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ABSTRACT

A study compared two methods for assessing English proficiency of limited-English-proficient school-age children, for purposes of placement in bilingual and monolingual education programs. The two instruments used were the Idea Oral Language Proficiency Test (forms C and D) (IPT), which assesses oral English proficiency, and the Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey-English (WMLS), which tests cognitive academic language proficiency. Subjects were 20 language-minority children, 11 in kindergarten and 9 in third grade. Tests were individually administered. Results indicate no significant difference in English oral language proficiency scores on the two tests for either grade level. However, overall, more students were designated at lower proficiency levels on the WMLS than on the IPT, suggesting that IPT scores may place more students in bilingual classrooms than in monolingual classrooms. Implications for placement, instruction, and provision of services are discussed briefly. Contains 26 references. (MSE)

# *Assessing Language Proficiency Levels*

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*A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty*

*of*

*California State University, Hayward*

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*In Partial Fulfillment*

*of the Requirements for the Degree*

*Master of Science in Education*

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*By*

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*June, 1998*

*Assessing Language Proficiency Levels*

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*Approved:* *Date:*

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*First giving honor to GOD, I dedicate this accomplishment to my aunt, who raised me like one of her own children. Her wisdom and guidance has instilled in me an everlasting thirst for knowledge and righteousness.*

*I would like to thank Dr. Alvin Jones and Dr. Donald Brown for giving me the opportunity to participate in the Educational and Psychological studies program with the best and brightest professors and classmates.*

*Special thanks to Dr. Bonnie Ho, Jennifer Rodriguez Roberts, and the principal, teachers, and students in the East Palo Alto Charter School for making this study possible. I am my daughters mother. Alana I love you. Thanks you Mike for loving me, and our new family.*

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Statement of problem

The purpose of this investigation was to explore the differences in identification for bilingual educational placement between an instrument that assess English oral language proficiency, and an instrument that assess cognitive academic language proficiency. Students classified as possessing limited English proficiency were tested for cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in order to see which measure was more effective for identification, placement and eligibility for monolingual instructions in English.

### Background of Problem

The selection of an instrument used to determine if language minority school-age children were eligible for monolingual services in English has been widely debated among speech, language diagnosticians, and multidisciplinary teams. Test used to assess basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) provided classifications based on surface fluency and a false conception of the level a student's academically related language proficiency (Cummins, 1984).

*Given the difficulties in identifying LEP students, and the lack of agreement among theorist on a definition of language proficiency, the role of context in language proficiency has been the focus of research for many years in the assessment of language minorities.*

*In the assessment of LEP students, it was suggested that in order to understand and judiciously use language assessment, it was necessary to clarify: (a) what it meant to be proficient, (b) what the variables were that influenced language usage during communicative interaction, and (c) how these variables should be incorporated in the development of language measures (Langdon, 1989; Rivera & Simich, 1981).*

*Researchers have agreed that language proficiency was a crucial factor in school assessment across the spectrum. However, within the past 30 years no clearly defined literature, or theoretical construct on the measurement of "language proficiency" per se: primary language, or first language proficiency has been reported. In other words, researchers do not yet know how to measure the extent to which one of the languages of a bilingual student influences the other, or even how to describe bilingual competence. Whether the theoretical issue was explicitly addressed as construct validity, or*

was approached less directly, there was a serious need for a defensible theory that would also define and determine an appropriate approach to assessment (Bachman, 1989; Cummins, 1981; Krashen, 1982; Oller, 1983b).

Subsequently, theorist suggested when preparing to evaluate a LEP student, a theoretical foundation was needed. And if language ability was the central focus, then a theory of language proficiency was necessary for every test developed. Therefore, theory would determine what type of test to use, how and where to do the testing or observation, and how to interpret the results.

According to Cronbach and Meehl (1955), a person who possessed a certain ability (defined by a theoretical construct) could be expected to perform, at a given level, a range of task with a certain probability. Additionally, where ever a construct failed to predict accurately, it should be modified. Whereby each construct then acted as a part of a theory of cognition and behavior, and must be sustained by experience or revised.

The empirical study of language proficiency remained undeveloped until the 1960s, when second language testing forced the issue (Carrol, 1961; Lado, 1961; Valette, 1964; 1967). During the 1960s, language proficiency was regarded as a construct in its own right and the need

for a theory began to focus. It was more than a decade later that language testing research flourished and new techniques were explored. Subsequently, old techniques were tested experimentally for the first time, and new theoretical issues were raised.

Roughly, from 1960 until the present, various theories of language proficiency were proposed. All aimed to describe the organization of language abilities and their manifestation in language use (Spolsky, 1968b; Carrol, 1961; 1983b). These various theories have been classified according to three ways of viewing language proficiency: discrete point, integrative, and pragmatic approaches. After years of reviewing research literature, Carrol, Sang, and Vollmer (1983) suggested that no one of these theories of language was adequate to meet educators' everyday requirements.

