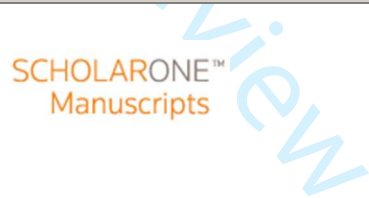




**A Comment On Test Validation: The Importance of The Clinical Perspective**

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**Abstract**

Purpose: The misuse of standardized assessments has been a long standing concern in speech-language pathology, and has been traditionally viewed as an issue of clinician competency and training. The purpose of this paper is to consider the contribution of communication breakdowns between test developers and the end users to this issue.

Method: We considered the misuse of standardized assessments through the lens of the two-communities theory, in which standardized tests are viewed as a product developed in one community (researchers/test-developers) to be used by another community (front-line clinicians). Under this view, optimal test development involves a conversation to which both parties bring unique expertise and perspectives.

Results: Consideration of the interpretations that standardized tests are typically validated to support revealed a mismatch between these and the interpretations and decisions that speech-language pathologists typically need to make. Test development using classical test theory, which underpins many of the tests in our field, contributes to this mismatch. Application of item response theory could better equip clinicians with the psychometric evidence to support the interpretations they desire, but is not commonly found in the standardized tests used by speech-language pathologists.

Conclusions: Advocacy and insistence on the consideration of clinical perspectives and decision-making in the test validation process is a necessary part of our role. In improving the nature of

*Running Head: A Comment on Test Validation*

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3 the statistical evidence reported in standardized assessments, we can ensure these tools are  
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5 appropriate to fulfill our professional obligations in a clinically feasible way.  
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For Peer Review

### A Comment on Test Validation: The Importance of the Clinical Perspective

If a test score is interpreted for a given use in a way that has not been validated, it is incumbent on the user to justify the new interpretation for that use, providing the rationale and collecting new evidence, if necessary – *Standards of Psychological and Educational Testing* (AERA, APA & NCME, 2014)

Assessment is a core foundation in definitions of the speech-language pathologist's scope of practice (American Association of Speech and Hearing, 2016; Speech-Language & Audiology Canada, 2016). As a part of the assessment process, standardized testing informs us about whether an individual is performing above or below age expectations. Despite their ubiquity, misuse of the results of standardized assessments has been a long standing concern in our field. For over two decades, calls for increasing clinicians' psychometric knowledge have permeated our field with limited impact. In 2003, Kerr, Guildford and Kay-Raining Bird noted a bleak trend: misuses documented by McCauley and Swisher in 1984 (e.g., using test items to select treatment goals, use of age-equivalents to summarize test results) continued to be common. The onus, traditionally, has been placed on clinicians or clinical training programs to increase psychometric competency. Ensuring adequate understanding of the tests we are administering is inarguably important (and a matter of professional ethics; see Palmer, 2009, for a discussion) but is clearly not sufficient. We argue that the misuse of standardized assessments is not only an issue of professional competency, but additionally, one of communication. Reducing the misuse of standardized assessments relies on a two pronged approach: increased clinical competency and advocating for our clinical perspective in the test validation process.

The gap between research findings and clinical practice has been routinely documented and is not unique to speech-language pathology (Graham et al., 2006), resulting in the development of fields of study (such as knowledge translation and implementation science) dedicated to understanding these gaps and the ways in which they can be mitigated. The two-

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3 communities theory (Caplan, 1979) describes knowledge-users (speech-language pathologists)  
4 and researchers (test-developers) as inhabiting different professional communities of practice  
5 with distinct professional jargon, values, resources, and beliefs. Bridging the *knowledge-to-*  
6 *action* gap rests on increasing communication between these two professional communities.  
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8 Most current models of knowledge translation describe understanding the clinical context as of  
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10 paramount importance to successful knowledge implementation and sustained knowledge use  
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12 over time (Dobrow, Goel & Upshur, 2004; Graham et al., 2006).  
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### 19 **Standardized Test Misuse: The Two-Communities Theory**

