

# **A perception-language chimera: integrating language into the enhanced perceptual functioning model**

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Unexpected bilingualism in autism could provide a 'Rosetta Stone' to help us understand the dynamic relationship that autistic children have with language before they exhibit overt autistic phenotype, and during their preschool years. While the perception and interests of typical toddlers are biased towards what is temporally or spatially close to their peers, prototypical autistic children show a dramatic shift towards an absence of social bias in their fourth semester of life. This occurs at a time when typical children display a lexical surge and an abrupt increase in syntactic complexity. While the parental voice loses its unique status as a trigger for the acquisition of maternal language, other forms of language, such as written language and foreign languages accessed via a screen, remain a key source of subsequent language acquisition. The search for sequential and combinatory structural redundancies based on formal similarity with language structures may extend to non-linguistic words in the form of autistic objects of interest. This perception-language-attachment chimera, i.e. perception that is biased, oriented and prioritised by the structural aspects of language, may play a causative role in many prototypical autistic signs.