

FIS PROJECT - ABSTRACT

Bilingual children sometimes display language difficulties that can be misinterpreted as a disorder. This challenge arises because their patterns of performance may resemble those of children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). As a result, assessing DLD in bilingual populations remains a complex task. This project aims to contribute to ongoing efforts to refine the assessment of DLD in bilingual children.

In recent years, a growing body of research has sought to disentangle differences between bilingual language development and DLD. These studies have provided important insights, but comparisons across languages remain difficult because assessment tools differ across linguistic contexts and only a limited number of language pairs have been examined. Some work has suggested that a bilingual child may be identified as having DLD when difficulties are present in both the dominant and the non-dominant language. However, the relative scarcity of multilingual assessment tools and the absence of multilingual norms make it challenging to evaluate this proposal systematically.

In this project we will develop a multilingual assessment for children aged 8–11 and investigate whether language dominance can be used as a reliable indicator in the identification of DLD in bilinguals. The project builds on previous work in three main ways. First, we aim to develop an assessment battery covering five major linguistic families represented in Europe and to explore combinations of languages across these families. Second, we will employ telehealth as a central methodological tool. While telehealth has already been used in language research, typically with small samples, we aim to explore its potential for systematic and larger-scale data collection. Third, rather than relying solely on monolingual norms, the establishment of impairment thresholds will also consider distributions observed within bilingual samples and participants' self-reported language dominance.

Taken together, these steps aim to contribute new empirical evidence to the ongoing discussion on how DLD can best be assessed in bilingual children, and to explore the role that language dominance may play in this process.