CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EVALUATION PRACTICES OF NORTH CAROLINA SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS

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ABSTRACT

Social, behavioral, and educational research has begun to examine the evaluation of diverse individuals and programs using culturally responsive evaluation (CRE) theoretical framework. A survey of North Carolina speech-language pathologists (SLPs) was conducted to examine their assessment practices with English language learners (ELLs) in the context of CRE theory as well as their confidence assessing ELLs and their academic experiences. Findings indicate that NC SLPs are using more mixed-method evaluation approaches with ELLs, however, they are not using culturally responsive assessment procedures consistently with non-native English-speaking students. Further, the majority of respondents report not feeling confident in assessing ELLs, nor do they feel that their academic experiences prepared them to assess ELLs.

KEY WORDS: Culturally responsive, evaluation, English learners, assessment practices

INTRODUCTION

As members of special education teams, with unique insight into the second language learning process, speech-language pathologists (SLPs) must be aware that English Language Learners (ELLs) and students of color (e.g. African American) are disproportionately represented in special education (Fish 2017; Hosp & Reschly, 2003; Klingner et al., 2005; Klingner & Artiles, 2003); further, ELLs are underrepresented in academically gifted programs (Fish, 2017; Office of Civil Rights Data Collection, n.d.). Disproportionality includes both the under and over representation in special education relative to the size of the cultural and/or linguistic representation of a student population (e.g. Latino/Spanish speaking).

Beyond special education, disproportionality exists amongst ELLs and students of color in access to higher-level academic experiences and suspensions/expulsions. For example, only 19% of ELLs entered college in 2006, in comparison to 45% of monolingual English-speaking students (Kanno & Kangas, 2014) and African American students are twice as likely to be suspended from school than their white counterparts (Hinojosa, 2008). The issue of disproportionality in special education has been at the forefront of educational research and legislation for decades (Albrecht, Skiba, Losen, Chung, & Middleberg, 2012). Understanding the academic landscape ELLs are navigating is a necessary first step in closing what can be perceived as an equity gap in American public schools.

In recent years, there has been a growing body of research to understand, explain, and alleviate this equity gap. First, the academic system itself is fraught with systematic institutional mechanisms that put ELLs at a persistent educational disadvantage (Schissel & Kangas, 2018). An example of this is academic tracking, a system in which students are grouped exclusively in classes, or tracks, based on testing performance. Using tracking, ELL students are often grouped into low-performing tracks in which they are not challenged academically, widening the equity gap further (Kanno & Kangas, 2014). For example, classes for low-track students are "limited to decoding [the words in the] textbook and finding keywords or sentences in short texts" (Kanno & Kangas, 2014, p.852). Meanwhile, students in high-performance tracks engage in higher-level abstraction skills such as holding a discussion about a text they have read.

Second, implicit and explicit bias play a role in which students are referred (or not) to specialized education programs, including academically gifted programs (Fish, 2017; Blanchett, 2006; Hosp & Reschly, 2003; Coutinho & Oswald, 2000). In summary, culturally and linguistically diverse students (e.g. African-American or Latino students) are disproportionately referred and, subsequently, placed in special education programs. Of notable interest was a study conducted by Fish (2017) in which she questioned 70 elementary school teachers on whether or not they would refer the student for exceptionality testing (special education and academically gifted) using fictional scenarios in which race, ethnicity, ELL status, and exceptionality were experimentally manipulated.

Fish's findings suggest that race and ethnicity *do* play a role in which students are referred for testing: When the hypothetical White student was depicted as struggling exhibited academically, teachers perceived these difficulties as problems that could be fixed (e.g., remediated through special education). However, these same difficulties were perceived as "normal" in the African American student. Moreover, skills related to academic giftedness were reported more often for the White student than when the African-American or Latino/ELL student exhibited the same skills. Finally, White ELL students were perceived as having less behavioral issues than their non-White ELL counterpart. Similarly, Irizarry (2015) investigated teacher's perceptions of literacy ability in a diverse range of students and found a racially significant gap in teacher perception of student ability.

Third, and a large focus of the present study, is lack of knowledge and preparedness of SLPs to accurately differentiate between a language difference and language disorder in ELL

students. One reason for the disparate overrepresentation of ELLS in special education may be due to the similar language learning errors made between students who are acquiring a second language and students with learning disabilities such as difficulty following directions and decreased vocabulary knowledge. Knowledge of the typical errors made by ELLs can decrease incorrect identification and placement of these students in special education (Derr, 2003; Roninson, 2003). The need for further education on implementing dynamic assessment and other less-biased assessment practices has been well-documented within the literature (Caesar & Kohler, 2007; Hammar, Detwiler, Detwiler, Blood, & Dean, 2007; Kritikos, 2003; Roseberry-McKibben & O'Hanlon, 2005;).

Assessing students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds is challenging for many reasons. Standardized assessments in and outside the field of specialized education are almost uniformly not normed on diverse populations and are often culturally and/or linguistically biased (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006; Au, 2016; Klingner & Artiles, 2003; Klingner, 2005; Knoester & Au, 2017; Menken, 2008; Solorzano, 2008). These tests often appear to make assumptions about the lived experiences of all students, assuming that everyone has had the same experiences and opportunities regardless of cultural, linguistic, or socio-economic background. Even when a test is in the student's native language, such as the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals IV in Spanish (CELF-4S), it may not be reflective of a ELL's true language abilities. For example, Barragan and colleagues (2018) investigated the utility of the CELF-4S on a group ELL students (n=656) between the ages of five and seven from low-income and low-parental education backgrounds. Their findings indicated that over 50% of the students scored more than one standard deviation below the mean on the core language component of the assessment, suggesting that the CELF-4S over identified low-income Spanish speaking ELL students. This over-identification in large part is due to the small norming sample that the creators of the CELF-4S used when determining norms for the assessment, suggesting the need for a separate set of norms for low-income ELL students.

