



Working with bilingual children at risk of developmental language disorder

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Working with Bilingual Children at Risk of Developmental Language Disorder

Adapting assessment and intervention for the nursery-aged child

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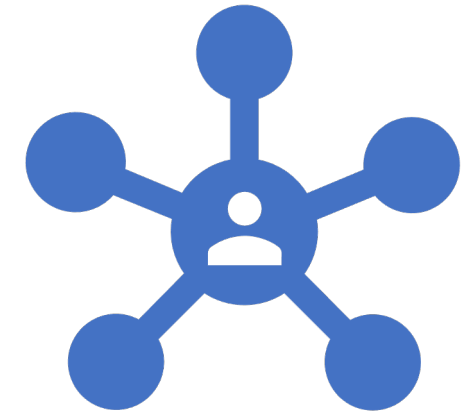


NALDIC 28

Saturday 21st November 2020

Funding and Team

- Project funded by the Heather van der Lely Foundation
- **LIVELY TEAM**
 - Professor Cristina McKean Principal Investigator, Newcastle University(NCL)
 - Dr Carolyn Letts, Co-Investigator (CI), NCL
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THE HEATHER VAN DER LELEY FOUNDATION
RESEARCHING LANGUAGE
DISORDERS IN CHILDREN

Structure of Presentation


The targeted children: Developmental Language Disorder (DLD).

LIVELY Project.

Case Series with bilingual children.

'BEST' Intervention.

Challenges of adapting the intervention.



Targeted Children:
At risk for
*Developmental
Language
Disorder (DLD)*

- Children with DLD experience difficulties with acquiring and developing language.
- May affect language comprehension or production.
- May affect vocabulary, grammar and use of extended discourse such as narrative.
- It is estimated that around 7.5 children have some sort of difficulty with language development, some of whom will go on to develop DLD.
- In many cases, the extent of language difficulty does not appear to be related to any underlying condition or risk factor.

Educational Implications of language difficulties

- Negative effects on:
 - Literacy
 - Long-term career prospects
 - Social and personal development
 - Additional language learning
 - Academic achievement
- One of the largest groups of children with SEND, equating to potentially two children in every mainstream classroom.





DLD in Bilingual Children

- Children who speak more than one language are just as likely to have DLD as monolingual children.
- Bilingual children will present with difficulties in both/all languages, as the disorder is a problem with **“breaking the code” of spoken language**, not a difficulty with a *particular language*.
- DLD will affect acquisition of the home language AND of the language of education.

LIVELY

- Language InterVention in the Early Years
- Aims to mitigate effects of language difficulties in the early years, evaluating *Building Early Sentences Therapy* (BEST: (McKean, Pert & Stow, 2010)
- Partnership with NHS Trusts, Local Authority Speech and Language teams in the North East, and crucially, participating schools.



LIVELY: two parts to study

1. Randomised control trial to evaluate effectiveness of BEST with large numbers of monolingual English speaking children aged 3-4 years.
2. Case Series study to look at effect of using BEST with individual bilingual children

For both studies, children are identified initially as being at risk for DLD by their early years teachers and then further assessed for inclusion.



Who are the targeted children?

- **LIVELY CRITERIA: Bilingual Children**
- Aged 3 years 5 months – 4 years 5 months
- Able to benefit from play-based therapy
- Central language difficulty affecting both/all languages

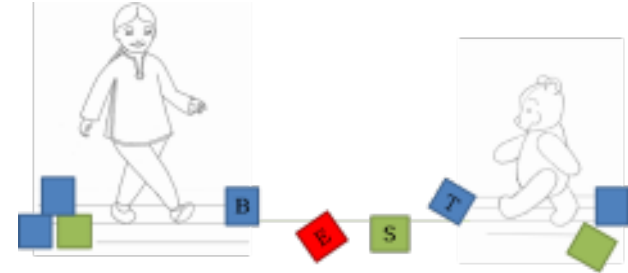


How to identify these children?

