Podcast**:** Imagine This

Episode Title: Where do our voices come from?

Duration: 12’ 59”

[ABC Kids podcast sting – This is an ABC podcast]

*[Curious classical music starts]*

**Nij:** Hello my name is Nij, and today on Imagine This we’re talking about, well, talking!

**Kid 1:** Talk … Talk … Talking!

**Nij:** Human beings can talk in all kinds of ways. In lots of languages…

*[Layered voices talking in German, Kuku Yalanji, Amharic, Urdu and French]*

**Nij:** With our bodies…

**Kid 2:** I use sign language, it’s called Auslan

**Nij:** and even just with noise!

**Kid 1:** Argh! … Aww! … *Giggle*

**Nij:** How do you talk?

**Kid 2:** My voice comes out of my throat then comes out of my mouth … I talk with my pod and communication device … With your voice!

**Nij:** Ah, yes, your voice, that’s what five-year-old Kate has asked about…

**KATE**: Hi I’m Kate and I want to know where our voices come from?

**Nij:** Where do our voices come from?

**Kid 1:** Inside our body … There’s a little voice inside your tummy then when you talk it creates voice ... it goes up into your head, then you know what you’re going to say, then it goes down into your chin then up into your mouth

**Nij:** And why do we all sound different?

**Kid 2:** Cos we’re all different people and we’re all different sizes … we are all different in the whole world

**Nij:** I think we better ask someone who knows a lot about voices

**Kid 1:** Who?

**Nij:** A speech pathologist. They are experts when it comes to speech, language, and communication

**Kid 2:** Communication means we tell each other words … it means talking to each other

**Nij:** Associate Professor Pammi Raghavendra knows all about using our voice – let’s ask her

**Kid 1:** Let’s go!

*[Sounds of a busy food market – food frying and sizzling, and sellers calling out foods, a radio is playing music, there are lots of footsteps and snatches of conversations in different languages****]***

**Nij:** I love this place – it’s the food market

**Kid 2:** I can smell lots of yummy food … and someone grilling steak

**Nij:** Smells amazing

**Kid 1:** It makes me hungry … Are those mushrooms?

**Nij:** Oh, they look good

**Kid 2:** I think I could help cook

**Nij:** Nah, I think we better stay together. It’s pretty crowded

**Kid 1:** Yeah … Lots of people … Can I hold your hand? … Yes, you can

**Nij:** Ah there’s Pammi by the yakitori. Hello!

**Kid 2:** Hi Professor … Hello

**Pammi:** Hello everyone!

**Nij:** Pammi, we have a question – where do our voices come from?

**Kid 1:** And why do they sound different?

**Pammi:** Well, we’re in the right place! There are lots of voices here and it’s full of talking

*[People talking in Hungarian, German, Amharic, French all talking over each other]*

**Pammi:** Right now, we’re speaking in English – but people speak in all kinds of ways – in lots of accents, like mine, and in lots of languages too.

**Kid 2:** Hola! Hola in Spanish means ‘hi’

**Nij:** Hola!

**Kid 1:** German … Guten Morgen it means ‘good morning’ in German … Croatian … Gujrati … Egyptian

**Nij:** I’ve always wanted to speak French better *(speaking in French)*

**Kid 2:** *(Speaking in French)* … You have to keep practicing and not give up

**Nij:** Oh, thank you, I’ll keep practicing

**Pammi:** There are so many languages spoken right across Australia and the world that people use to talk.

**Kid 1:** How many? … Lots

**Pammi:** Thousands of them! And there are lots of ways to talk too – it’s not always with our mouths

**Kid 2:** I use Auslan cos you can use your hands … And I use my pod and communication device

**Pammi:** Exactly. C’mon let’s find a quiet place to talk more about this.

**Nij:** Good idea

**Kid 1:** It’s too noisy here … Yeah

**Nij:** But I’m coming back for that börek

*[Footsteps through market, crowd noise softens to a park. Birds are tweeting in the distance, there’s a light breeze through trees. Kids playing nearby]*

**Pammi:** This is a nice spot. I can actually hear you now, and that’s important because listening is a huge part of using our voices and communicating

*[Orchestral waltz music starts]*

**Kid 2:** Yeah, listening is very important … That we listen what the other people say to us … Well, you listen with your ears, when they go inside your eardrums, they vibrate it, and your brain will figure out what another person’s saying … I use hearing aids and they’re really clever computers that actually make things sound louder

**Pammi:** Yes, just like there are lots of ways to talk, there are lots of ways to listen. The important thing is that it goes two ways. There is a sender and a receiver.

