

Research finds bilingual therapy vital to improving language disorders in dual-language children

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New research has found that providing bilingual therapy is vital to improving developmental language disorders in dual-language children.

The study, which brought together Birmingham City University academics and members of Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, also found that there is no evidence to suggest providing second language [therapy](#) is more effective than bilingual therapy.

A systematic review was conducted in which articles were screened, reviewed and appraised independently by two reviewers in accordance with the research questions. The study found that bilingual therapy is equally effective as second-language therapy in improving the second-language, but also improves first-language skills which are vital to helping [children](#) remain active in their communities.

Approximately 7 percent of children experience

developmental language disorder, which is characterised by difficulties learning new words, understanding language and expressing their thoughts and feelings.

Speech and language therapy aims to develop a child's language abilities to their full potential and teach children, and those around them, strategies to reduce the impact of their difficulties.

The research saw Birmingham City University academic Dr. Sarahjane Jones, and trainee research assistants deliver a hands-on research project whilst also increasing the research skills of clinicians at the Trust, including Speech and Language Therapist Hazel Allaway.

Dr. Sarahjane Jones said: "It has been brilliant working with Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust on this research. Our collaboration demonstrates that when frontline clinicians work with researchers to undertake real-world, practice-based research training, it can be of high quality and have wide implications beneficial to the community."

Hazel Allaway added: "Our findings have important implications for how [speech](#) and language disorders are treated. Often the focus is on improving the second language, but for dual-language children, it's really important that they improve in their home language skills too so they can remain active and included in their communities."

The partnership, which began in 2014, aims to support professionals in carrying out real-world research under the supervision of a more experienced researcher.

Amit Kulkarni, Research and Development

Manager at the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists commented: "I am delighted to see this high level research, which informs speech and language therapy intervention choices concerning children who have developmental language disorder and who are bilingual.

"Around 7 percent of children in the UK start school with [developmental language disorder](#), so it is vital that research continues in this field to ensure that the support available to them is the best it can be."

Birmingham City University is the only institution in the West Midlands to offer a degree in speech and language therapy, allowing students to apply for registration as speech and [language](#) therapists.

More information: To find out more about speech and language therapy at Birmingham City University, please visit: [www.bcu.ac.uk/health-sciences/ ... uage-therapy-2018-19](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/health-sciences/...uage-therapy-2018-19)

Provided by Birmingham City University

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