

## Background

Parents have often been advised to use only one, mostly the cultural predominant language with their child with ASD (Harlin & Paneque, 2006).

Arguments focus mainly on a more straightforward language acquisition through less confusion (Yu, 2015).

Because a person may develop socio-cultural knowledge via language and develop linguistic knowledge via socialization, the choice of language may have an effect on the child's socialization and the family's dynamics (Brinton & Fujiki, 1993; Damico & Damico, 1993; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984).



## Objectives

Investigate whether the use of language in the upbringing of children with ASD is related to:

- the children's social skills
- the parents' ability to feel comfortable, authentic, and free to express themselves when interacting with their child

with no limitation to language combinations and considering parent's and children's language proficiencies.

## Participants

Participants were recruited via email, social media, and websites of different associations and institutions for people with ASD.

68 parents (89,7% female; 27 – 56 years old,  $M = 39.86$ ;  $SD = 6.59$ ) of **25 nationalities (and languages)** reporting for 68 children (89,7 % male; 4 – 11 years old,  $M = 8.08$ ;  $SD = 2.31$ ).

4 groups according to the language used at home:

- Monolingual mother tongue  $n = 17$
- Monolingual foreign language  $n = 17$
- Multilingual mother tongue  $n = 26$
- Multilingual foreign language  $n = 8$

## Acknowledgements

Image: Freepik.com. This poster has been designed using resources from Freepik.com

## Online Study

### Socio-Demographic Data

### Language use & Proficiencies

- 7-point Likert scales: "How would you rate your proficiency in [language]?" "no proficiency", "fair proficiency", "good proficiency", "very good proficiency", "fluent proficiency", "native proficiency", and "mother tongue"

### Feeling comfortable, authentic, and free to express oneself

- 5-point Likert scales: "Regarding the language I use, when interacting with my child, I feel ..."
  - "very uncomfortable" to "very comfortable"
  - "very unauthentic" to "very authentic",
  - "very restrictedly" to "very freely"

### Social skills

- the Social Responsiveness Scale™, Second Edition (SRS-2; Constantino & Gruber, 2012) 65 items;  $\alpha = .95$

### Autistic traits

- the Autism Spectrum Quotient – Children's version test (AQ-Child; Auyeung et al. 2008) 50 items;  $\alpha = .97$

## Results: Social skills

### Differences in the social skills of children with ASD depending on languages used:

Analyses of variance (ANOVAs – with Bonferroni and Gabriel's post hoc tests) and additional independent samples *t*-tests did **not** show **sign.** differences between the different language groups regarding children's social skills:

- $F(3,64) = .84, p = .48, \eta^2 = .04$

## Results: Parent's well-being

### Differences in parents' well-being depending on languages used:

Kruskal-Wallis tests with pairwise comparisons (Bonferroni corrected *p*-values):

- Feeling comfortable (Figure 1;  $H(3) = 18.18, p < .01, r = .39$ )
- Feeling authentic (Figure 2;  $H(3) = 21.21, p < .01, r = .42$ )
- Feeling able to express oneself freely (Figure 3;  $H(3) = 23.97, p < .05, r = .38$ )

Additional Mann-Whitney tests:

- Parents using only their mother tongue feel **sign. more comfortable, authentic, and able to express themselves freely** than all other parents
- Parents using only a foreign language feel **sign. less comfortable and authentic** than all other parents
- No sign. differences** between monolingual households and multilingual households
- Parents using their mother tongue feel **sign. more comfortable and authentic** than parents using foreign languages

## Conclusions

- In our study, language use is **not related** to social skills in children with ASD
- Monolingual households and multilingual households **do not differ sign.** on parents' ability to feel comfortable, authentic, and to express themselves freely
- Parents who do not use their mother tongue feel **sign. less comfortable and authentic** when interacting with their child
- Limitations include: subjectiveness of parent-report variables, data collected online by only one parent

Our results indicate that the common advice to use only one language (often a foreign one) does not provide social skills benefits for children and may actually have negative implications for the parents.

## References

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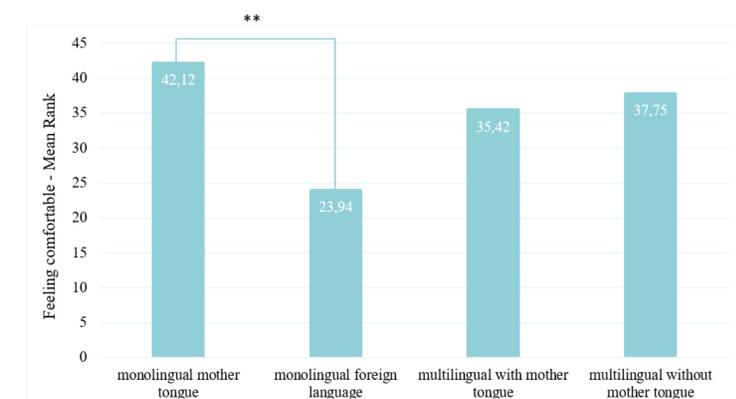


Figure 1. Pairwise comparisons of feeling comfortable (mean ranks) in parents regarding their use of language with their child. \*\* $p < .01$

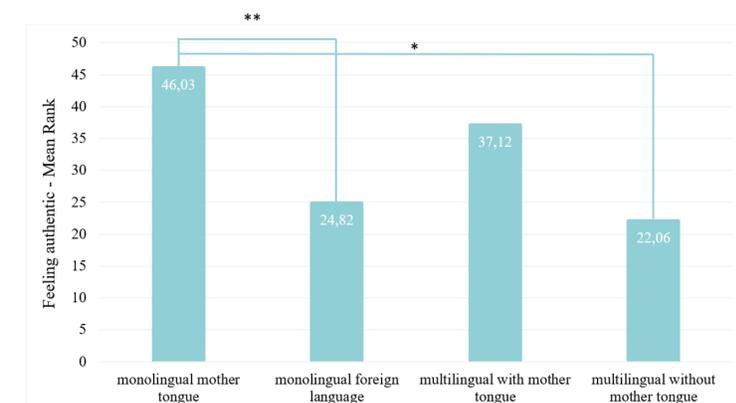


Figure 2. Pairwise comparisons of feeling authentic (mean ranks) in parents regarding their use of language with their child. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

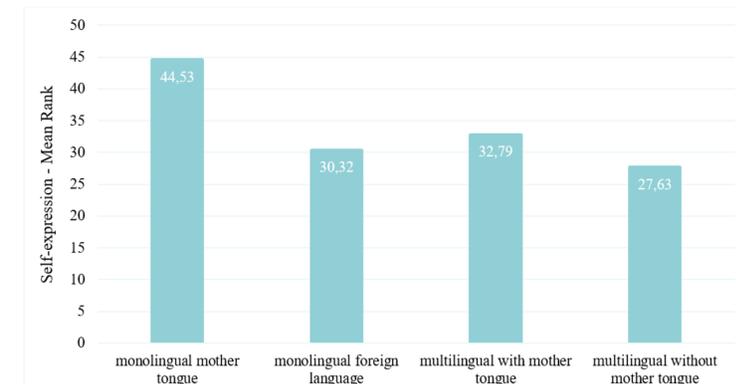


Figure 3. Pairwise comparisons of self-expression (mean ranks) in parents regarding their use of language with their child.