

On Tuesday 9 February 2010

Mothertongue hosted a seminar at the King's Fund, in central London entitled: ***Mother tongue or non native language? Working effectively across languages in frontline services.***

This seminar was planned, prepared and delivered in response to a sharpening focus of interest in language, amongst professionals in frontline services.

Increasingly, people are moving across borders in pursuit of, for example, work, safety and refuge. An inevitable consequence of this is that there are many people accessing services, including counselling services, who do not speak the official language of the country in which they find themselves. In London it is estimated that over 300 languages are spoken by schoolchildren. 150 languages are spoken in Reading schools. This has an impact in terms of language resources for frontline services.

Responses to this have included the recruitment of more bilingual and multilingual staff, the increased use of interpreters and the offering of services in non-native languages.

The seminar addressed each of these responses from a psychosocial, psychotherapeutic and psycholinguistic perspective. There were a number of presentations and there were several facilitated sessions for questions and discussions.

The main themes of the conference were:

- language switching and its meaning
- language in which trauma is experienced and the language in which the trauma is recalled with its full emotional impact (whether or not it is the native language)
- the protective, distancing function and psychic defence of languages learned after puberty
- the possibility of expressing different and additional emotions in different and additional languages
- learning a second/other language and the role of language learning in culturally sensitive psychotherapy training
- the role and relationship of the interpreter in the psychotherapeutic alliance
- the losses and gains of learning and speaking more than one language
- the "bilingual" self and linguistic splitting
- language as a transitional object
- language, communication and power
- base language predominance and processes of suppression of languages in bi/multilinguals
- people's relationships with different languages

"English is just like an apple tart and crunchy and only good for certain things. Spanish is like a passion fruit sweet tart, runny but with seeds so that it's good to express everything."

quotation from one of the participants in Jean-Marc Dewaele's research and presentation

Speakers and presentations

Dr Felicity de Zulueta

Dr de Zulueta spoke on Bilingualism, culture and identity referring to the changes that occur within a person when they speak another language and the linguistic relativities inherent in speaking more than one language. She referred to the potential protective function of languages learned after puberty and the “transitional space” they can provide. For further reading on this topic, please see:

De Zulueta, F. (1995), *Bilingualism, Culture and Identity*. Group Analysis 28:179-90.

Professor Jean-Marc Dewaele

Professor Dewaele spoke on the topic of bi/multilinguals’ emotional expression. His description of the research he had undertaken on language choice for emotional expression was illustrated by the following quotation by the linguist Francois Grosjean: “Bilinguals are not a sum of two monolinguals”.

Professor Dewaele stated that people’s choice and fluency in a language is unconscious and moves along a language continuum. Bi/multilinguals use languages depending on context and the people with whom they are speaking.

Susan Stevens

In her seminar address Susan Stevens described a research study she had conducted in which monolingual counsellors were asked two questions:

What is it like, counselling across a language gap?
What do you do, when counselling across a language gap?

Her recommendations included acknowledgement and toleration of the gap and maximising the advantages that it can bring. For further reading, please see:

Stevens, S. & Holland, P. (2008), “Counselling across a language gap: The therapist’s experience.” *Counselling Psychology Review*, Vol.23 No.3

Dr Noreen Tehrani

In her seminar address Dr Tehrani described a case study of a bilingual client in which she addressed the therapeutic effects of speaking and not speaking the language in which trauma had been experienced. She detailed the opportunities and challenges for people able to language-switch. The use of the “non trauma language” can achieve greater distance from overwhelming emotional material and the use of the “trauma language” can provide a more intense emotional catharsis when the client is able to tolerate this. For further reading, please see:

Tehrani, N. & Vaughan, S. (2009), “Lost in translation- using bilingual differences to increase emotional mastery following bullying.” *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*. Vol.9. No.1

Professor Rachel Tribe

In her seminar address Professor Tribe described the challenges and the opportunities for clinicians working with interpreters. Frequently clinicians are anxious about working with interpreters. Interpreters can, however, enhance the therapeutic work if sufficient care is taken to attend to the therapeutic alliance and the dynamics that occur. For further reading, please see:

Tribe, R. & Raval, H. (eds) (2003). *Working with Interpreters in Mental Health*. London: Brunner- Routledge.



