

# How language develops in children

[Linguistics](#), [Language](#)



For every parent, language development in their children is a fundamental aspect that must be given importance as many parents are concerned about the progress of their children when it comes to learning to speak and to understanding words and their meanings. The child's communication skills are further developed through the interactions they have with other people. That's why parents must continually provide the interaction needed so that their children's progress is continuous and steady.

Language development is defined as the process in which young children understand and communicate language during early childhood. Rafanello says that it is acquired more quickly in the first five years of a baby's life (1). The amazing thing is that even before the baby is born, he can differentiate native language and other languages. This is because when they are still inside the womb, they hear and respond to familiar voices, especially the mother's.

An infant's brain goes through changes after birth. Trillions of pathways develop between brain cells, and these pathways will allow the baby to learn and think, and then talk, and whatever stimulation a baby has during the early years of his life will mold and strengthen these brain pathways. Caregivers of these babies, especially the parents, need not worry because there are so many opportunities for a child's language skills to be further enhanced. Rafanello added that the experiences of an infant with language in interaction with parents and other people around him will impact his overall development (1).

A baby communicates through facial expressions, coos, gestures and verbal cries. In the article “ Language Development in Children,” it says that even before a child can speak, he can understand words. It also adds that the language spoken to a baby from birth will enable him to comprehend the words and later on speak them. Language development in babies starts through gestures and facial expressions. Through these, a baby can express his comfort or discomfort, unpleasantness and even satisfaction. There will be words that will have emotional significance on a baby, and these are usually the words that he will pay attention to.

A study showed that as early as twenty-four weeks, an infant can differentiate between “ bah” and “ gah.” Another study showed that a month old infant can “ associate sucking behavior to the sounds of “ b” and “ p.” Later on in his life, he will learn to “ babble” and form his own language (“ Language Development in Children”).

It is of importance that parents talk to their children, as this stimulation with the language environment has value. It is said that a baby learns to connect words with his emotional experiences and this will provide him the motivation to talk, or to express his feelings through “ babbling.” As the baby grows, he will attempt to create sounds in trying to communicate with the people around him.

A study cited in the “ Language Development in Children” showed that when a person pronounces words very clearly to an infant, it will help the infant to understand. This is a very important measure of a baby’s language development so that he can comprehend words and their meanings. A baby

will also learn that his babbling will gain the attention of those who are around him.

Listening is an important step before a child can learn. When a baby listens to a lot of things, he can develop and expand his vocabulary and improve his IQ. This is also the result of a study of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). Aside from the larger vocabulary, a baby's language skills are more complex when they are raised in high-quality child care environment (Rafanello 1).

Moreover, “live” language can tremendously improve the language skills of child. To be able for children to comprehend language, they must hear it in association with what happens around them. Through this, language does not become merely noise.

Another important thing for a parent to remember is talking directly to the baby even before he can talk back. This facilitates understanding of a word or words that are spoken many times. The best and natural way for a baby to learn the meanings of words is talk to him in relation to what is happening. Actions and descriptions of objects or thoughts will also help the baby to associate words with them.

A study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) showed that a positive interaction is connected with language development. Furthermore, a child can learn better through language-based interactions with his parents or the people around him.

At times, a baby repeats a word many times, such as “ bah” in reference to the same object. When he grows, he learns to speak other sounds. For instance, a baby can make sounds when he is in his crib. When his mother approaches and talks to him, the baby’s sounds become frequent. This is a very significant step as it opens another opportunity for the speech development of a child. If a baby is stimulated, he will use his vocal cords many times. This also makes way for increased social stimulation from other people to him.

The following presents the language development of children at certain ages.

Even before birth, language development takes place, especially when a mother constantly talks to her unborn child. According to Alic, infants become familiar with the human voice. She adds that infants pay more attention to a human face, more importantly when it is talking. At infancy, babies either quiet down or smile when they are spoken to. Turning towards familiar sounds and voices are also characteristic of infants. Moreover, they communicate through chuckling, gurgling, whimpering and cooing. They can also produce sounds such as “ ohh” and “ ah.” They also communicate and express their needs through crying.

Between three and six months, an infant can show responses to changes in a tone of voice. He also learns how to vocalize his pleasure or displeasure. Moreover, he laughs, sighs, squeals, blows bubbles, babbles and sputters loudly to get the attention of people around him. He also learns to use gestures to communicate his desires. Additionally, he can cry differently if he is in pain or hungry. An infant this age can also shape his mouth to change

sounds. His new collection of vocabulary includes sounds such as “ b”, “ m” and “ p” (Alic).