Assessment Practices of Speech-Language Pathologists

In the last 15 years, the educational experiences, beliefs, and assessment practices of SLPs have been researched (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Caesar & Koehler, 2007; Hammer et al., 2004; Kritikos, 2003; Roseberry-McKibben, Brice, & O'Hanlon, 2005;). The SLPs surveyed in these studies were diverse (e.g. urban-rural SLPs, mono-bilingual, and years of experience), but reported similar findings: (a) a gap between best practice and actual assessment practices (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Caesar & Koehler, 2007), (b) varied educational experiences regarding CLD assessment (Hammer et al. 2004; Roseberry-McKibben et al. 2005), and (c) decreased confidence and efficacy assessing ELL students (Hammer et al., 2004; Kritikos, 2003). These studies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Studies Examining the Assessment Practices of Speech-Language Pathologists.

Previous Studies	Number of Participants	Findings
Arias & Friberg (2017) (replication study of Caesar & Koehler, 2007)	166 SLPs	SLPs have improved their assessment practices to be more compliant with ASHA and IDEA guidelines in comparison to previous research (Caesar & Koehler, 2007). However, areas of improvement continue to exist in regard to training, including: utilizing interpreters during assessment, selecting assessment measures, and increasing use of a child's native language.
Betz et al. (2013) *Study focus was not on ELLs	364 SLPs	SLPs most often used standardized measures to diagnose school-age children with suspected language impairment. When determining which standardized measure to use, SLPs mostly focused on publication year of the assessment, not factors such as psychometric properties.
Fullcher-Rood et al. (2018) *Study focus was not on ELLs	39 SLPs	SLPs use both standardized and informal testing (e.g. language sample analysis) when assessing students with suspected language impairment. However, standardized testing plays a larger role in determining eligibility and severity of the disorder. Informal assessment measures were used to obtain information about the child's use in daily life, but did not appear to play as large of a role in diagnostic decision making as standardized assessments.
Roseberry-McKibben et al. (2005)	1,736 SLPs	SLPs had varying educational experiences related to ELLs across the United States, with SLPs from the Western part of the country having the largest amount of coursework in this area. This highlights a need for further education in this area. SLPs reported a lack in appropriate and least-biased assessments for ELL students.
Caesar & Koehler, (2007)	130 SLPs	SLPs reported assessing bilingual students using formal (e.g. standardized) measures more often than informal measures. This study further highlights the need for training in the academic setting and beyond on assessment of ELL students.
Hammer et al. (2004)	213 SLPs	One-third of SLPs reported that they did not receive any training related to CLD issues at the undergraduate or graduate level. SLPs also reported low confidence when assessing bilingual students whose primary language was Spanish, not English.
Kritikos (2003)	811 mono- and bilingual SLPs	SLPs reported low personal and professional efficacy in bilingual language assessment, with bilingual SLPs who learned a second language within a cultural context reporting more personal efficacy. Bilingual SLPs who learned a second language in an academic setting reported more efficacy than monolingual SLPs, but not as much as cultural context SLPs.

In summary, these findings indicate the need for more education and application on multicultural and multilingual issues within the field of speech-language pathology including culturally responsive assessment practices for CLD students.

Graduate Education

In the area of cultural competency, the Council on Academic Accreditation (CAA, 2017) currently outline the following standards:

- "Understand the impact of his or her own set of cultural and linguistic variables on delivery of effective care. These include, but are not limited to, variables such as age, ethnicity, linguistic background, national origin, race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation.
- Understand the impact of the cultural and linguistic variables of the individuals served on delivery of care. These include but are not limited to variables such as age, ethnicity, linguistic background, national origin, race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation.
- Understand the interaction of cultural and linguistic variables between the caregivers and the individuals served in order to maximize service delivery.
- Understand the characteristics of the individuals served (e.g., age, demographics, cultural and linguistic diversity, educational history and status, medical history and status, cognitive status, and physical and sensory abilities) and how these characteristics relate to clinical services." (CAA, 2017, p.20)

Essentially, these standards focus on understanding the influence of SLP cultural location on services; understanding how a client's cultural location influences services provided; understanding the relationship between language and culture; and understanding the specific cultural profile of clients (e.g. age, educational history) and how it impacts services. Finally, the CAA recommends that clinical issues related to diversity are infused throughout the curriculum in addition to a stand-alone multicultural course (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2011). However, despite these standards and recommendations, there are documented differences in the educational experiences of SLPs in the area of cultural competency (Hammer et al., 2007; Roseberry-McKibbin et al., 2005).

