



# Working with Punjabi Children & Families

A Mini-Handbook with Resources for  
Clinicians and Parents

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# Introduction

Punjabi is one of the five most commonly spoken languages by clients of speech-language pathologists (SLPs), after English and French. Yet, most SLPs provide service in only one language, typically, English. This means that there are likely to be clinicians who serve Punjabi-speaking children, yet do not know the language.

(D'Souza et al., 2012)

The purpose of this toolkit is to support clinicians in providing culturally responsive services to a demographic that has been largely neglected by Westernized institutions and power structures. Doing so may limit misdiagnosis and over- or under-identification, ensuring equitable, accurate, and effective services for Punjabi-speaking children and their families.

Please note that Punjabi has two written scripts. The handouts in this mini-handbook include only Gurumukhi translations, as I am familiar with this script only.



# Navigating Stigma within South Asian Families



Stigma profoundly impacts South Asian communities as various topics, including mental health and neurodevelopmental disorders (e.g., Autism), are treated as taboo. Similar patterns may be associated with language and learning disorders.

## Cultural Considerations

### Impact on Social Reputation

- Families may fear disclosing diagnoses under the belief that it will have a harmful impact on their reputation and/or future opportunities (Krishnan, 2025; Rivera-Figueroa et al., 2025)

### Pressures For Success and Being Resilient

- High expectations about achievements and importance placed on resilience can lead to families minimizing their challenges (Sahai-Siddiqui, 2025a).
- Children may perceive their differences as a personal limitation that needs to be “fixed,” consequently undermining their self-worth (Krishnan, 2025).

### Diverse Beliefs

- There will be differences across South Asian subgroups, and differences between families within those subgroups.
- Some families may interpret developmental and behavioural disorders through a medical, spiritual, or moral frame (Heer et al., 2012; Li et al., 2024).
- Families may also see diagnoses as something that is “temporary,” or improve on its own (Shafi et al., 2024).

## How Stigma May Manifest

- Avoidance of diagnosis (Krishnan, 2025; Shafi et al., 2024)
- Reluctance to use explicit labels, especially in front of relatives or friends (Shafi et al., 2024)
- Late referrals (Krishnan, 2025)
  - Keep in mind that this could also be attributed to structural inequities that neglect South Asian children, as well as a lack of awareness about language disorders in South Asian communities.
- Limited engagement with services and therapy (Krishnan, 2025)
- Preferences for home remedies, family advice, or traditional healers before clinicians (Sahai-Siddiqui, 2025b).
- Social Isolation (Li et al., 2024)
  - Families may withdraw from their community and social circles to avoid judgment
- Self-blame, anxiety, and stress (Li et al., 2024)
  - Be prepared to counsel families, debunk myths, and answer difficult questions with sensitivity

## What Can You Do

- When communicating with parents and through reports, use a strength-based framework to empower families and set a positive frame for SLP services.
  - Highlight the child’s strengths and communicate targets by separating them from the child
  - A guide on strength-based approaches (Lindsay Moore): [https://www.uwo.ca/fhs/lwm/teaching/dld2\\_2023\\_24/Moore\\_DLD2\\_2023.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/fhs/lwm/teaching/dld2_2023_24/Moore_DLD2_2023.pdf)
- When possible, provide written materials in the family’s language (e.g., Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Nepali) and ensure the use of plain language.
  - A guide on writing plain reports (Daryn Cushnie-Sparrow): [https://www.uwo.ca/fhs/lwm/teaching/dld2\\_2017\\_18/CushnieSparrow17\\_FamilyCentredReporting.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/fhs/lwm/teaching/dld2_2017_18/CushnieSparrow17_FamilyCentredReporting.pdf)
- Emphasize functional outcomes → Relay the practical benefits of therapy (e.g., school success, friendships, independence) and the importance of families’ engagement in the process.
- Avoid from using language that places a sense of uniqueness on the child’s difficulty → Instead, normalize it (e.g., many children find X challenging).
- Maintain confidentiality and communicate it clearly to families in order to reassure them of privacy and establish a safe space.
- Use stimuli and resources that match the culture to keep interest in therapy, facilitate a sense of acceptance, and practice client-centred care.
- With consent, connect families with other South Asian parents who have navigated services. Hearing lived stories from people with shared experiences can facilitate acceptance and reduce isolation (Gronholm et al., 2024; Zizzo, 2024).
- Educate! → Increase community knowledge and awareness about speech-language pathology as a field, along with developmental language disorder, to reduce stigma even beyond South Asian contexts.
- Recognize that families will experience caregiving stress while also feeling stigma (Shafi et al., 2024). This should inform clinical decisions and recommendations you provide to prevent overloading them with information and activities.

### Don't

- Assume stigma → ask and listen to concerns, not all families are the same.
- Insist on accepting a label → give them time and autonomy.
- Attribute limited engagement as non-compliance, laziness, or disinterest.

When working with children and families who face stigma, recognizing its signs and impact is essential to provide care that validates their experiences and supports their access to services in an equitable and nonjudgmental way. Our role as SLPs means addressing all the factors that impact communication and language, including stigma, to empower clients to participate fully and confidently in services.

# Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)

- A language difficulty that a child has with understanding and/or using language.
- It is present in all the languages that the child understands and/or speaks.
- DLD can affect various aspects of language, including speaking, listening, reading, and/or writing. This can impact how they learn, form and maintain their friendships, and how efficiently and accurately they communicate with others. (Dubois et al., 2020)
- The disorder is common, as it impacts roughly 2 children in every classroom of 30 students. (Norbury et al., 2016)
- Children with DLD are no less smart or capable than their peers without DLD; they just need more support with their language.

