

Framework for assessing a child with English as an additional language – Age 3 – 5 years

Areas to assess

1. Case History – including a full language profile
2. Attention and Listening
3. Non-verbal communication, e.g. eye contact, turn-taking, etc
4. Pragmatics – Can they request, respond, initiate, question, describe and comment
5. Play
6. Receptive language
 - a. Word level – Derbyshire type assessment
 - b. Functional Understanding
7. Expressive language
 - a. Word level – Derbyshire type assessment
 - b. Functional Understanding
 - c. Cause effect
8. Intonation / prosody / voice
9. Non-verbal skills – puzzles, fine motor, self help skills, etc

1. Case History

Use the **bilingual case history**. This includes the full language profile.

2. Attention and Listening

Through **observation** as you would assess a monolingual child.

Does the child:

- Play in isolation when 2 adults are speaking?
- Turn when his name is called?
- Sustain attention long enough to finish an activity e.g. puzzle or building an object or do they frequently change from one activity to the next?
- Work with/out rewards?

3. Non-verbal communication and Pragmatics

Through **observation** as you would assess a monolingual child.

It is important to be aware of cultural awareness and to discuss with the interpreter what is appropriate or expected by the child, e.g. rules on the use of eye contact vary among cultures. Evidence suggests that direct eye contact from a child to an adult may be inappropriate in some Muslim families.

It may not be inappropriate in a child's culture to greet the therapist with a hug. Don't just assume that the child is over familiar.

4. Play

Through **observation** as you would assess a monolingual child.

Find out from the interpreter whether adult-child play is part of the cultural norm or whether children are more accustomed to play with each other. Note: the **toys** the child plays with at home may not be familiar with the toys given by the therapist. It is important not to conclude that the child is not able to play. Is the child able to understand and follow the rules of the games?

5. Receptive language

- **Common nouns** – e.g. In Derbyshire Picture Test Book
- **Common verbs** – e.g. In Derbyshire Picture Test Book
- **Common adjectives** – e.g. colours, size, shape, hot / cold, long / short, etc
- **Prepositions** – e.g. in, on, under, over, in front, behind
- **Following instructions** – How many ICW's (2 / 3 / 4)
 - i. Accurately, presented verbally only
 - ii. With repetition – how many?
 - iii. With visual cues – which cues?
 - iv. With modelling
 - v. With simplification of instruction

- Vocabulary: **The British Picture Vocabulary Scales** have been standardised on a bilingual population, therefore when administered in English age norms can be quoted in reports.

- **NOTE:** Translating English tests into other languages will be inappropriate and inaccurate because the linguistic term in English may translate into a different linguistic form in the other language which may emerge developmentally at a different stage in that language. For example the passive structure emerges between 3-4 years in English speaking children but in Punjabi it develops much later and is used only as a highly literacy device.

6. Expressive language

- Is the child following the acquisition of the English syntactic structure? (WNL)
- Need to distinguish between a disorder of syntax and the child mapping syntax of their first language, e.g. is the child using the syntactic patterns (word order etc) of his first language when using English?
- Gain samples of language through **conversation** and **picture description**, e.g. composite pictures, **wordbooks** or any **children's book** that will promote sentence level construction, e.g. books about home events. (If there is a scene in the book about children having

breakfast, ask the child to describe the picture first and then retell their own experience of breakfast time at home).

- For Tamil, Somali, Portuguese, Gujarati and Arabic children refer to the **bilingual language profiles**. These will enable you through close discussions with the interpreter to determine whether the child has SLI or is using L1 syntax on L2 vocabulary.
- **STASS** can be used as an informal assessment. It is important to remember that the linguistic concepts may be changed if translated into another language.

7. Intonation / prosody / voice

It is important to discuss with the interpreter or check the **language profiles** to ascertain the above, e.g. a child speaking Punjabi can sound like they are shouting, but that is the normal prosody for Punjabi speakers.

8. Extra considerations for assessment

- Check the literacy abilities of the parents before sending English home programmes.
- Check religion or cultural beliefs before choosing pictorial and play material.
- Before booking the interpreter, check the dialect of the child.