

Appraising an AAC Resource in a Language You Do Not Speak

Questions and Considerations

As professionals supporting people who use AAC it is part of our job to provide resources that meet a person's communication needs. But what do we do if a resource is required in a language that we do not speak?

We have created this document pulling from our experience of doing just that. We have compiled questions you can and should be asking when appraising resources in a language you do not speak and considerations for you to keep in mind.

Who created the resource?

Find out if the resource was created by a native speaker or by a translation service or technology. If it was a native speaker, ask if they have a relevant background that understands the purpose of the resource and the language needs of the AAC user to ensure that translations are accurate.



Is the resource available in your country?

If not, reach out to the company who made the resource. Ask them to make it available as sometimes they have not thought about bilingual clients living in other countries.

Is it a translation of an English AAC resource?

Check to ensure the vocabulary has been made culturally appropriate. Look to see if all aspects of the resource have been translated. Sometimes, basic words and phrases have been translated but other features such as word prediction or operational function cells have not.



Will the client be able to easily move between this resource and resources in other language(s) in order to code-switch?

Rapid codeswitching between languages in the same utterance is viewed as an authentic feature of bilingual communication but there are very few electronic AAC options that allow for this.

Is the resource available on a device that has a keyboard appropriate for the language needed?

You will need the correct keyboard to add new words like names and looking up words if there is a "search" function.

What text-to-speech voice options are there?

Ensure voices are available to go with the system and consider what options exist e.g. gender and age-range. If the only text-to-speech voice available has been created for a different language, consider how you will discuss this with the client/family and be aware of any cultural sensitivities.

What language are the settings, menus and support in?

Look to see if the how-to guides are available in English. Consider whether you and others supporting the client be able to learn how to use the system if it is in a language, you do not speak.



Can you work out how the language is organised in the resource?

Are you able to tell if a cell is saying a single word or a whole phrase? Can you appraise the grammar options available? It is likely that you will need to work with a native speaker of the language to check these elements. Find out if your local interpretation/translation service support this type of work.

Be honest

Remember to always be up-front with a client/family when you are sharing an AAC resource with them that is in a language that you do not speak. Recognise that it will not be possible for you to fully appraise the resource before they see it and there could be inappropriate vocabulary or cultural insensitivities in the resource. Try to make sure they feel empowered to tell you what is wrong with the resource!

Learn more

As we began looking at how to improve the support we offer multilingual AAC users we attended a course run by Dr. Sean Pert who is an expert in the field. of supporting multilingual people with speech, language and communication difficulties.



A collaboration was formed which resulted in Ace Centre colleagues Lizzie Sadiku, Katherine Small and Suzanne Martin writing a chapter “[Augmentative and Alternative Communication](#)” for a book Dr. Pert was writing called “[Working with Children Experiencing Speech and Language Disorders in a Bilingual Context: A home Language Approach](#)”.

This leaflet is derived from the information presented in that chapter which dives into more detail along with case studies and examples. More information about the book can be found by following the QR code below.



To learn more about
[Working with Children Experiencing Speech and Language Disorders in a Bilingual Context: A home Language Approach](#)
by Dr. Sean Pert follow the QR or go to bit.ly/AACLang