Development of a Language Routing Protocol to Determine Bilingual Spanish Speaking Children's Language of Assessment

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**BACKGROUND**
- Many factors influence language proficiency and dominance in bilingual children including:
  - The age when children learn each language
  - How often (duration and frequency) children use each language in the home and with peers
  - Where and how children learn each language
- Determining the most appropriate language for assessing bilingual children can be challenging:
  - Tests of language dominance often categorize children into one of two language groups, rather than capturing the continuum of bilingual competencies
  - Few tests exist to determine appropriate language for assessment
  - Some research protocols rely only on parent or teacher report when determining which language to use when assessing children
- Assessing children in their non-dominant language can result in test scores that do not reflect accurately children’s overall development across languages.

**OBJECTIVE**
- Is a multi-step language routing protocol better than using only parent report to determine the appropriate language for assessing bilingual children and allow for appropriate adjustments during the actual assessment?
- Does the new routing protocol accurately capture children’s language abilities in a large urban ELL community sample, such as Los Angeles?

**SAMPLE**
- 1657 children attending a Los Angeles Universal Preschool Program (LAUP) funded by First 5 LA in 38 different centers
- 74% of children were of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity

**METHOD**
- Developed a multi-step language routing protocol

**FINDINGS**
- Children in language groups 2, 3, 5 were administered the bilingual (Spanish / English) Assessment (N = 952, 57.5%)
- Group 2 (N = 224) Spanish Only
  - 92.0% of children in Group 2 started the assessment in Spanish based on low scores on the English Pre-LAS subscales
  - 2.2% of children switched during the ROWPVT from English to Spanish (2) or English to Spanish (5)
  - 92.4% of the children continued the assessment in Spanish after the ROWPVT
- Group 3 (N = 434) Spanish Primarily
  - 68.5% of the children in Group 3 started the assessment in Spanish based on low scores on the English Pre-LAS subscales
  - 3.7% of children switched during the ROWPVT from Spanish to English (15) or English to Spanish (1)
  - 65.7% of the children continued the assessment in Spanish after the ROWPVT
- Group 4 (N = 537) English Only
  - 99.5% of children in Group 4 were administered the English Only assessment (N = 703, 42.5%)
  - 98.3% of children in Groups 1 and 4 were administered and completed the entire English Only assessment
- Group 5 (N = 93) English Primarily or Other Home Language
  - 99.0% of children in Group 5 stayed in English through the entire assessment
  - 12.9% of children in Group 5 answered 15 or fewer questions correctly on the ROWPVT, height and weight was collected and assessment ended
- 87.1% of children in Group 5 continued with the assessment in English

**CONCLUSION**

**Summary of Results**
- A multi-step language routing protocol increases the accuracy of routing bilingual children into the appropriate language for assessment and allows for appropriate adjustments during the actual assessment.
- Parent report accurately routed 73.3%. Evaluations that take only parent report into account mis-identifying nearly 30% of children.
- The Pre-LAS correctly routed the majority of children who spoke Spanish-only or primarily Spanish (Groups 2 and 3), but was less effective for children who spoke English-primarily with some Spanish (Group 5)

**Limitations**
- Although parents received consent forms in English and Spanish, parents with difficulties reading or writing may not have reported accurately on child’s language use
- Children who spoke Spanish-only or primarily Spanish (Groups 2 and 3), were administered the Spanish Pre-LAS before the English Pre-LAS. This may have given them additional exposure to the task than children who spoke English-primarily with some Spanish (Group 5)

**Next Steps**
- Analyze data from both fall 2007 and spring 2008 by language group