



Why Chatter Matters



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The facts...

- “Reading and writing float on a sea of talk” James Britton (1983, p11)
- “Skilled and knowledgeable young people are Australia’s most valuable resource for the future.” (National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, December 2005)
- The cost of **illiteracy** to the **global** economy is \$1.1 trillion (World Literacy Foundation, 2012)
- 20%** of 4 year old children in Australia have difficulty understanding or using language*
- 14%** of 15 year olds have only basic literacy skills*
- There is a high correlation between communication difficulties and poor mental health *
- 46%** of young Australian offenders have a language impairment*
- Children with language impairment are six times more likely to have reading problems than children without***

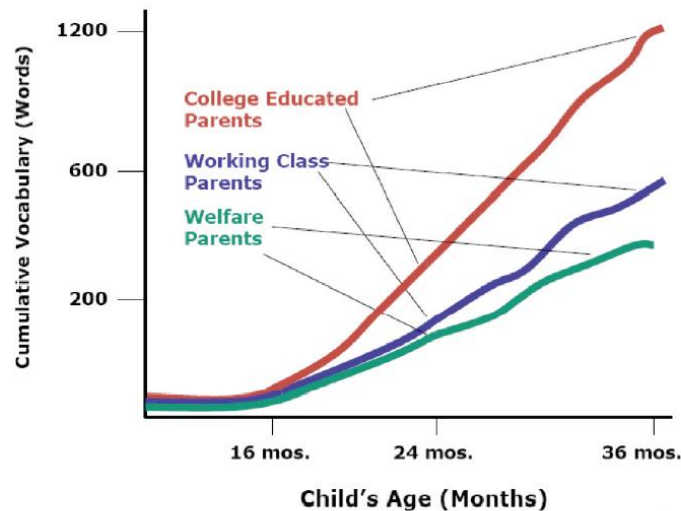
* <http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/>



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- There is overwhelming evidence that children's life chances are most heavily underpinned on their development in the first five years of life. It is fair to say that the first five years last a lifetime.
- By the age of 4, a child in a typical professional family has experienced 45 million words whereas a child in a less advantaged family has only heard 13 million words (over 3 times fewer) putting them at a disadvantage in school from day one.

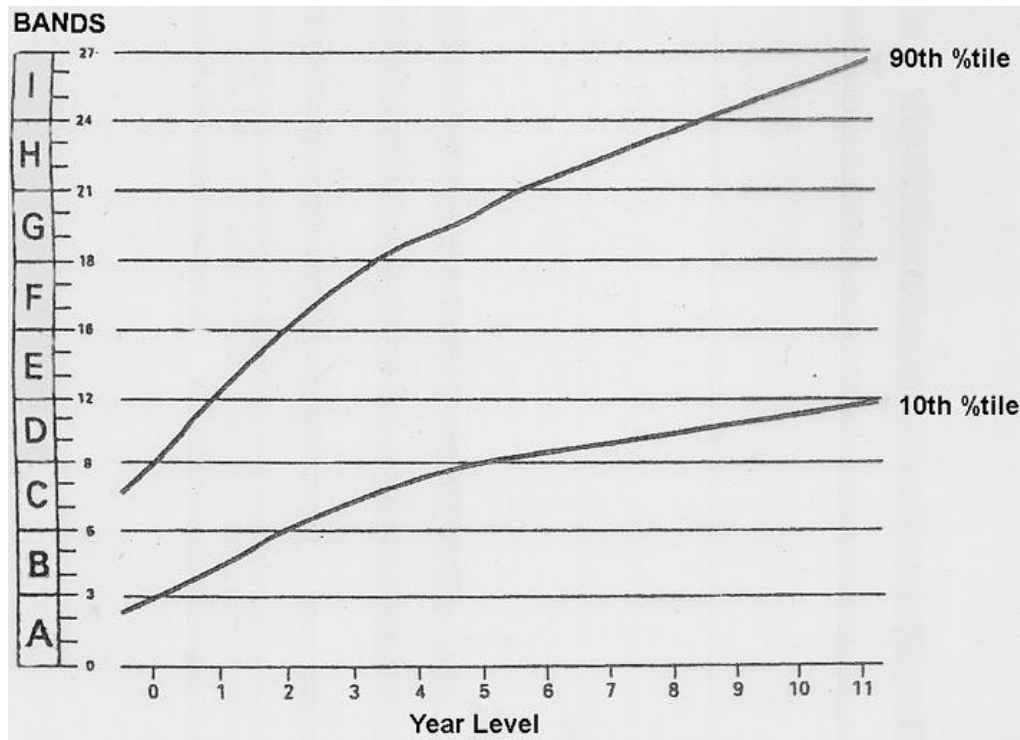
Disparities in Early Vocabulary Growth



Source: Hart & Risley (1995)



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Achievement levels in reading of students at the 10th and 90th percentiles: VQSP, University of Melbourne.

