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Disentangling bilingualism and language impairment in Italian L2 children: good practices

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The present article discusses the interplay between bilingualism and Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), i.e., a neurodevelopmental disorder that negatively affects children's language expressive and comprehension abilities. Given the close resemblance between the developmental language trajectories of typically developing L2 children and language-impaired children, the risk of confounding a delayed yet normal development with a language disorder in the L2 population is very high. The current study discusses assessment tools and good practices that (Italian) school educators and health practitioners could adopt to disentangle these two dimensions early and accurately. It also reviews studies showing the 'protective' effects of bilingualism on DLD and, in this light, emphasizes the relevance of home language maintenance for a harmonic and complete bilingual development of L2 children with and without language impairments.