The ability to understand speech is important to language development. In addition, this is an important skill to measure because the ability to understand speech often precedes the development of spoken language. However, the tests that we currently have available to measure this important skill are often very difficult for children with autism to complete, and so the scores that we obtain for these children may not be accurate. Therefore, we are investigating alternative ways to measure these language skills in children.

Who may participate in this project?
We are looking for boys who are between the ages of 2 and 5 years of age and who have either a diagnosis of autism or PDD-NOS, or children who are typically developing. The children must not have neurological disorders (beyond autism), should be free of hearing or vision difficulties (corrected vision and hearing with glasses and/or hearing aids is okay) or other serious health problems such as heart disease. In addition, the children should not be taking any medications on the day of testing with the eye tracker (vitamins are okay).

What type of activities will my child participate in?
Each child will be seen at our Lawrence laboratory for two separate sessions. During the first session, your child will complete two standardized assessments—one for language comprehension and another for autism (we will give both tests to all children, even typically developing children). The standardized assessment of language will consist of having your child identify (by pointing) pictures named by the experimenter, and the autism assessment will be completed while your child participates in free play with toys.

Then, approximately one week later your child will return to our laboratory to complete an eye-tracking task, in which your child will sit in a car seat and look at some pictures projected on a screen in front of the child while listening to the names of pictured objects. While they are looking at the pictures, their eye movements and pupil diameters will be recorded. Finally, we will administer a standardized developmental assessment, which assesses fine motor, visual perception and language development.

How long will these activities take?
Participation would require 2 sessions, and each session should take approximately 2 hours to complete.

Will we be reimbursed for our time and travel?
YES! You will be given $40 for participation in this study, $20 for each of the two sessions.

How do I sign up for participation?
If you are interested in participating in this research project or if you have any further questions, please contact us directly at our Lawrence office at (785) 312-5345 or send an e-mail to autismlab@ku.edu.

We hope that you will consider participation.
Sincerely,

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