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**TEACHING ENGLISH TO AUTISTIC CHILDREN:  
A TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE ROUTE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Autism is a multifactorial disorder, which is also considered a behavioural disorder, that compromises social interaction, communication and it presents repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behaviours, with restricted interest in many activities. This paper aims to discuss the possibilities to teach English as a Foreign Language to autistic children from 4 to 5 years-old in Regular Schools. One of the main reasons is because it is crucial for every teacher to know what this disorder is and how to deal with students in this condition. There are many approaches, methods, activities and strategies to work with an autistic child, and the one focused on this paper is the Total Physical Response (TPR) methodology, where there are many available activities to help develop and aid the autistic learner with their communication and others difficulties that they may have. In order to deep in the study of the subject, interviews were made with people who had the experience working with or contact with autistic children.

**Keywords:** Autism; Total Physical Response; Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

## RESUMO

O autismo é um transtorno multifatorial, também considerado um transtorno do comportamento, que compromete a interação social, a comunicação e apresenta padrões de comportamento repetitivos e estereotipados, com interesse restrito a muitas atividades. Este Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso tem por objetivo principal discutir as possibilidades de ensino de Inglês como Língua Estrangeira para crianças autistas de 4 a 5 anos em escolas regulares. Uma das razões que motivou esse estudo reside em compreender como crucial que todos os professores saibam o que é esse distúrbio e como lidar com estudantes diagnosticados como autistas. Existem muitas abordagens, métodos, atividades e estratégias para trabalhar com uma criança autista, e o foco neste estudo está na utilização da metodologia de Resposta Física Total (TPR), a qual oferece muitas atividades disponíveis para ajudar a desenvolver e auxiliar o aluno autista em sua comunicação e em outras dificuldades que possa ter. Para aprofundar no estudo do tema, foram realizadas entrevistas com pessoas que tiveram a experiência de trabalho ou contato com crianças autistas.

**Palavras-chave:** Autismo; Resposta física total; Ensino de Inglês como Língua Estrangeira.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is of common knowledge for the basic human needs, that education is a right to everybody even for children with special needs, which brings us to the topic of inclusive education, a subject that is a common reality nowadays and one that is, and should be discussed more and more. One of the most common types of special needs in Brazil nowadays and the one that will be the focus on this research, is autism, which is a multifactorial mental disorder with many levels and types, and depending on these levels and types, there are some specific characteristics that may hinder, or at the very least challenge the child in their education.

In spite of all these troubles, it is still a necessity (and a right) that an autistic child must be educated in order to be a full citizen and an active part of the society, which is why the concept of inclusive learning exists in the first place.

Nowadays, English has become a bigger necessity in order to provide students with better chances at their future, not only because of the role of English as a Global Language, but also for its role in the aid for future job prospects, seeing as many times, English not as a requirement, but an advantage when applying for jobs. Furthermore, the learning of a foreign language could help with the development of the child's communication skills. According to studies conducted by the website Chat in English (2019), some Brazilians psychologists and educators already indicate the English learning to amplify the communication and creativity capacity, because a second language instigates children to learn new words and keep focused in an activity different from the conventional, stimulating the creativity and speaking (our translation<sup>1</sup>).

As it was said before, inclusive education is a reality, and a situation within the school environment, thus seeking reports of experiences and pedagogical forms for teaching English language to students with autism spectrum, verifying the effectiveness of this experience is relevant for efficient teaching practices throughout the student's professional career.

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<sup>1</sup> “Alguns psicólogos e pedagogos brasileiros já indicavam o aprendizado do inglês para ampliar a capacidade de comunicação e criatividade. Isso porque um segundo idioma instiga as crianças a aprenderem novas palavras e as manterem o foco em uma atividade diferente da convencional, estimulando a criatividade e a fala.” (Chat in English. Available at:

<http://chatinenglish.com.br/os-beneficios-do-ingles-para-as-criancasautistas/#:~:text=A%20novidade%20chamou%20a%20aten%C3%A7%C3%A3o,que%20falavam%20apenas%20um%20idioma>. Access: 19/03/2021)

In addition, language learning can offer a range of benefits for students on the autism spectrum, as it is an opportunity to develop communication and daily life skills that are not very common in other areas of the curriculum, and it is for these and other reasons that this topic was chosen to be approached.