**Kid 1:** Sender and receiver?

**Pammi:** You might say speaker and listener. But not everyone speaks with their mouths or listens with their ears.

**Kid 2:** Oh yeah

**Pammi:** Communication is like throwing a ball. One person says something…

*[Sound of baseball being hit in a stadium]*

**Kid 1:** Sender!

**Pammi:** And another person catches it

*[Sound of ball being caught and crowd cheering]*

**Kid 2:** Receiver!

**Pammi:** This is communication. We take turns to talk and to listen.

*[Waltz ends]*

**Nij:** Pammi, I’m talking now with my mouth, and I can feel my tongue moving around, and my teeth, and it feels like the sound is coming from my throat. What’s happening?

**Pammi:** Well, if we’re talking about the sound that comes out of your mouth, you might think of your voice box in your throat

**Kid 1:** I think it looks like a box and it has a lot of strings in it to control your voice?

**Pammi:** The scientific word is the larynx

**Nij and Kid 2:** Larynx

**Kid 1:** But why do we have a voice box? We don’t have boxes in our bodies

**Pammi:** It’s not shaped like a box

**Kid 2:** Ooh mysterious!

*[Kids, Nij and Pammi all laugh]*

**Pammi:** It’s more like a tube that has two folds in it. These folds are called vocal cords.   
The vocal cords don’t make any sounds on their own though.

**Kid 1:** How do they do it?

**Pammi:** We need air

*[Deep breath in and out as gentle piano music starts]*

**Pammi:** When air gets pushed out of my lungs, it goes into my throat and passes through the voice box. When the air moves through my vocal cords, the folds in my voice box start to vibrate

*[Humming vibrations]*

**Kid 2:** And the vibrations come out your mouth?

**Pammi:** and that’s what makes the sound you can hear now.

**Nij:** So, I can make sound by moving air through my vocal cords

**Pammi:** I imagine the vocal cords a bit like rubber bands. When you pull a rubber band tight, it makes a sound. Here give it a try…

*[Sound of thrumming rubber bands]*

**Nij:** So, it’s doing that in my throat right now?

**Kid 1:** You can kind of feel the vibrations

**Nij:** That’s how I talk?

**Pammi:** Well, air and vocal cords aren’t enough on their own, that just creates a sound, like aaaahh

**Kid 2:** Aaahhhhhh!

**Pammi:** Or mmmm

**Nij:** Mmm

**Pammi:** That may not mean something on its own

**Kid 1:** No, it’s just noise

**Pammi:** Exactly. Speech is when the sound enters my mouth. Then my tongue, lips, back of my mouth, top of my mouth create the shapes to make words

**Nij:** How come we all sound different?

**Pammi:** Everyone’s vocal cords are different shapes and sizes.

**Kid 2:** Like a big guitar has a completely different sound to a little ukulele

**Pammi:** And if I want to be LOUD! That uses more air from my lungs

**Kid 1:** This is LOOUUUD!

**Pammi:** And if we use less air – we can make a whisper.

Kid 2: This is a whisper

*[Kids and Nij giggle]*

**Pammi:** But now we’re only talking about speech, that’s not what a voice is

**Kid 1:** I talk with my pod and communication device. Without my pod I can’t talk

**Pammi:** Exactly. Some people may not use their own speech but that doesn’t mean they don’t have a voice.

**Kid 2:** Yeah, your voice comes from inside you … Not your mouth … You could do sign words … You do actions with your body

**Pammi:** Yes, there are lots of sign languages all around the world, people can also point to pictures and photos, write and draw, we can use our bodies and our faces too

