DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 705 EC 210 639

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TITLE Characteristics of Learning Disabled, Mentally Retarded, and Speech-Language Handicapped Hispanic Students at Initial Evaluation and Reevaluation.
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 13p.; In: Schools and the Culturally Diverse Exceptional Student: Promising Practices and Future Directions; see EC 210 633. Paper presented at the Ethnic and Multicultural Symposia (Dallas, TX, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Disabilities; Educational Policy; *Educational Practices; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Handicap Identification; *Hispanic Americans; Language Handicaps; Learning Disabilities; *Limited English Speaking; Mental Retardation; Multicultural Education; *Referral; Special Education; Speech Handicaps; Student Evaluation; *Student Placement
IDENTIFIERS Regular and Special Education Relationship

ABSTRACT

The paper, originally given at a 1986 Ethnic and Multicultural Symposium, reports the results of a series of studies on the identification and placement of limited English proficient (LEP) Hispanic students. Research findings relate to the referral, assessment, and placement of LEP students in programs for the learning disabled, mentally retarded, and speech and/or language handicapped. Policy and practice implications of the findings include: the requirement that language assessment (both English and native language) precede other assessments; recognition that the handicapped child must be handicapped in his/her native language, not merely in English; necessary adaptations of assessment procedures and instruments should be documented in the student's records; recognition that scores obtained on assessment instruments for this population often indicate minimal rather than maximal abilities; assessment personnel must be fluent in the student's dominant language; instructional adaptations must be appropriate for different cultures and languages; bilingual special education personnel are needed to serve language minority students; and regular education needs to recognize its responsibility in improving the achievement of language minority students. (DB)

Characteristics of Learning Disabled, Mentally Retarded, and Speech-Language Handicapped Hispanic Students at Initial Evaluation and Reevaluation

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There is a strong rationale for all educators to be concerned with handicapped language minority students who are the focus of these studies. The rationale is simple and specific: a dramatically changing demography. The Census Bureau has reported that since the 1980 census, the Hispanic population in the United States increased by 30%, almost ten times the growth rate of the general population. Reich (1986) projects that, by the year 2080, the Hispanic population will have increased from 7% to 19%. In Texas, to cite a state where these changes are dramatic in terms of their effect upon schools, 38% of the general population is minority. Of interest is the fact that 34% of public school students in Texas are Hispanic, and approximately half of all kindergarten students are Hispanic.

Demographic changes such as these are not strictly, nor uniquely, a Texas phenomenon. Chicago, for example, is the third most populous Hispanic center in the United States (Fiesta Educativa, 1984). The average age of White women in this country is 32 years; Black women, approximately 25 years; and Hispanic women, 22 years. Hispanic women are not only the largest population group in the childbearing age range for the near future, but also have the highest birth rate of any ethnic group. Yes, there will be another baby boom, but this baby boom of the future will be Hispanic (Hodgkinson, 1985).

Population characteristics are shifting, and those elected to positions of power reflect a shift to larger numbers of minorities. In 1986, 6,000 elected officials were Black; in 1987, there were 3,314 elected Hispanic officials (Trevino, 1987).

When placed in perspective, these shifts in demography and in the power configurations represent critical information to special educators. No longer can special educators be concerned solely with the nature of the handicapping condition and/or the appropriate match of instructional procedures to that handicap. Special educators must also be concerned with a range of other characteristics of the population they will be serving, specifically, unique features such as linguistic, cultural, and other background characteristics.

Despite the dramatically increasing number of language minority students in special education, there is limited research focusing specifically on the exceptional limited-English-proficient or bilingual student. The Handicapped Minority Research Institute on Language Proficiency (HMRI) at The University of Texas at Austin has conducted the only programmatic research studies to date aimed at describing the interaction of language proficiency and

handicapping conditions. The findings of these studies serve as the backdrop in this paper to describe the state of practice in serving exceptional limited-English-proficient (LEP) Hispanic students; to identify major issues in service delivery; and to develop recommendations for improving policy and practice for students who qualify for both special education and for special language programs, such as bilingual education or English as a second language (ESL).

