

HOME RESOURCE

Bilingual Assessment & Intervention



According to ASHA, an SLP who does not speak the child's dominant language(s) may appropriately evaluate the child if certain clinical criterias are met by the evaluator. The ASHA document, "Knowledge and Skills Needed by Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologist to Provide Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services" identifies the following as skills needed by a clinician that does not have language proficiency in the language of the client or patient: knowledge and skill in "obtaining information on the features and developmental characteristics of the language(s)/dialect(s) spoken or signed by the client/patient; obtaining information of sociolinguistic features of the client's/patient's significant cultural and linguistic influences; and developing appropriate collaborative relationships with translators/interpreters (professional or from the community)" (ASHA, 2004)

How does the evaluation of bilingual children suspected of speech or language disorders begin?

- It is important to begin the evaluation of children suspected of speech or language disorders by looking at the cultural background and language history/background. Information about their exposure to both languages, whether or not they were a simultaneous or sequential bilingual, their current language environment and input, as well their cultural values, beliefs, and practices can help guide you in determining the best methods of evaluation. (Paradis, Genesee, Crago, 2011). Information can be gathered through a thorough interview with the parent or caregiver, as well as with the client depending on their age.
- In the bilingual approach, the clinician will choose targets that are present in both languages such as overlapping grammar patterns. (Paradis, Genesee, Crago, 2011). In this approach, there is less focus on which language the intervention is provided in and more focus on the shared characteristics that can be targeted.
- A bilingual child with a suspected speech or language disorder should be assessed in both of their languages in order to accurately determine if a disorder is present (Paradis, Genesee, Crago, 2011). As stated earlier, a child with a speech or language disorder will present with a disorder in both of their languages, so it is important to assess them in both of their languages.



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Bilingual Speech Intervention

Once a bilingual child is assessed in both languages and language delays have been identified in BOTH languages, bilingual speech therapy may take on multiple approaches.



Intervention should be provided in both languages that the child speaks. In general, children who are bilingual are utilizing both languages in some way in the communication environments. Because of this, it is important that we work towards improving their communication skills overall, not just in one language. Research shows that being bilingual or learning two languages does not negatively impact language development or increase language impairment. As noted above, children are likely to use their first language to communicate with others in their community or home environments. Restricting their intervention to one language may cause strain on their emotional well-being. It could prevent them from communicating with their loved ones and within their community. By conducting treatment in both languages, we support their continued interaction with others around them. There are two main approaches to bilingual speech therapy:

The Bilingual Approach to Speech or Language Intervention

- The bilingual approach to speech or language intervention focuses on “constructs common to both languages or errors or error patterns exhibited with relatively equal frequency in both languages” (ASHA, n.d.)
- In the bilingual approach, the clinician will choose targets that are present in both languages such as overlapping grammar patterns. (Paradis, Genesee, Crago, 2011). In this approach, there is less focus on which language the intervention is provided in and more focus on the shared characteristics that can be targeted.

The Cross-Linguistic Approach to Speech or Language Intervention

- The cross-linguistic approach, “focuses on separate training in the phonological, lexical, and grammatical features that are unique to each language.” (Paradis, Genesee, Crago, 2011, p, 224). In this approach, targets that are specific to each language are selected for treatment in that language. This approach addresses the fact that there are differences in the structure of each language. This approach may be used in conjunction with the bilingual approach. (ASHA, n.d.)

