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Childhood Trauma & Communication Virtual Conference

Guest Editor: Trisha L. Self, PhD,
CCC-SLP, BCS-CL

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The Effects of Trauma on Communication in Forced Migrant Minors

Helen Grech, PhD

Moderated by:
Amy Hansen, MA, CCC-SLP, Managing Editor, SpeechPathology.com

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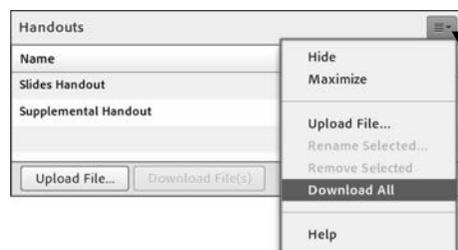
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The Effects of Trauma on Communication in Forced Migrant Minors

Helen Grech Ph.D.
Department of Communication Therapy
University of Malta

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Session Outline

- Introduction
- Demographic update on forced migration
- The impact of forced migration on minors
- The communication acquisition/skills of forced migrants
- Communication among forced migrants
- Communication of forced migrants with residents
- Scenario
- Conceptual Framework
- Summary, Q & A

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Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

- Describe how to assess the communication skills and the degree of social adaptation of forced migrant minors.
- Describe how to identify forced migrant minors who are struggling with communication difficulties.
- Explain how to use the conceptual framework to plan the management of forced migrant children and young adults, in order to enhance their communication skills.

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Where do I come from?

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MIGRANT CHILDREN SHOULD STAY WITH THEIR PARENTS, UN OFFICIALS SAY
(UNICEF, <https://youtu.be/ISVLPGZKH4j>)



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Demographic Update On Forced Migration

continued



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Demographic update of Forced Migrant Children

- In 2017, UNICEF reported that 30 million children were living outside the country where they were born.
- Around 10 million of these children have been displaced from their own countries forcibly.
- 17 million children were internally displaced due to conflict and violence.
- <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/migration/>

Approximately, 1 in 200 children worldwide is a refugee.

The number of refugee children in 2005 doubled by 2015.



<https://data.unicef.org/resources/uprooted-growing-crisis-refugee-migrant-children/>

Figures Across the Globe

UNICEF (2016). . Uprooted: the growing crisis for refugee and migrant children. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Uprooted_growing_crisis_for_refugee_and_migrant_children.pdf.

- Increasing number of unaccompanied minors moving within the Americas; they are often fleeing violence at home/country.
- More than double the number of children applied for asylum within the EU in 2015 compared to 2014.
- Almost ½ of African refugees are minors; approx. 3 million children are confronting the world's harshest realities.
- 2/5 of the world's international child migrants live in Asia.
- A high proportion of all children in Oceania are migrants.

The Impact of Forced Migration on Minors

Challenges of Forced Migrants

- Border control of migration and asylum policies have become stricter.
- We have recently seen migrant children separated from their families across borders.



Forced migrant minors who flee persecution ending up in more economically stable countries often endure physical and mental challenges both during the move as well as after landing in the host country.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees. (2009). *UNHCR. 2008 global trends: refugees, asylum seekers, returnees, internally displaced and stateless persons.* UNHCR: Geneva.

Migrant Children & Education

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2015)
<http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2015.htm>

- Some schools have a high % of migrant pupils whose mother tongue is different from that used at school or the community.
- Such pupils have gross communication difficulties at school reflecting on social interaction, learning and behaviour.



- Following migration, children with past minimal or no school education are suddenly immersed in a new school system.
- Xenophobia as well as bullying and difficult policies to accommodate asylum seekers are common day experiences faced by migrant minors.
- This trauma reflects negatively on their social communication skills.

Goldin S, Levin L, Persson LA, Hagglof B. Stories of pre-war, war and exile: Bosnian refugee children in Sweden. *Med Confl Surviv* 2001; 17: 25–47.

Systematic Review on Risk Factors related to Mental Health in Force Migrant Minors

Fazel, M., Reed, R.V., Panter-Brick, C., Stein, A. (2013). Mental health of displaced and refugee children resettled in high-income countries: risk and protective factors. *Lancet* 2012; 379: 266–82.

- Exposure to violence negatively affects mental health.
- Social support & stability in settling in the country where they land leaves positive effects on minors' psychological well being.

Health & Wellbeing of Child Migrants

Children of migrant families seem to be at risk of health related difficulties (including mental health) and may encounter difficulties in receiving services as a result of financial, communication and educational limitations.

Médicins Sans Frontières (MSF) (2009) <https://www.msf.org/>

Professional Services for Migrants

- Traumatized migrant minors are at higher risk of communication difficulties.
- Yet, scientific reports indicate that migrants are often medically underserved, have difficulty with accessing health service and consequently, they are less likely to benefit from rehabilitation services such as speech therapy (Wylie, McAllister, Davidson & Marshall, 2013).
- Albarran and colleagues (2011) attribute this to language barriers, financial matters, limited knowledge of the local health care system and expectations of these populations.

