Assessment with Bimodal-Plurilingual Learners – Trials and Errors

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Assessing the bimodal-plurilingual language profiles of immigrant d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners (IDML), and specifically their languages development, is a major challenge, as it involves considering the spoken, written, and/or sign languages of the host country in addition to learners' home language(s) (Cannon/Marx, submitted 2022). As well as language proficiency, assessments should consider the complexity of multilingual development by considering aspects affecting development such as age of acquisition, opportunities for language use, competencies in further languages, and language varieties, and for refugee learners, experiences of limited or interrupted education and trauma. This complexity results in challenges for language assessment, which is aggravated by the fact that most standardized instruments for spoken and written language are not normed for either d/DHH or for plurilingual learners, and there is a lack of appropriate instruments for sign languages in general (Pizzo & Chilvers, 2016). Subsequently, the validity of language assessments presently used for IDML is questionable. This is a major issue both for research and for pedagogy.

In order to address this issue in the German context, a comparison of different available assessment instruments is being carried out. The aim of the reported study is (1) to examine available spoken, written and sign language assessments, (2) to consider their usefulness for IDML, and (3) to pilot them with the target population of IDML, in order to (4) provide recommendations for researchers about alternative ways to approach assessment. In various trials beginning in June 2022, IDML at secondary-school level are being assessed with instruments developed for German and German sign language (DGS) contexts to determine inter-test validity. To assess written and spoken language, three different assessment instruments were chosen and subsequently piloted, while to assess DGS, two assessments will be used. Finally, a comparison of skills in different spoken, signed and written languages is to be carried out using the SOLOM and the CEFR guidelines. The results of the ongoing assessment study shed light on the potential for existing instruments to provide necessary and useful information for research and teaching practice.

References: • Cannon, J., & Marx, N. (submitted, 2022). Scoping Review of Methodologies across Language Studies with DHH Multilingual Learners. • Pizzo, L., & Chilvers, A. (2016). Assessment and d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing multilingual learners: Considerations and promising practices. *American Annals of the Deaf* 161(1), 56–66.