



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

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## 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.

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## MATERIALS & METHODS

### Participants:

- 179 self-identified speech-language pathologists across the United States ranging in age.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Characteristic	n	%
<b>Experience</b>		
CF	14	7.82
1-5 years	49	27.37
6-10 years	27	15.08
11-15 years	26	14.53
16-20 years	22	12.29
21-25 years	15	8.38
26-30 years	11	6.15
>30 years	15	8.38
<b>Current Work Setting</b>		
School	90	50.28
Hospital	23	12.85
Outpatient Rehab	34	18.99
Inpatient Rehab	13	7.26
Day Rehab	3	1.68
Skilled Nursing Facility	6	3.35
Private Practice	23	12.85
Home Health	8	4.47
Early Intervention	25	13.97
Acute Care	10	5.59
University Clinic	16	8.94
Other	9	5.03
<b>Population</b>		
Adults	19	10.61
Pediatrics	154	86.03
Both	6	3.35

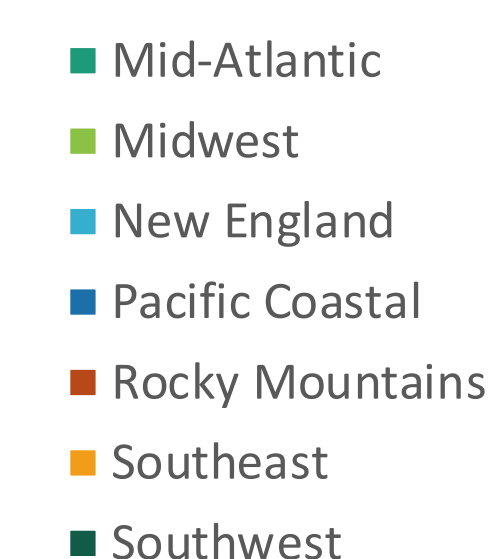


Table 2. Bilingual Participant Characteristics

Characteristic	n	%
<b>Bilingual</b>		
Yes	44	24.58
No	135	75.42
<b>Bilingual SLP</b>		
Yes	28	15.64
No	116	84.36
<b>Language other than English</b>		
Spanish	32	72.72
French	4	9.09
Russian	4	9.09
American Sign Language	3	6.82
Armenian	1	2.27
German	1	2.27
Urdu	1	2.27
Italian	1	2.27
Polish	1	2.27
Turkish	1	2.27
Tamil	1	2.27
<b>Proficiency in Language other than English</b>		
Somewhat Proficient	1	2.27
Proficient	17	38.64
Very Proficient	26	59.09

### 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.

Table 3. Caseload Dialectal and Linguistic Diversity (Percentage)

	<10%	10-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%	N/A
English	6.7	3.9	14.5	30.2	43.6	1.1
AAE*	40.2	15.6	6.7	3.9	2.8	30.7
Spanish	35.8	22.9	12.3	8.4	3.4	17.3
Arabic	35.8	4.5	1.1			58.7
Chinese	35.8	1.7	0.6			62.0
Vietnamese	26.8	1.1				71.5
French	19.6	1.1				79.3
Korean	21.2	0.6				78.2
Russian	20.7	1.1				78.2
Hindi	24.6	4.5				71.0

Table 4. Experience and Competency in Treating Bilingual Clients

	Not Competent		Somewhat Competent		Proficient		Very Proficient	
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
In my CF	14.2	2	42.9	6	35.7	5	7.1	1
1-5 Years	6.1	3	46.9	23	32.7	16	14.3	7
6-10 Years	14.8	4	40.7	11	37.0	10	7.4	2
11-15 Years	11.5	3	65.4	17	19.2	5	3.9	1
16-20 Years	4.6	1	63.6	14	22.7	5	9.1	2
21-25 Years	6.7	1	33.3	5	40.0	6	20.0	3
26-30 Years	27.3	3	54.6	6	18.2	2		
>30 Years	20.0	3	46.7	7	20.0	3	13.3	2

## 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.