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21 Viewed through the lens of the two-communities theory (Caplan, 1979), standardized  
22 tests are a product developed in one community (researchers/test-developers) to be used by  
23 another community (front-line clinicians). The community of test developers, researchers, and  
24 psychometricians brings important knowledge regarding the psychometrically appropriate ways  
25 to measure speech and language, the type of statistical evidence that is needed to support our  
26 interpretations, and the limitations of their analyses. As the end users of the assessment tool,  
27 front-line clinicians have equally important insights into the decisions that will be made based on  
28 assessment results, the information we need to enrich our interpretations, and the interpretations  
29 we are required to make to fulfill program requirements. Optimal test development, therefore, is  
30 a conversation where both parties bring their unique expertise and perspectives. Are misuses of  
31 standardized assessment, then, solely a failure of one community to develop necessary  
32 competencies? Or are these misuses exacerbated by breakdowns in communication between  
33 clinicians and test-developers, particularly with regards to the types of decisions that  
34 stakeholders are required to make? The goal of the present paper is to highlight the value of  
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3 clinicians' perspectives and to empower clinicians to initiate conversations with other  
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5 stakeholders (i.e., researchers and test-developers).  
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8 Standardized assessment results are designed to determine when an individual performs  
9  
10 significantly below their peers. However, as demands for public program accountability and  
11  
12 demonstration of intervention effectiveness increase, results from standardized assessments are  
13  
14 being requested at program and government levels for reasons such as evaluating a client's  
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16 change over time in response to intervention. As an illustrative example of the issue, the Joint  
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18 Committee of Infant Hearing recommends that all children who are deaf/hard of hearing receive  
19  
20 standardized, norm-referenced assessment of speech and language outcomes on a semi-annual  
21  
22 basis up to 3 years of age and annually thereafter (Muse et al., 2013), which is re-iterated in  
23  
24 international consensus documents (Moeller, Carr, Seaver, Stredler-Brown & Holzinger, 2013).  
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26 The results of these assessments are intended to be used by clinicians to identify whether the  
27  
28 child is progressing towards age-appropriate language, whether the child has made significant  
29  
30 progress over time, and whether changing the intervention plan is appropriate. These  
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32 recommendations, while necessary to demonstrate program effectiveness, require more  
33  
34 interpretation of standardized assessment results than the tests are traditionally validated to  
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36 support and, indeed, require clinicians to make interpretations that are traditionally described as  
37  
38 inappropriate for those tests (e.g., McCauley & Swisher, 1984).  
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45 Similar mismatches between test use and program requirements have been documented in  
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47 the state-mandated application of cut-off scores. Spaulding, Szulga, and Figueroa (2012)  
48  
49 documented that 8 of 45 (16%) state departments of education applied mandated severity cut-off  
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51 scores to determine a child's eligibility for special education services. These cut-offs, however,  
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53 were neither consistent across states nor consistent with the appropriate diagnostic accuracy cut-  
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3 offs reported in standardized tests' examiner's manuals. Advocating for change in government  
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5 policy is laudable, but pending such change, clinicians find themselves in a no-win situation:  
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7 meet requirements needed of them by governing bodies or avoid statistical misuses. Indeed,  
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9 when asked to give reasons for inappropriate uses of scores such as using age-equivalent scores  
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11 to summarize test results, Kerr, Guldorf and Kay-Raining Bird's (2003) respondents gave  
12  
13 reasonable explanations grounded in clinical reality such as communicating with parents,  
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15 securing funding, or using them when norms don't apply. Similarly, 86% of respondents  
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17 accurately identified two problems with using individual items on a standardized tests to set  
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19 treatment goals, but 55% felt the practice was an *efficient* way to identify goals. Clearly, misuse  
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21 stems not only from a lack of knowledge but is also related, in part, to trying to meet a variety of  
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23 needs with limited time and resources, and with time intensive tools (standardized tests) that may  
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25 not only be mandatory to administer, but also limited in the scope of information they are  
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27 capable of providing.  
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### **Statistical Justification for Misuses: Item Response Theory and its Implications**

