

Vitality forms expression and recognition in ASD children

Vitality form is a term, originally introduced by Stern (2010), to describe “how” an action is performed. The capacity to perceive the vitality form of others’ actions is a fundamental element of social interactions and a basic way of relating to and understanding others’ behaviors. Although vitality forms characterize all human interactions, few studies have addressed their role in social and communicative disorders such as autism. The aim of the ongoing study is to evaluate the ability of children with ASD and typically developing children (TD) to express and recognize simple actions - such as moving an object - performed according different forms of vitality, such as gently, neutrally and rudely, specifically in a social versus non social condition. For this purpose, we designed two different experiments: a kinematic and a psychophysics study. In the kinematic study children with ASD and TD children perform a simple action (passing a bottle) with different vitality forms and in two conditions (social and non-social). Children’s kinematic parameters are registered and analyzed using a video-recording setting. In the psychophysics study, the same ASD and TD children will be asked to watch video-clips showing actions recorded in the first study and to judge them in terms of vitality forms. Preliminary results from the kinematic tested in ASD children will be presented.