CHARACTERISTICS OF LIMITED-ENGLISH-PROFICIENT HISPANIC STUDENTS SERVED IN PROGRAMS FOR THE LD, SLH, OR MR

The findings reported here are those of a series of *ex post facto* investigations of the initial referral, assessment, and placement of limited-English-proficient (LEP) Hispanic students served in programs for the learning disabled (Ortiz et al., 1985), mentally retarded (Holtzman, Jr., Ortiz, & Wilkinson, 1986), and speech and/or language handicapped (Ortiz, Garcia, Wheeler, & Maldonado-Colon, 1986). A total of 519 students in grades 2–5 comprised the sample; 334 were classified as learning disabled (LD), 124 as communication disordered or speech and language handicapped (SLH), and 61 as mentally retarded (MR). To select the subjects, lists of Hispanic students enrolled in special education and of students classified as limited English proficient in three large urban school districts in south central Texas were cross-referenced to identify second-, third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade Hispanics in LD, MR, or SLH programs who were also classified as LEP. Students are considered LEP if their primary language is other than English and their English proficiency, as measured by a standardized oral language achievement test, is such that they have difficulty performing ordinary classwork in English (Texas Bilingual Education Act, 1981). These students met federal and state eligibility criteria for bilingual education and/or ESL programs.

Data retrieved from special education eligibility folders by trained coders included: (a) linguistic, sociocultural, and other demographic characteristics of LEP students at the time of their initial referral to special education; (b) reasons for referral; (c) performance on tests administered; (d) individuals most frequently involved on placement committees; (e) subjects' primary and secondary handicaps at initial placement; and (f) amount of time recommended for special education instruction. Data were analyzed for indicators that distinguished behaviors characteristic of handicapping conditions from those suggestive of linguistic, cultural, or other unique student characteristics.

FINDINGS RELATED TO LD POPULATIONS

One of the dilemmas when an LEP student is referred to special education is that the characteristics of second-language learners are similar to behaviors associated with certain categories of exceptionality, including learning disabilities and communication disorders (Ortiz & Maldonado-Colon, 1986). Ortiz (1984) suggests that many language minority students are referred to special education because educators are unable to distinguish individual differences from handicapping conditions. For instance, "problem behaviors" such as difficulty following directions, poor eye contact, inattention, and daydreaming could be associated with a handicapping condition, but they could also reflect a lack of English proficiency. If educators are not aware of this, a LEP student's academic difficulties might be inaccurately attributed to cognitive or intellectual deficits, thus triggering a special education referral.

Teachers gave 31 reasons for referring limited-English-proficient Hispanic students to special education for suspected learning disabilities (Ortiz et al., 1985). The most frequently cited were: (a) attention/behavior; (b) poor academic progress in general; (c) poor progress in reading; (d) poor academic progress in one or more areas (other than reading); and (e) problems related to language.

To explore the possibility that referrals might be related to limited English proficiency, attention/behavior problems which could also be characteristics of second-language learners

were regrouped under the category of language problems. Upon re-analysis, the language problem category became the most frequent reason for referral of LEP. The new data suggested that more than half of all referrals of LEP students were related to limited English proficiency. Data from a related study by Wilkinson and Ortiz (1986) provide support for this finding. They compared a sample of LEP and nonLEP students and found that limited English proficiency influenced referrals. Language problems were the most frequent concern for LEP students, with 53% of the LEP sample having at least one language-related referral reason; on the other hand, the most common reason for referral of nonLEPs was poor academic progress. This suggests a need to train regular classroom teachers to better distinguish between characteristics of normal second language acquisition and true learning handicaps to prevent the referral of students whose achievement difficulties result from inadequate language proficiency.

Grade and Age at Referral

The majority of LD students were between 7 and 8.5 years of age when they were referred. The largest number were in the second grade, followed by those in the first grade. Approximately 45% of the students had been retained at least once prior to referral. The high rate of retention raises questions as to the nature and appropriateness of prior attempts to improve student performance in the mainstream.

Language Background at Home and at School

There was little correlation between dominant language reported by teachers and dominant language reported by parents on the Home Language Survey, the screening instrument used by districts to identify students who are potential candidates for bilingual education or English-as-second-language instruction. The Home Language Survey indicated that Spanish was the primary home language for two thirds of the students. Teachers, however, reported that English was the predominant language for half of the sample. That so many students who were classified as English-dominant in school but from Spanish-dominant or bilingual homes supports literature which suggests that language dominance is dependent upon the communication context or situation, the topic, and the interactors (Erickson & Omark, 1981). Therefore, it may be possible for a child to be Spanish-dominant at home, but English-dominant in school.