Hayaman and Damico (1991) indicated that the term language proficiency had theoretical and practical usage. Theoretical usage referred to one's underlying capacity to handle language ability in general, regardless of the language spoken. The practical usage of the term referred to the degree of control one had over the language in question, and focused on four skill areas of

*language ability: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In addition, these skills were interrelated in that the ability to comprehend oral language was related to the ability to speak that language. And similarly, how well a person wrote a language varied as a function of how well one performed in reading it. For example, a student could develop oral proficiency in a second language without having skills in that language.*

*The effectiveness of the delivery of services has been debated in educational services over the years. A national study of services to students with limited English proficiency commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education found that schools employed a wide range of criteria and evaluation procedures for initial identification, for assignment to a specific service, and for termination of services (Fleischman and Hopstck, 1993). Overall, the study reported: 1) a lack of standardized assessment procedures nationally; 2) differences in types of assessment methods used based on the number of LEP students in the district;*

and 3) differences in the amount of assessment information gathered by districts based on the percentages of students with limited English proficiency who were in programs supported by federal and state funding.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, several lawsuits which involved linguistically diverse students in schools surfaced. For instance, one was Lau v. Nicols (1974). In this class action suit, it was charged that LEP Chinese American students were being denied an education because they were not receiving special English instruction from bilingual teachers. The Supreme Court ruled that the San Francisco school district had violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the HEW's 1970 regulating guideline that addressed discrimination due to language.

According to Hayaman and Damico (1991) this class action lawsuit and subsequent ones (e.g. Keyes v Denver in 1981 and Rios v Reed in 1978) established bilingual education in the U.S. from the judicial perspective. More importantly, the Lau remedies focused on the identification of linguistically diverse students, assessments of their language proficiency, and academic

performance, and placement in appropriate educational programs that usually involved bilingual instructional strategies.

Significance of the study

Researchers have understood for sometime that language proficiency was at the heart of any valid assessment test or procedure. Because of its importance to language acquisition and language use in general, school personnel and multidisciplinary teams must be aware of the issues associated with language proficiency testing. The lack of uniformity in measuring language proficiency could lead to confusion in the field, and could also hold negative consequences for LEP students rather than providing the benefits evaluators would expect.

Ascher (1997) indicated that an awareness of language policy and bilingual education was important. Subsequently, the American Educational Research Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education (1985) have proposed guidelines for testing language minorities. The standards for educational and psychological testing included warnings that the reliability and validity of test could be undermined by

*language differences; that administering an English language test to non-English proficient students would assess only English language proficiency, not subject domain; that translating test into a student's native language could subvert the tests' reliability: and that English language proficiency should be determined by more than a multiple choice paper-and pencil test.*

*Moreover, the study suggested that assessment instruments must test what they purport to test. Test must be consistent regardless of who administers the test, or when the test is given.*
*And that it was not sufficient for educators and testing specialist to rely on educational and psychological test alone for any placement or instructional decision.*

*Definition of Terms*

*Language-Minority Students*

*A language- minority student could come from a home where English was never spoken, or share a household where one parent has spoken a language other than English. Language-minority students could be bilingual, English monolingual, or limited-English proficient. Therefore, language-minority students had a language other than English spoken in their home background.*

Moreover, school districts have identified language-minority students as a first step to identify LEP students. In many California districts, the Home Language survey has been used to identify these students. Tests used for classification of language proficiency levels could then be administered.

Language Proficiency

Some theorist suggested that a single factor underlies language proficiency. Other theorist indicated that the theory of language proficiency involved a number of separate abilities. The latter theory has been more widely accepted. Thus, it could be possible for a LEP student to have spoken fluently in a second language, and not have the ability to read and write well in that second language.

Cummins (1984) was credited with formalizing a distinction between these two aspects of language proficiency. He described the first one as Basic Interpersonal Communication skills (BICS), or verbal communication skills developed and used in everyday social interactions. He described the other aspect of language proficiency as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), or a type of language facility

developed through, and needed for success in, formal classroom settings. This study used Cummin's BICS/CALP distinction to define language proficiency.

According to Cummins, task in school lacked the clues that promote understanding in day-to-day situations (e.g. facial expression, concrete-objects, gestures, etc.,). And that these school-related context reduced task presented difficulties to students who lacked CALP.

Cummin's framework for language proficiency pointed out the special requirements of classroom situations. Ironically, students who appeared proficient in English in the schoolyard, would lack the language skills needed to function in the classroom. Therefore, individuals responsible for selecting an appropriate language proficiency test yielded important programming ramifications.

Limited-English Proficient students

Definitions of the term "limited-English-proficient" could vary from district to district, as well as the measure or instrument used to assess proficiency. For the purpose of this study, LEP students were identified as those students who possessed insufficient English speaking competence needed in English only classrooms.

# CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

The literature associated with language proficiency was extensive and investigated many aspects of its complexity. This review focused on language assessment of students who were linguistically diverse. The areas to be considered included: 1. an overview of three theoretical paradigms of language testing; 2. a review of empirical research with language assessment procedures and the effectiveness of these test; 3. a review of a frequently used English oral language proficiency test; and 4. a review of a new language screening test.

### Historical Background

Different theoretical perspectives and definitions, as well as assessment procedures have emerged over three decades of study regarding ways of viewing language proficiency. The various theories were classed in three ways: discrete point, integrative, and pragmatic approaches. Discrete point theory was based on the hypotheses that language proficiency could be divided into distinct bits and pieces.