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35 The description of misuses by McCauley and Swisher (1984) highlighted that some  
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37 interpretations cannot be made when using tests that are designed according to specific  
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39 psychometric theories and that use a particular set of statistical analyses. These misuses are not  
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41 due to intransient properties of tests, but rather, are due to the nature of statistical evidence that is  
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43 commonly reported in the test manuals. For example, McCauley and Swisher argued that using  
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45 standardized tests to measure change is inappropriate because such tests measure a large set of  
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47 relatively stable skills and are not sensitive enough to provide detailed information regarding a  
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49 child's ability, or to detect small changes over time. The fault with using tests to measure  
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51 progress lies not with the desire to do so *per se* but with an incompatibility between this desire  
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3 and the statistical evidence or psychometric theory used to guide development of the tests. When  
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5 tests are designed using classical test theory (CTT), this is indeed true. CTT assumes that all  
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7 questions on a test are equally good measures of a single, unchanging skill. When standardized  
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9 tests are evaluated according to CTT, this limits their interpretation in a number of ways and can  
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11 thereby restrict their clinical utility.  
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15 Clinically, we can intuit that the assumptions underlying CTT about item equivalence are  
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17 not true in all cases. Sometimes, questions may be harder than they should be, may require skills  
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19 to answer them that aren't (intentionally) being measured (e.g., working memory), or may  
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21 simply be poorly written. Because of a lack of empirical data to support such intuitions, we are  
22  
23 traditionally required to ignore them. There is no reason, beyond psychometric tradition, that this  
24  
25 should be the case. Statistical analyses do exist that can allow clinicians to gather much more  
26  
27 information from a single test item than that with which we are currently being provided, and are  
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29 in fact well established within the psychometric literature. Consider Item Response Theory (IRT;  
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31 see Baylor et al., 2011 for a comprehensive tutorial). Contrary to the assumption of item  
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33 equivalence underlying CTT, IRT analyses are guided by the assumption that a client's  
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35 performance on a single item can be influenced by four parameters: (a) the client's true ability,  
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37 (b) an item's difficulty, (c) an item's discriminability (sensitivity to differences between levels of  
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39 difficulty), (d) and randomness (guessing). With enough data, these four factors can be  
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41 statistically teased apart, yielding a wealth of information with numerous potential clinical  
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43 applications.  
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50 When tests are developed using IRT, the item parameters can be used to identify (a) items  
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52 that are easier or harder than others, (b) items that are more, or less, related to the skill of interest  
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54 (supporting clinical intuition), and (c) items that are redundant with other items. Through this  
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3 knowledge, prospective studies correlating performance on individual items, or pre-intervention  
4 ability, to therapeutic outcome could support clinicians in determining candidacy for intervention  
5 based on test performance. Item parameters can also be compared across clinical populations to  
6 identify items that are easier or harder for different groups. Using IRT parameters, test  
7 developers can then use logistic regression to identify items to which individuals with various  
8 disorders respond differently, providing information to support differential diagnosis even in  
9 situations where the overall number of items answered correctly is the same across individuals.  
10 For instance, research evaluating the language outcomes of children who are deaf/hard-of-  
11 hearing (CD/HH) receiving early intervention repeatedly documents that, as a group, children  
12 perform within normal limits on standardized assessments (e.g., Tomblin et al., 2015). This  
13 finding can mean one of two things: (a) CD/HH have language abilities commensurate with their  
14 same-aged peers or (b) the norm-referenced tests used to measure language are not sensitive to  
15 the linguistic differences between CD/HH and children with typical hearing. IRT-based analyses  
16 can be helpful when the total number of correctly answered questions isn't sensitive to subtle  
17 differences, that is, by identifying individual items that point to differences between groups. For  
