

Zaytouna Primary School SEND Parent Coffee Morning

Tuesday 24th June 2025



Zaytouna



SEND



Coffee morning

Objectives

- ▶ Gestalt Language Processing
- ▶ Discussion
- ▶ Future Coffee mornings

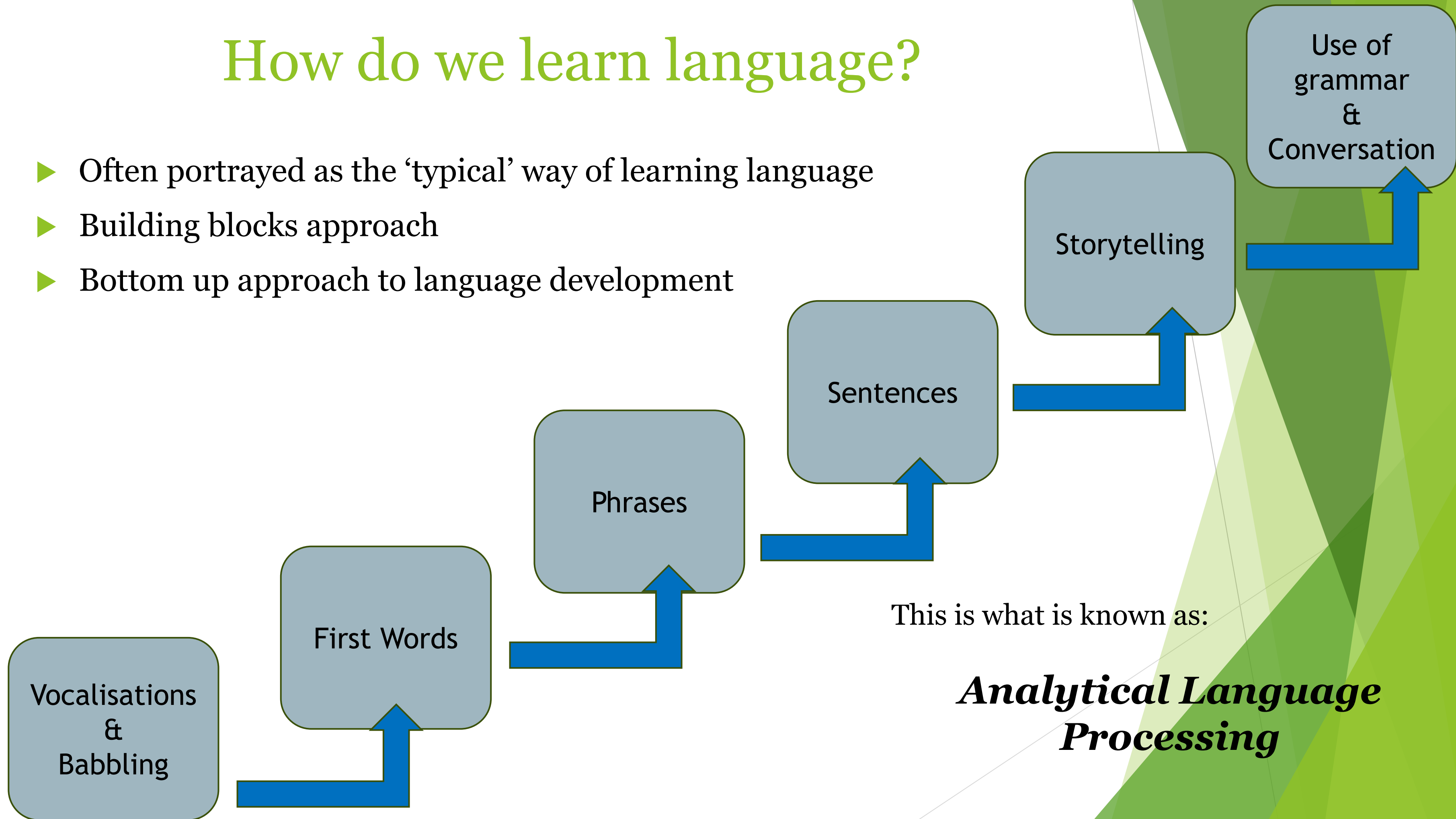
What is Gestalt Language Processing?