It is possible that the ratings of language dominance at school reflect that: (a) these children are able to communicate well in English and that ratings were based on teachers' perceptions that the child had mastered the surface structures of English (Cummins, 1984); (b) the subjects perceived that they were supposed to speak English at school; (c) English was the child's *preferred* but not necessarily *dominant* language; or (d) students were English-proficient in the use of language for interpersonal communication, but were not able to handle the language requirements of academic work (Cummins, 1984).

Comprehensive Individual Assessment

Tests of intelligence, achievement, and perceptual/motor development were the most frequently administered, followed by language proficiency and developmental/readiness tests. The most commonly used instruments were the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) (1974); Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery (1977); Wide Range Achievement Test (Jastak & Jastak, 1978); and the Bender Visual Motor Gestalt Test (Koppitz, 1964). Assessment procedures for LEP students were essentially the same as those used for Anglo students.

While districts are not specifically required to conduct a formal language proficiency assessment as part of the individual evaluation, they are required by state and federal law to conduct assessments in the child's dominant language. This implies that information on the student's language dominance or proficiency should be available to determine the language

to be used in test administration. Despite this requirement and the need to rule out lack of English language proficiency as a cause of learning problems, very little information on language was actually included in the initial assessment. Only 25% of the assessments contained evidence of current language proficiency testing; results of prior testing tended to be approximately one year old.

Students' scores on the WISC-R were usually one standard deviation below the mean on Verbal and Full Scales, but closer to, or at the mean, on the Performance Scale. A consistent discrepancy was found between Verbal and Performance Scale scores. Such a discrepancy is quite common among bilingual populations (Cummins, 1984; Kaufman, 1979). The performance of LEP Hispanic students on tests of achievement also revealed low levels of functioning, generally around the first-grade level. These scores support the initial reason for referral to special education, that is, poor academic performance. However, one must consider that achievement was tested in English. Because LEP students receive initial instruction in their native language, (i.e., they learn to read and write in Spanish), measurement of these skills in English constitutes an unfair assessment practice. Moreover, the lack of data on native language functioning makes it impossible to determine whether a child has a discrepancy in achievement and is therefore learning disabled.

Placement in Special Education

There appeared to be little adaptation of decision-making processes when LEP students were considered for special education eligibility. Placement committee membership usually reflected state requirements for representation (representatives of administration, assessment, instruction, and the parent). Of the 334 cases deliberated, there was complete agreement among the members on 97.6% of committee decisions. This high percentage of agreement suggests that the signatures are a reflection of group decision processes, rather than individual opinions about cases.

FINDINGS RELATED TO LEP STUDENTS WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

Identification of speech and language handicaps has traditionally been based on the examinee's ability to use surface forms of speech, often the morphological and syntactical elements of language (Oller, 1983). Emphasis on surface structures, however, creates serious problems when the child being tested is limited English proficient. It is difficult to determine whether the child makes errors in English because of a disorder, whether errors are developmental in nature, and/or whether they indicate that the student is in the process of normal second language acquisition (Damico, Oller, & Storey, 1983).

Because of differences in exposure and experience, it is normal for LEP students to demonstrate lower levels of English proficiency (i.e., greater error rates) than their monolingual English-speaking peers, particularly on standardized language tests. This performance alone is not sufficient to conclude that the child is disordered or to justify special education placements. Rather, a child should be judged to have speech and language deficits only if presenting behaviors which are atypical of peers from the same cultural group who speak the same dialect and who have had similar opportunities to hear and use language (Mattes & Omark, 1984). Moreover, children should not be considered handicapped if the problem is documented in English, but not in the native language (Juarez, 1983; Ortiz, 1984). Identification of communication disorders can only be made by comparing the child's ability to communicate in both languages in meaningful speaking contexts (Oller, 1983).

Referrals

Analysis of data on the subjects included in the study of communication-disordered Hispanics (Ortiz, Garcia, Wheeler, & Maldonado-Colon, 1986) revealed that the majority of referrals

(82%) were made by classroom teachers. For the most part, the 23 reasons they cited for seeking special education assistance were related to students' communication behaviors: (a) speech (30%); (b) poor language development (18%); (c) articulation (18%); (d) achievement difficulties (17%); (e) unintelligible speech (14%); and (f) articulation and language (7%). The majority of students were referred between the ages of 5 and 7 years. Those between the ages of 5 and 6 constituted 31% of the referrals; those between 6 and 7 years of age composed 29% of the sample.

