

The ICF & Multilingualism: Why the ICF has been adopted in speech-language pathology



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University of Toronto
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Outline

- International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)
- Other Useful Frameworks for SLPs
- SLPs, the ICF, and Multilingualism



The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)

Frameworks: Medical/deficit model

The Medical Model of Disability



This is a diagram of the traditional Medical Model of Disability, which the Social Model was developed to challenge.

<https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/about-us/disability-in-london/social-model/the-social-model-of-disability-and-the-cultural-model-of-deafness/>

Frameworks: Social model of disability

The Social Model of Disability

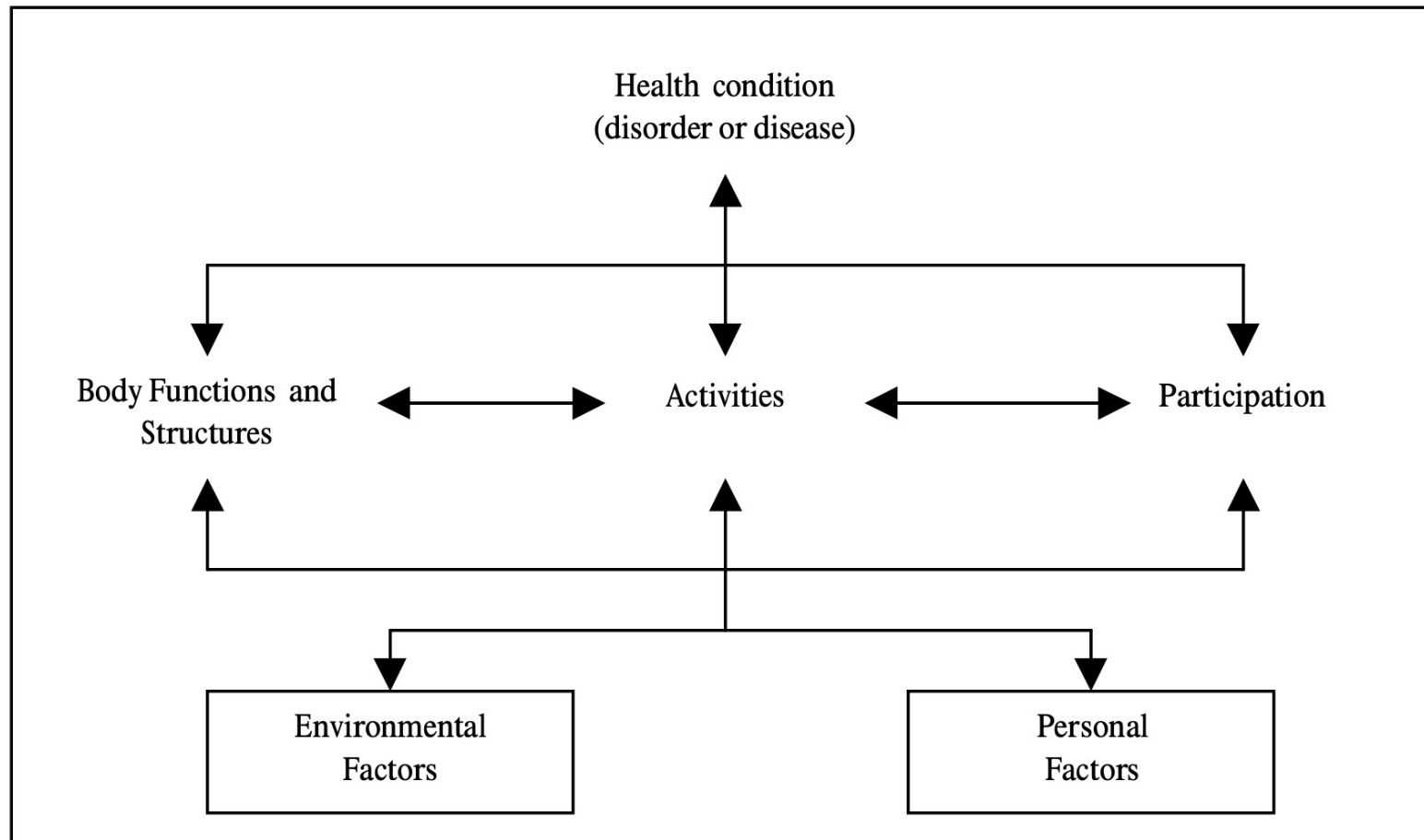


The Social Model of Disability states that the oppression and exclusion people with impairments face is caused by the way society is run and organised.

<https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/about-us/disability-in-london/social-model/the-social-model-of-disability-and-the-cultural-model-of-deafness/>

