

# Researcher Detects Differences in Early Language of Children with Reading Disability

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Research by University of Maine Assistant Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders Susan Lambrecht Smith is helping to refine speech and language skills of preschoolers as predictors of reading disability.

A [longitudinal study](#) by Smith and three colleagues — Kathleen Scott and Jenny Roberts of Hofstra University, and John Locke of City University of New York — found that some components of phonological awareness appear to remain strong predictors of reading disability in at-risk youngsters over the course of preschool and [kindergarten](#).

Phonological awareness is defined as the conscious sensitivity to the sound structure of [language](#). Performance on tasks such as phoneme deletion (e.g. pronouncing the word “cat” with and without the first letter) and rhyme production were highly predictive of later reading status.

The importance of this finding was that the researchers found distinct differences in other skills such as alphabet knowledge and rapid naming that were evident in pre-K youngsters with learning disabilities when compared to their peers were diminished by the time the children entered the first grade.

The findings were published in the journal *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*.

**More information:** [www.umaine.edu/magazine/past-issues-2010/sound-check/](http://www.umaine.edu/magazine/past-issues-2010/sound-check/)

Provided by University of Maine

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