



Name: AR

Age: 4;7

Language: Spanish/English

Speech Diagnosis: Typically Developing

Diagnosis: None

Background

AR is 4;7 year old female living in a bilingual Spanish and English household. AR was born on March 4, 2009 in New York City. The informants of the interview were AR's father and grandmother, who were judged to be reliable informants. AR's birth was deemed unremarkable. Her developmental motor and speech milestones appeared to be within normal limits as she reportedly crawled at about 8 months, walked at about 1 year, and produced her first words at about 11 months.

AR currently resides with her father and grandmother in Brooklyn, NY. Currently AR's father is employed as the landlord of the building in which they reside and is able to be with her for the majority of her time at home. The father is the principal caregiver and confirms that there have not been significant changes in the child's life in the past 6 months. AR is the younger of two children and her older sister resides with her mother in New York, NY. AR's parents separated 2.5 years ago, and she has weekly visitations with her mother and sister.

AR's father, mother, and grandmother were born and raised in Guatemala. According to parental and caregiver report, the father's highest education level in Guatemala was 6th grade, the mother's was 2nd or 3rd grade, and the grandmother received no formal education. The father denied any family history of speech, language, and/or academic deficits.

Language Background and Use

AR is a simultaneous bilingual since she has been exposed to and speaking both English and Spanish early in her language development. As a simultaneous bilingual AR receives input characterized by Guatemalan Spanish from her father, mother, relatives and friends. Although English input is received in the home, the father reports that his proficiency is limited. As her



father understands some English, when he asks the child a question in Spanish, AR responds in English. The only people AR responds to in Spanish are her mother and grandmother who are monolingual Spanish speakers. AR receives Standard American English input in her current preschool.

AR's father states that a majority of the child's friends are also simultaneous bilingual speakers of Guatemalan Spanish and are all enrolled in an English only pre-kindergarten classroom. AR is described to be superior to her older sister in language development and expressiveness. The father remarks that AR has made ample progress in the past six months as she has mastered the alphabet and has progressively begun to increase her use of English.

Evaluation

Behavior and Play

During the evaluation, AR appeared to be a well-behaved, shy young girl. According to the caregiver's and parental report, although AR is friendly and initiates interactions with school peers, she does not initiate interactions with unfamiliar adults. This was observed during the evaluation as initially she was reluctant to respond to the clinician (e.g., remained quiet after the clinician asked the first question). Throughout the assessment, AR demonstrated adequate social interaction with the clinician, participated in the tasks presented, and maintained selective attention in the presence of background noise. With regard to play, AR reportedly engages in games and activities organized by other children, such as playing with dolls, tag, and hide and seek. However, when she is by herself she engages in imaginative play activities (e.g., she arranges household furniture to appear like a car and pretends to drive).

Hearing Status

Hearing screening was administered during the summer when AR received her annual check-up. The child demonstrated hearing adequate to develop age appropriate speech and language.

Oral Peripheral Exam

AR's oral structure, strength, mobility, and precision of movement were all within normal limits at the time of the assessment.

Voice and Fluency

The client's voice quality, pitch, loudness, and resonance were judge to be typical for her age and gender. No dysfluencies were noted in AR's speech.



Articulation and Phonological Skills

Assessment of AR's overall speech production revealed age-appropriate articulation and phonological development. Some of her English productions were consistent with Spanish-influenced English such as replacing /ŋ/ with /n/ (e.g., sleeping→/slipin/, dancing→/dæncin/) and replacing vowels that do not exist in Spanish, such as /ɪ/, with other vowels (e.g., /ɪ/→/i/ in sleeping and dancing). Although AR omitted /s/ when it was next to /t/ in English (e.g., /sɪstə/→/sɪtə/), this error was not observed consistently as she was able to produce words like “está” in Spanish. Therefore, this suggests that this is not a phonological process. Additionally, as she was able to produce /s/ it is not an articulation error.

Receptive Language

In order to elicit a language sample, a picture of a shoe stuck vertically between two subway doors and questions about the child's favorite TV show were used. AR demonstrated adequate receptive language skills in Spanish and English as evidenced by correct responses to questions posed. For example, when asked to make an inference regarding the question “what could happen to the man whose foot was stuck in the subway doors?” AR said, “Se va a morir.” (He will die.) This short utterance reveals an understanding of the situation and the ability to use academic language to analyze and make inferences. In another example, when asked, “What would you do if this happened to you?” she responded saying, “Que un muchacho que se metió, que se metió un pie así” (That a teenager that went in, that he put in a foot like this). Although she answered the question incorrectly, this can be contributed to the fact that she said she has never seen this before and would therefore not know what to do in this situation. However, the fact that she answered the question shows problem solving skills in that she knew she needed to answer the question although she did not know the correct answer.