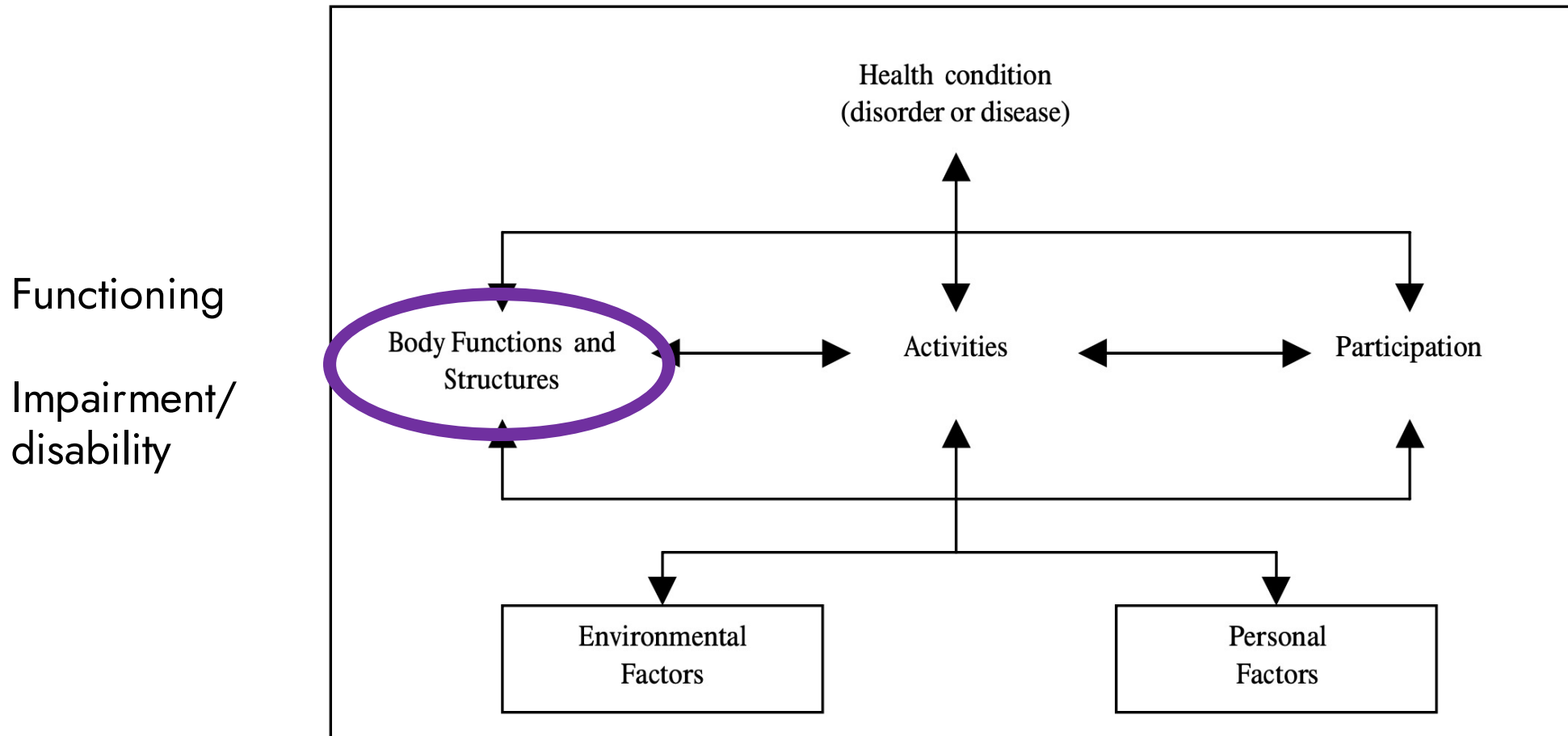
Frameworks: Biopsychosocial

- Classification internationale du fonctionnement, du handicap et de la santé
- International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)