*That perspective was introduced by John B. Carroll (1961) and best exemplified by Lado (1961).*

*Moreover, historically language was seen from the structuralist viewpoint. Roughly, from 1933 through 1955 linguist were primarily interested in writing the grammar of language. American structuralist viewed language and other human abilities as conglomerations of many distinguishable elements that pertained to components of language ability. According to such a perspective, language proficiency, consisted of separable components of phonology, morphology, lexicon and syntax. Furthermore, these components were broken down to words, phonemes, morphemes, syllables, and so on.*

*Lado (1961) suggested that test items should focus on only one element of one domain and skill at a time. And that a test could not be valid if it mixed several skills or domains of structure. Moreover, the discrete point model was essentially assessment that involved the evaluation of each of the domains of structure and each of the skills of interest. Whereby, the results could be combined to form a total picture of language proficiency.*

Oller Jr. and Damico (1991) indicated that the discrete point theory was more of an ideology perspective, rather than a practical one. Had it been influenced by empirical evidence, adjustments would have been made. And that, in practice, researchers found it difficult and sometimes impossible to restrict or isolate performance to a single skill, or distinguish domains of grammar as exact as the theory required. For instance, writing almost inevitably involved reading, just as speaking involved listening. Nevertheless, the demand for test purporting to meet the discrete point perspective were produced in abundance.

Nelson (1986) and other critics argued that measures of language proficiency were not necessarily assessments of simple linguistic features of language, but involved an evaluation of actual functional usage. Some believed that functional language use required the complex ability to integrate linguistic rules with higher order rules systems related to interpersonal communication, sociolinguistic considerations of the situation, and other pragmatic features.

Discrete point language test have been used consistently in most academic second language and

*bilingual instructional settings since the 1960s, and continued to dominate the commercial market in later years. Other researchers, (Day, McCollum, Cieslak, & Ericson 1981) disagreed in their research findings that the structural viewpoint of second language acquisition was merely being the result of habit formation, and that responses to a written exam would generalize to verbal skills.*

*Moreover, they argued that an excellent score on a discrete point test in and of itself was not a valid predictor of a speakers's communicative competence. Additionally, discrete point test might adequately measure a student's abstract knowledge of a second language and indicated the need for remediation of reading and writing skills. However, they did not necessarily adequately assess a student's oral proficiency or ability to communicate in a second language.*

*Subsequently, Oller, Jr. and Damico (1991) amplified that discrete point elements of distinct domains of language structure were valuable as objects of analysis, but without context, the elements themselves became undefinable fictions.*

It was Carroll (1961) who introduced the term "discrete point"; and also Carroll who referred to another kind of test aimed towards more global properties of language ability: which he called the integrative approach. Carroll commented on the artificial character of the discrete point approach when professionals involved in language testing had begun to share their frustrations and dissatisfaction with discrete point test scores as valid predictors of a student's ability to function in second language. The disenchantment with discrete point test led Carroll to the development of assessing second language oral performance in contrast to testing the discrete points of language structure via an oral or written approach.

Oller (1973) hoped that integrative tests of language proficiency would reveal more about a student's underlying total competence that the tests that measured awareness of the various units of language. The integrative approach viewed language proficiency as a composite construct with holistic qualities that could not be assessed adequately except in a rich context of discourse. Pushing this notion led to the idea of hypotheses that language proficiency might not be

*decomposable at all and that it could be assessed with nearly equal validity in a variety of ways.*

*Throughout the 1970's, the integrative theory was the simplest conceivable possibility, in contrast to the discrete point theory. As empirical research accumulated during these years so did the extreme versions of the integrative theory. It was apparent that some of the research based on the unitary factor hypotheses was wrong. And soon research findings established that language proficiency involved a variety of components that might be viewed in many different ways (Bachman, 1989; Bachman & Palmer, 1983; Carroll, 1983a; Upshur & Homburg, 1983).*

*While discrete point test aimed at one skill, or a single element of one component of grammar, integrated tests required the usage of many elements and more than one component and skill simultaneously. The later approach was viewed as being more consistent with the way language was actually used and yielded more valid measurements of language proficiency (Oller, 1973; Sommers, Erdige, & Peterson, 1978; Spolsky, 1986a; Upshur, 1967; Valette, 1964).*

Carroll (1961), Rand (1976), and Farhady (1983a) suggested that the dichotomy-discrete point versus integrative formed a continuum whose end points were fully distinct only in theory. Therefore, in practice, there were no completely discrete point test of items. And that all real test items were more or less integrative in character. It was this theoretical discovery that inevitably led to a search of a different kind of distinction that would be based on deeper levels of language processing, rather than the surface appearance of test or items.

A variety of alternative theoretical approaches between discrete items and holistic integrative testing were perceived throughout the 1980's. One of them was called the pragmatic approach. The pragmatic theory aimed to absorb the best of both discrete point and integrative ideas, and at the same time defined a much clearer line between them. Shrider (1981) indicated that studies done during this time attempted to describe the kind of competence involved in getting at the full meaning of utterances in context beginning with the literal meaning intended by the knowledge of grammar and moving towards a broader framework. In addition,

pragmatic tests and language test in general were used primarily for diagnostic and placement purposes. More specifically, they were used to determine the dominant language of a child and to assess the child's competence in a given language or languages.

A review of empirical Oral Language Proficiency studies and their findings

Oral language proficiency test were traced back as far as the late 1950s. Some interesting mixtures of discrete point and integrative oral language instruments have been reported as well as their effectiveness.