(National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders [NIDCD], 2023)

## What It Can Look Like

- Difficulty with understanding instructions, questions, and stories
- Difficulty with speaking about their ideas and feelings due to troubles with finding words, grammar, and organizing their thoughts
- Using non-specific words and/or shorter sentences when speaking
- Difficulties with attention and/or memory, especially when given a lot of information all at once
- Troubles in social interactions, especially when conversations grow complex with multiple speakers, change of topics, and figurative language (e.g., idioms, sarcasm)

(NIDCD, 2023; Archibald, 2020)

## What Causes It?

There is no direct cause for DLD. Research suggests that it is an interaction of multiple risk factors (genetic, biological, and environmental) that affects how the brain learns and processes language. This is why two children with DLD may look different from one another.

Please understand that DLD is not caused or harmed by speaking more than one language or a certain parenting style. DLD is nobody's fault; there is no single cause, and nothing a parent could have done that led up to it.

(Michaelson et al., 2019; NIDCD, 2023)

## Benefits of Getting Support

- Enhances the child's ability to understand and use language
- Provides the child, families, and teachers with techniques and strategies to facilitate communication
- Builds confidence, fosters independence, and reduces frustration by providing the child with strategies and promoting self-advocacy
- Enhances social interactions, supporting the ability to form and maintain connections
- Facilitates learning and school success, such as understanding lessons, following routines, and participating in class

## Can It Be Cured?

DLD is a lifelong condition that cannot be cured or simply outgrown. However, there can be changes as your child grows older. It is possible that parts of language that were challenging earlier on may become easier with time and support.

Many children and adults with DLD can lead successful and fulfilling lives, especially when they receive appropriate support.

(NIDCD, 2023)



## What does a Speech-Language Pathologist Do?

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) play a key role in supporting children with DLD. They:

- Assess the child's communication by asking questions, making observations, conducting activities, and using standardized tasks.
- Identify strengths and areas of support.
- Create an individualized intervention plan that fits with the child's personality, interests, needs, and strengths.
- Conduct therapy to guide the child toward achieving their goals, while also checking progress.
- Support families and teachers by providing strategies and resources to help the child communicate and learn successfully throughout the day.

# Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)

- ਬੱਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਸਮਝਣ ਅਤੇ/ਜਾਂ ਵਰਤਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਆਉਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ।
- ਇਹ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਸਾਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਮੌਜੂਦ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਬੱਚਾ ਸਮਝਦਾ ਅਤੇ/ਜਾਂ ਬੋਲਦਾ ਹੈ।
- DLD ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਦੇ ਕਈ ਪੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵਿਤ ਕਰ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ ਬੋਲਣਾ, ਸੁਣਣਾ, ਪੜ੍ਹਨਾ, ਅਤੇ/ਜਾਂ ਲਿਖਣਾ। ਇਸ ਕਾਰਨ ਬੱਚੇ ਦੀ ਸਿੱਖਣ ਦੀ ਸਮਰਥਾ, ਦੋਸਤੀ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਅਤੇ ਨਿਭਾਉਣ, ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵਸ਼ਾਲੀ ਤੇ ਸਹੀ ਤਰੀਕੇ ਨਾਲ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਕਰਨ 'ਤੇ ਅਸਰ ਪੈ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। (Dubois et al., 2020)
- ਇਹ ਡਿਸਾਰਡਰ ਕਾਫੀ ਆਮ ਹੈ। ਲਗਭਗ ਹਰ 30 ਵਿਦਿਆਰਥੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਕਲਾਸ ਵਿੱਚ 2 ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ DLD ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। (Norbury et al., 2016)
- DLD ਵਾਲੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਸਾਥੀਆਂ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਘੱਟ ਹੋਸ਼ਿਆਰ ਜਾਂ ਸਮਰਥ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ DLD ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ; ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿਰਫ਼ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਸਬੰਧੀ ਵੱਧ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ।

(National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders [NIDCD], 2023)

## ਇਹ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਆ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ

- ਹਦਾਇਤਾਂ, ਸਵਾਲਾਂ, ਅਤੇ ਕਹਾਣੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ
- ਆਪਣੇ ਵਿਚਾਰਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਭਾਵਨਾਵਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਬੋਲਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਦਿੱਕਤ, ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਲੱਭਣ, ਵਿਆਕਰਣ, ਅਤੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਢੰਗ ਨਾਲ ਸਜਾਉਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ
- ਗੱਲ ਕਰਦੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਸਪਸ਼ਟ ਸ਼ਬਦਾਂ ਅਤੇ/ਜਾਂ ਛੋਟੇ ਵਾਕਾਂ ਦੀ ਵਰਤੋਂ
- ਧਿਆਨ ਅਤੇ/ਜਾਂ ਯਾਦਦਾਸ਼ਤ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਬੰਧਿਤ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲਾਂ, ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਜਦੋਂ ਇੱਕੋ ਵਾਰ ਬਹੁਤ ਸਾਰੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ
- ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਵਿੱਚ ਦਿੱਕਤ, ਖਾਸ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਜਦੋਂ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਜਟਿਲ ਹੋ ਜਾਵੇ → ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਈ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਦਾ ਬੋਲਣਾ, ਵਿਸ਼ਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਬਦਲਣਾ, ਅਤੇ ਰੂਪਕ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ (ਜਿਵੇਂ ਮੁਹਾਵਰੇ, ਤੰਜ/ਵਿਅੰਗ)

(NIDCD, 2023; Archibald, 2020)

## ਇਹ ਕਿਉਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ?

DLD ਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਇੱਕ ਸਿੱਧਾ ਕਾਰਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ। ਖੇਤ ਦਰਸਾਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਕਈ ਜੋਖਮ ਕਾਰਨ (ਜੈਨੋਟਿਕ, ਜੈਵਿਕ, ਅਤੇ ਵਾਤਾਵਰਣਕ) ਦੇ ਆਪਸੀ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵ ਨਾਲ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜੋ ਦਿਮਾਗ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਸਿੱਖਣ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਕਿਰਿਆ ਕਰਨ ਦੇ ਢੰਗ ਨੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵਿਤ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਇਸੇ ਲਈ DLD ਵਾਲੇ ਦੋ ਬੱਚੇ ਇੱਕੋ ਜਿਹੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਦਿੱਖਦੇ।

ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਹ ਸਮਝੋ ਕਿ DLD ਇੱਕ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਬੋਲਣ ਕਾਰਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਅਤੇ ਨਾ ਹੀ ਪਰਿਵਾਰਕ ਪਰਵਰਿਸ਼ ਜਾਂ ਘਰੇਲੂ ਮਾਹੌਲ ਨਾਲ ਇਸਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਨੁਕਸਾਨਦਾਇਕ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। DLD ਕਿਸੇ ਦੀ ਗਲਤੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ। ਇਸਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਇੱਕ ਖਾਸ ਕਾਰਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਅਤੇ ਮਾਪਿਆਂ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਕੁਝ ਵੀ ਐਸਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਹ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੋਵੇ।

(Michaelson et al., 2019; NIDCD, 2023)

## ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਲੈਣ ਦੇ ਡਾਇਟੇ

- ਬੱਚੇ ਦੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਅਤੇ ਵਰਤਣ ਦੀ ਸਮਰਥਾ ਨੂੰ ਬਿਹਤਰ ਬਣਾਉਣਾ ਹੈ
- ਬੱਚੇ, ਪਰਿਵਾਰਾਂ, ਅਤੇ ਅਧਿਆਪਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸੰਚਾਰ ਸੁਗਮ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਤਰੀਕੇ ਅਤੇ ਰਣਨੀਤੀਆਂ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ
- ਰਣਨੀਤੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਵੈ-ਵਕਾਲਤ (self-advocacy) ਨੂੰ ਉਤਸ਼ਾਹਿਤ ਕਰਕੇ ਆਤਮ-ਵਿਸ਼ਵਾਸ ਬਣਾਉਣਾ ਹੈ, ਸੁਤੰਤਰਤਾ ਨੂੰ ਵਧਾਉਣਾ ਹੈ, ਅਤੇ ਨਿਰਾਸ਼ਾ ਘਟਾਉਣਾ ਹੈ
- ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਸੰਪਰਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸੁਧਾਰਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਰਿਸ਼ਤੇ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਅਤੇ ਨਿਭਾਉਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਦਦ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ
- ਸਿੱਖਣ ਅਤੇ ਸਕੂਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਫਲਤਾ ਨੂੰ ਆਸਾਨ ਬਣਾਉਣਾ ਹੈ → ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪਾਠ ਸਮਝਣਾ, ਰੁਟੀਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਪਾਲਣਾ ਕਰਨਾ, ਅਤੇ ਕਲਾਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਭਾਗ ਲੈਣਾ

## ਕੀ ਇਹ ਠੀਕ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ?

DLD ਇੱਕ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਭਰ ਰਹਿਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਹੈ, ਜਿਸਨੂੰ ਪੂਰੀ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਠੀਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਅਤੇ ਨਾ ਹੀ ਇਹ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਖਤਮ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ। ਹਾਲਾਂਕਿ, ਜਿਵੇਂ-ਜਿਵੇਂ ਬੱਚਾ ਵੱਡਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ, ਕੁਝ ਤਬਦੀਲੀਆਂ ਆ ਸਕਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਸੰਭਵ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਦੇ ਕੁਝ ਪੱਖ, ਜੋ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਸਨ, ਸਮੇਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਨਾਲ ਆਸਾਨ ਹੋ ਜਾਣ।

DLD ਵਾਲੇ ਕਈ ਬੱਚੇ ਅਤੇ ਵੱਡੇ ਲੋਕ ਸਫਲ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਤੁਸ਼ਟ ਜੀਵਨ ਜੀ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ, ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਜਦੋਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਢੁੱਕਵੀਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਮਿਲਦੀ ਹੈ।

(NIDCD, 2023)

## ਸਪੀਚ-ਲੈਂਗਵੇਜ ਪੈਥੋਲੋਜਿਸਟ ਕੀ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ?

ਸਪੀਚ-ਲੈਂਗਵੇਜ ਪੈਥੋਲੋਜਿਸਟ (SLPs) DLD ਵਾਲੇ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਭੂਮਿਕਾ ਨਿਭਾਉਂਦੇ ਹਨ। ਉਹ:

- ਸਵਾਲ ਪੁੱਛ ਕੇ, ਨਿਰੀਖਣ ਕਰਕੇ, ਵੱਖ-ਵੱਖ ਗਤੀਵਿਧੀਆਂ ਕਰਵਾ ਕੇ, ਅਤੇ ਮਿਆਰੀ ਟਾਸਕਾਂ ਦੀ ਵਰਤੋਂ ਕਰਕੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਦੀ ਸੰਚਾਰ ਸਮਰਥਾ ਦਾ ਮੁਲਾਂਕਣ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ
- ਬੱਚੇ ਦੀਆਂ ਤਾਕਤਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਜਿੱਥੇ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ, ਉਹਨਾਂ ਖੇਤਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਪਛਾਣ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ
- ਬੱਚੇ ਦੀ ਸ਼ਖਸੀਅਤ, ਦਿਲਚਸਪੀਆਂ, ਲੋੜਾਂ, ਅਤੇ ਤਾਕਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਧਿਆਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਰੱਖਦਿਆਂ ਇੱਕ ਵਿਅਕਤੀਗਤ ਹਸਤਖੇਪ ਯੋਜਨਾ (individualized intervention plan) ਤਿਆਰ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ
- ਬੱਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਲਕਸ਼ ਹਾਸਲ ਕਰਨ ਵੱਲ ਦਿਸ਼ਾ ਦੇਣ ਲਈ ਬੈਰਪੀ ਕਰਵਾਉਂਦੇ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਤਰੱਕੀ ਦੀ ਨਿਗਰਾਨੀ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ
- ਪਰਿਵਾਰਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਅਧਿਆਪਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦਿਨ ਭਰ ਬੱਚੇ ਦੀ ਸਫਲ ਸੰਚਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਦਦ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਰਣਨੀਤੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਰੋਤ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ



