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Who are International Adoptees?

1. International adoptees, or IAs for short, are typically children, adopted from a nation different from their adoptive parent(s). Depending on the age of adoption, IAs can experience **assimilation**, **enculturation**, and **socialization** fairly quickly, not showing obvious differences from their non-adopted peers. However, as we will discuss, IAs can experience difficulties, depending on a multitude of factors.

Introduction

1. Having begun language acquisition at birth, international adoptees are an interesting demographic. Although they resemble monolinguals, the initial exposure to their *first-first language* becomes obsolete once the primary language of their adoptive country becomes ever so present. This delayed exposure to an international adoptees' *second-first language* does present developmental delays, which will be discussed.
2. However, there are difficulties when studying international adoptees (IA). For example, IAs come from a variety of different countries, with different birth languages and different adopted languages. While diversity of sample sizes can provide more general results, the data collected can be difficult to decipher meaning.
3. Therefore, researchers studying IAs tend to use two groups to provide interpretable results: "Same age children who comprise the norming group for standardized tests and questionnaires or typically-developing non-adopted monolingual children who are

matched to IA children in particular measures of **gender, age, and socioeconomic status**".

The Present Volume

1. The development of a child's language skills do not form independently from the entirety of one's development, making the background of a child important information to recognize. Each IA child has different experiences, both before and after their adoption. Therefore, to understand linguistic development in IA children, one must understand their general development.
2. The quality of institutions holding children in pre-adoption varies greatly. However, the quality of these institutions set post-adopted children up for the rest of their lives, as the majority of children's important first months take place there. Lack of quality care in these institutions affect children in terms of "risk, stress, adversity and resilience".

Summing Up

1. Despite difficulties during early development for IA children, most researchers agree that they often display a high level of resiliency. Although IA children tend to score within typical ranges on standardized tests of language and cognitive ability, the first six months of life, if deprived, can negate typical cognitive development. Therefore, these early experiences are crucial.
2. Although IA children score within typical ranges in language ability tests, there is evidence that IA children continue to score significantly lower than non-adopted peers with matching socioeconomic statuses. IA children tend to acquire grammatical features

of their adoptive language in typical fashion, but with comparative delays. Again, the quality of pre-adoption care is important, as “IA children raised in foster care tend to exhibit better post-adoption outcomes than IA children raised in institutions.”

3. Many IA children live in advantaged families. International adoption can be just as, if not more expensive than domestic adoption, ranging from 20,000 to 50,000 USD per adoption, depending on the country of origin. Therefore, IAs “may be educated in school environments with many high performing children, additional in-class support might help to integrate IA children who have difficulty keeping up with their non-adopted peers.”
4. Interestingly, there is evidence that IA children do not acquire their adopted language in the same way as monolingual native speakers do. Instead, their neuro-cognitive systems are more similar to second language learners. However, these neuro-cognitive systems had been previously built to support a language that is typically no longer in use.
5. Because IA children exhibit differences in their adoptive language acquisition, the idea of *native language* is being challenged. Instead of monolingual speakers since birth representing the standard of language acquisition, different modes of native language acquisition have been identified. This also includes native simultaneous bilingualism.

What Does it All Mean?

1. After reviewing the linguistic development of international adoptees, please consider the following questions:
 - a. How might you aid IAs in their linguistic development, particularly in early education?

- b. When should language skill intervention be employed during an IA's development?
 - c. What does it mean to be a native speaker of a language?
- 2. Tips to be responsive to international adoptees:
 - a. IA children may need additional linguistic support, ranging from clinical specialization to additional in-class aid.
 - b. Studies of linguistic development in IA children continue to be conducted. Therefore, educators of IA children should often update their knowledge of the most recent research.
 - c. Language skills begin building at birth, making early childhood education crucial to set IA children up for success.
- 3. Tips to be respectful to international adoptees:
 - a. Differences in IA children's development should not be used as a reason to separate these children from their non-adoptive peers.
 - b. IAs are not automatically second-language speakers, and should not be treated as such.
 - c. IA children come from a variety of backgrounds, making a multicultural standpoint necessary in their education.

Quiz

1. Here are some questions to test your understanding.
2. Is the pre-adoptive care of IAs significant to their post-adoption development?
 - a. **Yes.** However, more research needs to be conducted to define varying qualities of pre-adoptive care and its effects on children.

3. Do IAs have similar neurological structures as second language learners?
 - a. **Yes.** However, IAs are usually not classified as second language learners after acquiring their native adopted language, as their native birth language typically becomes obsolete.
4. Are IAs consistently scoring lower than their average peers in standardized language skill tests?
 - a. **No.** Although, IAs typically receive lower scores on these tests when compared to non-adopted students of similar socioeconomic status.

Bibliography

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