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Assessment of bilingual children: What if testing both languages is not possible?

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Highlights

- Parental report on early language development predicts LI in diverse contexts
- Family history is not a reliable risk factor of LI in bilingual children
- Combining parental report with direct language measures is effective for assessment
- Unbiased tools offer an alternative to testing both languages of a bilingual child

Abstract

Language delays of bilingual children can arise from language impairment (LI) but also from insufficient exposure to the target language. A reliable diagnosis of LI in bilingual children is therefore ideally based on the evaluation of both languages, as LI affects each language that is learned. However, due to the multitude of language combinations that are encountered in clinical practice, this is often not feasible. Bilingual norm-referencing may offer a solution, but the heterogeneity within the bilingual population makes it difficult to determine appropriate standards for every child. The present study examined an alternative approach to assessing both languages or using bilingual norm-referencing, aiming to assemble instruments that reduce bias against bilingual children. We used a four-group design, including monolingual and bilingual

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