

Questionnaire for the Detection of Language and/or Literacy Difficulties in bi-/multilingual settings (4-6 years old)

Talli I., Theodorou E., Mouti A., Commissaire E., Tougiountzi V., Papastefanou T. & Stavrakaki S. (2025)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

Purpose

The “Questionnaire for the Detection of Language and/or Learning Difficulties in bi-/multilingual settings” aims to identify bi-/multilingual students who may be at risk of language and/or learning difficulties. The skills assessed cover the following domains: Oral Language Comprehension, Oral Language Production, Phonological Awareness, Written Language Production, Communication Skills, as well as other Cognitive Skills (memory and attention). These domains were selected based on scientific literature, which documents the most common characteristics observed in bilingual or multilingual students with language and/or learning difficulties.

This tool has been designed for use in the everyday school context by teachers working with preschool students. Through this questionnaire, teachers can identify students at risk and adapt their educational interventions according to the needs of each child.

Administration Requirements

The questionnaire is completed by the teacher, who answers the questions based on their observations of the child in the classroom. It is important that the teacher knows the student well. If the teacher cannot answer certain questions due to limited information, they may collect additional data from parents/guardians or from other professionals who know the child (e.g., speech-language therapists, child psychologists).

The questionnaire should only be administered after other factors that could account for the observed difficulties have been ruled out, such as:

- Presence of another neurodevelopmental disorder
- Sensory impairments (e.g., vision or hearing problems)
- Neurological conditions (e.g., consequences of brain injury)
- Disorders of intellectual development
- Lack of educational opportunities
- Psychosocial trauma

Completing the Questionnaire

On the first page, the student's basic information (name, age, grade) is recorded, and the languages the student knows are listed, ranked according to degree of dominance and frequency of use. Responses to the questionnaire should be given based on this linguistic information.

On the next page, the child's language history is recorded. Questions regarding language use in the home environment, age of first exposure, language preferences, and the duration of daily interaction provide crucial information for interpreting the results. Particularly important is the question concerning the time when potential difficulties were first identified, as this helps distinguish between typical bilingual development and a genuine language and/or learning difficulty.

Next follow the questions for each domain: Oral Language Comprehension, Oral Language Production, Phonological Awareness, Communication Skills, Written Language Production, and other Cognitive Skills (memory and attention). Each question is rated on a Likert scale from 0 to 4.

At the end, there are two open-ended questions for recording additional observations (e.g., behavioral or socio-emotional difficulties), which contribute to a more comprehensive interpretation of the results.



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Child's Full Name		Examiner's Full Name	
Date of Completion		Examination Framework	
Child's Date of Birth		Mother's Academic Background	
Child's Age		Father's Academic Background	
Child's Grade Level			

Purpose: This questionnaire is designed to detect learning and/or language difficulties in bilingual/multilingual children aged 4-6 years. It assesses Oral Language Comprehension, Oral and Written Language Production, Phonological Awareness, Communication Skills and other Cognitive Skills (memory and attention).

Instructions for Completion: The questionnaire is addressed to preschool teachers and its completion takes approximately 10 minutes. Each question should be answered using a Likert scale from 0 to 4, where: 0 = Never, 1 = Rarely, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Always.

Teachers should respond based on their observations of the child in the school setting or from information provided by parents and/or colleagues. They should select the word that best reflects the frequency or intensity of the observed behavior. In cases where they don't have sufficient information to answer accurately, they can be informed from parents or choose the answer "I don't know".

Below, please list all the languages spoken by the child, in order of dominance/frequency of use. Depending on what you indicate for each language, you will answer the corresponding questions in the questionnaire.

Language 1: _____ Language 3: _____
 Language 2: _____ Language 4: _____

Comments/Clarifications: By "Language 1," we refer to the language the child was exposed to, usually from birth, and is primarily used in the family environment (similar terms: First Language, Mother Tongue, Heritage Language, Family Language). "Language 2" is considered the language the child was exposed to either simultaneously or after Language 1 and is typically used in specific settings, such as at school or with friends (similar terms: Second Language, Environment Language, School Language). Finally, "Language 3" and/or "Language 4" refer to other languages the child is exposed to, usually not used in daily communication (e.g., through tutoring or additional lessons).

