

Presentation Title: A Neurodiversity Approach to Examining Topic Management Strategies in an Autistic Communicator

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This study is one of the *first*, and *few* studies to use a *neurodiversity* approach by means of a three-layer multimodal methodology in order to examine an autistic communicators topic management strategies, responses to conversation breakdowns and barriers, as well as strengths and communicative competencies in naturalistic social conversations. The study uses a mixed methods design which utilizes: *discourse analysis*, *conversation analysis*, and *vocal/voice* parameters: *GRBASI scale* and *Praat*. The purpose of this study is to examine the strategies that autistic communicators use in naturally-occurring conversations for topic management and identify what features are observable in moments of topic continuation, topic shift, as well as moments of breakdown in topic management. The purpose of the study is three fold:

Investigation 1: To critically examine the validity of the stereotype that autistic communicators are poor at topic management. **Investigation 2:** To examine the ways in which topic management breakdowns are a jointly constructed interactional outcome between communicators. **Investigation 3:** To examine everyday topic management as an interactional, multimodal and multilayered phenomenon. Results are analyzed using the following methodology: (1) Conversation Analysis, (2) Turn Construction Unit(TCU) data labelings, and (3) Identifying vocal patterns and fluctuations using acoustic software Praat. The GRBASI four-point scale was utilized as a second voice parameter in order to measure overall severity and parameters of voice(e.g. Breathiness, strain, roughness). Results will discuss the following identified and relevant patterns: (1) The use of special interests as a vehicle to harness flexibility of topics across daily life experiences, (2) topic management strategies across social communication and participant affect, (3) communication partner strategies that bridge stronger and more reliable communication and successful communication repair strategies among both participants, and (4) the co-construction and use of semiotic resources.

