

## **Teaching Strategies for first-grade students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Process of Learning English as a Foreign Language**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This project is conducted to identify some characteristics of an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) student, plan, implement and assess strategies that can assist his listening and speaking learning process of acquiring English as a foreign language.

This research's main problem was based on the idea that some of the ASD characteristics may affect the learning of English as a foreign language. Therefore, the aim of this investigation was to help these students in their process of acquiring English as a foreign Language especially in the listening and speaking skills, using new strategies focusing on a relationship based on their own potentialities and needs.

This research project was conducted qualitative method research based on a case study. Due to the fact this is a case study the subject was an elementary eight-year-old child from Costa Rica, and his English teacher. Moreover, seven strategies were applied and assessed to see how effective those strategies in the English classroom were and in the development of the language for the student.

The results showed that the student had a better performance English when applying the suggested strategies. Many of the strategies proposed by the teacher were very successful; however, not all of them.

## **Estrategias de enseñanza para estudiantes de primer grado con trastorno del espectro autista en el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera**

### **RESUMEN**

Este proyecto es realizado con la intención de identificar algunas características comunes de estudiantes de primaria con autismo para poder planear actividades significativas, implementar y buscar las estrategias de aprendizaje que ayuden al estudiante con el Trastorno del Espectro Autista (TEA) que aprende un idioma extranjero a poder lograr los objetivos de aprendizaje del idioma de manera significativa.

Debido a que algunas características del autismo son muy marcadas en niños, se deben de encontrar las estrategias correctas ya que a algunos de los estudiantes que presentan esta condición se les dificulta el aprendizaje y al ser un idioma diferente al materno, se deben encontrar actividades y estrategias que ayuden a los estudiantes a asimilar y disfrutar las clases de inglés, especialmente desarrollando las destrezas de habla, tomando en cuenta las potenciales y necesidades de los estudiantes con Autismo.

Esta investigación es basada en un estudio de caso a un estudiante de primaria de Costa Rica, quien aprende inglés en la escuela primaria. La profesora de inglés plantea siete estrategias a seguir en clase, algunas de las estrategias y actividades planteadas demuestran que ayudan al estudiante a enfocarse y motivarse en el aprendizaje, sin embargo, otras son menos exitosas en el desarrollo de la clase.

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## **BACKGROUND**

The learning of a foreign language is a new experience for students that are accustomed to hearing and understanding only one language (their mother tongue). A foreign language classroom is a place where students start to learn and acquire a new language; therefore, the classes have to bring the students the opportunity to learn by using the correct strategies according to the students' needs and providing every student with the tools needed to learn the language in a significant way.

This qualitative research focused on an eight-year-old Autism Spectrum Disorder boy's characteristics and how his behavior and lack of concentration affected his foreign language acquisition process, especially in his listening and speaking skills. His social skills were taken into account because this student did not like to socialize or work in groups. This affected the student's participation because there were many exercises and activities in class the student was not able to do. Another considerable bit of information was that the ASD affected this student's learning process, mainly in the foreign language acquisition process of English because the language was new for the student and the student could not understand the teacher and he felt lost and not interested in it. For instance, the student did not pay attention to the teacher and that affected him in his participation and development of the language. Another important fact that may have affected this child was that he was adopted three years ago and suffered from many difficult situations before being adopted such as aggression, poverty and abandonment with his biological parents and family. These difficulties could have affected this student in his learning process and school life. The student was taking first grade at a private school in which he has been for three years. The school was really worried about the student's learning, but his foster parents were not conscious about the real problems the student was having at the school.

The author, Efronini (2010) conducted a research in which he compared ASD students with "healthy" students and discovered that ASD students presented problems with social interactions, aggression, and bad behavior. Considering those aspects and the student's background, English teachers should treat and try to manage those characteristics in their classrooms. It is not an easy and fast process, but it is necessary if English teachers want their students to understand and learn the language in a proper way. Also, to avoid social problems such as rejection and lack

of empathy, it is important to create strategies that will be useful for the students to concentrate, behave well and have a better understanding of English as a foreign language, developing the listening and speaking skills.

No matter the condition, every student has the right of participating in class, becoming an independent English learner, and acquiring the language successfully. Therefore, by having specific strategies focused on the ASD characteristics, will make a difference in making the students feel confident, happy, and bring the student the opportunity to succeed and participate in the language classroom developing mainly the listening and speaking skills.

