

Assessing Young English-Language Learners in a Purposeful, Culturally- & Linguistically-Relevant Context Using Solid Conceptual, Psychometric & Data Analytic Procedures

National Research Council

**Committee on Developmental Outcomes & Assessments for Young Children
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Diversity, Accountability, and Research

- **Increasingly diverse population of 3-5 year-olds.**
- **Greater emphasis on evaluation & accountability systems.**
- **Urgent need to develop recommendations & resource materials to guide the appropriate assessment approaches used with growing population of English language learners (ELLs), within different contexts & for different purposes.**



Paper Overview

- I. **Assessment Goals and Rationale**

- II. **Assessing Key ELL Child and Family Characteristics**

- III. **Assessing ELL Children's Developmental and School Readiness Progress**

- IV. **Analytic Considerations**

Important to be clear on specific purpose of assessment(s):

National Education Goals Panel's *Principles and Recommendations for Early Childhood Assessments*

(Shepard, Kagan and Wurtz, 1998):

- 1. To promote learning & development of individual children,**
- 2. To identify children with special needs & health conditions for intervention purposes**
- 3. To monitor trends in programs & evaluate program effectiveness.**
- 4. To obtain benchmark data for accountability purposes at the local, state & national level.**

Unique challenges with English Language Learners – Bilingualism

- **1st language vs. 2nd language development**
- **Onset of bilingualism & home language experiences**
- **Linguistic domain of bilingualism - “...language is not a unitary skill, but a complex configuration of abilities” (Hakuta & Snow, 1986)**
- **Extent of bilingualism**



ELL Assessment Considerations

- **Important to consider whether goal is to assess at one point in time, capture growth over time, or both.**
- **Need to consider in which language(s) to assess, and how information will be used.**
- **Most measures administered in 1 language or the other, rarely in both, though dual administration or “conceptual scoring” likely to provide best information of child’s development.**
- **When selecting measures, careful attention must be paid to very specific psychometric properties of measures.**

Compendium of Measures for the Assessment of Young English Language Learners

- **Critical examination of the psychometric, linguistic, and cultural properties of the measures currently available for use with preschool-aged language minority children.**
- **Focused on direct language and literacy measures for use with Spanish-speaking preschoolers**
- **ELL Counterpart to Child Trends' Early Childhood Measures Profiles.** (aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/ECMeasures04/report.pdf)

Selection Process and Inclusion Criteria

- **Step 1:**
 - **Initial identification of > 1000 measures relating to early childhood, language, or literacy**
 - **Multiple sources: MMY, publishing companies, articles, reports, and internet searches.**
- **Step 2:**
 - **Identified measures with:**
 - **target age range including 3-5 year olds,**
 - **ample coverage of language and/or literacy domains,**
 - **publication of English and Spanish forms, and**
 - **direct child assessment.**

Compendium of Measures for the Assessment of Young English Language Learners

- Measure Overview
 - Author/Source
 - Purpose of Measure and relevant Assessment Goal(s)
 - Strengths & Weaknesses
 - ELL Measure Rating
- Administration of Measure (*e.g., Time, Cost, Training, Setting*)
- Development and Functioning of Measure
 - *Cultural and linguistic measurement development*
 - Standardization Sample
 - Reliability & Validity
 - *Comparability of Psychometric properties between English & Spanish measures*
- Examples of studies that utilizing measure (particularly intervention)
- Listing of other versions available and Reference list

4 Key Features in ELL Assessment Development, Translation & Adaptation

(adapted from Bravo, 2003)

1. Content equivalence

- Are constructs & operational definitions pertinent for key cultural groups of interest?
- *How determined?* Lit review, Expert panel, Observations, Interviews, Focus Groups

2. Semantic and Cultural Equivalences of Item Translations

- How was the measure translated and subsequently adjusted?
- Upon translation, did the items conform to *semantic* or *content* equivalents?
- *How translated?*
 - Translation/Back-Translation methods
 - Substitution: culturally concordant items or construct equivalents
 - Field Tests & Statistical analysis of item difficulty, order, etc.
 - Feedback from cultural informants: interviews, focus groups, panel comprised of community and experts

Key Features in ELL Assessment Development, Translation & Adaptation

(adapted from Bravo, 2003)

3. Standardization Sample

- **Population, Sample, Representativeness, etc.**
 - **Regions, Countries of Origin, Dialects, Bilingualism, etc.**
- **Size, Ages, etc.**

4. Psychometric Equivalences

- **Reliability**
 - **e.g., Cronbach's; split-half; Test-retest; inter-rater**
- **Validity**
 - **Face and Content**
 - **Criterion (Concurrent, Predictive, Postdictive)**
 - **Internal (Factor Analyses, Differential Item functioning, etc.)**
 - **External/Nomological Net (Convergent, Divergent)**

Overview of ELL Measures Review

- **Overwhelming majority of measures available for use with young Spanish-speaking children possess less than optimal basic reliability and validity characteristics**
- **Few have thoroughly considered and engaged in necessary linguistic and cultural equivalence measurement development.**
- **More measures being developed for use with Spanish ELL preschoolers.**



Recommendations

- **Consider specific assessment goals and research question at hand.**
- **Carefully read and consider multiple aspects of a measure's development and standardization.**
- **Pilot test and engage in psychometric and qualitative analyses within own studies.**
- **Engage/collaborate in ELL measurement development.**
- **Describe Measurement Development and/or Analyses in Publications & Manuals.**

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