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## Teaching the skill of speaking to an autistic learner: A case study

### Abstract

This paper reports the findings of research that the author conducted in order to investigate the development of English communication skills in learners with autistic spectrum disorders. Information and background about the issue is followed by a brief analysis of theory as presented in the literature. In the first part of the paper, the authors examine the relationship between appropriate therapy, understanding the disorder, using specific teaching methods, and the effective learning of communication skills in English. As shown in the literature, learning a language can bring therapeutic benefits and the use of particular teaching techniques has great effects on the development of English communication skills in autistic children. Furthermore, the subsequent part of the paper presents the results of the author's work with a student suffering from Asperger's syndrome. The paper ends with conclusions drawn as a result of the case study.

**Keywords:** SEN, autism spectrum disorders, English language teaching/learning, interactive methods, Asperger's Syndrome, parents of autistic children, the MI theory

### Introduction

Learning the skill of speaking in English is considered one of the most important skills in terms of linguistic competence, because it determines the correct understanding of the messages and allows one to freely use a foreign language. The process of teaching this

skill is difficult and time-consuming. It requires great commitment from language teachers, implementation of more and more innovative methods and an individual approach to students. This is a big challenge because each FL user assimilates knowledge differently. They need different kinds of motivation and benefit from the application of different foreign language process-directed approaches. Considering the difficulties in learning the language, students with autism spectrum disorders attending an inclusive classroom should also be mentioned; assuming that every FL learner is able to achieve the highest results in learning English communication, students with autism must also be taken into account.

For years autism has been seen as a disorder that has demanded more attention from teachers. Although autistic children have been present in the environment, only recently can one observe a greater awareness when it comes to the specificity of these students and the appropriate methods to work with them.

While working in a language school, one of the authors of this paper has repeatedly observed that autistic students can achieve outstanding results in acquiring the English language when appropriate teaching methods are used and correctly adapted to their needs. Moreover, they can achieve the same or even better results than non-SEN students. This prompted us to design our own research aimed at checking the effectiveness of individual methods and their impact on the English communication skills of children with autism spectrum disorders.

## Literature review

In order to get to know and understand what autism is, it is important to learn its history first. Over the years, numerous scholars have tried to discover the nature of this disorder. The term *autism* was first introduced in 1911 by E. Bleuler to describe one of the central symptoms of schizophrenia. According to Zaorska, Trajdowska (2013: 89) autism was defined as “[...] a loosening of the discipline of logical thinking with a concomitant progressive shyness”. In 1943, L. Kanner, having examined a number of children with learning difficulties, psychosis and schizophrenia who did not fit into any already functioning group, introduced the name “early childhood autism”. Kanner (1968: 123) believed that autism can be understood mainly as a “[...] visible deficit in the ability to direct reality and a lack of fantasy”.

Following Warren (1984), on 27 June 1977, the Florida National Autistic Children Association adopted an official definition of autism according to which “[...] autism is a serious developmental disability throughout life, which typically begins to manifest itself in the first three years of life. [...] The symptoms of autism are caused by damage to the brain and include: disturbances and delays in mastering the habits of daily living, social and language habits.” In Poland, a good definition of autism can be found in the works of Jaklewicz (1993: 25), who remarks that “[...] a developmental disorder that becomes apparent in the first three years of life. The symptoms [...] relate primarily to disorders in the sphere of social functioning. The axial symptom is withdrawal from social contacts, which determines the formation of further symptoms of the syndrome”.

Autism has also been defined as the inability to relate naturally to people and situations, or extreme withdrawal, which causes children to have problems making social contacts, speech disorders, and a fascination with objects. Zaorska, Trajdowska (2013) emphasize that initially doctors ruled out the diagnosis of autism in people with brain damage or intellectual disability, but that changed in the 1970s. Then the disorder began to be found also in people with diagnosed damage of the nervous system or intellectual dysfunctions.

