

Bilingual Verbal Ability Tests® ELP/BVA Discrepancy Model

Comparison of the English Language Proficiency (ELP) and Bilingual Verbal Ability (BVA) scores of the Bilingual Verbal Ability Tests® (BVAT) can reveal valuable information about an individual's oral language abilities. Three general score classifications based on the ELP/BVA discrepancy can be delineated. The three score classifications are:

A. A significant discrepancy exists between ELP and BVA

B. No significant ELP/BVA discrepancy and ELP and BVA are average or high scores

C. No significant ELP/BVA discrepancy, but ELP and BVA are both low scores

The following outline lists general statements of language learning expectations; probable basis of the language difficulty (if any); placement options; and instructional recommendations. It is of critical importance to understand that test scores must be interpreted in light of the student's exposure to each of his/her two or more languages and to the educational history of the student, in particular the type and quality of the educational language programming.

A. A significant discrepancy exists between ELP and BVA

Viktor, a 5th grade student, is 10 years old and is having difficulty in school. Viktor was born in Russia and attended preschool, kindergarten, first, second, and third grade in his native country. His mother reports that Viktor's performance in school was average. His family moved to the United States when Viktor was 9 years old. He was placed in a 4th grade classroom and received English as a second language (ESL) 30 minutes daily in a pull-out program. He is currently in the 5th grade receiving ESL for 45 minutes daily.

BVAT (English/Russian) Scores: **ELP Age Equivalent: 5-6** **ELP Standard Score: 64**
BVA Age Equivalent: 9-11 **BVA Standard Score: 97**

1. An ELP/BVA discrepancy indicates the student is in the second language acquisition process of English language learning.
2. Expect the discrepancy to close with time and *effective* instruction.
3. Anticipate that the time needed to close the ELP/BVA discrepancy for an individual can depend on factors such as:
 - a. The initial point at which student began learning the second language
 - b. The student's individual abilities and skills including auditory memory, auditory discrimination, learning style, study skills, and general intellectual ability
 - c. The quality of instruction
 - d. Sociocultural issues
 - e. Affective factors that can impact learning such as level of confidence, motivation, personality, etc.
4. Consider special language placement.
 - a. Two-way or dual language program
 - b. Bilingual program with both native language instruction and an English as a second language (ESL) component
 - c. ESL program

5. Consider the following instructional strategies and teaching recommendations.
 - a. The individual appears to need more time to fully develop the English language. Second language learning is a lengthy process that is influenced by many affective, environmental, and cognitive factors. Moreover, some professionals confuse a conversational level of English as an indication of the individual's readiness to handle instruction in English.
 - b. Active, aggressive, planned teaching of oral language with dynamic monitoring of student progress is essential for efficient English language learning.
 - c. Instructions should be clear, predictable, and understandable. The teacher needs to use clear communication skills. Meaning should be reinforced by gestures, concrete materials, and actual learning experiences. Verbal clarification of instructions should be given often. The teacher needs to anticipate and explain difficult vocabulary and concepts. The teacher is encouraged to make frequent comprehension checks.
 - d. Sensitive and sensible correction of errors encourage effort and do not interfere with communication. The student's errors need to be accepted as a natural and developmental part of the second language acquisition process.
 - e. Instruction through English needs to be cognitively challenging. The objectives of tasks should challenge the student's thinking, but the linguistic demands should be adapted to his/her stage of second language acquisition.
 - f. The maintenance and development of the individual's native language should be supported. A well-developed first language positively stimulates second language learning. Time should be scheduled daily and monthly for content area teaching in the first language. Sufficient textual and support materials should be available in the first language for accomplishment of first language instruction. If the teacher cannot provide first language instruction, creative alternatives utilized for providing cognitive development through the native language can be implemented. The school library is encouraged to have a substantial section of children's literature at different literacy levels in the student's native language(s)
 - g. Opportunities for the student to predict linguistic and conceptual meaning should be made available. Listening experiences should be provided in both languages. The teacher is encouraged to read literature to the students often.
 - h. The student should be held responsible for careful listening. If the student has difficulty, specific strategies for careful listening should be taught to the student.
 - i. Allowing the student to express his/her own thoughts, feelings, and opinions in any language can be beneficial for various affective and linguistic reasons.
 - j. The home culture and language of the LEP student should be evident in the classroom. Bulletin boards and reading materials can help the student understand the importance of his/her background.
 - k. Success in learning should be a fundamental underpinning of the instructional program. The educational environment can be planned and implemented to achieve student success that can then be translated to excellence. Success in learning content subject matter can be just as important as learning English language skills.
 - l. Preteach vocabulary and difficult concepts.

- (1) Provide intense oral language development programs. For some students, receiving oral language development in the native language will aid in the development of English. For other students, however, oral language development in English only may be the most efficient use of time. Factors, such as the student's age, level of native language development, family's language, etc., impact the decision of the language of instruction.
 - (2) Provide activities & opportunities such as field trips, movies, plays, and books to enrich the student's language. Encourage oral discussions before and after such activities and enrichment opportunities.
 - (3) Monitor oral language development. Record language samples.
 - (4) Have a consistent plan of re-teaching and reinforcing vocabulary and concepts.
 - (5) Provide concrete examples, visuals, and active learning experiences.
 - (6) Build on associative learning. Use the student's prior knowledge to teach new concepts.
- b. The student may have a specific learning disability in oral language.
- (1) Consider special education referral for speech/language testing.
 - (2) Provide intense, deliberate oral language development instruction specific to the student's needs and learning style.
 - (3) Remediate learning gaps.
- c. There may have been a lack of proper instruction or lack of opportunity to learn. The student's lack of expected oral language development in his/her current instructional placement/program may require a review of other instructional placements and programming options. Consider the following instructional strategies and teaching recommendations:
- (1) Provide consistent curriculum and programming.
 - (2) Assess and remediate knowledge gaps.
 - (3) Identify and develop low skill areas.
 - (4) Schedule parent/school conferences to discuss other instructional programs and placements.
 - (5) Identify student's preferred learning style and match with a teaching style that will promote academic progress.
 - (6) Develop an intervention plan to increase school attendance.
- d. Socio cultural issues may have limited the student's opportunity to learn. Socio cultural issues that may need to be considered include:
- (1) Economic disadvantage
 - (2) Conflict between student's home and school culture
 - (3) Family factors
- e. Lack of interest and/or poor motivation may have impacted language learning. Consider the following recommendations.
- (1) A student/parent/school conference is an essential first step in understanding the root cause behind the lack of interest and/or motivation and to establish a plan of action.
 - (2) Use student's interests in significant ways within the curriculum to promote a higher level of interest in schoolwork.
 - (3) Make instruction meaningful to the student. Provide concrete reasons why the instruction is important to the student..

- f. The BVAT may have been unable to yield a representative sample of the language ability of the student. More testing is recommended. Consider the following:
 - (1) Oral language cluster of the Spanish test, Batería Woodcock-Muñoz pruebas de habilidad cognitivas—Revisada®, and of the English test, Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability—Revised®.
 - (2) Informal language sample in the target language and English.
3. Consider remedial or alternative placements/programs that may include:
 - a. Consideration or reconsideration of ESL/bilingual education placement
 - b. 504 referral for accommodations
 - c. Tutorials
 - d. Peer tutoring/paired working arrangement
 - e. Use of computer lab to enhance language skills
 - f. Use multi-modality teaching strategies
4. Professional Resources
 - a. Performance Power, a curriculum-based assessment software by American Guidance Service, can be used to identify gaps in learning. The software program is available in English and Spanish and in the core content areas.