18 instance, despite the fact that CD/HH are documented to perform within normal limits on  
19 omnibus measures of language, they are still known to be at risk for impairments in specific  
20 domains such as articulation and morphology, and in specific structures within these domains  
21 (Moeller, Tomblin, Yoshinaga-Itano, Connor & Jerger, 2007). In cases where total scores are not  
22 sensitive, IRT analyses have the potential to identify individual items *within the whole test* that  
23 are (a) sensitive to differences between clinical populations and typical populations and (b)  
24 sensitive to differences within clinical populations. Further, IRT can be used to identify both the  
25 whole test's and individual items' direct relation to underlying ability in a single skill. Finally,  
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3 IRT parameters can be used to develop shorter (i.e., less time consuming) tests without  
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5 compromising informativeness.  
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8 An additional important clinical application of IRT relates to ability scores. Test  
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10 information curves can identify levels of ability in a skill where the overall test is maximally  
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12 informative, but individual items can also be used to quantify ability. Because ability estimates  
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14 (also known as theta scores, growth scale values, progress values, or W scores) directly estimate  
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16 ability and control for the other three parameters (difficulty, discriminability, and guessing), they  
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18 support uses of a test that are otherwise considered to be misuses. For example, age-equivalent  
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20 scores have been described by clinicians to be clinically helpful in summarizing test results to  
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22 parents and teachers (Kerr et al., 2003), however, their interpretation and calculation is  
23  
24 statistically problematic. Age-equivalents statistically “represent the mean or median score  
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26 derived for a normative sample for a particular age group” (Maloney & Larrivee, 2007, p.p 86) –  
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28 that is, the age at which a child’s score is considered average. Like standard scores, age-  
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30 equivalents are assigned based on comparisons of an individual to a group of peers. Age-  
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32 equivalents do not imply, for example, that a 6-year-old child with an age-equivalent score of 3  
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34 years uses and understands the same language as a 3-year-old child. Rather, age-equivalents  
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36 imply that the child correctly responded to the same number of questions to which a typical 3-  
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38 year-old in the norming sample would respond. Unlike age-equivalents, ability scores enable the  
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40 interpretation of *how much* ability a client has in a specific skill (loosely defined) based on the  
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42 pattern of their responses to individual items. Ability scores more directly capture what age-  
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44 equivalents attempt to by virtue of their underlying relation to ability in a skill.  
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51 With sufficient evaluation and correlation of ability scores to other measures of language,  
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53 a norm-referenced test could theoretically be validated to provide a summary statistic that more  
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3 closely aligns with a child's stage or profile in language development than the age-equivalent  
4 score. Clinically, this statistic could be transformed to be reported using terminology similar to  
5 an age-equivalent but in a statistically appropriate way. This statistic would provide clinicians  
6 with a *psychometrically appropriate* way to communicate test results in ways they have  
7 identified as important (i.e., to parents and teachers). Similarly, ability scores can be used to  
8 document whether or not an individual acquired more/less of that skill over time. Rather than  
9 interpreting a client's performance only in relation to their peers, IRT analyses enable  
10 interpretation of a client's performance relative to a skill, as well as to themselves. Here again,  
11 IRT matches statistical evidence with the types of decisions clinicians are already making.  
12 Rather than attempt to limit clinical interpretations to suit statistical evidence, our field is better  
13 supported by designing statistical evidence to fit clinical uses. When taken together, traditional  
14 psychometrics (e.g., reliability, normative scores) and IRT analyses enrich clinical interpretation  
15 and the value of administering a single test.  
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33 Daub, Baggato, Johnson and Oram Cardy (2017) illustrated the utility of growth scale  
34 values in measuring change over time using data from a province-wide database. When  
35 measured using standard scores alone, CD/HH did not demonstrate change in language ability  
36 relative to their same-aged peers after they were fitted with hearing aids. This lack of change  
37 might be misinterpreted as no improvement, which would stem from relying on types of scores  
38 that are not sensitive enough to tell the full story. When the same children's progress was  
