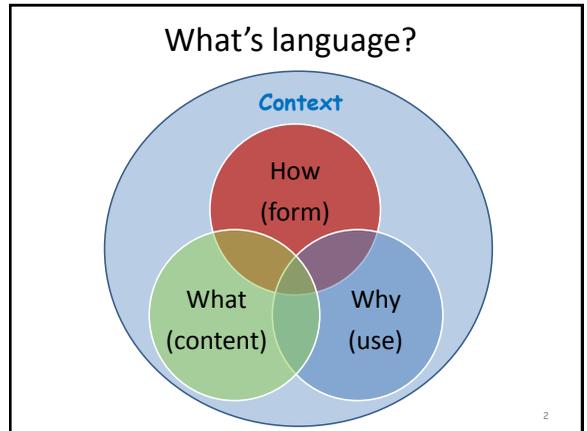




## Early Language Development

Dr Elizabeth Doell  
Parents and Whānau Hui  
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## How do children discover language?

*“.....a child requires progressively more complex joint activity with one or more adults who have an irrational emotional relationship with the child. Somebody's got to be crazy about that kid. That's number one. First, last and always”.*

(Bronfenbrenner, 1994)

## Pre-intentional communication

- Behaviours that express inner states and signal needs to adult e.g. cries, gurgles, body movements
  - Adults attend to children as if they are communicating
  - Richly interpret child's meaning
  - Respond to child as if they understand language



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6d4-SWI8dI>

## Developing Interactions

- Reciprocity in turn taking
- Adult and infant have proto-conversations
- Adult expects a response and pauses to allow infant to vocalise or gesture
- Children begin vocal or manual babbling



## Intentional communication

- Between 6 to 12 months infants begin to show signs of communicating intentionally
- They behave in a way that captures the adult's attention
- Follow the eye gaze of the adult to locate the object of interest
- Joint attention beginning to develop



## Intentional but unconventional communication

Unconventional ← → Conventional

Idiosyncratic Gestures

Physical contact with the adult  
e.g., tug, push, pull.

Produces behaviour and waits  
for adult to act



- Universal natural gestures  
e.g., nod, shake head, wave
- Word like vocalisations
- Signs
- Pointing to picture icons

## Early symbolic communication

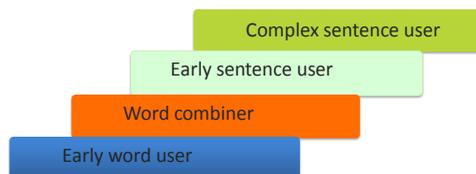
- Between 12 and 18 months joint attention more established
- Begin to replace gestures with more arbitrary symbols e.g., single words, sign
- Persistence or frustration if meaning is not understood



## First words/signs

- Understands simple questions
- Produces up to 50 words/signs
- One word can convey a whole message
  - Daddy [sad face] Daddy has gone
  - Daddy [happy surprised face] Daddy is home
  - Daddy? [questioning and pointing] Is that Daddy?

## Beyond first words



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## The impact of hearing impairment

The acquisition of spoken language will be affected by:

- The timing of the loss – at what age did the loss occur?
- Severity of the loss – how severe?
- Age of identification
- Exposure to language input – the quantity and quality of the language used with the child

## Early Identification

“ *Effective communication early on is easily the best single predictor of success in virtually all areas of deaf children’s development*” (Marschark, 2011, p. 5)

- Introducing sign language as early as possible may provide an effective mode of communication
- Bilingualism – when children acquire two languages
  - Simultaneous e.g. NZSL and English in the first three years.
  - Sequential e.g. NZSL first then English

To discover language children need responsive conversational partners who provide:

- child-centred interactions
- increased waiting times
- reciprocal interactions
- appropriate language models



## Child-centered interactions

- When parents were trained to respond with utterances that continued their child's topic there were associated increases in the length and complexity of the children's language.



(Conti-Ramsden, 1990, Yoder & Davies, 1990)

## Increased waiting

- When parent conversational partners were trained to wait for their child to initiate or provide a response there were associated increases in the frequency of child contributions to the conversation.



(Manolson, 1992; Pearce, Girolametto & Weitzman, 1996).

## Reciprocal interactions

For children to be active participants in interactions they need to initiate turns, comments and questions and respond to their conversational partners

(Fey, 1986)



## Language models

*“The important factor is not necessarily the ability to speak, but the ability to communicate through language, whatever its form, from an early age “*

(Marschark, 2011, p. 64)