

Gestalt Language Development

Analytic language development and gestalt language development are two ways to process and develop language. Many people think of analytic language development as the "standard" method of developing language, using words first as the building blocks to produce sentences. Children who use gestalt language development process language in whole chunks instead of processing single words... at first. Both analytic language development and gestalt language development are normal and natural!

Analytic Language Processors	Gestalt Language Processors
"Word Babies" – tune into single words	"Intonation Babies" - hear the melody of language
Basic Units of Language are WORDS 1. use of single words 2. use of two word combinations 3. use of emerging grammar in first phrases 4. use of first sentences 5. use of more complex sentences/grammar	Basic Units of Language are CHUNKS: 1. use of gestalt language (echolalia) to communicate 2. breaking apart language chunks (mitigation) and communicating more flexibly with smaller chunks 3. isolating single words and using single words and novel 2-word combinations 4. use of pre-sentence grammar in novel phrases 5. use of early grammar in first sentences 6. use of more complex sentences/grammar

Autistic individuals are often gestalt language processors. When people hear delayed echolalia (or scripts) used by an autistic child, the reaction is often "Should I ignore it?" or "How do we get rid of it?" But neurotypical individuals can also be gestalt language processors! We just don't realize their long strings of unintelligible language (sometimes referred to as "jargon") is really echolalia! Autistic individuals might use delayed echolalia later than neurotypical children do but it is the same natural developmental process...gestalt language development. And the real truth is, echolalia is a beautiful part of language development! It is the first stage of development for a gestalt language processor. It is not something to fear, to be frustrated with, or to ignore.

Here is why: ***echolalia communicates!***

DIFFERENT LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT = DIFFERENT LANGUAGE SUPPORTS

Natural Language Acquisition (NLA)

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NLA is a detailed description of Gestalt Language Development based on the pioneering research of Ann Peters, Barry Prizant, and others — and decades of clinical research with neurotypical and autistic children. NLA embraces the child's own level of natural language development, and supports further development towards self-generated grammar.



Join our supportive community
and learn more about GLP and
NLA step-by-step:
meaningfulspeech.com

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Want more on
the **difference** between
ALP vs. GLP Language Supports?
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Language Development Across GLD Stages



Curious how the stages of
gestalt language development might
look with an utterance across time?



Gestalt Language Development Stages

Example Utterance Across Stages

1. Use of whole gestalts,
single word gestalts and/or
intonationally defined strings
of language.



"There's a monster at the end of this book."

2. Breaking apart gestalts
and/or taking parts of gestalts
and combining them with
other parts or chunks of
language



"There's a monster + under there."

- Mix of Two Partial Gestalts

or

"There's a monster!"

- Trimming Down the Gestalt

3. Freeing a single word from
a gestalt and/or making a new
two-word combination without
regard to word order.



"monster"

"scary + monster"

"monster + red"

4. New original phrase or
sentence with beginning
grammar. All words have been
"freed."



"The monster goed under."

Stages 5 and 6
USE OF MORE COMPLEX
GRAMMAR



"The monster can't get out." (Stage 5)

"Shouldn't the monster have come out
from under the bed by now?" (Stage 6)



- Read Marge Blanc's article "Finding the Words...To Tell the 'Whole' Story" which can be found at www.communicationdevelopmentcenter.com
- Listen to a free "crash course" on gestalt language development on The Two Sides of the Spectrum Podcast - Episode 40. You can listen anywhere you access podcasts or [Delayed Echolalia & Gestalt Language Processors with Alexandria Zachos | Two Sides of the Spectrum \(simplecast.com\)](https://www.simplecast.com/shows/two-sides-of-the-spectrum)
- Consider taking The Meaningful Speech Course (for both parents and professionals) on meaningfulspeech.com or follow @Meaningfulspeech on Instagram for **free** "how to" content.
- Search your state/country on the NLA Trained Clinician Registry at meaningfulspeechregistry.com. Updated daily, so check back frequently!

