

ABSTRACT

Of the many aspects of the cross-cultural psychotherapeutic encounter that have extensively been explored, the client's experience of working with early memories in psychotherapy facilitated in a second language has perhaps received the least attention. Extensive psychoanalytic, neuropsychological and cognitive research has focused on the representation of verbal communication (e.g. expression of emotions and of concrete, abstract, cultural meanings) and its role in memory recall and accession to unconscious processes. This Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis study explored the experience of three bilingual clients of accessing and communicating developmental memories, in humanistic or integrative psychotherapy facilitated in the context of the second language, and aimed to offer recommendations for integrative psychotherapists working with this client group. Semi-structured interviews facilitated the exploration of participants' personal experiences. These were recorded, transcribed, analysed, and common themes were identified. The findings indicated helpful and unhelpful aspects identified in the therapeutic encounter in areas such as: the bilingual client's experience of verbal and intersubjective relatedness, and the interpersonal communication. Implications for integrative psychotherapy practice were considered, and limitations and suggestions for future research discussed.