

Differential diagnosis is the distinguishing of a particular condition from other conditions that present similar clinical features. The differential diagnosis of 'Developmental Language Disorder' (DLD) from 'Language Disorder associated with {X}' is made based on the presence of differentiating conditions. This scenario focuses on existing conditions that might be considered differentiating vs. co-occurring.

Child referred to SLP/SALT services (see DLD Diagnostics [vol. 1](#))
SLP/SALT assessment results consistent with Language Disorder

Child has been diagnosed with another existing condition relevant to language performance or development

Child has no other diagnosed condition relevant to language performance or development

See DLD Diagnostics [vol. 1 & 2](#)

Diagnostic Scenario

The pattern of impairments commonly associated with the existing condition does not include language disorder, however, the existing condition is likely to impact language performance

The existing condition is a differentiating condition, that is, a biomedical condition in which a language disorder can occur as part of a complex pattern of impairments

Diagnostic Decision

Provide diagnosis of DLD co-occurring with existing condition

Provide diagnosis of Language Disorder associated with {biomedical condition}

Co-occurring conditions relevant to language performance include impairments in cognitive, sensori-motor, or behavioural domains

Differentiating biomedical conditions might include an associated language disorder as a primary (direct) or secondary (associated) symptom.

Conditions co-occurring with DLD:

The associated language disorder is potentially different from DLD (in one or more ways):

- are not the clear or obvious cause of the language disorder
- can affect pattern of impairment
- can affect response to intervention
- include attentional, motor, reading, spelling, speech, adaptive, behavioural, or emotional difficulties

- a clear genetic aetiology
- a different prognosis than DLD
- requires a distinctive intervention approach (or might with further research)
- some of the language limitations might be qualitatively different from DLD¹

Nonexhaustive List of co-occurring conditions

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)
- Auditory Processing Disorder (APD)
- Developmental Dyslexia
- Speech Sound Disorder
- Specific Learning Disability
- Terms describing below average cognitive ability not in the Intellectual Disability range (e.g., Borderline Intellectual Functioning; Mild Intellectual Disability)

Nonexhaustive List of differentiating conditions

- Brain injury
- Sensory-neural hearing loss
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Intellectual Disability
- Cerebral Palsy
- Acquired epileptic aphasia in childhood
- Genetic conditions with known impacts on language development (e.g., Down Syndrome)
- Neurodegenerative diseases with known impacts on language development (e.g., Rett Syndrome)

Further Information on Co-existing Conditions

Note: 1 – Refer to dldandme.org/signs-of-dld. Also, see Bishop et al. (2017) CATALISE Study 2, JCPP, 58, 1068, [doi: 10.1111/jcpp.12721](https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12721); Visser-Bochane et al. (2016) Atypical speech & language development, IJLCD, 52, 10, doi.org/10.1111/1460-6984.12251