Examining the Linguistic Diversity of the Populations Speech-Language Pathologists Across the Country Serve

Sarah Dombroski & Giovanna Morini

University of Delaware
2020 Capstone Presentations, Newark, DE

BACKGROUND

• Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are working with more clients and families from linguistically diverse backgrounds (Verdon, McLeod, & Wong, 2015). This is due to the growing diversification of not only the United States, but the world.

• At the end of 2018, ASHA published a demographic profile of members providing bilingual services. A total of 11,259 SLPs out of 191,904 ASHA members self-reported as bilingual providers. In other words, only 5.9% of all SLPs reported being able to provide bilingual services. It is unclear how this figure relates to the actual needs of clients that SLPs across the country are seeing in their caseloads.

PURPOSE

To investigate whether there is a mismatch between the linguistic backgrounds of SLPs across the country and the clients in their caseloads. Additionally, we aimed to examine the degree to which practicing clinicians feel equipped to treat linguistically diverse populations.

PROCEDURE

A link to a survey was e-mailed to professional listservs and posted in professional Facebook groups (i.e. SLPs for Evidence Based Practice, Clinical Research for SLPs, Bilingual Resources for SLPs, and Cultural Humility for SLPs).

The 29-question survey included questions modeled after surveys done by Kohnert et al. (2003), Kritikos (2003), and Guiberson & Atkins (2012), in addition to questions generated by the first author. All of these studies looked at data from specific states, but none investigated the topic on a national level.

Survey questions focused on background information, caseload demographics, diversity training, and personal perspectives on linguistic diversity in the field of speech-language pathology.

RESULTS

• Data analysis compared the demographics of the participants to the demographics of their caseloads in addition to the comfort level of providing services to linguistically diverse clients.

• Findings suggest that almost 90% of SLPs surveyed have treated a linguistically diverse client, but only 54% have felt clinically competent in doing so.

DISCUSSION

The present study contributes to our understanding of some of the critical needs in our field related to the treatment of individuals from diverse language groups. Findings suggest that most SLPs are predominantly English speaking, while the caseloads of SLPs are far more diverse. Clear initiatives are needed to support the training of clinicians from underrepresented populations in the field, in order to better match the diversity of the clients.

REFERENCES


