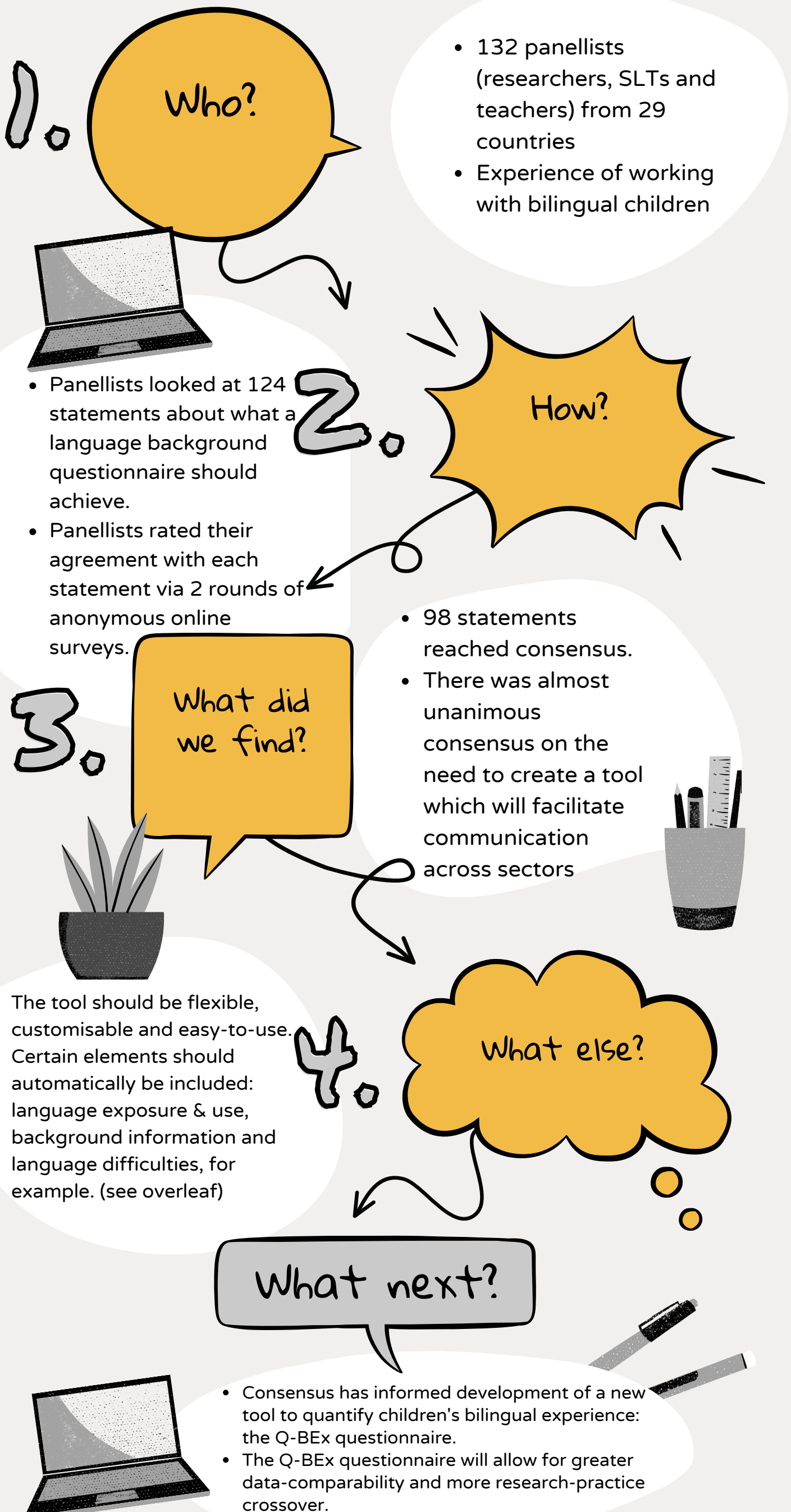# How to quantify bilingual experience?

Q-BEx

There is currently no consensus on how to quantify bilingual experience in children. This makes it difficult for researchers to compare data. For teachers wanting to use evidence-based tools in their practice it can be difficult to decide which ones to choose and why. The Q-BEx team used a consensus-reaching survey method to agree on how bilingual experience should be measured.

1. Who?

- 132 panellists (researchers, SLTs and teachers) from 29 countries
- Experience of working with bilingual children

2. How?

- Panellists looked at 124 statements about what a language background questionnaire should achieve.
- Panellists rated their agreement with each statement via 2 rounds of anonymous online surveys.

3. What did we find?

- 98 statements reached consensus.
- There was almost unanimous consensus on the need to create a tool which will facilitate communication across sectors

4. What else?

- The tool should be flexible, customisable and easy-to-use.
- Certain elements should automatically be included: language exposure & use, background information and language difficulties, for example. (see overleaf)

What next?

- Consensus has informed development of a new tool to quantify children's bilingual experience: the Q-BEx questionnaire.
- The Q-BEx questionnaire will allow for greater data-comparability and more research-practice crossover.

Find out more

www.q-bex.org
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Q-BEx

Agreed themes

Over the two rounds of surveys, 98 statements reached consensus. The Q-BEx team grouped these thematically; the themes are listed below with an example statement for each. The proportion of agreement is in brackets:

Mandate for a new tool

e.g. There needs to be a set of common measures of children's bilingual language experience, to allow comparability across studies and to facilitate communication across sectors (research, education, speech and language therapy) (96%)

Language exposure & use

e.g. Exposure and use should be measured (for each language):
(a) over an average week (85%)
(c) over holiday and school periods separately (80%)
(d) over home and school separately (92%)

Language difficulties

e.g. The questionnaire should ask about difficulties the child may have (had) with language, in order to identify what might require further assessment by specialists. (83%)

Child's proficiency

e.g. The questionnaire should not aim to measure the child's language proficiency. This should be done by other means. (75%)

Child's education and literacy

e.g. The questionnaire should ask if the child attended school in another country. (92%)

Input quality

e.g. The types of activity carried out in each language should be documented (e.g. storytelling, video games, play, etc.). (81%)

Language mixing

e.g. Language mixing should be estimated (in terms of exposure and use). (77%)

Attitudes

e.g. There should be a question on attitudes towards each of the child's languages
(a) within the family (at home)   (90%)
(b) within the local community (including school)   (86%)
(c) within the broader society   (79%)

Background information

e.g. The child's languages should be identified precisely (e.g. variety, dialect). (87%)

Questionnaire versions

e.g The questionnaire should be available in an online version, in a paper version, and as an interview protocol. (95%)

Questionnaire modularity

e.g. The questionnaire should contain thematic sections (e.g. on language exposure/use, on proficiency, on attitudes, etc.). Each section should be optional, and it should be up to the researchers/practitioners to select which section to use. (87%)

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If you would like to read the full paper, or an edited summary, they are available here:

Full paper
Summary