

Yasin Khoshhaldelijani (ELTE): Decoding and Comprehension of Figurative Language: Insights from a Systematic Review on Asperger's Syndrome

This paper conducted a systematic review of existing literature and research, comprehensively examining studies that addressed the comprehension of figurative language, specifically metaphorical and metonymic expressions, among learners diagnosed with High-Functioning Autism, commonly known as Asperger's Syndrome.

Asperger's Syndrome, identified as a subgroup within the autistic spectrum (Attwood, 1998), is characterized by impairments in the pragmatics of language (Wing, 1998). These individuals typically achieve developmental language milestones on schedule but exhibit persistent pragmatic language abnormalities.

Previous research consistently demonstrated difficulties in figurative language comprehension among individuals with Asperger's syndrome. However, learners with Asperger's Syndrome exhibited varying reactions and comprehension levels, ranging from struggling in interpreting and responding to nonliteral (i.e., figurative) language (Twachtman-Cullen, 1998) to an impossible interpretation of figurative language (Harbinson & Alexander, 2009). Given the integral role of these lexical units in daily language use, this review aims to determine the extent to which these learners could comprehend and produce figurative language, shedding light on the intriguing discrepancies among this population.

Additionally, although previous theories explored these learners' perception of metaphor through the Theory of Mind and the significance of broader language abilities, particularly semantic skills, critically analysing studies published between 1998 and 2022 allowed for the synthesis of existing knowledge. This provided insights into why learners with Asperger's Syndrome encountered difficulties in comprehending metaphorical and metonymical expressions.

Studies were summarized based on their themes, approaches, participants, and findings. Our findings delineated a multifaceted set of reasons and theories, emphasizing the complex nature of this impairment among learners with Asperger's Syndrome. This systematic review contributes to a deeper understanding of language challenges in this population, offering valuable implications for educators, therapists, and researchers in the field of language acquisition and intervention for individuals with Asperger's Syndrome. The authors discussed the implications of these themes and critical new directions for future research on the use of mobile-assisted language learning to facilitate learning metaphorical language.

Keywords: Asperger's Syndrome; metaphor; pragmatics; high-functioning autism; metonymy

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