

Organization of SLT services to multilingual clients throughout Europe



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INTRODUCTION

With increased migration in Europe the caseload of Speech Language Therapists (SLTs) has been evolving to include higher and higher percentage of multi-lingual clients. The need for multi-lingual SLTs is increasing, however, it is almost impossible to ensure that every client in need of SLT can have treatment from a professional that speaks his native language. This proposes a difficult situation for not only clients, but also for SLTs trying their best to serve this population. Within the Professional Practice Committee of CPLoL (The Standing Liaison Committee of EU Speech and Language Therapists and Logopedists) a working group was formed dedicated to this subject that focused on services to children.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives were:

- To gather information about how SLT services are organized for multilingual children in different European countries.
- To discuss ways to strengthen SLTs in their work with multilingual individuals in Europe.
- To find guidelines of language intervention to multilingual individuals and other documents that can support SLTs in their work with multilingual individuals.

METHOD

Each participant in the working group sent the following three questions and to speech therapists in their association (6 associations).

1. *At the 1st meeting when approached about a multilingual child, when do you think is the best moment to intervene? What do you do? How do you act? Give example, and please list examples of best practice from real life?*

2. *Do you feel equipped as a therapist to do your work in multilingual settings?*

3. *How well do you feel your initial training or education prepared you to work with multilingual clients (children and adults)?*

The information gathered were discussed and qualitatively analysed.

ROLES OF SLTs WITH MULTILINGUAL CLIENTS

Evaluation/ diagnostic role	Therapist's role	Advising and consultation role	Instructions role for teachers and paraprofessionals
Identify the children with speech and language problems in L1 and further languages (L2, L3, L4, etc).	Traditional direct speech and language therapy	Advising parents and environment about how to foster the child's language and communication skills	Teaching and coaching teachers, organize courses for other professionals about multi-lingualism

COMMON THEMES

Common themes include:

- The importance of nurturing the child's first language
- Importance of getting good background/ a complexe/full information of language biography (of family, child, young person, other persons involved with education)
- That counselling parents and people involved with education is a big part of intervention
- That SLT service includes teaching paraprofessionals that interact with the child
- Importance of using interpreters
- Many countries have limited availability of assessment tools in the different languages

DIFFERENCES

- Speech language services are either organised within medical or educational systems.
- If organised within the medical system SLT services are more likely to be restricted to multilingual children that have identified disorder.
- Organization of services is also dependent on the financial situation in each country.
- The timing of assessments (at the beginning, during the process).

OTHER FINDINGS

- Many SLT's reported that they didn't feel that they were well equipped by their initial education to deal with this population.
- Nobody referred to guidelines or research in their answered.
- Some referred to the importance of the resources found within the families.
- Also some noted that different financial situation of families can influence your actions.
- Although SLT services can be preventative, and is in some settings/ countries used as such, this might be a underutilized and undervalued asset of SLT services.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

- The implementation of protocol used as a guideline for the whole process, including in the diagnostic process.
- Informing and involving parents (with the help of interpreter, if possible) and teachers.
- Multi-lingual therapy (in Germany, Switzerland).
- In the anamnestic part of a first assesment : Recreating a ,Biographic Map' of the different languages in the family of the child and a special biography of the child himself through the use of a questionnaire.

CONCLUSION

- There are differences in the scope of practice between countries in Europe.
- Many SLT's don't feel that their initial education made them well equipped to service multilingual clients.
- The therapist role of SLTs is very well established. However, there is not as good awareness about the skills and knowledge of SLTs in the other roles concerning multilingualism.
- Many SLTs think that they are in need of more knowledge and education about multilingualism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- We need to reach consensus on the role of SLT in multilingual clients within Europe.
- There is a need of a professional profile of SLT's assessment and interventions of multilingual clients.
- There should be more emphasis on multilingualism in SLT formal education and in continuing education.
- SLT associations should work for specialization in multilingual services and support expert groups on the subject in their own country.
- There is a need to support research on the effect of the preventive process of multilingualism and the prospective role of SLT's.

EXAMPLE OF GUIDELINES AND OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS RELATED TO MULTILINGUAL SPEECH THERAPY

1. ASHA guidelines and position papers <http://www.asha.org/Practice-Portal/Professional-Issues/Bilingual-Service-Delivery/>
2. Speech-language & Audiology Canada (SAC) published a position paper about multilingualism in 1997, <http://sac-oac.ca/professional-resources/resource-library/sac-position-paper-speech-language-pathology-and-audiology>
3. University of Alberta has also published guidelines for speech therapy with bilingual children (May 2011) http://www.linguistics.ualberta.ca/en/CHESL_Centre/-/media/linguistics/Media/CHESL/Documents/WorkingWithBilingualChildren-May2011.pdf
4. Speech Pathology Australia has published their guidelines; Working in a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Society (2009) http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/library/Clinical_Guidelines/Working_in_a_CALD_Society.pdf
5. Charles Stuart University holds out an extensive website about multilingualism, that focuses specially on Speech sound disorders. http://www.csu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/392977/MultilingualSSDPositionPaper.pdf
6. London Special interest group Bilingualism website <http://www.londonsigbilingualism.co.uk/>
7. Cost Action IS0804 Language Impairment in a Multilingual Society: Linguistic Patterns and Road to Assessment, <http://www.bi-sli.org/index.htm>
8. Information on multilingualism project in CH playgroups http://ipe.phzh.ch/de/Projekte/Landerubergreifende-Projekte/Datenbank_Mehrsprachigkeit-EU-Projekt_Amuse/Datenbank-Mehrsprachigkeit/?action=detail&IDProjekt=96
9. Report from European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education on multilingualism and special needs education <http://www.european-agency.org/publications/ereports/multicultural-diversity-and-special-needs-education/multicultural-diversity-and-special-needs-education>
10. Document with five relevant messages presented by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education during their conference in November 2013 <https://www.european-agency.org/publications/ereports/five-key-messages-for-inclusive-education>
11. Language Education Policy Profile from the Ministry of Education, Hungary https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Profile_Hungary_EN.pdf