By analysing the data, it can be noted that most scholars believe that the effects of autism spectrum disorders are intellectual problems. With reference to E. Pisula (2005), it is very important to recognize autism as soon as possible. Abnormalities are apparent from very early childhood, so a diagnosis is usually made in the first five years of a child's life. These disorders largely interfere with one's everyday functioning; the child's behaviour is often significantly different from the age norm; it is also characterized by repetitive, stereotypical behaviour and difficulties in proper communication.

According to Zaorska, Trajdowska (2013), children with developmental disorders have a specific model of evolution and a tendency to develop not one, but several disorders. As the two scholars observe, the following diagnostic categories are included into comprehensive developmental disorders: autistic disorder (AD); Asperger's syndrome (AS); Rett disorder (RD); child autism; and atypical autism.

In the opinion of Johnson and Myers (2007), child autism is diagnosed when a child incorrectly assesses the information that s/he receives and even slight changes in his/her environment can cause severe anxiety and even panic. In this way it differs from the Asperger's syndrome, which is characterized by symptoms very similar to autism; in this disorder, however, there are no intellectual abnormalities or speech problems. When autism is mentioned, the presence of atypical autism cannot be forgotten. Following Zaorska, Trajdowska (2013), symptoms do not appear until after the age of three and are often incorrectly equated with a lighter course and less nuisance. As the two scholars observe, it is also crucial to characterize the Rett syndrome; contrary to the other types of autism, there appears a profound motor disability and a very limited ability to communicate with the environment.

According to P. Rodier (2000) autism spectrum disorders become most noticeable between the ages of two and five. It is during this period that parents begin to notice differences in the behaviour and development of their child when they compare their behaviour to the one of their peers. Parents first start to worry about the child's verbal communication process, when they notice that their child either starts to babble much later, or sometimes they do not make any sounds at all; likewise, no individual words are spoken for the purpose of communication.

As observed by Zaorska, Trajdowska (2013) the most characteristic features of autism are: avoidance of emotional relations, the appearance of exceptional talents (e.g. musical, perfect memory or manipulative dexterity), the appearance of anxiety and/or fear for no apparent reason, impaired speech (or its complete absence), as well as reluctance to accept oncoming necessary changes.

When an attempt to diagnose autism has been undertaken, many factors have to be analysed and investigated in order to obtain an appropriate opinion. People with autism

spectrum disorders also have difficulty when defining feelings revealed by other people; they do not understand jokes, and sometimes do not listen to what is being said. Moreover, according to Wasilonek (2019) every, even the smallest change in the environment and life of an autistic child may evoke strong emotions, anger and sometimes even a quarrel, because the behavioural area of symptoms is the repetition of actions and experiences.

## Teaching a foreign language to autistic children

Nowadays the knowledge of a foreign language, and English in particular, is crucial. Not only does it help more and more in everyday life, but also it plays a significant role in getting a good, well-paid job; the benefits of applying this skill are endless. It is, therefore, important to help children practice the use of English from an early age as much as possible. Learning a foreign language is mainly based on building one's use of correct vocabulary and grammar, so that students could communicate without any problems. The process itself can be difficult for both teachers and students. When it comes to teaching English to autistic learners much more attention and specific teaching methods are needed. Currently we can observe the advanced development of technology, which is why foreign language teachers are encouraged to diversify their lessons with all kinds of interactive aids, smartphones, the Internet and computers. Jagielska (2010) also draws attention to the fact that autistic students acquire knowledge better if they use games such as puns, which allow children to enrich their vocabulary, while having great fun at the same time.

While discussing the specificity of teaching English to autistic children, Jagielska (ibidem) gives an example of a game entitled "What do I have in my secret bag", which consists of guessing concepts and/or metaphors with the help of clues. When arranging this type of game, one should remember about adapting unambiguous, simple language and communication, avoiding irony, jokes, metaphors and other linguistic means that may cause fear in autistic learners and disturb their sense of security.

