

Dr Samantha Weld-Blundell

Communication and interaction
in the under 5s.



**Child and Education
Psychology**

The Little Psychology Company

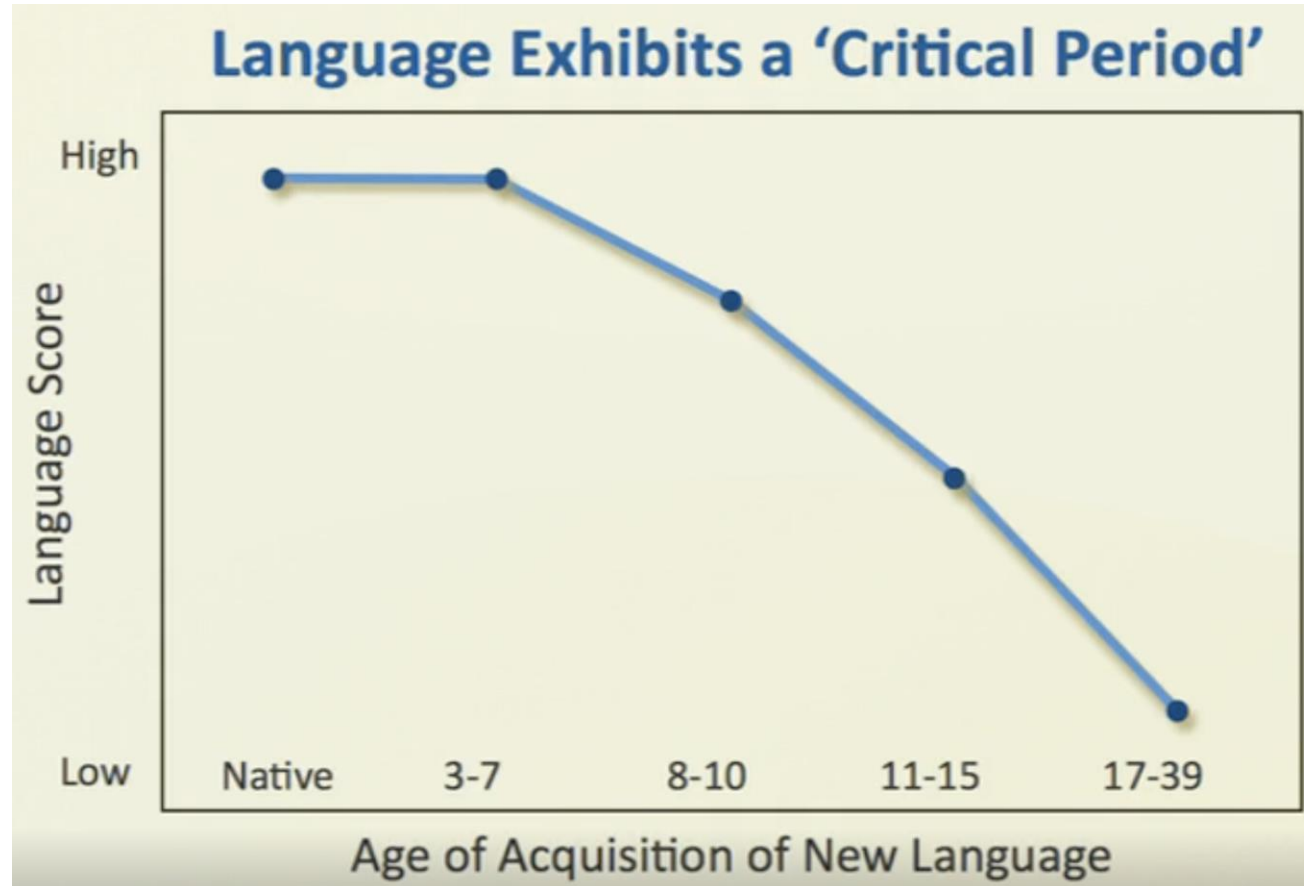
What to expect

- **What is language and why is it so important?**
- **Recipe for healthy brain and language development**
- **Language development**
- **Roles of the right and left brain hemispheres**
- **Plasticity**
- **Ages and stages**
- **Role of play and language**
- **Role of memory in language**
- **Pre-verbal language**
- **Voice of the child**
- **Speech, language and communication needs**
- **Supporting positive communication and interaction**
- **Summary**
- **Online resources**

What is language and why is it important?

