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Language in the new report format: Developing understanding, avoiding misunderstanding and knowing our boundaries

Dr Jane Yeomans
STEC committee member

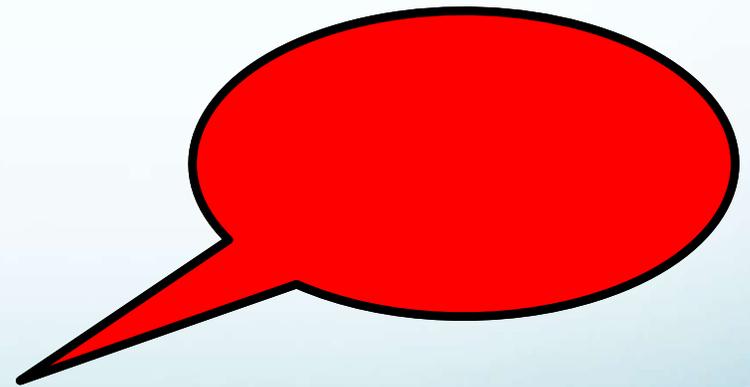




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Session content

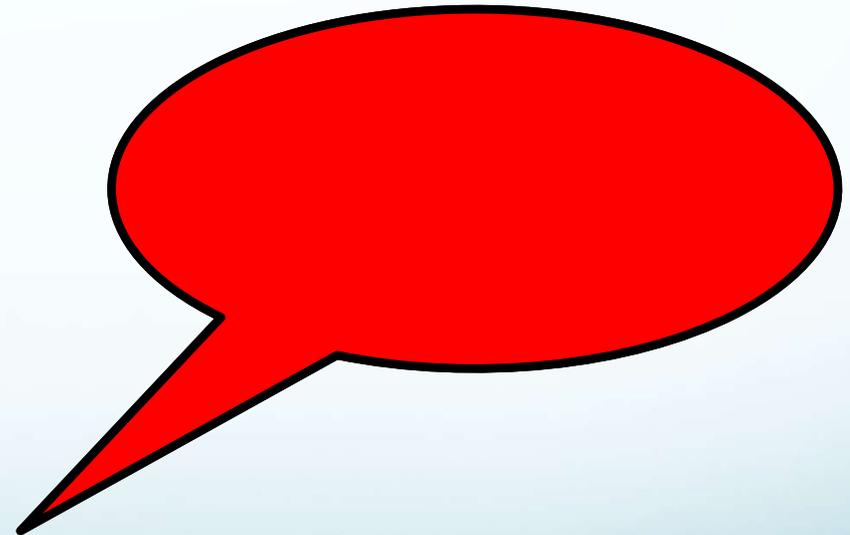
- Understanding: what is language?
- How does language fit into a diagnostic assessment?
- Assessing language
- Misunderstandings
- Boundaries





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Understanding language



What is language?



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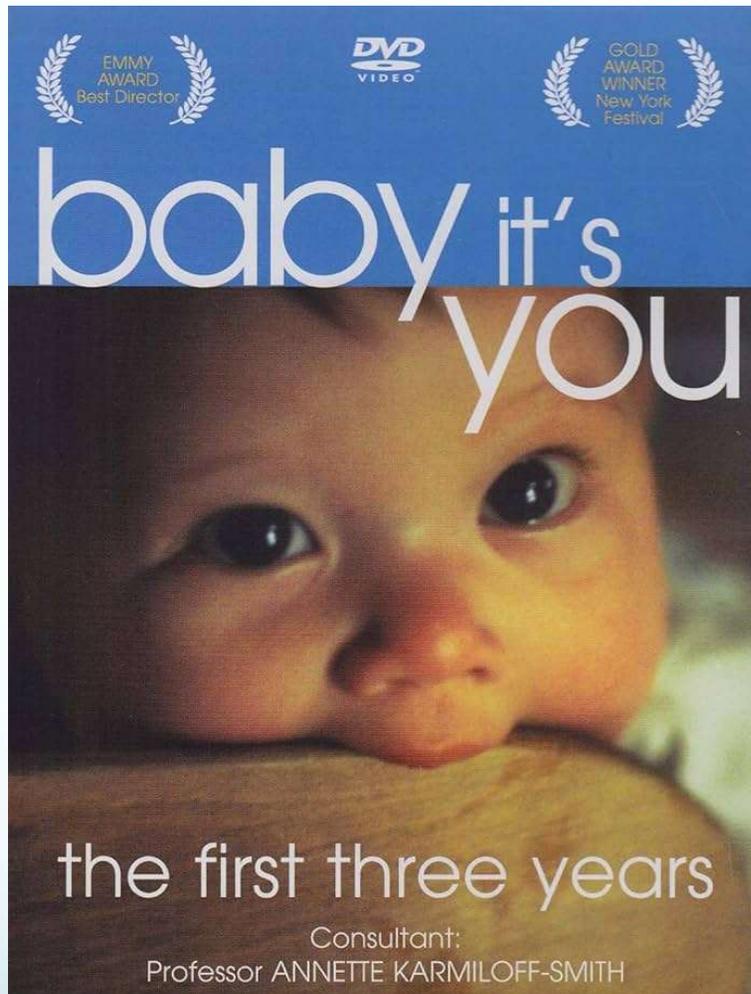
- It has a social context
- It is acquired
- We can talk about things that are real and hypothetical
- It is constantly changing



DVD extract



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Watch a short clip from the Channel 4 TV series 'Baby It's You', produced in 1994.

The clip shows Xavier, aged ten minutes.

