

# The A-B-Cs of Child Language Development

All parents look forward to hearing their children utter their first words. Yet for some children, speech is a challenge which requires immense effort on their part. **Ms Melisa Wooi, Speech Therapist from the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, NUH**, shares more about child language development and the instrumental role parents play in facilitating this process.

## The Common Barriers

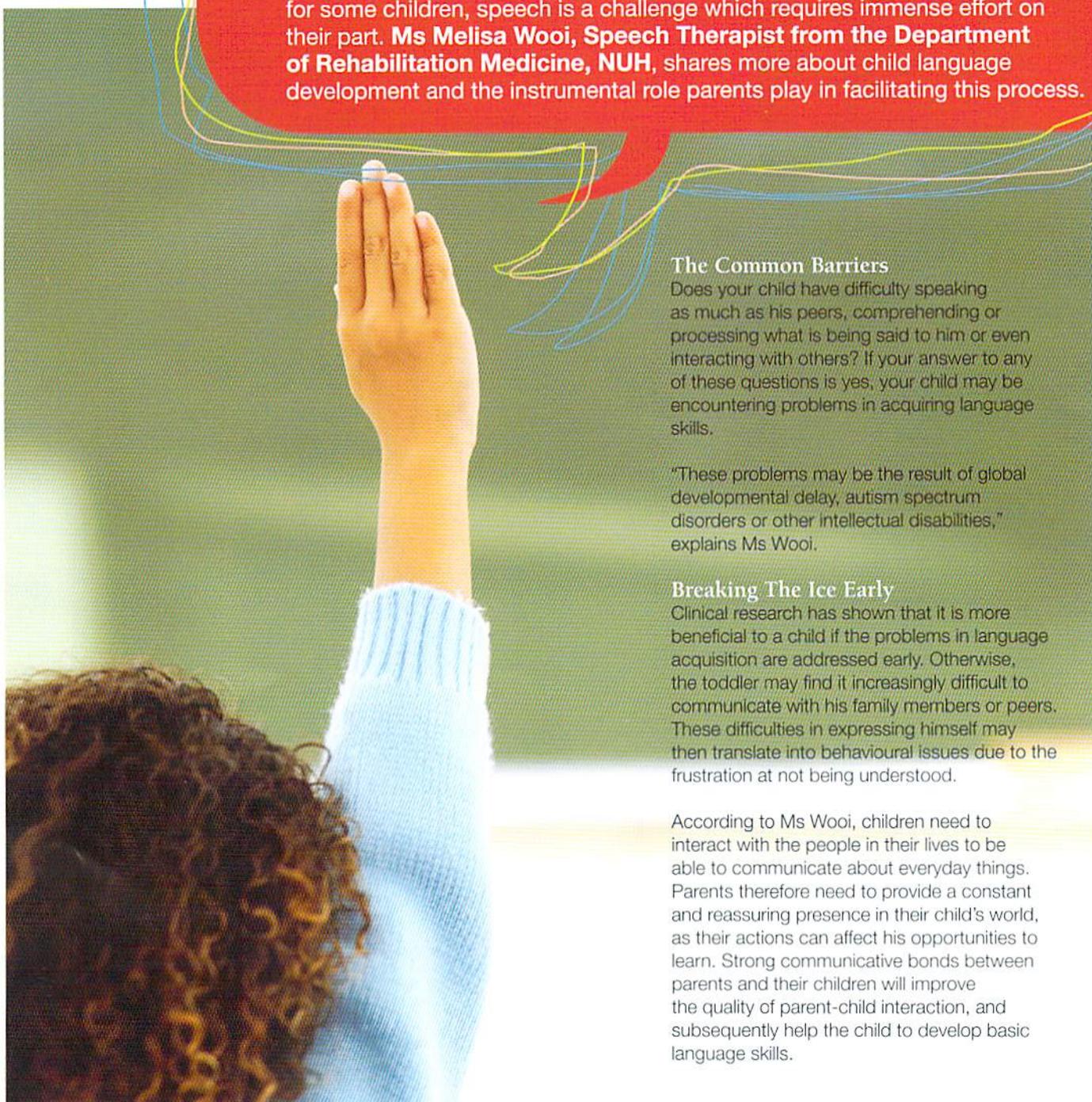
Does your child have difficulty speaking as much as his peers, comprehending or processing what is being said to him or even interacting with others? If your answer to any of these questions is yes, your child may be encountering problems in acquiring language skills.

"These problems may be the result of global developmental delay, autism spectrum disorders or other intellectual disabilities," explains Ms Wooi.

## Breaking The Ice Early

Clinical research has shown that it is more beneficial to a child if the problems in language acquisition are addressed early. Otherwise, the toddler may find it increasingly difficult to communicate with his family members or peers. These difficulties in expressing himself may then translate into behavioural issues due to the frustration at not being understood.

According to Ms Wooi, children need to interact with the people in their lives to be able to communicate about everyday things. Parents therefore need to provide a constant and reassuring presence in their child's world, as their actions can affect his opportunities to learn. Strong communicative bonds between parents and their children will improve the quality of parent-child interaction, and subsequently help the child to develop basic language skills.



# Seven ways to help your child along in language development



1

## Play

Spending time to play, interact and bond with your child is one of the best ways to stimulate early language development.

2

## Create Conversation

Your child's progress in his language development also depends on his opportunities to use enjoyable little "conversations" to communicate with you and his peers. Encourage him to talk about the things he enjoys doing or that he finds interesting. If your child likes watching dogs chasing balls in the park, you could create opportunities for conversation by bringing him to the park and start a conversation on what he observes on the outing.

3

## Speak Slowly And Repeat If Necessary

By hearing simple, repetitive language that provides the words for what he is interested in, the child is able to grasp concepts and words more quickly.

4

## Create A Language-Rich Environment

Talking, reading, singing or just spending time together with your child helps to create a language rich environment which is conducive to language development.

5

## Teach Vocabulary And Concepts Explicitly

Parents should teach toddlers basic language concepts such as location (e.g. behind, in front), opposites (e.g. wet/dry, open/close) and basic vocabulary (e.g. mummy, daddy).

6

## Model The Correct Language

Modelling what your child can say helps him to hear, see and experience the action or object clearly for himself. This enables him to derive meaning from the object or action that he sees and provides him with the information he needs to express himself.

7

## Expand Your Child's Verbal Responses

For example, if your child says "apple", you can add on with "eat apple". This provides him with the opportunity to build further understanding and communicate in more specific detail about a related topic using new words.

## Contact Us

**NUH Parent Training Programme**  
Children with speech, language and communication difficulties require support, encouragement and time to master the skills of communication and language. The Parent Training Programme at NUH imparts the skills of nurturing language and communication to parents, caregivers and teachers.

### Programme

- How and Why Children Communicate
- Children's Personality Types
- Roles that Parents Play (The Helper, The Mover, The Teacher, The Responsive Partner)
- Specific Techniques for Different Personality Types
- Observing, Waiting & Listening Skills
- Playing with Children

### Location

Level 1, Main Building

### Operating Hours

- Mondays to Fridays  
8.00am to 5.00pm
- Saturdays  
8.00am to 12.00pm

### Appointments

Tel: 6772 5168 / 9789 1443  
Email: Rehab\_Appts@nuhs.edu.sg

\* Please note that appointments are by referrals only.

### Services Include

Early Language Development Clinic  
Child Speech Clinic  
Child Fluency Clinic  
School Age Language Clinic  
Autism Spectrum Disorders  
Developmental Disorders  
Child Feeding Clinic