Albarran, J. W, Rosser, E., Bach, S., Uhnfeldt, L., Lunderg, P and Law, K. 2011. Exploring the development of a cultural care framework for European. *International Journal of Qual. Stud. Health Well-being*, 6, 1-11.

Wylie, K., McAllister, L., Davidson, B., & Marshall, J. 2013. Changing practice: Implications of the World Report on Disability for responding to communication disabilities in underserved populations. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 15, 1 – 13.

The Communication Acquisition/Skills of Forced Migrants

- Children of forced migrants are faced with a multitude of cultural values/beliefs and social rules that would influence their acquisition of language/s.
- The traumatic experience related to migration adds to their struggle with acquiring language or communicating.



Social Adaptation of Culturally Diverse Families

Migrants may initially reject the new culture and language in the hope of retaining theirs.

Cheng and Butler (1993) report that immigrants may experience various tiers of adaptation in the country in which they land.

Cheng L. & Butler. (1993). Difficult discourse: Designing connections to deflect language impairment. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the California Speech-Language Hearing Association. California, Palm Springs.

Cultural and linguistic diversity also impacts on attitudes, such as the need for referral to professional services, including speech and language therapy, the drive for education and literacy skills development as well as the need to interact with other socio-culturally-linguistically different groups.

This may also reflect on children's attitude to learn the language of the host country.

Watch & Wait

Sequential multilingual children may take up to two years to start before expressing themselves in their L2.



Martin, D. (2009). Language Disability in Cultural and Linguistic Diversity. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Communication among Forced Migrants

We need to understand that when forced migrants reach the host country & are placed together in detention or elsewhere, they do not necessarily speak the same language and understand each other.

Expert interpreting services is normally very limited.

Perception of Migrants about Communicating with other Migrants

Grech & Cheng (2010)

- >1/2 complained about difficulties with communicating in the receiving country.
- 1/2 of the adults explained that they were satisfied while the other half expressed concern.
- The under-18 year olds were more satisfied out of the 15 who replied only 1 expressed dissatisfaction.
- Reasons for dissatisfaction included lack of understanding each other's language, over-crowding and regular arguments.

Grech, H., & Cheng, L. (2010). Communication in the migrant community in Malta. *Folia Phoniatrica Et Logopaedica*, (5), 246 -254.

Communication of Forced Migrants with Host Country Residents

Communication with the Locals

(Grech & Cheng, 2010)

64% of the 36 who replied answered expressed satisfaction.

36% were dissatisfied and gave several reasons.

Some also expressed dissatisfaction with the education that their children were receiving in Malta.

>1/2 were also dissatisfied with the service of interpreters.

Perceptions of the Mainstream Population

- UNHCR (2012) reported findings of a survey carried out among residents
- >½ of the respondents reported that too many immigrants are arriving in the country
- Most of the residents expect migrants to adapt to the local culture and life style
- Anti-immigration campaigns have emerged

UNHCR. 2012. What do you think? A report on public perception on refugees and migrants in Malta. Malta: Floriana.

SCENARIO

Arrival & Detention: Interviews with Forced Migrants

- Some claimed that they had no point of return and could even stay as long as needed in detention
- Others claimed that this was not the country they wished to land premeditated arrival
- Others reported that they were unaware of detention policy before they landed (Mainwaring, 2012)



Mainwaring, C. 2012. Constructing a Crisis: the Role of Immigration Detention in Malta. *Population, Space Place* 18, 687–700.

What do the Maltese think about Forced Migrants?

Just over half the Maltese respondents reported that too many immigrants are arriving on Maltese shores and the majority indicated that these migrants should adapt to the Maltese culture and life style.

UNHCR. 2012. *What do you think? A report on public perception on refugees and migrants in Malta.* Malta: Floriana.

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The Commissioner for Human Rights reported concern at attitudes of racism and xenophobia in Malta.

Commissioner for Human Rights. 2011. Report by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, following his visit to Malta from 23 to 25 March 2011. Retrieved from <https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1797917>

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“‘What did we do to the Maltese?’ :Evicted Migrants Left Confused and Alone”

The Times, July 18 2019

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Suggestions Posed by Migrants

(to improve the service they are receiving in the host country)

- Opportunities to learning to read and write in English and /or language of the country
- Transport to the hospital
- Better work opportunities



What about Speech & Language Therapy (SLT)?

Are underserved communities aware of this service?



- Survey in Malta reported that 74.4% were unaware of SLT
- 25.6% claiming that they knew about the service

Conceptual Framework

How Can We Help These Vulnerable Forced Migrant Minors?

- Governments & NGOs are concerned about the influx of these populations
- These communities often have specific needs
- WHO, UN & other agencies are looking at these issues and trying to formulate strategies to deal with the situation



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Equitable Service

Speech-Language Pathologists & other health care professionals are committed to being respectful and empathic and to providing an equitable, caring and holistic service tailor-made to the client's needs.