An examination of subscales and how they were used to describe oral language proficiency was conducted by Schrank, Fletcher, and Alvarado (1996). The test studied included the Language Assessment Scale (LAS; Devilla & Duncan, 1991), the Idea Oral Language Proficiency Test (IPT-I, Ballard, Tighe, and Dalton, 1989), and the Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery-Revised (WLPB; Woodcock 1991). The validity of the three English oral language proficiency test was examined in terms of Cummin's (1984) BICS/CALP distinction. This investigation addressed the issue of validity by comparing the test to one another in terms of what each measures.

Schrank, Fletcher, and Alvarado conducted a concurrent validity study with 77 kindergarten LEP students in Tucson, Arizona. The students were administered the English and Spanish forms of the survey, the Pre-LAS and the WLPB-R. In addition, the students were also rated by their teachers in both languages using the Language Rating Scale (LRS). The highest correlation of the Survey Oral Language Cluster with the LRS, Pre-Las, and the WLPB-R were with the Pre-LAS total (English =.97, Spanish =.93) and the WLPB-R Oral Language Cluster (English =.97, Spanish =.95). The English WLPB-R correlated .90 with the Pre-LAS total. The Spanish Pre-LAS correlated .85 with the Spanish WLPB-R. The WLPB-R showed the strongest correlation with the teacher's rating of language proficiency (LRS).

Furthermore, Alvarado (1991) presented a concurrent validity study that involved 120 Grade 2 LEP students in the Houston and Pasadena, Texas area. The students were assessed on both the English and Spanish forms of the WLPB-R, LAS-O (Form C) and the IPT-I (the Spanish correlation was not included in this analysis). The total test correlations for the Grade 2 sample showed evidence of concurrent validity (each .86). Additionally,

correlations among the LAS and WLPB-R were derived to determine whether or not the subtest from these two batteries were measuring similar or dissimilar aspects of language proficiency. The IPT-I did not provide subtest information.

The English subtest correlations for the kindergarten sample reported the WLPB-R Oral Language subtests ranged from .56 to .86 with a median correlation of .72. Correlations among the LAS subtest ranged from .55 to .93. Moreover, correlations for the Grade 2 sample among the WLPB-R Oral language subtests ranged from .76 to .90, and the LAS subtests ranged from .39 to .95. Overall, the test correlation from the study obtained evidence of concurrent validity among the three test.

In a similar study, Woodcock & Sandoval (1993) reported a special Grade 3 study directed by Karen Erkel. A sample of 39 students were selected from three English-as-a-Second-Language classrooms in the southern Los Angeles area. The subjects were administered the oral language tests of the survey, the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals-Revised (CELF-R) (Semel, Wiig & Secord, 1987), the Idea Oral Language Proficiency Test I-

English (IPT-I), and the Oral Language cluster of the WLPB-R. The CELF-R, IPT-I, and the WLPB-R Oral Language total scores reported the highest correlations between the Survey Oral Language Cluster and all other English measures in the study (.82, .85, and .95 respectively). In addition, the students' scores on the IPT-I were expressed as a fluency in English classifications: non-English speaking (NES), limited English speaking (LEP), and fluent English speaking (FEP), and analyzed by the Rasch program which provided a total W score for each subject. The IPT-I W score (.85) reported a higher correlation than the IPT-I classification levels.

Idea Oral Language Proficiency Test

Oral language proficiency test were frequently used in most academic second language and bilingual instructional settings. It has been generally agreed by researchers that identifying the primary language and assessing the relative English and native language proficiency of students who were linguistically diverse would be necessary if effective educational instruction were to follow. However, eligibility decisions have often been misinformed because they were based on information from norm-referenced instruments that were

not appropriate for assessing students who were linguistically diverse. For example, placement in specific programs were determined by traditional assessment of oral language proficiency that yielded measures of English performance (Hayes-Brown, 1984).

The most popular language proficiency test were constructed using the discrete point approach (Damico, 1991; Mattes & Omark, 1984). However, the poor technical adequacy (low reliability and validity) of many of these tests continued to be a serious concern (Rueda, 1989; Willig, 1986). Additionally, it was argued that oral language proficiency test inadequately measure a students cognitive academic language proficiency that was necessary to read, write, and do arithmetic.

Ballard, Tighe, and Dalton (1980) designed the Idea Oral Language Proficiency Test- English (IPT-I) for the initial identification of LEP students. The test measured the competencies necessary for language minority students to function successfully in mainstream classrooms, and to assess four basic areas of English oral language proficiency: vocabulary, comprehension, syntax, and verbal expressions.

The IPT-I manual presented total scores for designation of students into three categories: NES, LES, and FES.

Cook (1995) indicated that the IPT-I forms C and D aimed to determine the level of English language proficiency as related to the acceptable levels designated to place students in the appropriate classroom settings. Additionally, the test was designed for students in kindergarten through grade 6. The forms were parallel tests that measured the correctness, and appropriateness, of items through syntax, morphological structure, lexical content, and phonological structure. Students were tested individually.

Moreover the IPT-I manual presented evidence of concurrent validity as established through a study of teacher rating of oral language proficiency and IPT-I results. In this study, there were thirty-three school districts reported as having participated in field test, and reliability and validity have been supported by these field test.

