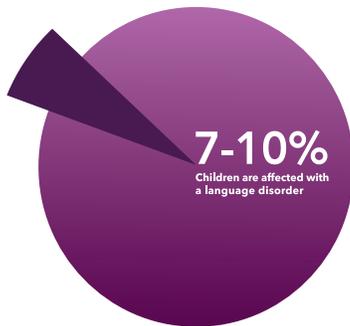




The Centre  
of Excellence  
for Speech and  
Language Development

# DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER; LANGUAGE DISORDER; LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES!!

## A FRIENDLY UPDATE!



It is estimated that about 7-10% of school-aged children present with a language disorder of unknown cause (Norbury et al, 2016; Tomblin, 1997). On average, this corresponds to about two children in every classroom. Despite the high prevalence, there is still poor public awareness about Language Disorders.

Perhaps you've come across the terms "specific language impairment (SLI)", "language-based learning impairment", "language delay", or the newer term "developmental language disorder (DLD); they and others have been used almost interchangeably to describe the same language difficulties in children. The variety of terminology has posed a challenge to raising awareness of Language Disorders.

Thus, in an international effort to come to a common term, a recent project called CATALISE gathered a panel of experts — including speech-language pathologists, psychologists and teachers — to come to a consensus on which term should be used to describe language difficulties in children. As a result, the expert panel reached the consensus that the designate "developmental language disorder (DLD)" was the best option.

Developmental language disorder (DLD) is thus the "new label", which replaces the terms "Specific language impairment (SLI)", "language-based learning impairment" and "language delay". Experts on the CATALISE panel defined "Developmental language disorder (DLD)" as language difficulties that create obstacles in communicating or learning, in everyday life situations. To be considered a DLD, these difficulties must be unlikely to resolve on their own and must not be associated with a known biomedical condition (Bishop et al, 2017). On the other hand, if a child's language disorder is associated with a known biomedical condition, the label "language disorder associated with [name of condition]" is than used instead.

## SO, WHAT EXACTLY IS A DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE DISORDER (DLD)?

It is a Language development disorder of neurological origin. It refers specifically to situations in which children have language acquisition difficulties for no specific reasons. The language impairment arises from a dysfunction that affects the part of the brain responsible for language, hence triggering limitations in the areas of comprehension and/or expression.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MANIFESTING SYMPTOMS MAY INCLUDE:

### Receptive Language (Comprehension)

- Difficulty processing verbal information; responding to questions
- Understanding and following directions and instructions; the relationships between words and meanings
- Making inferences and verbal reasoning skills
- Understanding and using comparative, sequential, spatial and time relations

### Expressive Language

- Limited vocabulary
- Difficulty finding appropriate words when speaking
- Short incomplete sentences; frequent grammatical errors
- Difficulty with sequencing and/or organization when re-telling stories or events
- Struggle with written language and composition
- Lack of flexibility in using syntax for speaking and writing

### Social / Pragmatic Language

- Difficulty maintaining a topic or taking turns in conversations or play
- Responding inappropriately to questions or statements
- Difficulty reading "body language" resulting in poor awareness of listener's needs
- Talking about emotions and feelings
- Adjusting speech to fit different people / situations
- Making and keeping friends



The disorder is present from birth and is not the result of a trauma or injury to the brain but is specific and persistent in nature. The degree of severity can vary from mild to severe, as well as the functional impacts on their daily environments. It should be noted that specific behavioural, fine motor, and/or attentional difficulties can accompany DLD.

In sum, the Conclusion of a Language disorder indicates that an individual presents with persistent language difficulties, which has a significant functional impact on daily situations, on social & educational progress, and even on self-esteem.

## STUDENTS WITH DLD OFTEN STRUGGLE AT SCHOOL

As Language is the Foundation for Learning, students with a Language Disorder often struggle in the classroom. Teachers should be alert to the symptoms and signs that a student exhibits, so to ensure that the extra support required to develop Language competency in Both Oral & Written Modalities is available. Adaptations are Essential for students presenting with Language Disorders.

So much learning depends on being able to understand and use language. Children with DLD won't just 'pick up' Language! They need to be taught language skills in a special way. They CAN do well, but need the right support in order to reach their Full Potential. This support will be from a S-LP, along with the school-team (teachers, resource teachers, Classroom Aids, etc.), along with the family.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Often times, the terms speech, language and communication are often treated interchangeably, but they actually have distinct meanings! Language involves the comprehension and use of words and sentences to convey ideas and information. Language can occur in different modalities: spoken, written or signed.

Speech refers to the production of vocal sounds, a process that involves both motor (articulatory) and linguistic skills. It is possible to have impaired speech but average language skills. Language and speech are both facets of communication, which encompasses the broader set of nonverbal and verbal means of conveying information and emotions.

### AS INDICATORS TO ALL – GUIDELINES, HERE ARE MILESTONES, PER AGE RANGE, HINTING TO LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES:

<b>Age 1-2 years</b>	No babbling; not responding to speech; minimal attempts to communicate (e.g.: gestures, speech sounds, words).
<b>Age 2-3 years</b>	Minimal interaction; lacks intention to communicate; no words; minimal reaction to spoken language; regression of the child's language development.
<b>Age 3-4 years</b>	Child produces 2 word utterances at most; does not understand simple commands, close relatives cannot understand the child's speech.
<b>Age 4-5 years</b>	Inconsistent or atypical interaction; 3 word utterances at most; poor understanding of spoken language; strangers cannot understand the youngster's speech and relatives struggle with more than half of the messages.
<b>Age 5+ years</b>	Difficulty telling story, understanding what is read or listened to; difficulty following or remembering spoken instructions; poor engagement in turn-taking; over-literal interpretation of given messages.

## LANGUAGE FOR COMMUNICATING, LEARNING, & BUILDING A LIFELONG SKILL

### References:

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Norbury, C. F., Gooch, D., Wray, C., Baird, G., Charman, T., Simonoff, E., Pickles, A. (2016) The impact of nonverbal ability on prevalence and clinical presentation of language disorder: evidence from a population study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, and Allied Disciplines*, 57(11), 1247–1257.

Tomblin, J.B., Records, N.L., Buckwalter, P., Zhang, X., Smith, E., & O'Brien, M. (1997). Prevalence of specific language impairment in kindergarten children. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research*, 40, 1245–1260.

Raising Awareness of DLD • DLD 1-2-3 –

Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQs02HWLb0> – Resources: <http://naplic.org.uk/resources/dld>



**TOGETHER, ENABLING STUDENTS, TO REACH THEIR POTENTIAL THROUGH  
THE BUILDING OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS.**



**Commission scolaire English-Montréal**  
**English Montreal School Board**

The Centre of Excellence for Speech and Language Development  
English Montreal School Board  
6000 Fielding Avenue  
Montreal, Quebec  
H3X 1T4  
Fax: 514-483-7460  
[www.coesld.ca](http://www.coesld.ca)  
[www.emsb.qc.ca](http://www.emsb.qc.ca)

**Co-Coordinator:**

Carol Jazzar, M.Sc., S-LP.  
Speech-Language Pathologist  
E-mail: [cjazzar@emsb.qc.ca](mailto:cjazzar@emsb.qc.ca)  
Telephone: 514-483-7200 ext. 7238

Karina Ismail, M.Sc.(A), S-LP  
Speech-Language Pathologist  
E-mail: [kismail@emsb.qc.ca](mailto:kismail@emsb.qc.ca)