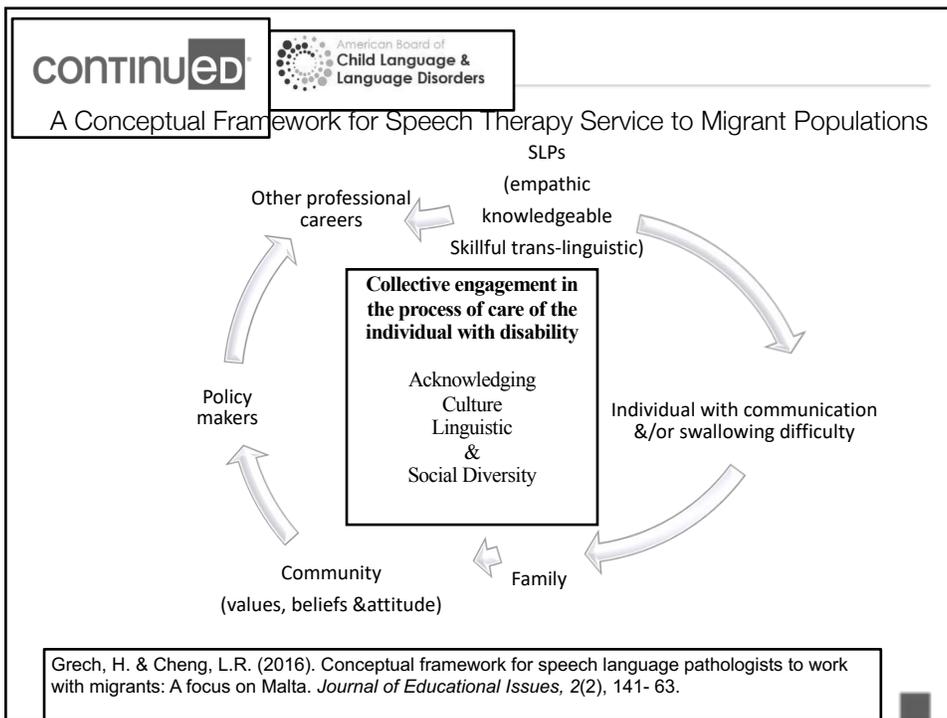
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Essential Information SLPs need about Forced Migrant Minors

- Is communication facilitated in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner?
- Do minors in the migrant community receive adequate language stimulation & education?
- Do they have opportunities to participate & socialize in the mainstream?
- Do they have access to timely diagnosis of communication disorders?
- Do they have learning opportunities at school via the medium/language that they understand?

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Multilingual & Culturally Sensitive SLPs

- Pillay (2013) argues that very often education and training of SLPs is carried out only in their native language and that this does not reflect a true picture of the world's population and those with communication difficulties
- Conceptual framework should highlight the importance of having multilingual & culturally sensitive practitioners

Pillay, M. 2013. Can the subaltern speak? Visibility of international migrants with communication and swallowing disabilities in the World Report on Disability. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 15 (1) 79–83.

Clinical Competence of SLPs

- SLPs should have a set of clinical competencies to manage cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Professional framework for under-serviced populations to shift, whereby people with disabilities and communities are collectively engaged in the process of care of the individuals with disabilities (Kathard and Pillay, 2013).
- Service provision should match with beliefs, behaviours, attitudes or values conveyed by cultural wisdom.

Kathard, H. & Pillay, P. 2013. Promoting change through political consciousness: A South African speech-language pathology response to the World Report on Disability. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 15 (1) 84–89.

Training of Health Care Professionals to Meet the Needs of Migrants

- Equipping students with creativity, flexibility, reflection and evaluation when working with individuals with communication difficulties in contexts where mentoring is scarce and where diverse cultures prevail (Wickenden, Hartley, Kariyakaranawa & Kodikara, 2003).
- Work on the professional trainees' perceptions of diverse populations since stereotypical perceptions may negatively affect intervention with such populations.

Wickenden, M. 2013. Widening the SLP lens: How can we improve the wellbeing of people with communication disabilities globally. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 15 (1) 14–20.

SUMMARY

The overall trends indicate that a number of young migrants suffer from culture shock and feel marginalized.

A high % of immigrants seem to be rejecting the new culture and language and by trying to retain theirs, they end up feeling dissatisfied with the service they receive.

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It seems that the core underlying issue of migrant dissatisfaction is the difficulty they encounter to communicate.

Communication among themselves is not easy; their culture and language still vary significantly. Conflicts and further challenges pushes them further for adaptation.

Communication is a basic human need and behavioral and multiple aggregating difficulties may be the consequence of difficulties in communication.

In the case of children, the literature clearly marks an overlap between communication difficulties and other areas of functioning such as school/peer relations, behavior/conduct and attention/learning/cognitive skills.

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There is a clear need that before embarking in service provision, cultural and linguistic characteristics should be identified to optimize interpretation of behavior and gain trust from the diverse service users.

Traumatized forced minor migrants are vulnerable and should be treated with TLC.



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