

Demystifying Science - August 5, 2018

FOXP2 is one of the most famous genes to be discovered because of its role in language. It is highly expressed during brain development and regulates some muscle movements, aiding in language production. Though found in all animals, a slight change in the composition of the gene in humans makes it possible for us to have speech. Those with a malfunctioning FOXP2 have been found to have severe speech defects. FOXP2 has also been shown to regulate language-like behaviours in mice and songbirds. Over the years, its presence has also been used to bolster the theory of natural selection: how a gene that helps a species continues to linger over generations. However a recent study contests this. An analysis of genetic data from a diverse sample of modern people and Neanderthals saw no evidence for recent, human-specific selection of FOXP2 and revises the history of how we think humans acquired language. The findings have been published in the journal, *Cell*. — *Science Daily*

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Samples were referred to the International Blood Group Reference Laboratory (IBGRL), Bristol, U.K., for serological test.

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