- Norms from standardised tests of language development cannot be used with bilingual children.
- Strategies being developed include:
 - Use of questionnaires to ascertain parental concern and patterns of exposure to each language.
 - Adaptation of English-based standardised test for use in *language other than English (LOTE)*, usually child's home language.
 - Possible use of non language-specific procedure such as *non-word repetition*.
- All triangulated to build up picture of child's language development.

Building Early Sentences Therapy

- **BEST is.....**



- Developed for use by Speech & Language Therapists
- For young children with (severe) language difficulties, at risk for DLD. (3;6 – 6;0)
- Aims to develop children's ability to
 - use range of simple 2, 3 and 4 element sentences (elements = components such as verb, subject, object, etc.
 - flexibly, with a range of verbs and nouns
 - and with appropriate grammatical morphology
- So far developed for English and a number of Pakistani Heritage languages
- PhD study carried out by Ana Trebacz found children make significant progress.

The intervention & its rationale

Frozen
Phrases/item –
specific
constructions



Cognition

Input



Abstract
constructions/
paradigmatic
categories

The intervention & its rationale

Schematization

Categorisation

Cultural Learning

Intention Reading



Cognition

Analogy

Distribution analysis



Manipulates the **nature of the input** to support children with **Language Delay** to apply these **cognitive 'tools'** to language learning

BEST

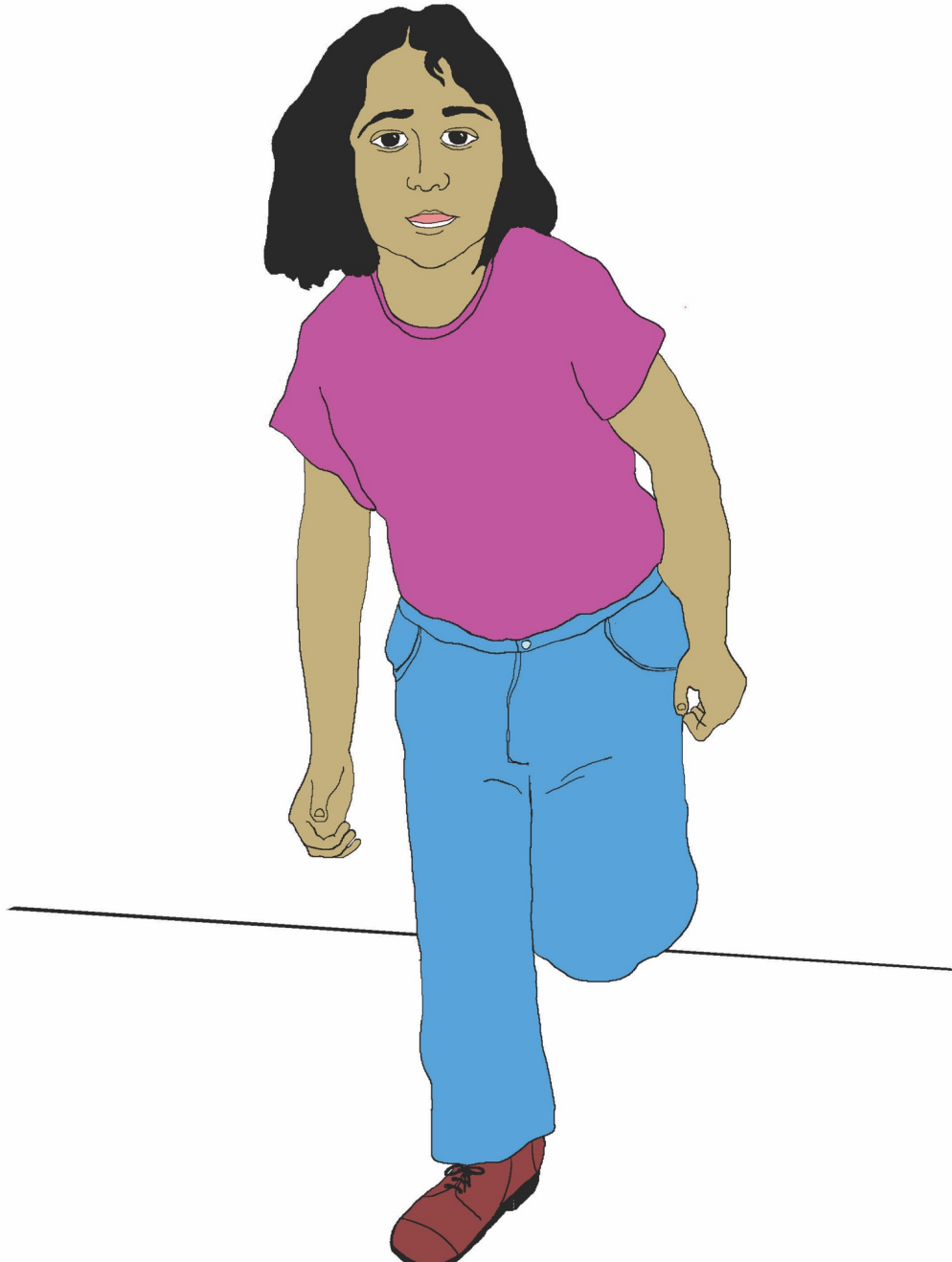
BEST Intervention: how does it work in practice?