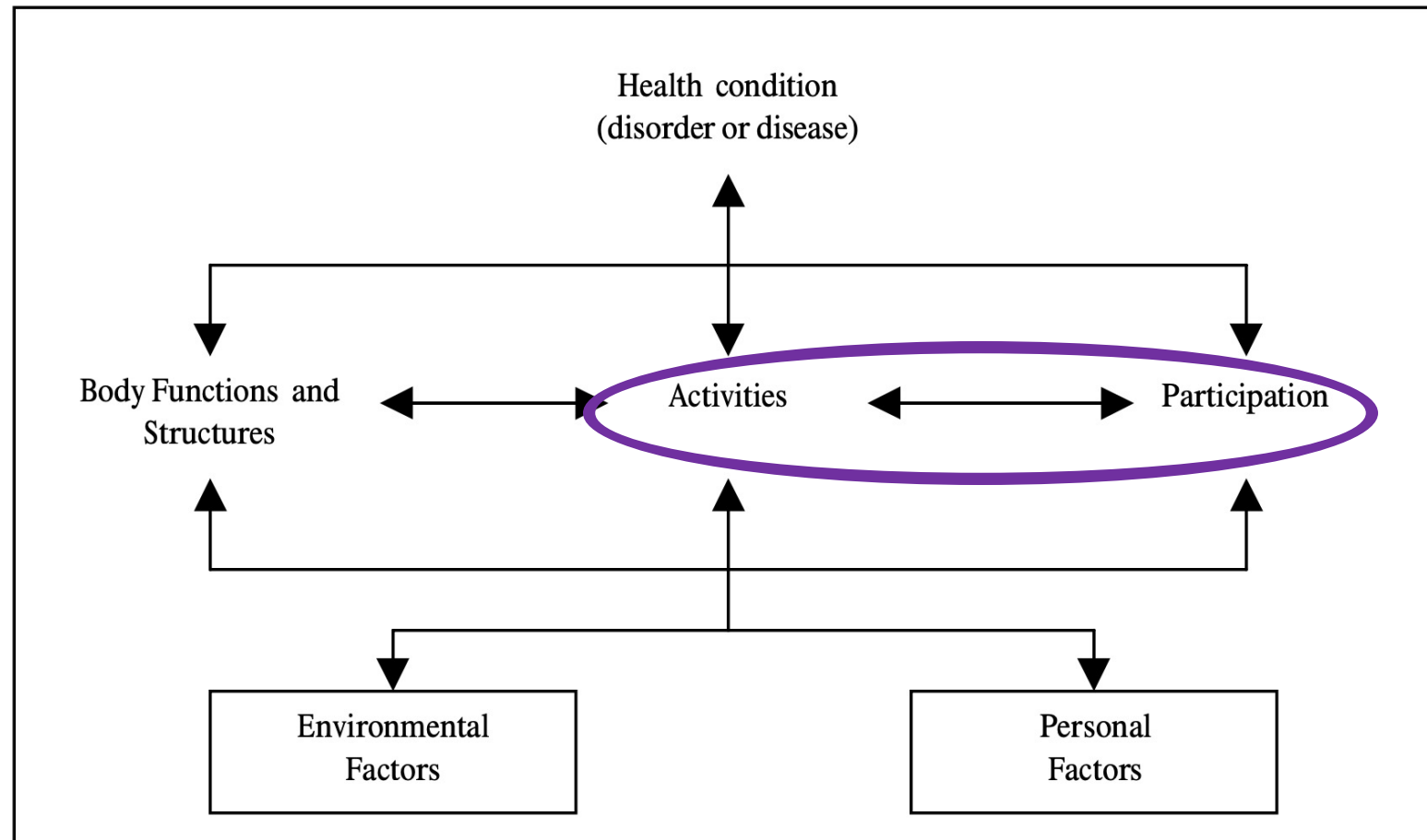
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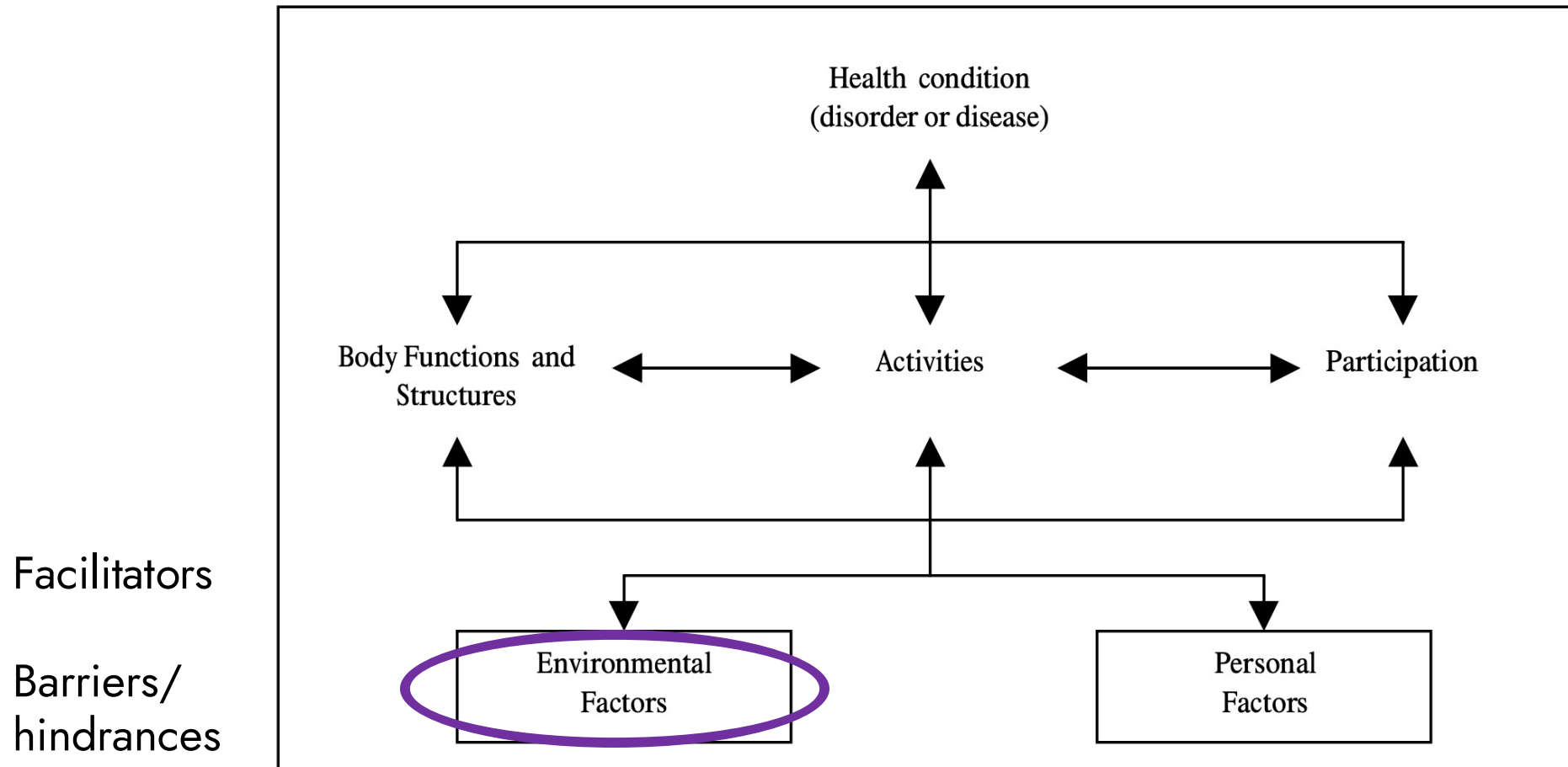
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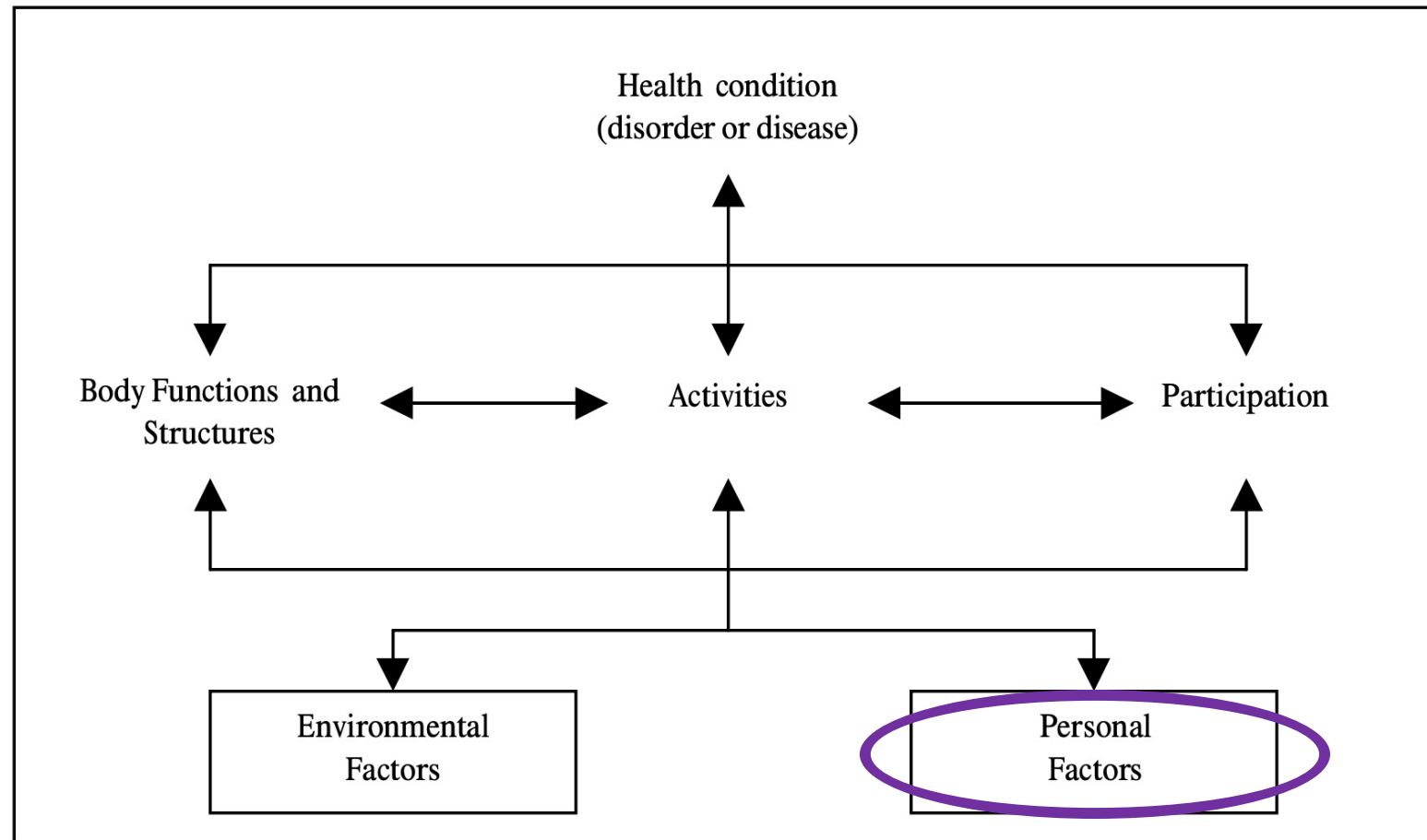
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Frameworks: Biopsychosocial

