

# Why repetition may hold key to helping children with specific language impairment

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Credit: University of Sussex

Simple repetition learning techniques could help young children struggling with language to learn vocabulary faster, according to the latest research from scientists from the UK and Germany.

The study by Dr Jessica Horst of the University of Sussex and Professor Katharina Rohlfing of Paderborn University examined whether repeated storybook reading was beneficial to children who had been diagnosed with specific language impairment (SLI) in helping them to retain information and word recall compared to those who were developing at the typical rate for their age.

Working with 3-year-old German children and building on the results from a 2011 study conducted at Sussex by Dr Horst, which found that preschool children do retain more new words through story repetition, the researchers discovered that the same was applicable to language-impaired children.

They tested the two groups of children on new word retention following identical storybook reading sessions. Although the children with SLI did significantly worse than their peers on the initial word learning tests, there was no difference in word retention between the two groups one week

later.

The results indicate that over time, children with SLI benefit from hearing the same stories again and again and will come as a huge boost to a number of parents of language-impaired children across the world.

Commenting on the research, Dr Horst said:

"Our research shows that something as simple as reading the same stories again and again can also help children with specific language impairment increase their word knowledge. We hope these results will be encouraging to parents of children with SLI.

"Although there is much left to do, these findings are promising and may help us create cost-effective intervention for children with SLI – including interventions that parents can participate in too."

Professor Rohlfing added:

"Crucial to our results, [children](#) benefited from repetitions of the stories and the fact that several reading sessions took place before the final testing. So, reading a [story](#) again and again as well as establishing a reading routine might be the best combination for an effective intervention."

**More information:** Katharina J. Rohlfing et al. Benefits of Repeated Book Readings in Children With SLI, *Communication Disorders Quarterly* (2017). [DOI: 10.1177/1525740117692480](https://doi.org/10.1177/1525740117692480)

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