The use of scripts within language development - the other typical way for your child to learn language.



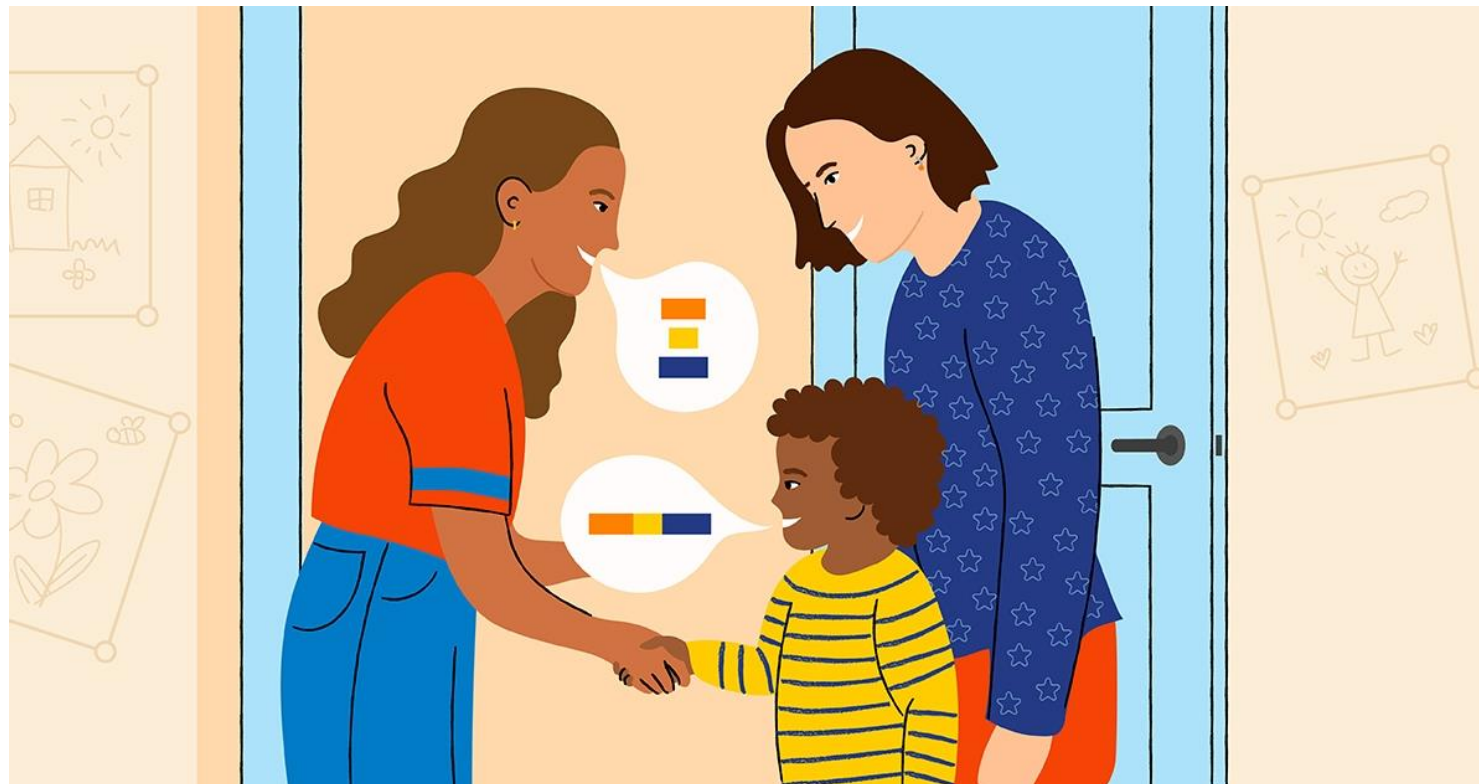
How do we learn language?