Correspondingly, Base Nacional Comum Curricular (from now on BNCC) states that the inclusion process can take place, for example, through Special Education and this type of teaching is provided for in the Federal Constitution (CF), in the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDBEN) and in several national documents and legislation.

The document also advises that the educational inclusion processes are diverse, and may be, for example, adaptation of material in audio, Braille or extended characters; suitability of an object (thicken a pencil); adjusting furniture (increase or decrease its height or inclination); adjusting content; adapt an activity (promoting ball games with rattles in Physical Education), among many other strategies and procedures.

All of these resources and strategies may, preferably, have the guidance and participation of specialized professionals, but the essential thing is that the inclusion of students targeting Special Education, and not only them, is a process that involves everyone, from the employees, passing by colleagues, teachers, school managers and central bodies. Inclusion is a process in constant construction, from everyone to everyone (BRASIL, 2018).

The practice of inclusive education is something very frequent in nowadays schools, because, according to current legislation, inclusion extends to all areas of basic education knowledge.

English language is approached to be taught to autistic children at regular schools because it helps them with their difficulty in communication and, according to Lorena Costa's research:

More than encouraging autistic children to learn a new language or other method of communication, adapting the school curriculum is essential for the full learning of people with ASD. Provided by the Inclusion Law (13,146 / 2015), this adaptation refers to change the way content is taught and presented to children (COSTA, 2018, our translation<sup>2</sup>).

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<sup>2</sup> Mais do que estimular as crianças autistas a aprenderem uma nova língua ou outro método de comunicação, a adaptação do currículo escolar é primordial para o pleno aprendizado das pessoas com TEA. Prevista da Lei da Inclusão (13.146/2015), a adaptação refere-se à modificação da forma como o conteúdo é ensinado e apresentado às crianças. (COSTA, 2018)

For these reasons, the discussion of possibilities of teaching English as a Foreign Language to autistic children from 4 to 5 years-old in Regular Schools was thought of as necessary of research, both for the applicability of this research by future teachers in the area, and also for a special personal interest in the area, as a result of previous experience with teaching autistic children in this age range. Thusly, in order to guide the research, the following research problem is set: Is Total Physical Response a proper method to approach English as a Foreign Language to autistic children from 4 to 5 years-old in Regular Schools?

In order to establish the course of action for the analysis and the study of autistic children, it is imperative to settle and present the Main Objective, which is:

- ✓ Discuss the possibilities to teach English as Foreign Language to autistic children from 4 to 5 years-old in Regular Schools.

Then, as Specific Objectives, there are the following: the definitions and characteristics of autism and the autistic spectrum are well specified and understood; it is crucial that a topic is well understood by the educator before talking about or even teaching someone who has this disorder, as such, these will be looked at going forward. In the same sense, finding and analysing specific characteristics of children in the autism spectrum would be significant in order to know exactly how these children behave, learn and what difficulties they might have, as well as how they can be taught.

On the topic of teaching, a specific methodology was selected: Total Physical Response, as the chosen method of working with autistic children and through the usage of this method, some strategies and resources could be presented to be used to teach a child with autism, or assist teachers in their work. TPR is a good choice of method for autistic children because it helps them with their communication issues, it helps them to learning new things and languages and it helps them to express themselves.

The importance of this research can be comprehended through two decisive instances for the investigative process as a whole. Those instances are: academic and the social environment. Regarding the academic environment, the problem, mentioned before, fills the gap of a theoretical question, a replacement of a problem question which has already been addressed by several names such as Guerra (2010), approaching some aspects about the inclusive education, Mecca et al (2011), tackling issues regarding the DSM-IV classifying

autism as one of the Global Developmental Disorders (TGD) or Invasive Developmental Disorder, Canut *et al* (Apud Zauza, 2015), analysing autism aspects, Santos (2008), who also studies about autism, Junior and Pimentel (Apud Zauza, 2015), suggesting things about autism and Khoury *et al* (2014, apud Zauza, 2015) offers new perspectives on the topic. About the social environment, the results of this research constitute theoretical and effective subsidies for English classes for autistic children, which become increasingly accessible in the formal school environment.