Speakers

Dr Felicity de Zulueta is a Consultant Psychiatrist in Psychotherapy and lead clinician of the Traumatic Stress Service at the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. She is also Honorary Senior Lecturer at King's College London, a group analyst, systemic therapist and psychoanalytic psychotherapist.

Professor Jean-Marc Dewaele, teaches Applied Linguistics and Multilingualism at the Birbeck College, University of London. He is President of the European Second Language Association.

Susan Stevens is a Chartered Counselling Psychologist. She has experience of counselling in the NHS, private and voluntary sector. She is currently completing her doctoral research on race issues in Britain.

Dr Noreen Tehrani is a Chartered Occupational, Counselling and Health psychologist and has her own organisation which seeks to reduce the incidence of workplace bullying. She is internationally recognised for her work throughout the UK, Europe and Australia.

Professor Rachel Tribe is a Chartered Organisational and Chartered Counselling Psychologist who has experience of working in the private, public, charity and academic sectors. She is the programme director for the Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology and related programmes at the University of East London. She has been published widely in the area of interpreters and health. She also acts as a trainer/ advisor on various government, health and voluntary sector committees.

Beverley Costa is a UKCP Registered Psychotherapist and Psychodramatist. After working in a multi cultural organisation in Reading she set up *Mothertongue Multi Ethnic Counselling Service* in 2000. Today *Mothertongue* is an award winning charity and BACP accredited.

Anne Marie Fox works for the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (MF). She has written on and translated texts in French, German and Hungarian on topics such as social affairs and human rights issues. At the MF she works with Francophone African and Romanian clients.

Jocelyn Avigad is a UKCP Registered Family Therapist and Registered Social Worker. She is the principal family therapist at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. She has a wide range of experience and also works as a consultant and trainer in the field of torture and trauma in the UK and abroad.

Feedback

"extremely interesting reflections – the wealth of experience in this team was evident in the presentation"

"thought provoking and interesting"

"extremely engaging and informative, useful information for working as an interpreter in this field as well as a broader perspective"

"the whole seminar was interesting and informative with just the right balance of reflection and information"

"references to research etc well used but also lots of practice based experience shared which was very helpful"

"lots to take away – content relevant to me"



Beverley Costa

Beverley discussed Perez Foster's concept of the "bilingual self". She referred to the gains and losses that occurred when we learn a new language, in particular as a result of migration. She made some practical recommendations for therapists including the taking of a linguistic history. She also used the Mothertongue Mental Health Interpreting DVD to demonstrate the Mothertongue training of Interpreters and Mental Health workers working together and provided a Code of Practice for interpreters and clinicians. For further reading please see:

Costa, B. (2010), "Mother tongue or non native language: learning from conversations with bilingual/multilingual therapists about working with clients who do not share their native language." *Ethnicity and Inequalities in health and Social Care*, (March edition)

Anne Marie Fox and Jocelyn Avigad

Anne Marie Fox and Jocelyn Avigad had a reflective conversation together as their address to delegates to demonstrate the particular way in which family therapy is conducted using an interpreter. They discussed case material to illustrate the dilemmas faced and the particular attention which needs to be attended to interpreting for competing voices in this context. For further reading, please see:

Fox, A. & Avigad, J. (2008). "Good Counsel." *The Linguist*, Vol.47, i.

Looking to the future

As a result of the conference a **Bilingual/Multilingual Therapist and Interpreter Forum** is being formed. This forum will provide a space for ideas, experience, learning and good practice across languages to be shared. It will also be a source of support and will offer a network of supervision in a variety of languages.

The first meeting of the **Bilingual/Multilingual Therapist and Interpreter Forum** will be on **Tuesday 25 May 2010**, 11am-1pm at the Directory of Social Change, Euston Square, London. This is an opportunity to participate at the start to influence the form and shape the forum will take.

Please contact kim@mothertongue.org.uk to reserve your place.

Interpreting for Mental Health Situations: A Training DVD

This DVD is aimed at Interpreters and Mental Health Professionals who need to work together. It provides ideas and reflective space to think about the best way in which a collaborative relationship can be formed between the Interpreter and the Mental Health Professional for the best outcome possible for patients. For a clip of this DVD please visit:

www.mothertongue.org.uk

If you would like to order a copy of the DVD please email us at info@mothertongue.org.uk



Culturally sensitive counselling that empowers people to make decisions, engage with their lives and make changes that are right for themselves, their families and the social contexts in which they live.

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