Comprehensive Individual Assessment

The Goldman-Fristoe Test of Articulation (GFTA) (Goldman & Fristoe, 1969) was the most frequently administered. The most commonly used language tests were the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) (Dunn, 1965) in English and Spanish, the Test for Auditory Comprehension of Language (TACL) (Carrow, 1973) in English and Spanish, and the Test of Language Development (TOLD) (Newcomer & Hammill, 1977). A language sample was obtained for 40% of the subjects.

Performance on Tests Administered

Articulation. Articulation errors were tabulated for each consonant sound tested ($n = 23$) by type of error (substitution, omission, distortion) and by position (initial, medial, and final). These data revealed a pattern of misarticulated sounds which must be interpreted in light of two important student characteristics—LEP status and age at assessment.

Since all students in the sample were LEP, and the majority of them were from homes where Spanish was the primary language, the results of articulation testing were compared with phonological characteristics of Spanish speakers who acquire English as a second language. For example, Saville and Troike (1975) predicted that Spanish speakers learning English as a second language would have difficulty discriminating and pronouncing the following sounds correctly: /ch/ - /sh/; /s/ - /z/; /n/ - /ng/; /b/ - /v/; /t/ - /soft th/ - /s/; /d/ - /hard th/; and /y/ - /j/. The sounds identified by Saville and Troike were the sounds most frequently misarticulated by LEP students in this study. The most frequent types of errors were substitutions, followed by omissions, and then distortions.

Additionally, the most frequently misarticulated sounds were categorized as either developmental, if the child's age was at or below the developmental norm for mastery of the sound (Sander, 1972), or as indicative of a possible disorder, if the child's age was greater than the developmental norm. As a group ($n = 39$) for whom both age and assessment results were available, there was a higher percentage of students for whom errors appeared to be normal developmental errors. This is to be expected given that 60% of the subjects were referred between 5 and 7 years of age. Thus, sounds for which the developmental age of mastery is 3 years were rarely misarticulated, while the error rate for those which have a developmental norm of 7 to 8 years was high. Errors made by LEP students are even more likely to be developmental since they are in the process of acquiring English as a second language.

There was limited testing of Spanish language skills, making it impossible to compare communicative competence in the two languages as a means of ruling out lack of knowledge of English as the cause of speech and language problems. According to Anderson (cited in Mattes & Omark, 1984):

> Assessment for the purpose of identifying speech disorders should always be done in the first or dominant language of the child. At present, there are no reliable means to determine whether a child's articulation errors in the second language reflect the child's interlanguage phonology, or whether they are evidence of a speech disorder. Consequently, testing for articulation disorders in the second language could result in labeling a normal child as handicapped. In addition, a program of speech therapy might interfere with the child's normal interlanguage development (p. 6).

Language Development. Subjects' scores on tests of language development revealed low patterns of functioning in English and trends toward even lower levels of performance in the native language. For example, available scores on the English TACL (n = 40) yielded a mean age equivalent of 5 years, 2 months, with scores ranging from 3 years, 2 months to 6 years, 7 months. Reported scores from Spanish administrations were lower, with the mean at 4 years, 4 months, and ranges from 3 years, 0 months to 6 years, 10 months. However, because there are no Spanish norms for the TACL, speech pathologists based age equivalents on available English norms, a practice which makes test results suspect. While scaled scores were generally low, score patterns on language tests reflected higher levels of comprehension than knowledge of surface structures such as syntax and grammar. This pattern is also descriptive of second language acquirers. Low scores, however, appear to be used to justify recommendations for special education intervention, rather than to validate the students' limited-English-proficiency status.

Language Samples. Language samples were obtained for 39% of the subjects. The samples tended to be brief and did not meet criteria for length of samples recommended in the language assessment literature. According to Mattes & Omark (1984), a minimum of 30 minutes of conversation should be recorded for analysis. Other researchers maintain that a minimum of 100–200 utterances must be obtained (Damico, Oller, & Storey, 1983; Prutting, 1982; Tyack & Gottsleben, 1974), while others recommend 200 or more (Muma, 1978). Obtained samples were also limited in terms of the context or topic of conversation. In most instances, one English sample was obtained. It was, therefore, not possible to compare students' communicative competence in English to that in Spanish. Consequently, language sample data offered no more elucidation as to whether the child's language performance was normal or disordered.

