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## HOW TO HELP CHILDREN WITH ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AT 1 TO 2 YEARS OF AGE?

(This article is based on Developmental Milestones, drawn from the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards of Australia)

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This article explores language acquisition in early childhood, emphasizing its critical role in cognitive, social, and academic development. Focusing on linguistic stage 2, it examines developmental milestones in one- to two-year-olds, as outlined by Australia's Early Years Learning Framework and National Quality Standards. During this stage, children advance from single words to two-word phrases, build a receptive vocabulary of 100-300 words, and begin following simple commands. Language development relies on both biological factors and environmental input, influenced by theories from Piaget and Vygotsky, who highlight cognitive readiness and social interaction. Practical approaches like dialogic reading and verbal mapping are examined as effective strategies to foster language acquisition. These methods, aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework's communication outcomes, demonstrate the importance of family and caregiver roles in promoting linguistic growth, providing children with essential tools for meaningful communication and understanding.*

### **Introduction**

Language acquisition constitutes a foundational aspect of child development, significantly contributing to future academic success, social competence, and the processes of belonging, being, and becoming (Fellowes & Oakley, 2019; Department of Education, 2022). From birth to five years, children pass through distinct linguistic stages, progressing from prelinguistic communication to the formulation of full sentences. This article examines linguistic stage 2, using "Developmental Milestones"

in the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards of Australia focusing on the language development of children between the ages of one and two.

### **Literature Review**

At the onset of the second linguistic stage, typically around one year of age, children experience a range of developmental milestones related to oral language. As they progress from using single words to forming two-word combinations, their ability to comprehend and follow simple instructions emerges. Children begin to engage in basic communicative exchanges, such as making eye contact and taking conversational turns, while becoming increasingly adept at associating spoken words with objects through pointing. During this stage, children typically acquire a receptive vocabulary of approximately 100-300 words, while their expressive vocabulary ranges between 5-50 words. Their syntactic awareness and phonological understanding also exhibit significant growth (Plural et al., 2012; Fellowes & Oakley, 2019; Levey, 2017; Oller et al., 2015; Department of Education, 2015). Furthermore, children of this age often demonstrate a strong affinity for books, storytelling, rhymes, and songs (Levey, 2017).

### **Theoretical Perspective on Language Development**

Language development is influenced by both biological predispositions and environmental stimulation. Children are innately equipped to acquire language, but they depend on external input from their surroundings (Otto, 2014; Feldman, 2019). Although linguistic exposure occurs from birth, expressive language emerges gradually, a phenomenon attributed to the maturational perspective and the concept of "readiness." Developmental readiness must be achieved before children can acquire and utilize language (Fellowes & Oakley, 2019). Psychologist Arnold Gesell posited that development follows predictable patterns, with genetic factors playing a crucial role in the sequence and timing of developmental milestones, including language acquisition (Crain, 2010).

Piaget's cognitive developmental theory suggests that language acquisition is closely tied to cognitive development, where children form schemas in response to

environmental stimuli, facilitating language understanding and usage. For example, a child cannot appropriately use the term "doggy" until they have constructed a conceptual understanding of what constitutes a dog (Fellowes & Oakley, 2019; Crain, 2010; Lefa, 2014). This underscores the importance of providing children with varied and enriching experiences that foster both cognitive and linguistic growth.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory further elaborates on the role of social interactions in language development, suggesting that language is developed through interactions with peers, adults, and the broader environment. These interactions serve as a medium for language modeling, introducing children to new vocabulary and linguistic structures (Fellowes & Oakley, 2019; Rowe, 2022; Topçiu & Myftiu, 2015). This perspective highlights the central role of parent-child communication in language acquisition.

### **Strategies for Fostering Language Development**

The home environment offers abundant opportunities for language development, particularly through everyday routines like reading mail, following recipes, and maintaining household records. Purposeful activities, such as reading with children and using child-directed speech, can enhance linguistic abilities (Fellowes & Oakley, 2019; Otto, 2014). Children are naturally drawn to textures and colors in picture books, and with adult support, this interest can evolve into robust family literacy practices. Reading enhances empathy and memory, expanding vocabulary by linking auditory input to meaning (Feldman, 2019; Spagnola & Fiese, 2007).

### **Child-Directed Speech**

An effective approach for fostering language development in young children is child-directed speech. This communication style is characterized by simplified vocabulary, shorter sentences, frequent repetition, and exaggerated intonation, capturing children's attention and focusing on key language elements. High-pitched, sing-song tones and slower speech provide auditory cues that assist in differentiating sounds, syllables, and words, supporting phonological awareness (Feldman, 2019; Rowe, 2012; Newman et al., 2016).

## **Dialogic Reading and Verbal Mapping**

Dialogic reading transforms story time into an interactive dialogue. Adults prompt children with questions, encourage predictions, and invite expanded responses. These interactions expose children to a wider range of vocabulary and complex sentence structures, supporting syntactic development (Chang et al., 2023; Towson et al., 2016). By asking questions like "What do you think will happen next?" or "Why is the character sad?" children engage in higher-order thinking that enhances comprehension and expressive language skills.

Verbal mapping involves narrating everyday activities to provide continuous language exposure. For instance, when an adult verbalizes task steps, such as "Now we are putting the toys in the box," it helps children link language to actions and context. This form of communication bridges the gap between receptive and expressive language, as children begin associating words with specific actions or objects (Timothy et al., 2014; Otto, 2014).

## **Role of Adults in Language Development**

Adults, including parents and educators, play a central role in promoting language development through dialogic reading and verbal mapping. In dialogic reading, adults create supportive environments that encourage active participation, selecting age-appropriate books with engaging narratives to stimulate interest. Effective dialogic reading involves scaffolding children's responses, guiding them from simple answers to more complex language use by asking open-ended questions and introducing new vocabulary in context.

Verbal mapping offers an accessible way to integrate language learning into everyday activities, ensuring continuous language input. Adults can narrate routine actions such as getting dressed, cooking, or playing, exposing children to language in diverse contexts. This regular exposure supports vocabulary development and helps children understand how language describes both concrete and abstract concepts.

Both dialogic reading and verbal mapping align with Outcome 5 of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), which emphasizes the importance of

communication in early childhood. Outcome 5 states that "children are effective communicators" and encourages educators to model verbal and non-verbal communication meaningfully (Department of Education, 2022). To assess the impact of these strategies, educators and caregivers observe children's language progression, noting milestones like the transition to two-word utterances, following simple commands, and vocabulary complexity.

### **Conclusion**

Language development is a multifaceted and gradual process shaped by maturational, cognitive, and social factors. While children possess an innate predisposition for language acquisition, environmental stimuli, and family interactions are critical in realizing this potential. Adults enhance family literacy practices through dialogic reading and verbal mapping, equipping children with essential tools for proficient language skills. These early strategies play a crucial role in preparing children for lifelong learning and social engagement.

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