As for the question of whether or not the research has any relevance on the lives of teachers-to-be, two main points are of importance: First off, the resources, strategies and activities that shall be proposed can serve as a guide and as tool for raising the teachers' awareness relating to autism and their types and levels. Second, the information regarding autism and its degrees/variations that will be consolidated throughout the paper, as well as the data collected through case studies and interviews could serve as an additional source of information for future teachers to use on their own lesson planning.

The methodology and instruments chosen for this paper are a bibliographic review, case study and interviews<sup>3</sup>, focusing on the literary review of previous experiences and researches, in order to verify approaches and techniques for inclusive education. Gil (2002) states that:

The research is carried out using the knowledge available and the careful use of scientific methods, techniques and other procedures. In reality, research is carried out along a process that involves numerous phases, from the proper formulation of the problem to the satisfactory presentation results. (GIL, 2002, p. 17, our translation<sup>4</sup>).

In the bibliographic review, the main topics to be looked at are: former research on the subject, information on the autism types and levels, previously established activities and methodologies and early case studies done related to the subject. And regarding the interviews, they were held with an English teacher while the other part was done with an autistic child's mother, in order to fill out two different point of views regarding the experience with autistic learners. About case study, Gil (2002, p.137) states: "Contrary to

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<sup>3</sup> According to instructions from UCS Ethic Committee, once this paper reaches simply the graduation level and only explores data collected by an interview (not medical tests or any other method which could set a dangerous situation to the participants), there was no need to submit this project to the Committee.

<sup>4</sup> "A pesquisa é realizada com o conhecimento disponível e com o uso cuidadoso de métodos científicos, técnicas e outros procedimentos. Na realidade, a pesquisa é realizada ao longo de um processo que envolve inúmeras fases, desde a formulação adequada do problema até a apresentação de resultados satisfatórios" (GIL, 2002, p. 17).

what happens with the survey, there is no consensus on the part of the researchers as to the steps to be followed in their development.”

However, based on the work of some authors who dedicated themselves to this issue, like Robert K. Yin and Robert E. Stake, it becomes possible to define a set of steps that can be followed in most defined searches as case studies: The formulation of the problem, definition of the case-unit, determining the number of cases, elaboration of the protocol, data collection, data evaluation and analysis and report preparation (GIL 2002, p. 137, our translation<sup>5</sup>).

In the first chapter of this research, the history of inclusive education in Brazil is presented and discussed, it has started in in the time of Empire, where two institutions were founded: *O Imperial Instituto dos Meninos Cegos*, in 1854 and *O Imperial Instituto dos Surdos-mudos*, in 1857, and this gave continuity to the foundation of other institutions: the Pestalozzi Institute in 1926, and the first APAE (Associação de Pais e Amigos dos Excepcionais) in 1954. Since then, even more schools were founded to assist children with special needs. Since then, even more schools were founded to assist children with special needs.

In the second chapter, a detailed synthesis of what is autism, its types and levels take place; as well as an analysis and evaluation regarding the usage of TPR as an approach for teaching autistic children.

Finally, the last chapter includes two interviews carried out with both an English teacher and also a mother about their experiences with autistic children as well as a correlation between both interviews and the research itself.

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<sup>5</sup> Ao contrário do que ocorre com o levantamento, não há consenso por parte dos pesquisadores quanto às etapas a serem seguidas em seu desenvolvimento. Com base, porém, no trabalho de alguns autores que se dedicaram a essa questão, como Robert K. Yin (2001) e Robert E. Stake (2000), torna-se possível definir um conjunto de etapas que podem ser seguidas na maioria das pesquisas definidas como estudos de caso: formulação do problema, definição da unidade-caso, determinação do número de casos, elaboração do protocolo, coleta de dados; avaliação e análise dos dados e preparação do relatório (GIL 2002, p.137).