- **LOOK:**
Child observes toys carrying out actions
- **LISTEN TO LEARN:**
Adult provides verbal input, describing what the toys are doing:
- Child maps meaning onto sentence structure
- Assisted by **comparison** and **contrast** in the spoken sentences provided
- **Repeated** and structured input
- **SAY:** Child joins in when ready. In contrast to traditional language therapy **no speech is demanded, or imitated**
- **Focus is on the response to input and the rate of progress**

Adaptation for Bilingual Children: BEST

- Languages vary in the way in which meaning is encoded in words, individual morphemes and sentences
- The **Thematic Roles** – i.e. ‘who does what to whom etc’ will remain the same for all languages (universal?), but way in which they are expressed will vary.
- For example, languages other than English (LOTE) may have different word/phrase order, such as Mirpuri’s SOV compared to English’s SVO surface structure



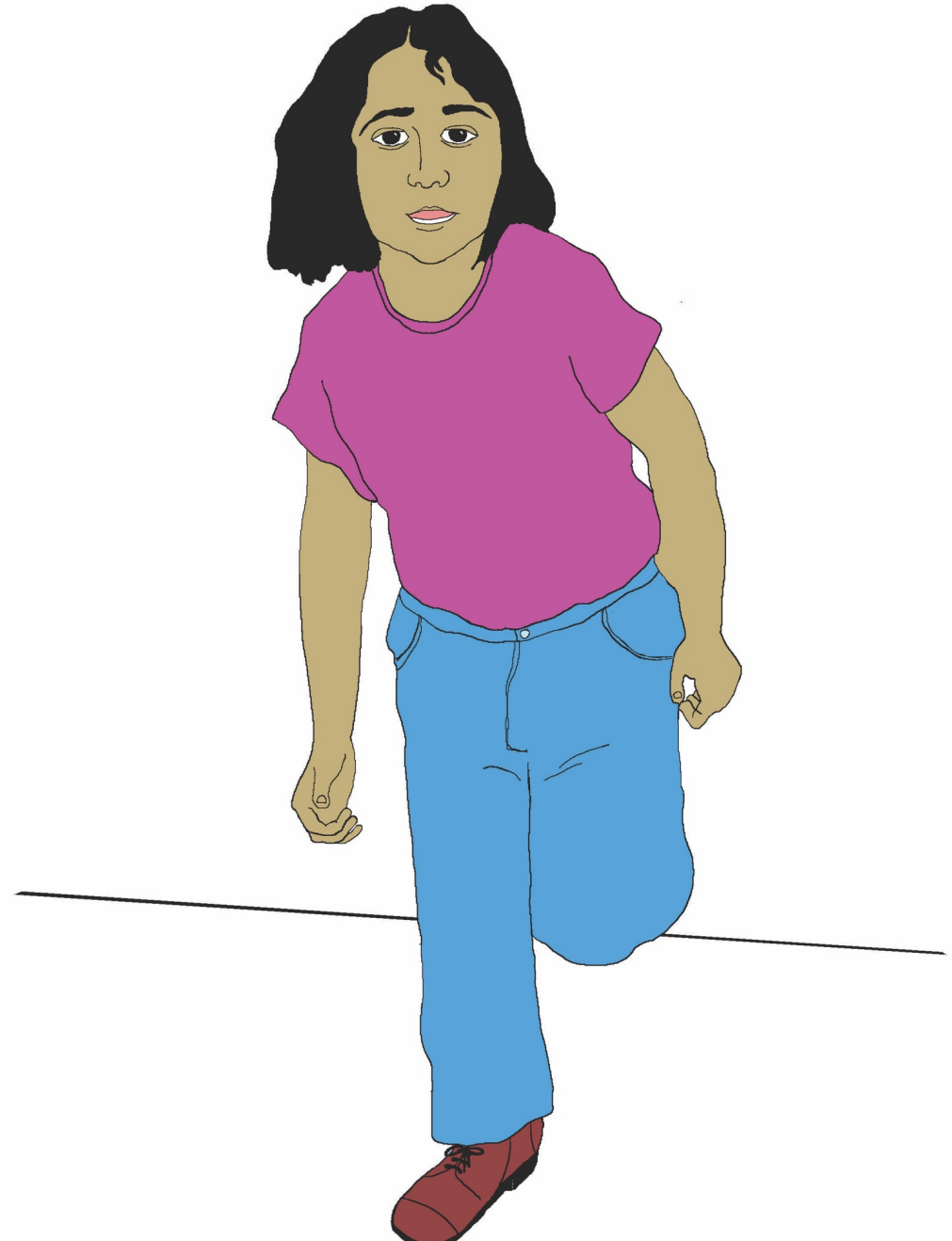


Adaptation for Bilingual Children: Procedure and example.

- Straight translation is not appropriate as lack of one-to-one mapping of structures will be lost and equivalence of complexity will be lost.
- Translation protocol (Pert, 2003):
 - “The man is eating an apple”
 - Compare to “d̄z̄ena seb kha-na pi-ja”
 - (the) man apple eat-ing+male is+male
 - *(The) man is eating (an) apple*
- When working with child on this structure, need to consider:
 - Word order (SOV, not SVO)
 - Subject-verb agreement morphemes.

