

Bilingual Multilingual Considerations in the Assessment and Management of Communication Disorders

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Abstract

Bilingual and multilingual people are becoming more common in a society that is becoming more interconnected by the day. In contrast to the 2011 census, which found that 26% of Indians are bilingual and 7% are multilingual, the 2001 census found that 24.8% of the population was bilingual (Census, 2011). According to a study

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Introduction

Bilingual and multilingual people are becoming more common in a society that is becoming more interconnected by the day. In contrast to the 2011 census, which found that 26% of Indians are bilingual and 7% are multilingual, the 2001 census found that 24.8% of the population was bilingual (Census, 2011). According to a study [1], the majority of people on the planet speak multiple languages, which creates both possibilities and difficulties for the study of communication impairments. Nuanced methods that take language and cultural variation into consideration are necessary for the diagnosis and treatment of communication issues in bilingual and multilingual populations. Addressing these issues and emphasising the value of linguistically and culturally sensitive approaches in the area are the goals of this letter. According to a study [2], multilingualism and bilingualism are intricate phenomena that go beyond mere proficiency in multiple languages. In order to choose the target language and avoid interruptions from the nontarget language, multilingual people can activate brain areas linked to domain-general executive control [3]. Based on ASHA (2004), these people frequently toggle between many language systems, each of which has its own phonological, syntactic, and semantic norms. Understanding that a single-language emphasis could not fully convey the complexities of their language use is essential when assessing communication problems. Because bilingual and multilingual language processing is dynamic and flexible, assessment techniques and tools must be amended accordingly. Cultural sensitivity, dual-language assessments, narrative-based evaluations, and integrating language inputs should all be a part of this [4]

Studies are necessary to recognise Speech-Language Pathologists' (SLPs) understanding in this area due to the growing number of bilingual and multilingual populations as well as the rising challenges in bilingual evaluation. In their study of the difficulties faced by Singaporean SLPs working with the bilingual population, Teoh et al. (2017b) [5] found that SLPs have been using standardised tests that were not intended for use with the population because they lack appropriate local assessment tools, data on the developmental trajectories of the host languages, and, practice guidelines for bilingual assessment. Additionally, the adoption of alternate evaluation measures was insufficient, despite the literature-based recommendations. As per Mulgrew et al. (2021) [6], speech-language therapists (SLTs) are realising steadily how important it is to have thorough training and resources in order to properly assess bilingual and multilingual children. Bilingual educators are now equipping themselves with sufficient tools that are validated and studied in bilingual populations rather than using adapted test materials. SLP's are also learning on how bilingual children acquire and employ a language differently from their monolingual classmates. Traditional methods and instruments for evaluation are frequently created with monolingual populations in mind. One of the difficulties that may result from this is the accuracy of the diagnosis [7]. Standardized assessments could not take into consideration the subtleties of language used by bilingual or multilingual speakers, which could result in incorrect severity ratings or misdiagnosis. For instance, a test designed for monolingual English speakers could not adequately assess a Spanish-English bilingual person's

language proficiency [7]. Misunderstandings of the person's actual language skills and maybe inappropriate treatments may result from this mismatch. The performance of bilingual and multilingual people on assessment tools may be impacted by their varying levels of abilities in each of their languages [8]. It is critical to distinguish between true language disorders and typical disparities in language proficiency. Cultural sensitivity is another crucial thing to consider. Communication norms and expectations differ greatly between cultures, influencing how people respond to evaluation tools [8]. To solve these issues, multiple approaches could potentially be used. Dynamic evaluation is one key means of evaluating an individual's learning capacity and progress rather than depending simply on standard static measures. It aids in the distinction between language disorders and linguistic differences by assessing how people react to treatments and instructional support. Cross-linguistic comparison is an approach in which we analyse skills in all of an individual's languages in order to present a more complete picture of their communicative ability. This entails employing techniques that are culturally and linguistically relevant to each language [9] Information on the child's communication skills and difficulties may also be obtained by interviewing others who are acquainted with the child's language usage in various circumstances. An accurate picture of the child's linguistic abilities and areas in need of support may be painted with the use of contextual information from instructors and family members, allowing for interventions that have been tailored to meet their specifications (Antón, 2019) [10]. When Valliappan et al. (2023b) [11] surveyed student clinicians in India, they discovered a number of problems related to multilingualism, such as the parents' educational background, the absence of adequate evaluation tools, a shortfall of translators and interpreters, and the relatively poor linguistic proficiency of clinicians. In similar lines, Wang and Li (2020) [12] examined the assessment literature on multilingualism over the previous 15 years in order to investigate the issues, challenges, and future directions. He discovered that the majority of bilingual evaluations were conducted in classrooms and that large-scale, standardized testing is extremely atypical. The lack of instructors' multilingual competency, the resources needed to create, administer, and score dynamic tests, and resistance from the prevailing monolingual mindset are some of the difficulties in conducting multilingual assessments. Tailored treatment options that target the language or languages most pertinent to the person's everyday requirements and communication style are necessary for the effective treatment of communication problems in bilingual and multilingual people. This might entail combining strategies across languages or concentrating on one language at a time. Therapeutic methods must be considerate of the patient's history and should be suitable for their culture. This involves taking into account cultural norms about family participation in treatment and communication. It is essential to involve families in the intervention process. Therapy results can be improved by giving families the resources and strategies they need to aid their kids in communicating in all pertinent languages. It is crucial to develop and validate assessment tools and interventions tailored to bilingual and multilingual populations as the area of communication disorders evolves further Research should concentrate

on developing measures that are appropriate both culturally and linguistically as well as can investigate successfully cross-linguistic intervention techniques In conclusion, addressing bilingual and multilingual considerations in the assessment and management of communication disorders is imperative for ensuring precise diagnosis and effective intervention. By adopting culturally and linguistically informed practices, professionals can better support the diverse needs of individuals in our increasingly multilingual world.

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