Less talk from parents can encourage more speech from children

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A University of Bath research student has helped with a study that has found children with poor language skills improve when their parents make a few simple changes in the way they interact with them.

Student research associate Louise Davey was on a placement at the University of Sydney, Australia, working with four and five-year-olds attending pre-schools, and their parents.

She taught the parents of children with language difficulties to use simple strategies to develop their child's language skills.

The strategies were used while reading books and during everyday conversations and included: pausing to allow the child an opportunity to talk about a topic of interest to them; asking open-ended questions; and encouraging the child to talk more on their chosen topics.

Louise, who was working under the supervision of Dr Susan Colmar, a lecturer in the Faculty of Education & Social Work at the University, said:

"For me, the most rewarding part of my involvement in the research was observing that just teaching parents a simple intervention to use when looking at books with their children could produce significant changes in terms of children's language, and as such really act to improve the quality of life and educational opportunities available to such children."

Research shows how well we learn language has major implications for our progress in school and our life chances. According to Dr Colmar, an estimated 10 per cent of [children](#) under six experience serious language delays and difficulties.

Provided by University of Bath