# The Punjabi Language

## Assessment Considerations

Punjabi is largely spoken in Punjab, India, and Punjab, Pakistan. But it is increasingly spoken in Canada. It is important to understand the features of the Punjabi language to support your interpretations, especially considering that there may be transfer/interference between a child's L1 and L2. What may seem like DLD may actually be a language difference. Please note!

There is immense dialectal variation.

### Phonology

Punjabi and English have a 56% overlap of consonant phonemes (Chohan & Garcia, 2019). Therefore, when assessing phonemic awareness, it is important to consider Punjabi's phonemic inventory.

- **Phonemes in English but not (commonly) in Punjabi**

- /θ/ → voiceless "th" in *thin*
- /ð/ → voiced "th" in *the*
- /ʒ/ → "zh" in *vision* (may be replaced with /z/ or /s/)
- /w/ → water (may be replaced with /v/)

- **Distinctions in Punjabi but not English**

- Dental-retroflex consonant distinctions are phonemic
  - e.g., /t/ - /ʈ/, /d/ - /ɖ/, /n/ - /ɳ/, /l/ - /ɻ/
- Aspiration is phonemic → Voiceless stops and affricates can be both aspirated or unaspirated, resulting in different word meanings (e.g., p-p<sup>h</sup>, tʃ - tʃ<sup>h</sup>).
- Nasalized Vowels

(Bilingualistics, n.d.; MustGo Languages, n.d.)

### Phonotactics

#### Syllable Structure

- Punjabi has relatively simple syllable structures, with primarily:
  - V, VC, CV, CVC, and CVCC

(Bilingualistics, n.d.)

#### Consonant Clusters

- Does not have words with consonant clusters in the onset position (i.e., beginning of word, before the vowel)
  - English can allow up to three consonants (e.g., strong).
  - Punjabi speakers may use vowel epenthesis to break up the cluster
    - "stop" may sound like "satop"

(Singh, 2025)

### Another Consideration:

#### Tonal Language

- In Punjabi, tone is a phonemic feature. It can change the meaning of the word entirely

(Bilingualistics, n.d.)

It is critical for SLPs to use various tools, beyond just standardized measures, which do not account for these differences. Instead, use dynamic assessment to determine language learning potential, take language samples that highlight total word knowledge across all languages, and have Punjabi-speaking interpreters in the assessment and interpretation process.

### Grammar & Syntax

#### Word Order

- Follows a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) word order, unlike English's SVO order

#### Adjectives

- Adjectives occur before nouns, like English (e.g., *big cat*)

#### Postpositions

- Punjabi uses postpositions (e.g., "box in")
- English uses prepositions (e.g., "in the box")

#### Articles

- Punjabi does not have articles (e.g., *the*) but it sometimes uses the numeral *one* to express indefinite articles (*an/a*)

#### Nouns

- Along with being identified by number, Punjabi nouns are assigned genders → Feminine or Masculine
  - e.g., *milk* (*doodh*) is masculine and *car* (*gaadi*) is feminine
- Adjectives, verbs, and pronouns agree with the gender and number of the noun they refer to
  - Good = *Changa*
  - Good Boy (masc.) = *Changā munda*
  - Good Boys (masc. plural) = *Changey mundey*
  - Good Girl (fem.) = *Changi kuri*

#### Verbs

- Punjabi verbs change to agree with the subject's gender, number (single/plural), and person (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>)

(Bilingualistics, n.d.; MustGo Languages, n.d.)

### Writing and Letter Systems

#### Two Writing Systems

- Gurmukhi in Punjabi, India
  - Read left to right
- Shahmukhi in Punjab, Pakistan
  - Read right to left
- Both have consonants represented by full letters and diacritics to symbolize vowels, add nasalizations, or modify consonants

ਬ = /b/  
ਬਾ = /ba/  
ਬੁ = /bu/

(Bilingualistics, n.d.)

#### Sound-Letter Correspondence

- Punjabi has a 1:1 sound-letter correspondence.
  - English can use multiple letters for single sounds ("ph" for /f/)
  - Punjabi speakers may have trouble with digraphs in English
- Punjabi does not have irregularly spelled words or silent sounds unlike English (e.g., *knight*)

(Singh, 2025)

### In-Depth Punjabi Resources

English-Punjabi Grammar and Composite: <https://punjabiaapp.com/grammar>

Harjit Singh's Punjabi Reference Grammar: [https://pt.learnpunjabi.org/assets/a%20reference%20grammar\\_final.pdf](https://pt.learnpunjabi.org/assets/a%20reference%20grammar_final.pdf)

# South Asian Centred Books

Books can be a fascinating resource for therapy, providing exposure to various aspects of language and literacy, such as print knowledge, phonetics, vocabulary, and narrative skills (macro and microstructure). It is also a resource that parents can use; encourage them to discuss the story and give them guidance on what they should focus on for their child.

Below is a list of books centred on South Asian perspectives and topics. All children deserve to see themselves represented in media, yet many are not due to the dominance of Westernized views that have become normalized. Using culturally relevant material and tools is just one way of pushing back against colonial and racist structures.