In the late 1980s, it was apparent that reading and writing tests were needed to accompany tests developed especially for language minority students, in order to provide a comprehensive language proficiency test. Thus,

the authors of the IPT-I began work on a reading and writing test that, together with the IPT-I Oral Test, that would provide comprehensive assessment for the initial identification and redesignation of LEP students.

The IPT-R & W manual presented five parts to assess different domains in reading: vocabulary, vocabulary in context, reading for understanding, reading for life skills, and language use. Moreover, the writing test consisted of three parts to assess different domains of writing: conventions, write a story, and write your own story. The IPT-R & W Test was a group administered standardized test for LEP students. The reading and writing tests are not timed. However, the reading test was estimated to take from 45-70 minutes to administer based on information provided from the pilot and field testing. The writing test was estimated to take from 50-80 minutes.

Brown (1995) presented three levels of difficulty in the series of tests: Level 1 for grades two and three; Level 2 for grades four, five, and six; and Level 3 for grades 7-12. A Form A and a Form B were used with each of these levels in order to provide alternate forms. Levels 1A and 2A were administered in three schools to

143 students in grades 2 and 3 and grades 4 to 6. Tests 3A and 3B were administered in 13 schools to 117 students in grades 7 to 12.

Reliability of the writing subtest based on interrater correlation ranged between (.90 to .98), and exact agreement between rates (79% to 86%). Cronbach alpha reliabilities were also reported. The alpha's for total Reading scores were .95, .91, .90, and .96 for the 1A, 2A, 3A, and 3B tests, respectively.

Concurrent validity was explored by examining the correlations of reading test percentile scores with the California Test of Basic Skills percentile scores at each grade level. These coefficients averaged .76 for the 1A and 2A tests, and .53 for the 3A and 3B tests. Overall, in conjunction with the IPT-I, the reading and writing tests were presented as useful tools for making placement decisions for LEP students.

Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey

A new language survey was constructed by Woodcock and Munoz-Sandoval (1993), the Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey. This screening instrument has been designed to aid in placement services for English second language (ESL) learners. The survey manual presented two

surveys: the Woodcock-Munoz- English (LS-E) and the Woodcock Munoz Language Survey-Spanish (LS-S) designed for providing a broad sample of proficiency in oral language, reading, and writing, and language competence (Broad English Ability, Broad Spanish Ability).

The LS-E and the LS-S were primarily designed to measure cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1984) in English and Spanish. These tests were specifically designed to provide a sound procedure for determining cutoff points for five suggested levels of CALP in individuals aged 48 months and older. These levels were presented as: Level 5, Advanced English or Spanish CALP; Level 4, Fluent English of Spanish CALP; Level 3, Limited English proficient, Level 2, Very limited English or Spanish CALP; Level 1, Negligible English or Spanish CALP.

Kao (1997) indicated that the language survey was an integral part of the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Revised (WJ-R) (Woodcock and Johnson, 1989) and the Bateria Woodcock Psico-Educativa en Espanol [(Bateria)] (Woodcock, 1982).

He also described the four subtest; Verbal Analogies, Letter-Word Identification, Picture Vocabulary, and Dictation, which were included in the WJ-R and Bateria.

Moreover, the Verbal Analogies test required the examinee to say a word that completed a logical relationship of a concept when three or more other words were provided. For example, "a fish swims, a bird flies." The Letter-Word Identification test required the examine to read words that were presented one at a time. The Picture Vocabulary test required the examinee to name or identify the object in each item question. And lastly, in the dictation test, the examinee was required to respond to measures of handwriting readiness (e.g. drawing lines), punctuation, spelling, word usage and capitalization by writing out the answer.

Crocker (1997) indicated that the scores were reported in a variety of ways (e.g.age equivalents, grade equivalents, relative proficiency indices, percentile ranks, NCEs, and W scores were based on Rasch logits). CALP scores were based on W score differences between the English and Spanish versions. The range of CALP scores were associated with CALP levels.

Summary

Considerable controversies surrounded language proficiency testing. From numerous studies and findings over the past 30 years, researchers agreed that language proficiency was the central focus for any valid assessment procedure or test. However, the lack of agreement among theorist on a definition of language proficiency, and a theory of what language proficiency warranted further research. In addition to the development of multidimensional theories that could explain how linguistically diverse students learn and develop cognitive, linguistic and social areas. Thus, these theories would serve as a basis for constructing valid and reliable assessment instruments.

Surprisingly, no clearly defined literature on the measurement of language proficiency were presented. Due to the lack of methodological, educational, and theoretical problems, educators faced complex decisions when they assessed, diagnosed, and placed students who were linguistically diverse. Moreover, the literature suggested that when norm-referenced tests were used for placement, and instruction of linguistically diverse students, they should be judiciously applied. And that

testing specialist should never use one single test alone for any placement or instructional decision, even with students who were proficient in English.

The research literature to date has focused on the issues of misplacement and misdiagnosis of students who were linguistically diverse based on inappropriate language assessment. As cited earlier, one of the areas of concern in language proficiency was that the lack of uniformity in measuring language proficiency could lead to confusion in the field.

