

NEWS

Video: Language's variable role in autism

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In the late 1990s, before the Human Genome Project had mapped out the precise locations of each gene, **Simon Fisher** found the first one ever linked to language: **FOXP2**.

Fisher's team found it by analyzing the genes of members of one famous British family with a striking and specific language problem: Many of its members cannot properly coordinate parts of words, so their speech comes out garbled.

FOXP2 encodes a protein that turns other genes on and off. In 2008, Fisher and his colleagues showed that among **FOXP2's molecular targets** is **CNTNAP2**, one of the first genes linked to autism.

Fisher, director of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, recounted the FOXP2 story in a keynote lecture on Saturday evening at the **2012 Society for Neuroscience annual meeting** in New Orleans. On Sunday, in a video interview with SFARI.org, he elaborated on FOXP2's link to autism.