General information

What causes language disorders/delays?

There is little evidence to identify the cause of language problems. Genetics appear to play a part, since language difficulties often arise within multiple family members.

However, it is likely that other factors also play a part in the language development of appropriate language skills.

Suggested resources

Books

- Titch by Pat Hutchins
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle
- Who Sank the Boat by Pamela Allen
- Rosie’s Walk by Pat Hutchins
- Frog Goes to Dinner by Mayer
- Mr Grumpy’s Outing by John Birmingham
- Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak
- Hairy MaCary’s Bone by Lynley Dodd
- Mr Archimedes Bath by Pamela Allen
- Mr Grumpy’s Motor Car by John Birmingham
- The Bad Tempered Ladybird by Eric Carle

Websites

Please talk to your Speech Pathology student about great websites and resources to access for further information.

UQ Health & Rehabilitation Clinics
Speech Pathology Clinic

Phone: 07 3365 2232
Email: healthclinics@uq.edu.au
Web: www.uq.edu.au/healthclinics

If you have any concerns regarding your child’s language development:

1. Discuss concerns with your child’s Kindergarten or Preschool Teacher
2. Contact a Speech Pathologist in your local area.
What is language?

Children begin to learn language in early childhood as a result of interaction with others in their environment and their own natural abilities. First the child learns to understand what is said. This is known as receptive language or language comprehension. Then the child learns to speak and join words together. This is known as expressive language.

Language consists of three skills:

- the meaning and use of words
- the ability to structure and organise spoken/written language
- the use of language in social settings (eg to make requests, statements, greet people and express emotions).

Language difficulties may be present in any of these areas.

Encouraging language development

Following are some suggested strategies for encouraging language development. However, talk to your Speech Pathologist for specific strategies to meet your child's needs.

What you can do to help

- Always acknowledge, praise and encourage your child after they have spoken
- Remember to allow your child time to respond
- Read with your child. Discuss the story in the terms beginning, middle and end.
- Encourage descriptions and elaboration
- Develop your child's word knowledge by creating vocabulary lists related to themes (eg colours, body parts, the sea). Talk about features, definitions, determine opposites and include other related words
- Encourage your child to ask for an explanation if he or she does not understand what a word means
- Model correct grammatical structures (eg if he/she says "Yesterday he drawed" repeat back, "Oh, yesterday he drew"). Stress the target word.

Interacting with your child

To further encourage the development of your child's language, use the following strategy:

Observe: what your child is doing
Wait: for your child to respond
Listen: to what your child is saying.

The importance of answering questions

Questions are often useful to assist in the development of your child's language skills. As your child's language skills develop, so too will their ability to use and answer different types of questions.

You can ask your child questions when playing, reading books or during everyday situations (eg when shopping or driving).

Remember to use a variety of questions, such as:

- What is this?
- What is happening?
- Who? What? Where?
- What will happen next?
- Tell me how?
- Why will ...?
- What could she do?