39 evaluated using growth scale values, significant improvement on the expressive communication  
40 and auditory communication scales of the *Preschool Language Scale, 4<sup>th</sup> edition* (PLS-4;  
41 Zimmerman, Steiner & Pond, 2002) was observed. These differences have important  
42 implications: misinterpreting results as no growth could, theoretically, be used as justification for  
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3 reducing services or de-funding programs. Jointly considering changes in children's *relative*  
4 *standing* (standard scores) and *ability* (growth scale values) demonstrated that children in this  
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6 database not only improved in their spoken language comprehension and use, but did so at a rate  
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8 sufficient to maintain their standing relative to same-aged peers who mostly were not hard of  
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10 hearing (>99% in the PLS-4 sample), a very positive story. Measurement errors can have costly  
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12 and potentially devastating consequences for clients: denying, delaying, or discontinuing services  
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14 to those who need it; providing services to those who don't; and misallocating resources.  
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19 Although analyses such as IRT are well-established in the psychometric literature and  
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21 require sample sizes often collected in traditional norming samples, they are not yet commonly  
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23 reported in examiner's manuals for tests used by speech-language pathologists. Although a  
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25 review of all commercially available standardized tests is beyond the scope of the present work,  
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27 the authors explored top publishers and retailers in the field of speech-language pathology to  
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29 identify the prevalence of IRT-based scores in commercially available tests. The websites of  
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31 Brookes Publishing, Linguistics, Pro-Ed, Pearson Assessment, and Super Duper Publications  
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33 were examined. No tests of adult language were identified that either included IRT-based  
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35 analyses or reported growth scale values (or an alternately named equivalent). Seven tests of  
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37 child speech and language (all published by Pearson Education Inc from 2004 on; see Table 1)  
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39 reported growth scale values and one test, the *Test of Integrated Language & Literacy Skills*  
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41 (TILLS; Nelson, Helm-Estabrooks, & Hotz, 2016) used IRT-based analyses, but did not provide  
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43 growth scale values (or equivalently derived scores).  
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49 It is not a new concern that test examiner manuals do not provide all sources of statistical  
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51 evidence that would allow us to make the most of our assessment results. McCauley and Swisher  
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53 (1984) noted that z-scores were not frequently reported in standardized assessment manuals. Ten  
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3 years later, Plante and Vance (1994) noted that very few preschool standardized assessments  
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5 contained a sufficient level of detail in reporting their psychometric properties, although they did  
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7 provide more detail than in the tools evaluated by McCauley and Swisher. Friberg (2010)  
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9 observed a trend of improvements in the examiner's manuals for school-aged language  
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11 assessments, in terms of their frequency of reporting the validity evidence for which previous  
12  
13 work had advocated. Historically, advocating for more statistical detail from test developers has  
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15 resulted in seeing improvements in the level of detail provided in examiner manuals.  
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19 Closing this knowledge gap within standardized assessment is an ethical obligation to our  
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21 clients (Palmer, 2009), as they are entitled to the best available assessment protocols. Currently,  
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23 assessment tools do not exist to support all of the decisions we are required to make within our  
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25 profession such as whether or not a client has made significant progress, or whether or not they  
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27 are progressing appropriately towards goals. The responsibility, therefore, lies with us to  
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29 communicate with test developers on an ongoing basis about additional interpretations we need  
30  
31 to make within our practice. A caveat, however, is that advocacy cannot occur in the absence of  
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33 clinical competence. We, as clinicians, are not justified in calling for changes that we do not  
34  
35 understand how to use, or how to use appropriately.  
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### 39 40 **Moving Forward: Increasing Clinical Competency**

