

Atypical development of language in children

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"I have always been fascinated by language," says Professor Nikki Botting. "However my main motivation and interest has been developmental disorders - children growing up with difficulties. Atypical language is one important aspect for these children."

As Research Centre Lead for Language and Communication Science Research (LCS) within School of Health Sciences, Professor Nikki Botting has long been known for her work on atypical [language](#) development and her recent promotion to Professor - and subsequent inaugural lecture - has affirmed her standing within City and the wider LCS community.

Delivering her inaugural lecture on Wednesday 26 November, Nikki's talk centred on what we know and don't know about atypical language.

"I am interested in how cognition and language interact across different types of [developmental disorder](#), for example autism, developmental language impairment, [attention deficit disorder](#)," says Nikki. "But my specialism is really developmental language impairment (DLI) - what it looks like over time, what associated difficulties these [young people](#) have, and what is hindering them or helping them.

"We know that language has different elements, and that atypical language can occur alongside other difficulties or without any other explanation," says Nikki. "This latter case is when we call it DLI. We know that DLI is a long term issue that it interacts with memory and IQ development, and that social skills are affected, as well as employment,"

she added.

However despite a lot of progress, certain issues still persist, with lack of awareness still a primary problem.

"What we don't know is how cognition and language inter-relate or why emotional difficulties are linked to DLI, and we don't really know how to help these young people efficiently. So where do we go next? We need to sort out some bigger issues which are, in my opinion, delaying progress. Firstly we need to look more openly at combining theoretical approaches. Second, we need to develop better methods of measuring language in children with severe difficulties and across a wider age range.

"However, one of the biggest issue in my field is lack of awareness. Many professionals in education, health and social work are not aware that some young people have a substantial problem understanding what people say, and putting sentences together."

So while great strides have been made over the past few decades, with a great deal of progress made in establishing some key facts about developmental [language difficulties](#) especially regarding associated mechanisms such as memory, emotional health and long term outcomes, there is still much to be done to help raise awareness of these issues. Luckily for City, we have Nikki and her colleagues, who continue to work hard to find out more about atypical language development, helping the children who grow up with these issues.

As a result, Nikki's professorship will also provide an ideal context in which to take her research forward, enabling her to concentrate on the vital work needed to improve our understanding of language impairments and of the most effective interventions for the children in question.

Provided by City University London

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