Sourced: Literacy Solutions, 2013



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Rate of Vocabulary Acquisition (expressive vocabulary):

- 12 months first word appears
 - 18 months 20 - 100 words
 - 2 years 100 - 500 words
 - 2.5 years 300 - 600 words
 - 3 years at least 900 words
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- In order to achieve a normal rate of vocabulary acquisition, children must learn approximately 10 new words each week. For parents, this means lots of talking, singing, reading of books, playing and positive interaction with their child.





Parents' ability to understand their child's speech at different ages:

- 18 months 25%
- 24 months 50 -75%
- 36 months 75 -100%
- 4 years 100%





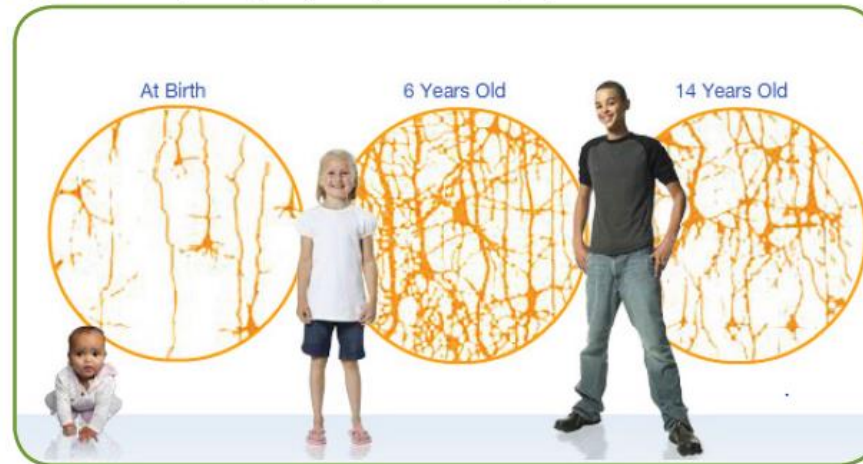
- About 68% of state prison inmates have not received a high school diploma, according to a report in 2009 by an Oregon (USA) organization of law enforcement officers and prosecutors called [Fight Crime: Invest in Kids.](#)
- In Australia and overseas research demonstrates that high proportions (some 50% in Australian studies) of young offenders have a clinically significant, but previously undetected, oral language disorder (Snow and Powell 2012).



Why the early years are important...

Genes provide the initial map for brain development, beginning with the basic connections in the brain from birth. Significant 'wiring' occurs during the first years of a child's life and this effectively programs child development. At age 3 a child has around 1000 trillion brain connections or synapses, which in later development are selectively pruned. When adolescence is reached, brain synapses will number around 500 trillion, and this number remains relatively stable into adulthood.

Figure 1. The pruning trajectory of brain synapses



<http://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/aedi/130171%20AEDI%20Brain%20development%20in%20children.pdf>



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The architecture of the brain (the neural circuits) is built in a hierarchical 'bottom-up' sequence. This means the foundation is paramount, as higher level circuits are built on lower level ones. Each newly acquired skill aids in the sequential development of the next.

Attaining the more complex and higher order skills becomes much more difficult when the foundation is shaky. As the foundations are built upon, brain circuits stabilise making them much harder to change and this highlights the importance of getting them right the first time.

Positive early experiences result in optimal brain development, which in turn provides the foundation for the other skills and abilities children need for success at school and for life.

