EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

VIBRANT LANGUAGE

Identifying Preschoolers Who May Benefit from Speech-Language Therapy

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EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN PRESCHOOLERS

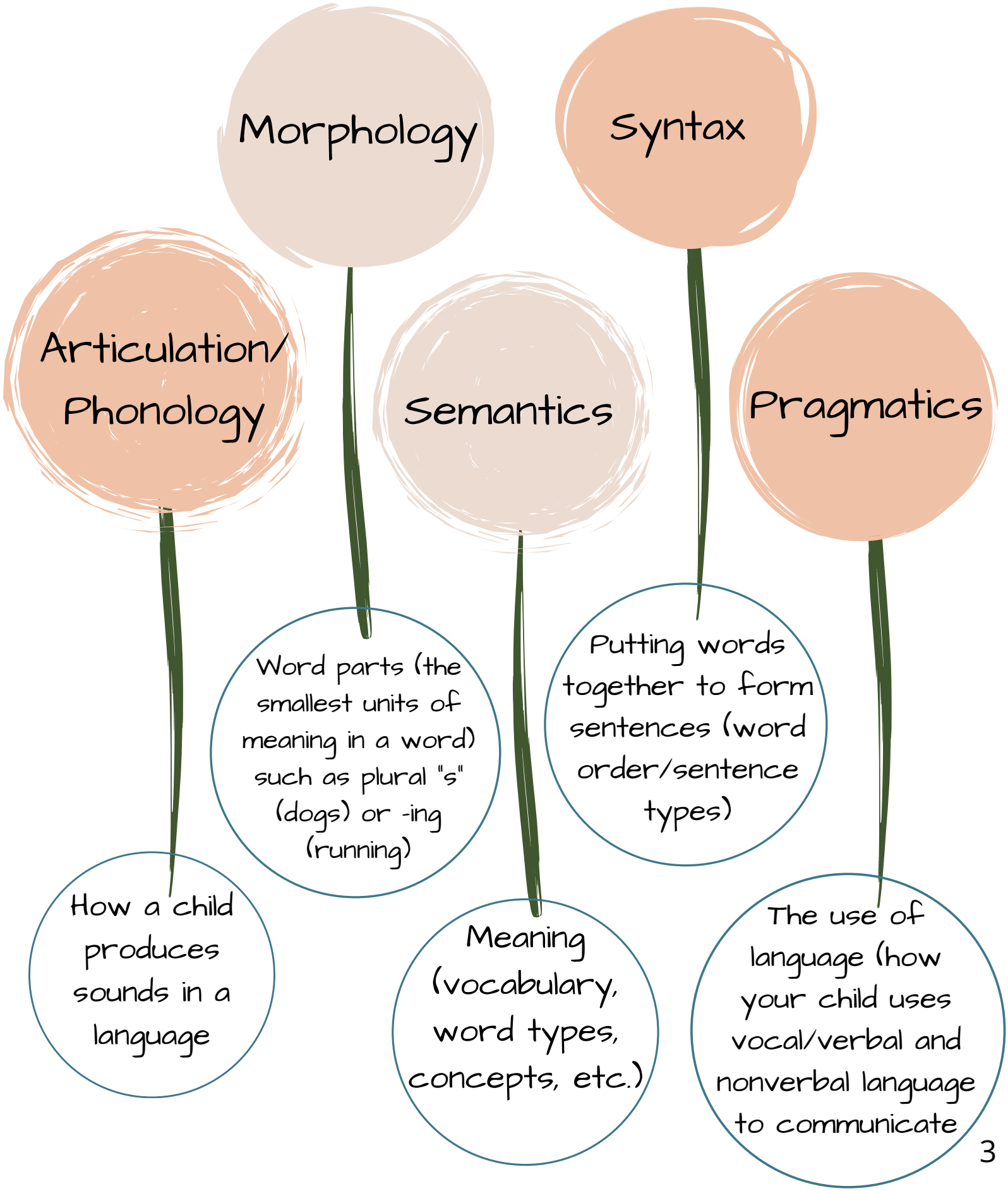
What Exactly is Expressive Language?

Language is made up of two major parts; receptive language (what we understand) and expressive language (what we say and communicate).