- Classification internationale du fonctionnement, du handicap et de la santé
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Other Useful Frameworks for SLPs

Framework: Human rights

United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” (Article 19).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

“States Parties shall ensure that children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and to be provided with disability and age-appropriate assistance to realize that right” (Article 7)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

“Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development” (Article 24-3c)

Frameworks: Person-centred

- Respect for individuality
- Active listening and involvement
- Collaboration with families and caregivers
- Strengths-based focus
- Holistic support
- Flexibility and responsiveness



Frameworks: Strengths-based



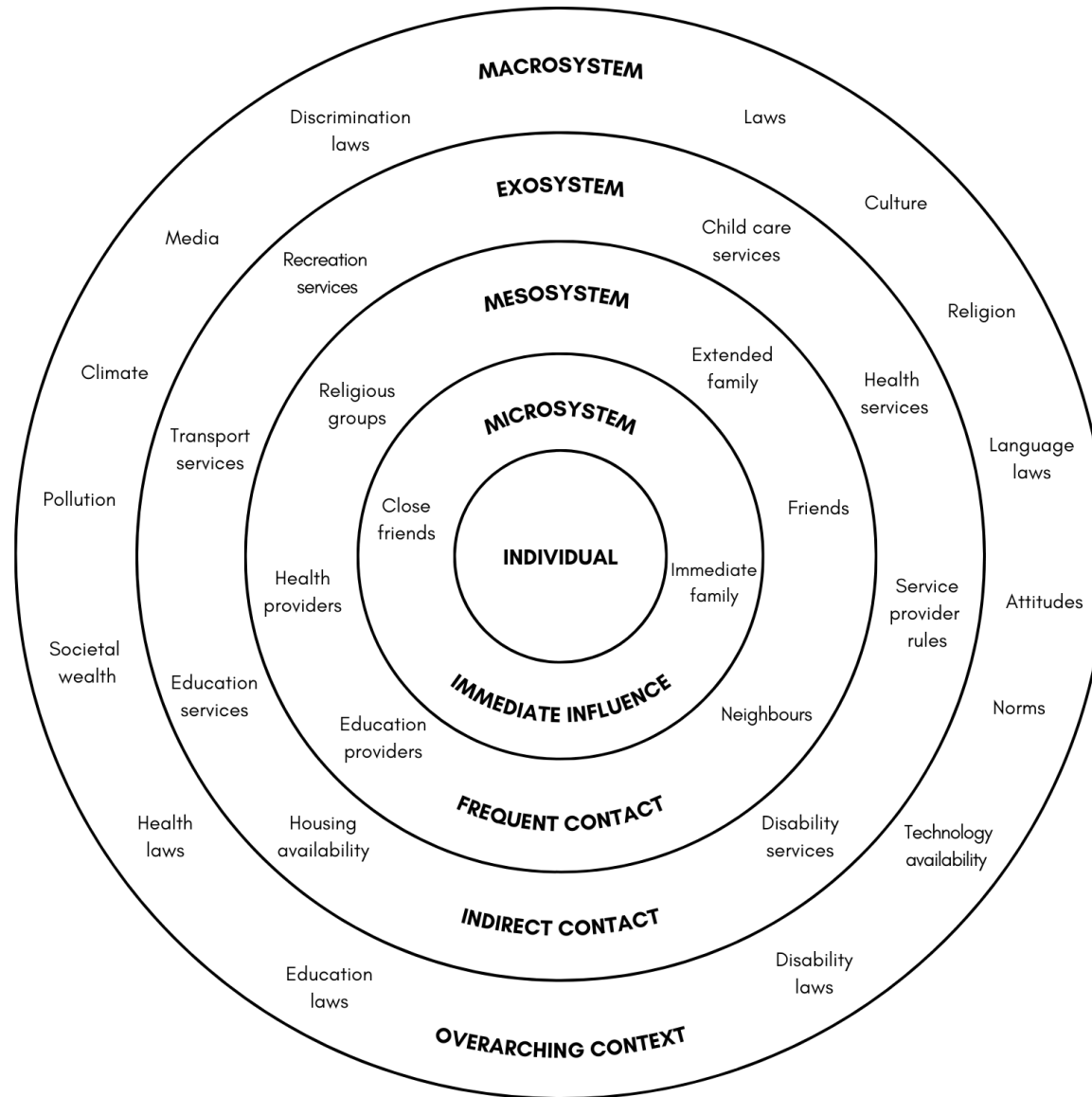
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- Recognition of abilities
- Empowerment
- Collaboration
- Focus on potential
- Holistic perspective
- Positive mindset



Frameworks: Intersectional experience



Hopf, S. C., Crowe, K., Mosen, J., Perera, S., Liu, E., & Singh, S. (2024). Intersecting identities and experience of sensory loss. In K. Crowe (Ed.), *Communication and sensory loss: Global perspectives* (pp. 16-33). Routledge.

