

## **Bilingualism in Children with Developmental Disorders: From Human Rights to Language and Cognition** (Napoleon Katsos)

Among parents and professionals there is a common albeit empirically unsupported belief that bilingual exposure may be detrimental to the development of children with neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism. Starting from the observation that bilingualism is a fundamental human right of children, I will then review studies that capture the lived experience of bilingualism by autistic children and their carers. I will then report on a systematic meta-analysis of the emerging literature which reveals that bilingualism has no adverse effect on the linguistic and cognitive development of children with autism. Moreover, I will outline three possible cognitive models of pragmatic competence which suggest that bilingualism may be beneficial for children with autism in terms of communicative competence. I will then present experimental studies on pragmatics in bilingual children with and without autism that suggest this might be the case. The interplay of qualitative and quantitative methods and the benefits of participant-informed research will set the background for this presentation.