## **1. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

In this chapter, the topics to be approached are: The history of inclusive education in Brazil, how and where it started; Autism, what it is, when it was discovered, its types and levels; Total Physical Response method, what it is, when it was first used and English language teaching for autistic children: how to teach, strategies and resources.

### **1.1 HISTORY OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN BRAZIL**

The first attempt to discuss inclusive education in Brazil was in the Empire time, with the foundation of two institutions: *O Imperial Instituto dos Meninos Cegos*, in 1854 and *O Imperial Instituto dos Surdos-mudos*, in 1857.

In the 20th century more organizations appeared with the foundation of the Pestalozzi Institute in 1926 and the foundation of the first APAE (Associação de Pais e Amigos dos Excepcionais) in 1954. Since then, even more schools were founded to assist children with special needs.

However, in the 1960s, a discussion begun questioning if the segregated education of these children would be able to include them on the midst of society. An education model called *School Integration* was proposed. This model suggested that children with disabilities should live alongside others on a daily basis, including on the schools. Thus, special schools, special classrooms and regular classrooms were developed. As assessments were made, and it was believed that the children were evolving, they advanced through the different levels. However, as the regular classrooms had no adaptations to accommodate the reception of special students, this final progression did not happen.

In the 1994's World Education Conference, more specifically the Declaration of Salamanca, the need of an education that would serve children, teenagers and adults with disabilities within the regular education system was recognized and addressed. The document stated, among other things that pedagogy should be mindful of the children, who should be the centre of attention of the school system, attending to their needs with the intent of fighting discrimination.

From then on, Brazil also began to make changes in its legislation to adequate the teaching towards inclusive education: “In 1999, decree 3298 that regulates law 7853/89 defines special education as a transversal modality at all levels and modalities teaching, emphasizing its complementary performance to regular education<sup>6</sup>”(GUERRA, 2016, p. 31, our translation).

Since 2003, the Ministério da Educação (MEC) has been implementing the Programme of Inclusive Education:

The right to diversity, with a view to supporting the transformation of education systems into inclusive educational systems, promoting a broad process of training managers and educators in Brazilian municipalities to guarantee the right of everyone to access schooling, the provision of specialized educational assistance and ensuring accessibility<sup>7</sup>. (BRASIL, 2003, p.54, our translation)

When discussing about inclusive education, it is necessary to know the target audience, that is, to know all of the potential disabilities that will be found in the classroom. Some of them being: visual impairment, hearing impairment or deafness, intellectual disability and multiple intelligences.

## 1.2 AUTISM

It is considered a multifactorial disorder, with its etymology linked to genetical, environmental, immunological and neurological factors. The diagnosis can be hard because the same signals may be not present in every case and by the lack of detectible symptoms of the illness on the first years of life. It is also considered a behavioural disorder, that compromises the social interaction, communication and presents repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behaviours, and restricted interest in many activities<sup>8</sup> (CANUT *et al*, 2014).

The first official record of an autism diagnosis, was in 1943, by a child psychiatrist called Leo Kanner, that also was the first to coin the term autism, which comes from the

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<sup>6</sup> “Em 1999, o decreto 3298 que regulamenta a lei 7853/89 define a educação especial como uma modalidade transversal a todos os níveis e modalidades de ensino, enfatizando sua atuação complementar ao ensino regular” (GUERRA, 2016, p. 31).

<sup>7</sup> Direito à diversidade, com vistas a apoiar a transformação dos sistemas de ensino em sistemas educacionais inclusivos, promovendo um amplo processo de formação de gestores e educadores nos municípios brasileiros para a garantia do direito de acesso de todos à escolarização, à oferta do atendimento educacional especializado e à garantia da acessibilidade (BRASIL, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> ZAUZA, C.M.F.Z.; BARROS, A.L.B.; SENRA, L.X.S. O Processo de Inclusão de Portadores do Transtorno do Espectro Autista. Access: 25/08/2020.

Greek: *autos*, that means “in yourself”. Throughout his career, Kanner realized that a group of children differed from others due to the inability to relate to people and a strong resistance towards changes (SANTOS, 2008, apud Zauza, 2015).