# CHAPTER 3

## DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

### Specific Statement of Problem

The purpose of this investigation was to explore the differences in identification for bilingual educational placement between an instrument that assess English oral language proficiency, and an instrument that assess cognitive academic language proficiency. Students classified as possessing limited English proficiency were tested for cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in order to see which measure was more effective for identification, placement, and eligibility for monolingual instructions in English.

### Hypothesis Tested

There will be no significant difference in levels of English oral language proficiency scores on the IPT-I form C and the WMLS obtained by kindergarten language minority students.

There will be no significant difference in levels of English oral language proficiency scores on the IPT-I form D and the WMLS obtained by third grade language minority students.

*General Methodology*

*This investigation used the Fisher's Exact Test (2 tail) for analyzing the combined frequency distribution scores obtained by students who were administered two language proficiency test. The Fisher's Exact test is a nonparametric statistical test which analyzes the combined frequency distributions for small samples.*

*Moreover, a difference analysis by grade was performed on the Statistical Analysis System (SAS). First, the number of children in grade K who were FES and took the IPI-I form C was entered into the program, followed by the number of children who were LES and NES and took the IPT-I. Then the number of students who were FES and took the WMLS was entered into the program, followed by the number of students who were LES and NES and took the WMLS. Furthermore, this procedure was repeated to enter the frequency scores for third graders who were FES, LES, and NES and took both the IPT-I form D and the WMLS. After all the data was entered a frequency analysis command was selected using the exact test analysis by grade to obtain a difference analysis by grade.*

For the purpose of this study, the levels of English oral proficiency were designated into three categories: Fluent English Speaking (FES), Limited English speaking (LES), and Non-English speaking (NES). Therefore, the cutoff levels for CALP were combined as follows: Levels 1 and 2 were combined and designated as (LES). Levels 4 and 5 were combined and designated as (FES).

During the Spring of 1998, the investigator was granted permission to obtain IPT scores for kindergarten through six grade students from the principal of the East Palo Alto Charter School. This list consisted of all students identified as having a primary language other than English from home surveys and school enrollment forms. Based on the scores reported the majority of kindergarten and third grade students had been tested. Therefore, these two grade levels were selected.

The sample consisted of forty language minority students. In April, these students were briefed by their respective teacher regarding the nature of the study, and given a permission slip to participate in the study. From those student who returned their permission slips, 20 students participated. Each subject was administered the WMLS over a period of two weeks.

*Sample*

*The initial sample consisted of 11 kindergarten and 9 third grade language minority students in the EPA Charter School. The testing schedule was determined by each respective teacher and the investigator. As a consequence, the subjects were individually administered the test in a quiet room which had been designated as an area for students to receive resource tutoring, and testing services. Upon prior approval from the principal. The investigator received approval to occupy the room between 10 and 11:30 a.m. daily, until all students had been tested. The investigator would escort each subject from class over to the testing area, and then back to class. Testing for all subjects generally took 15 to 20 minutes.*

*Table 1:*

*Number of Subjects by Grade Level*

| *Grade* | *Subjects* |
|---|---|
| *kindergarten* | *11* |
| *third* | *9* |

*Instrumentation*

*The two instruments used to assess levels of language proficiency were the Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey-English (WMLS) and the Idea Oral Language Proficiency Test (IPT-I) forms C and D. Although both of these instruments contained English and Spanish subtest, only the English versions were used in this study.*

*The Comprehensive Manual (Woodcock & Munoz-Sandoval, 1993) reported that the English language survey (LS-E) was normed on 6,359 subjects aged from 2 to 90+ years old. In their design, the sampling technique controlled for census region, community size, gender, ethnicity, educational levels which were adjusted in order to be consistent in proportion with the U.S. population.*

*According to the manual, reliability for CALP scores were based on discrepancy of performance between the English and Spanish versions. And CALP Level classifications were based on W score differences. The authors reported different standard errors of measurement for different score ranges within each subtest, but not for CALP scores. Thus, reliability of classification into the five proficiency levels were not addressed.*

However, measures of CALP based on Cummin's (1984a, 1984b), as cited in the manual, were more relevant than measures of BICS, rendering surface fluency misleading as an overall indication of predictor of an individuals ability in the assessment of language proficiency in academic situations. And, that the intent of the WMLS was to assess a subject's proficiency with cognitively demanding and context-reduced language.

Moreover, estimates of the four subtest and three broad language clusters were reported across several selected age groups such as 4, 6, 9, 13, 18, 30-39, and 70-79 years old. Coefficients generally fell in the .80s and .90s range for the subtest and the low .90s for the clusters.

Additionally, the manual presented empirical evidence from seven studies which were sketchily described and difficult to summarize.

According to Crocker (1997), the content validity section were referred to an earlier section in the manual where item selection was briefly described. Criterion-Related validity evidence was limited to examination of correlation with other test scores from various small-scale studies.