Theories of acquisition



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- Chomsky and Bruner: LADS and LASSES
- Skinner: Verbal Behavior
- Vygotsky: ZPD, language and thought

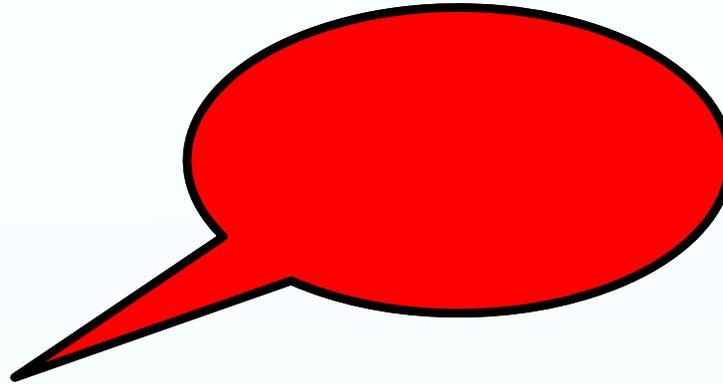


What are the components of language?



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- Phonology
- Semantics
- Syntax
- Pragmatics



Language development and acquisition



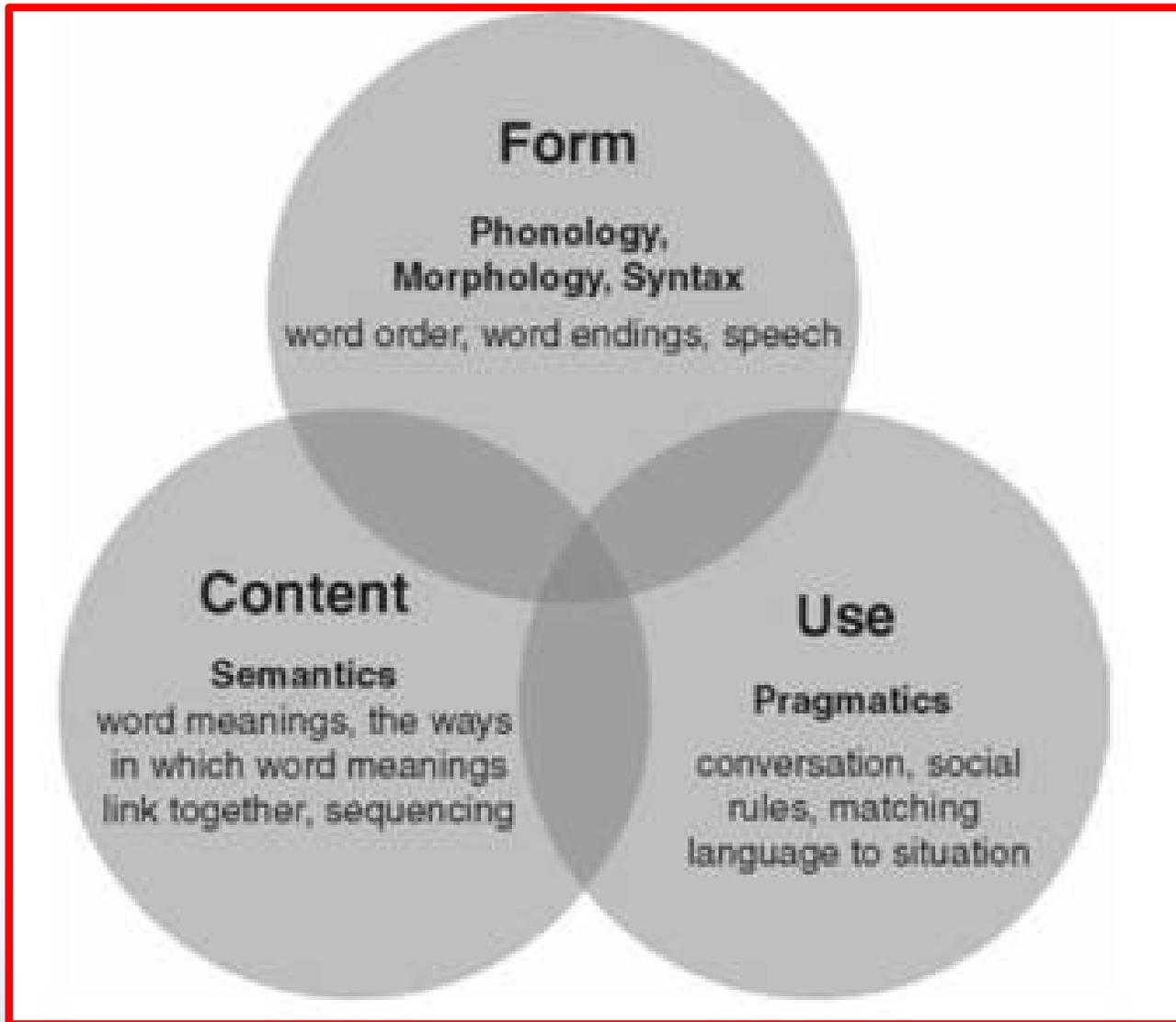
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- We need to know developmental milestones but to be cautious when using them
- Form, content and use (Bloom and Lahey) can be a useful conceptual framework