Culturally Responsive Evaluation (CRE)

Given the documented inconsistency in the implementation of least-biased assessments (e.g., dynamic assessment) varied educational experiences of SLPs in the area of cultural competency, and the documented rise of ELLs in the public school system (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016) there is a need to investigate the educational backgrounds and subsequent assessment practices of SLPs. In recent years, social, behavioral, and educational research have begun to examine the evaluation of programs using a culturally responsive evaluation (CRE) theoretical framework. Culture, as defined by CRE, is "a cumulative body of learned and shared behavior, values, customs and beliefs common to a particular group or society" (Hood et al. 2015). Responsive is defined as "attend[ing] substantively and politically to issues of culture and race in evaluation practice." CRE is based in both theory and practice, making it unique in the field of program evaluation (Hood et al., 2015). The central tenets of CRE include putting culture at the center of the evaluation, refuting the belief of culture-free evaluation, and acknowledging that values and beliefs, as they are defined by culture, are the basis of an evaluation. Though CRE refers to evaluation in the context of programs, in the opinion of the present authors, the CRE framework can be modified to apply to SLP assessment of ELL students and is a logical and appropriate lens through which to examine SLP assessment practices.

CRE has evolved and expanded in the last 20 years; exploring constructs such as understanding lived experiences, negotiating power differentials, and acknowledging white privilege. These constructs, or principles, among others are necessary for administering culturally responsive assessments to CLD students, especially ELLs. As SLPs, we are acutely aware of the power of language: "Communication is not merely an exchange of information but an act of *power*" (Kanno & Kangas, 2014, p. 853). Similarly, ELLs need to position themselves as powerful communicators (Cummins, Markus, & Montero, 2015). This type of focus on positionality and power is well documented within the field of Teaching English as a Second Language (Kangas, 2014; Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Cummins et al, 2015; Lopez-Gopar, Nunez-Mendez, Sughrua, & Clemente, 2013; Shohamy, 2011). However, there is little to no research on understanding or acknowledging power differentials in the assessment of ELLs in the field of speech-language pathology.

Acknowledging white privilege, another principle of CRE, is paramount in the assessment process for two reasons. First, The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Member and Affiliate Count for 2016 indicates that 92% of members are white (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2016). Further; speech-language pathology is the fourth whitest profession in the United States (Thompson, 2013). Second, the students receiving special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act are diverse (e.g. Indian/Alaska Native, Black, White, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and Asian) (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). It is important to note that the authors are not stating that White SLPs cannot provide culturally responsive services to a diverse group of students. We are only highlighting the need for culturally responsive assessment practices for culturally and linguistically diverse students in the field of speech-language pathology at large. See Table 2 for a summary of studies examining CRE.

Table 2. Principles of CRE Theory From The Last 20 Years (After Hood et al. 2015).

Authors	CRE Principles
Hood, 1998	Acknowledging the importance of shared lived experiences
Hood, 2001	Focusing direct attention to race and culture as political entities Expanding data analysis to qualitative data as well (mixed methods)
Hood, 2009	Addressing positionality and identifying power differentials which requires long-term investment*, Using a cultural liaison or interpreters as needed.
Hopson, 2009	Directly identifying white privilege Focusing on strengths
Askew, Beverly, & Jay, 2012	Strategically creating an evaluation team Establishing a rapport/dialog in order to address issues such as power, race, and privilege
Frazier-Anderson, Hood, & Hopson, 2012	Decreasing cultural centrism Explicitly differentiates race and culture from one another

What makes an evaluation culturally responsive? Hood et al. (2015) provide the following as an answer: "an evaluation is culturally responsive if it fully takes into account the culture of the *program* that is being evaluated" (Frierson, Hood, and Hughes, 2002, p. 63)" (Hood et al., 2015, p. 284). SLPs aiming to implement culturally responsive assessments should replace *program* with *student.* CRE also focuses on historically marginalized groups and is rooted in social justice and equity; as we know students described as CLD have been historically marginalized in the American public schools (Hood et al., 2015; Tupas, 2015).

Figure 1. Culturally Responsive Evaluation Framework.
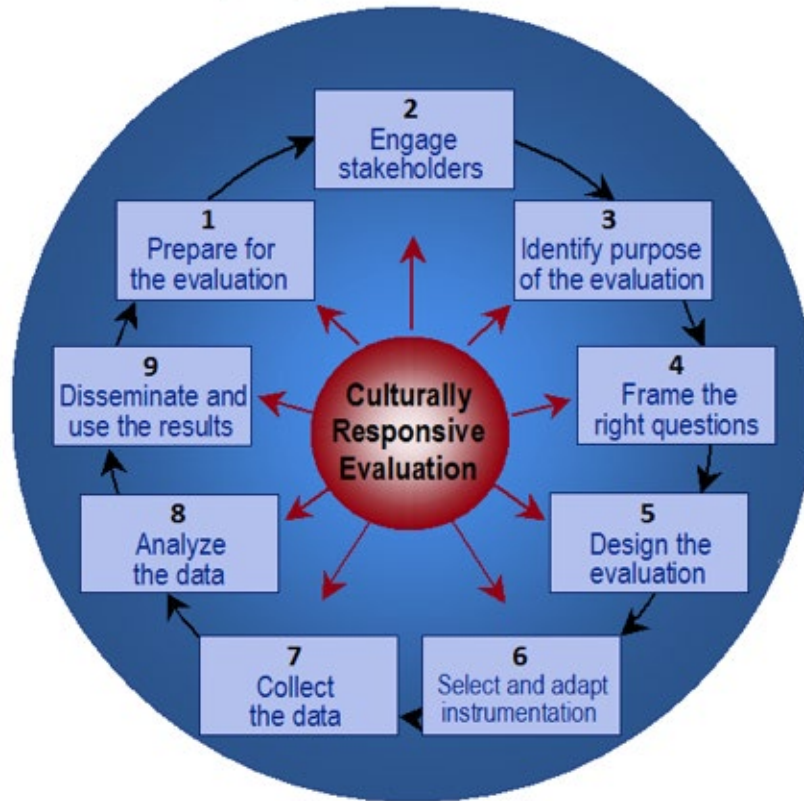
Culturally Responsive Evaluation Framework

In 2015, Hood and colleagues created a framework of nine steps, or guidelines, for culturally responsive evaluation. An illustration of the CRE framework is shown in Figure 1 and a summary of the framework, as it relates to the assessment of ELL students is provided in Table 3 below.