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42 With respect to psychometric competency, it is our role as clinicians to be able to identify  
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44 *when* an interpretation is statistically supported and when it is a misuse. When encountering  
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46 examiner's manuals that do not provide statistical evidence for an interpretation we may wish to  
47  
48 make, we must ask ourselves: is there evidence that an interpretation is inappropriate to make or  
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50 is there simply no evidence at all? In cases where the evidence suggests that our interpretation is  
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52 inappropriate, then the test should not be used in this way. For instance, using individual items to  
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3 set therapeutic goals is a psychometric misuse because tests have not been designed, and  
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5 evidence has not been collected, to demonstrate that individual items are sufficient to capture  
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7 broad areas of skills or are associated with improved therapeutic outcomes when used this way.  
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10 In this case, the misuse is the result of a lack of evidence. Consider, however, using a  $-2SD$   
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12 (standard score = 70) cut-off to rule out language disorder using the Total Language Score on the  
13  
14 *Preschool Language 5<sup>th</sup> edition* (PLS-5; Zimmerman, Steiner & Pond, 2011). First, the PLS-5  
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16 examiner's manual only provides sensitivity and specificity values using a  $-1SD$  cut-off (which  
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18 are 0.83 and 0.80, respectively, both meeting the *acceptable* accuracy level of .80 proposed by  
19  
20 Plante & Vance, 1994). Therefore, SLPs lack some of the necessary evidence to determine  
21  
22 whether the PLS-5 has adequate diagnostic accuracy at a  $-2SD$  cut-off. The PLS-5 examiner's  
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24 manual does, however, provide information on both the positive predictive power (PPP; the  
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26 percentage of children identified as having a language disorder who are accurately classified)  
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28 and negative predictive power (NPP; the percentage of children identified as *not* having a  
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30 language disorder who are accurately classified) of this cut-off in samples with different disorder  
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32 base rates. When used in settings where children are very likely to have a language disorder (i.e.,  
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34 clinics where 70-90% of children being assessed truly have a language disorder), the PPP of a  $-$   
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36  $2SD$  cut-off is quite high: SLPs can be between 97-99% certain that children receiving a standard  
37  
38 score of 70 or lower on the PLS-5 truly have a language disorder. However, at this same base  
39  
40 rate range of 70-90%, the NPP of a  $-2SD$  cut-off is quite low, ranging from .16 to .43. This  
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42 indicates that between 57-84% of children classified as *not* having a language disorder due to  
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44 receiving a standard score above 70 will be misclassified. In this case, statistical evidence clearly  
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46 demonstrates that applying a  $-2SD$  cut-off for the purposes of *ruling out* a language disorder is  
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48 not well-supported in similar clinical settings. Therefore, using the PLS-5 to rule out language  
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3 disorder in this type of clinical scenario is a misuse, but not because of an absence of evidence:  
4 the evidence has been collected, and instead suggests that the PLS-5 is not sufficiently accurate  
5 for this purpose. Statistical evidence does suggest that a  $-2SD$  cut-off on the PLS-5 Total  
6 Language Score has strong diagnostic utility in *ruling in* language disorder in these settings.  
7  
8 However, the absence of sensitivity/specificity information for the  $-2SD$  cut-off leaves open the  
9 possibility that it is nonetheless not clinically useful. If the sensitivity of the  $-2SD$  cut-off is in  
10 fact low (say, for example, .58), this would mean that SLPs would only detect 58% of children  
11 who have a language disorder. In this scenario, the high PPP values indicate that SLPs could be  
12 highly confident whenever they have classified a child as having a language disorder using a -  
13  $2SD$  cut-off, but the low sensitivity value would mean that this would happen for only 58% of  
14 the children who truly have a language disorder – 42% of them would be missed (see Lange &  
15 Lippa, 2017, for a helpful discussion of the importance of joint consideration of  
16 sensitivity/specificity and PPP/NPP in selecting cut-off scores and evaluating the clinical utility  
17 of diagnostic tests).