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Universally Speaking

The ages and stages of children's communication development

From 5 to 11 years



Universally Speaking

The ages and stages of children's communication development

From 11 to 18 years



Social and cultural factors

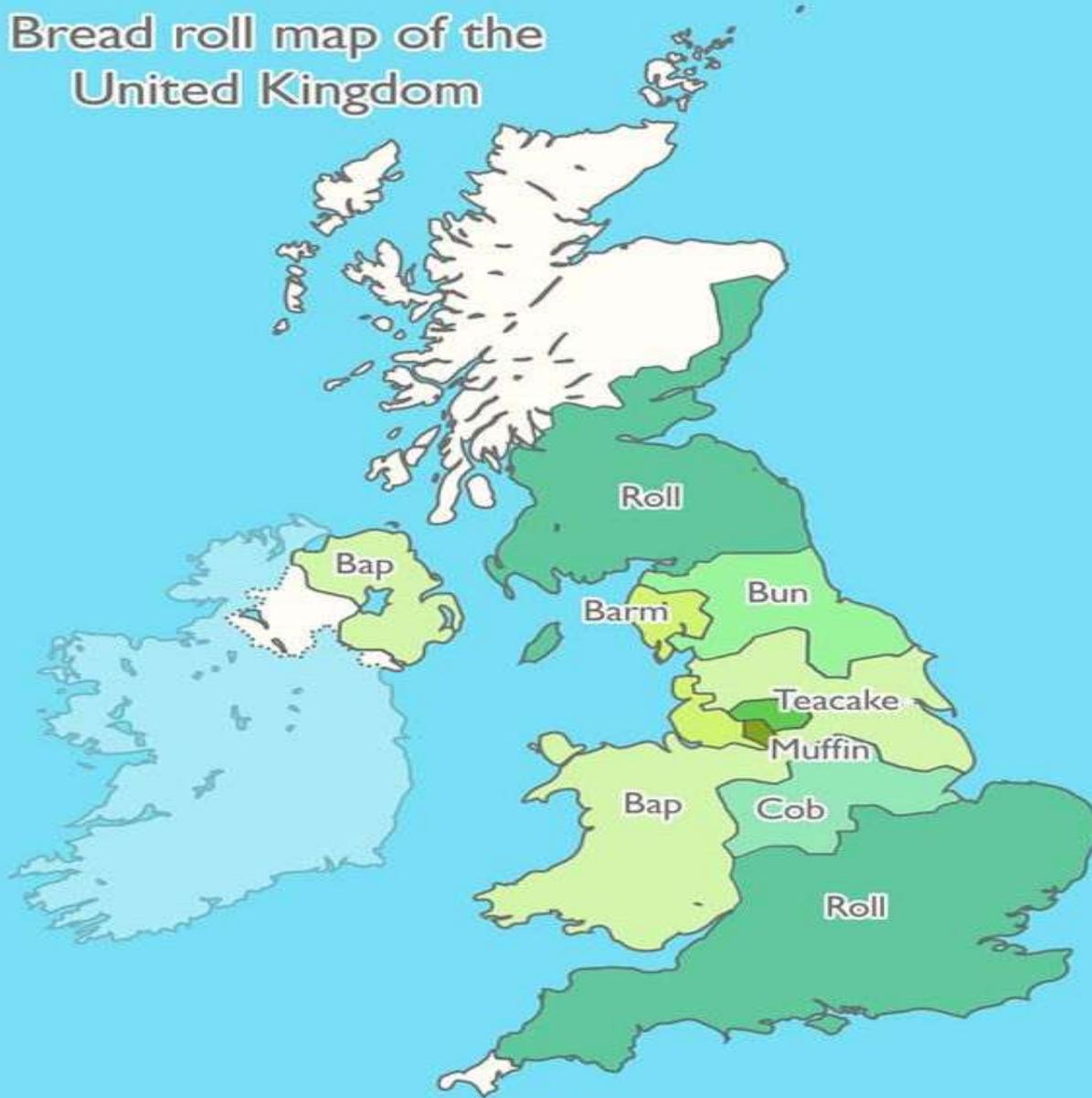


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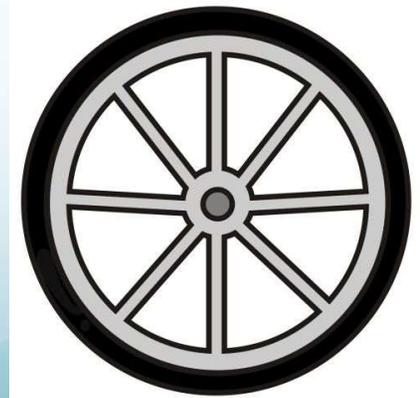
- Language isn't 'neutral'
- It can reflect an individual's or a group's culture and beliefs
- Language needs very careful consideration in order not to view difference as deficit
- Language can convey social status



Bread roll map of the United Kingdom



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SASC

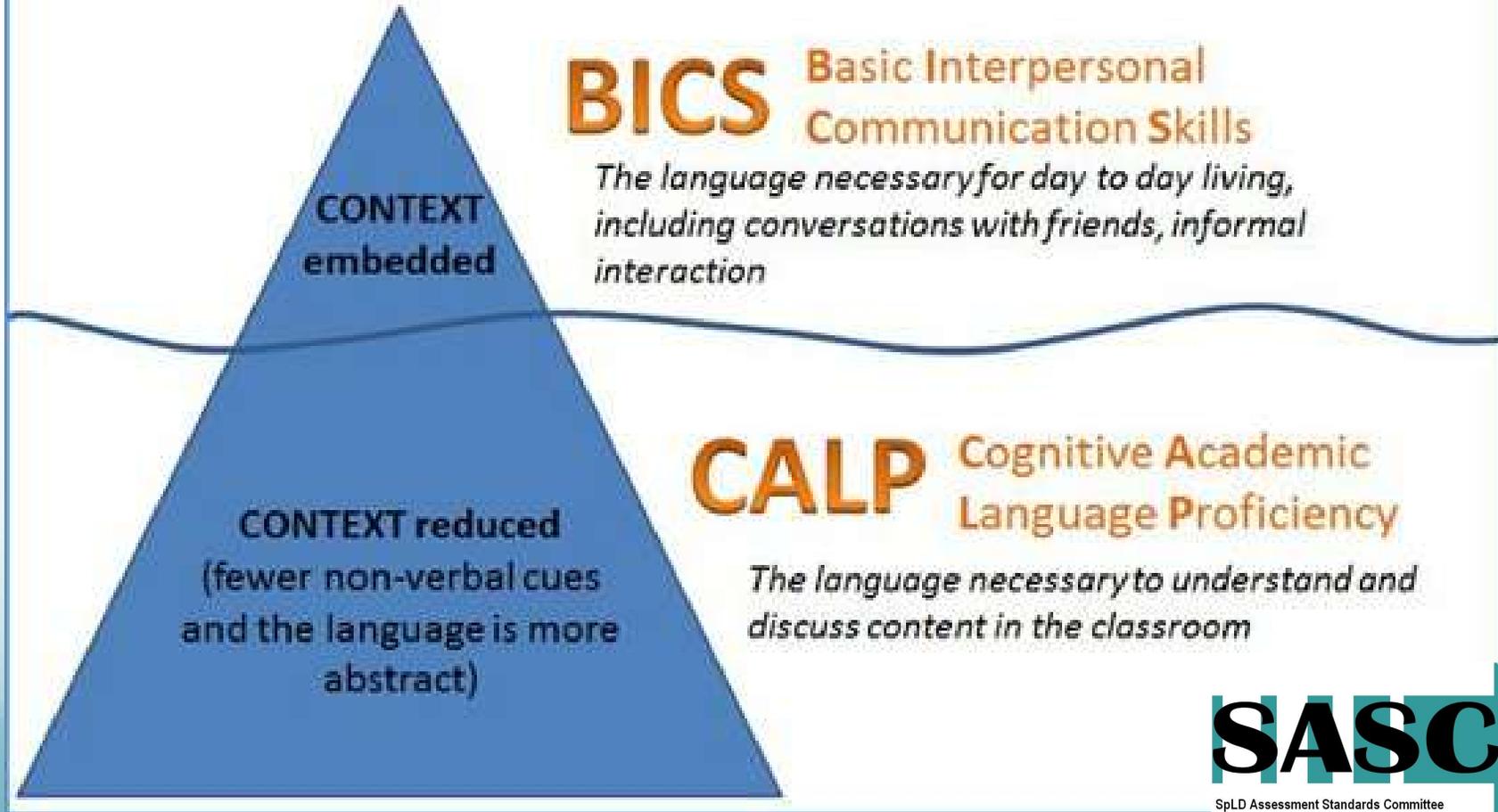
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The language iceberg



