



Development Stages of Language and Thinking Skills

This is a very basic summary of language development, and simplifies the complex language profile with which children with SLCN often present.

Developmental Age	Understanding	Speaking	Content of language possible/ play
2 years	<p>Able to understand simple questions and instructions e.g. "where's baby?", "go get your coat".</p> <p>Can understand between 200 and 500 words.</p>	<p>Using 50 or more single words, e.g. "juice", "biscuit" and starting to put simple sentences together, e.g. "who that?".</p> <p>Speech sounds developing but not all in place until approximately a developmental age of 5 years.</p>	<p>Can talk about here and now. Likely to find it difficult to be directed by an adult.</p> <p>Enjoy pretend play with toys, e.g. feeding dolly or pretending to drive a car.</p>
3 years	<p>Can understand longer instructions, e.g. "put on your coat and get your bag".</p> <p>Understands simple "who?", "what?", "where?" questions.</p>	<p>Now using simple sentences of up to 4 or 5 words.</p> <p>Can use up to 300 words.</p> <p>Can refer to something that has happened in the past.</p> <p>Can ask lots of questions.</p> <p>Able to have a proper conversation, although may be difficult to follow a train of thought.</p>	<p>Still very much a concrete thinker – here and now.</p> <p>Not yet able to use language to reason or predict.</p> <p>Playing more complex imaginative games.</p>
4 years	<p>Understands simple "why?" questions, e.g. "why is the boy sad?".</p> <p>Understanding longer sentences, and more of what people say.</p>	<p>Using more complex sentences and past tense, e.g. "I hurt myself", linking sentences together "I had pizza for tea and then I played in the garden."</p>	<p>Beginning to use language to plan and organise themselves, e.g. "you be the mummy, I'm the daddy".</p> <p>Can describe events that have already happened.</p> <p>Interested in make believe play – imaginations are developing.</p>
5 years	<p>Understands "how?" and "why?" questions, e.g. "how did your coat get so muddy?".</p> <p>Understanding more complex and abstract language such as "first", "last", "might", "maybe".</p> <p>Beginning to understand the idea of time.</p> <p>Can listen whilst doing something else.</p>	<p>Using talk now to help in working out problems, and to organise thinking and activities.</p> <p>Able to talk about near future plans, e.g. "I'm going to grandma's house today".</p> <p>Can answer questions requiring some reasoning.</p>	<p>Beginning of more abstract thinking – e.g. being able to use language to support thinking beyond what they can directly perceive, and to make basic predictions. This process continues throughout primary and secondary years.</p> <p>Use talk to take on different roles in imaginative play, to interact and negotiate with others.</p>