18  
19 As clinicians, we need to know how we intend to use a test and what statistical  
20 information we require to justify its use. In order to bring about changes to standardized tests, we  
21 must understand psychometric best practices and the most appropriate ways to use and interpret  
22 the types of psychometric data reported in examiner's manuals. There is evidence, empirical and  
23 anecdotal, to suggest that clinical knowledge surrounding psychometrics could be strengthened  
24 in our profession. A survey of Canadian speech-language pathologists documented that only  
25 17% (of 143 clinicians) felt "completely confident" with their psychometric knowledge where  
26 66% were "somewhat confident", and 17% reported that they were "not at all confident" (Kerr et  
27 al., 2003). Psychometric knowledge, in this study, was broadly defined as having the knowledge  
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3 to “evaluate tests adequately” (Kerr et al., 2003, p. 20). Further consider that IRT analyses are  
4 relatively new to our field – it is unlikely that clinicians in this study were considering their  
5 ability to evaluate IRT based analyses when responding to the survey. That the majority of  
6  
7  
8 ability to evaluate IRT based analyses when responding to the survey. That the majority of  
9  
10 clinicians reported being only “somewhat confident” in their ability to evaluate tests *adequately*,  
11  
12 it is unsurprising that our field continues to see gaps in best assessment practices. For instance,  
13  
14 a survey of American speech-language pathologists by Betz, Eickhoff and Sullivan (2013)  
15  
16 documented that only a few tests tended to be frequently used, and that test selection was  
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18 correlated with publication year rather than metrics of psychometric quality such as reliability,  
19  
20 criterion validity, or diagnostic accuracy.  
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24         Clearly, our profession needs more support to promote psychometric competency if we  
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26 are to expect appropriate uptake of newer statistical analyses such as IRT. This is not to dismiss  
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28 the laudable efforts of researchers within our profession who have worked to tackle  
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30 psychometric issues in clinically accessible ways. There exists a large body of literature,  
31  
32 particularly within the area of child language, dedicated to exploring issues such as diagnostic  
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34 accuracy (e.g., Pena, Spaulding & Plante, 2006; Plante & Vance, 1994), application of cut-off  
35  
36 scores (Spaulding et al., 2012), and outlining evidence-based practice (including for assessment;  
37  
38 Dollaghan, 2004). However, our profession lacks access to comprehensive education  
39  
40 surrounding psychometrics. Ideally, such an educational resource would (a) be developed by  
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42 psychometric leaders, (b) be consistent across service regions, (c) offer tangible  
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44 recommendations for test selection and interpretation, and (d) support clinicians when they are  
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46 required to deviate from psychometric best practice. Numerous possible solutions to this problem  
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48 exists (e.g., establishing corpuses that compare and contrast the uses of different tests,  
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54 psychometric webinars and tutorials, clinical practice guidelines and practice statements), but  
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3 they will not be successful if the clinician's voice is absent. Clinicians are in the best position to  
4 evaluate their own understanding of psychometrics and determine what materials are accessible,  
5 feasible, and manageable given the context of their clinical practice. We argue that misuses of  
6 test stem from problems in communication, and that the solution relies on communication from  
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they will not be successful if the clinician's voice is absent. Clinicians are in the best position to evaluate their own understanding of psychometrics and determine what materials are accessible, feasible, and manageable given the context of their clinical practice. We argue that misuses of test stem from problems in communication, and that the solution relies on communication from *both sides* of the knowledge-to-action gap. Researcher initiated efforts, such as publications in peer-reviewed journals, over the past three decades have not been sufficient to close this gap.