- ▶ Often portrayed as the 'typical' way of learning language
- ▶ Building blocks approach
- ▶ Bottom up approach to language development



Words are Units

- ▶ The word ‘gestalt’ means ‘whole,’ so gestalt units are typically long ‘wholes,’ whole sentences, whole songs, whole stories.
- ▶ GLPs naturally recognise their importance when they hear them because they’re part of whole experiences.
- ▶ Gestalts are like the sound-track of experiences, or life episodes. And when they’re spoken in every-day language, children recognise their boundaries by the silences that surround them. The speaker pauses momentarily, and gestalt kids pay attention.



Words are Units

- ▶ These ‘units’ are whole chunks of language, and if spoken later (‘delayed echolalia’) the foundation of gestalt language development.
- ▶ Confusingly, gestalts can be single words:
 - ▶ “wow!”
 - ▶ “No!”
- ▶ However; they are more often longer.
- ▶ The language of any important experience or ‘episode’ of life might be a gestalt that a child spontaneously acquires and uses later. And any language ‘whole’ that is acquired naturally represents a ‘unit of meaning’ for a gestalt child.
- ▶ ***The meaning isn’t the adult definition***, but the emotional/social ‘whole’ of the situation as experienced by the child.



Example:

If taken literally, you might think the child is asking if you are okay.

The child is not actually asking if you are okay. They've picked up this gestalt as a way to communicate discomfort when they are hurt. It is something they are often asked when they fall down. They are repeating it verbatim.



The child is communicating that they are thirsty to their mother. They are using "you're" to refer to themselves.

Example:

The child is not actually wondering when Dad will be home. They've picked up this gestalt as a way to communicate that they are excited to see him. The child says this everyday around the same time when they know their Dad will be home soon.

"When is dad coming home?"



Echolalia

More Than Just Repetition

Echolalia is often misunderstood—here's what it really means for Gestalt Language Processors.

Myth: "Echolalia is just meaningless parroting."

Reality: "Echolalia is a natural stage of language development for gestalt processors."

Myth: "Children should be trained to stop using echolalia."

Reality: "Echolalia should be guided, not eliminated—it is the foundation for future speech."

Myth: "If a child uses echolalia, they won't learn independent speech."

Reality: "With the right support, echolalia evolves into self-generated speech."

- ▶ It is real language development for children and young adults who are 'echolalic' — especially gestalt language processors.
- ▶ The echoing of language can be single words but can also be whole chunks of language: some short, some long — some from media, some from songs, and plenty from the other people in their lives, including you!

How to spot a GLP

HERE ARE THE TYPICAL SIGNS
(A CHILD DOESN'T NEED ALL THE SIGNS FOR A DIAGNOSIS)

THEY REPEAT
LINES FROM
MOVIES OR TV
SHOWS

THEIR SPEECH IS
RICH IN
INTONATION
(RISE/FALL IN
PITCH & TONE)

THEY HAVE BEEN
LABELED AS
'ECHOLALIC'



THEY MAKE SPEAK
IN 3RD PERSON OR
MAKE PRONOUN
ERRORS

THEY DON'T
TALK YET, BUT
THEY SING/HUM
RHYTHMICALLY

THEY MAY HAVE
DIFFICULTY
ANSWERING QUESTIONS



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Gestalt Language Processor Stages

GLP Stage

Meaning

Stage 1
Echolalia

At this stage your child is learning and using full learned phrases.
At this stage there is hidden meaning to the gestalt phrase and it can't be taken literally.

Stage 2
Mitigation

At this stage your child breaks their learned gestalt phrases into chunks and mixes and matches these to add meaning & support understanding.

