



Understanding Developmental Language Disorder

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that emerges in early childhood and persists into adulthood. DLD was previously identified by many different labels including, Specific Language Impairment, Language Learning Impairment, childhood aphasia and Language Impairment. It is important for school staff to understand more about DLD, its prevalence, and its impact, to best support their students during their schooling years.

Keywords: *Developmental Language Disorder, understanding, receptive, expressive*

What is DLD?

Under the umbrella of 'Language Disorder' is DLD which refers to difficulties with language, including reading, writing, speaking and understanding that is not associated with a known biomedical condition. DLD is life-long and can have a significant functional impact on an individual's life.

Language Disorder

(Language Disorder and DLD = roughly 10% of the population)

2.3% of children have **Language Disorder associated with a biomedical condition**

Refers to Language Disorder that is associated with biomedical conditions. These include:

- Autism
- Intellectual disability
- Cerebral palsy
- Brain injury
- Sensorineural hearing loss
- Down syndrome

7.6% of children have **DLD**

Refers to persistent and significant language difficulties without an associated condition.

However, DLD can commonly co-occur with:

- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- Developmental coordination disorder
- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia

However, these conditions are not directly associated with Language Disorder

Prevalence of DLD

An Australian study conducted in 2022 identified DLD in 6.4% of 10-year-old children. Compared with other neurodevelopmental conditions, DLD is more prevalent than ADHD, is nearly 7 times more common than autism, and is 46 times more prevalent than permanent childhood hearing impairment.



To put these statistics into perspective,
approximately 2 students in each classroom (of 30 students) have DLD



Functional Impact of DLD

Difficulties expressing themselves: ▶ Forming grammatically correct sentences ▶ Selecting and using correct vocabulary ▶ Answering questions correctly ▶ Sharing a story or their thoughts and feelings 	Difficulties comprehending language: ▶ Remembering and understanding instructions ▶ Understanding questions asked ▶ Learning new words ▶ Listening and understanding spoken information (e.g., stories, instructions) 
Social language difficulties: ▶ Participating in a conversation ▶ Connecting in play with peers ▶ Understanding the rules of the game ▶ Making and understanding jokes 	Difficulties in the classroom: ▶ Difficulties in all areas of writing e.g., quality and amount of writing, grammar, vocabulary, spelling ▶ 6x more likely to have reading difficulties ▶ 4x more likely to have difficulties with math 

Impacts of DLD on Daily Life

It is crucial to recognise that language is more than just a tool for academic success. Students with DLD may face social and emotional challenges as language is a key component of self-identity. Teaching self-advocacy and providing students with patience, empathy, and opportunities to connect with others are meaningful ways to nurture their confidence. Therefore, it is important to incorporate these social-emotional learning strategies into any language intervention.

What should I do if I suspect a student has DLD?

Consultation with speech pathologist is essential to determine the nature of the student's communication difficulties. A referral to a paediatrician may also be required in the diagnosis process to identify or exclude the presence of biomedical conditions.

Want to learn more?

To learn more about Language Disorder and how to support children and young people for whom language is their primary disorder, please **contact us**. Language Disorder Australia provides holistic, innovative and effective therapy, education and support services and has a transdisciplinary team of speech pathologists, occupational therapists, educators, psychologists and physiotherapists.

Contact: 1300 881 763 or hello@languagedisorder.org.au

Website: languagedisorder.org.au



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Partnered with

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