Another extremely important procedure of teaching English to autistic children is the one of transferring the skill particulars basing on the individual preferences and interests of the student. Each child, and especially those with autism spectrum disorders, has his/her passions, special talents and even "fixations" on a given area or part of reality. According to Małeckki (2019), instead of using schematic, template forms of classes, it is better to create one's own materials and trivia consistent with the child's areas of interest. Thanks to this activity, we are sure that the classes (inclusive classes included) will be interesting for the students and will provide a lot of useful information.

To teach English to (autistic) students it is important to adapt the teaching activities to the child's preferential forms of FL learning. Jagielska (2010) notes that even in the case of non-SEN students, the procedures must be differentiated to take into account an individual's preferred way of learning. When it comes to autistic children, it is even more important to adapt the materials to the specificity of the child, taking into account his/her type of memory, for example. It is also crucial to expose such students to the foreign language, teach them songs, poems, play recordings, and organize language games and

competitions. Having a group of students, the teacher should identify people with different types of memory (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, verbal) as soon as possible, in order to choose the best possible materials and methods of teaching a foreign language.

Each of the previously mentioned types of students, the ones suffering from autistic disorders included, perceives reality differently and assimilates knowledge in a specific way. Referring to the research described by Harmer (2001), several forms and modes of work with students with autism and different types of learning styles can be distinguished. These entail, among others, various procedures based on communication and interaction, audiovisual techniques and the well-known procedure of the Total Physical Response designed by James Asher. Following Harmer (*ibidem*), all communication-based procedures are worth using when teaching/learning vocabulary and dialogues. The idea upon which such procedures function is an assumption that any situation occurring in the classroom can be a reason for communication. At the same time, all linguistic mistakes are to be treated as a natural part of the learning process.

As for audiovisual techniques the assumption is that presenting new language materials in an audiovisual context help (autistic) learners learn specific skills, such as listening, reading, or speaking. Knowing that autistic children have very poor attention span, such techniques are recommended to be applied as a form of concentration training.

Finally, Harmer (*ibidem*) writes that the Total Physical Response is a good teaching method for practicing understanding and performing the instructions given by the teacher. As this method consists in giving short and simple commands such as: “clap your hands”, “sit down” it can be used to teach foreign languages to children, autistic children included.

Similar remarks can be found in Zaorska, Trajdoska (2013). These two scholars write that, following their research, the principal reasons autistic students, due to their disorders, have difficulties in taking part in everyday communication, are serious obstacles related to autism, such as: speech impediments, impaired memory, impaired visual-auditory coordination or phonemic hearing. This is mostly why such learners should be given short but easy to follow messages, as well as information strengthened by pictures. Additionally, autistic learners should be encouraged to take part in simple and easy to grasp simulation scenes with limited by repeatable number of expressions.

In conclusion, it is believed that autistic children can achieve a level of linguistic knowledge comparable to that attained by non-SEN students, if they are given the right amount of work and attention. Willingness and multifaceted cooperation between the child the teacher, parent, and therapist are important.

## The participant of the research

The subject of this study is Magdalena, a 15-year-old with diagnosed Asperger’s syndrome belonging to the autism spectrum. She attends the first grade of a public high school. Magda was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome at the age of 9, when severe symptoms began to appear, such as difficulties in non-verbal communication, a narrow, obsessive interest in music with the use of specialized names, social interaction disorders

as well as repetitive routine behaviour. Extra lessons to help overcome her problems with English were a suggestion after her parents were notified about a lack of progress with the language by her class teacher. As she kept silent during the first lessons, it was necessary to apply specific forms of teaching to resolve her evident dislike of the language. However, the first lessons helped us find out that Magda had problems with pronunciation, and the production of correct grammatical structures, although the biggest problem was found within her speaking activities. Simple statements were difficult for her, she put Polish words into sentences, or used the words closely related to her field of interest, which stood in no relation to the topic of the task. In addition, Magda had difficulty focusing on one activity. Generally, she experienced visible stress in speaking out loud in English.

