A gene that has been associated with dyslexia now has been linked to another persistent disability that first surfaces in childhood - Specific Language Impairment.

A recently published study led by Mabel Rice at the University of Kansas is the first to report that a variant in the gene KIAA0319 is a likely culprit in Specific Language Impairment. Children with Specific Language Impairment, which affects about 7 percent of 5- to 6-year-olds, have no other developmental disorders, hearing loss or brain injuries but are late to begin talking. When they do talk, they use simpler sentence structure and immature grammar. Some also develop reading problems.

The finding is important because it shows that genes can affect language development and that other problems - such as speech production disorders and reading delays - are, in all likelihood, related.

"We've come to realize that language really sets the platform for reading to emerge and to thrive," Rice said. "Without a solid language system, it's much harder to get reading going."

Rice and a team of researchers from across the globe studied 322 individuals, including children with Specific Language Impairment.
Talk to your child when you are playing together.

Have fun with nursery rhymes and songs, especially those with actions.

Encourage your child to listen to different sounds, such as cars, animals, the telephone.

Gain your child’s attention when you want to talk together.

Encourage your child to communicate in any way, not just through words.

Increase vocabulary by giving choices, e.g. “Do you want orange or black currant?”

Talk about things as they happen, e.g. when you are both unpacking the shopping bags.

Listen carefully and give your child time to finish talking. Take turns to speak.

Always respond in some way when your child says something.

Help your child to use more words by adding to what is said, e.g. if they said “ball” you might say, “Yes, throw me the ball.”

If your child says something incorrectly, say it back the right way, e.g. “Goggy bited it.” “Yes, the dog bit it, didn’t he?”

Try and have a special time with your child each day to play with toys and picture books.

Michael Vitevitch is an associate professor in Psychology and an affiliated scientist with KU’s Life Span Institute, one of the largest research and development programs in the nation for the prevention and treatment of developmental disabilities. Vitevitch’s work, published in the April 2008 issue of the Journal of Speech-Language-Hearing Research, suggests that when one part of our language network breaks down, the system has the ability to reroute itself.

“Think of the diagram of flights you see in an in-flight magazine,” Vitevitch said. “In bad weather, one or two airports may be shut down but the entire system doesn’t come to a halt. You can take out parts of the system but other parts pick up the slack.” A cognitive psychologist, Vitevitch has long studied the mental lexicon — how words are stored and retrieved in the human brain. Though a dictionary approaches words alphabetically, research suggests that the brain organizes words differently — by sound, by word meaning or by a combination of sound and meaning.

Vitevitch’s research is currently funded by the National Institutes of Health—National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. He is an expert in research of language and speech, speech perception, and cochlear implants.

By Mary-Margaret Simpson

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http://www.features.ku.edu/rice/
The differences persisted through the third grade according to a follow up study by Hart and KU researchers Dale Walker, Charles Greenwood and Judith Carta. The study showed that the amount of language a child hears in its first three years meant having a larger vocabulary at age 3 and predicted later school readiness, spoken language, early literacy and achievement level.

All of the KU researchers are associated with the Juniper Garden’s Children’s Project located in Kansas City, Kan., one of the 12 centers of the Life Span Institute.
About this Newsletter:
The BNCD newsletter is designed to keep you informed about the ongoing research projects that are being conducted by BNCD researchers at the University of Kansas. Participants who have been part of recent research projects conducted by BNCD researchers, parents who have expressed interest in participating in future research, and individuals from organizations such as schools and daycare centers that have an interest in BNCD studies will receive this newsletter from time to time to keep them up-to-date about the research activities at the BNCD. If you do not wish to receive future newsletters, please call or e-mail the BNCD to have your name removed from our list. Research at the BNCD is supported in part by grant number 5 P30 DC05803 from the National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) at the University of Kansas.

Springtime Puzzle Search!
Unscramble each word. Then use the marked letters to solve the second puzzle.

- FSOWREL
- RANI
- WRAM
- SUYNN
- SRGAS
- PYAL
- TEIK
- GARNDE
- NGFIIHS
- TPUIL

Created with Discovery Channel School’s PuzzleMaker.