### **English teaching in Costa Rica**

In the English daily classroom environment in an elementary school, to work with a student with a special learning condition is not an easy task because these students usually do not pay attention, do not show interest in the class, or do not like to participate actively. These students need more attention from the teacher and the teacher needs the appropriate activities and strategies to work with them.

There is a big need for English teachers as a foreign language to be ready to face and to teach students with different conditions. Therefore, the need to look for strategies, activities, among others, can be used as a guide for teachers to facilitate the learning and teaching processes. This can be improved and developed well if teachers and students work together and feel encouraged to grow as integral human beings, even more when English is a new subject for them. Using strategies that combine characteristics and the ASD student's needs in the strategies proposed, will help students in the process of learning and in his school life because the strategies made the student have the same opportunities to learn and understand the English language as the rest of the students that do not have this disorder.

In Costa Rica English as a foreign language is taught in almost every school around the country. According to the Cambridge dictionary, the foreign language is English as taught to people whose main language is not English and who live in a country where English is not the official or main language. There are studies about Autism and English as second language learning, but there is not any about English as a foreign language. It is important to know what strategies can be used to help Autism students in a foreign language classroom and not only in a second language classroom.

Nowadays, English learning has become a very important subject at school because it is needed for future opportunities, so it is important to learn it in a proper way since people is young. Therefore, the teacher has to make some modifications in the curriculum or in the way she gives instructions to support the ASD student. According to Law 7600, all students and people in general with different conditions, have the same opportunity to have a good education and to be treated well at school. No matter how much a teacher changes a class or an activity or how much she has to investigate, the main objective of any teacher is to make the student understand and speak the language for life. This law pointed out that no matter the condition a student has, they deserve to be treated well and to have an education of quality. Every student is different and so their needs. The mission as teachers is to take them all and look for the best strategy to work with the student.

### **Defining the Asperger Syndrome or Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Authors like Attwood (2002), Alli (2012) and Andrade (2011) mentioned that the ASD is a mental disorder that affects mainly social interactions and the school environment. Martin (2011) said that Hans Asperger defined Asperger Syndrome as “Psychopathy Autism” and that it is manifested by the behavior of the person that suffers it. Through the years, people have ignored it or have not paid very much attention to it letting the student work individually, not interacting with others or working cooperatively and having regular grades in school. Due to this, class work and the development of the child with the ASD in class is very difficult. The students have problems when it is time to work in groups and in some cases are not getting concepts because of the lack of attention they have in class. The English language is studied in all schools in Costa Rica for all students at school, so every child should have a meaningful learning experience and have the right to learn it consciously. Nowadays, English has become one of the most important subjects in private schools because it brings a lot of opportunities in life and it is one of the most spoken languages around the world. The quality of teaching of this subject should be really well taught to bring the students the opportunity to use the language in and out of the English classroom.

### **Characterizing the Autism Spectrum Disorder.**

When working with an ASD student, it is essential to know his characteristics to realize what things teachers, parents and people around him should take into account when treating him and managing some situations they can bring in his daily life.

According to Wing and Gould (1983) (p.88), some characteristics are:

- 1) Lack of empathy.
- 2) Unilateral and inappropriate social interactions.
- 3) Poor ability to make friends (isolation).
- 4) Repetitive language.
- 5) Nonverbal communication.
- 6) Poor coordination, compulsive movements or inappropriate posture.
- 7) Obsessive interest in a specific topic.

Also, Ortiz (2003) mentioned some characteristics and one of the most catching and important for the author is that people with this condition, tend not to pay attention for more than five minutes, letting the teacher the big challenge of catching their attention in a class of 40 minutes. This may affect a foreign language class directly because one of the basics to learn another language is to pay close attention to the new things that are taught in class, gestures, pronunciation, vocabulary, among others.

Going deeper with the social problems of this condition students have and stated by Attwood (2002), there are some facts about them that are crucial for the interaction and behavior of the student. These social problems are: (p.35).

- a) Inability to extract meaning from social cues and to respond socially and emotionally appropriate.
- b) Lack or shortage of desire to share information and experiences with others.
- c) The deficit in social skills can provoke behavioral problems.
- d) They are often alone and do not like group work.
- e) They tend to pay close attention to small details.