With regard to the above problems, the girl's mother decided to help her overcome her problems with English; from September 2021 Magda became a learner of a specific course of English designed by us for autistic students and Monika became her personal tutor. Likewise, from this time we were ready to begin the case study.

## **Methods and procedures of work with the student**

The case study began with the application of the Gardner's Multiple Intelligences test, so as to select the dominant type of Magda's intelligence. The aim was to check what type of learning the research participant can be sensitive to and what teaching procedures may be effective when bringing Magda closer to learning communication skills. The IDRlabs Multiple Intelligences (MI) Test (IDR-MIT) applied by us consisted of 45 questions with a 0–5 score depending on the degree of truthfulness of the statement.

In order to better understand and interpret the test results, it is vital to know the types of intelligence: linguistic, mathematical and logical, motor, visual and spatial, musical, natural, intrapersonal and interpersonal. Interestingly, the test results clearly showed that Magda's leading intelligences were: musical and visual/spatial. Following the description provided by the test authors, people located within musical intelligence type are emotionally sensitive, have a sense of rhythm, their sensitivity to different sounds is quite high – they can hear and recognize sounds that are imperceptible to others. In addition, they learn better when the knowledge is conveyed in the form of a presentation rather than when they are supposed to read the text on their own. Also, they can play a melody or rhythm after just hearing it once. It is worth adding that in one of her answers that referred to one's easiness of memorization of song texts and melodies, Magda received the maximum number of points; this may be used as one of the arguments that it is musical intelligence that is dominant in her. As in her psychological diagnosis, the girl reveals a passion for music, is extremely knowledgeable about this field, and in her vocabulary there are very visible, often professional, references to music.

In this instance, we assumed that some of the most effective methods of teaching English communication skills are those that combine facts and concepts with sound and rhythm, so as to encourage the expression of the learner's experiences and opinions in

the form of a song, a piece of music. Apart from that, after analysing the MI test, it also turned out that many of Magda's answers indicated that the student's second moderately developed intelligence should be the visual-spatial one. One more time, the description of the finding provided by the test authors, informs that students with this type of intelligence think vividly, use maps, diagrams, tables and pictures, and use their imagination. They are sensitive to colours, shapes and patterns; they also like to paint, sculpt, draw, and compose puzzles.

Having determined the dominant types of intelligences of the student, the task the teacher was to complete was to adapt the forms, procedures and methods of work, as well as games and proposals of activities to the interests and abilities of the student; additionally, it was necessary to implement all the novelties and create an educational space in the implementation of creative ideas in order to discover the child's potential and to motivate her to learn.

Subsequently, an oral pre-test was conducted, which was created in order to check Magda's power of English communication and general speaking skills on the one hand and her knowledge of vocabulary and language basics on the other. We decided to award one point for each correctly produced (affirmative, interrogative and/or negative) sentence, one point for the correct choice of descriptive expression, one point for the choice of correct tense, and one point for the type of statement (compound, multiple) correctly produced by Magda. In this way it was possible to score up to four points if only all four situations occurred. Before starting the test, we asked the student a few simple "warm-up" questions on common topics related to everyday life. The pre-test consisted of three parts, each of them consisting of four questions. Both the content and the vocabulary contained in the questions were taken from Magda's coursebook, which she uses at school during her mandatory English lessons.

The first part of questions concerned the issues regarding her place of residence, as well as Magda's opinion about the ideal place where she would like to live. The student answered all the four questions moderately correctly, but she was visibly surprised that she had to answer aloud and express her opinion. Later on, she admitted that during regular school lessons, exercises to develop the ability to speak were performed extremely rarely. During Magda's speech, we noticed that she had numerous problems with the pronunciation of individual words; she repeatedly produced long pauses in her statements, numerous hesitations, interruptions, in this way showing that she had only a vague idea how to build the correct sentence or apply the needed vocabulary.

