

# Nuts & Bolts: Typical Language Learners' Development

TABLE 12.1 A Summary of Milestones in Typical Language Development

	12 to 15 months	18 months	24 to 36 months	3 to 4 years	4 to 7 years
<b>Semantics</b>	<p>Average expressive vocabulary size at 15 months: 10 words</p> <p>Average receptive vocabulary size at 15 months: 50 words</p> <p>Comprehension strategies include attending to objects named, and doing what is usually done</p>	<p>Average expressive vocabulary size at 18 months: 100 words (±105)</p> <p>Average receptive vocabulary size at 18 months: 300 words</p> <p>Comprehension strategies include acting on objects in the way mentioned, interpreting sentences as requests for child action</p>	<p>Average expressive vocabulary size at 24 months: 300 words (±75)</p> <p>Average receptive vocabulary size at 24 months: 900 words</p> <p>Comprehension strategies include interpreting sentences according to knowledge of probable events</p>	<p>Average expressive vocabulary size at 3 years: 900 words</p> <p>Comprehension strategies include supplying most probable missing information in answer to difficult questions</p>	<p>Average expressive vocabulary size at 6 years: 2,500 words</p> <p>Average receptive vocabulary size at 6 years: 8,000 words</p> <p>Comprehension strategies include overreliance on word order to process sentences that use unusual word order, such as passives</p>
<b>Syntax</b>	<p>First productions are single-word <i>holophrases</i>; one word carries the force of a whole sentence</p>	<p>Average age of first word combinations: 18 months (normal range: 14 to 24 months)</p> <p>First word combinations express basic semantic relations with consistent word order</p>	<p>Average MLU at 24 months: 1.92 (±0.5)</p> <p>Average MLU at 30 months: 2.54 (±0.6)</p> <p>Average MLU at 36 months: 3.16 (±0.7)</p>	<p>Average MLU at 4 years: 4.4 (±0.9)</p> <p>Grammatical morphemes become more consistent</p> <p>Mature forms of negatives and questions develop</p>	<p>Average MLU at 5 years: 5.6 (±1.2)</p> <p>Use of complex sentences increases from less than 10% to more than 20% of all utterances</p>
<b>Phonology</b>	<p>Most productions have CV or CVCV (consonant vowel/consonant vowel combinations, e.g., "ba" or "mama") form</p> <p>Front stops and nasals are most frequent consonants</p>	<p>Back stops, fricatives, and glides are added to the consonant inventory</p> <p>CVC syllable shapes begin to be used</p> <p>50% of consonants are produced correctly</p>	<p>9 to 10 different consonants are used in initial position; 5 to 6 in final; stops at all places of articulation are used; liquids appear</p> <p>Two-syllable words and initial consonant clusters are used by a majority of children</p> <p>70% of consonants are correct; speech is 50% intelligible</p>	<p>Most sounds are produced correctly</p> <p>Consonant blends are used</p> <p>Some phonological simplification processes may persist</p> <p>Speech is nearly 100% intelligible</p>	<p>Almost all sounds are produced correctly</p> <p>Phonological processes are no longer used; a few distortions on difficult sounds (<i>/s/, /l/, /r/</i>) may persist</p> <p>Phonological analysis skills are learned for reading and spelling</p>
<b>Pragmatics</b>	<p>Average rate of communications: 1 per minute</p> <p>Requests and comments are used; communication is accomplished by combining gestures with speechlike vocalizations</p>	<p>Average rate of communications: 2 per minute</p> <p>Requests and comments are used; words predominate; gestural/vocal communication decreases</p>	<p>Average rate of communications: 5 per minute</p> <p>Requests and comments are used; children begin to ask questions and convey new information; word combinations predominate</p>	<p>Talk about past and future events increases</p> <p>More options for politeness are acquired</p> <p>New communicative functions (projecting, narrating, imagining, etc.) are expressed</p>	<p>Language is used to predict, reason, negotiate</p>
<b>Play</b>	<p>Conventional, functional play</p>	<p>Symbolic play using self as actor</p>	<p>Pretend play involving others and using multiple schemes</p>	<p>Sequences of events are played out (preparing food, setting table, eating)</p> <p>Child engages in dialogues, talking for all characters</p>	<p>Fantasy themes are played out</p> <p>Child or doll can take multiple roles</p> <p>Elaboration of planning and narrative story lines included in play</p>

Tager-Flusberg, H., Paul, R., & Lord, C. (2005). Chapter 12: Language and communication in autism. In Volkmar, F. R., Raul, R., Klin, A., & Choen, D. (Eds.). *Handbook of autism and pervasive developmental disorders, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.