

**A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC CASE STUDY OF VERBAL  
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN AN  
ADOLESCENT BOY WITH AUTISM**

By

**RAJESH KUMAR.K**

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

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**DEDICATED TO**

**Amma & Achhan**

**for unconditional love and support**

**and to**

**everyone who is fighting for the cause of**

**Autism**

## CERTIFICATE

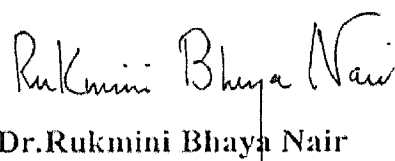
This is to certify that the thesis entitled "A Psycholinguistic Case Study of Verbal Communicative Competence in an Adolescent Boy with Autism" being submitted by Rajesh Kumar to the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is a record of bonafide research work carried out by him.

Rajesh Kumar has worked under my guidance and supervision and has fulfilled the requirements for the submission of this thesis, which to my knowledge has reached the required standard.

The results contained in this thesis have not been submitted, in part or in full, to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

Date: 01-04-2002

Place: New Delhi



**Dr. Rukmini Bhaya Nair**

**(Supervisor)**

**Professor**

**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.**

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Rajesh Kumar

## ABSTRACT

The present study is entitled “A Psycholinguistic Case Study of Verbal Communicative Competence in an Adolescent Boy with Autism”. It consists of six chapters. This study addresses questions related to language and communication in autism. It shows how far the conversations of a person are reflections of his mind and how much information we can glean about a person from his conversations. An attempt is made to explore the characteristic features of the conversations of an autistic boy. In an individual with autism, there seems to be a problem with the filtration of information received as well as expressed. Because of this, ‘irrelevant’ utterances seem to abound in autistic conversation. The central issue of verbal communication is addressed in relation to the theory of mind and other theoretical models, which define the dimensions of communicative competence.

Autism is a complex neurological disorder which affects various aspects of human growth and development. It is challenging to study an enigmatic disorder like autism. In a developing country like India, where the diagnoses of cases of autism are increasing day-by-day it still happens that, many people, including professionals, are unaware that such a medical condition exists. Consequently research on autism is currently only in its initial stages in this country. The present study perceives autism as a state of being rather than as a devastating disorder and tries to explore the person as a whole. One of the important messages this study tries to convey is that the unique strengths and weaknesses of a child with autism must be thoroughly studied before planning any intervention strategies for him/her. Intervention should thus be individually

designed. This is also a central justification for the detailed single-case study method adopted in the present thesis.

Taking language as a crucial medium that enables us to study the mind of a person, this study explores the conversations of an adolescent boy diagnosed with high functioning autism. His 'deficits' in language and communication skills are here compared with his exceptional abilities at art and music. Through analysis of conversations, an attempt is made to identify the cognitive schema that this child uses to 'shape' his world. Finally, this dissertation also discusses other related issues like the status of autism research in India, the neurological basis of autism and the problems faced by a bilingual autistic.

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