The second set of (five) questions raised questions related to Magda's vacations, favourite travel destinations, hotels and food. The coursebook also included helpful words for the student, in order to create more correct and interesting answers. We noticed that Magda liked the topics and holiday vocabulary much more. The fact that the test was performed in winter could have significantly influenced the girl's interest in summer and travelling. Although the student had a lot of options for the production of possibly correct answers, it was still noticeable how uncertain she was in speaking. Moreover, she was aware of her language deficiencies and for that reason, she spoke in a very shy manner, as if being ashamed of speaking English. Here we repeatedly guided the participant to the

correct construction of sentences, and although the student was visibly interested in the topic of the questions, she was still unable to express herself correctly and confidently.

Finally, in the third part, Magda answered the questions related to her interests and hobbies (five questions). Interestingly, in this case, the girl did much better than in the previous two question sections. Here we must admit we felt surprised by the knowledge of vocabulary that went beyond the textbook, when she kept talking about her passion for music. The linguistic correctness and the manner of expression were far more correct, when contrasted to her talk in the two previous parts of the test. The student herself seemed more certain of what she was saying, her behaviour was more positive, she spoke with a smile and noticeable joy.

After analysing the results of the pre-test, it can be concluded that despite the significant difficulties of the student with the ability to communicate in English (Magda scored 7 points for the first part, 8 points for the second part and 13 points for the third part), her knowledge was greater in the topics related to her passion. This may prove the influence of the type of intelligence on language learning that may be all the more important in autistic children, who are strongly attached to specific topics and areas.

Another method of teaching used by us were interactive exercises. In school, the girl followed a course of standard teaching, so during her tutorial hours we decided to use online games. First, Magda answered a few simple warm-up questions related to the topic. (e.g. "Do you like shopping?", "What clothes do you like to wear on a daily basis?", "What have you recently bought?" etc.) After selecting the clothes to be the category in the game, the student was to listen to a short dialogue in which mum and son talked about a gift that they will buy together for dad's birthday. Then Magda was to choose the gift that was mentioned in the dialogue from the three pictures presented to her. In this case, we noticed that after listening to the recording for the second/third time, the girl was able to indicate the correct answer. After completing the task, we asked her two analytic questions (whether she agreed with the choice of mum and son, and what she would buy for her dad for birthday). Once again, the questions regarding the student's opinion evidently rose her enthusiasm; she spoke fluently and though there was a lack of vocabulary (because the girl tried to search for more complicated words), with the help of the tutor she managed to keep the sentences roughly correct. Additionally, using Magda's musical passion, during the lessons, we introduced an exercise containing a song. It was related to the main lesson topic and both the music and the lyrics were displayed on the screen. After listening to the music for several times, the student's task was first to answer questions about the contents of the song by combining the appropriate answers with the questions on the touch screen and later to sing it. To our surprise, the girl brilliantly coped with the task related to music. She answered the questions correctly, without much help of the tutor.

The student enjoyed completing the task in an interactive form; she remembered the words of the song instantly and hummed them until the end of the lesson. This supports our hypothesis that the interactive elements in language learning are very effective, especially in children with Asperger's syndrome who need many various stimuli to learn the language. In the next stage of the case study, the tutor decided to use a different multimedia form related to the student's interests. As a homework assignment, the tutor asked the girl to

listen to a podcast of a famous foreign music star, in which Magda was informed in detail how the star's career developed and what steps she had to take to achieve her goals. During the listening session, Magda was to write down all the issues that were either incomprehensible to her or that she would like to talk about. During her tutorials, it turned out that Magda liked the podcasts very much, she had many questions, but mainly concerning the contents of the recording. As a result, a very interesting discussion on musical topics arose; moreover, we also observed the girl's extensive knowledge of the vocabulary related to music, which confirms that people with the Asperger's syndrome often have great interest in specific areas. It is also worth adding that the level of the student's linguistic correctness still required corrections from the tutor, but it was definitely better than before the study began.

