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**The Rochdale Assessment
of
Mirpuri Phonology**

with Punjabi, Urdu and English

Manual

**A Speech and Language Therapy Resource
for the Phonological Assessment of Bilingual Children**

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Part 1. Overview

The Rochdale Assessment of Mirpuri Phonology (RAMP) is a phonological assessment for pre-school and school aged children who use Mirpuri (a dialect of Punjabi), Punjabi, Urdu or English, either as a monolingual or bilingual / multi-lingual speaker.

If a child uses more than one language, each language is assessed separately. The RAMP allows the clinician to describe a child's phonological system accurately within each language used.

Intervention can then be targeted accurately to address the child's needs for each language.

The RAMP consists of :

- A manual which includes the photocopiable recording and analysis sheets for each of the languages assessed.
- A book of picture stimulus material. This book is used whichever language is being assessed.

Part 2. Background information

The professional standards for Speech and Language Therapists clearly state that 'appropriate language assessment material should be available in the required languages' (RCSLT 1996 p151).

In attempting to offer a quality service to a population where pre-school children are typically monolingual in Mirpuri, Punjabi or Urdu and school aged children have at least one of these languages in combination with English, the authors found a clear gap in their assessment battery. This led to a decision to develop a phonological assessment for Mirpuri, Punjabi or Urdu speakers.

Current research by Dodd et al (1997) resonated with our own clinical experience of working with bilingual children. Dodd asks two central questions about the bilingual child's phonological development:

1. Do bilingual children keep their two languages phonological systems separate or do they use a single system to support both languages?

and

2. Do bilingual children acquire phonology in the same way, following the same developmental stages as monolingual children for each of their languages?

These questions have important implications for accurate diagnosis and the planning of effective treatment. RAMP has been designed as a clinical tool for the collection of data necessary to answer these questions.

Part 3. Test Development and Standardisation

Word List

An initial word list was developed with the assistance of a co-worker who spoke all of the test languages. This list was refined after a phonetician transcribed several young adult speakers. Target words selected were those likely to be known by children and which elicited as many phonemes in as many different word positions as possible.

Picture stimulus material

The artist was then asked to prepare a set of illustrations that included the following features:

- Attractive visual images to hold the child's attention.
- Bizarre visual images to stimulate spontaneous connected speech.
- Culturally appropriate images of people.

Transcription Sheets

A set of transcription sheets was produced for each language assessed by the RAMP. It was decided that, as the speech and language therapist was likely to be unfamiliar with Mirpuri, Punjabi and Urdu, the transcription sheets for these languages would show a detailed phonetic transcription for each target word. In contrast to this, the English targets are presented in broad, phonemic transcriptions. As the phonemic structure of English is more thoroughly documented than that of Mirpuri, Punjabi and Urdu, in depth articulatory detail is not required.

It should be noted that the English transcriptions represent the local (Rochdale) variant of English. This means that speech and language therapists working elsewhere may encounter differences of vowel realisation and voicing, for example in the plosive element in s-clusters. Similarly, speech and language therapists may encounter differences in the realisation of the other languages tested by the RAMP due to geographical variations.

Analysis Sheets

Currently the analysis sheets are descriptive rather than developmental. In the future when more is known about the normal pattern of acquisition for all languages sampled, the analysis sheets will be organised to reflect these patterns.

Standardisation

Thirty five bilingual children were assessed using a trial version of the RAMP. These children ranged in age from 4;08 to 7;05 years. None of these children had any sensory or cognitive deficits, nor had they been referred for speech and language therapy (Holm et al in press).

Table 1 presents the quantitative data collected from these children using the trial version of the RAMP.

Source: Holm et al, in press.

Qualitative data suggests that these bilingual children were making some errors which would be regarded as atypical in monolingual English speaking children (Holm et al in press).

Part 4. Administration

Test Materials

The tester will need :

- The picture stimulus book.
- Copies of the recording and analysis sheets for the language to be assessed.