Table 3. A Framework for Culturally Responsive Evaluation (Hood et al. 2015).

CRE Component	Relation to Assessment of ELLs
1. Prepare for the Evaluation	SLPs are responsible for arming themselves with knowledge about their students. This includes their: history, cultural/linguistic background, and experiences. SLPs should ask themselves: ● What is the student's story? ● "How can I respectfully enter this community?" (Hood et al., 2015, p. 291) ● How is power distributed? ● Which relationships are "valued or privileged" and which relationships are "discouraged or forbidden?" (Hood et al., 2015, p.291). Further, SLPs should prepare *themselves* for the evaluation by acknowledging their own biases, assumptions, and power, or privilege, as the evaluator. For the purposes of this study, we, largely, focused on how SLPs prepared themselves prior to assessing an ELL student.
2. Engage Stakeholders	Stakeholders are defined as. "Persons who are invested in a program or its evaluation by virtue of their roles, values, or perceived gains or losses" (Hood et al., p.292). CRE aims to create a diverse group of stakeholders who have varying levels of power, resources, and investment. What is one stakeholder's loss may be another's gain. For the purposes of this study, stakeholders were defined as: the student, parents, SLPs, Special and Regular Education teachers, psychologists, the student, English as a Second Language (ESL) Teachers, community liaison, and physical/occupational therapists. In a school based setting, any of these individual members may serve as part of the special education team. Diverse teams are an important asset in the pursuit of a culturally responsive assessment. Certain stakeholders such as parents or community liaisons can provide unique insights about a student's history and their cultural/linguistic background.
3. Identify the Purpose of the Evaluation*	In terms of English language learners, SLPs are differentiating between the presence of a language difference and language disorder in order to determine if special education services are warranted.

Table 3. A Framework for Culturally Responsive Evaluation (Hood et al. 2015).

CRE Component	Relation to Assessment of ELLs
4. Frame the Right Questions*	Per the NC Department of Public Instruction requirements (2018), NC SLPs and other members of the special education team will ask the following questions: ● Does the student meet criteria for one or more of the 14 disabling conditions consistent with the definitions described in NC Policies? Does the student have a disability? ● Does it require specially designed instruction? Further, special education teams need to also determine if the determination is a result of limited English proficiency. If the answer is "yes," the student should *not* be placed in special education.
5. Design the Evaluation	Given the documented need for least-biased assessment practices (e.g. Arias & Friberg, 2018) and the rise of ELL students in the U.S. (North Carolina Center for Education Statistics, 2016), SLPs should determine which measures to use including: dynamic assessment, language samples, standardized tests, and/or language samples. Recent research indicates that SLPs often use both formal and informal methods when assessing monolingual students with a suspected language impairment (Betz et al., 2018; Fullcher-Rood et al. 2018). However, SLPs relied more heavily on formal assessments for eligibility purposes than informal measures (Fullcher-Rood et al. 2018). In designing the evaluation, CRE Theory recommends a mixed methods approach. In a clinical setting this may appear as combining standardized assessments with a language sample as Ebert and Pham (2018) implemented, with positive and accurate results.
6. Select and Adapt Instrumentation	A brief review of the literature regarding assessment of CLD students indicates that standardized assessments misrepresent the abilities of these students (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006; Au, 2016; Klingner & Artiles, 2003; Klingner, 2005; Knoester & Au, 2017; Menken, 2008; Solorzano, 2008). In regards to assessments, CRE theory requires that "when selecting instruments for use in CRE, existing tools must be closely scrutinized for cultural bias in both language and content. Norms based on other populations and locations may be of little value in interpreting local scores. Instruments must be validated for use in culturally-specific contexts. When translation is used, it should follow best practices, addressing both semantic and content equivalence" (Hood et al., 2015, p 295).

Table 3. A Framework for Culturally Responsive Evaluation (Hood et al. 2015).

CRE Component	Relation to Assessment of ELLs
7. Collect the Data	Much of the research related to the assessment of CLD students in the field of speech-language pathology has centered around the instrumentation (e.g. dynamic assessment or other testing materials). However, CRE theory posits that the procedure in which these assessments are implemented are important as well. Therefore, SLPs should understand how implicit and/or explicit bias can impact what they see and hear, subsequently impact their data collection. SLPs also need to be confident in the efficacy of their assessment procedure and subsequent results.
8. Analyze the Data	Hood et al. poignantly state, "Data do not speak for themselves; they are given voice by those who interpret them" (Hood et al., 2015, p.296). SLPs should understand that their voice is not absent from the report; essentially reports are not entirely objective. This demonstrates an underlying need for accurate data interpretation, as well as the importance of engaging with stakeholders who can explain nuances within the data.
9. Disseminate and Use the Results*	This step is self-explanatory; SLPs will share assessment findings with stakeholders to determine special education eligibility.

*These steps were not used in the present study.

