

Napoleon Katsos (University of Cambridge): Bilingualism in Children with Developmental Disorders: From Language and Cognition to Human Rights

Among parents and professionals there is a common albeit empirically unsupported belief that multilingual exposure may be detrimental to the development of children with neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism. In this presentation I will first review studies that capture the lived experience of multilingualism by autistic children and their carers and then I will report on a systematic meta-analysis of the emerging literature which reveals that multilingualism has no adverse effect on the linguistic and cognitive development of children with autism. Moreover, I will outline in what ways multilingualism may actually be beneficial for autistic children and report some unpublished trends in recent work with colleagues. The interplay of qualitative and quantitative methods and the benefits of participant-informed research will set the background for this presentation.