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Cummins' Iceberg Theory



SASC

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Risk factors



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In *some* cases, there are known associations with particular conditions, such as:

- Chromosomal
- Neurological
- Congenital
- Metabolic disorders
- Sensory difficulties
- Atypical development
- Exposure to toxins
- Chronic illness
- Severe infectious disease



Environmental risk factors



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- Parent child interactions and general exposure to language in the early years
- Mental health problems of carers
- Number of other pre school children



DLD



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A number of terms have been used to describe and label language difficulties. The current term used is DLD: Developmental Language Disorder:

- *'Developmental language disorder (DLD) is a condition where children have long-term challenges talking and/or understanding words. Children with DLD may have lots of ideas but find it hard to put their ideas into words and understand what other people say to them. Their difficulties can be hard to spot and may be 'hidden' for a long time.'*



Speech and Language UK

DLD diagnosis



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A child can be diagnosed with DLD if their challenges with talking and/or understanding words:

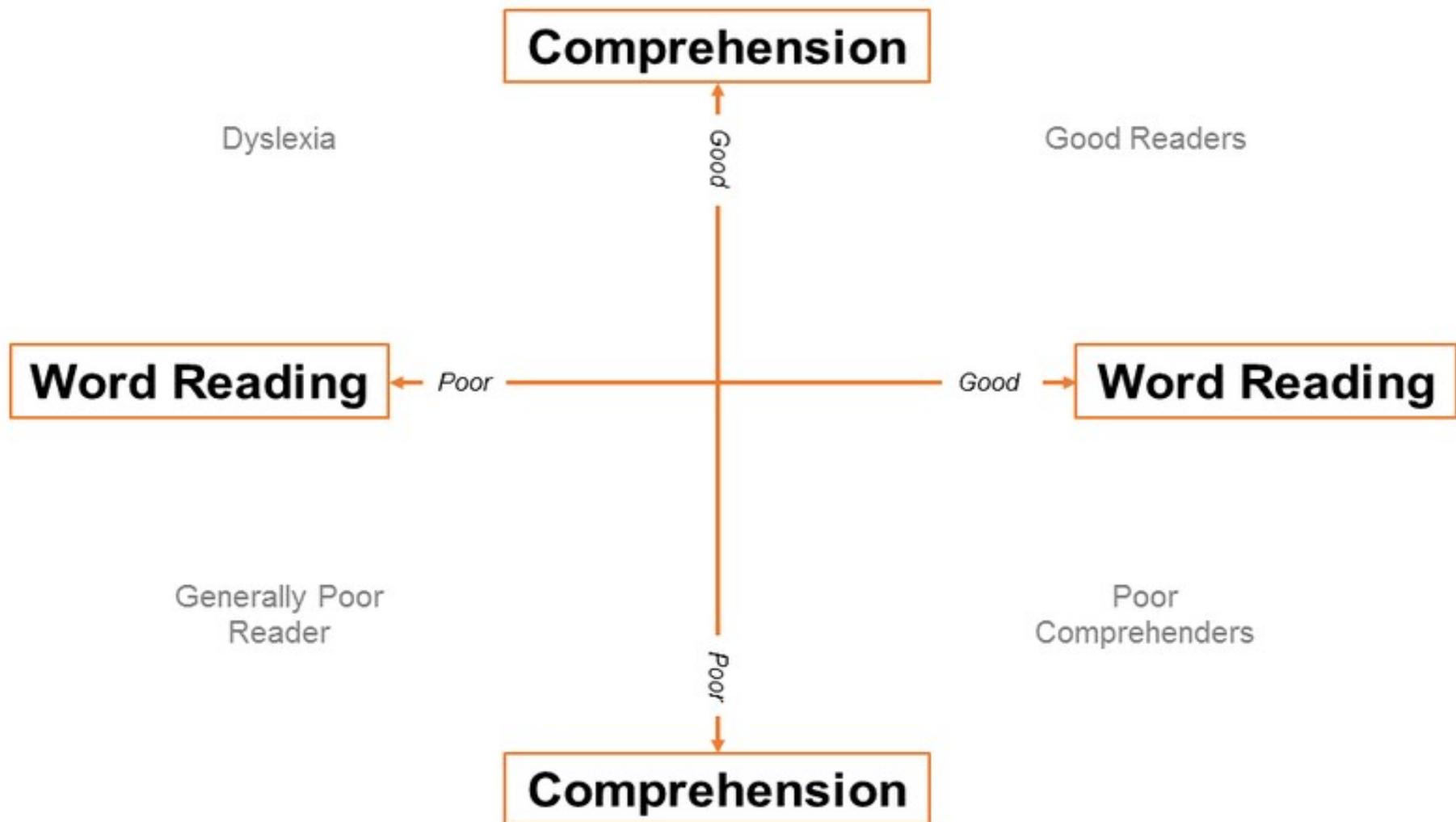
- Have a big impact on how well they do at school, or in everyday life;
- Are not caused by another condition, such as hearing impairment or autism; and
- Are not likely to get better by age five – their challenges are likely to be life-long.

