



## Bilingualism and Autism: Bridging the Gap between Research and Beliefs

**Speaker:** Tamara Sorenson Duncan, *School of Linguistics and Language Studies, Carleton University*



*Tamara Sorenson Duncan is an Assistant Professor in the School of Linguistics and Language Studies at Carleton University. Her research investigates language and literacy development in diverse populations, including children from immigrant and refugee backgrounds, children with developmental language disorders and children with autism spectrum disorder. Her current projects examine bilingual development among children with language- and literacy-based disabilities, tackling issues such as bilingual development in autistic children, inclusion in French immersion programs, and the impact of COVID-19 and related school closures on children's language and literacy development.*

**Date:** Thursday, April 11, 2024

**Time:** 11:00 – 12:15 a.m. (EST – Ottawa, Canada)

**Bimodal Presentation:** **In-person** (encouraged) and **Online** (after registering, you will receive a Zoom link a few days before the event.)

**In-person:** 100 Laurier Ave E. (LRR 114)

**Registration:** Please [click here](#) to register.

**Organized by:** Canadian Centre for Studies and Research on Bilingualism and Language Planning (CCERBAL), Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI), University of Ottawa

**Language of the presentation:** English (with questions in either English or French)

### Abstract

Despite evidence to the contrary, concerns persist that learning more than one language will exacerbate the language-learning challenges experienced by some autistic children<sup>2,3,4</sup>. Research consistently demonstrates that autistic children can and do become bilingual<sup>1,2,5</sup>. Thus, there appears to be a disconnect between research evidence and the concerns of parents, educators, and clinicians. A bridge is needed to close this gap. To this aim, this three-part talk will specifically focus on autistic children's bilingual development in families who speak a minority language at home and whose children are learning English as the majority and community language. Specifically, this talk will include: (1) an examination of parents' beliefs about their child's capacity for bilingualism, parents' experiences with the language supports provided to their autistic child, and the factors that shape parents' decision-making about language use; (2) a discussion of the extent to which autistic children receive sufficient opportunity for bilingual development; and (3) an investigation of the heterogeneity in L2 development among autistic children, with a particular focus on vocabulary and morphosyntactic skills. Taken together, this collection of research describes bilingual development in autistic children and provides metaphorical bricks to add to the bridge between research evidence and beliefs about autistic children's capacity for bilingualism.

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