

Beyond theory of mind: Exploring pragmatic language in ASD

Greta Mazzaggio

Abstract

Traditionally, research on pragmatic language in Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) has linked difficulties with a not-fully developed Theory of Mind (ToM). However, emerging experimental evidence reveals a more nuanced picture. It has been observed that some autistic individuals demonstrate intact performance on diverse perspective-taking and pragmatic tasks, employing strategies that differ from those of typically developing peers. These findings challenge the assumption of impaired ToM and highlight the need to investigate other contributing factors, such as linguistic skills, cognitive abilities, and the unique profiles of individuals. This presentation explores empirical findings concerning irony comprehension, implicatures' processing, and other pragmatic aspects, scrutinizing the varied resolving strategies manifested by autistic children. The presentation, however, is not a conclusion; rather, it opens new questions, challenging us to explore further the complex web of factors underpinning pragmatic skills in autism. New insights may emerge from re-examining task outcomes through this broader theoretical framework.