Most children with DLD will need support and changes to the environment at school to help them. Some people with DLD continue to need support when they are adults.

Reading and language links [1]



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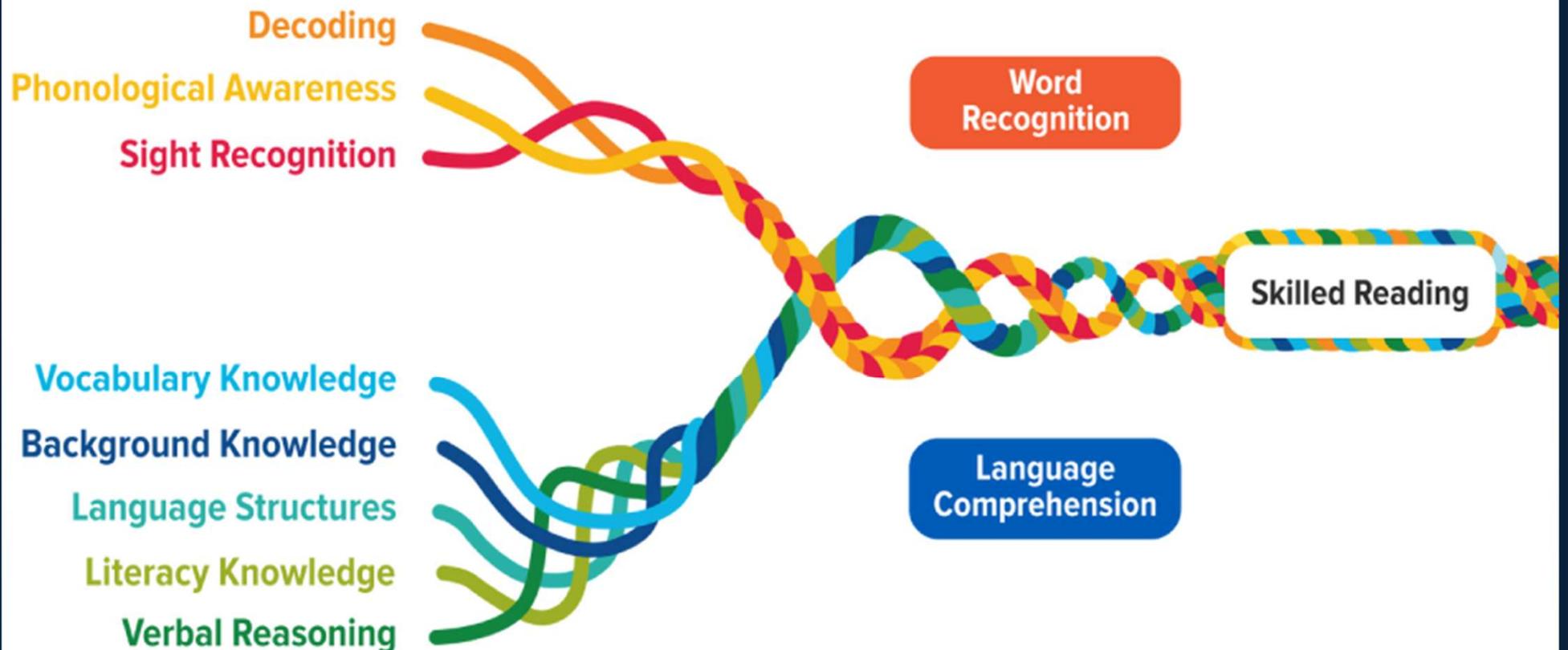


Reading and language links [2]



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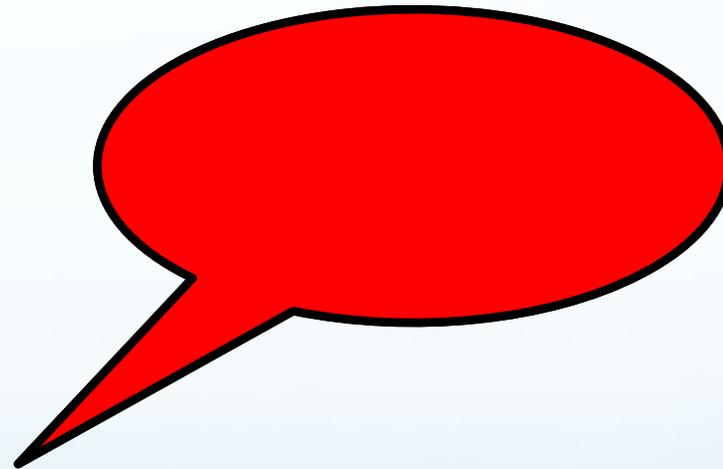
SCARBOROUGH'S READING ROPE





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How does language fit into a diagnostic assessment?



