PROJECT TITLE: Listening to bilingual children’s talking through their drawings

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Project Description

The cultural and linguistic demography of the United States is ever-changing (Adekemi et al., 2016). More than 55 million people (21%) over 5-years of age speak English in addition to the home language (Ryan, 2013). For early childhood education professionals like speech-language pathologists (SLPs), this changing demography means that we must employ new and creative ways of understanding the communication experience of the children we serve. This is especially important in contexts where the SLP does not speak the language(s) spoken by the child. SLPs are becoming increasingly aware that children need to be given a voice for matters that concern them (Holliday et al., 2009; McLeod, 2012; McCormack et al., 2010). This means that the child’s own perspective should be considered so that important information about what children are feeling and actually want to say is given a voice. Drawings offer SLPs an appropriate and child-friendly way of soliciting children’s thoughts and feelings about talking (Brooks, 2005; Malchiodi, 1998). By considering the child’s own voice, SLPs could consider child development for speech and language beyond the notion of education and service delivery to more directly obtain the experiences and views of children. This is particularly true for children who speak more than one language, including those who speak languages other than English as a first language. By providing bilingual children with the opportunity to express themselves, SLPs would be in line with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that states:

"Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (UNICEF, 1989: 4)
In this WISE project, the scholar will learn about and employ approaches that use this new direction in early childhood education to consider the voices of children. In particular, the scholar will use a corpus of data from a group of bilingual children, so that their talking experiences are better understood and that information used to improve SLPs’ cultural competence. We will use a qualitative approach entitled Meaning-Making (cf. Cox, 2005; Driessnack, 2006; Picard et al., 2007), which will allow us to understand bilingual children’s views on talking and to assist SLPs in understanding these children’s perceptions, thoughts and experiences. We are interested in documenting the experiences and views about talking in this population using their drawings so that insights into these children’s minds are obtained and meanings are abstracted from these drawings. The following specific aims will be addressed:

Specific Aim #1: To describe how bilingual children feel about their talking by examining focal points (i.e., features) in their drawings for six specific details – facial expressions, accentuation of body features, portrayal of talking/listening, colors used, conversational partners, and sense of self.

Specific Aim #2: To examine how bilingual children’s ratings (i.e., about their feelings about talking) inform their perceptions, thoughts, and experiences about talking. These ratings are based on a visual analogue scale collected from each child.

Participants: The data utilized in this project were collected in Jamaica from a sample of 100 3- to 6- year old Jamaican Creole- and English-speaking preschoolers who attended similar schools in urban settings in Kingston, Jamaica. We have a corpus of data on each child’s drawings and ratings, in addition to information on overall development based on parent report and on direct child evaluations of nonverbal cognition, oral motor skills, receptive language and hearing.

Project Elements for WISE scholar:
- Complete IRB procedures to be added to the already approved study protocol (IRB #2013-6345)
- Complete training sessions, including a reading list, on the qualitative approach “meaning-making”, among others to prepare for scoring and interpretation of data. Data collection sheets using the Australian Drawing Protocol and the Speech Participation and Assessment for children (SPAA-C; McLeod, 2004) will be used to facilitate training. Professor Sharynne McLeod will support this training in addition to the WISE mentor.
- Complete an introduction to cultural and linguistic diversity using the Multilingual Children’s Speech Website, http://www.csu.edu.au/research/multilingual-speech, as well as training on working with children speaking more than one language, http://www.leadersproject.org/ceu-courses/grammar-fundamentals-for-a-pluralistic-society/
- Complete training sessions using the resource, Writing Jamaican the Jamaican Way (Jamaican Language Unit, 2009)
- Complete a training session with establishing inter- and intra-rater reliability and reviewing statistical analyses such as the Kappa Statistic
Organize and enter data from parent, and speech-language pathologists’ measures
Organize and enter all child data on demographic measures
Complete qualitative analyses of the child drawings and ratings
Complete preliminary interpretations
This task will be completed in consultation the WISE mentor and Professor Sharynne McLeod.
Support manuscript and abstract preparations (e.g., ASHA 2018 Convention)

Background Characteristics of WISE scholar:
Communication Sciences and Disorders background
CITI training completed (can be completed during the first few weeks of the program)

Reference List:
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