Six to twelve months of age marks the most critical period for receptive language development. Receptive language development is the infant’s ability to comprehend language. During this age, an infant responds to their names. He also learns how to listen keenly to speech and other sounds. He expresses his moods through body language and sound. He can also play with sounds.

Aside from these, he can respond to friendly or angry tones and can repeat syllables. He also communicates through imitation of intonation or speech sounds. At this age, he uses his tongue to change sounds and babbles with as many as 12 sounds in a singsong pattern. He can also make long sounds (Alic). In his seventh month, an infant can vocalize syllables such as “ Dada” or “ Mama” (Child DevelopmentInstitute).

Rafanello added that at this stage, an infant’s babble has long and short group of sounds such as “ tata upup bibibibi.” His vocabulary now includes one or two new words such as “ bye-bye,” “ dada,” “ mama,” “ no,” or “ uh-oh” (6).

An infant between nine and 12 months can listen when he is spoken to. Moreover, he can give responses to simple requests. He also recognizes the names of hisfamilymembers and even the names of common objects. He also understands the word “ no.” He repeats sounds, exercises intonation, uses the words “ dada” and “ mama” for any person, connects voices and

names with people, makes use of sounds other than crying for their needs or to get attention, shouts and screams, knows their own names, understands gestures babbles two to three syllable repeated sounds.

By 12 and 18 months of age, a toddler can now use partial words, recognize names, laugh appropriately, use words that start with “ b,” “ c,” “ d,” and “ g,” make gestures and say “ no,” understand and follow directions, and ask for help using sounds and gestures. He can also use complete words and understand certain words, such as “ up,” “ down” and “ hot.” Moreover, a toddler this age learns to form sentences by putting two short words together.

This age also marks the toddler’s understanding of words associated for everything; their language development is steady. Alic says that the majority of a toddler’s first words are universal. They consist of names of foods or family members. By the age of 18 to 24 months, a toddler has a collection of 20 to 50 intelligible words. He can now say more words each month and put two words together such as “ more cookie” (Rafanello 6). His vocabulary also consists of nouns. He can follow simple commands and use two pronouns correctly. The pronouns I, me and you are commonly used. He also follows command such as “ show me your eyes.”

A two- to three-year old toddler is able to use short sentences to ask for things, and he has a word for almost everything. Those around him can understand his speech (Rafanello 6). His vocabulary now consists of 400 words, which include names. As early as this age, the toddler can repeat the

stories, songs or rhymes he hears. He can also describe his experiences through three- to five-word sentences.

By three to four years of age, a child can talk through sentences that have four or more words. If a child attends preschool, he can talk about the activities he does there. He can also converse with others and ask questions. At this age, he can use pronouns correctly. His collection of vocabulary is much bigger, usually consisting of 900 to 1, 000 words (Alic). At this age, a parent is suggested to communicate with his child through self-talk, which is another way of enhancing language development. The parent can start by telling his child “ I am picking up your toys.”

When a child is aged four or five, his language skills further develops. According to Rafanello, a child this age exhibits ease in communicating with adults and children. However, he may have difficulty with certain sounds, such as j, l, ch, r, s, sh, th, v, z. He has the ability to speak with lots of details (6). He can now describe things and has a better grasp of number and time concepts. Moreover, he knows things about himself, such as his age. His understanding of number concept includes counting from one to ten.

Language development can be further developed through continuous interaction with the people around the child. Language development can also be enriched when a child is exposed to an environment rich in language and language-based interaction. If a parent regularly reads and talks to his child, it can have an impact in the child’s ability to communicate with others.

However, a parent must remember that the ability of children to learn is not the same for everyone. While one child may show quick progress, such as forming a sentence, another may have problems dealing with speech or language delay. There are times when a child exhibits mild or temporary delays. These delays can affect about six percent of children. There are factors which can affect the delays. A child may be experiencing genetic disorders, hearing impairment or development disorders. The good thing is if these disorders are detected earlier, they can be treated or prevented in their early stages.

Although children show different rates when it comes to language development, it is best not to compare a child's language development with another. Parents must make sure that the language development of their children is steady, and not just fast or slow. They must also provide an environment where their children have a room to learn things. Aside from this, parents must assist their children's development in any way possible.

## **Works Cited**

1. Alic, Margaret. " Language Development." 2007. About. com. 9 December 2007 < >.
2. " Language Development in Children." Child Development Institute. 9 December 2007 .
3. Rafanello, Donna. " Facilitating Language Development." Healthy Child Care America, Summer 2000: 1-6.