Placement

Language therapy was the most frequently recommended service for eligible students, followed closely by articulation therapy. This is an interesting finding in that reasons for referral suggested that teachers were more concerned about articulation skills. One hour of therapy was recommended for 69% of the SLH students; 14% were to receive 1 1/2 hours, and 10 were to receive 2 hours of intervention weekly. This suggests that students were mildly handicapped. As with LD students, the most frequent representatives on placement committees were representatives of administration, assessment, instruction, and parents. Of the 116 cases for whom information on this variable was available, there was complete agreement among members in 97% of the cases.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MENTALLY RETARDED LEP STUDENTS

As described previously, three school districts participated in this study. When the MR sample was selected, however, there were some interesting district differences. There were no eligible mentally retarded LEP students in one district and only seven in the second, despite the large number of LEP students served in all three. As will be seen by the patterns described in the third district, it appears that local education agencies have become extremely reluctant to identify and serve language minority students in the category of mental retardation. While there are some obvious advantages to this caution, there are some disadvantages as well. There are some mentally retarded students in need of services who have not been identified; others are being served under the wrong classification (most likely learning disabilities) and may not be receiving appropriate services. Given the limited availability of subjects, the MR findings will be discussed only briefly for the purpose of describing trends in service delivery for this population.

Referrals

The mean age of MR subjects at the time of referral was 7 years, 4 months. At least 44% of the students had been retained at least once; because data were not available for a third of the subjects on this variable, it is possible that the percentage of retention exceeded 50%. Poor academic progress in general was the most commonly cited reason for referral (49%). Language problems of various types were cited as reasons for referral for 26% of the subjects.

Language Background

Teacher ratings, which indicated that students had very low language proficiency, were corroborated by results of administrations of the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) (DeAvi'a & Duncan, 1977). Of 40 students for whom LAS scores were available, 35 were categorized as nonspeakers of English. Results of Spanish testing were virtually identical to English results, with scores being low enough for students to be classified as nonspeakers of Spanish as well.

Comprehensive Individual Assessment

The most frequently administered tests were the WISC-R, Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Terman & Merrill, 1960), Peabody Individual Achievement Test (Dunn & Markwardt, 1970), Wide Range Achievement Test, and the Bender Visual Motor Gestalt Test. The Vineland Social Maturity Scale (Doll, 1965) was the most frequently administered adaptive behavior scale. Assessment results indicated that students were low functioning across all areas tested. For example, on the WISC-R Verbal Scale, subtest scores, in almost all instances, were more than two standard deviations below the mean of 10. Performance Scale subtest scores were somewhat higher but were still very low. Seventy-five percent of the students obtained age-equivalent scores that were below the 6-year level on the adaptive behavior scale. While not all subjects performed poorly on achievement tests, scores in most cases fell well below the mean.

The pattern of very low IQs, combined with low adaptive behavior and achievement scores, suggested that the subjects were, in fact, mentally retarded. Students were classified as mentally retarded only when scores on these measures left little doubt that the classification was appropriate. However, limited assessment in the native language leaves open the possibility of inaccurate placements.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEP LD STUDENTS AT REEVALUATION

In a related study, Wilkinson and Ortiz (1986) examined practices used in the reevaluation of LEP Hispanic students and how these impact continued special education eligibility. The sample included 72 learning disabled Hispanics. Half of the students were classified as LEP and were drawn from the same population as the LD study previously cited (Ortiz et al., 1985). LEP students were then paired with nonLEP subjects, using initial special education placement data. Both members of a pair had been referred and placed in special education while in the same grade and during the same school year.

Interestingly, although reassessments can be requested at any time by committees which review student progress annually, reevaluations of both LEPs and nonLEPs took place almost exactly 3 years after the initial assessment. Early reevaluation occurred for only 3% of the LEPs and 6% of the nonLEPs. This means that students identified as handicapped typically spend at least 3 years in that placement, making even more critical ensuring that initial decisions are accurate.

While the total number of tests administered (n = 6) did not change for either LEPs or nonLEPs between the initial assessment and reevaluation, the composition of test batteries did. Significantly fewer IQ tests were given at reevaluation. Unlike the initial assessment,

which usually included two intelligence tests, one of which was nonverbal, more projective testing was done at reevaluation.

