

***DIFFICULTIES LEARNING
FOREIGN LANGUAGES:
LINGUISTIC CODING
DIFFERENCE***

***Seminar for Cascia Hall Preparatory
School***

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Tucson, Arizona

Linguistic Coding Difference



Sparks spoke of two types of students with difficulty with foreign language:

- Those with no phonological problems, but problems with listening comprehension and oral expression.
- Those with phonological processing problems and listening comprehension, oral expression, vocabulary and general linguistic awareness problems.

Sparks, R.L. (1995). Examining the Linguistic Coding Differences Hypothesis to explain Individual Differences in Foreign Language Learning. Annals of Dyslexia, 45, pp. 187-214.

Linguistic Coding Difference



In addition to phonological problems, poor foreign language learners tend to have weaknesses in spelling, word identification, and grammar. Memory problems may also cause problems with foreign language learning.

Sparks, R.L., Ganschow, L., and Javorsky, J. (1992). Diagnosing and Accommodating the Foreign Language Learning Difficulties of College Students with Learning Disabilities. Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 7, pp. 150-160.

Linguistic Coding Difference

- **Dyslexia manifests itself among those who read totally transparent phonetic languages primarily as problems with fluency.**

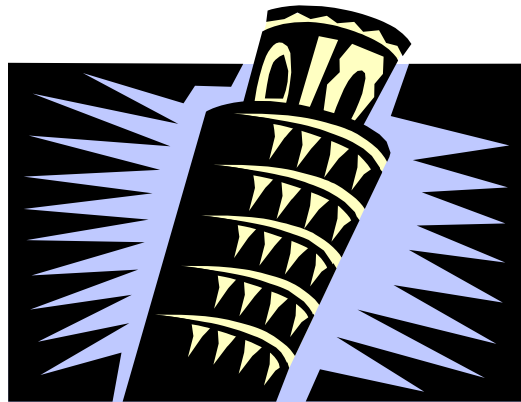
Fletcher, J.M., Lyon, G.R., Fuchs, L.S. and Barnes, M.A. (2007). Learning Disabilities: From Identification to Intervention. New York, NY: Guilford.



Dyslexia in Other Countries

- **English, French and Italian dyslexics have reduced activation in the left occipitotemporal region during reading.**

Fletcher, J.M., Lyon, G.R., Fuchs, L.S. and Barnes, M.A. (2007). Learning Disabilities: From Identification to Intervention. New York, NY: Guilford.



Linguistic Coding Difference



**“The distinction between word recognition and spelling, however, is important, because there are individuals for who spelling, but not word recognition, is the problem. These patterns are especially apparent in the identification of LDs in people who use languages that have more transparent relationships between phonology and orthography, such as German or Spanish.”
(p. 86)**

Fletcher, J.M., Lyon, G.R., Fuchs, L.S. and Barnes, M.A. (2007). Learning Disabilities: From Identification to Intervention. New York, NY: Guilford.

Linguistic Coding Difference

- Foreign Language Anxiety is the result of Linguistic Coding Difference not the cause!

Sparks, R.L., Ganschow, L. and Javorsky, J. (1992). Diagnosing and Accommodating the Foreign Language Learning Difficulties of College Students with Learning Disabilities. Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 7, pp. 150-160.



Linguistic Coding Difference



How to Diagnose LCD

Sparks, Ganschow and Javorsky (1992) suggested:

- review of the student's developmental history;
- review of the student's elementary and secondary learning history and academic records;
- review of the student's foreign language history and;

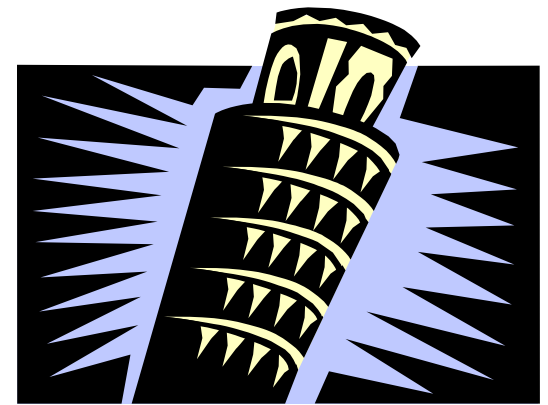
Linguistic Coding Difference (Continued)



- “An in-depth personal interview with the student is necessary to obtain background information before standardized testing.” (p. 153)
- administration of specific standardized tests

Sparks, R.L., Ganschow, L. and Javorsky, J. (1992). Diagnosing and Accommodating the Foreign Language Learning Difficulties of College Students with Learning Disabilities. Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 7, pp. 150-160.

Linguistic Coding Difference



Sparks, Phillips and Ganschow (1996), suggest the following types of standardized test instruments as part of this assessment: “IQ, foreign language aptitude, reading, spelling, written language, oral language” (pp. 34 and 35).