Considering how much the podcasting method developed Magda's speaking skills, we decided to use a multimedia tool called TED Talk. This is a series of videos on the Youtube internet platform, where a new video in the form of a lecture appears every week. In each of them, there is either a famous person, or a person doing specific work, who speaks about life, personal experiences or traumas. There are also scientific, musical, linguistic and many other topics. Importantly, each video is in English, with subtitles, in order for the viewer to understand everything. First Magda was asked to watch one of the TED Talks on autism. The woman told her story with Asperger's Syndrome and how it affected her academic performance, relationship with her parents, and adult life. In this case, Magda was also supposed to rethink the contents of the video and write down incomprehensible words or statements. It is worth noting that we noticed a kind of breakthrough. The girl was extremely moved by the lecture she watched, she had many questions, she expressed a desire to watch more videos on the same or another subject. The tutor started a conversation, in which the student once again did quite well, there was a noticeable progress in building sentences and the selection of appropriate vocabulary. Moreover, the video made her aware that people with her disorder can achieve great goals and use a foreign language at a very good level.

Throughout the research, TED Talks were used repeatedly, either as homework assignments or viewed and analysed during classes. Each time it gave many opportunities for reflection and discussion, and the student's level of her speaking skill visibly increased. At the beginning of each lesson, there was a short conversation with Magda on everyday topics, such as what happened in the last week, how she felt, or how her day looked like. The aim of such a procedure was to gradually get her used to conversations in English so that it would become a habit for her. As a result, we noticed that in the initial phase of the research, the answers to the questions were very simple and limited to "I don't remember", "I'm fine", "I don't know". However, over time, Magda felt more and more freely, her knowledge grew up and also her statements became better and more complex. The student began to respond in a much bolder manner, interjected her answers with stories from her life, and – most importantly – with a little help from the tutor, she was more and more able to build interesting sentences with a more complicated structure, and her level of speaking English improved significantly.

In order to check Magda's progress, we used speaking cards one more time, but this time they were entirely devoted to the participant's favourite field – music. The questions

included in this game were, for example, “What kind of music do you like? Is there any kind of music that you can’t stand? Why?”, “Do you play musical instrument?”, “What types of music do older people listen to in your country?” or “What song best represents you, or your attitude to life?”. It is worth observing that the girl did not need much time to think; she used her rich musical vocabulary impressively. In addition, numerous procedures were introduced, thanks to which the girl could improve her pronunciation (we used many times reading texts to be read out loud, or an exercise called “Talk with your partner”). The latter is a smartphone application, with many (sub)categories, from which you can choose your favourite. Then, there is a recorded conversation of two people on the selected topic; simultaneously there is a script of the dialogue on the phone or other device screen. After listening to the recording, the student was supposed to select the person from the dialogue she would like to be. Later, the tutor played the recording again, but as this time only one person was heard, there was time for the student to read the other person’s line. In this way, the learner had the opportunity to not only develop her pronunciation, but also to learn some particulars of the speaking skill.

The last task of the research was to perform a post speaking test to see what progress the student had made during the research process. The test consisted of 10 questions (and two-three sub-questions) on several topics and various difficulty levels. Similarly, as in the pre-test, the student could obtain up to four points for each correct statement. The test participant could score up to twenty-five points all together. Compared to the pre-test, we noticed significant changes in Magda’s skills; her ultimate post-test score was nineteen points, but it was not the score alone that turned the most important.

First of all, she was much more confident in her answers, she still needed moments of reflection to gather her thoughts, but the tutor’s help in constructing sentences was not needed; only sometimes the tutor would suggest individual words when Magda wanted to use a bit more sophisticated vocabulary.