Additionally, Attwood (2002) agreed with the fact that ASD students do not like to work with others, and according to him, these students cannot see themselves as part of a group, and they follow their own interests during class and during break time. Regarding the language, the author mentioned that these students have problems when talking, expressing their thoughts, and using simple vocabulary.

### **Treating Autism Spectrum Disorder Children**

In 1944, the Austrian pediatrician Hans Asperger studied children that showed non-verbal communication and limited social interaction with other children. He mentioned that the exact cause of the disorder is unknown despite the scientific research. As a result, the exact treatment is not determined yet. The symptoms are very notable, but

not physically visible in the majority of cases (as cited in Martin, 2011). Children may improve skills with time if they grow up with a sensitive and encouraging environment and people who take care of them. On the other hand, those symptoms may never improve or even get worse if people around mistreat or abuse them, which will affect not only their learning acquisition processes but social interaction development (Wainscot, Naylor, Tantam, & Williams, 2008).

Regarding to the author Alli (2012), there is no cure for ASD people, but treatment may bring a lot of opportunities, and it can reduce bad behaviors. This treatment includes some aspects like:

- Special education: A person that knows the student's condition and methods to work with them. A person who knows what is the best for the student and his needs.
- Behavior modification: This includes strategies for supporting positive behavior and decreasing problem behaviors.
- Speech, physical, or occupational therapy: These therapies are designed to increase the child's functional abilities.
- Medication: it will depend on the specialist who is attending the person and his/her recommendations. This treatment will be very significant for the student in his process of learning and developing the speaking and listening skills.

Finally, the cognitive abilities of these students like memorizing things, solving puzzles and playing mental games. This is really good to know to see the Autism level a person has and the aspects teachers have to pay attention to help students with this condition to acquire English as a foreign language efficiently. These cognitive strategies can be positively used in a foreign classroom and they can bring lots of benefits.

### **Classifying the Autism Spectrum Disorder**

The author Zuñiga (2009) mentioned that every Autistic child or adult has his own personality characteristics and social interaction difficulties along his life. Even though ASD people have a normal intellectual capacity, they face difficulties regarding learning and social interaction with others, but they have very defined interests. Also, Zuñiga (2009) mentioned that these students really need an adaptation of activities; otherwise, they will be excluded due to their condition. ASD students deserve to be treated well, giving the educational system opportunities and a good education based on respect and equality. These students need to have the appropriate tools to face their condition and learn, and teachers need to find the best strategies to do this. It is the teacher's mission

to choose between teaching for a test or teaching for life. As stated in Costa Rica, Law 7600, every person deserves the opportunity to have an education of quality, no matter the condition or the problem they have. Therefore, ASD students have that opportunity to have a significant learning process, and teachers should have to find the best strategies to help them acquire English in a significant way.

As Foley and Assouline (2010) indicated, AS students are very talented and are capable of doing whatever they want to if they have the correct and effective tools. Their behavior and ways of communicating can be different, but they cannot be seen as an obstacle for learning. If teaching an ASD student in the native language is not easy, teaching a foreign language to this student could become a real challenge for both the teacher and the student. Then, the teacher has the challenge of making the difference and achieve their main goal that is teaching the student in a way that addresses his needs. As Winter (2009) said, if AS interests like dinosaurs are taken into account at the moment to teach AS students, their learning process is going to be better.

### **Type of Study**

This was a case study based on a qualitative research. This research was based on attitudes, characteristics and social relationships of a student with ASD in the English as a foreign language class and the implementation of strategies that helped him in his learning process of English as a foreign language, especially in the listening and speaking skills.

Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin, 1994). This qualitative research was done in a classroom where the participant's presence in the English class, his relationship with his classmates and teachers were observed and analyzed. Also, the study was done by observing the child in a non-participant way. All the interpretations of this study were collected during the observations and the moments of interaction with the student.

This qualitative study was based on the student's behaviors and how to help him to get to the right way of learning English as a foreign language by using the correct strategies no matter the difficulties or distractions the student will have had.

### **Description of the Institution and the Participant**

This qualitative research study was presented in a natural setting in an English classroom of a private school in Heredia, Costa Rica. The school is a very well recognized school that has been opened for more than fifteen years. It offers preschool, elementary school and high school education. This is a small school with almost one hundred students from all the levels. It is a bilingual school and the students have fifteen English lessons per day. In this school listening, speaking, reading and writing are all integrated, but in first cycle, the speaking and listening skills are emphasized more.

