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# Cognitive Assessment of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students: Evidence for Current Practices

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# Cognitive Assessment of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students: Evidence for Current Practices

Aaron Pomeranz, Hannah Luken, Garry Wickerd (Advisor)

## ◆ Abstract

Evidence from placement data show that culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students are over-identified for learning and intellectual disabilities (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Cognitive assessments play a central role in correctly identifying CLD students for special education services. This study reviewed the literature to determine support for three methods of cognitive assessment with CLD students. Search results revealed that although there was considerable research supporting the use of the Cultural-Linguistic Interpretive Matrix (C-LIM) and Nonverbal Assessment, there was also much research disputing their use. Much of the support for the C-LIM and Dual Language Assessment was not from peer reviewed research. Dual Language Assessment appeared to have the most support in the literature.

## ◆ Introduction

Disproportional representation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students receiving special education services has been a major concern of educational policy in the United States. Evidence from placement data show that CLD students are over-identified for learning and intellectual disabilities (Donovan & Cross, 2002). With the population of CLD students predicted to reach 40% of the U.S. school population by 2030, it is imperative that cognitive assessment practices account for cultural and linguistic differences that could cause special education eligibility determination errors (U.S. Department of Education and National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2003). This study sought to determine which methods of cognitive assessment of CLD students were most supported in the research literature.

## ◆ Research Questions

Which method of cognitive assessment appears most reliable and valid for the assessment of CLD students?

## ◆ Hypothesis

There will be unclear support for any current method of cognitive assessment for CLD students.

## ◆ Methods

Keywords and keyword pairs pertaining to cognitive assessment of CLD students were used to search for relevant literature in PSYArticles, PSYCinfo, Dissertations & Theses: A&I, Academic Search Complete and Education Full Text databases since 1997.

Included in the search were all published journals and unpublished dissertations pertaining to the key words.

Relevant articles and dissertations were inspected to find additional relevant literature.

Several methods were identified including Cultural-Linguistic Interpretive Matrix, Native Language Assessment, Interpreters, Nonverbal Assessment, Bilingual Assessment, and Testing Accommodations.

Articles and dissertations without empirical findings pertaining specifically to cognitive assessment of CLD students were eliminated.

This process reduced the number of methods of cognitive assessment of CLD students to three.

Articles and dissertations were grouped by whether they supported, were against, or provided mixed support for a particular method by the lead author in consultation with a co-author.

## ◆ Sample

The sample included 18 peer reviewed articles from various journals in psychology and education.

The sample also included 22 dissertations.

