

Impact of Language Barriers on Occupational Therapy Intervention



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INTRODUCTION

As the diverse population in the United States continues to rise, so will the healthcare needs of non-proficient English speakers. This expansion requires increased cultural competency in the healthcare system to ensure quality care is provided. To achieve this, language barriers in healthcare must be analyzed and addressed to implement necessary strategies to support non-proficient English speakers as current research indicates that they receive inadequate healthcare compared to English speakers. Further research is needed to determine if language barriers impact implementation of occupational therapy and potential outcomes due to this discrepancy.

EVIDENCE-BASED QUESTION

How do language barriers impact functional performance scores with bathing and dressing between Spanish-speaking and English-speaking patients in an inpatient rehabilitation facility?

SIGNIFICANCE

The purpose of the capstone project is to provide evidence that language barriers negatively impact occupational therapy rehabilitation as indicated by lower functional performance scores with activities of daily living in patients who speak Spanish compared to English speakers. With this information, attention can be brought to the need for increased cultural competency in Occupational Therapy and potential solutions can be investigated to remedy this disparity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2022), 1 in 5 people in the United States speak a language other than English with Spanish speakers accounting for 62% of the population. Of the Spanish speakers in the United States, 38.6% report speaking English 'less than very well'. Research indicates that non-proficient English speakers have poorer health quality outcomes as they are less likely than English speakers to engage in preventative care and follow-up visits, have a higher incidence of medical errors, longer hospital stays, lower satisfaction with care received and are more likely to misunderstand care and education received (Jacobs et al., 2006; Kilkenney et al., 2018).

SETTING AND POPULATION

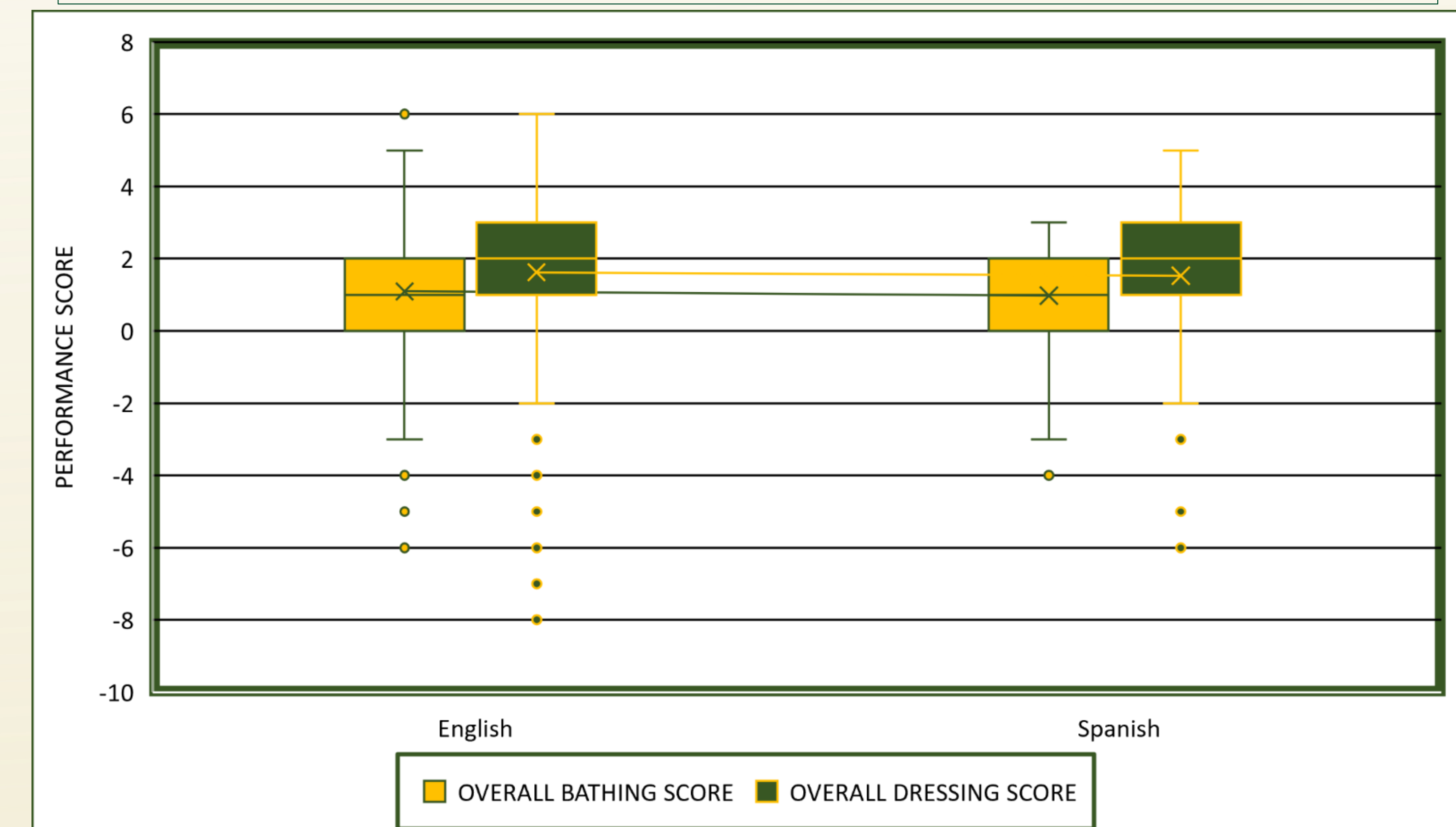
Setting was an inpatient rehabilitation hospital located in San Antonio, Texas. Participants were adults over the age of 18 receiving Occupational Therapy services whose primary language spoken was English or Spanish. Sample size was 2,087 patient records, 2,033 English speakers and 54 Spanish speakers.

METHODS

Data obtained included language spoken, initial bathing and dressing scores, discharge bathing and dressing scores. The dependent variable in the analysis was ADL performance scores. The independent variables were English speaking patients and Spanish speakers. A box plot was created to visually demonstrate the data and a t-test was used to determine statistical significance.

RESULTS

The English-speaking patients had better performance scores than Spanish-speaking patients, however, the statistical analysis determined that no significant impact on overall performance scores of bathing and dressing.



SUMMARY

While there were no significant findings from the statistical analysis, the data obtained reflected the inaccurate documentation practices that impact those who speak a language other than English. Inaccurate documentation results in poor representation of non-English speaking patients and prevents adequate resources to be implemented. Future research should continue to investigate the impacts of language barriers in occupational therapy to not only treatment implementation but also explore its impact on evaluations, therapeutic relationships, patient perspectives and evaluative tools.

REFERENCES

