

Functional Communication: Spanish for Occupational Therapists

Jacqueline Thrash¹

¹*Living Skills Therapy, Glendale, CA, United States,* ²*San Jose State University, San Jose, CA, United States*

Introduction: The presence of a language barrier between clinician and client can interfere with expected therapeutic outcome, and fails to provide the client mandated culturally and linguistically appropriate treatment. There exists no evidence regarding methods used, nor their effectiveness in bridging language barriers during occupational therapy services. The purpose of this pilot study is to determine the effectiveness of a 16-hour weekend class in Spanish for occupational therapists given to 40 diverse occupational therapy clinicians currently practicing in Southern California. It is proposed that there will be significant increase in their functional communication following this pilot Spanish for occupational therapy weekend class.

Objectives: Determine the effectiveness of a 16-hour weekend class, Spanish for occupational therapists, to increase functional communication with Spanish speaking clients.

Methods: The teaching methods utilize a psychomotor learning approach; phonetic encoding and memory burn techniques to teach 83 functional phrases for occupational therapy. A language exposure survey will be given to determine the therapist's home language and exposure to other languages and a 30-question pre-test/post-test will be given to determine the baseline of subjects' Spanish ability, and the change following the 16-hour class.

Results: A pilot study with Spanish for Physical Therapists has yielded significant results and this equivalent study is being completed for Spanish for Occupational Therapists.

Conclusion: In accordance with the mission of providing culturally relevant services, there exists a need to develop methods of bridging cultural and language barriers in occupational therapy as well as document their effectiveness in order to provide evidence based practice.

Contribution: This study will initiate evidence regarding methods of bridging the English-Spanish language barriers in occupational therapy, as well as provide incentive for clinicians to participate in occupational language Spanish to improve their ability to communicate with Spanish speaking clients.

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