## ◆ Methods Identified

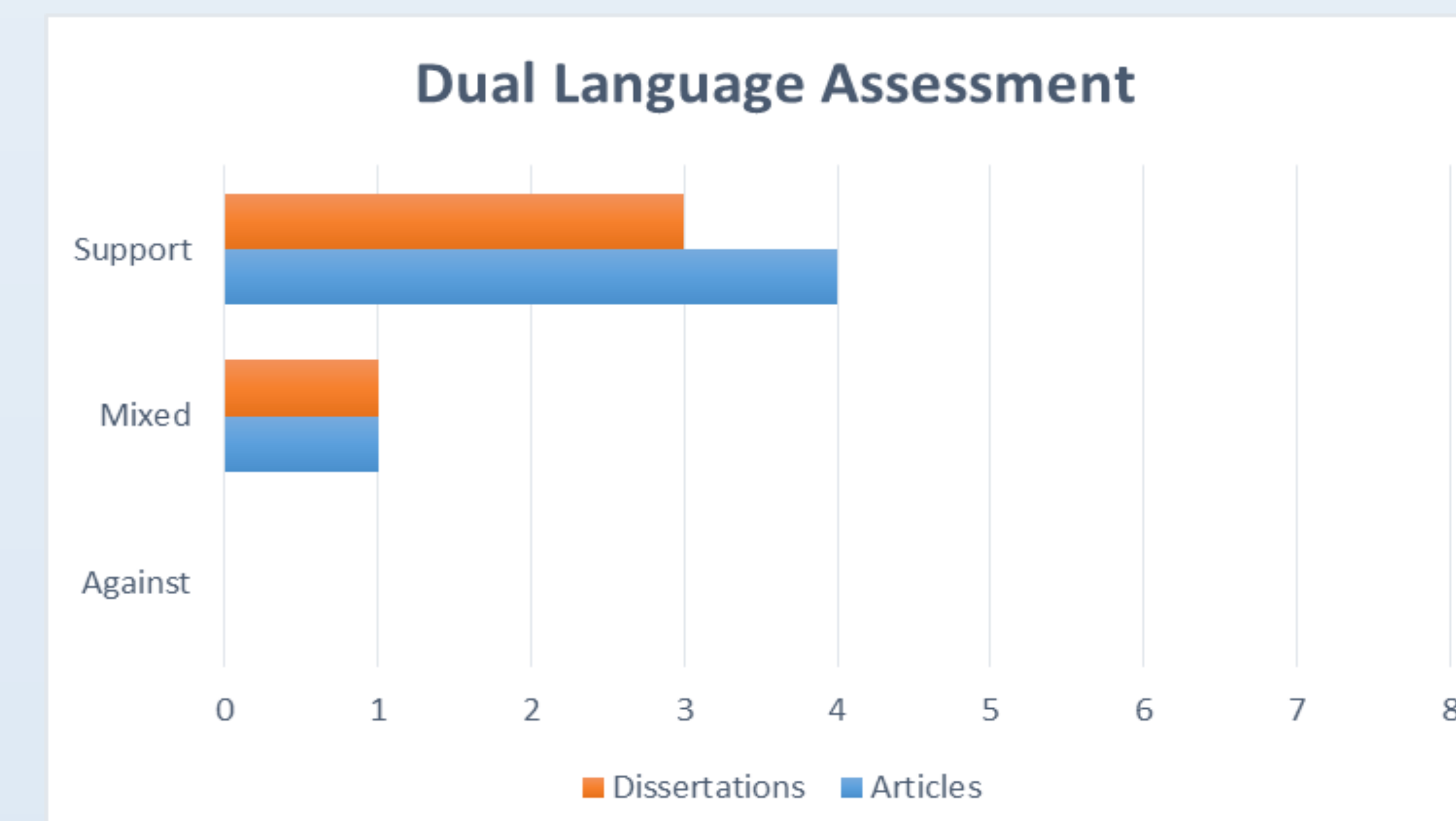