Child's History					
Which language does the child speak with the people around them?	Mother	Father	Rest of the family (grandparents, cousins)	Friends	School
Language 1					
Language 2					
Language 3					
Language 4					
From what age was the child exposed to each language?	0-1 years old	1-2 years old	2-3 years old	3-4 years old	4-5 years old
Language 1					
Language 2					
Language 3					
Language 4					
If there are difficulties, when were they identified in each language?	0-1 years old	1-2 years old	2-3 years old	3-4 years old	4-5 years old
Language 1					
Language 2					
Language 3					
Language 4					
Which language does the child use most comfortably with each person in their environment?	Mother	Father	Rest of the family (grandparents, cousins)	Friends	School

Language 1					
Language 2					
Language 3					
Language 4					
How many hours per day on average does the child get exposed to and interact with others in each language?	1-3 hours	3-5 hours	5-7 hours	7-9 hours	9-12 hours
Language 1					
Language 2					
Language 3					
Language 4					

Oral Language Comprehension						
1. The child has difficulty distinguishing between speech sounds.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						
Language 2						
Language 3						
Language 4						
2. The child has difficulty understanding the meaning of complex and/or multi-syllable words.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						

Language 2						
Language 3						
Language 4						
3. The child struggles to comprehend oral sentences at a fast speaking rate.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						
Language 2						
Language 3						
Language 4						
4. The child has difficulty understanding instructions that involve two or more steps.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						
Language 2						
Language 3						
Language 4						
5. The child has difficulty answering comprehension questions related to a short story they have listened to.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						
Language 2						
Language 3						
Language 4						
6. The child understands a limited number of words compared to their classmates.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						
Language 2						
Language 3						

Language 4						
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Oral Language Comprehension	Language 1	Language 2	Language 3	Language 4
Total Score				
Mean Score ($\div 6$)				

Oral Language Production						
7. The child engages in code-switching when speaking (alternating between two languages within a sentence or more generally when communicating with one person). If yes, are the sentences they use grammatically correct?	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						
Language 2						
Language 3						
Language 4						
8. The child has difficulty producing speech sounds.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						
Language 2						
Language 3						
Language 4						

9. The child has difficulty producing complex and/or multi-syllable words.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						
Language 2						
Language 3						
Language 4						
10. The child has difficulty producing grammatically correct sentences.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						
Language 2						
Language 3						
Language 4						
11. The child struggles to recall the right words in everyday communication or in other contexts (e.g. picture, book description) when expressing themselves.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						
Language 2						
Language 3						
Language 4						
12. The child uses a limited number of words to express themselves compared to their classmates.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						
Language 2						
Language 3						
Language 4						

13. The child has difficulty repeating simple sentences.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						
Language 2						
Language 3						
Language 4						
14. The child has difficulty answering open-ended questions and prefers to respond with one-word answers.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						
Language 2						
Language 3						
Language 4						
15. The child has difficulty telling his own story (e.g., how he spent the Weekend).	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						
Language 2						
Language 3						
Language 4						
16. The child has difficulty retelling a short story they have listened to in their own words.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	I don't know
Language 1						
Language 2						
Language 3						
Language 4						

Oral Language Production	Language 1	Language 2	Language 3	Language 4
Total Score				
Mean Score ($\div 10$)				

Phonological Awareness					
17. The child has difficulty identifying the initial syllable of a word.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Language 1					
Language 2					
Language 3					
Language 4					
18. The child has difficulty dividing words into syllables.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Language 1					
Language 2					
Language 3					
Language 4					
19. The child has difficulty combining syllables to form words.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Language 1					
Language 2					
Language 3					
Language 4					

Phonological Awareness	Language 1	Language 2	Language 3	Language 4
Total Score				
Mean Score ($\div 3$)				

Communication Skills					
20. The child has difficulty taking the initiative to express themselves spontaneously (e.g., in class, with classmates, etc.).	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Language 1					
Language 2					
Language 3					
Language 4					
21. The child has difficulty communicating with others (e.g., classmates, teachers, etc.).	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Language 1					
Language 2					
Language 3					
Language 4					

Communication Skills	Language 1	Language 2	Language 3	Language 4
Total Score				

Mean Score ($\div 2$)				
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Written Language Production					
22. The child has difficulty writing their name correctly.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Language 1					
Language 2					
Language 3					
Language 4					
23. The child has difficulty holding the pencil correctly.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
24. The child has difficulty copying shapes.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

