

# Bilingual and multilingual children: identification of speech language disorders and strategies of intervention

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## METHOD

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

## RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Scientific literature analysis shows that identification of multilingual and/or bilingual children of speech disorders, speech therapy models are not sufficiently. Therefore, for speech language therapists, teachers and family members are often difficult to identify and distinguish between multilingual children with language disorders, from natural language acquisition.

### The objectives of this research were:

- to analyze the scientific literature about different models of multi-language learning;
- to disclose the identification criteria of language disorders in multilingualism and speech therapy methods
- to analyze the experience of parents raising bilingual / multilingual children about the effect of the linguistic environment on the child's native language development, speech language therapy and their cooperation with specialists.

Using a semi-structured interviews there were questioned mothers raising multilingual children. Interviews carried out by the *Skype*. **The age of multilingual children was 3 - 10 years old.** The bilingualism / multilingualism type of three children's whose simultaneous and 5 participants had sequential bilingualism. Three children whose parents participated in the study had Specific Language Impairment. One child communicates in four languages (Lithuanian, Swedish, English, German,) two children - three languages (Portuguese, English, Lithuanian), five children communicate in two languages (English, Lithuanian).

## ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH OUTCOMES

The qualitative study results are summarized according to the methodological recommendations, in order to reveal the experience of parent's whose participated in the interview, the child's situation, language environment and factors which determine the effectiveness of speech language therapy. In order to assess whether the child has a speech or language problems, were taken into account the following basic criteria: 1) child's language disorders in native and other languages; 2) delays in the native language (s) and the slow learning pace of other language (s). When children are learning several languages, they often faced with difficulties in acquiring new words, this problem becomes particularly clear and relevant, if a child has a language disorder: The results confirm that the three children have specific language impairment, four children have articulation disorders, which can be caused by differences of the diverse fonetics in the languages. Gutierrez-Celen, Simon Cereijido, Wagner (2008) points out that, in order to recognize that bilingual or multilingual children have language disorders, specialists must gather detailed information about the native language (s) so evaluate first, second (and other) language level, taking into account the child's age, the rate of language acquisition, to take into account family, teachers' expectations and observations, compare the child's language changes over time, evaluate the child's needs, taking into account its cultural context. In order to know how much time and ways in which parents encourage the child's first language (languages) development was asked in an interview how much time a child spends in Lithuania, which is spoken and with whom he comes in contact, as well how often family use Lithuanian at home Most interview participants mentioned that every parent with a child trying to communicate in their native language. Mothers indicate the factors positively affecting the child's first language (L1) and they were categorized.

## The impact of linguistic environment on the child's language development

Category	Subcategory	Number of statements
Visits in Lithuania	Active communication in Lithuanian language	8
	Heard only Lithuanian language	7
	The child communicates with family members who do not speak other languages	7
	The possibility to communicate with children who do not speak other languages	6
Maintenance of contacts with family members	Chat with software program Skype	4
	Telephone calls	1
	Family visits abroad	4
Language promotion at home	Each parent communicate in their native language	4
	Watching TV shows, cartoons, reading books	5
	Work with the tasks prepared by speech language therapist in Lithuania	3
	Baby sitter of the child communicates in Lithuanian	2

Kohnert (2010) indicates that there is no universal method for speech therapy support, suitable for all bilingual / multilingual children's language disorders overcome. That the native language (languages) development will develop successfully, it is necessary to inform the child's family members, that it is so important constantly communicate with a child in the same language. Parents must observe their child's interests which encourage his / her motivation to speak and to cooperate systematically with the speech language therapist. The purpose of early language intervention is to develop first child's language / languages (L1) and consistently promote a motivation to learn other languages, in order to gradually overcome language development disorders. Speech language therapy for multilingual children with SLI is based on the communicative function of language (pragmatic) development. Speech therapy is provided for all forms of communication, children the opportunity to learn about and understand what they do not understand, to express their needs, thoughts and feelings and develop in the children's social skills.

## THE CONCLUSIONS PRESENTED IN THIS SAMPLE RANGE

The identification of bilingual and / or multilingual children with SLI is a complex process. Formal and informal assessment methods are based on a comprehensive child's first language (languages) development and case history. The analysis of the interview data revealed several tendencies: a multilingual children experiencing difficulties with the language related with of sounds pronunciation in Lithuanian, grammar structure and use the exact meaning of words; one of the main criteria to distinguish between natural language learning difficulties and language disorders, there are delays in the first language (L1) development and the slow pace of learning other languages; a language disorder adversely affects both native (L1) and foreign (other) language (L2, L3) learning. The results revealed the aspirations of the parents that the child does not lose the mother tongue and keep it together with other languages. Participants notice that they seek for a speech language therapist's consultation and value interaction with the speech language therapist and teachers and consider and consider collaboration as success of speech language therapy. The study participants understand the impact of language environment on children's language development, possibly seeking to create more supportive conditions for language learning, and actively interact in different environments with their first (native) language. Analysis of the literature and research findings suggest that it is important to develop research about bilingual / multilingual children with speech disorders, standardized and informal assessment tools, protocols for Lithuanian language, which would help to identify as early as possible multilingual children at risk for SLI and provide individualized, matching the needs of the child, speech language therapy methods.

## LITERATURE

- Gutierrez-Celen, V., Simon-Cereijido, G., Wagner, C. (2008). *Bilingual children with language impairment: A comparison monolingual and second language learners*. *Appl psycholinguist*, 29 (1), p. 3-19.
- Kohnert, K. (2010). *Bilingual Children with Primary Language Impairment: Issues, Evidence and Implications for Clinical Actions*. *Journal Communication Disorders*, 43 (6), p. 456-473.