**Nij:** Yeah, smiling, frowning…

**Kid 1:** When you’re angry you do cross arms … Folding their arms, humph! … Or if you’re really excited you can jump up and down

**Pammi:** And there are lots of ways to listen too. It’s not just about using ears

**Kid 2:** My mum uses hearing aids … Yeah, I use hearing aids. When I don’t have them, I use my eyes to listen

**Pammi:** Yes, all of this. The way we speak and listen, or send and receive, is called communication

**Nij:** So why do we communicate in all these different ways?

*[Gentle harp music starts]*

**Kid 1:** Your heart makes you want to talk, and your brain … And I have lots of things to say

**Pammi:** We communicate to say what we want, and what we think, to learn about others, to share our ideas, feelings, and ask questions. From the moment we are born, we start to communicate.

**Kid 2:** But babies can’t talk … They just cry a lot like a baby

**Pammi:** Crying is an excellent way to communicate, isn’t it?

**Kid 1:** People cry when they’re angry … Yeah and they want something … And a baby cries without having to speak words, it still is communicating … Crying for food and standing up … It’s their way of talking

**Nij:** It really does get your attention

**Pammi:** Exactly. And babies are very clever, they learn that when they cry, someone comes to feed them, or change their nappy

**Kid 2:** No thanks, stinky!

*[Nij and Pammi laugh]*

**Pammi:** As babies get older, they point to things and listen and watch people speaking around them and this is how they create their own voice!

**Kid 1:** Amazing!

**Nij:** It sounds like a voice comes from lots of listening

**Pammi:** Yes. When we speak, we need people to listen too. All communication must have those two parts. Can we talk and have a good conversation if you don’t listen to me?

**Nij and Kid 2:** No

**Pammi:** Or I never let you talk?

**Kid 1:** No way

**Pammi:** We wouldn’t get anywhere, would we? That’s why, however we communicate, with speech or with our bodies or with technology, we need to take turns. If I’m speaking, you’re listening, and then we swap

**Kid 2:** So, when I speak!

**NIJ/Pammi:** We listen!

**Pammi:** The listening is just as important as the speaking. So, when I think of your question, where does our voice come from? I’d say that our voice actually comes from being heard and that starts from our very first day as babies.

**Kid 1:** And a voice doesn’t just mean words coming out of your mouth. Having a voice means being worthy of something, being part of something, having something to communicate

**Nij:** It’s been so nice listening to you all today. Thanks, Pammi.

**Pammi:** And you as well!

**Kid 2:** Bye Pammi! … Thank you! … Cya

*[Gentle orchestral music starts]*

**Nij:** So, Kate, the sound of my voice comes from my voice box

**Kid 1:** Larynx

**Nij:** A space in my throat where there are two folds of muscle called vocal cords, that rub together

*[Thrumming rubber band]*

**Nij:** And vibrate when air moves through them

**Kid 2:**Aaahhh!

**Nij:** The shape of my words comes from my teeth, and tongue, and nose and mouth, all working together to make speech

**Kid 1:** Talking!

**Nij:** But a voice is more than just speech. A voice is sharing your thoughts and ideas and feelings in many ways

**Kid 2:** With pictures … With our bodies … And with technology

**Nij:** Everyone has a voice but not everyone uses their own speech or talks in a language that we understand straightaway.

*[Voices speaking in Amharic, Hungarian and Kuku Yalanji]*

**Nij:** That’s why it’s so important to be really good listeners, so that everyone has the time and space to share their voice.

*[Classical music ends]*

**Nij:** Imagine This is an ABC Kids listen podcast hosted by me, Dr Niraj Lal. A big thanks to Associate Professor Pammi Raghavendra from Flinders University, and to all the kids who helped make the podcast. Today’s episode was written and produced by Soumia Bella, and was made on Gadubanud, Kaurna and Gadigal lands. Our engineer is Que Nguyen and senior producer is Emma Gibbs. For more great podcasts to play, music to move, and stories & soundtracks to sleep, download the ABC Kids listen App, free from your app store.