
Some (but not all) pragmatic inferences are difficult for autistic children: the case of scalar implicatures and metaphors

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Abstract

Based on current findings, one could conclude that autistic participants, when compared to neurotypical controls, are lacking in metaphor comprehension but not with drawing scalar implicatures. To assess whether this inconsistency across pragmatic phenomena holds in a single study, we presented both a metaphoric-reference task and an action-based scalar task to 23 autistic children and compared their performance to a control sample of 237 neurotypical children between the ages of 6 and 11. Surprisingly, the autistic and neurotypical children were comparable with respect to metaphor comprehension; however, the autistic children were less "pragmatic" than their controls on the scalar task.

Keywords: scalar implicatures, metaphors, developmental pragmatics, clinical pragmatics, autism

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