Providing equitable access for bilingual children:
Adaptation of language assessments and interventions

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Assessment aims

✓ To identify **diversity** from **disorder**.

✓ To differentiate typical additional language learners from those with pervasive language disorder (Stow & Pert, 2015)

✓ To provide **assessment in home language** and any additional language(s)
(RCSLT, 2018).

✓ To provide **culturally appropriate** materials that clients recognize and identify with, prompting maximum response (pictures and objects).

✓ To develop **adaptations** which take into account linguistic differences, not a direct **translation**.

Practice

X Patchy use of interpreters due to funding.

X Failure to **plan** and **de-brief**.

X US SLPs '…perceived interpreters to be highly formal, intrusive, cumbersome, and erroneous in their interpretation.'
(Santhanam, Gilberrt & Parveen, 2019:132)

X Use of family members and siblings as interpreters is common, which is against NHS and RCSLT guidelines
(Jordaan, 2008)

X …commonly held beliefs underlying the continued provision on monolingual therapy are…that **bilingualism is not the norm** and that **children with language impairments cannot cope** with the acquisition of more than one language.'
(Jordaan, 2008: 104)

Practice

- Difference between **bilingual** / culturally competent and **monolingual** therapists' approaches

✓ **Positive mindset** is an asset to working with diverse families
(Maul, 2015)

✓ Bilingual and culturally competent therapists are more likely to value home language, even if they do not share a language with the client

✗ Greater reliance on standardized assessments by monolingual therapists

✓ Bilingual therapists and experienced therapists are more likely to provide training to interpreters
(Palfrey, 2013)

Identification: Dynamic Assessment

- The following could serve as danger signs for disorder:
  - Child flagged up as struggling to learn by experienced EAL teachers;
  - Child slower that EAL peers to learn English, despite similar levels of exposure;
  - Poor learning on *dynamic assessment* tasks. These can be in any of the child's languages
    (see for example Hassan et al 2013; Pena, Gillam & Bedore 2014).
- Once concern identified, a full bilingual assessment will be required.

Dynamic assessment: Possible procedure

- DA examines potential to learn a skill/task, rather then current (static) knowledge. Typical sequence: *test-teaching/therapy-retest.*

- Narrative to pictures:

STAGE	DESCRIPTION
Test:	Child attempts without support
Intervention:	Try various levels, i.e. • Telling story for child to re-tell; • Using scaffolding to help the child construct story; • Teaching specific lexical items
Re-test:	Child attempts same story without support
Notes:	• How much support did the child need? • How difficult was the whole process?

Overview: Assessment

- Assessment in **home language** and any additional languages **provides a full profile** of the child's abilities.

- Without home language assessment, **central language difficulties** cannot be differentiated from **additional language learning difficulties**.

- Assessment in English / mainstream language only signals to parent(s)/carers that home language is irrelevant and can speed up language loss.

Overview: Therapy

- Assessment and therapy for bilingual children should be provided in the **home language** and then additional languages for best outcomes
  (RCSLT, 2018; Jordaan, 2008).

- **Intervention in home language is holistic**, maintains family, community and cultural links.

- Intervention in home language **prevents home language loss**.

- Children who have a secure home language go on to acquire additional languages such as English.
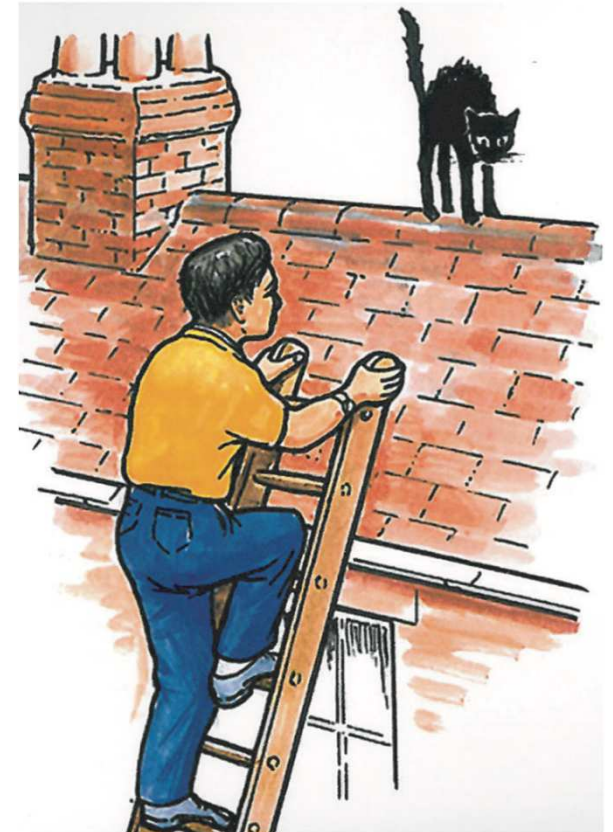
Cultural competence

- Being aware of the everyday practices, beliefs, and use of concepts and language are key to distinguishing differences from diversity.

