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PREVIEW

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**The effects of types of bilingualism on the performances of
learning disabled and non-learning disabled students on the
WISC-R and the Children's Auditory Verbal Learning Test**

Carbajal, Graciela Ines, Psy.D.

Pace University, 1992

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**300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106**

PREVIEW

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PERFORMANCES OF LEARNING DISABLED AND NON-LEARNING
DISABLED STUDENTS ON THE WISC-R AND THE
CHILDREN'S AUDITORY VERBAL LEARNING TEST

by

Graciela I. Carbajal

A Doctoral Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Psychology
in the Department of Psychology at Pace University

NEW YORK

1992



PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT
PSY.D. PROJECT
FINAL APPROVAL FORM

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learning disabled and non-learning disabled students on the
WISC-R and the Children's Auditory Verbal Learning Test

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I have read the final version of the doctoral project
and certify that it meets the relevant requirements for
the Psy.D. degree in School-Community Psychology.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the relationship between types of bilingualism and cognitive and verbal abilities as measured by the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - Revised (WISC-R) and the Children's Auditory Verbal Learning Test (CAVLT). Forty three learning disabled and non-learning disabled 10 to 12 year old males were identified as coordinate or compound bilinguals. Age and context of second language acquisition and language usage patterns (Hoffman Bilingual Schedule results) were the criteria for the bilingual type classification. MANOVA analysis of WISC-R scores revealed a significant interaction between LD status and bilingual type. LD compound bilinguals showed significantly lower scores on Bannatyne's (1974) WISC-R Verbal Conceptualization, Sequential and Acquired Knowledge scales. MANOVA analysis of CAVLT variables revealed that CAVLT performance was not affected by the type of bilingualism but showed significant differences for LD status. Implications for the assessment of bilingual LD students are discussed.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The fields of mental health and education continue to encounter problems in the effort to provide the Hispanic minority with adequate services, despite professionals' growing sensitivity to their particular needs (Esquivel, 1988; Figueroa, 1990; Padilla & Ruiz, 1973). Apart from the issue of cultural differences, many of the difficulties professionals face, are related to language differences. Finding Spanish speaking professionals is difficult and in many instances does not necessarily solve the problem as the issue is a complex one. An example is the lack of agreement as to how different languages in patient and clinician affect the clinical evaluation and diagnosis. Del Castillo (1970) indicated that bilingual patients may show less psychotic symptoms when they are examined in English than when the interview is conducted in the native language. In an experimental study Marcos et. al. (1973) reached an opposite conclusion: patients seem to show more pathology when examined in English.

In the field of school psychology the problems are no less. Even though research regarding education, assessment and placement of language minority children continues to grow, the policy debate over how best to

educate students with limited ability in English continues. As Hakuta and Garcia (1989) state: "There is hardly any dispute over the ultimate goal of the programs-to 'mainstream' students in monolingual English classrooms with maximal efficiency. The tension has centered on the specific instructional role of the native language: How long, how much, and how intensively should it be used?"(p.376). The issue of developing competencies in the native language prior to the introduction of English vs. the introduction of English from the very beginning with minimal use of the native language is one of concern and controversy. However, there are also children who have already "mastered" English language skills and are already receiving education in English in the same manner as their monolingual peers. This problem, which affect minority students, is a major one for the professionals involved in the evaluation and development of interventions for these children.

Bilingualism was defined for many years simply as a "bivariate function of linguistic proficiency in two languages" (Hakuta & Garcia, 1989, p. 374). As Hakuta and Gould (1987) explain in their review of the early literature, it was also considered a handicapping condition: "...bilingualism confuses the mind and

retards cognitive development." (p.41). The more recent literature on the topic recognizes its complexity. The social context of language usage, the language-cognition-affect connection, the age and context of second language acquisition, etc. are accepted as important variables of bilingualism (Zentella, 1981; Gardner, 1983; Lambert & Rawlings, 1969). Bilinguals, therefore, should not be considered a homogeneous group.

The literature on bilinguals has focused generally on how individuals function in each of their two languages (e. g. expression of affect, language representational systems, recall in either language, etc.). It also points out the role that cultural and language factors often play in relation to test results and academic achievement. However, there is still a need for applied research in the area of bilingualism, particularly in school psychology. The present study was undertaken primarily in order to address the difficulties encountered in the assessment and diagnosis of bilingual students (e.i. learning disorders vs. difficulties in language proficiency), the problems posed by the available instruments, and the limited research-based knowledge in this particular

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area. The classification of children into compound and coordinate bilinguals according to age of second language acquisition and context and patterns of native (L1) and second (L2) language usage takes into account some of the variables cited by the literature as influential in the cognitive and academic functioning of bilingual children (Fernandez Rivera, 1986). The goal of the present study was to provide further understanding regarding these students' second language functioning by investigating cognitive skills and their relationship to verbal learning ability.

The issues of second language acquisition and proficiency, types of bilingualism, cognitive skill assessment, verbal learning ability and strategies are discussed in the following sessions.

Second Language Acquisition and Proficiency

Language development literature indicates that worldwide, children begin to learn their native language at the same age, in much the same way and same sequence (Saville-Troike (1979). By the age of four they have acquired most of the basic operations in language skills. Children are also capable of understanding and creating new utterances without being limited to the repetition of what they hear from their