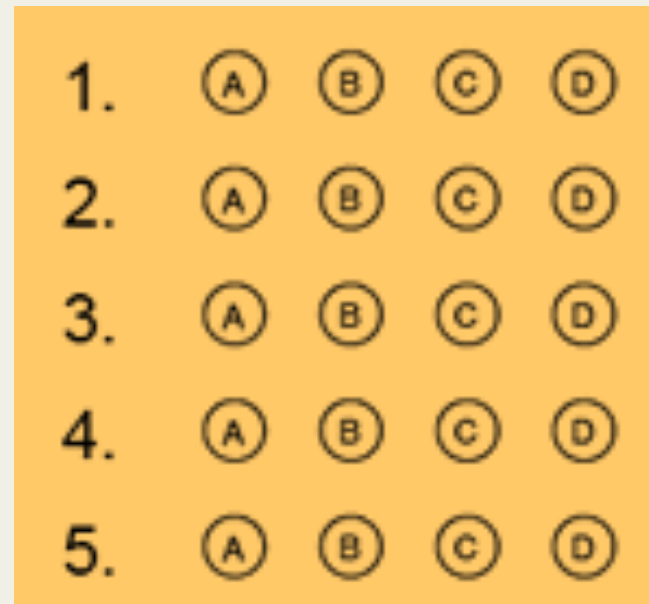
(U.S. Census Bureau)

CULTURAL & LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN NJ

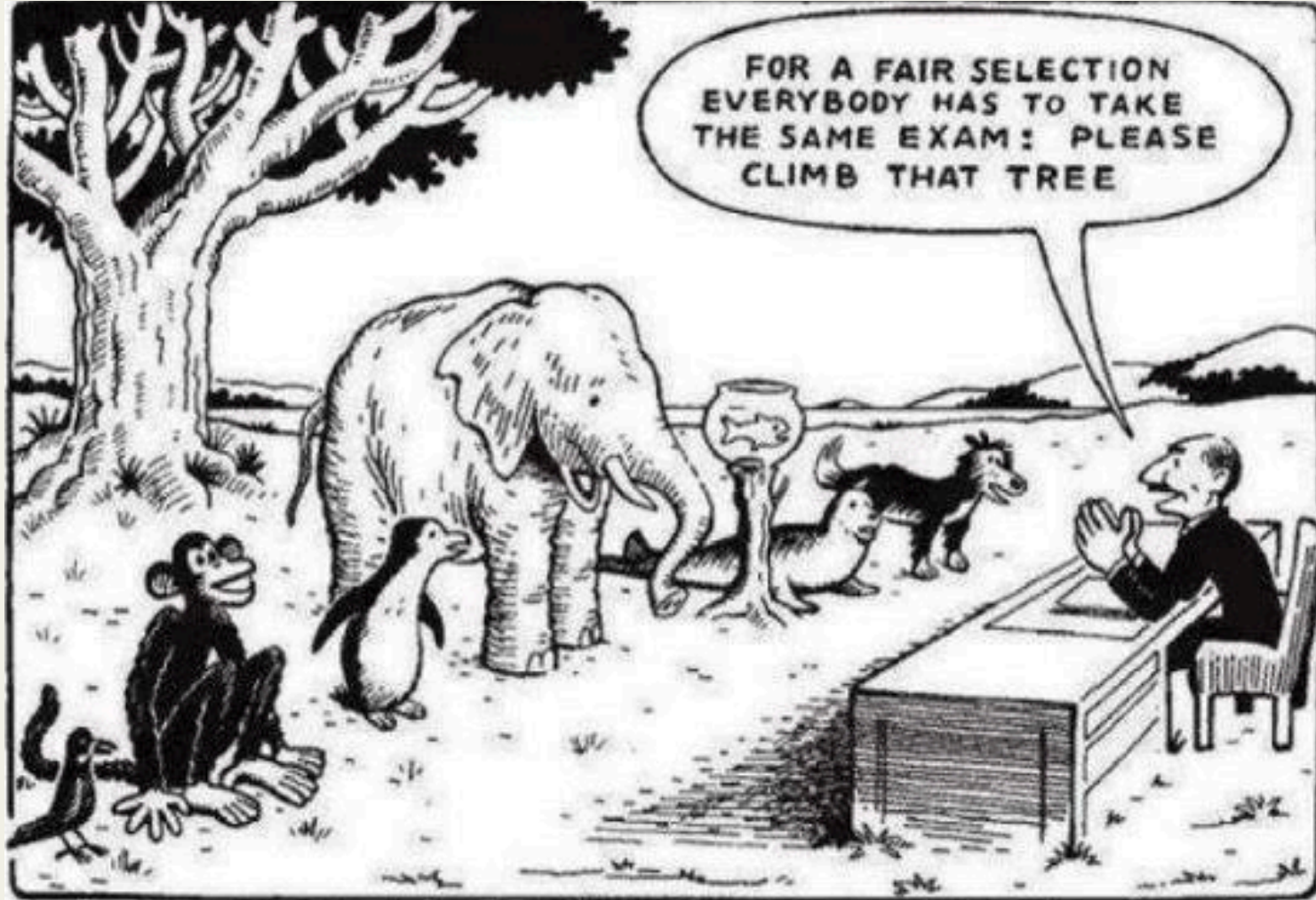
- Income & Poverty
 - Median household income - \$72,702
 - Persons in poverty – 10.4%
- Language & Culture
 - Language other than English spoken at home (5 years +) – 30.7%
 - Foreign born – 21.8%
- Education
 - High school graduate or higher – 88.9%
 - Bachelor's degree or higher – 37.5%

