Language Acquisition vs. Special Education Services: How to determine the Difference Between the Two

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A little about me....

- Undergrad in Bilingual Bicultural Elementary Education from Western Illinois University

- Taught for 5 years in Waukegan Public Schools

- Taught for 7 years in Harvard Public Schools

- Obtained Master’s Degree in Special Education from Western Governors University

- 4th year teaching in Woodstock Public Schools as Bilingual Special Education in Elementary/Middle school (23 kids on my caseload)
My student is struggling...what do I do? Investigate!!

➔ What language is the student most comfortable using?
  ◆ Have a conversation/ask the student
  ◆ Identify which language is used at home...not always what it says on the home language survey!

➔ Look at Test Scores (MAP/ACCESS/Classroom)
  ◆ Do they correlate with what your student is actually able to do in classroom? Tests can be an inaccurate representation of what a student can do.
I know the student’s language... now what?

Is the curriculum meeting the need of the student?

EL students need a curriculum that is going to address the following needs:

➔ Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary and Comprehension (most curriculum has these)
➔ Oral Language Development in 2nd Language
➔ **Oral Language Development and Literacy in First Language**
Where to intervene? Which language is best?

- Every child is different, no two cases are alike
- Start with student’s dominant language (may not be home language)
- Fill in “pot holes” in their education and see if learned skills are applied to different context areas (requires good communication with all parties involved - interventionist, classroom teacher, bilingual specialist/special education teacher)

Pot Holes??
- Phonics development
- Decoding strategies
- Vocabulary Development
- Text Comprehension
  - Parts of text - MI/D, CSPS, PM, AP, etc
Intervention cont....

- Minimum of 6 weeks in same intervention
- PROGRESS MONITOR!!
- Reconvene as a team after 6 weeks and discuss student
  - Growth
  - Continued short comings
  - Application of new learned skills in different areas
  - Anything new come up?
- What next?
How do I know?

- I can’t tell the difference if my student is a language learner or needs special education services. We’ve done interventions and I’m still fighting with the team.
Language Learner

- Difficulty in ENGLISH: What can't the student do?

- Comprehend Grade Level Text
- Decode Text at Independent Level (during Guided Reading/Small Group Time)
- Define Unknown Vocabulary
- Identify Different Parts of text (MI/D, CSPS, Plot Mountain, etc)
Language Learner

- **Language Learner Explanations:** Why they might have this difficulty?
- Decoding English text that does not match their ORAL LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY
- Developing Academic Vocabulary
- Developing English Syntax
- Early Levels of Language Acquisition
- Figurative Language
- Cultural References
Language Learner

- **Instruction:** Who will provide the instruction to the child?
- What will it look like?

- Parent/Associate/Classroom Teacher during small group time
- Home/Dominant Language
  - Front load vocabulary
  - Send home text for student to read/complete activity before major unit to front load some content
  - Share a variety of resources for parents to complete/review WITH student
Language Learner

- **Intervention**: Who will provide the instruction to the child?
- What interventions are needed?

- Interventionist/Bilingual Special Education Teacher/Associate/Classroom Teacher
- Thematic Units
  - GLAD Strategies (Concept Maps with key vocabulary)
- Front Loading Vocabulary or key concepts
- Use of Non-fiction Text at instructional level about same Thematic Unit
Language Learner

- Progress Monitoring:
  - What will you use?
  - How will you use it?

- Instructional Assessment
  - Project (rubric)
  - Recreate the text
  - Application of concepts (assessment/text)
  - Running Record
Exceptional Learner

- **Difficulty in ENGLISH:** What can't the student do?
- Comprehend Grade Level Text
- Decode Text at Independent Level (during Guided Reading/Small Group Time)
- Define Unknown Vocabulary
- Identify Different Parts of text (MI/D, CSPS, Plot Mountain, etc)
Exceptional Learner

- **Language Learner**
  
  Explanations: Why they might have this difficulty?

- **Memory Retention**
  - Short
  - Long
  - Auditory (list forming)

- **Comprehension**
  - Vocabulary
  - Sentence Structure
  - Reasoning
  - Abstract concepts
  - Multiple-meaning words
Exceptional Learner

- Language Learner
  Explanations: Why they might have this difficulty?

- Expressive Language
  - Can take in concepts/ideas but can’t communicate what he/she knows
    - Vocabulary
    - Word Find

- Executive Functioning
  - Connecting meaning from the text to real life

- Speech Articulation
Exceptional Learner

- **Instruction:** Who will provide the instruction to the child?
- What will it look like?

- Parent/Associate/Classroom Teacher during small group time
- Bilingual Resources (Whatever is available in your district)
- Bilingual Speech to Text when Writing (Technology use)
- Sentence Frames
  - Across content
  - Generic Oral and Written Frames to get student started when communicating with peers/adults
Exceptional Learner

- **Intervention:** Who will provide the instruction to the child?
- **What interventions are needed?**
  - Interventionist/Bilingual Special Education Teacher/Associate/Classroom Teacher
  - Vocabulary Squares
    - 1 box - word
    - 2nd box - picture of word
    - 3rd box - dictionary definition
    - 4th box - Use in a sentence, student explains word
  - Graphic Organizer to chunk important information (GLAD Strategies)
Exceptional Learner

- **Intervention:** Who will provide the instruction to the child?
- What interventions are needed?

- Color Coding when writing - students can follow pattern when copying from board (ROYGBIV)
- Video Clips of key information to draw students in
  - Pixar Animation has many good ones - just have to search for them
Exceptional Learner

- Progress Monitoring:
  - What will you use?
  - How will you use it?

- Instructional Assessment
  - Project (rubric)
  - Recreate the text
  - Application of concepts (assessment/text)
  - Running Record

- Standardized Assessment
  - AIMSweb (SP/EN)
  - Fastbridge (SP/EN)
  - IDEL (SPANISH)
  - SEL (SPANISH)
  - BAS (ENGLISH)
Your turn! Who has a student we can borrow?

- Student SUDO name
- Dominant Language?
- Home Language?
- Where is the student struggling?
- What have you done?
- What has the team said?
- What does the data show?
- What do you feel as the teacher?

- Suggestions of where to go next
- Strategies to try
Contact me!!

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