Messaging in COMD

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*What are Linguistic Microaggressions?*

Brief, everyday exchanges that send negative messages to individuals because of the way they talk.

Microaggression deals with a class of utterances or sentences that, given the context of their production, are ambiguous: they are potentially insulting or invalidating, but the insult is *plausibly deniable.*

Unambiguously Negative: *Your outfit looks dumb.*

Ambiguous: *Your outfit looks [pause] so interesting.*

Intent vs. Effect

*Do we have ambiguous messaging in our field?*

 If we do, we may be unintentionally engaging in linguistic microaggressions.

If we do, we should work to change our messaging.

The next two infographics were created as supplements to a recent article in the ASHA Leader. The infographics were cut for space. I’m offering these infographics to spark dialogue. I’d love to learn more about ways to improve my messaging. Please share tips!

<https://leader.pubs.asha.org/do/10.1044/leader.FMP.25112020.12/full/>

*Let’s look at this first one. (Graphic #1)*

Graphic #1:

**Developmental Language Disorder**

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) affects children’s abilities to learn and use language to communicate with others and perform well in school. DLD is not caused by a hearing impairment, intellectual disability, autism, or other conditions.

**Characteristics:**

Children with DLD often display difficulties:

* Understanding others
* Talking to others
* Making friends and completing school work

**Statistics:**

As the most common disorder of early childhood, DLD:

* Affects 5X more children than autism
* Presents in 7-15% of kindergartners
* Leads to later reading difficulties in 50-70% of children
* Doubles the risk and negative effects of being bullied at school
* Runs in families, with 2X the rate of a positive family history than other children

**Clinical Markers of DLD:**

Young children with DLD often rely on generic words and simple sentence structure

* A child with DLD says: “*He carry it*” and “*She go*”.
* Other children say: “*The boy carried the ball*” and “*Mia goes to the store*”.

**Speech-Language Pathologists:**

Speech-language pathologist assess and treat children with DLD

* Speech-language pathologists work in schools, private practice, and clinics
* Language therapy helps children succeed socially and academically

**Dialect Differences Are Not DLD:**

Some children speak a dialect of English that differs from school English. Some of these dialects are African American English, Southern White English, and Spanish-influenced English.

* Dialects reflect natural differences in how groups of speakers use language
* A child who speaks a dialect that differs from school English presents a language difference and not a language disorder.

Source Websites: D4 Child Language Lab ([https://faculty.lsu.edu/oetting)](https://faculty.lsu.edu/oetting%29) ; DLDandMe.org (<https://dldandme.org)>

**This infographic is not recommended for dissemination**

It was created using a Dialect vs. Disorder Framework

Pretty standard content, eh?

Now let’s think about this content through a microaggression lens.

Look for ambiguity in the messaging.

If our messaging is ambiguous, we may be engaging in microaggressions.

*Ambiguous*

DLD affects children's abilities to learn and use language to communicate with others and perform well in school. DLD is not caused by a hearing impairment, intellectual disability, autism, or other conditions.

* Some nonmainstream dialect speakers may also struggle with language and school for different reasons. They are invisible in this paragraph.
* Dialects are treated as an “Other” Condition.

Young children with DLD often rely on generic words and simple sentence structure.

A child with DLD says: “*He carry it*” and “*She go*”. Other children say: “*The boy carried the ball*” and “*Mia goes to the store*”.

* Examples may be relevant for mainstream dialects of English, but they are not relevant for all dialects of English when presented in isolation.

Dialect differences are not DLD. Some children speak a dialect that differs from school English. Some of these dialects are African American English, Southern White English, and Spanish-Influenced English.

* Well, that’s great to know but what does DLD look like in these other dialects?

Dialects are natural differences in how groups of speakers use language. A child who speaks a dialect that differs from school English presents a difference and not a disorder.

* Again, good to know but what does DLD look like in these other dialects?
* Does our field care about DLD within dialects other than mainstream English?

From a microaggression lens, there is ambiguity in what seemed like a pretty good infographic.

*Let’s look at a second infographic. (graphic #2)*

Graphic #2:

**Developmental Language Disorder**

Across all dialects of English, some children struggle to learn language compared to their siblings, cousins, and friends; these children may have Developmental Language Disorder (DLD).

**Characteristics:**

DLD is not caused by a hearing impairment, intellectual disability, autism, or other conditions. Children with DLD often display difficulties:

* Understanding others
* Talking to others
* Making friends and completing school work

**Statistics:**

As the most common disorder of early childhood, DLD:

* Affects 5X more children than autism
* Presents in 7-15% of kindergartners
* Leads to later reading difficulties in 50-70% of children
* Doubles the risk and negative effects of being bullied at school
* Runs in families, with 2X the rate of a positive family history than other children

**Dialect Universal Markers of DLD:**

Some clinical markers of DLD are found in all dialects of English, including a reliance on generic words and simple sentence structure.

* A young child with DLD says: “*it*”, or “*go*”; Other say: *“bulldozer*” or “*drive*”
* A young child with DLD says: *“I see it”*; Other say: *“I see the baby playing with a toy”*

**Dialect Specific Markers of DLD:**

Some clinical markers of DLD are specific to a child’s dialect. Some English Dialects include:

* General American English, African American English, Southern White English, Appalachian English, Cajun/Creole English, Gullah/Geechee-influenced English
* English influenced by another language, such as Spanish, Mandarin, or Vietnamese

**Speech-Language Pathologists:**

Speech-language pathologist assess and treat children with DLD

* Assessment and treatment for DLD is customized for a child’s family and dialect
* Language therapy helps children succeed socially and academically

Source Websites: D4 Child Language Lab ([https://faculty.lsu.edu/oetting)](https://faculty.lsu.edu/oetting%29) ; DLDandMe.org (<https://dldandme.org)>

Same content, but it is much more inclusive and unambiguous. It was written from a Disorder within Dialects Framework

*Unambiguous*

Across all dialects of English and all languages, some children struggle to learn language and perform well in school compared to their siblings, cousins, and friends; these children may have DLD. DLD is not caused by a hearing impairment, intellectual disability, autism, or other conditions.

* All dialects and languages are included. Reference is to children in the same dialect/language community.

Dialect Universal Markers: Some clinical markers of DLD are found in all dialects of English, including a reliance on generic words and simple sentence structure.

Dialect Specific Markers: Some clinical markers of DLD are specific to a child’s dialect and language.

SLP services are customized to a family’s dialect and language.

* Sends a message that SLPs work with children who present with DLD within ALL dialects and ALL languages.