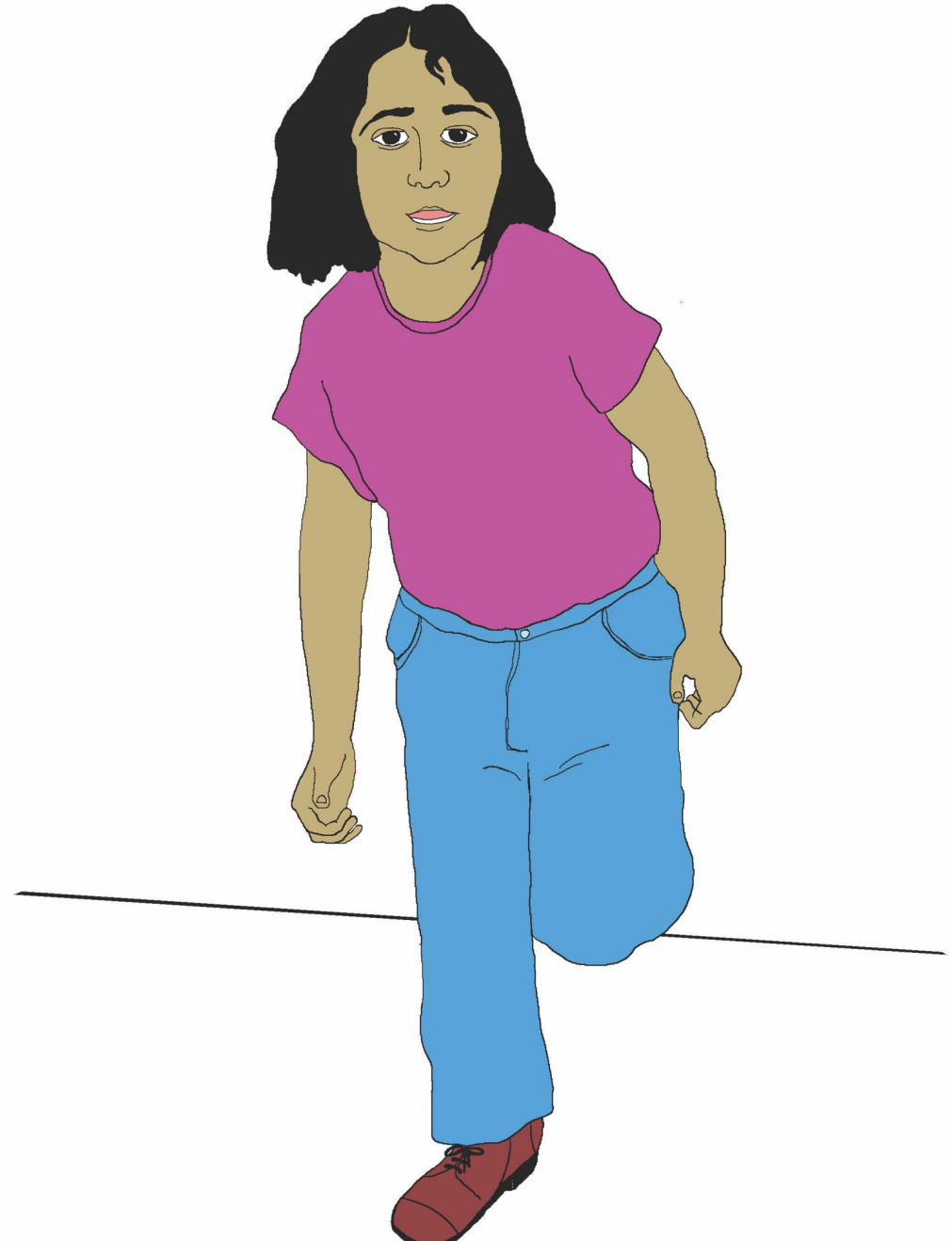
Adaptation BEST to Polish

- Ewa Czaplewska currently providing:
 - Morpheme by morpheme translation of stimuli to Polish
 - Advice on how key structures work in Polish to enable judgement about suitability and stage of language acquisition represented.
 - Suggestions for substitutions for items where translation does not work.



Adaptations for Bilingual Children: Issues that may arise

- Lack of one-to-one correspondence between vocabulary items – an idea expressed by a single word in English may involve a whole phrase in a LOTE.
- Case endings on nouns – do these add to complexity, or make comprehension and correct production easier?
- Word order.
- Verb inflections – system likely to be more complex in Polish.





Summary

- It is possible to develop language assessment and intervention materials in home languages
- Good initial indicators that children respond to the BEST approach
- RCT will evidence of which intervention is most effective for which groups of children
- Single case studies lend further support to the theory that input-based interventions are effective and work in ANY LANGUAGE
- Culturally and linguistically sensitive adaptations are worth the effort and cost
- BEST developed based on constructivist theory
Explains the mechanism of the interventions
- Trebaz PhD findings (in press) demonstrate that:
(Sign +) Verbal input + Observing/Interacting with toys = Child constructing their own model of language

Any questions?



References

Pert, S. and Letts, C. (2006). Codeswitching in Mirpuri speaking Pakistani heritage preschool children: Bilingual language acquisition. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 10 (3), 349-374.

Pert, S. and Stow, C. (2003). *A traceable translation protocol for speech and language therapy teams working with bilingual clients: The collation and analysis of expressive language data*. VIth European CLOL Congress: Evidence-based practice, Herrot Watt Conference Centre, Edinburgh, 5-7th September 2003. Available from [https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/a-traceable-translation-protocol-for-speech-and-language-therapy-teams-working-with-bilingual-clients\(89991c4f-9f91-4da5-90db-c9fa8e1ef5cf\).html](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/a-traceable-translation-protocol-for-speech-and-language-therapy-teams-working-with-bilingual-clients(89991c4f-9f91-4da5-90db-c9fa8e1ef5cf).html)