


Chapter 11


Psychological Profile and Intervention Programs for the Development of Social Skills in Bilingual Children

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ABSTRACT

The topic of this chapter's discussion is the psychological profile and intervention programs for the development of social skills in bilingual children. Some basic notions are going to be studied, such as "bilingual", "monolingual", and "bicultural". Bilingual children have both advantages and disadvantages vis-à-vis their monolingual peers. Considering the fact that bilingual children often face socialization issues, some intervention programs are created in order to help bilingual children, overcome the "language barrier", as well, as to enhance their self-confidence. In this context, psychotherapy is extremely useful. While there are many psychological-

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therapeutic currents, we decided to describe CBT, ACT and Schema Therapy interventions. Some programs often combine the basics of CBT with ACT or CBT with Schema Therapy, showing good overall results.

INTRODUCTION

“Bilingualism” is considered as the ability of a person to use two or more languages in a proficient level; this phenomenon is common in many parts of the world (Bialystok, 2001). Since language is often followed by a certain cultural background, children raised in bilingual environments face the challenge of navigating between both different languages as well as different cultures. This condition can significantly influence the cognitive and the psychological development of children deriving from bilingual environments (Cummins, 2000). A crucial aspect of childhood development is the development of social skills, hence children from bilingual environments experience both advantages and challenges in this domain (De Houwer, 2009). This chapter examines: A. The profile of a bilingual child (when is a child considered as “bilingual”, what are the advantages and disadvantages of bilingual childer). B. Certain techniques for the development of social skills. In the following paragraphs we are going to present, both, some intervention programs, as well as, psychological intervention programs including CBT, Trauma Therapy and Schema Therapy. An important subject that is going to be described is the language in which therapy should take place, as well as the meaning of the elaboration of a good and resilient therapeutic alliance.

The basic fact that should be taken into consideration is that bilingualism is a phenomenon usually deriving from immigration. As a matter of fact, a person is obliged to speak in two different languages when the language its relatives speak at home differs from the language that is used by society in which the above mentioned person acts, or when its parents speak different languages. The fact that a person should learn to talk in two different languages is an extremely stressful condition. Also, a language is often connected-linked with a certain culture. As a matter of fact, a bilingual child is asked to change its way of acting, reacting, responding and in general socializing. This can cause a number of issues such as social anxiety, stress, depression and other dysphoric emotions.

French sociologist P. Bourdieu, after research, demonstrated that the educational system often functions as a “selection system” that favours certain social classes at the expense of others. Collecting data, he pointed out that the social origin of the individual plays a crucial role in his subsequent school success. Children originating from families of higher social classes are more likely to excel in academia, in comparison to their peers. This “favourable” discrimination becomes evident,

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