*Construct validity evidence was offered in the form of correlations among subtests.*

*The WMLS was designed to provide a specific procedure used to determine cutoff points for five levels of academic language proficiency, or CALP. Moreover, the survey consisted of four subtests: Picture Vocabulary, Verbal Analogies, Letter-Word Identification, and Dictation. However, for the purpose of this study, only the Picture Vocabulary and the Verbal Analogies subtests were administered by the practitioner to obtain CALP levels for subjects. The survey required individual administration, which generally took about 10 to 15 minutes for the examinee to complete both subtest. A raw score was determined for each subtest by totaling the number of correct responses. The total raw score for each test was then converted to a W score. Once the W scores were calculated and entered into a computer scoring program, the appropriate CALP levels were obtained for each subject. The following CALP levels were used for this study:*

*Level 5: Advanced English CALP*

*Level 4: Fluent English CALP*

*Level 3: Limited English Proficiency*

*Level 2: Very Limited English CALP*

*Level 1: Negligible English CALP*

*The Idea Oral Language Proficiency Test (IPT-I) forms C and D consisted of four parts designed to assess areas of English oral language proficiency: Vocabulary, Verbal expression, Comprehension, and Syntax. The instrument had a wide range of items to such as the ability to state name and age, identify common modes of transportation and household items, and identify common food, clothing, and animals.*

*Two trained personnel from the East Palo Alto Charter School administered the IPT-I test during the Fall of 1998 ( September, October, November) to all students who were identified as having a primary home language other than English on school enrollment forms and home language surveys. They were assessed for English and Spanish language proficiency using the IPT-I forms C and D (levels of Spanish proficiency were not included in this analysis). After the testing was completed, students were designated levels of English oral language proficiency classified by the IPT-I manual.*

*The IPT-I manual presented evidence of concurrent validity as established through a study of teacher rating of oral language proficiency and IPT-I results. The IPT-I yielded a total score for designation of students into three categories: NES. LES, and FES. However, according to Cook (1995), the major difficulty of the test is interpreting the tables, as cited in the manual, on the various empirical studies mentioned.*

# Chapter 4

## RESULTS

The hypothesis were tested in null form and significance was determined by alpha level .05.

Findings

Hypothesis: There will be no significant difference in levels of English oral language proficiency scores on the IPT-I form C and the WMLS obtained by kindergarten language minority students ($p > .07$).

There will be no significant difference in levels of English oral language proficiency scores on the IPT-I form D and the WMLS obtained by third grade language minority students ($p > .637$).

It was found that no significant difference existed between the type of test given and the levels of English oral proficiency for the two grade levels. Therefore, the null hypotheses was not rejected.

GRADE=3

TABLE OF LLEVEL BY TESTTYPE

LLEVEL TESTTYPE

| Frequency<br>Percent<br>Row Pct<br>Col Pct | IPT | WMLS | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| FES | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| | 11.11 | 0.00 | 11.11 |
| | 100.00 | 0.00 | |
| | 22.22 | 0.00 | |
| LES | 4 | 5 | 9 |
| | 22.22 | 27.78 | 50.00 |
| | 44.44 | 55.56 | |
| | 44.44 | 55.56 | |
| NES | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| | 16.67 | 22.22 | 38.89 |
| | 42.86 | 57.14 | |
| | 33.33 | 44.44 | |
| Total | 9 | 9 | 18 |
| | 50.00 | 50.00 | 100.00 |

STATISTICS FOR TABLE OF LLEVEL BY TESTTYPE

| Statistic | DF | Value | Prob |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 2 | 2.254 | 0.324 |
| Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square | 2 | 3.027 | 0.220 |
| Mantel-Haenszel Chi-Square | 1 | 1.117 | 0.291 |
| Fisher's Exact Test (2-Tail) | | | 0.637 |
| Phi Coefficient | | 0.354 | |
| Contingency Coefficient | | 0.334 | |
| Cramer's V | | 0.354 | |

Sample Size = 18

WARNING: 100% of the cells have expected counts less than 5. Chi-Square may not be a valid test.

GRADE=K

TABLE OF LLEVEL BY TESTTYPE

LLEVEL TESTTYPE

| Frequency<br>Percent<br>Row Pct<br>Col Pct | IPT | WMLS | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| FES | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | 9.09 | 4.55 | 13.64 |
| | 66.67 | 33.33 | |
| | 18.18 | 9.09 | |
| LES | 1 | 6 | 7 |
| | 4.55 | 27.27 | 31.82 |
| | 14.29 | 85.71 | |
| | 9.09 | 54.55 | |
| NES | 8 | 4 | 12 |
| | 36.36 | 18.18 | 54.55 |
| | 66.67 | 33.33 | |
| | 72.73 | 36.36 | |
| Total | 11 | 11 | 22 |
| | 50.00 | 50.00 | 100.00 |

STATISTICS FOR TABLE OF LLEVEL BY TESTTYPE

| Statistic | DF | Value | Prob |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 2 | 5.238 | 0.073 |
| Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square | 2 | 5.661 | 0.059 |
| Mantel-Haenszel Chi-Square | 1 | 0.759 | 0.384 |
| Fisher's Exact Test (2-Tail) | | | 0.077 |
| Phi Coefficient | | 0.488 | |
| Contingency Coefficient | | 0.439 | |
| Cramer's V | | 0.488 | |

Sample Size = 22

WARNING: 67% of the cells have expected counts less than 5. Chi-Square may not be a valid test.