Firstly, the psychiatrist described as “autistic disorders of affective contact” when the disturb was characterized by obsessiveness, stereotypes and echolalia<sup>9</sup>. These signs were defined as a type of schizophrenic disease (JUNIOR; PIMENTEL, 2000).

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), the Global Developmental Disorders are classified into: Autistic Disorder, that is considered one of the most severe; Asperger's Disorder that is considered the milder between the types of autism; Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, that is considered the most severe; Rett Syndrome and Global Developmental Disorder Without Other Specification (TGD-SOE) that aren't considered as autism.

The DSM-IV classifies autism as one of the Global Developmental Disorders (TGD) or Invasive Developmental Disorders (*et al* 2011). In 2013, it was published on the DSM-V, which brought about considerable changes in the diagnostic criteria of autism, adopting the term ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder).

Disorders included in ASD were: autistic disorder, childhood disintegrative disorder, Asperger's disorder and invasive developmental disorder without further specification. These categories are now considered on the same spectrum of autism and no longer under different conditions. The Rett syndrome that used to be a part of it is now considered a distinct disease and is not part of the ASD (KHOURY et al. 2014, apud Zauza, 2015).

Children with Disorders on the spectrum have in common three particular areas of difficulty: an impairment in social interaction, in social communication, and in imaginative and flexible thinking.

These classifications of ASD appear to have become the standard for the time being and, as recent legislation has introduced a presumption of mainstreaming, it may be useful to raise awareness of potential issues for teachers of students with autism so that both, have a really positive experience in a foreign language class.

There is a triad of hindering behavioural traits that was put forth by Wire (2005). It's first aspect is that there is always a difficulty in interaction with others, talking, working in groups, but learning a foreign language can make a useful contribution to raising an autistic

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<sup>9</sup>Echolalia is the repetition of words and sounds.

student awareness of social skills, right from early attempts at social “meetings and greetings”. Modelling and prompting by the teacher and selected pupils and the strategies described later may be helpful.

The second aspect is an unusual social communication, this means that these student’s voice may be too soft or loud, they may have speech that is garbled and long-winded, or too brief, and there may be elective muteness, or echoing of words and phrases. Some find direct eye contact with others difficult, even painful, and may focus on the mouth or a point beyond the face, but this does not mean they are not noticing everything through their peripheral eye vision. In a subject such as foreign languages where oral communication is so important, patience and prompting are required, but this subject has the potential to help the pupil with autism communicate more appropriately, as all pupils have to demonstrate their ability to understand others and equally be understood by them.

The third aspect of the triad is a lack of flexibility, which can be seen in varying ways. Perhaps an important issue for the classroom teacher is the real difficulty most pupils with autism have in coping with change. It may as well take them time to get used to a new school, new teachers and possibly a new subject. These pupils may not like it if a substitute teacher takes over and varies the routine, so prior warning to the pupil can help. The challenge many have with change is displayed daily, even hourly, in school, for example when the bell rings and there is a change of location and lesson. Pupils with autism find it particularly hard to adjust from the first thing in the day, when they are making the transition from home to school, and they may be quite uncooperative during the first lesson of the day. Changes throughout the day will affect them, for example, going from PE to Portuguese (often slow to get changed, because of organisational issues); break/lunchtime to Portuguese (going from unstructured time, which they don’t always enjoy, to a structured lesson); science to English (different area of school, so they may get lost, or ‘teased’ going along corridors or across the playground).

To summary, autism is a multifactorial disorder, with levels and types of severity, in which the diagnosis can be hard because the same signals may not be present in every case and by the lack of detectible symptoms of the illness on the first years of life. It is also considered a behavioural disorder, that compromises the social interaction, communication and presents repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behaviours, and restricted interest in many activities.

### **1.2.1 TYPES OF AUTISM, ITS LEVELS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

Although already briefly mentioned, following are listed the different types of disorders on the autistic spectrum as well as the levels of severity of these disorders, according to the website *Psicologia Viva* (2019).