Expressive Language

AR's English expressive language skills have been determined to also be typically developing for a simultaneous bilingual. Since AR's English language skills have been supported both in school and at home with her father, they appear to be stronger than her native Spanish skills, demonstrating language loss. One example of AR's English language skills can be seen in response to the question, “Should I watch it? (her favorite TV show) Why not?” In response to this question she said, “Because it's my mommy phone. My sister's show is in my mommy phone.” In this example she was able to self-correct, providing the needed preposition to make the utterance understandable. In addition, although she does not use the possessive “s” in “mommy phone” she does use it in “sister's show,” indicating an emergence of acquisition of



this concept, which is not present in Spanish. Furthermore, while this is AR's longest English utterance, it is void of any developmental errors, unlike her longest Spanish utterance, which did contain developmental errors.

Although AR demonstrates language loss in Spanish her Spanish expressive language skills were also determined to be typically developing for a simultaneous bilingual as evidenced by her response to questions asked. For example, when asked how the man got his foot stuck in the train doors AR said, "el se queriba meter el tren y pues la puerta cerro." (He wanted to get on the train and then the doors closed.) Although this utterance presents with errors, it uses the conjunction "then" to create a compound sentence. The errors in this utterance included a verb change of "quería" to "queriba" and an omission of the preposition "en." It should be noted that the use of "queriba" instead of "quería" is a common error displayed by typically developing Spanish speaking children (Menéndez Pidal, 2005). In addition, when asked, "What would you do if this happened to you?" she responded saying, "Que un muchacho que se metió, que se metió un pie así" (That a teenager that went in, that he put in a foot like this). This utterance demonstrates AR's errors in the use of the preposition "en," the demonstrative pronoun "que" and the reflexive pronoun "se." According to Quezada (1998), the acquisition of prepositions like "en," demonstrative pronouns like "que," and the reflexive pronoun "se" typically develop in Spanish speaking children around the age of 3. Although AR is 4;7, these errors do not point to a language delay as they only occurred in Spanish and not in English. Therefore, they are indicative of Spanish language loss rather than a language delay.

Narrative Skills

When producing narratives in Spanish, AR was able to include an initiating event, an action, and a possible consequence. For example, when producing the train narrative she included an initiating event/problem, "Que el se queriba meter el tren" (That he wanted to go the train), and an additional conflict, "Y pues la puerta se cerró," (And then the door closed). She also included an action taken by the main character to solve the initial problem, "Que un muchacho que se metió, que se metió un pie así" (That a teenager that went in, that he put in a foot like this). AR's narratives did not include a consequence, which is an element of a complete episode. However, it should be noted that she was able to infer the following consequence, "Se va morir" (He will die). Therefore, this suggests that she is beginning establish the concept of a basic narrative structure in Spanish (Hughes, McGillivray, & Schmidek, 1997; Muñoz, Gillam, Peña, & Gulley-Faehnle, 2003).

In contrast to AR's narratives in Spanish, her English narratives were more simplistic. When asked to tell the clinician about her favorite show, her narration consisted of descriptions (e.g.,



“Only my siter, only the peoples” and “Piano. And guitar.”) and actions sequences (e.g., “an dancin (dancing) and sinin (singing)”). Since AR’s English narratives did not include a complete episode (e.g., an initiating event, action, and consequence), this suggests that she has not yet established the concept of basic narrative structure in English.

AR was able to use appropriate sequencing of events in the Spanish and English narratives. In Spanish, she used the temporal marker “pues” (then) and conjunction word “y” (and) and in English, she used the conjunction word “and” to connect these events. In the Spanish narratives, AR demonstrated use of causal connections, such as when she stated “Que el se queriba meter el tren y pues la puerta se cerró” (That he wanted to go the train and then the door closed). Her English narratives were descriptive sequences and action sequences that were chronological but not causally ordered. AR consistently used referential markers throughout her narratives, which made her stories clear as it easy to understand who or what she was referring to. This suggests that although she is beginning to develop causal coherence, she has established referential coherence in her narrative productions.

Overall, AR’s Spanish and English narrative skills appear to be emerging, which is typical of four year old children. This is supported by Muñoz et al. (2003) who stated that the narratives of four year olds range from the production of nonepisodic descriptions to the production of a complete episode. Additionally, as the narrative structure is emerging; children tend to continue relying on simple action sequences (Muñoz et al., 2003).

Summary and Recommendations

In conclusion, AR has been determined to be a typically developing simultaneous bilingual (Spanish-English) speaker with emergent English skills and language loss in Spanish. Although AR had exposure to English before entering school, this exposure was limited as her mother and grandmother (2 of her 3 primary caregivers) are monolingual Spanish speakers and her father, who is a bilingual speaker, has limited English proficiency. Based on AR’s delayed language skills in Spanish (i.e. errors in the use of reflexive pronouns, prepositions, and demonstrative pronouns) but not in English, her language skills indicate that she is in a time of language transition since entering English immersion in school. AR’s developing narrative skills have also been determined to be typical as compared to her true, same aged bilingual peers. Furthermore, when compared to her sister at the same age, AR’s language skills were reported by both her father and grandmother, to be superior in content and intelligibility. Given the above findings, speech-language services are not recommended.



References

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