- Speech, language and communication.....the difference in terminology used
- Language has a role in creating the world we experience
- Our use of complex language sets us apart from other animal species
- Human ability for elaborate language development may be due to the sophisticated social world we live in
- The speed at which language develops in the first few years of life is extraordinary

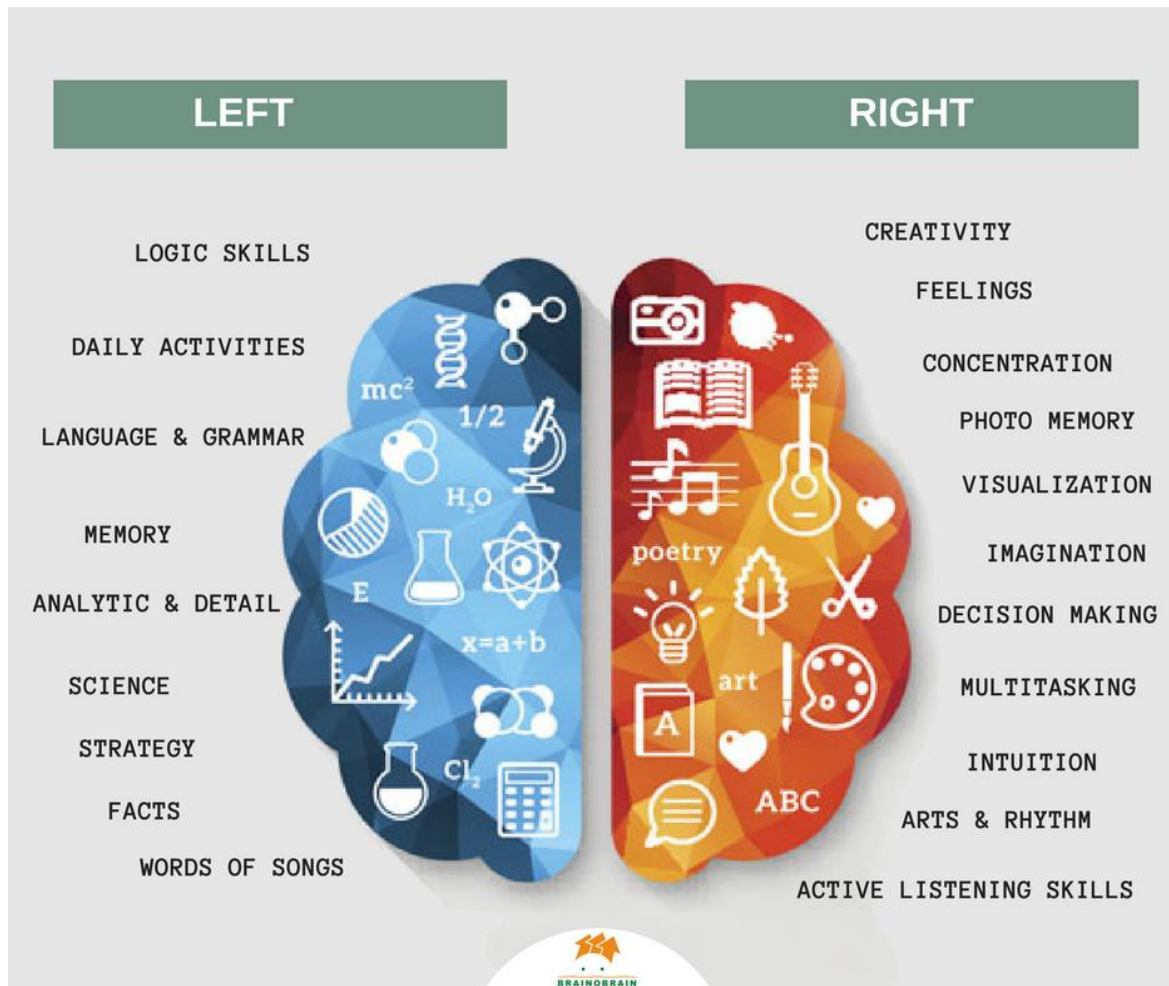
Language development



- How do children acquire an impressive vocabulary in a few years?
- How is it possible to learn more than one language from an early age?

Patricia Kuhl, The Linguistic Genius of Babies, TED Talk 2010

What is language and why is it important?



- The impact of the social world and the technological world on language development
- Right and left hemispheres of our brain

Language development

Our brain - What roles do our right and left hemisphere have in language development?