The participant was an eight-year-old boy who was abandoned by his mother when he was only four years old. A married couple adopted him and one of his brothers. His foster parents have taken care of them and have giving them everything possible to make them feel like at home and loved. Two years before, they lived very happily, and the children considered this couple their real mother and father. It has not been easy for the student to adapt to his new life, but his new parents have done the best to help him and his brother to be fine and to feel good with the environment and with them as a family.

### **Aspects considered to develop the research**

#### **1. Attitudes: characteristics, potentialities, interests**

Some characteristics of an ASD are related to his or her personality. These students tend to be perfectionist in the case of classwork. They want everything to be very elaborate and clean. Also, Juan is very competitive; he cannot stand losing or be the last in completing a task.

Regarding his potentialities, an ASD student is very good at memorizing dates and pictures. If you show an ASD student a picture once, he will remember it and its details for a long time. Other aspects these student loves are handcrafts and art. Working with play dough or paint will make him feel identified in the English class.

Then, Juan's interests are very well defined. If there is something he likes, he will try to know everything about it. You can know what he likes because he is always talking about it. Also, ASD students like many things, but there is always something that catches his/her attention the most. This makes the child ask many questions very often. These questions are really difficult to answer depending on the topic. You should investigate or answer him because he will remind you of the question until you answer

it. After one question, many questions come, and he is very curious about things he really likes.

## **2. Behavior: classroom, English lesson**

The ASD student tends to be moving all the time, playing with his body and with everything that is in front of him. In the classroom, Juan cannot control his anxiety, and he seems not to be paying attention in the class. There is no a doubt that Juan needs to be doing something all the time. If he is not doing something, you will see him standing up, running in the class, bothering a classmate, or playing with something. It is important that the ASD student knows what he is doing or what he has to do.

In the English class, Juan usually will have trouble at the moment of doing a task, playing and not paying attention because he does not understand or does not care about what the teacher says. The problem here is that for the student, the teacher is talking about something he does not know or does not care, so he seems not interested in the class. It is very important to use gestures and pictures to catch the student's attention.

## **Social relationship: peers, English teacher and student**

Regarding social relationships, the student interacts with the teacher only when she comes to him and talks or asks him for something. If there is something the student wants to know, he will immediately go to the teacher and ask her what he wants, but he does not communicate with her frequently.

Usually, ASD students does not like to work with peers. They usually play alone and try not to be with others. When it is work group time, they do not participate or collaborate. They prefer to do something else or not to participate at all, leaving all the work to his classmates. Games that require a team like soccer are not attractive for them. Even if the teacher asks him to play, he will not do it. Students get really frustrated when they have to play or do something they do not like. This is exactly what happens with Juan, he does not like to be with his peers, only calling teacher's attention.

## **3. Language proficiency: vocabulary, comprehension, production**

The ASD student participation in the English class is very important to develop the language and practice what he has learned. Due to the fact that these students do not fully understand what the teacher says or teaches, the students sometimes do not know what to do, or even worse they sometimes do not pay attention to class. All students no matter the condition need to learn vocabulary in English that helps them to understand the language. Also, the comprehension is essential for the student to work and

participate in class. If a student does not know what to do, he is not going to participate actively in the class and the learning is not going to be acquired for the student. Having problems understanding and vocabulary knowledge will be negative for the student at the moment to produce sentences or conversations in English. Making sure that the student is learning English is what English teachers need in order to make the students understand the language, participate, and feel comfortable in class.

## **INSTRUMENTS AND TECHNIQUES USED**

The researcher designed three instruments for this project. All the questionnaires designed by the researcher and answered by the participant were done in Spanish; this with the purpose of getting a better understanding from the student to the teacher and to make sure the student really answered the questionnaire consciously. Some of the strategies were created in Spanish with a psychology's help because the psychologist does not understand English well.

### **1- Instruments**

The instruments applied were an interview to the student, a class memo observation, and a questionnaire to the teacher to complete after applying a strategy in the English class.

The first instrument was an interview. The interview consisted of questions related to the class and how the student felt in it. There were several faces that the student could color depending on his opinion. The first one is a happy face which means he felt and did it very well. The other is an indecisive face, and the third one is a sad face that means he did not like the class or what he did. The interview to the student helped the teacher of the student to know how the student felt in the English classroom.