It is recommended that the assessment session(s) be recorded on audio tape.

Use of a Co-worker or Interpreter

The RAMP is designed to be administered on an individual basis by a speech and language therapist.

If the speech and language therapist is not a native speaker of the language being assessed, it is advisable, in accordance with current standards of practice, to seek assistance from a co-worker or interpreter (p151 RCSLT 1996).

Selection of the Assessment Language

Select the appropriate recording and analysis sheets for the language being assessed, either Mirpuri, Punjabi, Urdu, or English.

If RAMP is to be used to assess more than one language, assess each language on a separate occasion. If this is not possible, allow a minimum of 20 minutes interval before assessment of the additional language(s). DO NOT assess two languages simultaneously.

Transcription Consistency

The speech and language therapist should be thoroughly familiar with the test manual and stimulus materials.

Recordings of the target words spoken by a native adult speaker are available on a CD-ROM, *RAMP interactive!* Use of this CD-ROM will allow the speech and language therapist to practise transcribing target words and compare their transcriptions with those found on the recording sheet. If the speech and language therapist does not have access to a CD-ROM, it is recommended that a recording is made of a co-worker or interpreter producing the target items.

The Assessment Environment

The assessment will be carried out in a quiet, well-lit room.

Audio Recording of the Assessment

Audio recording of the assessment session is advantageous. Clinicians are likely to feel less confident transcribing a language they do not speak. A recording of the assessment will enable the clinician to make careful transcriptions at a more convenient time.

Part 5. Transcription and Analysis of Data

Complete the administration details at the top of each page of the recording sheets before commencing the assessment.

Establish a rapport with the client before testing.

Explain to the client that they are going to look at some pictures and that they will be asked to name them.

Give all instructions to the client in the assessment language. This will avoid encouraging the client to switch languages during the assessment.

The progress of the assessment should be supervised by a speech and language therapist, even if administration of the assessment is via a co-worker or translator.

Present the client with the first stimulus picture.

Point to the first target item, and, using the assessment language, ask the client "What is it?". Record the client's response on the appropriate recording sheet. Continue to the next target item.

If no response is elicited, give a further prompt once only before offering a cue. Semantic or phonemic cues are preferred to forced alternatives. However, if the client still does not respond, model the target word and ask the client to repeat.

When a response is elicited which is not spontaneous note this on the recording sheet. It is suggested that the following notation be used:

- f/a forced alternative.
- i imitation of model.
- n/r no response.

Discontinuation of the Assessment

Discontinue the assessment if :

- The client losses concentration.
- The client's responses indicate that they are unfamiliar with the vocabulary.

SCORING AND ANALYSIS

Percentage Correct Boxes

On each recording sheet, below the phonetic transcription of each target word, there are tick boxes to indicate if the client has produced the adult target realisation. The boxes corresponding to consonants are unshaded. Those corresponding to vowel sounds are coded grey.

As most clients experience difficulties with consonants, a 'Consonant correct' calculation section is provided at the end of each set of recording sheets.

If the client's realisation matches the adult target, tick the corresponding box. Count the total of ticked (unshaded) boxes and calculate the percentage correct.

This crude measure can then be used as a baseline and on re-testing at a later date the clinician can use a comparison of percentage consonants correct, along with descriptive data, to evaluate any progress. The clinician may also wish to refer to the preliminary standardisation data presented in Part 3.

Analysis

The analysis sheets for each language include:

- Categorisation of sounds by manner of production and position of the sounds within the word / syllable.
- Consistency analysis.

Once the recording sheets have been completed, a descriptive analysis of the client's productions can be formed by transferring the transcriptions to the analysis sheets.

The *analysis sheets* are organised broadly along the lines of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Consonant clusters are arranged according to the first sound in the cluster. Clusters are analysed regardless of syllable boundaries for all languages. This is in line with the purely descriptive nature of the assessment and will allow the collection of a broad corpus of data.

The *consistency analysis* sheets enable comparison of the production of target words which occur more than once within the RAMP.

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