

# AAC services for multilingual and non-English clients: Perspectives of speech-language therapists in the public healthcare setting in Gauteng

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## Introduction

- Despite efforts to support all 12 official languages, English still dominates in the healthcare and education sectors.
- Discrimination against multilingual clients is a concern and makes appropriate communication assessment and intervention challenging for speech-language therapists (SLTs).

## Methods

- A qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews was used in this study.
- Nine SLTs working with multilingual or non-English clients in the public healthcare sector participated.

## Results

- SLTs hold positive views of multilingualism.
- Attempts are made for linguistically and culturally congruent services.
- However, systemic challenges impede these services.

## Conclusion

- SLTs face several challenges when providing equitable services.
- Creative avenues are used to overcome these challenges.

Table 1: Themes

Theme	Sub-themes	Examples of codes
Theme 1: Current practice in assessment and intervention	Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use translation and interpretation</li><li>• Mainly English</li><li>• Language-independent approach</li></ul>
	Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Informal assessments</li><li>• Multi-disciplinary</li></ul>
	Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developed or translated</li><li>• Low tech augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)</li></ul>
Theme 2: Factors that influence practice	Clinician-related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge, skills and attitudes</li><li>• Training</li></ul>
	Client/family-related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Language needs and preferences</li><li>• Language proficiency</li><li>• Family involvement</li><li>• AAC perceptions</li><li>• Motivation to use AAC</li></ul>
	AAC systems and technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access</li><li>• Linguistic appropriateness</li><li>• Cultural appropriateness</li></ul>
	Finance and the health system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of budget</li><li>• Lack of resources</li></ul>
	Policy, ethical principles and research evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Barriers related to multilingualism guidelines and policies</li><li>• Lack of research</li></ul>
Theme 3: Best practice	Beliefs about best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use client's home language</li><li>• Person-centred</li></ul>
	Factors promoting best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guidelines, protocols, policies</li><li>• Research, practice-based evidence</li></ul>



There is a pressing need for culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate AAC practices in South Africa.