The second instrument was a class memo observation. There were several observations in which the student's behavior and some important information were collected. This observation was done in the natural setting of the class and during break time. Also, the social behavior of the student in the class and the way the student interacted with his teacher and his peers were observed. The researcher went to the student's English classroom and observed the student in the class several times.

The third instrument was for the teacher to evaluate the behavior and progress of the student once a strategy was applied. This instrument consisted of questions related to behavior in the class, social relationships, and use of English in the class.

## **2- Strategies implemented**

The strategies implemented in this project were design by the researcher taking into account the characteristics of the ASD student and his needs. The researcher observed the student for a year in a natural setting to know how he behaved and interacted in class. After that, the researcher made a list with the positive and negative aspects that were observed in that year. Having the psychologist's help, the researcher came up with several strategies that helped Juan in his learning process of listening and speaking in English, especially in the concentration part. These strategies were designed with the purpose of help the student to focus on what he has to do in class. Also, the strategies guided the student to work independently and to interact with his classmates in a proper way without affecting the other students and their learning. The strategies used were:

**Strategy 1:** The English teacher can see if the student knows what to do just by observing them. Sitting next to the student and making sure that he knows what to do is what most teachers should do to make sure the student is in the right path. Asking the student what he has to do or what he is doing is also a good way to know if he understood or not the teacher's explanation. If the student is not doing what he/she is supposed to do, the teacher has to explain to him/her the instructions again and observe him/her when he/she starts working. With this strategy the teacher makes sure that the student is listening and understanding her. Also, the student will produce the language by asking the teacher a question if he has a doubt or just answering simple questions the teacher can ask him about the work he is doing.

**Strategy 2:** It is important to give the student mini breaks in which he can stretch his body and have some time to do other things. This is a good idea to not lose the student's attention. The mini breaks can consist of favors the teacher asks of the student, for example, going to the principal's office and ask for glue or paper. In this way, the mini breaks can be significant for the student, and they can make the student feel relaxed and important in class. These minibreaks can make the student work and participate in class better because AS students cannot do the same task for a long time without losing the interest and attention. In this sense, the student will pay more attention and participate more orally in class.

**Strategy 3:** Use colors at the moment to explain difficult concepts or patterns. The ASD are visual learners, and the colors will help them a great deal to remember important

things regarding grammar, vocabulary, patterns, among others. Ask the students for the word and always remind them of the colors. The production of the student will be better if he matches meaning with colors. The production of the student will be better if he matches meaning with colors and the student will feel comfortable when remembering and participating in class.

**Strategy 4:** Use simple vocabulary at the moment of explaining and talking to an ASD student. Try to look for cognates because it will be easier for them to understand you, and what you want him to learn. Words like “meaning” can be changed for “definition”. The student can understand the instructions the teacher says and work or do what she asks. Also, it is important to use body language while explaining to an ASD student because it is easier for him to follow what the teacher is saying, and he is going to feel secure at the moment to do what the teacher asked for.

**Strategy 5:** Creating an agenda will be very significant for the student. In this way, the student knows what he has to do and what it is going to happen in the English class. This also helps the student to be responsible and organized in the English class. The agenda consists of several pictures that represent an action, for example, pay attention, cut, glue, work in groups, among others. With this agenda, the student knows the work and the things he/she has to do. The agenda also has a clock and two words “yes” and “no”. The teacher will give the student a period of time to complete the tasks. If he/she does everything on time, the student points the word “yes”. The teacher will give the student a happy face every time he/she completes all the tasks on time and in a proper way. The agenda gives the student the help he needs to finish a task and pay attention and learn of the class.

**Strategy 6:** Let us use a thermometer of emotions. This is a thermometer in which the student can express how he feels without behaving inappropriately in the class. This thermometer will control the student’s emotions in class, and this will not let the student lose control. The thermometer consists of three different colors, red, yellow, and green. In this case, red means that the student is really upset, yellow means the student is a little bit mad, and green means that the student is happy. If the student says he/she is mad, the teacher gives him/her some solutions to calm him/her down. This thermometer of emotions helps the student to feel better and makes him not to lose the attention to the class for a long time. Therefore, the student can continue working, listening and participating in the English class.

