
Appendix 7: Normative issues

Normative information is crucial for practitioners in any field of atypical development. A sound knowledge of what occurs in normal development enables a practitioner to recognise atypical performance and to measure it in terms of how far removed from normal it is.

The following notes provide information from normative studies on aspects of speech development that have relevance for children with speech disorders and specifically those with developmental verbal dyspraxia. Further details can be accessed from the individual papers in the reference list provided at the end of this appendix.

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The relationship between early vocalisations and speech

Children with dyspraxic difficulties often have a history of delayed speech development. Typically, they have not babbled or babbled very late; they have been late in producing their first words and have had difficulties in imitating speech models provided by adults. In addition, many children demonstrate difficulties with breathing for speech and with vocal control-skills, usually mastered in the early months of life.

Information on early speech skills should be obtained from a case history and an informal assessment of voice should be made during the speech assessment. Referral to an ENT Consultant may also be required.

Normative notes from the literature:

Stark (1980)

Speech production skills can be viewed as "occurring in sequences of stages, each of which is related to its predecessors in a coherent way." (CF Jakobson 1941, 1968 on dissociation between "babbling" and "speech").

Vocalisations → babble → jargon → 1st words → word joining.

Oller (1980)

Basic phonation begins at birth when the child cries. By 4 months, vocal play involving squealing, cooing, laughter etc occurs.