PURPOSES OF STANDARDIZED TESTS

- Determine eligibility for special education and related services
- Monitor student performance
- Compare students within and across states
- Verify if students are learning what they should have learned
- Hold schools and teachers accountable



STANDARDIZED TESTS AND ELL STUDENTS



IDEA 2014

- 20 U.S.C. § 1414(b)(2) - In conducting the evaluation, the local educational agency shall:
 - (A) use a variety of assessment tools and strategies...
 - (B) not use any single measure or assessment as the sole criterion for determining whether a child is a child with a disability...
 - (C) use technically sound instruments...

IDEA 2014 (Cont.)

- 20 U.S.C. § 1414(b)(3) - Each local educational agency shall ensure that:
 - (A) assessments and other evaluation materials used to assess a child under this section---
 - (i) are selected and administered so as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis;
 - (ii) are provided and administered in the language and form most likely to yield accurate information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally...
 - (iii) are used for purposes for which the assessments or measures are valid and reliable
- 20 U.S.C. § 1414(b)(5) – In making a determination of eligibility under paragraph (4)(A), a child shall not be determined to be a child with a disability if the determinant factor for such determination is—
 - (A) lack of appropriate instruction in reading...
 - (B) lack of instruction in math
 - (C) limited English proficiency

THE NJ ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

DO

Use standardized tests, *if appropriate*

Apply informed clinical opinion

Utilize valid and reliable assessments

Ensure assessments are normed on a representative population

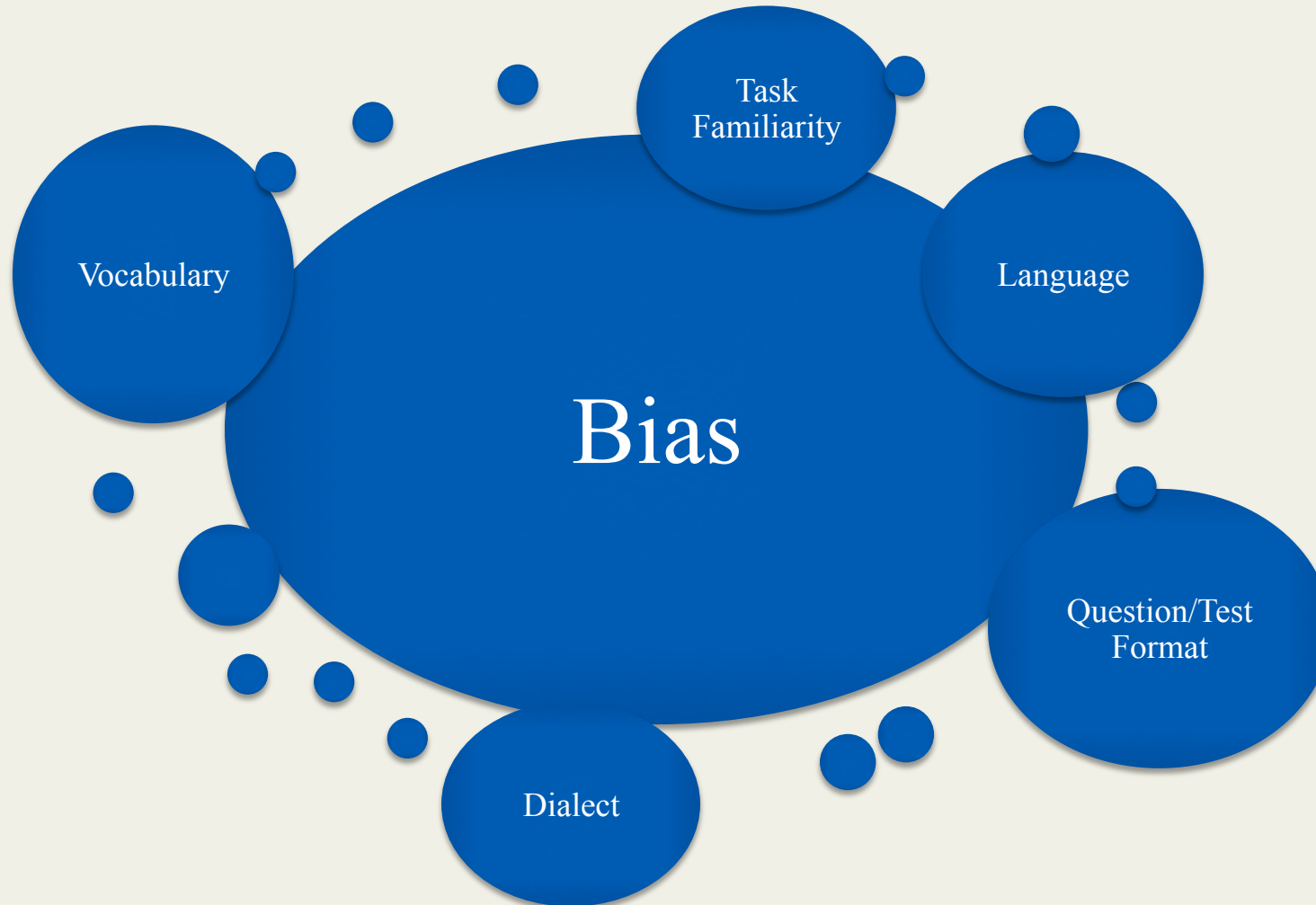
DON'T

Use assessments with racial or cultural bias

Rely on a single procedure

Determine eligibility due to limited English proficiency or lack of instruction

STANDARDIZED TEST BIASES



NORMATIVE SAMPLE CONCERNS

- Does the normative sample adequately represent the individual's background?
- Are people with disabilities included in the sample?
- Basing the normative sample on current census data does not eliminate cultural and linguistic biases (Stockman, 2000).

NORMATIVE SAMPLE OF PLS-5

Race/Ethnicity	% of Sample
White	53.7%
Hispanic	23.9%
African American	14.2%
Asian	4.0%
Other	4.2%

Language	% of Sample
English	98.3%
Spanish	1.4%
Chinese	0.3%
Other	0.5%

NORMATIVE SAMPLE OF PLS-5 (Cont.)