Sparks, R., Phillips, L., and Ganschow, L. (1996). Students Classified as Learning Disabled and the College Foreign Language Requirement. In J. Liskin-Gasparro (Ed.), The Changing Demographics of Foreign Language Instruction. Boston, MA: Heinle and Heinle.)

Linguistic Coding Difference



Suggested Standardized Tests

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised

- Test of Adolescent and Adult Language-3
- Test of Language Competence-Expanded Edition
- WAIS-III
- WJ-III
- Test of Written Language (TOWL)
- Wide Range Achievement Test-3 (Spelling subtest)

Linguistic Coding Difference

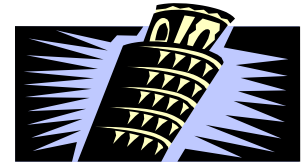


- Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT)
- Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery
- Defense Language Aptitude Battery

Adapted from: Sparks, R., Phillips, L. and Ganschow, L. (1996). Students Classified as Learning Disabled and the College Foreign Language Requirement. In J.Liskin-Gasparro (Ed.), The Changing Demographics of Foreign Language Instruction. Boston, MA: Heinle and Heinle.

Linguistic Coding Difference and The Question of Substitution

- Just because someone is LD does not indicate they need a foreign language course substitution.
- Those who had no difficulty with mother tongue should not be considered for substitution.
- “...many students classified as LD had passed high school FL courses with average or above-average grades.” (p. 346)
- Disability Services staff should help students map out a successful strategy for the student to take foreign language courses.



Linguistic Coding Difference and Substitutions



- Students should be made to use all available accommodations before substitutions are made.
- Postsecondary institutions should make specific guidelines for foreign language substitutions.

Sparks, R.L., and Javorsky, J. (July/August, 1999). Students Classified as LD and the College Foreign Language Requirement: Replication and Comparison Studies. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 32 (4), pp. 329-349.

Linguistic Coding Difference/ADHD



- Just because a student has AD/HD does not mean they have LCD.
- AD/HD students usually pass foreign language courses with A, B, or C grades.
- Accommodations for AD/HD without LCD: sometimes extended time and non-distracting environment.
- Some do have AD/HD and LCD.

Javorsky, J., and Sparks, R. (November 16, 2002). Diagnostic and Foreign Language Achievement Profiles of College Students with AD/HD: An Examination of Test Files from 1996-2001. Paper Presented at the 53rd Annual International Dyslexia Conference, Atlanta, GE.

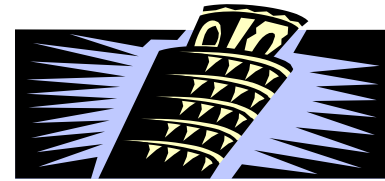
LCD/Substitutions



- Most postsecondary institutions offer course substitutions for Foreign Language courses.
- This is a contentious issue (Academic Integrity vs. Substitution, etc.).
- As accommodations for LD students become better developed and available for Foreign Language courses fewer substitutions will be granted.
- OCR recommended “well-tailored accommodations” (p. 322) that require coordination between faculty and LD services.

Brinkerhoff, L, McGuire, J.M., and Shaw, S.F. (2002). Postsecondary Education and Transition for Students with Learning Disabilities. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Linguistic Coding Difference



“...There is ample evidence to show that some students cannot successfully complete several semesters of language study, even with a specifically modified program. There is also ample educational justification for allowing individual students to pursue the goals of a liberal education in many different ways.” (p. 327)

Shaw, R.A. (July/August, 1999). The Case for Course Substitutions as a Reasonable Accommodation for Students with Foreign Language Learning Difficulties. Journal of Learning Disabilities. 32 (4), 320-349.

Linguistic Coding Difference



Possible Accommodations

- Synthetic Multi-Sensory Phonics instruction in the foreign language
- Take a written rather than a spoken language
- Intense tutoring
- Reduced overall load while taking this course
- Ideographic languages (i.e., Chinese, etc.)
- American Sign Language
- Immersion

Shaw, R.A. (July/August, 1999). The Case for Course Substitutions as a Reasonable Accommodation for Students with Foreign Language Learning Difficulties. Journal of Learning Disabilities. 32 (4), 320-349.

Linguistic Coding Difference

WARNING!



In rare cases students exposed to foreign languages will start to “forget” their mother tongue. In these cases students should be offered a substitution, if academically appropriate.

Dinklage, K.T. (1971). Inability to Learn a Foreign Language. In G.Blaine and C. McAurther (Eds.), Emotional Problems of the Student. New York, NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts, pp. 185-206.

Duane, D. (1993). Developmental Disorders of Learning, Attention and Affect. Videotape prepared by the Institute for Developmental Behavioral Neurology, 10210 North 92nd Street, Suite #300, Scottsdale, AZ 85258.

Linguistic Coding Difference

- Excellent Reference:

Schneider, E. and Crombie, M. (2003). Dyslexia and Foreign Language Learning. London, Great Britton: David Fulton.

