



Understanding Individual Variations in Multilingual Populations by Speech-Language Pathology Graduate Students

Irina Vaynshteyn, Anastasiia Myslyk, Sophy Chaya, Ester Chalouh, Ester Chalouh, Lexie Rosenblatt, Miriam Friedlander

irina.vaynshteyn2@touro.edu

Touro University Graduate Program in Speech-Language Pathology

INTRODUCTION:

- Speech-language pathologists (SLP) work with individuals who present a wide range of language and cultural backgrounds, personal values, and communication styles. Recognizing these differences is essential for providing effective and appropriate intervention. Developing this awareness is especially important during graduate training, as it shapes clinical decision-making and professional growth.
- There is limited research on how knowledge of individual variations in multilingual populations is taught and applied in graduate programs. Although these programs emphasize evidence-based practice, it remains unclear how consistently this knowledge is incorporated into coursework and clinical experiences.

PURPOSE:

- To examine graduate students' knowledge about individual variations in multilingual populations, application, and perception of confidence and readiness to provide diagnostic and intervention services to multilingual populations.

METHOD:

Participants:

- Participants were 70 graduate speech language pathology students from Touro University: 41 first year graduate students (Group 1) and 29 second year graduating students (group 2).

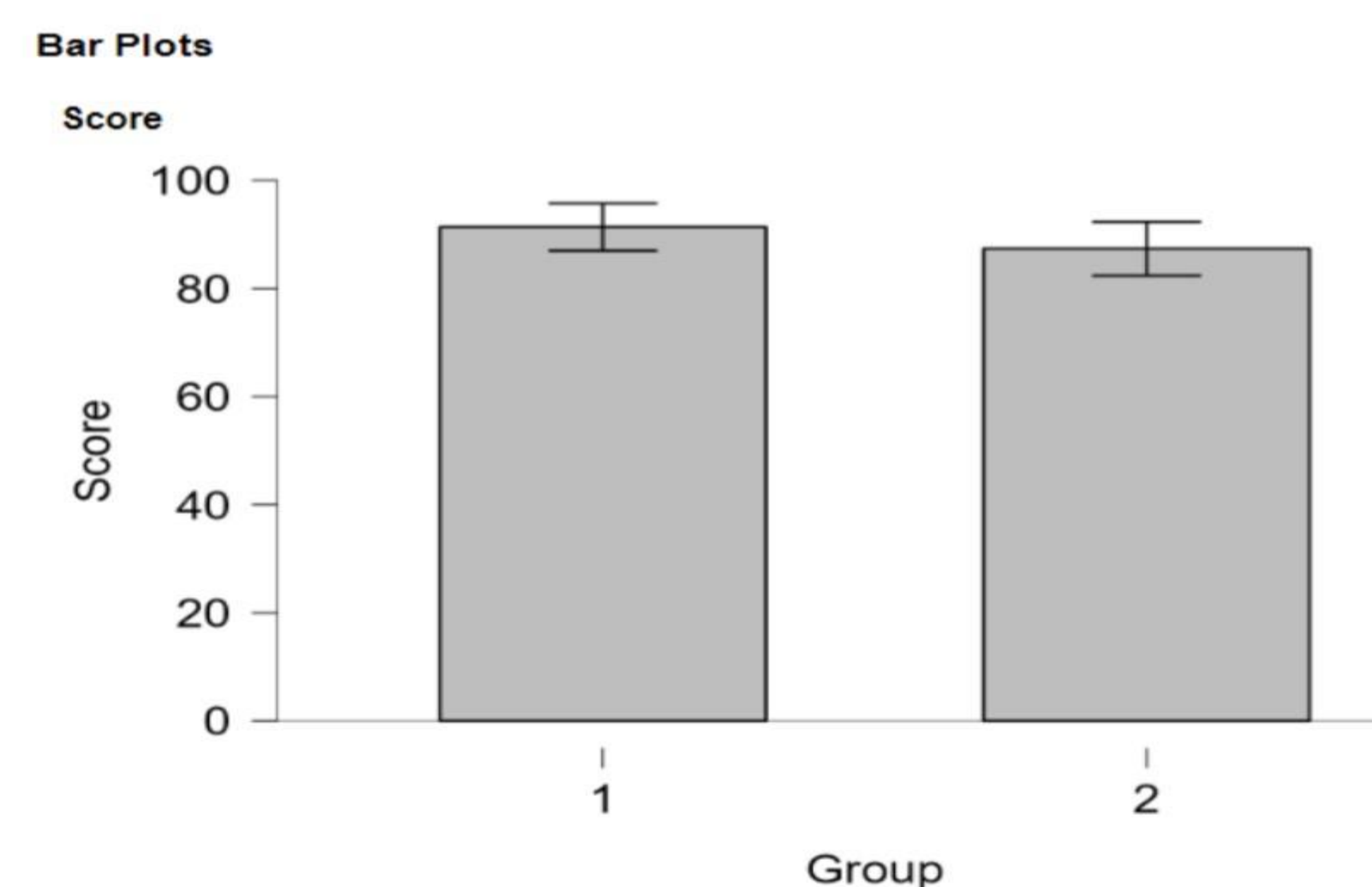
Materials & Procedure:

- Participants completed an 18-item survey through an online platform (Qualtrics).
- The survey consisted of multiple-choice questions related to students' knowledge and understanding of language variations in multilingual populations, and rating questions related to their perception of confidence and readiness to provide diagnostic and intervention services to multilingual populations. Information about participants' educational, cultural and linguistic background was obtained as well.

RESULTS:

- An Independent Samples T-Test analysis examined and compared performance scores on the knowledge of language variations in multilingual populations between Group 1 and Group 2. Results revealed no statistically significant difference between Group 1 and Group 2 (91.3% vs 87.3%, respectively; $t = 1.163$, $df = 68$, $p\text{-value} = 0.249$). Please see figure #1 below.
- 76% of students in Group 1 and 88% of students in Group 2 reported that they are able to identify and adapt assessment strategies that respect the clients' background and individual/ linguistic variations.
- 79.4% of students in Group 1 and 81% of students in Group 2 felt confident in adapting their therapeutic approaches to address individual differences in multilingual populations.
- 86% of students in Group 1 and 81% of students in Group 2 felt confident in integrating the clients' family and main social circle during the intervention process.
- 83% of students in Group 1 and 85.4% of students in Group 2 reported being committed to continuing their cultural education beyond graduate school to enhance their effectiveness as their clinicians.

Figure # 1



The authors have no financial or non-financial relationships to disclose.

DISCUSSION:

- Graduate students from both groups demonstrated high performance scores on the knowledge portion of the survey. This finding indicates that students acquired adequate knowledge and understanding of individual and linguistic variations in multilingual populations as part of their graduate curriculum.
- Most graduate students reported that they are able to identify and adapt assessment and intervention strategies in order to address the needs of clients with individual, linguistic, and cultural differences. This finding suggests that both groups felt adequately prepared and competent to apply the knowledge received as part of their graduate education in clinical settings, despite the differences in clinical practicum experience.
- It further suggests that Touro University's curriculum provides graduate students with a strong foundation early in their training.
- Both groups expressed a strong commitment to continue their cultural education beyond graduate school. This shared commitment highlights the importance that students place on continuous growth and learning beyond graduate training.

Future Direction for Research:

- Future studies should include students from various universities and geographical regions to examine how different training programs influence understanding of individual variations in multilingual populations. Expanding the sample would help determine whether the current findings reflect broader trends across speech-language pathology education.
- Further research should follow students over time to explore how their knowledge, confidence, and skills develop throughout graduate training. Combining self-reported data with supervisor evaluations or performance-based measures could provide a more complete picture of student preparedness to work with multilingual clients.