### **1.2.2 ASPERGER'S SYNDROME**

It is considered the milder between the types of autism and is three times more common in boys than in girls. Normally, those who have the syndrome have a much higher intelligence than average and is also known as “high functioning autism”.

It is also normal for this autistic person to become extremely obsessive about an object or a single subject - and spend hours discussing or talking about it. If the syndrome is not diagnosed in childhood, the adult with Asperger's may be more likely to develop depression and anxiety.

### **1.2.3 INVASIVE DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDER**

It is an “intermediate phase”, as it is slightly more severe than Asperger's syndrome, but not as strong as the autistic disorder.

In this case, the symptoms are varied, but, in general, the patient will present:

- Less repetitive behaviours;
- Difficulties regarding social interaction;
- Linguistic competences lower than Asperger's syndrome but superior to the autistic disorder.

### **1.2.4 AUTISTIC DISORDER**

Characterized by the presence of more severe symptoms than the other two types. In this case, several capacities are affected in a more intense way, such as social relationships,

cognition and linguistics. Another very common factor is the intensified presence of repetitive behaviours. This is the classic type of autism and is usually diagnosed early, usually before the age of 3. The main signs are:

- Lack of eye contact;
- Repetitive behaviours like hitting or shaking their hands;
- Difficulties in making requests using the language;
- Late language development.

### **1.2.5 CHILDHOOD DISINTEGRATIVE DISORDER**

It is the most severe disorder of the autistic spectrum and the least common. Mostly, the child has a normal period of development, however, starting from 2 to 4 years old, they begin to lose their intellectual, linguistic and social skills without being able to recover.

### **1.2.6 LEVELS OF AUTISM**

At the first level, children have difficulties in starting social relationships with people and may have little to no interest in interacting with others, presenting atypical responses or failure to begin social connections. They usually show difficulty in switching activities and problems with planning and organization<sup>10</sup>.

On the second level, they show a slightly more severe degree of deficiency in social relationships and in verbal and non-verbal communication. They have limitations in initiating social interactions and apparent social impairments even with the presence of support. They are more inflexible with their behaviour as well, showing difficulties with changes or repetitive behaviours and suffer to change the focus of their actions.

At the level three, there are much more serious deficits in relation to verbal and non-verbal communication, in addition to notorious difficulties to start social interaction, with serious impairments in functioning. They have extreme difficulty in dealing with change and show repetitive behaviour, which interferes more strongly in their functioning. They still suffer greatly to change the focus of their actions.

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<sup>10</sup> PSICOLOGIA VIVA, 2019. Available at: <https://blog.psicologiaviva.com.br/tipos-de-autismo/> Access: 02/09/2020.

## 2. TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE

Total Physical Response (TPR) is an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching method created by James Asher, a psychologist, in the early 1970s after many researches and experiments in the 1960s. It is a method which attempts to develop language communication ability as an impact of body movements in response to language cues. It is built around the coordination of speech and actions, in which vocabulary items paired with appropriate physical actions, are designed to reinforce comprehension on the items, and is then accompanied by language practice. Meanings of language are literally presented through physical demonstration with or to objects, with students then practicing the use of utterances after comprehending it. Students get the language by listening to the sayings, and they get meaning by seeing and doing the physical actions.

This method is based on the experience of how humans learn their mother tongue. When children learn their mother tongue, their parents and carers are involved in imparting language, they demonstrate and instruct, and the child responds in kind.

No one demands or requires very small children to speak at all, only to listen and understand, which is to say and comprehend. According to Sojuangon Rambe (2019), studies point that TPR is more effective in children than in adults.

Meanwhile, in spite of the studies and suggestions, teachers make use of this method mostly for teaching language to children, not to adult. In one side, this placement is based on the children's level of cognition which is in 'concrete operation' level. Students at this age, according to majority of educational psychologists, are able to acquire knowledge through exposure to learning process providing real things and real activities. When TPR offers language teaching practices which promotes the use of real things and real actions, teachers accept and apply it to teach language for children. In other words, application of this method for teaching language to children is not because the teachers disagreed with Asher's and advocates recommendation, but due to the shake of children ability in learning based on the view of majority educational psychologists (RAMBE, 2019).

