

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 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. use of single words2. use of two word combinations3. use of emerging grammar in first phrases4. use of first sentences5. use of more complex sentences/grammar	Basic Units of Language are CHUNKS: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. use of gestalt language (echolalia) to communicate2. breaking apart language chunks (mitigation) and communicating more flexibly with smaller chunks3. isolating single words and using single words and novel 2-word combinations4. use of pre-sentence grammar in novel phrases5. use of early grammar in first sentences6. 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) Marge Blanc, MA, CCC-SLP

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.



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NLA step-by-step:
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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

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

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

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

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

Stages 5 and 6
USE OF MORE COMPLEX GRAMMAR

Example Utterance Across Stages

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

→ "There's a monster + under there."
- Mix of Two Partial Gestalts
or
"There's a monster!"
- Trimming Down the Gestalt

→ "monster"
"scary + monster"
"monster + red"

→ "The monster goed under."

→ "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/podcasts/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!