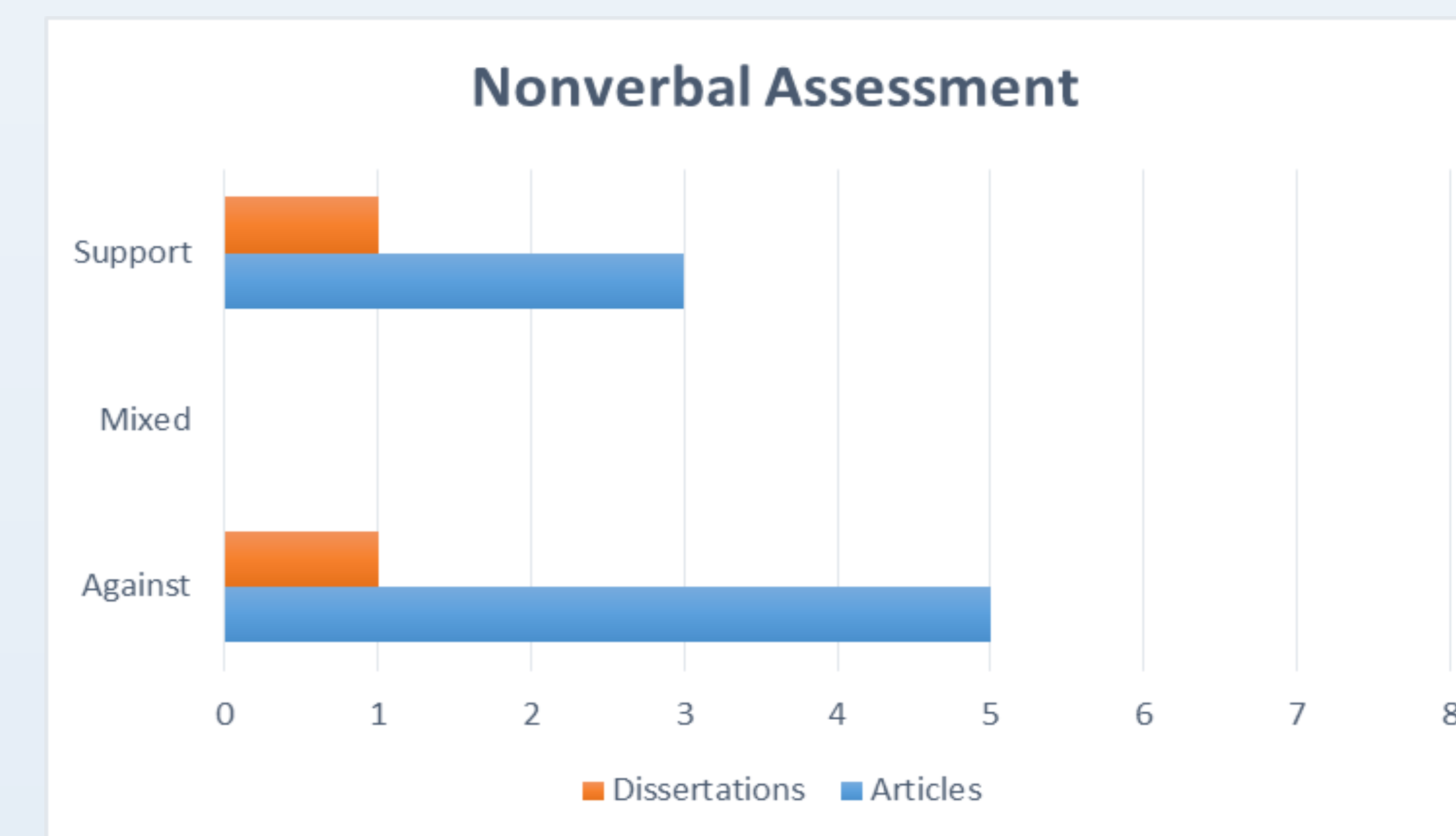
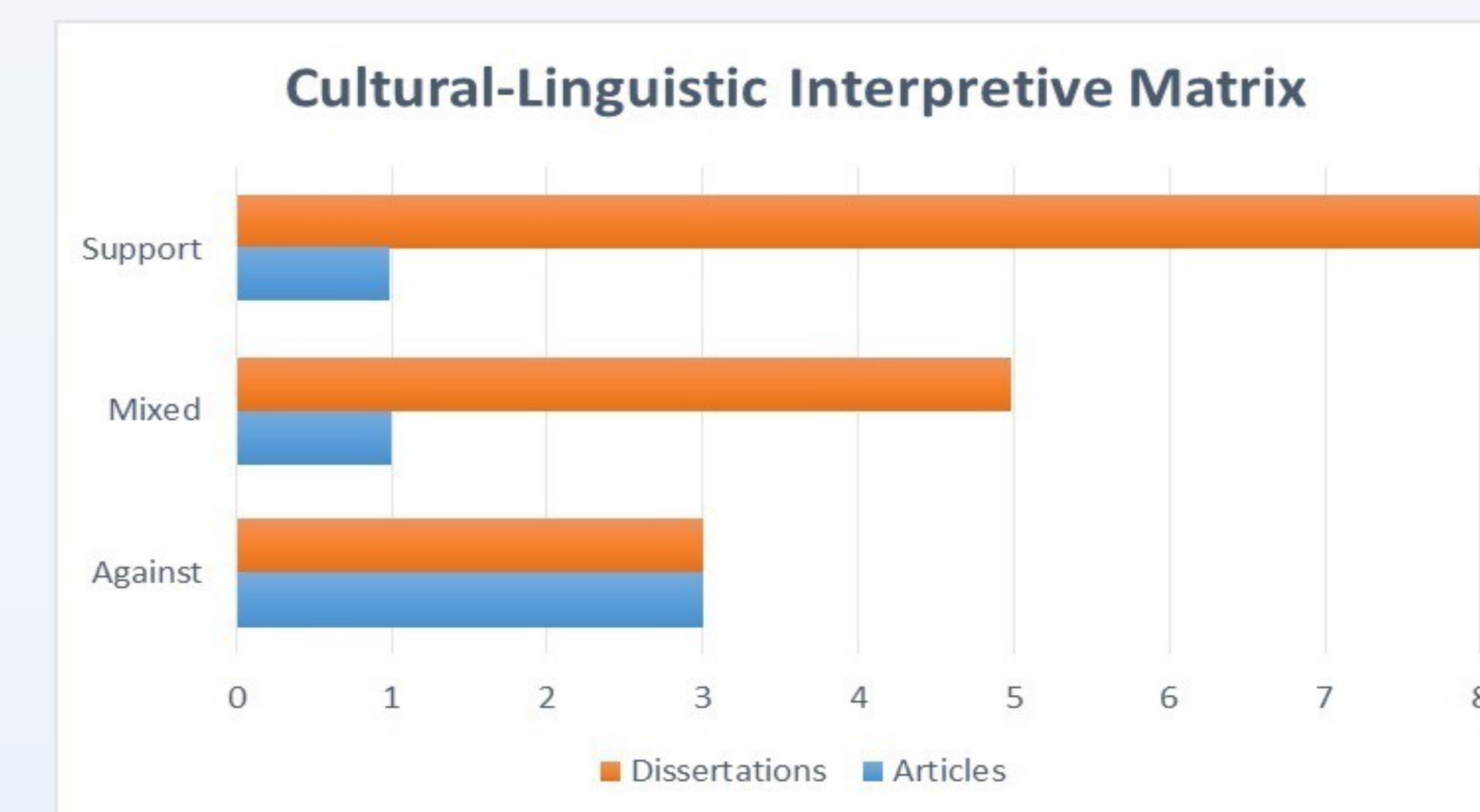