Douglas Brown (2000) also says that TPR has its limitations. It seemed to be especially effective in the beginning levels of language proficiency, but it lost its distinctiveness as learners advanced in their competence, and he also adds saying that in a TPR classroom, conversations and other activities proceeded as in almost any other communicative language classroom.

Such methodology could prove to be especially beneficial for the work with autistic children, seeing as their difficulty in communication can be circumvented and better developed throughout the TPR's application.

Diane Anderson Larsen-Freeman (2011) in a text discusses about role of the teacher and the role of the student, and she says that the teacher is the director of all student behaviour, since the students are imitators of their nonverbal model. She also states that at some point, after some minutes of instruction they are 'ready to speak', and there will be a role reversal with individual students directing the teacher and other students.

She comments about the goals of teachers who use TPR, and she says that teachers believe in the importance of having their students enjoy their experience of learning to communicate in another language and that TPR in fact, was developed in order to reduce the stress people feel when they are studying other languages and to encourage students to persist in their study, and in the end she adds that their way of doing this, according to Asher, is to base foreign language learning upon the way children learn their native language.

According to studies conducted by Nofra Ilwan<sup>11</sup>, TPR can be used to practice and teach various things. It is well suited to teaching classroom language and other vocabulary connected with actions. It can be used to teach imperatives and various tenses aspects. It is also useful for storytelling. This kind of activities can be helpful for autistic children, due to their previously discussed difficulties.

Studies made by Hanifah Ayu Retnoningsih (et. al, 2010, p.2)<sup>12</sup> state: "According to Ur (1998, p. 60) vocabulary can be defined as the words that are taught in a foreign language." Here we can say that is possible for an autistic child to learn vocabulary.

Harmer (1991, p. 153) also adds "Then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and flesh". For that reason, the students have to develop their vocabulary and master it in order to be able to communicate with others.

To conclude and recapitulate, TPR is a method in which the teacher can work with speech via reading, role play, etc, body movements through dance and mimicry, and with the student's attention. This method is desirable for working with autistic children, seeing as it

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<sup>11</sup> The effectiveness of total physical response (tpr) to enhance students' vocabulary mastery (an experimental study at the seventh grade of smp n 3 ajibarang) in academic year 2009/2010 available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/12350544.pdf> access: 27/05/2021.

<sup>12</sup> Enhancing students' vocabulary mastery through total physical response (tpr) for elementary school students available at: [https://eprints.uns.ac.id/42922/1/k2213028\\_abstrak.pdf](https://eprints.uns.ac.id/42922/1/k2213028_abstrak.pdf) access: 27/05/2021.

may help them with their communication difficulties, among other challenges that the disorder brings forth.

### **3. ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR AUTISTIC CHILDREN: HOW TO TEACH, STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES**

With the main definitions regarding autism and TPR set, the research focus will now be in regards of teaching, looking through different aspects, such as: how can we teach English to autistic children, some strategies and resources. How to teach, in order to better help teachers when working with autistic children; strategies to serve as guide for teachers and quality resources to streamline the educational journey for both teacher and their students.

#### **3.1 HOW TO TEACH**

According to studies made by Jéssica Azambuja Feijó (2016)<sup>13</sup>, the importance of teaching a new language is brought up, where you should not only teach grammatical rules and different words, but mainly to show, through playful and dynamic activities, a little of the culture of countries where another language is spoken (in this case, English). Trouche (2002, p. 81) adds to this line of thought, by saying: “If we open a language textbook published in Brazil, we may also find many activities and texts that do not address issues that are relevant for our students.” (our translation)<sup>14</sup>

When teachers produce their own class material, they are not using some activity from a textbook that may not fit the reality of their students. In producing their own material, they should think about a specific group of students, their background, where and how these students live and, after that, consider activities that should help those particular students. It is very important for a teacher to reflect about his/her own practice and continue studying to improve his/her practice in class, both things are connected.