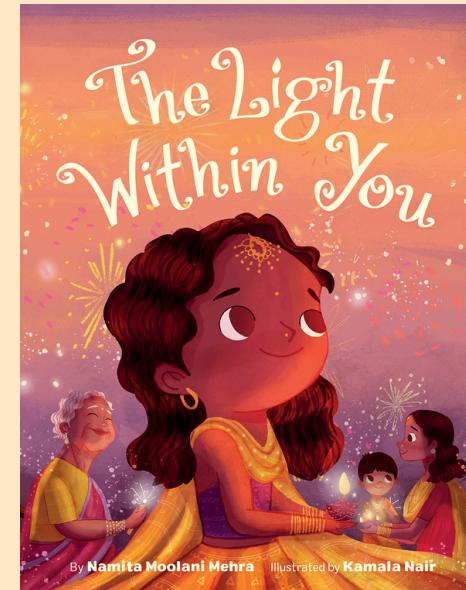
## Make the most out of the book !

**Pre-Teach Vocabulary** → Choose target words in the book (nouns and verbs) and highlight them, either by showing them or acting them out.

**Ask Questions** → To get engagement and monitor comprehension throughout the book (i.e., "Who fell down?" "Why did she do that?")

Plan activities (arts and crafts, puppets, etc.) around the book to further work on language goals

### ***The Light Within You* by Namita Moolani Mehra**

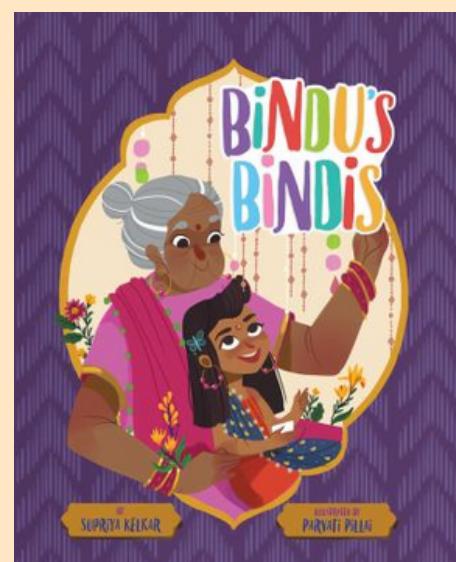


Diya heads to India for the celebration of Diwali (Festival of Light).

**Examples of Targets:**

- Vocabulary: Cultural terminology (Nani, mehndi, diya) with a glossary at the back to support this
- Figurative language: Concept of finding and enhancing one's "inner light"
- Narrative Macrostructure: Describe the sequence of events

### ***Bindu's Bindis* by Supriya Kelkar**

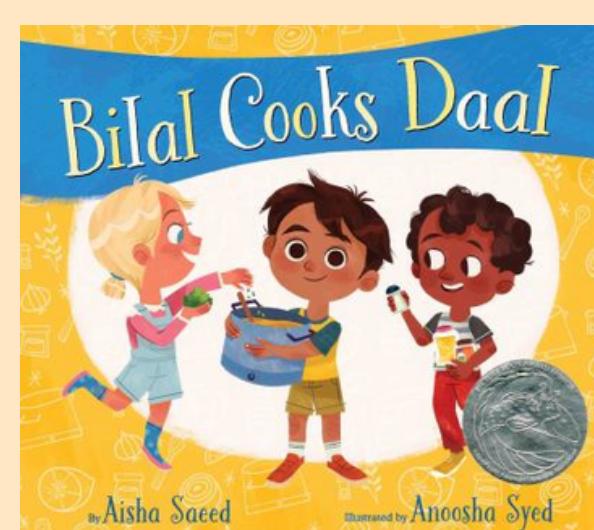


A story that highlights the connection between Bindu and her Nani (grandmother) through bindis (a symbolic and decorative jewel and/or dot on the forehead), while preparing for the school talent show.

**Examples of Targets:**

- Vocabulary: emotions, adjectives
- Using because to explain emotions and expand sentences
  - Bindu feels \_\_\_ because \_\_\_
- Narrative Macrostructure
  - Identify problems and solutions
  - Describe the sequence of events
- Inferencing emotions and reasons for actions

### ***Bilal Cooks Daal* by Aisha Saeed**

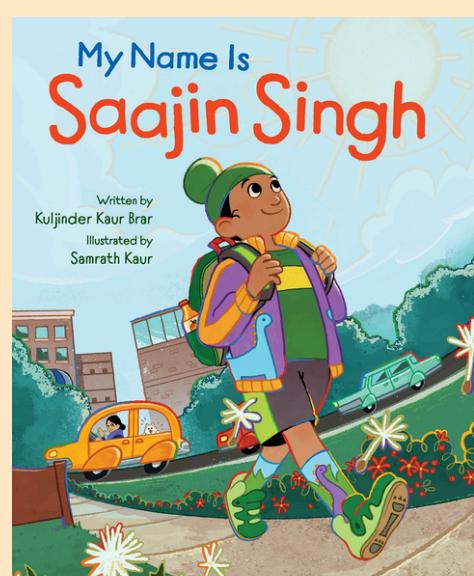


Bilal and his dad show readers how to make daal in hopes of sharing it with his friends.

**Examples of Targets:**

- Describe the sequence of events (e.g., the process of making daal)
  - Procedural writing: inspire students to make their recipes
- Making predictions (e.g., friends' reactions)

### ***My Name Is Saajin Singh* by Kuljinder Kaur Brar**

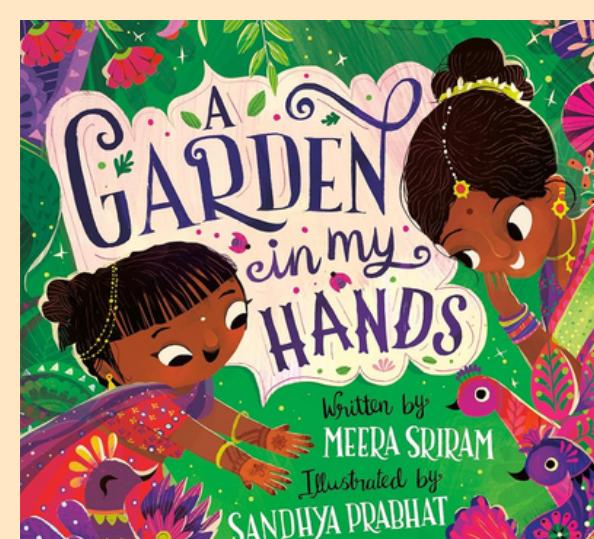


A book that underlines the significance of correctly pronouncing names because of their connection to one's personal and cultural identity, featuring a Sikh boy named Saajin Singh.

