

## CLD Corner: Q&A for the CLD Experts

The CLD Corner is a regular column written by members of the TSHA Task Force on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity.

### Are developmental norms different for a bilingual child?

The question can be interpreted in two ways: first, in considering norms for acquisition of language, and second, in analyzing norms derived for standardized tests. Developmental norms may vary for the bilingual child, and there are many variables to consider such as simultaneous language learners and sequential language learners. We must keep in mind standardized assessments are normed on specific populations.

Developmental norms need to be *interpreted* differently for a bilingual child because norms for a "bilingual" child do not exist. We do know that language development varies and is dependent on the amount of exposure to each language. Bilingualism is classified as either sequential or simultaneous. Sequential bilingualism occurs when an individual has had significant exposure to a second language after the first language is well established. The child is likely to have developed first words, sentence combinations, appropriate grammar and vocabulary, as expected. Developmental norms for the native language would apply. Simultaneous bilingualism occurs when a young child has had significant exposure to two languages before one language is well established. In this case, these children generally do not have any difficulties in comprehension of either language but may express themselves in only one language initially. Language milestones then develop as expected in regards to initial vocabulary, number of words, and word combinations. Errors common to second language learners are to be expected. These errors are a result of the differences between the languages and are not indicative of a language disorder.

### RESOURCE:

Goldstein, B. (Ed.). (2004). *Bilingual language development and disorders in Spanish-English speakers*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

CLD questions may be sent to [slaustin@cebridge.net](mailto:slaustin@cebridge.net). Current task force members are **Becky Gonzalez, M.S., Lynette Austin, M.A., Jennifer Watson, Ph.D., Gina Glover, M.S., Gail Totten, M.A., Dolores Castor, M.A., Cynthia Garcia, M.A., Marie Belgodere, M.S., Michelle Leos, M.A., and Diana Gonzales, Ph.D.**

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