- The RH is dominant in social communication

Sign language – right or left hemisphere?

- Research shows that deaf individuals can use the right and left hemisphere when watching sign language, compared to hearing individuals listening to the same message

Brain plasticity:

- The developing human brain possesses a superior ability to (re)organise after acquired brain injury or damage
- Our brain has the most plasticity in the first five years of life and these early years provide wonderful opportunities for brain pathways to be formed, reinforced and for language and communication skills to develop

Recipe for healthy brain & language development

Healthy brain development depends on five things:

- Connecting
- Talking
- Playing
- A healthy home
- Community

There are also four components of language:

- Phonology
- Semantics
- Grammar
- Pragmatics

Language development stages

Ages and stages

- 18 months – 5-25 words
- 2 years – Increase in single word use, labelling and imitation and adults to understand 50%-60% of what the child is saying
- 3 years – Sentence development, increase in naming picture, talking about their own action (e.g., “I just went down the slide”) and able to answer questions. Adults to understand 70% of what the child is saying
- 4-5 Years – More advanced vocabulary, putting four to five words together, imitating what parents are saying to using that in conversation. Adults to understand 80-90% % of what the child is saying

Typically developing language and possible reasons
for concern

Role of play and interaction

- Play is the foundation of our children's development
- We are hard-wired to play
- Play helps us develop fundamental skills for later in life
- Cooperative play further enhances communication, enabling a child to learn from their peers. Play **enables children to practise the language skills they have learnt and build on their expanding vocabulary**. Interacting with adults and peers also enables children to refine their speech sounds through listening to others.

Role of memory in language development

Working memory:

- Limited capacity in storage and duration
- Rehearsal and applying knowledge is required to store it in long term memory

Long-term memory and the phonological loop:

- Using new language
- Processing it
- Applying it

Language store:

- Library in the back and a script at the front

Preverbal language

- The power of non-verbal communication – in some cases 93% of messages received and understood can be attributed to non-verbal communication
- 6 features on pre-verbal (non-verbal) communication have been identified in research:
 - Gesture
 - Body contact
 - Posture
 - Proxemics
 - Gaze
 - Facial expressions
- Methods of communicating with pre-verbal children in practice:
 - Sign Language and Makaton
 - Eye gaze
 - Choices board
 - Body language and facial expressions
 - Objects of reference
 - Visuals
 - Picture Exchange System (PECS)
 - Talking mats
 - Vocalizations/sounds/words
 - Technology (iPads/buttons)

Voice of the child

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can be thought of in four areas; communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social, emotional and mental health; and sensory and/or physical needs

- *Metaphorically speaking*, a child's voice can represent the current landscape of childhood studies, such as children's rights, participation, social inequality, perspectives inclusivity or autonomy.
- *Physiologically speaking*, the meaning of voice that relates to aspects of the anatomy that produces vocalisations and sounds.
- Jersey, UK and global policies and legislation agree that all children have the right for their views and opinions to be heard and included in the decision made. BUT HOW? The responsibility is on the adults to engage in creative and developmentally appropriate ways of facilitating children's communication.

[Weld-Blundell, S. \(2017\). How Can Practitioners Develop Methods of Hearing the Voices of Pre-Verbal Children in Early Years with Complex Needs? \(Professional Doctorate\). UEL.](#)

Voice of the child

Methods

- Joint attention
- Symbol use
- Learning support
- Interpersonal support
- Facial expressions
- Eye contact
- P-V vocalisations
- Gestures
- Verbal vocalisations
- Providing opportunities
- Imitating behaviour/noises
- Interpretating/understanding message
- Activities and interaction
- Song rhythm and tune
- Technology
- Books and pictures
- Visuals

Framework

Individual

- Knowledge of the Child's SEND

Micro-system

- The role of the communication partner
- Shared understanding and joint attentional frame

Meso-System

- Multi-method and multi-sensory
- Approaches
- Observation
- Motivation

Technology

- Setting and environments
- Child centred language

Exo-System

- Ethos of educational setting

Macro-system

- Ethnicity and Culture

Supporting positive communication and interaction

- Get down on your child's level – Ensures you are both looking and talking about the same thing
- Use eye contact and ensure you have their attention before giving an instruction
- Verbal commentary – Comment on what you are both doing and looking at
- Model words correctly – Listen and repeat back what they say, filling in missing words and using clear speech
- LASS – Language Acquisition Support System – Scaffolding Language
- Give choices – Holding the objects “Do you want an orange or a banana?”
- Share books, songs, rhymes and encourage actions and sing along
- Follow your child's lead in play – reduce the urge to direct and correct
- Have fun and play – Try at least 10 minutes a day
- Use language you want your children to use and label the behaviours you would like to see more of e.g., reinforcing “Please can I have another grape?” and “Feet on the floor please.” rather than, “Don't put your feet on the chair.”