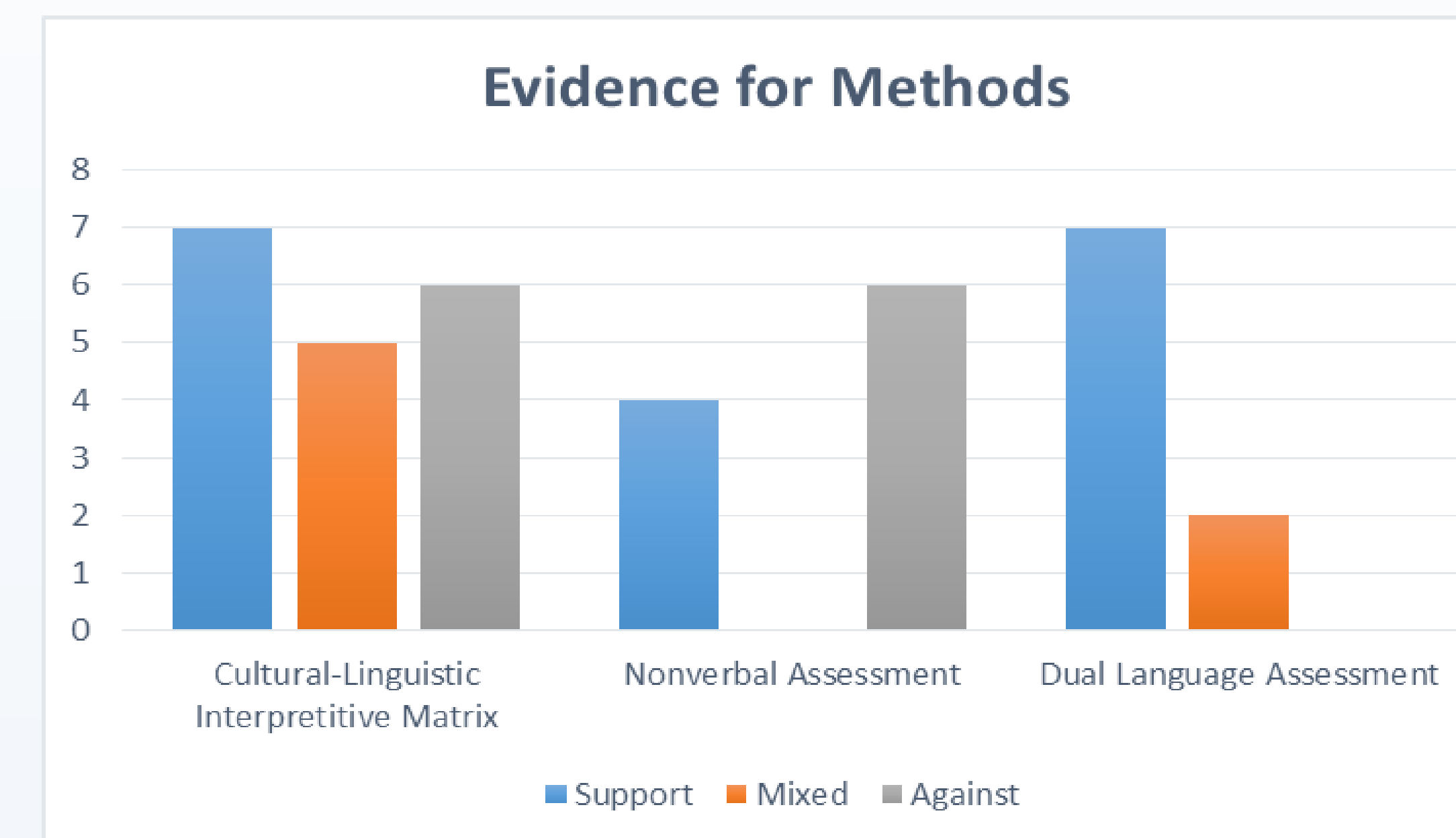
The cognitive assessment methods included:

