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ABSTRACT

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DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALCÍNÍ BIZAAD COMPREHENSION TEST
OF NAVAJO AND ENGLISH FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

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The Alchíní Bizaad ("Children's Language")
Comprehension (ABC) Test of Navajo and English was
produced by group consensus through a series of meetings
of classroom teachers, administrators, Navajo language
specialists, applied linguists, parents, and community
members from 1988-1994. The ABC test assesses the language
comprehension of Navajo kindergartners who respond to test
questions by manipulating objects in Navajo sheep camp
diorama.

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The study reports results of the ABC test for
subjects from four Navajo Nation schools (150
kindergartners, ages 5-6) who participated in the fall
1993 pilot. The Navajo and English components each
contained 34 questions (14 object identification, 6
dimension, 2 quantity, 10 location directives, and 2
complex directives) worth a total of 50 points and
required 10-15 minutes to administer individually. The
Navajo rounded mean score (N = 150, M = 30, range = 1-49,
SD = 13) was lower than the English mean (N = 116, M = 39.
range = 19-50, SD = 6). Both score distributions were

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positively skewed. Preschool attendance and sex made no difference in test scores; age was a slight advantage only for the English component. Significant Navajo and English mean differences by school were found due in part to bilingual program variation.

Guidelines for norm and criterion referenced ABC test score interpretations are reported. Reliability measures applied to the data include: internal consistency, standard error of measurement, the agreement coefficient and the kappa coefficient. The Navajo test was adequately reliable on all four measures, but the English test was not.

Convergent and discriminate validity evidence was obtained through investigation of associations between the ABC test scores and other language test scores in Navajo and English, a home language use survey, and a teacher's observational measure of language comprehension dominance. The Navajo test was supported by the validity evidence although further revision is suggested. The English test was not supported by the validity evidence; a new approach to the design of the English component is necessary. It is predicted that the test will be used for a variety of purposed based upon bilingual program needs.

The study concludes with a series of questions which constitute a planning exercise for other groups wishing to design minority language tests based on the strengths and weaknesses of the ABC test development process.

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