Frameworks: Children's Voices

“Honouring the voices of young children can only occur when they are valued noticed, and listened to; however, the everyday (significant) voices of young children are frequently missed. This means that what matters to young children is also missed when professionals do not attend to their messages and ideas”



Frameworks: Positive psychology

Fostering Joy: a family/professional effort celebrating the joy of raising and supporting a child who is DHH.

- Loving and supportive families provide a strong base for social and emotional health and well-being.
- Focusing on special moments that bring joy helps families prioritise loving parent-child connections above worrying.
- Reduces professionals' negative feelings and experiences of burn out

Professionals: <https://cccbsd.org/programs/institute/fostering-joy-professionals/>

Families: <https://handsandvoices.org/resources/fostering-joy.htm>



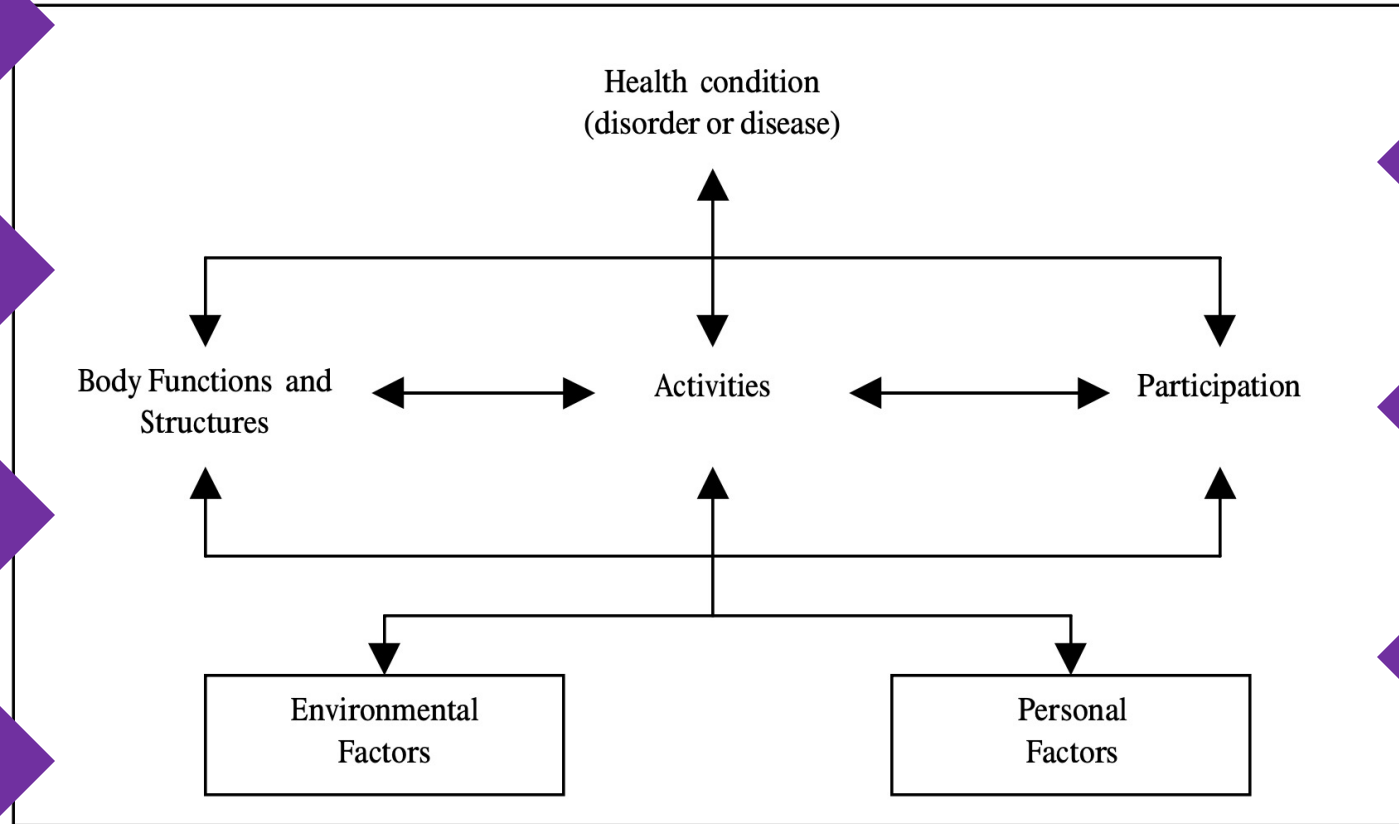
ICF as a wholistic tool for SLPs

Social model of
disability

Human rights

Strength-based

Person-centred



Intersectional
experience

Children's voices

Positive
psychology

SLPs, the ICF, and Multilingualism

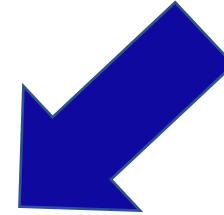
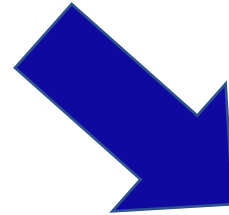
Example: Deaf multilingual learners

Multilingual Learners

Exposed to and/or learning two or more (spoken) languages.

d/Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (DHH) learners

Have a hearing loss.