**Strategy 7:** When talking to an ASD, make sure that he is looking at you. Ask the student to look at your eyes when you talk to him and when he talks to you. In this way, the student will only be paying attention to you and what you are saying; that is, he/she will know what to do.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

After applying the two instruments, reading, and observing the answers, the researcher decided to apply a triangulation of data, in which the information gotten was analyzed to obtain conclusions. With the information the researcher collected from literature, interviews with specialists and observations in class, the strategies to support the ASD were analyzed.

To analyze the instruments a chart of evaluation was required, in which the answers from the student and teacher were analyzed to have some conclusions. The conclusions were divided into the following aspects: by evaluating the student's attitude towards English, if he was interested in the class, teacher and the subject she was teaching. Also by their behavior in class, participation and things he does in class. And finally, some social interactions the student had in class with his classmates and teacher. The social part was analyzed based on Attwood's (2012) social problems in ASD students.

Also, to analyze the instruments, the researcher first created a chart in which the interest, language and social interactions were analyzed. Every question the student and the student's teacher answered responded to the categories and subcategories the researcher established with the intention of analyzing them together. Also, the class observation memo helped the researcher with some important information that was added in the instruments. The researcher compared the answers gotten from the teacher and the student and the conclusions were reached.

### **Procedures**

Different data were collected by the researcher by using the memo observation in which the researcher took notes of the different observations she did to the student and the learning environment he was involved, the instrument of evaluation of the strategy answered by the teacher of the Asperger student after applying a strategy and the interview answered by the student.

First of all, the observations were done using the memo observation instrument. The student was observed during the English class time when the teacher was explaining and when the student was working in class. The class began, and the student was not paying

attention. The observer took notes of all the behaviors the student had in class, the things he did, the social relationships, and the problems the student had during the class, for example, when he was fighting with his classmate for a color pencil. During break time, the student was also observed. It was interesting to observe the student inside the classroom and outside because outside the social interaction part was different, the student played alone but sometimes he was interested in his classmates' games being part of them indirectly. During the observation, the strategy of the mini break was implemented. The student had some mini breaks in which the teacher told the student to go out and drink water, to go out and collect leaves, to make her a favor and go to the principal's office, and so on.

Then, the strategy of the agenda was implemented. The teacher gave the student an agenda with pictures in which the student knew what he had to do. The first picture was a group of students paying attention, the second picture was a student working, cutting or gluing and then the other picture was a clock that symbolized that the student had to work and finished in a specific period of time. At the end of the classwork, the student had to review with the teacher if he followed the agenda and if he did it or not by pointing to the word "yes" or the word "no" in the agenda. The student did it and pointed the word "yes". The teacher congratulated the student on his hard work.

During the classwork and after showing the student the agenda, the teacher completed the questionnaire to see if the agenda strategy helped the student to focus in class and to work well. Before and after applying this strategy, the teacher called the student apart, and together they answered the interview for the student. The teacher read the questions, and the student colored the face he considered is the one that represents how he felt or worked in class.

Some strategies like sitting next to the student, eye contact and color patterns were used during the English lesson. The teacher was always talking to the ASD student looking at his eyes and she was making sure the student was also looking at her. She sat down next to him to make sure he was doing the correct work. When the student did not look at her in her eyes, she called him and asked him to look her at her eyes. Then, the teacher explained the parts of the house, and she used different colors for the different parts of the house making sure that the student knew the name of the part of the house by identifying it with a specific color. All the strategies were evaluated by the teacher. She evaluated all the strategies after being applied.

## **ANALYSIS OF RESULTS**

The following information consists of the data collected with the instruments designed by the researcher and the implementation of strategies the researcher used in order to obtain the results of the three research's instruments. Also, the memo observation done by the researcher was used to analyze and get conclusions of the results instruments provided.

### **1. Behavior in class**

The data gotten in the use of the thermometer of emotions (Strategy 6), showed that the teacher found a good strategy to help Juan feel well and to make him understand and look for something that makes him happy and relax. The student felt better expressing his feeling and talking to the teacher about his feelings.

Regarding the use of the agenda (Strategy 7), the pictures made the student know that there is work to do and that he has to do more than just paying attention to the teacher. The pictures chosen by the teacher were appropriate for the students' attention. The agenda helped the student to be interested in what the class consisted of Using images was a good idea to catch Juan's attention. The student had good behavior during the class.