Present Study

The purpose of the present study was to examine how the language assessment practices of North Carolina (NC) SLPs fit into the CRE framework outlined by Hood et al. (2015). There was also interest in determining if life experiences, such as learning a second language, influenced SLP assessment practice as well as their reported confidence. To do so, the following questions were addressed in this study:

1. Do NC SLP demographics (e.g. years of experience, language status) influence assessment practice, as described by CRE Theory?
   a. Confidence in assessing ELLs?
2. How are NC SLPs modifying their evaluation practices when assessing ELL students?
   a. Do these assessment practices fit into the CRE framework outlined by Hood, Hopson, and Kirkhart (2015)?

3. What are the educational experiences (e.g. coursework) of NC SLPs in regards to bilingual language development, bilingual assessment, and multicultural issues?
   a. Do SLPs feel that their graduate education prepared them to assess ELLs?

For the purposes of this study, we defined ELLs as students: a) whose native language is anything other than English, b) receive English as a Second Language (ESL) Services, and c) receive services from a speech-language pathologist. Though the latter is not part of the traditional definition, our focus was on students on SLP's caseload.

North Carolina and ELLs

North Carolina is a southeastern state that borders Virginia, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia. There are 115 schools districts

which include over 2,500 public schools, 148 charter schools, as well as three residential schools for students with visual and hearing impairments (North Carolina State Government, 2019). North Carolina is a World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium member since 2008 (Colorin Colorado, 2019). WIDA is an organization of states devoted to providing equitable and high standard instruction for ELL students by providing a system of identifying and assessing ELL's language growth annually (Colorin Colorado, 2019). North Carolina contains rural, urban, and suburban schools districts with a moderate number of ELLs across the state (i.e., 6 to <10%), according to The National Center for Education Statistics (2016). The Migration Policy Institute states that, North Carolina was among the top eight states with the highest representation of ELLs, with 102,311 such students accounted for in the 2012-2013 school year (Ruiz, Ariel, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015a).

North Carolina is a diverse state with at least 10 documented languages spoken by its ELL students (Ruiz, Ariel, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015b). Spanish is the most common language (71%), followed by Chinese (4%), Vietnamese (3%), Arabic (2%), French/Haitian Creole (2%), Yiddish (1%), Korean (1%), Tagalog (1%), German (1%), and Hmong (1%) (Ruiz, Ariel, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015b). Within the largest school districts in the state reporting such data, over 142 cultural groups are represented (Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Schools, 2017; Guilford County Schools, 2019). Given the diversity of ELL demographics in NC, reviewing the assessment practices, educational experiences, and SLP self-reported confidence when assessing ELLs is a necessary task in order to improve the efficacy of SLP assessment.

METHOD

Survey Instrument

A 49-item questionnaire was created to investigate the CRE practices of SLPs when assessing ELLs. The questionnaire consisted of questions from previous studies investigating SLPs assessment practices (i.e., Kritikos, 2003, McKibben, Brice, & O'Hanlon, 2005; Caesar &

Koehler, 2007) as well as questions developed by the research team that were based on the CRE framework outlined by Hood et al. (2015). Demographic information such as linguistic background and years of professional work experience were also obtained. Questions were in the following formats: yes/no, multiple-choice, Likert-type responses, and free-response. In addition to these questions, survey respondents were provided with the option of participating in a short 10-15 minute phone interview following completion of the questionnaire. The optional interview questions offered SLPs the opportunity to answer questions in greater depth.

The questions were reviewed by the research team and entered into Qualtrics, an online survey platform. A feature within Qualtrics analyzed the question types/formats and reported that the questions earned a score of "good," indicating that the question and answer formats were consistent and appropriate for the information being obtained. Once the questionnaire was completed, it was distributed to all school-based SLPs on the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction listserv by Mr. Perry Flynn, Consultant to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in the Area of Speech-Language Pathology.

The "Magic Number" method, outlined by Blair and Blair (2015), was used to address sample size. An interview was conducted with Mr. Flynn to determine the typical response rate of web-based surveys of NC SLPs. Flynn indicated a typical response rate of between 200-300 when surveys are sent out to *all* school-based SLPs (N=4,000) (P. Flynn, personal communication, March 1, 2018). Therefore, in this study our sample size was n=200, which was consistent with his experience in distributing web-based surveys to NC SLPs.

Interview Format

The interview questionnaire consisted of four base questions with follow-up probes to collect more information. SLPs that responded to the survey had the option of indicating interest in participating in a 10-15 minute phone interview. A total of five interviews were conducted. The interviews were audio-recorded and played back to determine themes across interviewee responses.

Participants

200 NC SLPs responded to the survey. All respondents had at least a master's degree in speech-language pathology, a North Carolina Speech-Language Pathology license, and the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology from ASHA. The majority of respondents worked in the pre-k/elementary setting (67.11%). 30.94% worked in upper grades (e.g. middle and high school). Finally, a small percentage (2.46%) worked in separate special schools (e.g. a school for children with autism). Further demographic information of the respondents as well as caseload demographics are indicated below:

Table 4. NC SLP Demographics.

SLP Reported Race	Percentage (%)	School Work Setting	Percentage (%)	Years of Experience	Percentage (%)
White	88.9	Pre-K	28.26	1-9 years	17
African American	7	Elementary	38.85	10 or more years	83
American Indian/Native Alaksan	1	Middle	17.39		
Asian	0.0	High	13.04		
Native Hawaiin/ Pacific Islander	.5	Special Separate	2.46		
Other	2.6				

Table 5. Language Status.

Second Language Proficiency	Percentage (%)
No	95
Yes	5

Language	Percentage (%)
Spanish	98
Other	2

Table 6. ELL Caseload Demographics.

