

## Paper 14

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### Working with bilingual children at risk of developmental language disorder: adapting assessment and intervention for the nursery-aged bilingual child

A proportion of all children (7.58%: RCSLT) have significant difficulty acquiring language, irrespective of whether this applies to their first and only language or to two or more languages acquired in a multilingual setting. These children have developmental language disorder (DLD) and once identified are supported in school by speech & language therapists working with SENDCOs and other school staff. The majority are slow to develop language in the preschool years and identification and intervention at that point is crucial for later education including literacy. This poses a problem for professionals if the child is bilingual; distinguishing overall language delay from lack of familiarity with the majority language and providing intervention in the home language are both problematic.

This work is part of a larger project (LIVELY) investigating the effectiveness of an early language programme for 3-4 year olds who are at risk for DLD. The programme focuses on early word combinations and sentences of increasing complexity. We are conducting a number of case studies with children who are acquiring a home language and expected to learn English. For these children, the programme will be conducted in their home language. This involves adaptation of both language assessment and intervention material to this language, with the possibility of remote working with the child if dictated by the pandemic situation.

In this presentation we describe the strategies used to make these adaptations to Polish and to Mirpuri (Pakistani Heritage language), both of which are spoken widely in the UK. While sentence structure differs across languages, the focus is on the unique events that can be communicated through early sentences, universal to all linguistic contexts. Specific issues that we have encountered in developing these adaptations will also be discussed.

Language Intervention in the Early Years

(LIVELY): <https://research.ncl.ac.uk/lively/aboutlively/>

Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists (RCSLT): <https://www.rcslt.org/>