

**National Research Council
Committee on Developmental Outcomes and Assessments
for Young Children**

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*Fair and Useful Communication Assessment for
Young Children From Culturally and
Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association representing more than 127,000 audiologists, speech-language pathologists, and speech, language, and hearing scientists.



Mission

ASHA: Empowering and supporting speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and speech, language, and hearing scientists by:

- Advocating on behalf of persons with communication and related disorders
- Advancing communication science
- Promoting effective human communication



Fair and Useful Assessment for **All**
Children is Fundamental to the
Practice of Speech-Language
Pathology and Audiology



Fair and Equitable Communication Assessment Practices

- Assessment results should account for **individual, as well as family-based, cultural and linguistic influences** that affect the assessment process.
- Assessment tools and procedures must be **free of cultural and linguistic bias**.
- Assessment decisions should **not be based solely on standardized test** results.
- Assessment should be **conducted in the child's native language** (and English, when appropriate).
- Assessment should take into consideration the **stage of second language acquisition** for English language learners.



Guiding Principle for Assessment of Communication in Young Children

Assessment Should Be Family-Centered And Culturally Responsive

- No single set of assessment practices is appropriate to meet the needs of all families.
- Align assessment with family's culture, unique situation, preferences, resources, and priorities.



Assessment is Inherently Culture-Bound

- Every clinician, child, and family belongs to one or more cultures.
- Each individual speaks at least one dialect.
- Recognize your own and the family's cultural beliefs, values, behaviors, and influences.



Parent–Child Interaction

Language is Learned in the Context of Interactions Between Children and Families

- Assessment tasks should reflect the preferred family style and level of involvement.
- Identify behaviors that facilitate interaction and communication.
- Sociocultural factors influence the ways caregiver–child behaviors are exhibited and viewed.



Influence of Environmental Stressors on Assessment

- Social risk factors (poverty, maternal depression, poor-quality child care, and adolescent or single parenthood) can influence communication development.
- Risk factors often co-occur and have a cumulative effect.
- Consider these factors when assessing communication development.



Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Assessment Methods

Psychometric Considerations for Fairness

- **Valid**—measures what it claims to measure
- **Reliable**—stable measure
- **Sensitive**—children with difficulties are accurately identified
- **Specific**—children who do *not* have a problem are accurately identified (as not having a problem)
- **Representative**—large, representative norming samples

Challenge--limited number of well-constructed and validated measures available for young children, particularly with applicability for broad multicultural sample



Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Assessment Methods

Fair Assessment of Emergent and Early Stages of Language Development

- Prelinguistic or emerging stages of language development: Examine the use of gaze, gesture, and vocal forms of communication
- Linguistic stages: Assess emergence of words and word combinations
- Observe frequency, range, and function of communication intentions
- Augment with parent report using interpreters and cultural mediators
- Differentiate *linguistic difference* from a *communication disorder*



Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Assessment Methods

Fair Assessment of Feeding/Swallowing

- Feeding experience is culturally driven.
- Food offerings, mealtime rituals, and feeding skills are influenced by culture.
- Ask about
 - type, amount, and frequency of meals;
 - variety and consistency of foods eaten;
 - evidence of difficulties sucking, chewing or swallowing, or of gagging or drooling.



Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Assessment Methods

Fair Assessment of Hearing

- Early identification of hearing loss, followed by appropriate intervention, results in improved developmental outcomes.
- Differing cultural perspectives may influence the response to assessment results and related decision making.
- Respect for family choices is paramount.
- Use of English-language speech test materials with individuals who do not speak English with native or near-native proficiency is inappropriate.
- A cultural informant, translator, and interpreter all have important roles in audiologic assessment.



Assessment of English Language Learners

Assessment of young English language learners should include information about the following:

- Child's and family's history with language(s)
- Language the family typically speaks at home and in the community
- Other languages spoken in the home
- Family's country of origin
- Length of time in the United States
- Child's age when first exposed to English
- Amount of English exposure
- Who in the family speaks English (and how well)

Collaborate with interpreters or cultural mediators to ensure the accuracy of the assessment.

