Cultural Competence in an Autism Evaluation: A Case Study

Shirley Huang, M.S., CCC-SLP
Architects for Learning

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Case Study

Background
• 13 year old bilingual Cantonese-English girl → “Lisa”
• Language disorder, social challenges and academic delays
• Family and socioeconomic status

Reason for Referral
• Increasing emotional outbursts at school
• Psychotherapist’s concerns
• Preoccupations
• Autism evaluation
Purpose of Sharing Case Study

A) Draw attention to the issue of misdiagnoses (or lack of diagnoses) due to inappropriate assessment.

B) Help professionals identify components of a culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment.

C) Address ways to conduct culturally and linguistically sensitive family conferences.

D) Support professionals in helping families overcome cultural and linguistic barriers.
Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS-2) Evaluation

• ADOS-2: “The Gold Standard”

• Test limitations

• Understanding family and cultural influences

• Distinguishing DIFFERENCE vs. DISORDER
Putting It All Together: ASD Diagnosis

- Parent interviews
- Teacher questionnaires
- Developmental history
- DSM-V Criteria
Culturally and Linguistically Sensitive Family Conference

- Culturally competent interpreter
- Translator & written documents
- Sensitive word choice
- Inviting questions
- Validating concerns
- Empowerment
Beyond the Evaluation: Overcoming Barriers

Cultural:
• Self-advocacy
• Values and respect
• Limited understanding of the system

Linguistic:
• No interpreter
• Written document were computer translated
What can you do?

• Recognize cultural patterns, but also understand individual variations

• Follow evidence-based protocol, integrate clinical expertise, and involve input from multiple sources

• Collaborate with interpreters and translators

• Encourage a safe and open communication space

• Anticipate barriers to navigating and accessing special education and healthcare services
The process of achieving cultural competence is lifelong, informed by evidence, and involves self-reflection and humility in recognizing what one does not know, followed by the drive to seek cultural knowledge and experience to fill those gaps.