

Abstract

Previous research suggests that mothers adjust their interaction strategies in response to their children's developmental level. This study will expand on a previous study that examined how mothers and their children (who are typically developing or who are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder; ASD) use mental state language. Data for 20 mothers and their 21 children with ASD and 22 mothers and their 22 typically developing children have already been collected. Analyses revealed some potentially interesting differences between groups with regard to mental state talk. Unfortunately, group differences were also evident for maternal age and education and household income. In the proposed study, approximately seven mothers and their typically developing children will be recruited in an effort to distribution-match the two groups. The data collection procedures used in the proposed study will be identical to those used to gather archival data. All mothers and children will be asked to participate in a story-telling task using wordless pictures specifically designed to elicit mental state talk. Interactions will be coded reliably for mothers' and children's frequency (absolute amount of talk) and proportion (relative amount of talk) of mental state term types and functions, relevant and irrelevant utterances, as well as mothers' causal talk and causal questioning. All mental state data will be analyzed in a series of independent t-tests. It is expected that the previous findings will persist after groups are distribution-matched on key variables. Expected results, limitations, and implications will be considered.