

Frog, where are you? Narratives in children with specific language impairment, early focal brain injury, and Williams syndrome.

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“Frog, where are you?” Narratives in children with specific language impairment, early focal brain injury, and Williams syndrome

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### Abstract

In this cross-population study, we use narratives as a context to investigate language development in children from 4 to 12 years of age from three experimental groups: children with early unilateral focal brain damage (FL;  $N=52$ ); children with specific language impairment (SLI;  $N=44$ ); children with Williams syndrome (WMS;  $N=36$ ), and typically developing controls. We compare the developmental trajectories of these groups in the following domains: morphological errors, use of complex syntax, complexity of narrative structure, and types and frequency of evaluative devices. For the children with early unilateral brain damage, there is initial delay. However, by age 10, they are generally within the normal range of performance for all narrative measures.

Importantly, there are few if any side-specific differences. Children with SLI who have

Interestingly, there are few, if any, side specific differences. Children with SLI, who have no frank neurological damage and show no cognitive impairment demonstrate significantly more delay on all morphosyntactic measures than the FL group. Quantitatively, on morphosyntactic measures, the SLI group clusters with those children with WMS who are moderately retarded. Together these data help us to understand the extent and nature of brain plasticity for language development and those aspects of language and discourse that are dissociable.



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## Keywords

Specific language impairment; Focal brain injury; Williams syndrome; Morphology; Plasticity; Narratives; Language development

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