When you have an understanding of how expressive language develops, you will be able to:

- Make small changes and additions to your daily interactions with your child to encourage their expressive language development
- Understand how to identify when there may be a need for additional support from a speech-language pathologist.

The Five Parts of Language



Differences in Expressive Language Development

Expressive language development may look different for different children. As we examine their progress, we must ask ourselves, are they:

- Analytic Language Learners
- Gestalt Language Processors
- Multi-language Learners
- Neurodivergent Individuals

Please see the Glossary on page 12 for more in-depth descriptions of some of the terms above.

Expressive Language Development

2-3 Years Old

ANALYTIC LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Highlights

Articulation

Can say the sounds /b, n, m, p, h, w, d/ in words

Morphology

- Uses 's for possession (e.g. Mommy's car)
- Starts using articles such as "a" and "the"
- Starting to use present progressive and past tense verbs (e.g. painting/painted, playing/played)
- Starting to use plurals (e.g., dogs, horses)

Semantics

- Uses words to talk about location (i.e. "in," "on")
- Asks simple "who", "why", "where", "how many" questions
- Answers "where" and "what doing" questions

Syntax

- Sentences are 2-3 words
- Uses "be" verbs in sentences (e.g. I am happy)
- Uses words like "gonna," "wanna," "gotta", "hafta")
- Uses "is" plus and adjective (e.g. (The) tree is big!)
- Uses "no", "not", "can't", and "don't" as negation between subject and verb (e.g. Daddy can't play)

Pragmatics

- Short dialogues
- Introduces and change topics
- Expresses emotion
- Begins using language in imaginative ways
- Uses descriptive details to help others understand
- Uses attention-getting words like "hey"
- Clarifies and request clarification
- Symbolic play

Expressive Language Development

3-4 Years Old

ANALYTIC LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Highlights

Articulation

Can say the sounds /g, k, f, t, ŋ ("ng"), j (y")/ in words

Morphology

- Begins using Irregular plurals (e.g. "mice")
- Consistently uses contractions (e.g. can't, won't)
- Consistently uses possessive 's (e.g. Daddy's shirt)

Semantics

- Consistently uses pronouns (I, me, you, your, he, she, they)
- Uses basic kinship words
- Uses basic size vocabulary
- Tells two events in order
- Can answer "what if" questions
- Asks "how", "why", "when" questions
- Asks for detailed explanations

Syntax

- 3-5 word sentences
- Begins to use complex and compound sentences like "The cat is under the chair," or "I am tired and I want to go to sleep."
- Uses "are" with plural nouns (e.g. The cars are going fast)
- Starts to use "because"
- Begins to use 3rd person singular present tense (e.g. "he runs")

Pragmatics

- Starts to report on past events, reason, predict, express empathy, create imaginary roles, and maintain interactions
- Participates in longer dialogue
- Makes conversational repairs and corrects others
- Uses language for fantasies, jokes, and teasing
- Uses more indirect requests (e.g. "I am hungry" instead of "I want a cookie")

Expressive Language Development

4-5 Years Old

ANALYTIC LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Highlights

Articulation

Can say the sounds /v, dʒ ("j"), s, tʃ ("ch"), l, ʃ ("sh"), z/ in words

Morphology

- Uses uncontractible auxiliary (are they eating?) vs. they are (they're)
- Uses "be" verbs, regular past tense, and third person "s"
- Comparative "-er" is emerging (e.g. "bigger")

Semantics

- Asks for the meaning of words
- Starts using possessive pronouns (e.g. his, her, hers, their, etc.)
- Uses "could" and "would"

Syntax

- 4-8 word sentences
- Consistently uses basic sentence forms
- Makes frequent agreement errors between noun-verb and adjective-noun (e.g. "They wants to go")
- Passive is emerging (e.g. "The dog was taken for a walk")
- Begins using later-developing complex sentences

Pragmatics

- Uses indirect requests
- More elaborate discussions of emotions and feelings
- Addresses specific requests for clarification more frequently
- Narratives are chains of unfocused sequences of events with some plot, no central character, and no high point or resolution

Gestalt Language Development

Gestalt language development is when language is first learned in large chunks (e.g. whole phrases) and later broken down into smaller and smaller units, until the child is eventually able to put individual words together to form original and flexible language.