Stage 3
Chunking

At this stage your child breaks the chunks of phrases into single words.

Stages 4-6
Grammar Develops

At this stage your child uses the learned single words and puts them in sentences, sometimes grammatically incorrect. Typical language development continues.

STAGES OF NATURAL LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

1

WHOLE GESTALTS

Scripts, songs, whole phrases and sentences

“do you wanna build a snowman? come on it will be fun”

2

MITIGATIONS

Pieces of scripts, mix and match partial scripts

“build a snowman”
“Come on, let’s go”

3

ISOLATED SINGLE WORDS

Pulls single words from gestalts, combines with other words

“snowman”
“snowman + hat”

4

ORIGINAL PHRASES

Combining words to make original phrases and beginning sentences

“I make a snowman.”

5

ORIGINAL SENTENCES

Original sentences with more complex grammar

“Did you make a snowman last night?”

6

COMPLETE GRAMMAR

Original sentences with complete grammar system

“If it snows tonight, you can build a snowman.”

ANALYTIC LANGUAGE

VS

GESTALT LANGUAGE

"word babies"

"intonation babies"

Learn language by acquiring single words, then (2) word combos, then (3), and so on...

Learn language by using "chunks" of words (one or many words) that serve as a single unit meaning.

Single words carry individual meaning + serve as single units.

Single word production is a later stage of language development.

Intonation develops as longer sentences are produced.

Language is rich in intonation.

What we often see as "typical" language development.

Less frequently talked about but **VALID** and common form of language acquisition.

Boho Speechie

So what can we do?

- ▶ **LISTEN** to the child's communicative attempts and do the detective work!
- ▶ **ACKNOWLEDGE** their gestalts/delayed echolalia as communicative attempt, by imitating what you hear and/or nodding, smiling, etc.
- ▶ **MODEL** an appropriate gestalt back to them for the situation.
 - ▶ Avoid "Say...." Instead, provide exact models of natural language kids may say during play (e.g., "Wanna come play?" "We can build this together." "Let's do that again.")
 - ▶ Get away from always prompting kids say "I want..." It's not natural.
- ▶ **LIMIT** questions during early stages. Until children get to stage 3, expressive language and building their inventory of gestalts should be the primary focus.
- ▶ **NARRATE** their play using language that can easily be mix and matched to make other combos (e.g., "It's a...." "Let's..." "I'm...")

**PROTESTS/
REJECTS**

I don't like it

Stop that

It's not fun

Go away

I'm upset

Not that one

TRANSITION

Let's go

It's time to go

In the car

Time for school

What's next?

I'm all finished

REQUESTS

It's my turn

Let's go

Need/want help

Let's play

It's mine

Need/want more

SELF-ADVOCACY

Need toilet

I'm tired

It hurts

Let me do it

Don't touch me

It's okay

SHARED JOY

This is fun

That's great

It's my favourite

It's so cool

I'm so happy

I like it

REGULATION

I'm hungry

Too loud

Need to move

Need a hug

Time to jump

I'm ready

Gestalt Language Processing...

<https://sensoryclassroom.org/blogs/sensoryclassroom/gestalt-language-processing-stages>

Marge Blanc -

<https://communicationdevelopmentcenter.com/>

www.private-speech-therapy.co.uk

Future Coffee Mornings

Please share
any parent
voice/feedback

- Tuesday 30th September 2025 @ 9:15am
- Tuesday 25th November 2025 @ 9:15am
- Tuesday 27th January 2026 @ 9:15am
- Tuesday 24th March 2026 @ 9:15am
- Tuesday 19th May 2026 @ 9:15am
- Tuesday 7th July 2026 @ 9:15am

SEND Support

- <https://www.zaytounaprimary.co.uk/send/>
- <https://schoolsportal.derby.gov.uk/sen/>
- <https://derbysendiass.org.uk/>
- <https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/branches/nas-derby-district-branch>
- <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/>

Any questions

