

December 11, 2018

## OFFICIAL STATEMENT FROM SPEECH-LANGUAGE & AUDIOLOGY CANADA (SAC)

### Childhood Language Disorder

***Speech-Language & Audiology Canada (SAC) recommends speech-language pathology members and communication health assistant associates support the promotion and implementation of the CATALISE consortium consensus statements on identification criteria and terminology for childhood language disorder.***

[Speech-language pathologists](#) (S-LPs) have primary responsibility for identifying, assessing and providing interventions to assist children experiencing problems with language development. Approximately 10% of children have a language disorder at school entry (Norbury et al., 2016). Inconsistent terminology and definitions for childhood language disorder have hindered communication among professionals, access to appropriate speech-language pathology services and research progress, as well as attempts to raise awareness of the disorder among the general public (Dockrell, Lindsay, Letchford, & Mackie, 2006; Reilly, Bishop, & Tomblin, 2014).

In 2015-16, the Criteria and Terminology Applied to Language Impairments: Synthesising the Evidence (CATALISE) consortium, an international panel of experts in language development and disorder, came together to reach consensus on identification criteria and terminology for childhood language disorder. The resulting consensus statements are available as two open access papers (Bishop, Snowling, Thompson, Greenhalgh and The CATALISE Consortium, 2016, 2017). The CATALISE consortium restricted its focus to the English-language; similar studies are not yet available for the French-language.

In its [first paper](#), the CATALISE consortium agreed on criteria for identifying children who might benefit from speech-language pathology services, provided suggestions for language assessment and discussed the co-occurrence of other developmental difficulties (Bishop et al., 2016). In its [second paper](#), the CATALISE consortium recommended the umbrella term ‘language disorder’ for language problems that affect educational and/or social functioning, and are likely to persist into middle childhood and beyond. ‘[Developmental language disorder](#)’ (DLD) is the preferred term for language disorder not associated with a known biomedical cause. (For a variety of reasons discussed in the [second paper](#), the CATALISE consortium does not recommend use of the term ‘specific language impairment’ (SLI).) Where the language disorder is part of a complex pattern of impairments occurring in the context of a biomedical condition, ‘language disorder associated with (a biomedical condition)’ should be used (Bishop et al., 2017).

## Practice Context

Given the key role that S-LPs have in the identification, assessment and management of childhood language disorder, S-LPs are encouraged to lead promotion and implementation of the CATALISE consortium's recommendations. However, taking into account the variety of speech-language pathology practice environments across Canada, SAC members and associates should be guided by the research evidence and their professional judgment when adopting these recommended changes. Changes in practice should be sensitive to the needs of children receiving speech-language pathology services and their families. Consideration should also be given to the interprofessional context in which SAC members and associates work.

Additional research on assessment and intervention approaches for childhood language disorder is needed, including studies to advance our understanding of DLD (Bishop et al., 2016, 2017; Bishop, 2017). *L'Ordre des Orthophonistes et Audiologistes du Québec* has promoted the use of new terminology, but initial translations have identified differences in French-language terms for DLD: [\*trouble développemental du langage is used\*](#) in Québec and *trouble du développement du langage* is used in France, Belgium and Ontario. Research to develop consensus statements on identification criteria and terminology in the French-language is of particular importance to SAC members and associates.

## References

- Bishop, D. V. (2017). Why is it so hard to reach agreement on terminology? The case of developmental language disorder (DLD). *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, 52(6), 671-680.
- Bishop, D. V., Snowling, M. J., Thompson, P. A., Greenhalgh, T., & The CATALISE Consortium. (2016). [CATALISE: A multinational and multidisciplinary Delphi consensus study. Identifying language impairments in children.](#) *PLoS One*, 11(7), e0158753.
- Bishop, D. V., Snowling, M. J., Thompson, P. A., Greenhalgh, T., & The Catalise-2 Consortium. (2017). [Phase 2 of CATALISE: A multinational and multidisciplinary Delphi consensus study of problems with language development: Terminology.](#) *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 58(10), 1068-1080.
- Dockrell, J. E., Lindsay, G., Letchford, B., & Mackie, C. (2006). Educational provision for children with specific speech and language difficulties: Perspectives of speech and language therapy service managers. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, 41(4), 423-440.
- Norbury, C. F., Gooch, D., Wray, C., Baird, G., Charman, T., Simonoff, E., ... & Pickles, A. (2016). The impact of nonverbal ability on prevalence and clinical presentation of language disorder: Evidence from a population study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 57(11), 1247-1257.

Reilly, S., Bishop, D. V., & Tomblin, B. (2014). Terminological debate over language impairment in children: Forward movement and sticking points. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, 49(4), 452-462.

### About SAC

**Speech-Language & Audiology Canada (SAC)** is a member-driven organization that supports and promotes the professions of more than 6,500 members and associates. We are the only national organization passionately supporting and representing speech-language pathologists, audiologists and communication health assistants inclusively. Through this support, we champion the needs of people with communication disorders. Visit [www.sac-oac.ca](http://www.sac-oac.ca) to learn more.

#### Media Inquiries:

Emily Banzet

Email: [emily@sac-oac.ca](mailto:emily@sac-oac.ca)

Tel: 613-567-9968