Delphi statements



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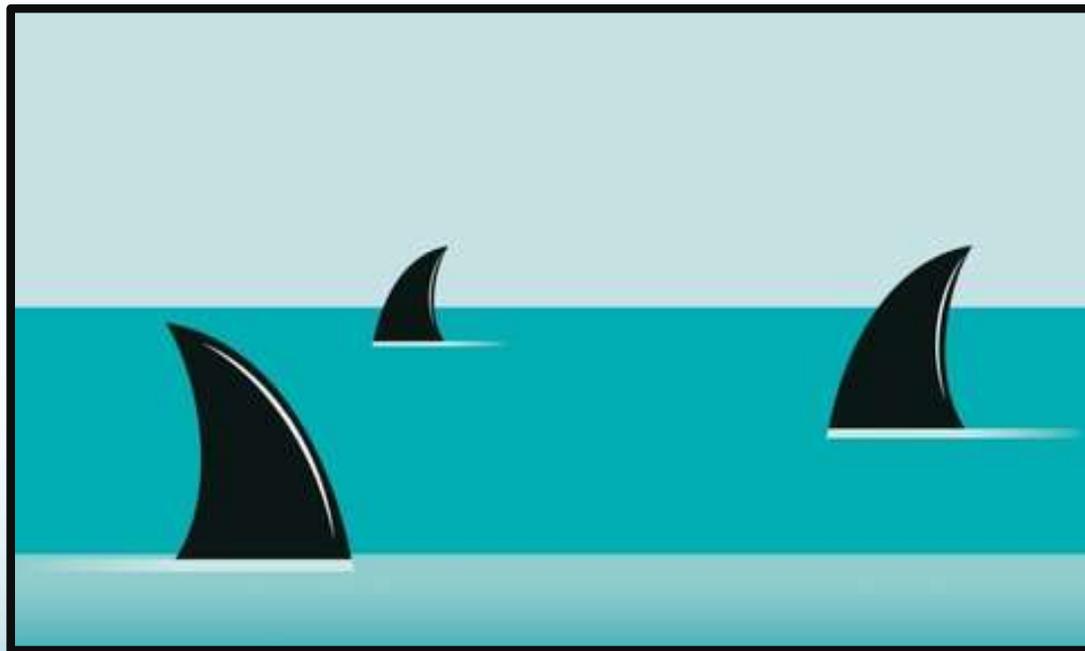
- S15. Protective factors in dyslexia include early and sustained intervention, and **good verbal, nonverbal and oral language skills**
- S18. Dyslexia frequently co-occurs with one or more other developmental difficulties, including **developmental language disorder**, dyscalculia, ADHD, and developmental coordination disorder
- S29. Useful indicators of the need to assess a school-age child for possible dyslexia include: reference to results, where they exist in school, from standardised phonics checks; failure to meet age-related targets in reading, writing, and spelling; discrepancies between **literacy and language performance**, and slow or no progress across 6–12 months of planned intervention
- S35. **Children who come to school with speech or language difficulties are at risk of literacy difficulties, including dyslexia.**



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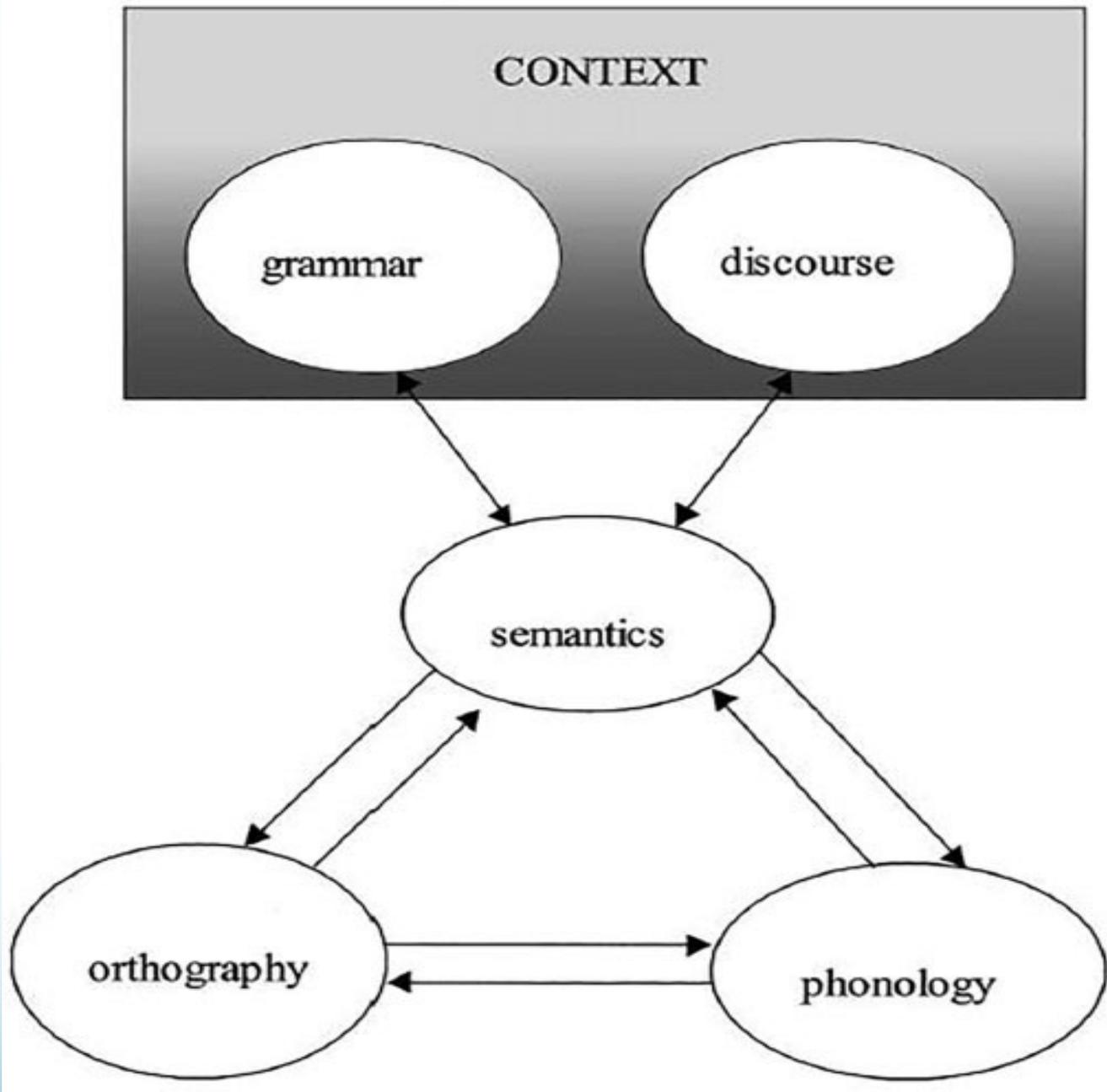
Dyslexia or DLD?

