

## Abstract

The present study examined the relationship between theory of mind competence and pragmatic language skills among a sample of Chinese-speaking autistic boys in Hong Kong. Developmentally normal boys are matched to high functioning autistic boys in terms of IQ, age and gender; both groups of subjects completed the Raven's Progressive Matrices, Theory of mind test, and Test of Pragmatic Language. Results indicated that normal controls consistently outperformed their autistic counterparts on both the Theory of mind test and Test of Pragmatic Language. Across groups a significant association was found between IQ scores and theory of mind abilities, between IQ and results on the Test of Pragmatic Language, and between theory of mind abilities and pragmatic competence. Perhaps one of the most important findings of the present study is that the autistic group exhibited an extremely strong relationship between theory of mind and language pragmatics. Findings are discussed in terms of the intimate relationship between theory of mind abilities and pragmatic competence that is specific to the autistic group as well as some of the developmental trends that emerged on the two tests. Implications of the present results on future studies are also highlighted with particular attention paid to variables that may be underlying the high magnitude of correlation between language pragmatics and theory of mind competence among autistic subjects.