Who are GLPs?

Gestalt Language Processing is associated with autism, however, is not exclusive to autism.
It is possible for someone to be a GLP and not autistic, and it is possible to be autistic and not be a GLP. Additionally, both children and adults can be Gestalt Language Processors as "scripting", memorisation, and melody, play into the language acquisition process in autistic individuals.

Individuals with Autism

Childhood Apaxia of Speech (CAS)

Other speech delays

Typically developing children
Highly verbal or have strong auditory memory

So, what next?

Every child develops language in their own way and at their own pace. However, it is important to note that children may move throughout the stages of GLP independently, and speech pathology input in only necessary when children are not progressing through the stages. If you're noticing any of the following, it might be a good time to speak with a Speech Pathologist:

- Their main language output consists of unintelligible strings of language.
- They haven't been able to mitigate language or develop flexible language, meaning they are only communicating with scripts.
- Those around them (e.g. educators, extended family) need support to understand how to communicate with them.
- They are experiencing frustration due to communication breakdowns.

A Speech Pathologist familiar with Gestalt Language Processing can guide these individuals through their unique language journey.

Contact us

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Gestalt Language Processing

Presented by
ALL ADELAIDE
SPEECH PATHOLOGY

What is GLP?

Some children learn language in chunks, not one word at a time.
This is called Gestalt Language Processing (GLP). Instead of saying single words first, children using GLP often repeat whole phrases they've heard before. These phrases are called "gestalts". Over time, children start to understand what the individual words mean and begin to break the phrases apart.

An example may be:
"Time to go!" which may develop into
→ "Go now." → "I want to go." → "Let's go to the park."

Once they understand the words, they can mix and match them to make their own creative sentences.

How does GLP differ to Natural Language Acquisition?

GLP and NLA are concepts related to language development, particularly in autistic individuals. NLA is a framework for understanding and supporting the language acquisition of GLPs, who process language in whole chunks rather than individual words.

Natural Language Acquisition is a framework developed to build upon the work of Barry Prizant and Ann Peters. It outlines the development of Gestalts to spontaneous, flexible and grammatically correct language. NLA is not a treatment or intervention, but a way to support the natural development of language for GLPs.

Stages of GLP

1. **Whole Gestalts**
   Scripts, songs, whole phrases and sentences
2. **Mitigations**
   Parts of scripts, mix and match partial scripts
3. **Isolated single words**
   Pulls single words from Gestalts, combines with other words
4. **Original Phrases**
   Combining words to make original phrases and beginning sentences
5. **Original Sentences**
   Original sentences with more complex grammar
6. **Complete Grammar**
   Original sentences with complete grammar system

Signs of GLP

- **Rich intonation**: Drawn to tone, rhythm, and emotion in speech.
- **Scripting**: Repeats long phrases from shows, songs, or books.
- **Stuck words**: Uses single words, but not across different situations.
- **Whole-event thinking**: Understands experiences as full routines.
- **Learns from media**: Repeats or uses clips from videos to communicate.
- **Musical**: Hums, sings, or uses songs more than spoken words.

Communication Tips

1. **Respond!**
   Smile, nod, or even just repeat it back to acknowledge that you know it is a communication attempt.
2. **Don't take the echolalia or scripted comment seriously.**
   For instance, "it's on fire!" may have a different meaning to the child than something actually being on fire/hot/etc.
3. **Don't respond with "replacement language".**
   Language development is a process. It's better to embrace a child's attempts to communicate and clearly model your OWN language during good teaching moments.
4. **Be a detective.**
   Ask yourself, "What are they communicating to me when they say this script?". Once you discover the true meaning, you will be able to target ways to increase self-generated language through modelling your own language.
5. **Provide Silence.**
   Prompt dependence by providing silence, and listening and acknowledging any spontaneous output.