

Verbal behaviors of French-speaking autistic and non-autistic adults: from monologue to cross-neurotype social interactions

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Difficulties in social interactions and communication are one of the core symptoms of autism (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) and can have a significant negative impact on autistic individuals' everyday lives (Cummins et al., 2020). Traditionally, these challenges have been attributed to autistic individuals' atypical social cognition, such as difficulties with perspective-taking and interaction management (Davis & Crompton, 2021). Supporting this view, linguistic analyses have consistently shown that, in comparison to their non-autistic peers, autistic individuals struggle to produce coherent discourse, both in content and delivery strategy (e.g., Baixauli et al., 2016; Geelhand, 2019; Harvey et al., 2023). Most of this linguistic evidence comes from "monologic" tasks, such as narrative productions or interactions between an experimenter and a participant, rather than peer-to-peer interactions.

Recent research, however, suggests that social atypicalities previously considered specific to autism are at least partially bidirectional: both autistic and non-autistic individuals may mutually misunderstand each other due to differing cognitive profiles, norms, and expectations (Davis & Crompton, 2021; Milton et al., 2018). This creates a 'double problem,' affecting both parties in the interaction (Milton, 2012). Consequently, it is assumed that same-neurotype interactions (autistic/autistic and non-autistic/non-autistic) experience better interaction outcomes than mixed-neurotype interactions (autistic/non-autistic). Recent evidence indicates that autistic interactions are characterized by different linguistic norms and styles compared to non-autistic interactions (e.g., Heasman & Gillespie, 2019).

In this talk, I will provide evidence from these two perspectives to identify which linguistic characteristics seem specific to autistic individuals and which ones seem relational, helping to improve our understanding of communication abilities in autism.

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