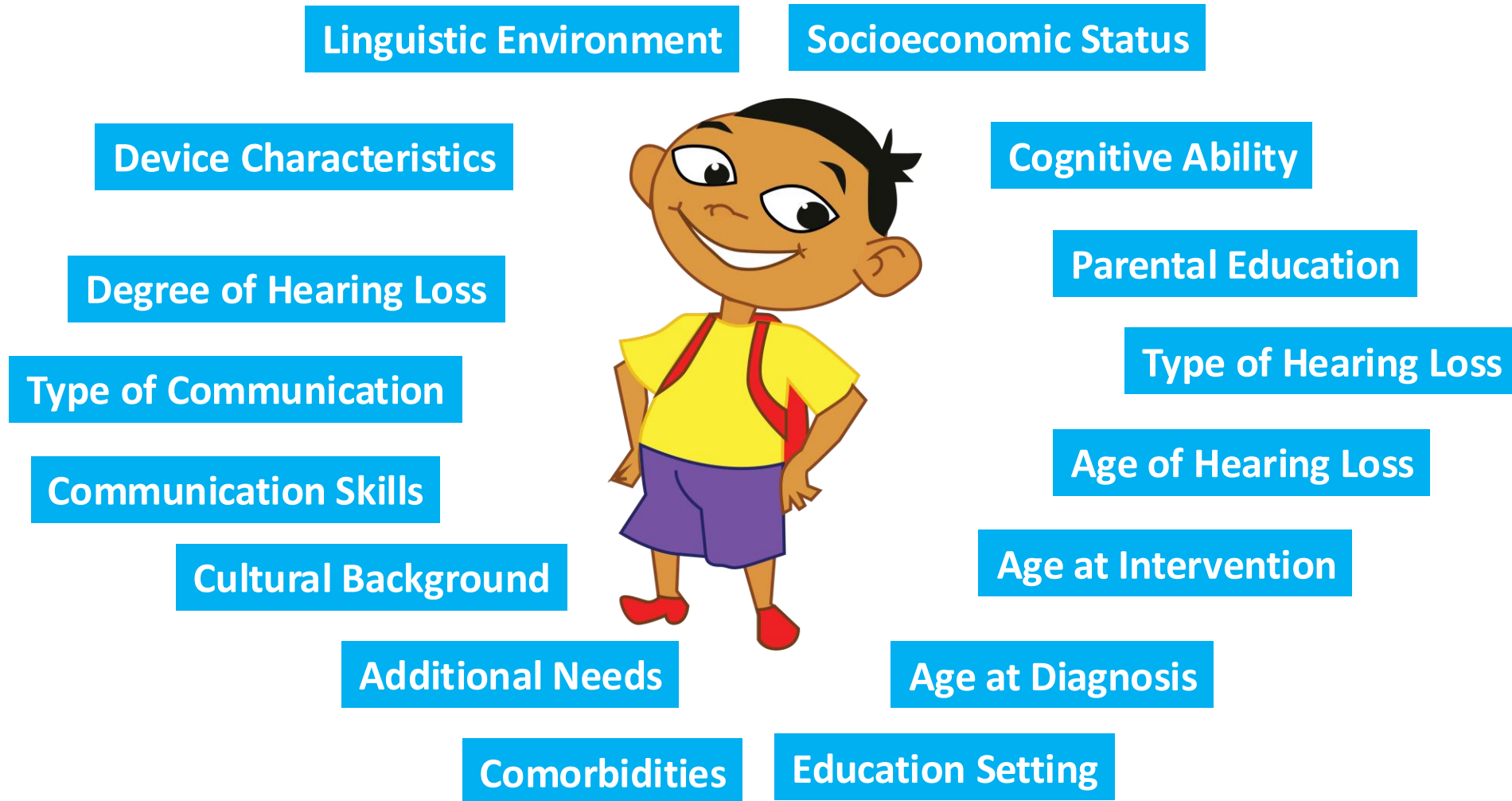


Deaf Multilingual Learners (DML)

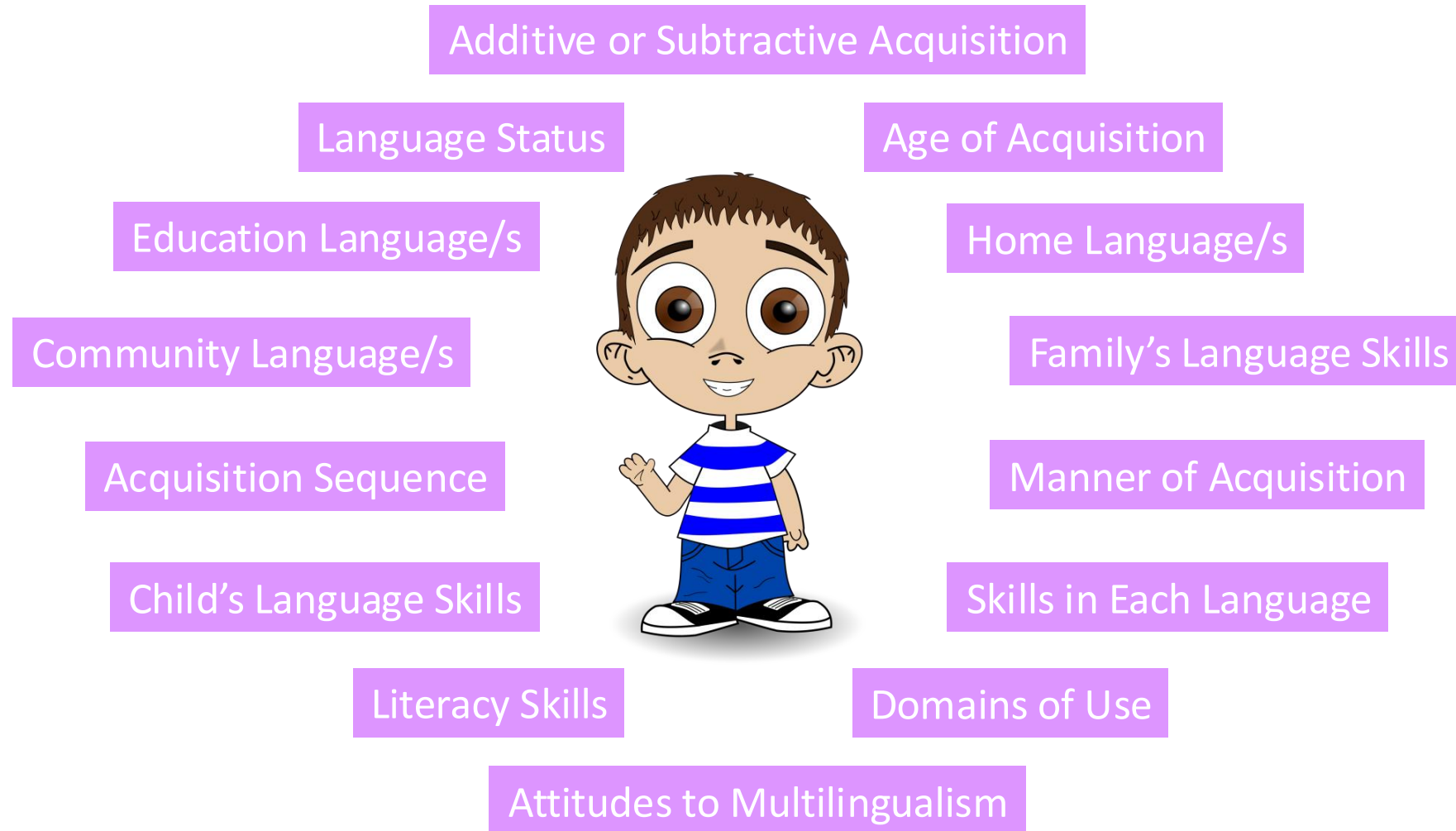
Have a hearing loss and are exposed to and/or learning two or more spoken languages, with or without use of signed languages and/or signed communication systems.



