

A GUIDE TO



# GESTALT LANGUAGE PROCESSING (GLP)

*Newcastle Speech Pathology*

*What is it?*

# GLP

Gestalt language processing involves acquiring language through chunks or phrases, with single words emerging later. For individuals who exhibit gestalt language processing, these chunks serve as the fundamental units of language, rather than single words.



## Analytic Language

Starts with small units of language like single words, then progress to phrases, sentences and conversation

Intonation develops later in longer sentences

Single words carry individual meaning

Children follow predictable developmental pathways

Language is flexible and productive

The most common pathway for learning language

## Gestalt Language

Starts with a top-down approach through four stages starting with chunks or phrases

Intonation begins first which means they often have a sing song manner of speech.

One or more words (chunks) carry individual meaning

Children's language development is more unique and individualised

Language is inflexible and situational

Talked about less but equally valid



# GLP TRAITS

Often very  
musical

Not responding  
to traditional  
strategies such  
as expanding  
phrases

Rich  
intonation

Singing or  
humming songs  
before they  
started speaking

Delayed  
echolalia-  
Use of  
scripts  
heard a  
while ago

Speech may  
be difficult  
to  
understand

Tend to not  
respond to  
questions (may  
repeat the  
question)

Language  
may seem  
inflexible  
and specific  
to a certain  
situation

Speaks in  
third person

Language  
isn't  
developing  
beyond  
prompted  
phrases

# Stages of GLP

*gestalt language processing*

Gestalt Language Processors follow a series of predictable stages during their language development journey. These stages lead to original, flexible language.



## Echolalia

- 1 Children may copy entire sentences or phrases they've heard. This could be immediately repeated or used later. You might not understand everything they say at this stage. Children may repeat phrases for fun, for aural stimulation or to practice. Or they might use them to communicate meaning for example, 'Turn it off' could be used to close the blinds and make it dark.



## Mix and Match Stage - Mitigation

- 2 Children start breaking down their gestalts (consistent phrases) and mix and match words to create new phrases.

For example:

Original Gestalt: "It's time to go."

Original Gestalt: "Let's eat dinner"

Child's mitigated Gestalt:

Mixing - "It's time to + eat dinner"



## Single Words and Two-Word Combinations

- 3 Children are learning to use words on their own and put them together to make new phrases. They start recognising words as separate bits of meaning and begin creating their own sentences.

For example, when asking for cookies, they might say:

Noun: "Cookies"

Noun + Noun: "Mumma cookie"

Pronoun + Noun: "I cookie"

Adjective + Noun: "Big cookie"

# Stages of GLP

*gestalt language processing*



## 4

### Independent language

Children begin using their own flexible sentences. Sometimes, it might seem like they're taking a step back because they start making mistakes like saying, "Mummy cookie me." This shows that they're moving into Stage 4, where they're starting to create their own sentences with their own grammar rules, rather than just repeating what they've heard.



## 5&6

### Grammar Development

In these final stages, language development starts resembling more traditional milestones. Children begin using more advanced grammar such as irregular past tense verbs e.g. ate vs 'eated.'

# GLP THERAPY

The ultimate goal in speech therapy for children who are gestalt language learners is to eventually use self-generated language

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Speech therapy intervention looks like:

- Child-led play: This involves following the child's lead and the child's interests in target language.
- Responding to their echolalia and attempts to communicate: This involves acknowledging echolalia and attempts to communicate to ensure they feel validated and heard even when they cannot be understood.
- Modelling language: Modelling language in differing contexts will allow your child to learn new vocabulary and environments to use it in.
- Minimal use of questions: Speech Pathologists will instead comment, narrate, and pause to provide models.
- Use of intonation: Speech Pathologists will use consistent intonation that sounds exciting to help increase engagement and likelihood of their imitation.
- Parents and clinicians work together and use 'detective' skills to interpret what the child is communicating.
- During stages 4, 5 & 6, Speech Pathologists start to support grammar development.

*What next?*

# TIPS FOR MODELLING LANGUAGE



Acknowledge  
your child's  
scripts/phrases  
as  
communication

Model comments  
and functional  
scripts like "Let's...",  
"I'm...", "It's a ...",  
"LOOK!..." INSTEAD  
of asking questions

Model language in  
context  
based on what you  
think  
your child wants to  
say

Follow the child's  
lead in play and  
interests (all are  
opportunities to  
learn and grow!)

Model  
language  
using rich  
intonation

# HELPFUL RESOURCES

*gestalt language processing*

## 01 **Websites and Blogs**



### Meaningful Speech

- <https://www.meaningfulspeech.com/>

### Therapy Works Blog

- <https://therapyworks.com/blog/child-development/gestalt-language-processor/>

### The Informed SLP

- <https://www.theinformedslp.com/review/let-s-give-them-something-to-gestalt-about>

## 02 **Podcasts**



- SLP Live- An Overview of Gestalt Language Processing and Natural Language Acquisition
- Two Sides of the Spectrum- Delayed Echolalia and Gestalt Language Processors
- The Gestalt Get- Together

## 03 **Social Media Pages**



### Instagram:

- @bohospeechie
- @meaningfulspeech
- @haepsplp

### Facebook groups:

- Gestalt language processor- natural language acquisition.
- AAC and Gestalt Language Processing

*For more information...*

# CONTACT US



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