**Examples of Targets:**

- Narrative Macrostructure
  - Identify problems and solutions
  - Describe the sequence of events
- Self-Advocacy on clarifying names and conveying their significance to others
- Inferencing emotions and reasons for actions

### ***A Garden in My Hands* by Meera Sriram**

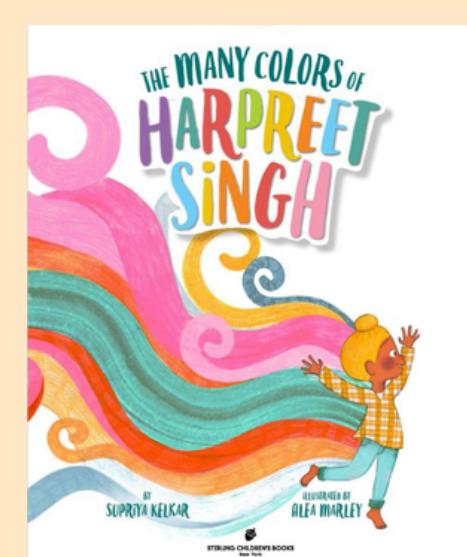


A story about mehndi/henna, and its importance for celebrating occasions and building connections.

**Examples of Targets:**

- Sequencing of events (applying and revealing the mehndi/henna design)
- Figurative Language (e.g., "garden in my hands," "damp earth," "like a scarecrow")

### ***The Many Colors of Harpreet Singh* by Supriya Kelkar**

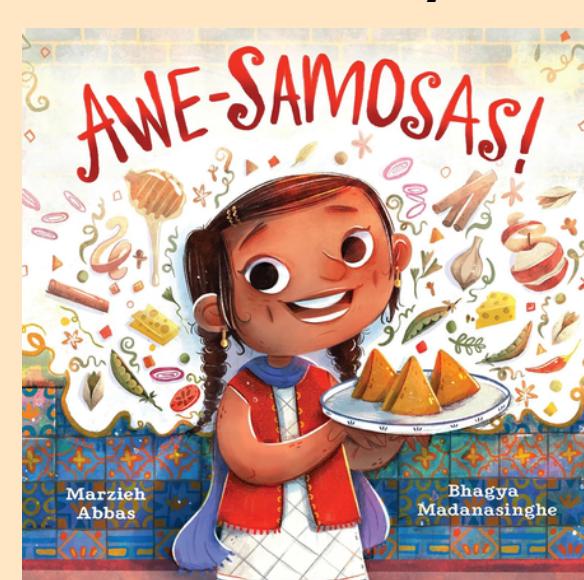


Harpreet is a little boy who moved to a new city. The change has made him want to feel invisible, which is represented by changes to the colours of his patka.

**Examples of Targets:**

- Symbolization (through colours)
- Expanding sentences with adjectives and feelings
  - Harpreet feels \_\_\_ when \_\_\_
- Narrative Macrostructure
  - Identify problems and solutions
  - Describe the sequence of events

### ***Awe-samosas!* by Marzieh Abbas**



Noor is trying to make samosas but has to improvise her family's recipe when she doesn't have all the ingredients.

**Examples of Targets:**

- Narrative Macrostructure
  - Identify problems and solutions
  - Describe the sequence of events
- Vocabulary: food items, adjectives, sensory elements

# How to Support Language at Home

DLD exists in all settings, including at home. You may see similar signs of the disorder when spending time with your child and engaging in various daily activities. Here are some ways you can support your child at home.

## Talk To Them & Talk About Anything

Language input is incredibly supportive for your child's language skills; one way to do this is by modelling → you say the word or sentence to show them how to use it correctly.

You can model through:

- **Self-talk:** Talking about what you are doing
  - "I'm cutting the lettuce for lunch."
- **Parallel talk:** Talking about what your child is doing
  - "You put the lid on the box."
- **Expanding:** Adding extra words to what your child has said.
  - Child: "Ball!"
  - Adult: "Yeah, the yellow ball!"

You could also:

- Talk about past events
- Talk about future events

Use the language you feel most comfortable speaking, whether it's one language, a mix of languages, or a heritage language other than English.



This natural communication style provides your child with valuable exposure, strengthens cultural and family connections, and will not harm their language development.

## Support Communication Broadly

- Give your child choices so they do not have to overwork their memory to communicate
- Use pictures, gestures, and facial expressions to further clarify your message and reduce language load
- Wait → Give your child time to process what they heard and then plan what they want to say.
- Use concise and clear language with simple sentences.

## Read!

Designate some time for reading books with your child because it provides an opportunity to hear and see words. You can ask questions throughout the book to have them practice using their own words to describe what they see and express their thoughts.



- Choose books of their interest
- Do not pressure them to read; but give them the choice to

## Recasting

Recasting means repeating your child's words/phrases, but said correctly and naturally, without stopping the flow or pointing out mistakes.

- Child: "I went swim!"
- Adult: "You went swimming? Wow I went swimming too!"

## Other Tips

- 1) Put labels on objects at home in both languages to support exposure



- 2) Follow the child's interests and lead! Interactions should be low-pressure and stress-free to encourage positive language learning.

