

A close watch on communication and literacy development: *When to consult a speech-language therapist?*

Signs of language difficulties:

Does the child have low vocabulary?

Children with *any home language* and typically have:

- First words @ 12 months old
- 20-50 words @ 18 months old
- 200-300 words @ 24 months old
- 1000 words @ 36 months old

**** For multilingual children, sum up all the words across all of the child's languages.**

Do they say less than expected?

In *English and Spanish*, children typically use:

2-3 word phrases	4+ word phrases & sentences	complex sentences
		
2-3 years old	3-4 years old	7-8 years old

Do they make errors in syntax and grammar?

By age 4, *English and Spanish* speakers learn:

- personal pronouns
- present progressive (*I am playing. Estoy jugando.*)
- Prepositions (*in, on, under...*)
- diminutive (*doggy, perrito*)
- plurals
- possessives
- negation

Signs of speech difficulties:

Is the child hard to understand?

Even when their speech isn't perfect, children all over the world are typically **understood** by *unfamiliar* listeners

- 50% of the time @ 2 years old
- 75% of the time @ 3 years old
- 100% of the time @ 4 years old

For pronunciation, we would typically **not** expect children to

- omit many consonants in words
- make vowel errors
- substitute many speech sounds of their language with one preferred sound (e.g. /d, k, g, s, z, ch/ all produced as "t")

Late talkers and children with speech sound errors may have later challenges in language-related areas like:

Literacy

- decoding
- spelling
- reading comprehension

Social skills, attention, planning and organisation.

So many of our students are learning 2, 3 or even 4 languages at at time. Bilingualism or multilingualism **does not cause** a speech/language impairment. When deciding whether language learning factors may be at play, take into account information from parents about the child's first language(s).

Still concerned?

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