Language difficulties are a known risk factor in relation to the acquisition of literacy





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Source: Snowling and Bishop, 2004



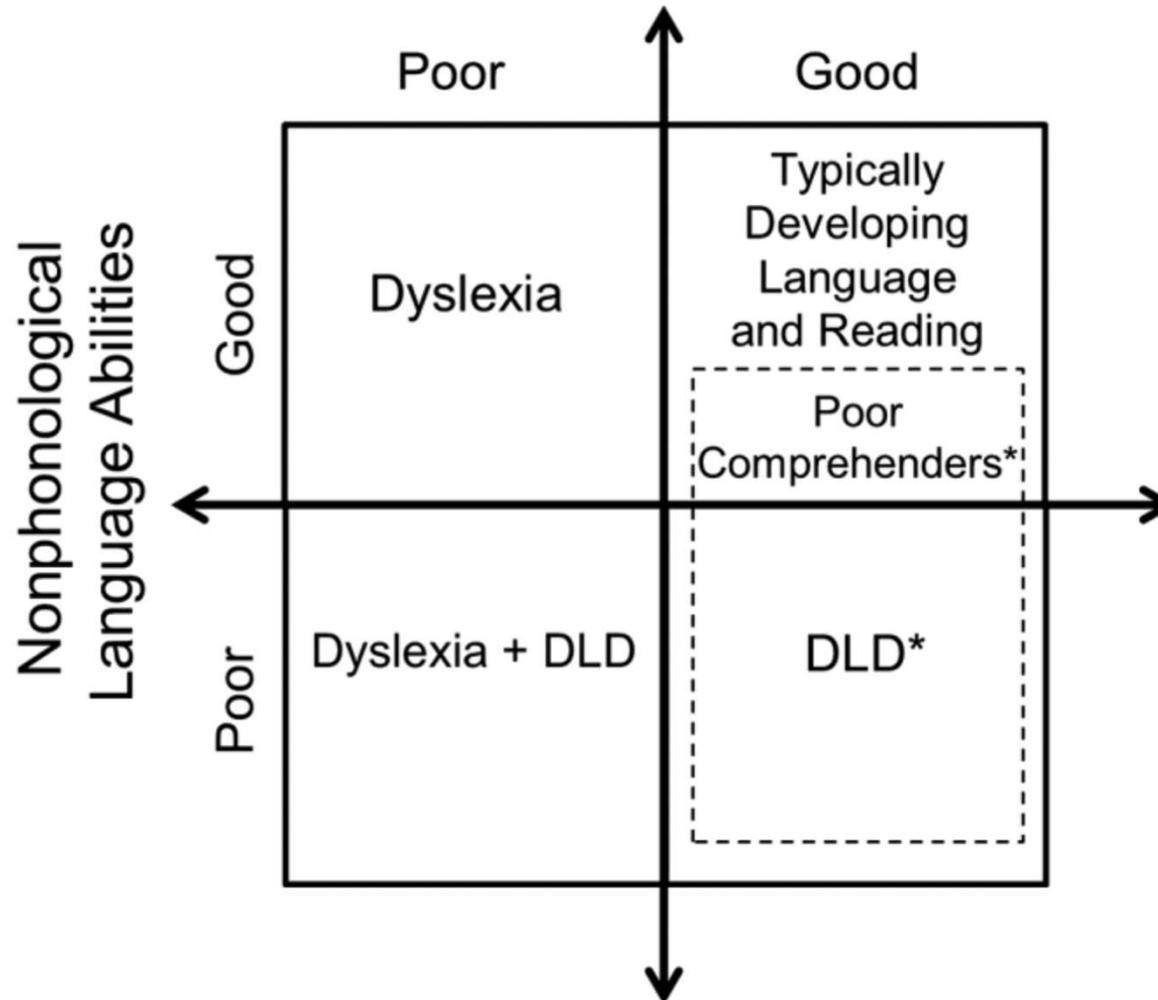


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c. Fully Distinct Hypothesis

(Catts et al., 2005)

Phonological Abilities



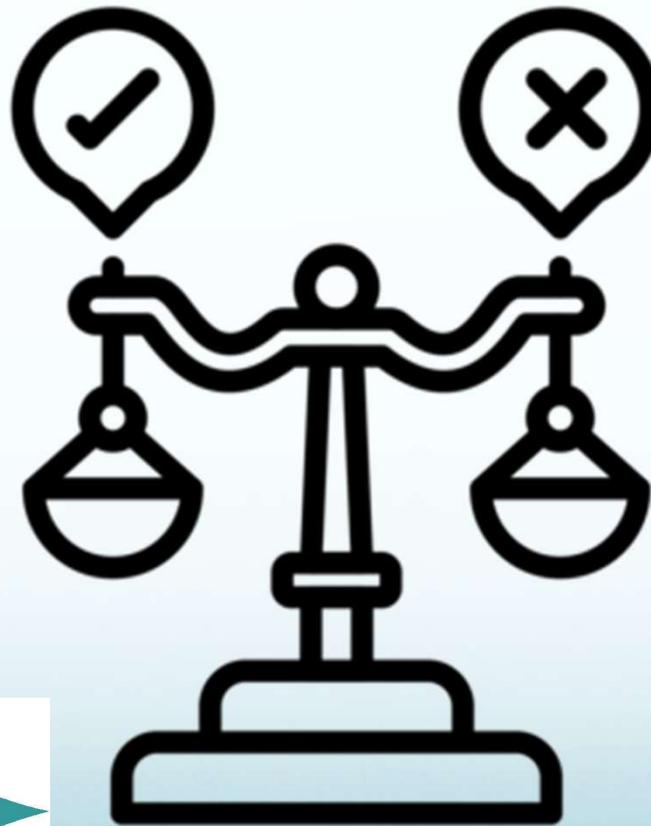
Source: Adlof and Hogan (2018)



What's the verdict? (so far.....!)