English Dialect	% of Sample
African American	4.2%
Appalachian/Ozark	0.1%
Central Midland	0.1%
Chinese Influenced	0.5%
Eastern New England	0.4%
Mainstream American	78.9%
Middle Atlantic	0.4%
New York City	0.6%
Spanish Influenced	0.6%
Southern	4.4%
Western Pennsylvania	0.0%
Other	0.5%

STANDARDIZED TEST TRANSLATIONS

- Age expectations for speech sound acquisition and grammatical markers are different for each language
- Familiarity with vocabulary varies in different linguistic communities
- Psychometric properties (e.g., validity) are lost when a test is translated
- Languages have different morphological, syntactical, semantic, and phonological features and rules

REDUCING BIAS

Appropriate Assessment of ELL Students

- Interview parents and teachers
- Modify standardized tests
- Use dynamic assessment
- Compare individual's performance to published data for their cultural/linguistic background
- Compare individual's performance to that of their speech community
- Complete a BICS/CALP analysis

PARENT INTERVIEW

- ① Parents' highest educational level
- ② Family history of speech, language, and/or learning problems
- ③ How the child's speech and language development and skills compare to siblings and/or or to peers in the same speech community
- ④ Significant changes in the family structure
- ⑤ What exposure the child has had to different languages or dialects
- ⑥ If performance during the evaluation was typical
- ⑦ Child's motor skills
- ⑧ 10 examples of best communications and where it breaks down

PARENT INTERVIEW

Language and Dialect Acquisition and Exposure

- Language(s) and dialect(s) the child and family speak
- Age acquired the language(s) and dialect(s)
- Duration of exposure
- Frequency and setting of exposure and use
- Parents' and child's country of origin

TEACHER INTERVIEW

- Student's grade-level performance in reading and math
- Supports the student may need
- Student's strengths and weaknesses
- Progress the student has made over time
- If the student's English language skills are typical
- If our impressions of the student's skills are consistent with his usual performance in class and at school

(Crowley, Friedman, & Tancredi, 2006)

MODIFY STANDARDIZED TESTS

- Modify administration procedures to allow extra time for a response
- Increase the number of practice items
- Reword test instructions
- Continue testing beyond the ceiling
- Ask the student to explain an incorrect response

***Note that any modifications invalidate a standardized test**

DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT

- Interactive
- Test → Teach → Retest
- Identifies zone of proximal development
- Provides embedded instruction
- Minimizes effects of previous experience
- Appropriate for ELL students

TYPES OF DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT TASKS

- Non-word repetition
 - Unbiased by SES and parent education level
 - Assesses language learning
- Fast-mapping
 - Assesses a child's ability to learn new words
 - Done during play activities
 - Clinician gives the child exposure to novel words and then probes for comprehension and production of these words
- Graduated Prompting
 - Not a typical mediated learning experience
 - Uses scripted, graduated prompts
 - Children receive points based on the number of prompts needed to achieve a correct response

SELECT DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT STUDIES

- Hasson, N., Camilleri, B., Jones, C., Smith, J., & Dodd, B. (2013). Discriminating disorder from difference using dynamic assessment with bilingual children. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, 29(1), 57-75.
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BICS

- Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
- Refers to the social language first used when learning any language
- The universal aspects of language proficiency that are required for speakers to communicate with one another
- Includes everyday language used in social situations and during everyday tasks
 - Turn taking, providing personal narratives, asking questions, responding to directions, making requests, communicating wants and needs, repairing conversational breakdowns, using gestures
- Commonly referred to as “playground English”

(Cummins, 2000)

CALP

- Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
- Refers to academic language
 - Using language to inform, compare, order, classify, analyze, infer, justify and persuade, solve problems, and evaluate in all content areas
- It takes approximately 5 to 7 years to acquire this type of language proficiency in a first language
- It may take up to 10 years to acquire this type of language proficiency in a second language

(Cummins, 2000)

IMPLICATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

- Dual language exposure is not a risk factor in language development
- Providing children consistent, continuous, and rich exposure to both languages on a regular basis will ensure full dual language development
- Do not be concerned if ELLs produce sentences in one language that follow the grammatical rules of their other language
- Language dominance should be determined before assessment of language is completed
- Code-switching is not indicative of a problem

IMPLICATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (Cont.)

- Testing ELLs in English (their nondominant language) can result in an underestimation of the child's skills
- English vocabulary size is not a full indication of an ELLs skills
- Crosslinguistic influence and/or code mixing should not be factors in determining if an ELL has a disorder
- Disordered language causes both languages to be delayed
- It is not appropriate or recommended to suggest that an ELL with or without a disability be encouraged to use only one language
- Milestones for other languages are not the same as they are for English

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