Teachers' ratings of children's dominant language at school were reported much less frequently at reevaluation than at initial assessment. Among children whose language dominance was perceived to have changed at reevaluation, 90% of LEPs and all nonLEPs moved in the direction of greater English usage. Reevaluations were characterized by more testing conducted in English.

Past research (Oakman & Wilson, 1986; Vance, Blaxt, Ellis, & Debell, 1981) has suggested that handicapped children's scores on the WISC-R are fairly stable over time. However, both Verbal and Full Scale WISC-R IQs decreased significantly between administrations for this group of Hispanic students. The magnitude of score decreases was greater for LEPs than nonLEPs, although differences between the two groups were not significant.

Achievement scores were difficult to compare, in that few students received the same test during both evaluations. However, results which were available for the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery showed that math, reading and written language scores were approximately equal at initial placement and at reevaluation. The students' achievement did not change in respect to the achievement of their peers, despite specialized intervention. This fact raises questions about the efficacy of special education for this population.

The majority of students (66% of LEPs and 64% of nonLEPs) were assigned the same primary and secondary handicapping condition following reevaluation as assigned at initial evaluation. Rates of dismissal from special education were similar for the two groups: 11% for LEPs and 18% for nonLEPs. Placement committees recommended significantly more time in special education for students who were not dismissed, regardless of LEP status.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)

One of the most important aspects of the special education process is the development of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). In the case of linguistically different students, specialized services must not only be appropriate to handicapping conditions, but must also accommodate students' levels of native language and/or English proficiency as well.

Goals and Objectives for LEP Students

Wilkinson, Willig, and Ortiz (1986) investigated the IEPs written for the LD and MR subjects in their study. Goals relating to reading, written expression, and spelling were the most frequently specified for learning disabled LEP and nonLEP Hispanics across districts. The most frequently listed objectives were all reading related. Although the most frequently selected goals for the LEP MR students were in academic areas such as reading and language arts, the most frequent set objectives were in oral expression/expressive language.

Language of Instruction

None of the IEP forms used by any of the districts provided space or direction to specify the language of instruction. This may explain why so few references to language were found. Of the 396 IEPs examined, for both LEP and nonLEP students, eight (2%) stated that some instruction would be provided in the native language.

It appears that there is little difference between the goals and objectives included in the IEPs of limited-English-proficient Hispanic students and those specified for English-proficient students. Additionally, little difference was found between the content of IEPs written for language minority students and that of IEPs written for non-minority students as described in other studies (e.g., McCormick & Fisher, 1983; Pyecha et al., 1980; Turner & Macy/cited in Safer & Hobbs, 1980). These findings suggest that a child's language background and proficiency have little effect on the selection of goals and objectives by IEP committees.

Committee recommendations, with very few exceptions, assumed that handicapped LEP students profit from instruction delivered totally in English.

POLICY AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

The results of the studies reported are a reflection of current practice in special education. While mandates aimed at ensuring that handicapped LEP students receive an appropriate education are embodied in policy, law, and judicial decisions (e.g., P.L. 94–142 of 1975; Diana vs. State Board of Education, 1970; Lau versus Nichols, 1974), districts need guidance to effectively implement existing safeguards. These findings and the effects emerging from them suggest specific policy and/or practice implications.