Asking the student to go out of the class (Strategy 2), indirectly works to make the student focus on something else and then go back and pay attention to what he was doing before. The student feels important when the teacher asks him to help her. The student knew what to do after going out of the class and doing a favor to the teacher.

According to Ruiz (2002), the pedagogical methodology or strategies proposed by the teacher, is a tool of direct relationship between the student and the teacher. The strategies proposed were thought in the sense that the teacher justifies its intention. In this case, the researcher has determined strategies with the purpose of helping AS behave well, participate and learn from the English class. Based on the results and previous data, the researcher could notice that Juan behaves and works better knowing what to do and expressing his feelings in class. Therefore, the student feels a very important part of the English class when the teacher asks him for a favor. The student's behavior has changed positively after applying the strategies in class and made the student pay attention and participating orally in class.

## **2. Language Proficiency**

The strategy of sitting next to the student (Strategy 1), and making sure that the student is doing the correct task was important for the teacher. Having the teacher's support makes the student feel happy. The student works well having teacher's help.

Regarding the use of patterns or colors (Strategy 3), it was shown that colors helped the teacher to make the students be interested in the content she is teaching. The teacher felt secure using colors at the moment to explain and that security was transmitted to the student who liked and understood the patterns and all the content involved in it. The student felt indifference when the teacher started explaining but then he was really excited about knowing what those colors meant.

Also, using simple vocabulary (Strategy 4) helps the student to understand better the teacher. The student does not talk in English at least the teacher asks and helps him to do it. The student feels well when the teacher uses and asks him simple vocabulary.

Regarding to asking the student to look directly to the eyes when talking (Strategy 5), makes the student focus on what the other person is saying or asking him but in this case Juan could not do it. The student was not accustomed to look at the eyes when talking, so he felt uncomfortable and he showed anxiety. Making the student look at the other's eyes did not work for Juan. The teacher needs to find out another strategy that does not make feel Juan uncomfortable when talking and paying attention to someone that is explaining him something.

According to the conclusions gotten, Language proficiency improved during the implementation of the strategies, but there are some strategies like the eye contact strategy that the teacher still needs to modify or implement again. The researcher could identify that Juan feels better when using simple vocabulary and when he understands the teacher. However, Juan feels bad when the teacher asks him to talk by looking at her eyes.

### **1. Social relationships**

Regarding the social relation of the student with the teacher it was showed with the interactions they had that it is better. The student trusted the English teacher more than before and he had closer relation with her. The student felt comfortable with the English teacher and he showed respect and love listening and talking to her. The student showed that he was happy when she was teaching him. Also, the student showed that he liked the teacher and that there was empathy between him and his teacher. As expressed by

the student, he felt happy talking and interacting with her. The relationship the student had with the teacher is better now which is very important for the students learning.

The results showed that even though he does not like to work with other students, he could work in groups and cooperate. As Wing and Gould (1983) mentioned, the student seems to have a lack of empathy with his peers, but if his peers are doing something, that will catch his attention, and he will try to do it too. Due to his poor ability to make friends, he was the majority of the time alone and isolated. Even though there were games that imply group cooperation the student preferred not to do it. Also, it seemed to be frustrating for him not to be the group leader. The student felt frustration when things were out of his control, moreover he did not like group work.

As reflected in the results, it was difficult for the student to interact with others, but making him feel an essential part of the group was very significant for the student and made the student cooperate and participate in the class actively.

#### **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

It was also proved that there are some strategies that need to be more elaborated and adapted to student in order for them to work. Sometimes what teachers believe can work does not work for the students. Teachers cannot force students to do something they do not like, but they can make students like that something they propose if they figure out what is wrong and change it according to their likes.

Once the strategies were defined, the researcher applied the suggested strategies in class to help a student with the ASD in the learning process of English as a foreign language. The strategies were used in different days and with different contents. After the application of the strategies, they were assessed by the researcher to realize how effective they were regarding the improvement of the student in the English class.

As a result of the assessment of the different instruments, the researcher was able to identify if the strategies implemented worked and how much they helped the student in his learning process and to develop the listening and speaking skills more in the English as a foreign language class. The researcher realized that most of the strategies proposed really helped the student developing his listening and speaking skills using vocabulary the teacher taught him and answering her some questions in English, participation in class and interaction with peers and teacher. All the objectives proposed by the researcher were reached and successfully developed in this project. The student and the

teacher have now many strategies that will make their learning and teaching experience significant and better.

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