Ethnicity	Percentage (%)	Ages	Percentage (%)	Socio-Economic Status	Percentage (%)
Latino	44.41	3-5	32.1	High	2.75
Chinese	8.98	6-10	37.11	Middle	25.79
Arab	8.69	11-14	21.87	Low	71.46
Indian	2.39	15-21	8.93		
Pakistani	6.59				
Sub-Saharan African	8.88				
Vietnamese	1.81				
Korean	9.84				

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

RQ1

Our first research question asked if SLP demographics (e.g. years of experience and language status) influenced ELL assessment practices, described by CRE Theory. Further, we questioned if SLP demographics influenced confidence in assessing ELLs. To answer this, a chi square analysis was performed which revealed no significant relationship between years of experience and any components of the CRE framework. Similarly, years of experience was not significantly correlated with SLP confidence in assessing, the findings, or diagnosing ELLs. However, second language status (e.g. bilingual) was correlated with acknowledging power differentials and understanding the spectrum of stakeholder investment, though both associations were weak ($\phi > .30$). Further, language status was mildly correlated ($\phi = .31$) with confidence in assessing ELLs. As a whole, a little over half (63.9%) reported feeling "not confident" or "somewhat confident" in assessing ELL students. This finding of decreased confidence in assessing ELLs was also noted in Kritikos' (2003) survey study of mono- and bilingual SLPs.

RQ2

Our second research question examined how NC SLP assessment practices fit into the CRE framework outlined by Hood, Hopson, and Kirkhart (2015). The research team was specifically interested in whether the current practices of these professionals aligned with CRE theory. Below is a table outlining current SLP practice and its relation to CRE theory. Not all components of CRE (e.g. Step 9) were used, as certain assessment procedures are guided by federal and state law. The findings are reported below in Table 7.

Table 7. NC SLP Assessment Practices in Concordance with CRE.

Preparing for the Evaluation	In terms of preparing themselves for an evaluation, less than a fourth (13.2%) of NC SLPs reported consistently acknowledging their positionality. In preparing for to assess an ELL student, the majority of SLPs (81.5%) reported looking up information about the student's native language. A little over half (53.8%) reported looking up information about the student's native country. 39.5% of SLPs reported completing an ethnographic interview (e.g. immersive observation and one-to-one interview). 36% of SLPs reported looking up information about the perception of disability in the student's culture or native country. Finally, 9.5% of SLPs reported looking up information about the student's religion.
Engaging Stakeholders	Almost half of NC SLPs (46.7%) reported that all stakeholders are equally invested. The stakeholders these practitioners reported engaging the most were students, parents, and teachers; Community liaisons, ESL teachers, and physical/occupational therapists were the least engaged.
Designing the Evaluation	A little over half (66.2%) of surveyed NC SLPs reported they did not design unique evaluation protocols for ELL students. However, the majority of SLPs (80.5%) reported using both formal and informal assessment measures "all" or "most of the time, such as language sample analysis (LSA) and standardized assessments with ELLs.
Selecting and Adapting the Instrumentation	Of the NC SLPs who translate standardized tests (29.5%), the most commonly reported way of interpreting them are describing correct and incorrect responses in a narrative (39.5%) and computing a standardized score (39.5%).
Collecting Data	Over half (53.3%) of surveyed SLPs reported that they considered how their experiences and cultural locations influence their data collection process.
Analyzing Data	99% of SLPs stated their reports were objective and their voices were not present in the report.

RQ 3

Our final questions explored the educational experiences (e.g. coursework) of NC SLPs in regards to bilingual language development, bilingual assessment, and multicultural issues. We also asked if SLPs felt that their graduate education prepared them to assess ELLs.

53% of respondents indicated receiving an infusion model (e.g. instruction related to multicultural topics throughout their curriculum) during their graduate education. A smaller percentage (14%) reported receiving a stand-alone multicultural course. Finally, over a fourth (33.5%) reported receiving no instruction related to multicultural issues during their graduate education.

In terms of theoretical knowledge, slightly less than half (45.5%) of respondents reported that their graduate experience provided them with sufficient theoretical knowledge related to multicultural issues (e.g. bilingualism, least-biased assessment). A greater percentage (62.8%) of SLPs reported that their graduate education did not provide them with sufficient clinical knowledge related to multicultural

issues. A smaller percentage (20.2%) reported that their graduate education did provide sufficient theoretical knowledge related to these issues. Conversely, a smaller percentage (9%) of SLPs reported receiving sufficient clinical knowledge.

Phone Interviews

Five phone interviews were conducted. SLPs were asked about their challenges with assessing ELLs, thoughts on how to improve the assessment process, and what is needed in terms of coursework, clinical training, and continuing education. A summary of their themed responses can be found in Table 8.

Table 8. SLP Phone Interview Responses.

