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[Review](#) [Brain Sci.](#) 2021 May 17;11(5):654. doi: 10.3390/brainsci11050654.

Developmental Language Disorder: Early Predictors, Age for the Diagnosis, and Diagnostic Tools. A Scoping Review

Alessandra Sansavini ^{1 2}, Maria Elena Favilla ³, Maria Teresa Guasti ⁴, Andrea Marini ^{5 6}, Stefania Millepiedi ⁷, Maria Valeria Di Martino ⁸, Simona Vecchi ⁹, Nadia Battajon ¹⁰, Laura Bertolo ¹¹, Olga Capirci ¹², Barbara Carretti ¹³, Maria Paola Colatei ¹⁴, Cristina Frioni ¹⁵, Luigi Marotta ¹⁶, Sara Massa ¹⁷, Letizia Michelazzo ¹⁸, Chiara Pecini ¹⁹, Silvia Piazzalunga ²⁰, Manuela Pieretti ¹⁸, Pasquale Rinaldi ¹², Renata Salvadorini ²¹, Cristiano Termine ²², Mariagrazia Zuccarini ¹, Simonetta D'Amico ^{2 23}, Anna Giulia De Cagno ¹⁸, Maria Chiara Levorato ^{2 24}, Tiziana Rossetto ¹⁸, Maria Luisa Lorusso ²⁵

Affiliations

PMID: 34067874 PMCID: [PMC8156743](#) DOI: [10.3390/brainsci11050654](#)

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Abstract

Background: Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is frequent in childhood and may have long-term sequelae. By employing an evidence-based approach, this scoping review aims at identifying (a) early predictors of DLD; (b) the optimal age range for the use of screening and diagnostic tools; (c) effective diagnostic tools in preschool children.

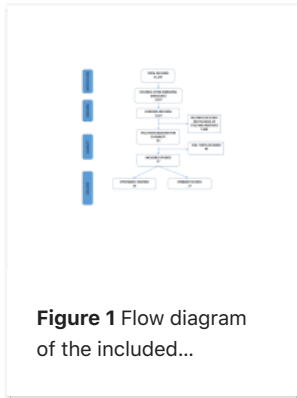
Methods: We considered systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and primary observational studies with control groups on predictive, sensitivity and specificity values of screening and diagnostic tools and psycholinguistic measures for the assessment of DLD in preschool children. We identified 37 studies, consisting of 10 systematic reviews and 27 primary studies.

Results: Delay in gesture production, receptive and/or expressive vocabulary, syntactic comprehension, or word combination up to 30 months emerged as early predictors of DLD, a family history of DLD appeared to be a major risk factor, and low socioeconomic status and environmental input were reported as risk factors with lower predictive power. Optimal time for screening is suggested between age 2 and 3, for diagnosis around age 4. Because of the high variability of sensitivity and specificity values, joint use of standardized and psycholinguistic measures is suggested to increase diagnostic accuracy.

Conclusions: Monitoring risk situations and employing caregivers' reports, clinical assessment and multiple linguistic measures are fundamental for an early identification of DLD and timely interventions.

Keywords: age of assessment; developmental language disorder; diagnostic tools; early predictors; evidence-based medicine; language delay; late talkers; screening tools.

Figures



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