### **Moving Forward: Advocacy**

With knowledge can come advocacy. As clinicians, we have the ability to change the way standardized assessments are reported. Historically, our field has seen major gains in the reporting of psychometric detail through calls to action (as discussed above), but we must continue this push as the demands for assessment use, and the nature of psychometric best practices, change. At its simplest level, we have financial leverage in choosing which standardized tests we purchase. However, we also have ongoing opportunities to communicate with test developers via direct correspondances, at national conference booths, or through test-developer initiated calls for feedback (e.g., in February 2018, Pearson Education Inc. published an online survey requesting clinician feedback on the PLS-5). Sound knowledge of psychometrics, both new and old, supports the thoughtful response to invitations such as these. For instance, clinicians in regions with mandated cut-off scores might consider responding to a survey by outlining the cut-off requirements they are obligated to fulfill, and a test-developer may respond by designing the test to be either maximially (or at least appropriately) diagnostically accurate at that mandated cut-off score.

In cases where the evidence has not been provided, this is an opportunity to communicate with test developers to continue the test validation process. Consider the

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3 recommendations put forth by the Joint Committee of Infant Hearing. With a clearly defined call  
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5 for a specific frequency of assessment, tests that are designed to be used for CD/HH ought to  
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7 provide evidence that they are appropriate to meet this clinical need. These recommendations can  
8  
9 serve as concrete evidence to a test-developer that it is financially in their best interest to report  
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11 on analyses that support this test use, or develop new tests that can. These unified calls for  
12  
13 annual or semi-annual assessment are a wonderful example of an impetus that test developers  
14  
15 can use to continue the iterative validation process and appraise their tests' appropriateness for  
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17 assessment at these intervals. In bringing our voices to the test-development conversation, we  
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19 have the potential to dramatically shape the nature of future standardized assessment tools and  
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21 facilitate our own clinical interpretations with tools tailored to support us and the clients we  
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27 serve.

## 28 **Conclusions**

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31 Improving evidence-based practice in assessment is a necessary goal. However, calls to  
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33 improve psychometric knowledge amongst speech-language pathologists do not acknowledge  
34  
35 that clinicians are, often, required to make decisions about a client that standardized tests do not  
36  
37 commonly provide statistical evidence to support. Inarguably, there is room for improvement in  
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39 regards to psychometric competency within our profession, but clinicians must also recognize  
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41 and insist that the assessments they use provide them with the most statistical information  
42  
43 possible to support their interpretation. Standardized assessments are costly in terms of price,  
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45 time to administer, and time spent analyzing and interpreting results. Maximizing the clinical  
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47 utility of our assessments is necessary to improve our assessment practices, but doing so requires  
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49 that we advocate for ourselves, on behalf of our clients, and communicate with test-developers.  
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3 We conclude with a comment to researchers and test developers. The purpose of the  
4 present paper has been to highlight the value of the clinical perspective in test development and  
5 to encourage clinicians to insist their voices are present in the conversation. It is equally  
6 important that researchers and test developers actively seek to understand the clinical  
7 perspective. Three decades worth of research has routinely documented that the status quo for  
8 reporting statistical results in examiner's manuals has been insufficient for clinicians and, more  
9 importantly, for their clients. Active efforts on the part of both communities to engage in the  
10 conversation about test validation has the potential to substantially improve the quality and value  
11 of standardized assessments for the people with communication disorders we all aim to serve.  
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Table 1.

Test Name	Publication Year
Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals, Preschool, 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition	2004
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, 4 <sup>th</sup> Edition	2007
Expressive Vocabulary Test, 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition	2007
Preschool Language Scale, 5 <sup>th</sup> edition	2011
Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests, 3 <sup>rd</sup> edition	2011
Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals, 5 <sup>th</sup> edition	2013
Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals, 5 <sup>th</sup> edition - Metalinguistics	2014
Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, 3 <sup>rd</sup> edition	2014
Goldman Fristoe Test of Articulation, 3 <sup>rd</sup> edition	2015

*Standardized tests of speech or language that include IRT-based ability scores*