*Interpretations*

*The statistical results suggested that there was no significant differences in levels of English proficiency for the two grade levels. Overall, a higher number of students were designated at lower levels of oral proficiency on the WMLS than the IPT-I.*

*As a consequence, the results of this study could make high stakes effecting the decisions about programs of instruction in which a child could be best suited to learn. For example, IPT scores for kindergarten subjects would place twice as many students in bilingual designated classrooms based on the number of students who were NES.*

*Moreover, five times as many students were designated as LES on the WMLS than the IPT for kindergarten subjects. Subsequently, fewer subjects would be eligible for bilingual instructions and tutoring services for limited English proficient students based on the subjects IPT levels.*

*Furthermore, these results could lead to incorrect placement decisions, denial of services, or failure to succeed with language-related academic learning task. If oral language proficiency test were used to determine*

two of the subjects readiness for English-only instruction, according to the FES designations among third grade language minority subjects.

Although, there has been minimal research studies reported using the WMLS. Other similar studies have reported the validity of oral language proficiency test comparing one test to another in terms of what each measures. Their findings generally found evidence of concurrent validity.

Woodcock and Sandoval (1993) reported a special Grade 3 study in which 39 subjects were administered three oral language test, the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals-Revised (CELF-R), the Idea Language Proficiency Test (IPT-I), and the Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery-Revised (WLPB-R). Total scores reported correlations of .82, .85, .95 respectively.

Based on empirical studies within the last decade, educators might expect or assume that any one of the oral language proficiency test currently used in school settings would have similar results based on aspects of what each test has been designed to measure. However, this did not suggest that no dissimilar aspects existed among them.

*It could be that some English oral language test were more appropriate than another in terms of what the researcher or educator aimed to measure using these instruments.*

*In this study, overall levels of English oral language proficiency on the WMLS reported fewer subjects as possessing cognitive academic language skills necessary for success in English only classrooms. Therefore, more students would receive bilingual services based on these findings.*

# CHAPTER 5

## SUMMARY

### Conclusion

Results of this investigation concluded that no significant differences in obtained scores existed between the type of test instrument given and the levels of English oral language proficiency by the Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey (WMLS) and the Idea Oral Language Proficiency Test (IPT-I) forms C and D.

Moreover, data analysis indicated that a higher number of language minority students would be placed in bilingual classrooms based on designated lower levels of English CALP on the WMLS. Therefore, it was expected that if a student's language proficiency fell within limited or negligible levels, than he or she would experience difficulty with cognitive academic language demands in monolingual instructional situations.

### Limitations

This investigation had the following limitations:

The limitations of this study was that the levels of English proficiency obtained by the WMLS and the IPT-I forms C and D were limited to 11 kindergarten and 9 third- grade language minority students in one

*geographical area. In addition, the CALP levels designated by the WMLS were interpreted slightly different than the manual presented. Therefore, the adjustment of levels of proficiency may not be valid, and the different sample size by grade of unequal proportion could warrant differences within the groups.*

*Suggestions for Further Research*

*Further research should be conducted to examine the differences in levels of language proficiency obtained from the Spanish subtest of both the WMLS and the IPT. Moreover, this study could be conducted with a larger sample distributed over several grade levels, ages, and gender differences.*

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Los estudiantes que participen en este estudio podran proveer valiosos dicernimientos acerca del examen sobre la proficiencia del lenguaje oral, y tambien podran contribuir al adelantamiento de estudios para encontrar metodos aternativos que se puedan usar en el futuro para aumentar la habilidad en el lenguaje que es necesaria para obtener exito escolar. Aunque los riesgos son minimos, unos estudiantes pueden experimentar ansia o inquietud que normalmente son asociados con el tomar de examenes. La psicologa practicante escolar y el/la maestro/a estarán ahí listos para discutir estas ansiedades y tomarán toda precaución para asegurar el mínimo riesgo a su hijo/hija.

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_____
Nombre de el niño/la niña

_____ _____
Firma de padre/madre o persona responsable por el niño/la niña Fecha

Parent Informed Consent Form

This study is designed to investigate the validity of oral language proficiency resulting from scores on the Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey. The Idea Proficiency Test (IPT) is normally administered to all bilingual students in the Ravenswood Elementary School Distict. In addition, the Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey will be administered to your child. The additional testing will take approximately thirty-five to forty-five minutes to complete and will be done during the school day. The practitioner shall work with your child's teacher in determining a tentative testing date, once informed consent forms have been returned to school. Letters to parents will be sent to parents informing them of the test date.

Students participating in the study may provide valuable insights about oral language proficiency screening, as well as contribute to further studies in alternative assessment approaches used in the near future to improve the language skills necessary for educational success. While the risk is minimal, some students may experience some feelings of anxiety or jitters normally associated when taking a test. The practitioner and the teacher will be available to discuss any such discomforts, and every possible precaution will be taken to ensure the least minimal risk to the child.

All score reports used for the purpose of the study will be kept in the child's confidential cumulative folder in the school. Your child's name and other identifying information will be kept anonymous.

Inquiries about your child's rights in this study may be directed to the Office of the Vice President, Faculty Affairs and Research, California State University Hayward, Hayward, CA. 94542, (510) 885-3022.

---

I have read and understand the above description of the study and I voluntarily allow my child to participate. I understand that my child may withdraw from the study at any time and that all information will be kept confidential.

_____

Child's name

_____ _____

Parent or Guardian Signature Date

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# APPENDIX

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_____
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Firma de padre/madre o persona responsable por el niño/la niña Fecha

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