Supporting positive communication and interaction

- Talking about the experiences
- Repeat and revise new information
- Use imagery to support auditory information and auditory memory
- Wrap previous knowledge around new knowledge to help make meaningful connections:
 - When have you done something like this before? (Connecting to prior experience - time)
 - Where have you done that before to help you solve a problem? (Connecting to prior experience - place)
 - When is another time you needed to.....? (Prediction based on prior learning)
 - Can you think of another way we can do this? (Generating alternative strategies for problem solving)
 - What do you think the problem is? (Defining the problem)
 - Let's make a plan so we don't miss anything (Developing planning behaviour)
 - Let's stop and look carefully at how you are doing (Reflecting on the process)
 - Can you tell me what you need to do next? (Planning and prediction)

Summary

- Language is fundamentally a system of symbols movements and signs to communicate with others
- The special period of our overall development as humans, especially our language, is in the first 5 years of life
- Play is fundamental to our language and interaction skills
- Allow time for talking, rehearsal, applying past experiences to new language in order to help store this to long-term memory
- Every interaction is an opportunity to support healthy brain and language development

Appendices

Online resources

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/tools-for-talking-18-24-months/zxdfp4j>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/tools-for-talking-2-3-years/zt7bydm>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/tools-for-talking-4-5-years/z3bmqfr>
- <https://ican.org.uk/>

Language development

Age	Stages of language development:	
0-12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceives speech of others Shows preference for human voices Cries frequently, showing some pitch variations Cries become differentiated to indicate different needs Cooing and gargling sounds Listening skills developing Laughs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises own name Can locate sounds with some accuracy Understands 'no' Babbling (ba-ba-ba) Tries to say ma-ma and da-da Uses actions and gestures Tries to mimic sounds Enjoys language games
1-2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Words Answers questions non-verbally Uses one-word sentences Starts to form two-word sentences Vocabulary grows to 50 words Asks for common foods by name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes animal sounds Uses pronouns e.g., mine Repeats words of interest Naming words Enjoyment and participation in language games

Language development

Age	Stages of Language development:
2-3 years	Use of W questions Spatial concepts such as in and on Pronoun use e.g., you, me and her Knows descriptive words e.g., big, happy Uses question inflection Uses plurals Three-word sentences
4-5 years	Copes with four to five-word sentences Increased use of pragmatics Applies language rules in speech Increases use of why questions

Play and language development

Age Range	Play Descriptions	Language Descriptions
0-10 months	Explorations of immediate environment. Holding different shapes and banging them on a surface	Using gestures and sounds to communicate
9-15 months	Relating one object to another in play Putting one brick on top of another	Able to produce varied patterns of sound
11-18 months	Use of pretend actions as parts of stories and rhymes	First words
12-30 months	Pretend actions that involve other people or objects (e.g., dolls, puppets)	Simple combinations
19-36 months	Play sequences that involve others and modelling/construction	Short sentences of 3, 4 and 5 words

Common features of speech, language and communication needs

Difficulties with speech sounds

- Muscle's weakness that produce the speech sounds
- Rain signals to make the speech sounds
- Phonological difficulties

Difficulties in understanding others

- Listening and attention
- Auditory processing and auditory memory
- Understanding words and concepts - semantics
- Understanding sentences

- Memory

Difficulties with producing language

- Limited vocabulary
- Forming sentences

Difficulties with using language appropriately

- Rules of communication
- Non-verbal
- Conversational skills

Web Links

Weld-Blundell, S. (2017). *How Can Practitioners Develop Methods of Hearing the Voices of Pre-Verbal Children in Early Years with Complex Needs?* (Professional Doctorate). UEL.

<https://repository.uel.ac.uk/download/8feefb66aad657113a22cf835e17809bd599fb8ceb1324ea5835d975ef5ebea0/17553580/U1430391.pdf>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/tools-for-talking-18-24-months/zxdfp4j>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/tools-for-talking-2-3-years/zt7bydm>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/tools-for-talking-4-5-years/z3bmqfr>

<https://ican.org.uk/>