There was also a noticeable change in Magda’s attitude to language learning. Her motivation increased significantly in relation to the initial phase of the research; moreover, her ability to speak English was broadened, her statements were clearer and more understandable. It is also worth adding that – hopefully thanks to Magda’s tutorials – her grades at school also improved, and her mother did not have to spend so much time helping her daughter learn.

## Findings

After an in-depth study of the many types of research conducted in the field of teaching English to children with autistic disorders, including a case study done by us, as well as the extensive analysis of the available literature, many interesting conclusions can be drawn. First of all, the case study carried out with Magda showed that the use of interactive methods by language teachers brings great benefits to children with autism disorders. Thanks to the forms of teaching proposed by us, the learner’s creativity was significantly developed, what invariably influenced the learner’s ability to communicate in English.

The use of podcasts, films and interactive games influenced Magda's motivation to learn the language, and an idea to introduce the elements of the student's interests into the course of the tutorials also contributed to improving the speaking skills. Nowadays, in the age of the Internet, social media and technological development, there is a very wide range of all kinds of interactive tasks that can be easily applied in English lessons, also with autistic children, in this way helping the mainstream teachers improve and enrich her inclusive classroom lessons.

During the time of the pandemic, schools were forced to switch to online teaching, which opened up even more possibilities for introducing interactive elements. Evidently, there is no single, ideal way of teaching children with autism spectrum disorders. Despite a number of studies, analyses and trials, autism still remains a disorder that is not fully known in terms of its symptoms and needs. There is no single solution by which it can be clearly stated what FL teaching procedures turn out to be best for this type of learners. However, the most important thing is to constantly develop one's knowledge, and continue researching various cases of autistic learners learning a foreign language, so as to increase the common contents and find common points. Moreover, as this work has shown, the final result does not depend solely on the teachers. It is primarily the work of the school, the state, which should properly formulate the curriculum, so that it creates good working conditions for teachers, but also for all students.

Autistic students are still in the minority when it comes to public schools and inclusive FLT, so it is worthwhile to structure teaching in such a way that no one is excluded and everyone can achieve success in learning the language. Then, it is important to remember about the cooperation between the school (management), teachers and the parent(s). They should talk to each other about the possible problems of the student, discuss how to help the student and look for solutions. Taking into account all the above-mentioned methods and teaching approaches, the process of FL education for autistic students can be much more enjoyable, effective, and what's more, students will acquire knowledge in an appropriate environment. Thanks to research like this one, teachers' awareness of the educational needs of students suffering from the autism spectrum disorders can be increased. Although learning how to communicate is difficult for all students, autistic students, when using appropriate tools, paired with patience and an enormous amount of work, are able to achieve noticeable results and communication skills in English.

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## Streszczenie

### Uczenie umiejętności mówienia ucznia autystycznego: studium przypadku

Praca przedstawia dokładną analizę teoretyczną oraz badania mające na celu zweryfikowanie możliwości rozwoju umiejętności komunikacyjnych w języku angielskim u uczniów posiadających zaburzenia w spektrum autyzmu. W pierwszej części autorzy prezentują informacje dotyczące opisywanego zaburzenia, a także związek między dogłębnym zrozumieniem autyzmu, zastosowaniem odpowiedniej terapii, włączeniem konkretnych metod nauczania a efektywnym nauczaniem umiejętności komunikacji. Jak pokazuje literatura, rozwijanie kompetencji językowych może mieć również walory terapeutyczne, co więcej, zastosowanie odpowiednich technik nauczania powoduje znaczną poprawę zdolności komunikacji w języku angielskim u dzieci autystycznych. Dlatego też w kolejnej części pracy przedstawiono wyniki pracy autorów z uczennicą cierpiącą na zespół Aspergera, a na koniec ukazano wnioski z badania.

**Słowa kluczowe:** SPE, spektrum autyzmu, nauczanie/uczenie się języka angielskiego, metody interaktywne, zespół Aspergera, rodzice dzieci autystycznych, teoria MI