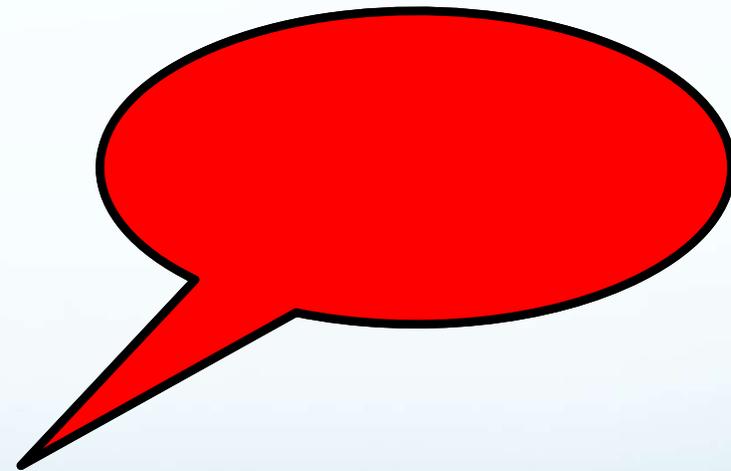
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Assessing language





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Some key principles

- Not everything can be assessed via formal testing (note the root of the word 'assessment'!)
- Triangulation of different data sources is important
- The individual's social and cultural background is an important factor when assessing language
- If you do use tests make sure that they are standardised appropriately (for example, for EAL, DLD) and that the content validity isn't a problem
- Assessment should link to intervention

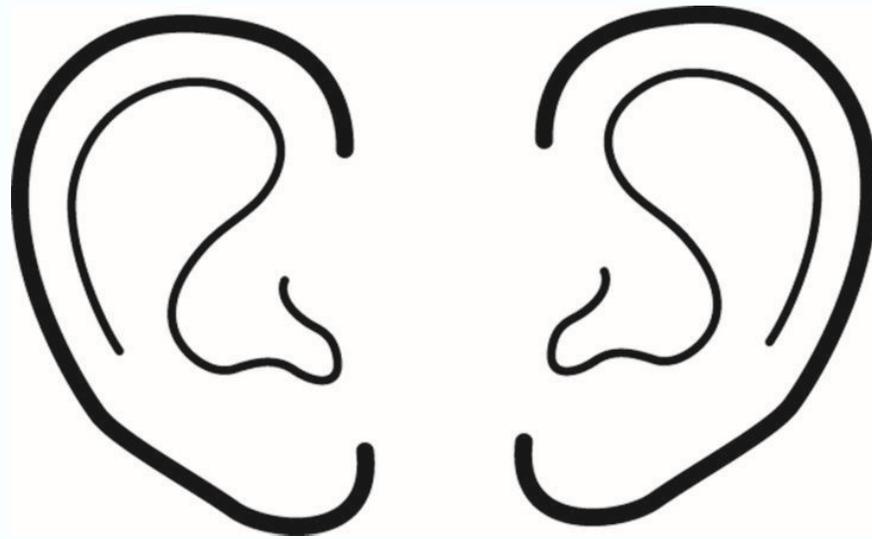
The new report format



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- Language comes into one of the assessment areas
- The report asks for assessment of receptive language and listening comprehension and expressive language
- This section **will include** a standardised measure of expressive and/or receptive language skills to assess vocabulary knowledge, language structure, and the ability to put thoughts into words and sentences in ways that make sense





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What am I hearing?

- Understanding and following task instructions
- Conversation:
 - Sentences or phrases?
 - How easy is it to follow their narrative?
 - Sense of audience.
 - Impressions of vocabulary





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Background information from home



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- When did s/he begin to babble?
- When did s/he say first word(s) and put words together?
- Clarity of speech: were there problems saying or pronouncing any words/sounds?
- Did the HV pick up any concerns (e.g. at two-year check)?
- Language(s) spoken and exposed to at home
- If EAL, how long has s/he been exposed to English?
- Has s/he ever had Speech and Language Therapy?
- Did Nursery/pre school/EYFS share any concerns?
- Has s/he had a hearing test? If so, when? What result?

Background information from school



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- Overall views/impressions about language: do they have any concerns?
- Understanding and following instructions in class
- Vocabulary
- Has language been a focus of support in the past, or is it a current focus of support?
- Has school ever made a SALT referral?



The new test list



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- Very poor oral (receptive and expressive) language skills are implicated in developmental language disorder (DLD)
- Poor early language skills are implicated as a risk factor for dyslexia
- Good expressive and receptive language skills in the context of poor reading or mathematics attainment can indicate that the specific identified difficulties are unexpected, Such strengths may act as protective factors in the management of those difficulties





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Links to intervention

- Assessment should always feed into intervention
- If we suspect that there are some language difficulties, we might still suggest some Wave 1 or Wave 2 strategies and approaches to support the pupil



Misunderstandings



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- Verbal reasoning tests can help to assess language
- Tests involving single words (vocabulary or understanding) are all that are needed to assess language
- A very chatty learner doesn't have any language problems
- If a test is designed to assess language, then it's OK to use it
- There's no problem with listening, s/he was fine in my assessment



Boundaries

- Our role is not to diagnose DLD
- DLD is diagnosed by HCPC Registered Speech and Language Therapists
- Specificity of interpretation
- Specificity of recommendations



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Finally.....



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- Questions?
- Comments?
- Feedback?





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