Question	Themed Responses

What is your greatest challenge when assessing English Language Learners (ELLs) with potential language disabilities?	Respondents reported the following as challenges to assessing ELLs:
	● Getting them [ELLs] assessed in their native language.
	● Knowing and having that background of student's language
	   ○ Specifically related to morpho-syntax and phonology.
	   ○ Familiarity with less common languages

In your opinion, what could make the assessment process easier?	SLPs reported that the following resource would make assessing ELLs easier:
	● School districts establish policies/ guidelines for assessing ELLs
	   ○ Serves as a framework for assessment process
	● More bilingual SLPs in the school system
	   ○ Preference for SLPs over interpreters
	   ○ Knowing where to find bilingual SLPs as well as interpreters
	● Access to more informal measures that are less biased to ELLs

What is needed in terms of:	
Coursework	● Increased instruction on dynamic assessment specifically as well as least-biased assessments in general for ELLs ● Explicit instruction bilingual language development ● Instruction on ELLs and The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
Clinical Experiences	● Increasing exposure to a diverse range of students, including ELLs. ● More connections with local schools or programs with high levels of ELLs in order for SLP students to be exposed to that population.
Continuing Education	● More in-services on dynamic assessment, bilingualism, and differentiating between a language difference and disorder

DISCUSSION

In this study we examined how years of experience and language status influenced assessment of ELLs according to CRE Theory as well as SLP confidence in assessing ELLs. Findings indicated that years of experience did not influence how SLPs assessed ELLs within the constructs of CRE or confidence in assessing ELLs. We found that language status, the ability to implement a language assessment in another language, was significantly related with two components of CRE: recognizing power differentials and understanding varying degrees of stakeholder investment. Further, bilingual SLPs reported confidence in assessing ELLs at a significantly higher level. This finding is not surprising, given that bilingual SLPs reported being proficient enough in a second language to implement a language evaluation.

We also questioned SLPs about their assessment practices with ELLs and compared their reports to the CRE Framework outlined by Hood et al. (2015).

Preparing for the Evaluation

A culturally responsive evaluators should be armed with knowledge about. Further, "they have a responsibility to educate themselves" (Hood et al., 2015, p. 287). SLPs reported a variety of ways of preparing for the evaluation, with the most prevalent way being researching information about the student's native language followed by researching information on native country. Slightly less than half of SLPs reported looking up information about the perception of disability in the student's culture or native country. Less than a fourth of SLPs noted that they looked up information about their student's religion.

These findings suggest that NC SLPs are aware of the need to under linguistic differences between a student's native language and English as well as understanding the cultural context the student, including country of origin. Understanding how a cultural group perceives, or understands, a disability may impact the assessment process. For example, some cultural groups view disability from the lens of superstition or witchcraft (Munyi, 2012). Religion is an important variable to consider when assessing a student as well. Some religions may view disabilities as an Act of God. For example, in Hinduism a disability may be the result of bad Karma. Understanding these factors may help a SLP understand the context in which he/she is entering.

A critical component of CRE is acknowledging privilege, in all its forms, as well as understanding that power differentials, or positionality impacts every phase of the evaluation process (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). The majority of SLPs reported not acknowledging power differentials (e.g. the power associated with the role of *the diagnostician*) before entering into an assessment with ELLs. Acknowledging power, or privilege, is necessary as evaluators should be "aware of their own cultural locations vis-a-vis the community, including prior experiences, assumptions, and biases" (Hood et al., 2015), p. 291). In doing so, evaluators (e.g. SLPs) may be more likely to enter into an assessment conscious of their privileges, assumptions, and/or biases.

Engaging Stakeholders

Stakeholders are defined as "individuals who are invested in a program [or student] by virtue of their roles, values, or perceived gains or losses" (Hood et al., 2015 p.291). However, according to CRE Theory, stakeholders do not all hold the same investment. One stakeholder's benefit may come at another's expense. A culturally responsive evaluation values a diverse team of stakeholders, with varying levels of investment. Almost half of SLPs surveyed reported that all stakeholders shared an equal investment in the assessment process. However, according to CRE Theory this is untrue. An example of this may be an ELL student, who receives English as a Second Language (ESL) services, also begins receiving special education services. This may result in the ELL student losing their ESL services in order to accommodate the special

education services. Though there is no formal rule that special education eclipses ESL services, it is an unfortunate reality for many ELL students who are placed in special education (Kangas, 2014). Therefore, it is necessary for SLPs, and other members of the special education team, to understand the underlying stakes associated with team decisions and advocate for their students accordingly.

Further, CRE Theory supports the creation of diverse team members through an "array of skills, competencies, and sensibilities" (Hood et al. 2015, p. 291). To that end, we questioned SLPs about the stakeholders they engaged with. SLPs reported engaging the most with the regular/special education teachers, parents, and the students. These individuals are some of the required members of any special education team. Those professionals with whom the SLPs did not, or rarely, engage with included: ESL teachers, community liaisons, and physical/occupational therapists. Engaging these members, particularly the former two, are an important, and necessary, part of the evaluation process. ESL teachers can report on the student's language growth in English and provide information about how the student's progress compares to peers of a similar age and language background. Community liaisons can serve as a link between the school and the student's cultural background, increasing the likelihood of parental involvement.

Designing the Evaluation

Culturally responsive evaluations should be unique to the individual, group, or program. A little over half of SLPs reported that they did not create unique assessment protocols with their ELL students. However, we found that SLPs often used a mixed-methods approach when assessing ELLs, which is a recommended approach in CRE Theory. As mentioned previously, this type of mixed-methods approach is recommended in CRE theory (Hood et al., 2015). Further, this outcome supports previous findings by Arias and Friberg (2017) that SLPs are using both informal and formal (e.g. standardized assessment) measures with ELLs. The methods utilized most by SLPs were a standardized assessment (e.g. CELF-V) paired

with a language sample analysis, criterion-referenced checklist, or skilled observations. This suggests that SLPs are aware that a standardized test alone may not be sufficient to assess a student's language abilities.

Selecting and Adapting the Instrumentation

At times, it is not conceivable for SLPs to create an entire assessment protocol for a student. If a SLP, in Designing the Evaluation, determines it is appropriate to use a standardized test, it is necessary to screen the instrument for culturally and linguistically biased test items. One form of adaptation is translation. CRE Theory supports the use of translated instruments, but warns that the evaluator should confirm that the translated questions continue to target the same skills or concepts.