<http://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/aedi/130171%20AEDI%20Brain%20development%20in%20children.pdf>





Table 1. Key features of early brain development

| Brain development period | Key features |
|--------------------------|--|
| Ante-natal | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● All five senses begin to function before birth.● Prenatal sensory experiences actually help shape the brain and nervous system.● Prenatal experiences prime the attachment behaviours of the infant. |
| 0–3 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● A rapid period of brain development which can be:<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ fostered by relationships with caregivers, and→ supported by optimal community environments for families and children.● Brain development is vulnerable to toxic stress (depending on length and number of stressors for the child). |
| By school age | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Children build on the solid foundation of the first five years.● It is more difficult for children to take advantage of the learning environment of schools if:<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ they have not had an optimal home environment→ there is restricted access to quality early childhood services→ they have experienced a poor quality community environment. |
| Adolescence | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Brain development prioritises the connections used most often, resulting in 'pruning' of brain networks or circuits.● As children enter this period, more intensive resources are required if children have missed the opportunities for optimal caregiving and environments in the preceding years. |

<http://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/aedi/130171%20AEDI%20Brain%20development%20in%20children.pdf>



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Oral Language video (Deslea Konza)



<http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/northernadelaide/pages/comp/43073/?reFlag=1>

http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/northernadelaide/files/links/02orallanguagev2_wmv.wmv



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Oral language skills continue to be important throughout all the school years – in fact, throughout life.

“We live at the level of our language. Whatever we can articulate we can imagine or understand or explore.” Ellen Gilchrist (2000)



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- Oral language proficiency assists the establishment and maintenance of personal and social relationships, in communicating and meeting everyday needs, in managing our business, recreational, health and financial affairs, in optimising employment opportunities – in every facet of our lives.





Thus oral language development is not just the domain of the early childhood teacher, teachers can continue to help students become more articulate and sophisticated users of the language throughout their school years, and thus equip them for fuller and more rewarding participation in life.

Konza (2011)



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Vocabulary

The importance of vocabulary cannot be underestimated. It is critical to reading success as comprehension improves when you know what the words mean.



Vocabulary Video - Deslea Konza



<http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/northernadelaide/pages/comp/43073/?reFlag=1>



05vocabularyv2.wmv



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Words are the currency of communication. A robust vocabulary improves all areas of communication — listening, speaking, reading and writing. When children and adolescents improve their vocabulary their academic and social confidence and competence improve, too.



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Oral language is essential for successful relationships to occur, for success in literacy and indeed, wider learning success. Language that is heard must be fully understood before the language that is read can be decoded and understood.

We also use language to express our thoughts, firstly at the oral level and later encoded into print.





As educators we are responsible for enabling our kids to be the best they can be. How? Give children the tools to succeed. Plan opportunities to talk, talk, talk, share books and build their vocabulary.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/fionaindigo>




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We literally live at the level of our language.



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- From birth to age three, children have roughly 15,000 hours of learning opportunity
 - Whether these hours are filled with language or left empty makes an extraordinary difference to children's development.

Ref: From Babbling to Books – Building Pre-Reading Skills Reading Rockets
Sourced: Koala Joeys 2013



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High expectations for listeners

LISTEN UP!

Listening is important for your child's development because it helps to teach the skills needed to read, communicate and build social skills.





Foundations for future learning are established well before children start school. The experiences of the early years have a huge impact on whether children succeed at school or struggle at school. Professor Frank Oberklaid, 2009.



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Childhood is not a race to see how quickly a child can read, write, and count. Childhood is a small window of time to learn and develop at the pace which is right for each individual child.



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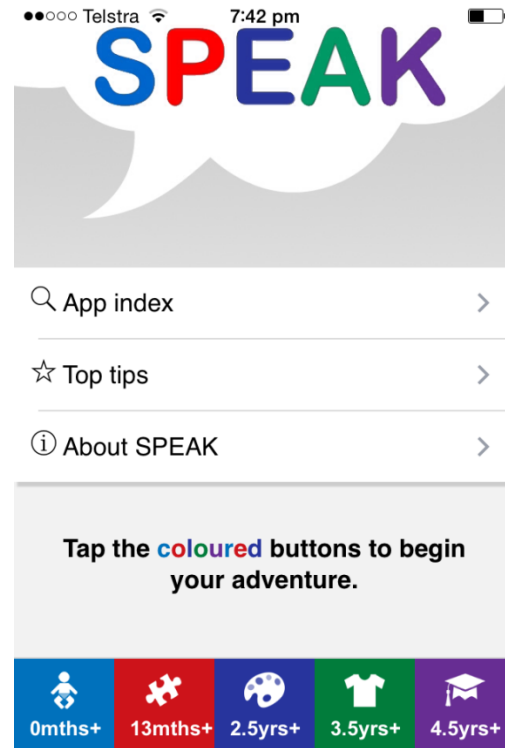
How can you make a difference?



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wuSaNCIde4>



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Make chatter matter every day.

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