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Book Review. No Easy Answers: Bilingualism or Language Delay?

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Book Review.

No Easy Answers: Bilingualism or Language Delay?

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A bewildering question that all bilingual teachers face is how to address language delay or impairment in bilingual learners. When is referral appropriate? What characteristics and factors have to be considered in the evaluation process? In the following book review by Dr. Catherine Crowley, it is made clear that distinguishing language delays from the process of acquiring a new language is an arduous process. There are no simple "Yes" or "No" answers. There are no simple explanations. A child may be identified through various means, but the main one is teacher observation and intervention. A teacher can closely monitor the student's progress and adjust the intensity and nature of her teaching. But equally important is knowing the child's family history, the community in which the child's family is inserted, and the characteristics of the communicative interactions that the family and community employ.

A careful assessment demands a thoughtful understanding of the child's linguistic repertoire (including exposure and production of different linguistic registers and bidialectism), as well as cultural and socio economic factors. The interaction and impact of each of these factors has to be carefully considered in making clinical decisions that have the potential to maximize or weaken a bilingual child's development.