Signs of a gestalt language processor may include:

- Repeating phrases heard from others (family, friends, videos, movies, songs)
- Reciting/singing whole songs, while appearing to not use language in other ways to communicate with others
- Using "jargon" that is rich in intonation and not easily understood
- Repeatedly watching, replaying, fast-forwarding, rewinding specific parts of videos

GESTALT LANGUAGE PROCESSORS

*Stages are not age specific

Stages of Natural Language Acquisition (NLA) for gestalt language processors are as follows:

- Stage 1 — Whole Gestalts/Phrases/Scripts
- Stage 2 — Mitigated/Partial Gestalts (mixing/matching and trimming down of gestalts)
- Stage 3 — Isolation of Single Words/ Word Combinations
- Stage 4 — Beginning Grammar
- Stages 5-6 — Advanced Grammar

If a child is a gestalt language processor and is not yet able to use language to effectively communicate with others, it may be helpful to seek out a speech-language evaluation from a speech-language pathologist who is trained in Natural Language Acquisition (NLA).

Multilingualism

There are many benefits to learning more than one language. Research shows that learning more than one language will not confuse children, cause speech or language problems, or slow down their learning. If a child has a speech-language delay, it will show up in both/all languages.

Facts About Multilingualism

Milestones of pre-language development are the same in all languages.

Bilingual toddlers might mix word parts from one language with word parts from another language.

Expressive vocabulary is calculated by adding the number of words used in all languages.

Bilingual children might sometimes mix grammar rules or use words from both languages in a sentence.

Neurological Differences

Neurological differences such as Autism and ADHD can result in differences in the way your child develops and uses language. Pragmatic language and play for example, may look different in neurotypical vs. neurodivergent individuals. Viewing pragmatic language development through a neurodiversity-affirming lense, we understand that:

- Some children may not show interest or attention by making eye contact, but may show that they are interested or attending in other ways

- Some children may prefer play that involves sensory stimulation rather than or in addition to other types of play (e.g. pretend play, symbolic play, etc.)

- Neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals may have a harder time effectively communicating with one another than they have when communicating with individuals of a similar neurotype (The Double Empathy Problem)

Glossary

- Analytic Language Learning - Language learning that starts at the single word level then builds to phrases and eventually sentences
- Delayed Echolalia - The repetition of words or phrases heard that are echoed (some time after the words or phrases are heard)
- Gestalt Language Development - Language learned in larger units of words first, rather than single words.
- Expressive Language - The "output" of language, what we communicate
- Intonation - The rise and fall of the voice in speaking
- Natural Language Acquisition (NLA)- The process/stages of gestalt language development
- Neurodivergent - A term used to describe someone whose brain processes information and/or develops differently from what is considered "typical"
- Neurodiversity-Affirming - A way of interacting with and supporting individuals of all neurotypes that recognizes and celebrates neurological differences in individuals and offers support that is based on their specific strenghts and needs
- Neurotypical - A term used to describe someone whose brain processes information and/or develops in a way that is considered "typical"
- Receptive Language - The "input" of language, what we understand

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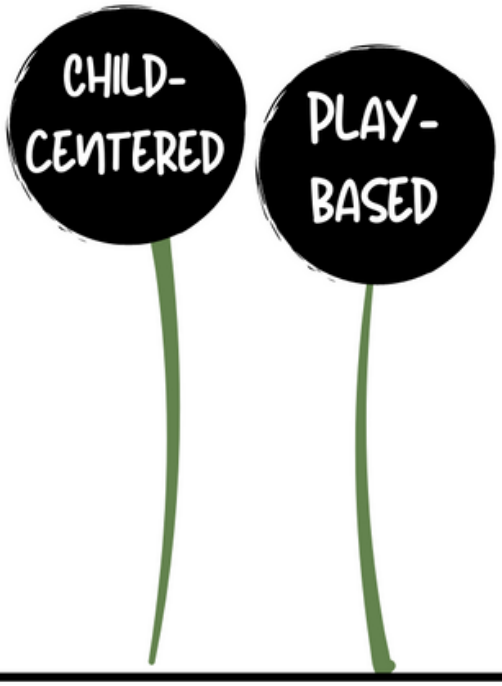
SOW VIBRANT LANGUAGE



Therapy and support for:

- Delayed echolalia/gestalt language processing
- Childhood Apraxia of Speech
- Speech sound disorders
- Language delay
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)