Framework for assessing a bilingual child – Age 5 – 9 years

Areas to assess

1. Case History – including a full language profile (use addendum to case history).
2. Attention and Listening Skills
3. Social Communication – Topic maintenance, group of friends, social use of language, turn taking, eye contact etc.
4. Play
5. Receptive language
   a. Detailed evaluation of understanding of form (morphology and syntax) and content
   b. Vocabulary
   c. Functional Understanding
6. Expressive language
   a. Detailed evaluation of expression of form (morphology and syntax), content, use
   b. Narrative skills
   c. Functional Use/ conversational skills
   d. Cause and effect/ Verbal reasoning (higher level language use, more abstract use of language e.g. inference, prediction, problem solving)
7. Intonation / prosody / voice
8. Phonology and articulation
9. Non-verbal skills – Organisation/ sequencing, Draw a Man Test, age norms for literacy and numeracy, spelling, auditory and visual memory.

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. The child may have greater difficulty in listening to an unfamiliar language.

Be aware of what name the child is addressed by. The child may be called a nickname which they are familiar with and only respond to.

Does the child:
    Play in isolation or with peers?
    Turn when his/her name is called?
    Sustain attention long enough to finish an activity e.g. a paper based activity, or therapy based activity?
    Work with/out rewards?

3. **Social Communication/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.

   Is the interaction of e.g. a child giving the therapist a hug, considered to be normal or inappropriate within the culture? Don't just assume that the child is over familiar.

   Use the **pragmatic checklists and profiles** available for monolingual children. Theses are still appropriate as they are not standardised and age norms are not quoted.

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 **games** the child plays with at home, as the child may not be familiar with the game 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?

   Be aware of the stages of development of play: pretend, imaginative and role play.

   Does the child engage in play with others peer/adults

5. **Receptive language**

   Vocabulary: **The British Picture Vocabulary Scales 2** has been standardised on a bilingual population, therefore when administered in English age norms can be quoted in reports.

   Informal assessment should always form part of assessment depending on the level of the child. Stimuli such as **picture cards, picture descriptions** are appropriate methods of gaining levels of functional and contextual comprehension.

   Follow the same criteria as for assessing a monolingual child for example, question forms, following instructions, contextual / abstract etc.

   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?

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. **wordbooks, picture cards** 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 on the s-drive. 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 or **RAPT** can be administered in the home language, and qualitatively assessed, but be aware that the linguistic concepts you are assessing may be different in the home language. Therefore it is very important to work closely with an interpreter.

When requesting an interpretation of the child's response, it is important to discuss with the interpreter that the responses given by the child should be DIRECTLY transcribed in the language being assessed. For example (picture of a boy walking) If the child gives a response in Gujarati, the interpreter should not translate the sentence as "The boy is walking" which is the acceptable for English, but write it down in Gujarati. After the assessment session the interpreter should translate word for word "boy walk is the" at which time a conversation should take place regarding the appropriateness of the utterance.

Ask the interpreter if they were to say this sentence in Gujarati themselves, would the order of the words be the same as the child's response. If yes, the child's utterance is developing within normal limits for their language. If no, the child is presenting with delayed/disordered syntactic development. Discuss with the interpreter how grammatical structures e.g. tenses, plurals etc are marked in that particular language.

7. Intonation / prosody / voice

8. Non-verbal skills

Have a discussion with the child's class teacher about the child's **numeracy and literacy levels**, and ask them which level the child is functioning at in the classroom.

Contact the parent to identify if the child is being exposed to their home language in a written form, (e.g. the child may go to learn the Koran which is written in ancient Arabic).

Remember standard scores on the **Draw a Man Test** can not be used, but this assessment alongside pictures that a child has drawn will give

you a good indication of the child's non-verbal skills. This can be used informally.

9. Articulation

See phonology guidelines to assessment

10. 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.