

**Abstract: Jens Sand Østergaard**

**Narrating strange stories: structural language impairments and internal state reference in ASD**

The ability to narrate a story involves integrating quite a complex web of information: what happened and who did what to whom and why? In recounting the events of a story, reference to the mental states of characters is often a good way of retelling the story concisely and coherently for an audience. However, this requires both an awareness of these mental states, as well a language rich enough to express them.

In a field study using narrative elicitation experiments for children with ASD ( $N=17$ ), I found that the children's use of internal-state language (i.e. use of verbal reference to beliefs, thoughts and desires) was significantly correlated with the syntactic complexity of their sentence constructions (e.g. how often they used syntactic complements and NP-elaborations). The results and limitations of this study are discussed, as well as their possible consequences for a theory of mentalization in autism.