



# DEAF CHILDREN AND ASIAN ADOLESCENTS: THEIR MUTUAL STRUGGLE WITH EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

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**EDUCATING DIVERSE LEARNERS: MANY WAYS, ONE GOAL (ATHENS 2015)**

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# Research Aims

- *Explore differences and similarities observed in the use of emotional language amongst Deaf and Asian children*
- *To consider cultural influences and their effect on the development of emotional language in adolescents*
- *Highlight the lack of research or information available on emotional language development and usage in both Asian and Deaf groups*
- *Case studies demonstrating the emotional language deficits that exist*

# Cultural Influences

*Ravel. V. V & Martini. T. S (2007)*

- Emotions are developed through culture
- Research shows that culture plays a key role, which children learn as a set of '*cultural display rules*'
- Cultural Display Rules are a form of guidance as to how emotions should be expressed
- Cultural rules also include specific beliefs about various situations

# Similarities and differences in our cultures

Lanyado (1999)

- It is crucial to be aware of the similarities and differences within our cultures.
- We have to avoid making assumptions about families or individuals.
- This includes people who are of Western and Asian cultures, who may have disabilities.

# Emotional Language Development

- Hearing families with a deaf child tend to focus more on developing speech and language patterns.
- Deaf children who have focused on correcting their vocal sounds and speech may not have the opportunity to be exposed to emotional play.
- The emotional side of the child's development is unused and is not integrated as part of the deaf child's language.

# Deaf children who experience delays in language development

- May be deprived of social and emotional language experiences
- May not have the necessary coping mechanisms required for certain settings
- May be at risk.

# Understanding the role of culture

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To date there is still very limited research information regarding aspects of emotional language in those who have dual identities such as British Asian or Deaf British Asian.

# Emotional Expression

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- Research shows that Indian children are more able to control anger and sadness than physical pain.
- Emotional expression is not acceptable.
- They can control their emotions.



# Traditional Asian Approaches

(Ravel. V. V & Martini. T. S: 2007)

- Focus more on behaviour and less on emotional expression - depending on upbringing.
- Focus on cultural beliefs and religious activities.
- Depends on what is acceptable within their own community

# Additional Culture

- Attending a 'foreign' school may bring shock at the attitudes, behaviours, learning approaches and language.
- A child has to adapt almost at once, digest the environment and come to a realisation that they are different.
- At home they may have felt more equal to their siblings and may have not noticed before that they were 'different'.

# 'Yasmin' Hearing 13 year old

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- Referred due to being bullied
- Has mild learning difficulties
- Low academic achiever
- Low language development

# Background

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- Chubby girl – continues to gain more weight
- Afghanistani/Pakistani Muslim
- French speaking household
- Second oldest of six sisters
- Yasim's mother had just had a new born baby
- Living in a two bedroom flat

# Non Verbal Emotional Language

Illustrates how visual materials offer an opportunity for developing a verbal emotional language.



# House Burning



- Painted a number of pictures of houses; most of them burning.
- People burnt to death.
- She used art as a means to access and communicate her emotional language.

# Case Example – the conversation

- House that could walk, it was also burning.
- She explained

*“...a girl in there, burning”*

I asked her who this girl

*“...a girl who bullies her and had been doing so since primary school. The girl is in the same class; she hits her, pulls her hair, and pushes her about. I would like to “burn her face”.*

She smiled at this thought and continued *“the other girl would stop bothering her”*.

I asked her why she would do this,

*“because”* then was silent,

I replied ‘because....?’

She then stated *“because, because!”*.

# Cultural Identity

Wilson (1978)

- Asian community provides people with the choice that either you are with the community or not.
- Children feel that they are caught in the middle, as they lead a double life
- Experience discrimination
- Struggle with their own cultural identity



# Cultural Identity

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- Deaf children may similarly struggle to understand their own identity and have to make a choice.
- This usually happens when they enter puberty
- It may be at a younger age for Asian children

# Independent Thinking Skills

- Asian children, are always 'a child' until they are married - they are not independent as a person in their own right.
- This may cause delays in puberty as they have not yet formed the independent thinking skills with which to understand their emotional development.

# Independent Thinking Skills

Winnicott (1965)

*“On the other hand the cure is patience and time, there is no need to rush the maturation process”.*

- Deaf and Asian children would enjoy growing up without limitations and demands
- Western cultures encourage children to become independent and adult at a very early age.

# Breaking Barriers

Shah (1992)

- Language barriers can be successfully overcome if we adjust ourselves
- If we understand the differences and similarities in cultures we may be able to develop emotional language

# 'Alison' Young Deaf Child

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- Profoundly deaf
- Four year old
- Cochlear implant
- Foster care
- Domestic violence & sexual abuse
- Struggles to show any emotions
- Not developed language

# Referral

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- Throws tantrums
- Head-banging on the wall
- Running onto the road
- Screaming on the floor
- Demanding food

# Art Therapy Images



# Summary

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- Alison may not have experienced an emotional relationship with her mother from a very early age.
- She lacked ability in expressing her emotional language.
- Uses her phantasies (unconscious thoughts) to communicate her feelings and thoughts.
- I sensed her emotions through her play, the art making process and interactions.



# Initial difficulty for me...

## 'was I good enough?'

- I felt a sense of frustration and tension, it made me feel inadequate about my own communication skills.
- The emotional facial expressions I used in my signing brought no reaction or interaction.
- Alison lacked crucial experience of being able to use emotional language to communicate her thoughts.

# Influences that traditionally affect emotional language

- Deaf children's language is often delayed due to poor communication methods
- Asian children can experience difficulty in developing an emotional language because of cultural norms.

# Emotional Language

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Deaf children need to be exposed to an accessible language at an early age in order to develop an emotional language

Asian children need to be exposed to free play to share their thoughts and feelings and develop an emotional language

Verbal and non-verbal emotional language should be expressed without feeling under pressure from any cultural barriers

# Anyone who belongs to more than one culture:

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Needs to feel good enough emotionally to be able to develop a clear use of emotional language, whether it be verbal or non-verbal.