Policy and Practice Implications Associated wi. Assessment

1. It becomes clear from the results of these studies that there must be a requirement for an assessment of the competence of the student in the area of language prior to any other assessment. These assessments should not be confined to proficiency in English, but must also include assessment of competence in the student's native language. For referred students, such language assessment, because of its implications relative to the determination of handicapping conditions, must be the responsibility of special education and cannot be left to bilingual education and/or some other programs. Because language proficiency is critical to the determination of whether special education services are truly required, it must be assessed prior to any other assessments. Once the assessments traditionally used to determine entrance into special education have been accomplished, it is too late in the decisioning process to go back and determine language competence of the student in the native language and in English.
2. It must be recognized that to be truly handicapped, a child must be handicapped in his/her native or dominant language, not merely in the English language. The logic seems overwhelming that policy must be formulated which states that a student who is not handicapped in the native language is not a handicapped student.
3. Due to the paucity of standardized instruments and/or other measures available for students of limited English proficiency and/or bilingual students, it is necessary to utilize adaptations of assessment procedures and instruments. The specific policy practice implications are, however, that all such adaptations of assessments, procedures, and instruments must be documented and described within the students' records. These descriptions must become a part of reports utilized by the various special education decision-making committees. It is not uncommon for assessment personnel who make assessment adaptations to be absent from an Assessment, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) or IEP committee meeting. Therefore, it cannot be left to chance that adaptations and/or modifications in standardized procedures will be documented.
4. In addition, it must be recognized that scores obtained on assessment instruments and/or through assessment procedures for language minority students are most often a minimal, rather than a maximal, indication of abilities. For a variety of reasons, second language learners will score less than their potential. It is incumbent upon assessment personnel to be sensitive to this obvious fact and to articulate, both in assessment reports and in decision-making contexts, that the assessment results probably represent minimal evidence of abilities.

5. Although there is often a shortage of such personnel, it is incumbent upon special educators, parents of language minority children, and regular educators to insist upon the use of assessment personnel fluent in the student's dominant language. Without such insistence,

there will be limited movement on the part of administrators to hire bilingual professionals or for training institutions to train them.

6. Assessment is the "gearwheel" which drives placement into and out of special education. Special education must become more intimately involved with, and linked to, assessment personnel training and/or development. Special education is ordinarily not considered a major component of university preparation programs for assessment personnel, nor is it often a topic of professional development for assessment personnel. Without linkages to special education, the appropriate feedback loop associated with the effects of assessment of language minority students for special education will remain ineffective.
7. The traditional special education concept of an annual and/or 3-year follow-up assessment is often inappropriate for language minority students. These students are continuously enhancing and improving both their English and their native language skills. Assessment results for language minority children are, therefore, greatly influenced by time. Results obtained at initial assessment must lead to appropriately sequenced, and more frequent, follow-up assessments.

Policy and Practice Implications for Special Education

1. Special education instructional adaptations must also include adaptations appropriate for students of different cultures and languages. This is a unique and, at this time, relatively rare response on the part of special education instructional personnel. As the percentage of language and cultural minority students within special education programs increases, special education cannot remain truly special without these particular adaptations.
2. The findings of these studies highlight the critical need for personnel with specialized language skills to help with the adaptation and/or instructional process for language minority students placed in special education. Special education must have bilingual special education personnel available to serve language minority students, or, at the very least, special educators trained in English-as-a-second-language instructional techniques. Institutions of higher education must train such professionals.
3. The education profession is limited in the number of bilingual personnel and language specialists also trained as special educators. Therefore, it is particularly critical at the level of practice that special education utilize, within instructional, assessment, and decisioning processes, educational specialists from other program areas, specifically bilingual education. The integration of these complementary disciplines becomes critical to appropriate assessment, placement, and instruction for handicapped language minority students.

Policy and Practice Implications for Regular Education

1. The mismatch between instructional needs of the language minority child and the general educational system at this time destines many language minority students to a general lack of achievement, not necessarily indicative of a need or requirement for special education services. There must be universal policy statements articulating that responding to this general lack of achievement is not the exclusive responsibility of the special education system.
2. In order to enhance the probability of accurate identification and placement of language minority students into special education, regular education must institute prereferral processes which give the system the opportunity to adapt instructional programming to the language minority student. Certain models (Adelman, 1970; Ortiz & Garcia, see Chapter 2) hold promise for the regular educator in this critical area of practice.
3. Regular education must more clearly define and make more generally available to teachers and others in the system the criteria to be applied when placing language minority students

in special education. Understanding of these criteria are critical to preventing inappropriate allocation of special education resources to the student who is not, in fact, handicapped.

4. Regular educators must make generally available to the regular education system information which describes the developmental stages for second language acquisition. Information about other student characteristics such as culture and socioeconomic status, which influence student behavior and which can be inaccurately interpreted as deviant, should also be part of the knowledge base of regular educators.

Finally, research and development efforts must focus upon the development of instruments and procedures appropriate for second language learners. Demographic data suggest that the need for such assessment tools will increase, rather than diminish, in the future.

The findings and effects of the studies reported must be viewed as formative for special educators. These findings are presented in order to raise points of concern and issues of policy and to point the direction of future practice for special education personnel.

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