

MY TOP RESOURCES

1. Bilingual assistant

When working with clients from a Pakistani background our bilingual assistant Zahida Warriach is an invaluable resource. Sessions flow smoothly, allowing more information to be elicited and - with an accurate case history and detailed mother tongue assessment - we are more likely to reach an accurate diagnosis. We work 'with' rather than 'through' Zahida. She not only provides rapid and accurate translations but invaluable cultural and religious information, which helps us to understand and empathise with our clients and their carers.

As an experienced speech and language therapy assistant she has insight into both the client's viewpoint and that of the therapist. All potential barriers are lifted allowing us all (therapists, assistant and carers) to focus on the needs of the bilingual child rather than parents feeling isolated from the therapy process by cultural barriers.

2. Internet

We make extensive use of two Internet facilities: the World Wide Web and e-mail. The World Wide Web is a treasure trove of information - some of which needs judicious sifting. We have our own web site and get many interesting contacts from people around the world who visit it and then contact us via e-mail for further information. When carrying out research we use e-mail extensively to make contact and then correspond with fellow researchers. On one occasion, when editing an article for publication, we were using e-mail to pass suggestions back and forth rapidly to meet a deadline, blissfully unaware that our co-author was in Hong Kong that weekend. <http://www.speechtherapy.co.uk>

3. RAMP

The Rochdale Assessment of Mirpuri (with Punjabi and Urdu) Phonology is a phonological assessment we developed to meet the needs of our main population group. A total of 59 words are elicited using 35 brightly coloured and culturally appropriate pictures. The data obtained can then be transferred to detailed analysis sheets allowing a complete phonological assessment of mother tongue abilities. Preliminary standardisation data obtained using the assessment indicates that some realisations previously considered to be 'errors' are in fact normal processes in this client group. A CD ROM version of the assessment is particularly enjoyed by our older clients who love the opportunity to use a computer.

RAMP (ISBN 0 9534337) is published by Sean Pert, 31 Gilbrook Way, Badger Hollow, Rochdale OL16 4RT, £75 plus p&p.

4. National SIG Bilingualism

This group of the Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists meets at least twice a year with meetings rotating around the country. An invaluable forum for hearing the latest research and discussing current issues as they occur in clinic, the meetings also offer an opportunity to share ideas about resources and get support from other therapists working with bilingual clients.

Contact Sheila Anderson, Speech & Language Therapist, Keighley Health Centre, Oakworth Road, Keighley, West Yorkshire BD21 1SA. Annual fee £5.

5. British Library Reading Room

We visit the British Library reading room at Boston Spa at least once a year. It's an excellent and completely free resource which allows access to all the latest research. Each person can request ten journal articles or books by ordering them in advance and a further six whilst there. A day in peace and quiet with no phones to answer getting new ideas for clinic can be revitalising for a stressed therapist.

The Reading Room, The British Library, Document Supply Centre, Boston Spa, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7BQ.

6. Velcro board

We run group sessions for children and find a Velcro board invaluable. It provides a focal point onto which real objects and picture materials can be fixed and, in this way, we can encourage one child to act out an action with rag dolls and real objects, whilst another constructs the appropriate sentence using laminated picture stimuli. The children love standing up and 'being teacher'.

Velcro board from T.F.H. 76 Barracks Road, Sandy Lane Industrial Estate, Stourport on Severn, Worcestershire DY13 9QB, £39.

7. Computer and laminator

We use a computer to produce high quality colour picture materials and worksheets both for therapy activities and to encourage carryover in the home environment. Laminating equipment makes it more attractive and long lasting so it is cost-effective in the long run. We use Boardmaker™ to make target SOV or SVO strips for the children to check their output against when describing pictures or activities on the Velcro board (see no.6).

The ability to produce the best possible equipment gives the message that we value the clients and see bilingualism as an advantage, not a difficulty.

Boardmaker™ - UK distributors are Cambridge Adaptive Communication, Don Johnston Special Needs Ltd, Inclusive Technology and SEMERC. See also www.mayer-johnson.com

Carol Stow

is a speech and language therapist who specialises in working with bilingual children. With her colleague Sean Pert,

she sees bilingual children both individually and in groups in a community clinic in Rochdale. Both are involved in research projects with Newcastle University.



8. Bag Books

These unconventional 'books' (actually a set of pages in a box) were developed for use with children with severe special educational needs or with visual impairment. Each page is a sturdy A3 sheet with a real object attached so that children can participate in the action as the simple story unfolds. Used in the groups we run, we find children love the repetition as each one takes it in turn to carry out the action - for example using the real dusters to clean the chairs in anticipation of Gran's visit. One book in the series, 'The Party', is specifically multi-cultural, describing a Hindu celebration - but we use them all, to much hilarity when Gran arrives, apparently wearing her new tweed shalwaar kameez! *Bag Books, 60 Walham Grove, London SW6 1QR, £30 plus p&p.*

9. The right kind of mango and a small aubergine...

Whilst there are excellent picture materials available for use in community clinics, our client group do not recognise many of the items. Some pictures reflect a culture and lifestyle of which they have little or no experience; for example, they are reluctant to name a burger as it is an item most of them are not allowed to eat. We therefore decided to tailor our equipment to the everyday experience of our clients. A small grant from our Trust and assorted shopping trips later, we have the first trial version of photographic object and action pictures featuring activities and dress which reflects the local community. We are collecting user comments to improve further the picture materials we use, but the photos appear to be eliciting more spontaneous language - and the right kind of mango is now recognised.

This material will possibly be published in future. For further details contact Carol or Sean at Baillie Street Health Centre, Rochdale OL16 1XS.

10. Video camera

We have a video camera in our clinic and frequently use it to record ourselves and students working with children. Used in a supportive way, this allows students to observe, monitor and - following constructive analysis - modify their clinical performance. By recording children demonstrating a range of speech and language abilities we ensure we have a library of different video clips which we use to teach a wide range of people including special educational needs coordinators, health visitors and other members of our profession. We always obtain written parental consent after giving a careful and detailed explanation in the mother tongue of why we wish to use the video and, contrary to many people's expectations, it's very rarely that we get a refusal.