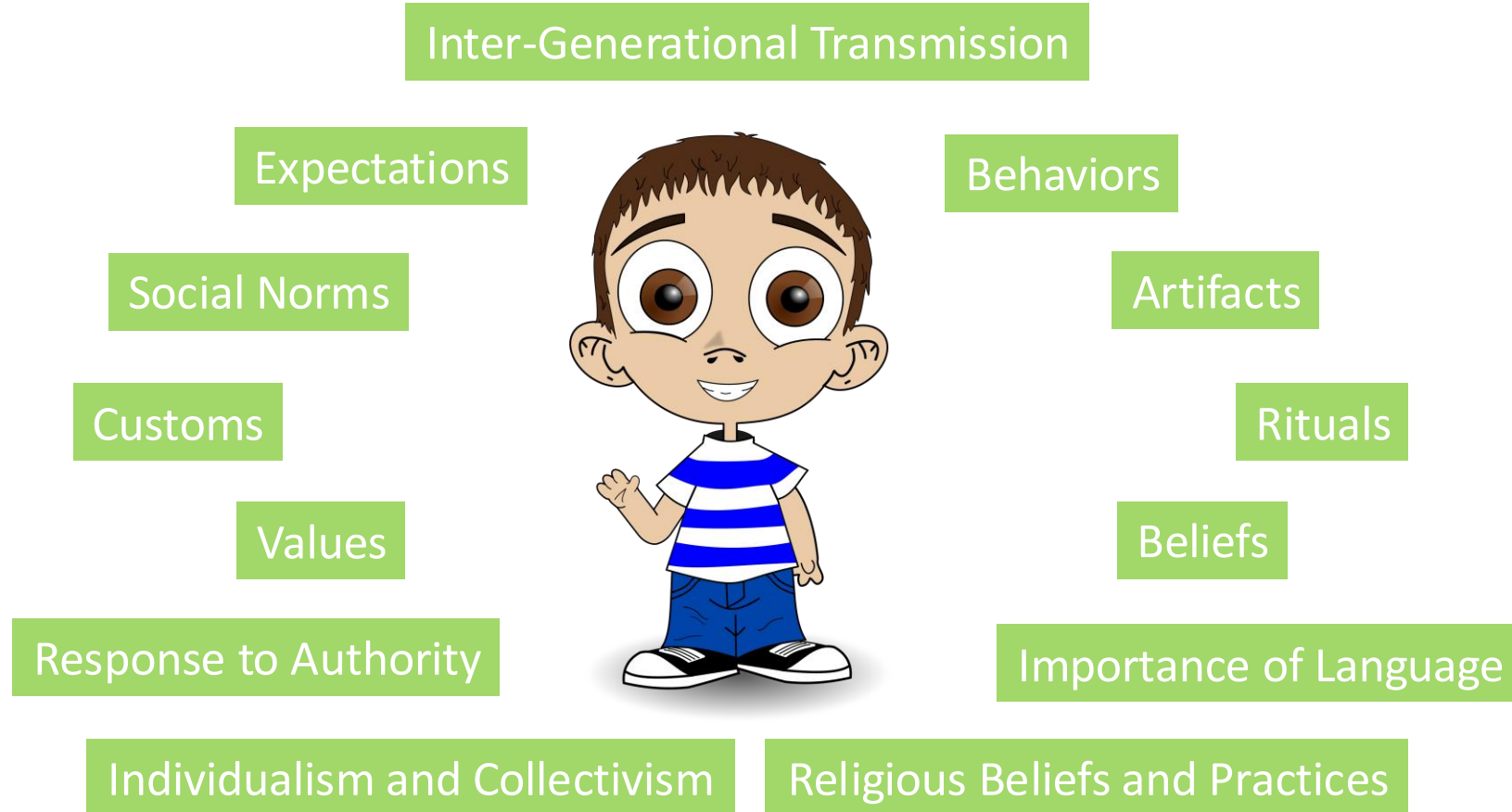
Diversity: Hearing-related characteristics