- 3) Avoid:

- Forcing your child to repeat after you ("Say like! Say lion!")
- Pointing out errors ("You forgot to add -ing")
- Over-exaggerating ("It is runING")

# ਘਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਦਾ ਸਮਰਥਨ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਕਰੀਏ

Developmental language disorder (DLD) ਹਰ ਮਾਹੌਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਮੌਜੂਦ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ, ਘਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੀ।

ਜਦੋਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਨਾਲ ਸਮਾਂ ਬਿਤਾਉਂਦੇ ਹੋ ਅਤੇ ਰੋਜ਼ਾਨਾ ਦੀਆਂ ਵੱਖ-ਵੱਖ ਗਤੀਵਿਧੀਆਂ ਕਰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਬਿਮਾਰੀ ਦੇ ਮਿਲਦੇ-ਜੁਲਦੇ ਲੱਛਣ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਆ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ। ਹੇਠਾਂ ਕੁਝ ਤਰੀਕੇ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਹਨ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਘਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਆਪਣੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਦਾ ਸਮਰਥਨ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹੋ।

## ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਗੱਲ ਕਰੋ ਅਤੇ ਹਰ ਗੱਲ ਬਾਰੇ ਗੱਲ ਕਰੋ

ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਦੀ ਇਨਪੁੱਟ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਦੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਈ ਕੌਸ਼ਲਾਂ ਲਈ ਬਹੁਤ ਮਦਦਗਾਰ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਦਾ ਇੱਕ ਤਰੀਕਾ ਮਾਡਲਿੰਗ ਹੈ → ਅਰਥਾਤ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਜਾਂ ਵਾਕ ਖੁਦ ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਦਿਖਾਉਂਦੇ ਹੋ ਕਿ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਹੀ ਤਰੀਕੇ ਨਾਲ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਵਰਤਣਾ ਹੈ।

ਤੁਸੀਂ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਤਰੀਕਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਮਾਡਲ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹੋ:

- **Self-talk:** ਤੁਸੀਂ ਜੋ ਕਰ ਰਹੇ ਹੋ, ਉਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਨਾ
  - “ਮੈਂ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ ਦੇ ਖਾਣੇ ਲਈ ਲੈਟਸ ਕੱਟ ਰਿਹਾ/ਰਹੀ ਹਾਂ।”
- **Parallel talk:** ਤੁਹਾਡਾ ਬੱਚਾ ਜੋ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ, ਉਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਨਾ।
  - “ਤੂੰ ਡੱਬੇ ‘ਤੇ ਢੱਕਣ ਲਾ ਦਿੱਤਾ।”
- **Expanding:** ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਕਹੀ ਗਈ ਗੱਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੋਰ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਜੋੜਨਾ।
  - ਬੱਚਾ: “ਗੱਡੀ!”
  - ਵੱਡਾ: “ਹਾਂ, ਪੀਲੀ ਗੱਡੀ!”

ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਵੀ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹੋ:

- ਪਿਛਲੀਆਂ ਘਟਨਾਵਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਨਾ
- ਆਉਣ ਵਾਲੀਆਂ ਘਟਨਾਵਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਨਾ



ਉਹ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਰਤੋਂ ਜਿਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਆਰਾਮ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਕਰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਚਾਹੇ ਉਹ

- ਇੱਕ ਹੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਹੋਵੇ,
- ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਦਾ ਮਿਲਾਪ ਹੋਵੇ,
- ਜਾਂ ਅੰਗ੍ਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਤੋਂ ਇਲਾਵਾ ਕੋਈ ਵਿਰਾਸਤੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਹੋਵੇ।

ਇਹ ਕੁਦਰਤੀ ਸੰਚਾਰ ਸੈਲੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਕੀਮਤੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਈ ਅਨੁਭਵ ਦਿੰਦੀ ਹੈ, ਸੱਭਿਆਚਾਰਕ ਅਤੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰਕ ਰਿਸ਼ਤੇ ਮਜ਼ਬੂਤ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ, ਅਤੇ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਦੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਕਾਸ ਨੂੰ ਕੋਈ ਨੁਕਸਾਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਪਹੁੰਚਾਉਂਦੀ।

## ਸੰਚਾਰ ਦਾ ਵਿਸ਼ਤਿਤ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਸਮਰਥਨ ਕਰੋ

- ਆਪਣੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਚੋਣਾਂ ਦਿਓ ਤਾਂ ਜੋ ਉਸਨੂੰ ਸੰਚਾਰ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਆਪਣੀ ਯਾਦਦਾਸ਼ਤ 'ਤੇ ਵਧੇਰੇ ਦਬਾਅ ਨਾ ਪਾਉਣਾ ਪਵੇ।
- ਆਪਣਾ ਸੁਨੋਹਾ ਹੋਰ ਸਪਸ਼ਟ ਕਰਨ ਅਤੇ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਦਾ ਬੋਲ ਘਟਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਤਸਵੀਰਾਂ, ਇਸ਼ਾਰੇ ਅਤੇ ਚਿਹਰੇ ਦੇ ਹਾਵਾਂ-ਭਾਵ ਵਰਤੋਂ।
- ਉਡੀਕ ਕਰੋ → ਆਪਣੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਸੁਣੀ ਗੱਲ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਲਈ ਅਤੇ ਫਿਰ ਉਹ ਕੀ ਕਹਿਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ/ਚਾਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ, ਉਸ ਦੀ ਯੋਜਨਾ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਸਮਾਂ ਦਿਓ।
- ਸਾਦੇ ਵਾਕਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਛੋਟੀ, ਸਪਸ਼ਟ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਧੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਰਤੋਂ।

