



Evaluating the Language Development of Newly Arrived Migrant Pupils: Go Beyond Words!

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Chair/Discussant: [Reinhilde Pulinx/ Piet Van Avermaet](#)

Contribution

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It is a widespread practice to assess Newly Arrived Migrant pupils (NAMS) with diagnostic tests, even though most tests have only been standardized for monolingual speakers. Sometimes tests are informally translated by bilingual clinicians from L2 to L1, without being adapted to the targeted structures in the L1. According to the literature, the problem with these tests is that NAMS may then be erroneously be diagnosed as children with a language disorder even though their L1, L2 development and cultural background are not taken into account (e.g. Paradis, 2005; Paradis et al, 2013). Nowadays, most scholars recommend oral narratives to assess bilingual children (e.g. Uccelli & Páez, 2007). MAIN (Multilingual Assessment Instrument for Narratives, Gagarina et al. 2012) tests the narrative abilities of bilingual children in L1 and L2. According to the authors, MAIN is more appropriate than previous narrative elicitation materials, e.g. Test of Narrative Language (Gillam & Pearson, 2004) and Frog where are you? (Mayer, 1969) because it takes into account the cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds of bilinguals and includes options with comparable structure and complexity for eliciting narratives in a bilingual context. In order to investigate the vocabulary development of young NAMS, I recorded the MAIN narratives of 52 NAMS aged 4 to 6 (mean = 5;3 years) twice in their first year in the Netherlands within four months. Even though the pupils just started to learn the school language, most of them were willing to communicate and showed active use of communicative strategies such as 'asking for assistance' and 'mime'. I compared the use of nine different strategies (adapted from Dörnyei & Scott, 1997 among others) to the amount of words and the complexity of the sentences that were elicited. The hypothesis is that the use of some strategies may be linked to more gain in L2 learning than others (Chamot, 2001). In this presentation, I present an inventory of these communication strategies and I link them to the receptive as well

as productive language performances of the pupils. The goal is to discover the link between the use of metacognitive strategies and school language development in young multilingual pupils.

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