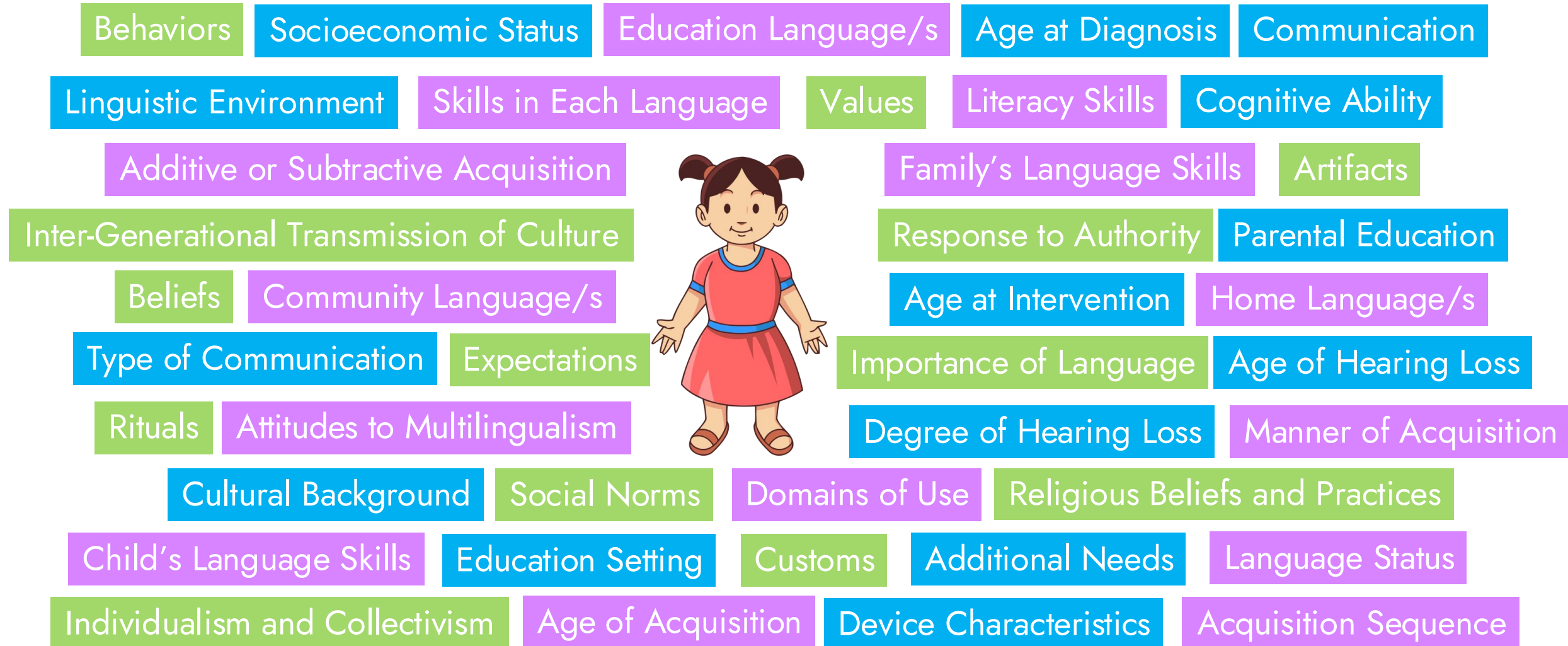
Diversity: Multilingualism-related characteristics



Diversity: Culture-related characteristics



Deaf multilingual learners in context



Deaf multilingual learners in context

Parents

Child Factors ★

Family Factors

Community Factors

Professional Factors ★



Professionals

Child Factors

★ Family Factors

★ Community Factors

Professional Factors



Crowe et al. (2014). Speech, sign, or multilingualism for children with hearing loss: Quantitative insights into caregivers' decision-making. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 45, 234-247.

Crowe et al. (2014). "Part of our world": Influences on caregiver decisions about communication choices for children with hearing loss. *Deafness and Education International*, 16(2), 61-85.

Crowe & McLeod (2016). Professionals' guidance about spoken language multilingualism and spoken language choices for children with hearing loss. *Australasian Journal of Special Education*, 40(2), 157-177.

Parent Preferences

★ Child: Age of fitting, age at enrolment, forming friendships and relationships

Family: Learn English later, family culture, dominant culture, communicating with extended family

Community: Access to intervention and education in English

★ Advice: Advice from audiologists, specialist teachers, and speech-language pathologists



Client's Informed
Preference

Crowe et al. (2014). Speech, sign, or multilingualism for children with hearing loss: Quantitative insights into caregivers' decision-making. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 45, 234-247.

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Professional Perspectives

Child: Rarely mentioned

- ★ Family: Family language skills and needs
- ★ Community: Support for language acquisition and need for different languages

Professional: Minimal importance, except for adherence to models of professional practice



Professional's
Clinical Expertise

Help Us Amplify Children's Voices!

Children Draw Health Global Online Gallery

We are inviting children around the world
to create a picture that answers

“What makes you healthy?”

“Who helps you be healthy?”

“Where do you go to get healthier?”

*“What would your ideal hospital or
health service look like?”*

This information will be used to inform the
World Health Organization
Scan the QR code to visit the
Children Draw Health site



Charles Sturt
University



Children Draw Health Global Online Gallery

Children are invited to contribute to our Children Draw Health Global Online Gallery.

We invite children around the world to create a picture that answers the following:

- “What makes you healthy?”
- “Who helps you be healthy?”
- “Where do you go to get healthier?”
- “What would your ideal hospital or health service look like?”

We'd especially love to hear from children with disabilities.

The drawings don't need to be works of art (lines or marks are perfect).
Children can even make a creation out of anything, like blocks or clay.

Submissions close
18 December 2025.


Find out more
→ csu.edu.au/children-draw-health

Children draw health


Children Draw Health Global Online Gallery

<https://www.csu.edu.au/research/childrens-voices-centre/research/childrens-health>




Gallery 1: What makes you healthy 




Gallery 2: Where do you go to get healthier 



Gallery 3: Who helps you be healthy. 



Gallery 4: What your ideal hospital or health service looks like 



Children draw health to advance health equity: Insights from children with disabilities: Submission to the 76th Session of the World Health Organization Regional Committee for the Western Pacific

https://cdn.csu.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/4506148/CVC-Children-draw-health-2025-Fiji-submission.pdf



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