- Even in English (EAL), Mdlalo, Flack & Joubert found that isiZulu-speaking children had very **different understanding** of the pictures found
in the Renfrew Action Picture Test
(RAPT)(Renfrew, 2010)

Cultural competence

- 'The concept of rescuing a black cat was regarded by most focus group participants as inviting danger. The responses from the children clearly indicated that the security of the man climbing the ladder was at stake. Therefore, in the following phase of the study, the picture was adapted to be more culturally appropriate and the black cat on the roof was replaced by a ball that was to be 'fetched' from the roof of the house' (2019: 4)

Source: Renfrew, C. (1997). *The Renfrew action picture test* (4th edn.). London: Speechmark Publishing

Cultural competence

- Additional time is vital to explore all aspects of cultural competence
  - (Leadbeater & Litosseiti, 2014, RCSLT, 2018)
- Cultural aspects can impact on:
  - Assessment
  - Selection of therapy
  - Family engagement with therapy
  Awde (2009)

Linguistic Awareness/Competence:
Languages encode meaning differently on the surface

Mirpuri

- Subject Object Verb

- Verb morphology agrees with natural gender of the subject

- No articles or determiners

English

- Subject Verb Object

- No gender agreement with verb morphology

- Articles and determiners

The underlying thematic roles are the same
- **Translation – focus on the surface form**
- **Adaptation – focus on the underlying message/ structure**

Further Examples: See *Multilingual Toolkit*
(Letts & Sinka 2011)

English

- Vocabulary, semantic 'space':
  Separate words for *hand* and *arm.*

- One word or more?:
  One word *wave.*

- Simple sentences:
  All elements, e.g. subject-verb-object, have to be expressed.

Other languages

- Latvian, plus at least 227 other languages: Same words (*roka*) for both.

- Welsh:
  Short phrase required, *codi llaw* (literally 'lift hand').

- Other languages:
  It may be possible to omit elements (e.g. subject) in circumstances where English would

Assessment materials have to be created and adapted for the target language – this is not easy!

Example of an expressive language screen

Mirpuri	kʊri	t͡ʃal	maɾ-ni	pi
Literal translation	girl	jump	do-ing + contact + female	is + female
Child's utterance	t͡ʃal	maɾ-ni		pi
Literal translation	jump	do-ing + contact + female		is + female
Translation*	*She's jumping			

Example of an expressive language screen

Mirpuri	kʊri	betʰ-i	vi		
Literal translation	girl	sit –ing + female	is + female		
Child's utterance	girl	chair	upr -	beth-i	vi
Literal translation	girl	chair	on	sit-ing + female	is + female

Example of a therapy package

BEST

- Currently being evaluated through a randomised control trial (RCT) in English
- Single case studies in other languages

- Designed using Constructivist language acquisition theory
- Thematic roles are assumed to be universal, i.e.
  - AGENT – The 'doer'
  - ACTION
  - PATIENT – Affected by the action
- No change in thematic role for phrase/word order changes
- Surface changes / Deep mapping

Bilingual BEST: Adaptations

- Homework packs are **picture based**: Mirpuri is pre-literate
- Toys feature **items children will recognise**, including people in casual and traditional dress
- Adaptations of the target sentences **recognise code switching as valid responses**
- Adaptations use the **translation protocol**

- **Interpreters** / Bilingual Co-workers **are trained** to deliver the programme **in home language** *from the start of the session* to signal home language environment.

Summary: Assessment

✓ Assessment should be in home language facilitated by a **professional interpreter**

✓ Assessment is **more accurate** and informative if it is **informal**; Translated assessments will be culturally insensitive, translations will be inaccurate and result unreliable

✓ **Dynamic assessment** highlights the child's ability or specific difficulties with learning language and is a **key approach** when working with bilingual children.

Summary: Intervention

✓ Intervention should be in **home language** facilitated by a **professional** interpreter

✓ **Cultural competency** develops with more experience, requires more time with families and self-reflection and awareness See Papadopoulos, Tilki & Taylor (1998) for a comprehensive model

✓ Cultural competency and adaptation of resources encourage family engagement and best outcomes and so **are essential**

Questions

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