Written Language Production	Language 1	Language 2	Language 3	Language 4
Total Score				
Mean Score ($\div 3$)				

Other Cognitive Skills					
25. The child has difficulty repeating a sequence of words/numbers (4-5 words/numbers).	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Language 1					
Language 2					
Language 3					
Language 4					
26. The child has difficulty memorizing songs and poems.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Language 1					
Language 2					
Language 3					
Language 4					
27. The child has difficulty memorizing and following a sequence of instructions (2 or more).	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Language 1					
Language 2					
Language 3					
Language 4					
28. The child has difficulty maintaining attention in school activities and/or during play.	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Language 1					
Language 2					
Language 3					
Language 4					

Other Cognitive Skills	Language 1	Language 2	Language 3	Language 4
Total Score				
Mean Score ($\div 4$)				

Are you aware of any language difficulties in the child's family?

Additional comments on the child's behavior that you wish to mention (e.g., attention difficulties, impulsivity, hyperactivity, social/emotional difficulties, interest for communication, problem-solving difficulties, etc.):

CONCLUSIONS

SCORING AND INTERPRETATION GUIDELINES

1. CONVERTING RESPONSES INTO NUMERICAL VALUES

Response	Value
Never	0
Rarely	1
Sometimes	2
Often	3
Always	4
<i>I don't know</i>	Blank / Excluded from calculation

2. CALCULATING DOMAIN SCORES

For each domain and each language, calculate:

Domain Score = (Sum of scores) / (Number of completed items)

(Responses marked “I don't know” are excluded from the calculation, resulting in a mean score ranging from 0–4).

DOMAIN	Questions	Language 1	Language 2	Language 3/4
Oral Language Comprehension	1–6			
Oral Language Production	7–16			
Phonological Awareness	17–19			
Communication Skills	20–21			
Written Language Production	22–24			
Other Cognitive Skills	25–28			

3. OVERALL RISK INDEX PER LANGUAGE

MEAN SCORE	RISK LEVEL	RECOMMENDED ACTION
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0.0 – 1.0	Low Risk	Within normal limits
1.1 – 2.0	Medium Risk	Monitoring or discussion with parents
2.1 – 4.0	High Risk	Referral for further evaluation

4. IDENTIFICATION OF LANGUAGE / LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Before drawing conclusions, we need to examine whether the difficulties appear in one or in multiple languages, as this significantly affects the interpretation of the results.

If a score > 2.0 appears in two or more languages → This is a strong indication (red flag) of a neurodevelopmental language disorder. A genuine language disorder is not limited to a single language; it appears consistently across all languages used by the child. In this case, referral for specialized assessment is recommended.

If difficulties appear only in Language 2 → Do not rush to conclude that a disorder is present. This pattern is often completely typical and reflects the normal process of second language acquisition. Children learning a new language are expected to make more errors and struggle with complex structures, without this necessarily indicating a disorder.

Take the child's language history into account → Scores should always be interpreted together with information such as: when exposure to each language began, how many hours per day the child is exposed to each language, and the linguistic environment at home and at school. A child who was exposed to a language recently should not be evaluated using the same criteria as a child who has grown up bilingual from birth.

5. FINAL DECISION — WHEN REFERRAL IS RECOMMENDED

Referral is recommended if **at least one** of the following conditions applies:

- **Domain Score > 2.0 in two or more domains — in both (or more) spoken languages**
This criterion applies only when high scores appear in the same domain (or multiple domains) simultaneously across more than one language. If a score > 2.0 appears only in one language, this alone does not indicate a disorder and most likely reflects the typical course of language learning. What is concerning is the pattern where the difficulties “follow” the child across two or more languages, suggesting that the issue is not related to a particular language but to the child's overall language system.
- **Difficulties in memory and/or attention**
Difficulties in working memory (e.g., difficulty remembering instructions or sequences of words) and sustained attention are often associated with language and learning disorders. Their presence strengthens the need for further evaluation, regardless of scores in other domains.
- **High exposure to the majority language / school language**
When a child is mainly or exclusively exposed to the school language and still shows

significant difficulties, limited exposure can no longer be used as an explanation. In this case, the difficulties warrant specialized assessment.

When interpreting the results, it is important to also consider the information obtained from the “History” domain. The child’s skills should not be evaluated based on a single score, but rather on the pattern of difficulties across different domains and languages.

References

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