Cultural-Linguistic Interpretive Matrix – Cross-battery approach to the interpretation of cognitive test results (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005)

Nonverbal Assessment – Cognitive assessment with a nonverbal cognitive test (e.g., UNIT-2)

Dual Language Assessment – Cognitive assessment in both native language and English

## ◆ Results



## ◆ Results

Although the Cultural-Linguistic Interpretive Matrix has produced the most research, there were many peer reviewed publications disputing it. Furthermore, nearly all of the research supporting it was from non-peer reviewed dissertations.

Nonverbal Assessment yielded mixed results. There were almost equal numbers of articles/dissertations supporting and disputing it.

Dual Language Assessment was the only one of the three methods for which research could not be identified to dispute it. There were an equal number of articles/dissertations supporting or providing mixed support.

## ◆ Discussion

The results revealed that although there was considerable research supporting the use of the Cultural-Linguistic Interpretive Matrix (C-LIM) and Nonverbal Assessment, there was also much research disputing their use. Much of the support for the C-LIM and Dual Language Assessment was not from peer reviewed research and therefore implies that these methods lack validity. Dual Language Assessment appears to have the most support from both articles and dissertations.

Further research may clarify the validity of these methods and/or identify other methods.

## ◆ Limitations

The review of the literature was not independently verified by a second researcher.

Classification of each article was conducted by the lead author with consultation from a co-author. There was not an independent classification of articles.

## ◆ References

Donovan, M. S., & Cross, C. T. (2002). *Minority students in special and gifted education*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.

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