## ਪੜ੍ਹੋ!

ਆਪਣੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਨਾਲ ਕਿਤਾਬਾਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਲਈ ਕੁਝ ਸਮਾਂ ਨਿਯਤ ਕਰੋ, ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਇਸ ਨਾਲ ਬੱਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਸੁਣਨ ਅਤੇ ਦੇਖਣ ਦੇ ਮੌਕੇ ਮਿਲਦੇ ਹਨ। ਕਿਤਾਬ ਪੜ੍ਹਦੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਵਿਚ-ਵਿੱਚ ਸਵਾਲ ਪੁੱਛ ਸਕਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਜੋ ਬੱਚਾ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਗੱਲਾਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਸ਼ਬਦਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਬਿਆਨ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਅਭਿਆਸ ਕਰੇ, ਜੋ ਉਹ ਦੇਖਦਾ ਹੈ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਵਰਣਨ ਕਰੋ ਅਤੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਕਰੋ।



- ਬੱਚੇ ਦੀ ਦਿਲਚਸਪੀ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਕਿਤਾਬਾਂ ਚੁਣੋ।
- ਉਸ 'ਤੇ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਲਈ ਦਬਾਅ ਨਾ ਪਾਓ; ਬਲਕਿ ਉਸਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੀ ਮਰਜ਼ੀ ਨਾਲ ਚੋਣ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਮੌਕਾ ਦਿਓ।

## Recasting

Recasting ਦਾ ਮਤਲਬ ਹੈ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਬੱਚੇ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਕਰੇ ਗਏ ਸ਼ਬਦਾਂ ਜਾਂ ਵਾਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦੁਹਰਾਉਣਾ, ਪਰ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਹੀ ਅਤੇ ਕੁਦਰਤੀ ਢੰਗ ਨਾਲ ਕਹਿਣਾ, ਬਿਨਾਂ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਦੀ ਲਹਿਰ ਰੋਕੇ ਜਾਂ ਗਲਤੀਆਂ ਵੱਲ ਧਿਆਨ ਦਿਵਾਏ।

- ਬੱਚਾ: “ਮੈਂ ਕੱਲ੍ਹ ਤੈਰਣਾ।”
- ਵੱਡਾ: “ਓਹ, ਤੂੰ ਕੱਲ੍ਹ ਤੈਰਣ ਗਿਆ ਸੀ? ਵਾਹ! ਮੈਂ ਵੀ ਕੱਲ੍ਹ ਤੈਰਣ ਗਿਆ ਸੀ!”

## ਹੋਰ ਸੁਝਾਅ

1) ਘਰ ਦੀਆਂ ਚੀਜ਼ਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਦੇਵੇਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੇਬਲ ਲਗਾਓ ਤਾਂ ਜੋ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਨਾਲ ਜਾਣ-ਪਛਾਣ ਵਧੇ।



2) ਬੱਚੇ ਦੀ ਦਿਲਚਸਪੀ ਦਾ ਪਾਲਣ ਕਰੋ ਅਤੇ ਉਸਨੂੰ ਅਗਵਾਈ ਕਰਨ ਦਿਓ! ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਘੱਟ ਦਬਾਅ ਵਾਲੀ ਅਤੇ ਤਣਾਅ-ਰਹਿਤ ਹੋਣੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਜੋ ਸਕਾਰਾਤਮਕ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਸਿੱਖਣ ਨੂੰ ਉਤਸ਼ਾਹ ਮਿਲੇ।

## 3) ਨਾ ਕਰੋ:

- ਬੱਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਪਿੱਛੇ ਦੁਹਰਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਮਜ਼ਬੂਰ ਨਾ ਕਰੋ (“ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਰੋ”)।
- ਬੱਚੇ ਦੀਆਂ ਗਲਤੀਆਂ 'ਤੇ ਧਿਆਨ ਨਾ ਦਿਓ।

# Resources to Support SLP Practice

## **The Informed SLP: Multilingual Language Assessment**

- A guide on assessing preschool and school-aged children who are learning or know more than one language
- <https://www.theinformedslp.com/review/BilingualMultilingual-language-assessment-Start-here>

## **Bilinguistics | Speech and Language Development Library for the Languages of the World**

- Various languages' articulation and language systems are compared with English to support differentiation between language disorder and language difference
- <https://bilinguistics.com/language/>

## **Intelligibility in Context Scale (ICS)**

- 7-item questionnaire for parents to rate the degree to which their child's speech is understood by others on a 5-point scale
- Punjabi-Gurmukhi: [https://cdn.csu.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/408580/ICS-Punjabi.pdf](https://cdn.csu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/408580/ICS-Punjabi.pdf)
- Punjabi-Gurmukhi & English: [https://cdn.csu.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/408581/ICS-Punjabi-English.pdf](https://cdn.csu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/408581/ICS-Punjabi-English.pdf)

### **Handouts for Punjabi-Speaking Parents & Guardians**

## **Language Development Milestones Brochure – Resource for Punjabi-Speaking Parents**

- <https://www.firstwords.ca/punjabi-resources>

## **NHS Lothian | Growing Up with More Than One Language**

- English Handout: <https://www.lets-talk.scot.nhs.uk/tips-and-info/top-tips/growing-up-with-more-than-one-language/>
- Punjabi Handout: <https://www.lets-talk.scot.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2020/04/growing-up-with-more-than-one-language-Punjabi.pdf>

## **NHS Lothian | Talking and Playing Together**

- English Handout: <https://www.lets-talk.scot.nhs.uk/tips-and-info/top-tips/talking-and-playing-together/>
- Punjabi Handout: <https://www.lets-talk.scot.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2020/04/Talking-and-playing-together-Punjabi-Final.pdf>

## **NHS Lothian | First Words**

- English Handout: <https://www.lets-talk.scot.nhs.uk/tips-and-info/using-words/first-words/>
- Punjabi Handout: <https://www.lets-talk.scot.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2020/04/First-Words-Punjabi-Final.pdf>

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