Most SLPs did not report translating standardized assessment into the student's native language. Of the SLPs (approximately one-third) who translated standardized tests, the most common way of interpreting them was to describe correct and incorrect responses in a narrative. Followed by computing a standard score and, third, calculating a percentage score from the total correct answers. Computing a standard score from a translated assessment is problematic for many reasons, including the loss of validity after translation and subsequently an inaccurate standard score. Keeping in mind the varied ways SLPs scored translated assessments, SLPs should interpret translated assessments with caution.

Data Collection

Collecting data, according to CRE Theory, goes beyond collecting correct and incorrect responses. In order to have a culturally responsive evaluation, it is necessary to understand how bias, both implicit and explicit, can influence what is seen and heard and how it influences data collection. Further, understanding one's own cultural location, or identity, can help SLPs be more critical of their data collection. For example, a SLP who has considered her cultural location, may be more aware of her/his (un)familiarity with Spanish-influenced English, and therefore pause for a

moment and question her/his rationale for marking a response as correct or incorrect. We expected only a small percentage of SLPs to consider their cultural locations when collecting data. However, our findings indicated that a little over half of SLPs considered how their experiences and cultural locations influence data collection. While these findings are greater than anticipated, a continued discussion of understanding one's own cultural location remains necessary.

Analyzing Data

"Data do not speak for themselves; they are given voice by those who interpret them" (Hood et al., 2015, p.296). SLPs should always be aware of the presence of their own voice within their reports. No report is objective. However, CRE Theory has recommendations for reducing the presence of our voices when writing a report including using cultural interpreters and engaging (diverse) stakeholders (Hood et al., 2015). As previously noted, the vast majority of NC SLPs (99%) stated that their reports were objective and their voices were not present in their reports. A small percentage (1%) reported recognizing the presence of their voice in the report. This finding highlights an underlying need to monitor the influence of one's own voice when reporting on data.

Graduate Education

We asked SLPs to share their educational experiences as well as their perceptions of preparation to assess ELLs during their graduate coursework. Our findings indicated that despite the majority (87.3%) of SLPs having some sort of coursework related to multicultural issues, most SLPs (90.9%) reported that their graduate education did not or only somewhat provide them sufficient theoretical knowledge to assess ELLs. In addition, the majority (79.8%) of SLPs reported not receiving sufficient clinical experience regarding assessment of ELLs. The findings of varied education experiences is supported by previous research indicating the documented differences in the educational experiences of SLPs in the area of cultural competency (e.g. Hammer et al., 2007; Roseberry-McKibbin et al., 2005). Essentially,

these findings suggest the need for graduate programs to make a more concentrated effort to address multicultural issues and topics in their curricula.

Phone Interviews

Finally, we interviewed five school-based SLPs regarding the challenges they've experienced when assessing ELLs, their suggestions for making the assessment process easier, as well as areas of improvement in graduate education, both theoretical and clinical. All SLPs reported difficulty with familiarizing themselves with the student's native language, specifically with technical characteristics such as syntax. One monolingual SLP reported very mild proficiency with Spanish that helped her with some components of the assessment. However, she reported that her confidence decreased when it was a language she did not know at all (e.g. Arabic).

Moreover, SLPs reported the need for more coursework, clinical training, and post-graduate school training to improve both confidence and competence with assessing ELLs. Increased instruction related to bilingual language development and clinical practice with implementing informal, least-biased measures such dynamic assessment were consistently indicated. SLPs also shared a desire for more support from their school districts by way of formal guidelines or procedures to assess ELLs. One SLP noted that having a general procedure, or steps, in place would give her a starting-off point when assessing her ELL students. During that call, the first author briefly explained the CRE Framework by Hood et al. (2015) to which the interviewee commented that such a framework (or something similar) would likely be beneficial for herself and many of her colleagues. In general, the phone interviews revealed a desire and need for increased education at the University level and increased support at the district level.

CONCLUSIONS AND CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

In this study we examined SLP's assessment practices with ELLs, confidence, and graduate education. We have also introduced, for the first time, an established model of culturally responsive evaluation that can be applied to ELL students. The CRE Framework outlined by Hood et al. (2005), is a potential model for culturally responsive language assessment. However, more research needs to be done in this area to determine the feasibility of such a model within the public school setting.

In addition, the findings related to confidence and academic experiences, from both the questionnaire and phone interviews, may be the most significant, as it sheds light on a persistent challenge in CSD graduate programs (e.g. Caesar & Kohler, 2007; Hammer et al. 2007; Arias & Friberg, 2017). This finding, in addition to previous research, suggests that SLP graduate programs need to more rigorously incorporate cultural and linguistic diversity into their curriculums to address the persistent gap in education regarding language diversity.

Limitations

First, the study questionnaire was distributed online, decreasing the likelihood of responses for SLPs with limited internet access. Second, the time of year in which the survey was distributed may have limited SLP response. The survey was distributed in May 2018, towards the end of the school year, which is a busy time for school-based SLPs. Third, we did not include a question asking SLPs about their geographic location (e.g. rural, urban, suburban). Therefore, our sample may not have been geographically representative of NC school-based SLPs in North Carolina. Finally, the questionnaire was distributed with a brief message describing the study. SLPs who may not have many ELL students on their caseload, may have chosen not to respond as they have limited experiences with that specific population.

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