Jéssica Feijó also states that in order to have a better learning of a second language, it is always good to think about the interaction between students. It is important that they

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<sup>13</sup> O ensino da língua inglesa para crianças autistas: uma possibilidade real Available at: <https://editora.pucrs.br/edipucrs/anais/i-seminario-luso-brasileiro-de-educacao-inclusiva/assets/artigos/eixo-5/completo-11.pdf> Access: 17/05/2021.

<sup>14</sup> “Se abrimos um livro didático de idiomas publicado no Brasil, também podemos encontrar muitas atividades e textos que não abordam temas que são relevantes para nossos alunos.” Trouche (2002, p. 81)

understand, through practice, how to use certain content. Children, mainly, need dynamic classes, so that they can take an interest in the subject and learn, without realizing it, whilst playing.

Another point brought by the author, in relation to language teaching, is the importance of mediation, and adds that Vygotsky (1998) points out that the learning process is the goal of education and not the final product of learning. This speech by Vygotsky can be considered for any additional language that a child can learn. It is important to take this theory into account for the teacher to know some important aspects to be considered of when teaching a child. Still speaking on the subject of languages, in general, Rajagopalan (2003) discusses that the real objective of teaching other languages is to form individuals capable of interacting with people from other cultures. In addition, Hall (*apud* SARMENTO, 2001, p. 14) states that language acquisition is related to the notion of oral practice. This reflects how important it is to try to make the child interact in the classroom, whether through games or play.

It is also important to know, when teaching children, what their characteristics are, and how they behave in the classroom. Roth (*apud* PIRES, 2001, p. 51) suggests that the teacher must know at least seven characteristics to develop their activities, so with this information about a child's profile, it is possible for the teacher to elaborate a more attractive class, exploring the maximum of the student, without making him lose interest in what is being taught, moreover the educator also needs to know how to establish some priorities for children who are learning a new language for the first time.

Jéssica Feijó (2016) also comments about the challenges of teaching English to autistic people and says that schools, already in Early Childhood Education, motivate students to be autonomous, teaching some basic things, like going to the bathroom, brushing the teeth, packing stuff in the backpack, etc. With this thought, Nicolaidis (2003, p. 180) comments that: In principle, every human being is autonomous, so much that they are able to learn thousands of tasks throughout your life and you end up being able to do them one day without the help of another. Language learning cannot be different; it takes place through social interaction.

Freire (1996, p. 107), adds, speaking about pedagogy of autonomy: autonomy, as the being matures for itself, is a process, it is becoming. It does not occur on a scheduled date. It is in this sense that a pedagogy of autonomy must be centered in experiences that stimulate decision and responsibility, that is to say, in experiences respectful of freedom. These ideas

are important to be considered, as an autistic student does not acquire this autonomy as naturally as other children and, depending on the degree of the disorder, it may be that neither achieve that. Therefore, one of the teacher's challenges already begins at this stage. Another important topic of awareness for teachers, is that subjects that may appear trivial, may not always be that simple for an autistic child. Therefore, classes should be designed in a way that can achieve this student, making it possible, within its limitations, to obtain some positive result.

In conclusion, we can associate what has just been mentioned with the TPR approach and with the strategies and resources that will be mentioned to teach an autistic child and have positive results.

### **3.2 STRATEGIES**

There are many strategies available to be utilized by language teachers for teaching autistic children; these strategies may (and should) also be adapted to the student's specific needs, so no one true rule-set may followed. However, Costa et. al (2020) listed some common strategies to help with autistic children in school, which was published as an advert by the Pearson Education publishing company. Following this list, a short synthesis of its strategies, approaches and benefits is put forth.

- Use pictures to show the structure of the day:

In this part Costa state that if it is possible, it would beneficial to have a figure for each activity of the day, even the simplest ones like washing your hands, so that the child will be able to understand what is happening during the day and, if necessary, you refer to the activity to keep the child aware of it and help with changes.

- Routine:

Here they say that some children with ASD prefer a well-structured routine, seeing as when something changes, they might get frustrated and angry. Therefore, trying to keep a routine in class; however, if the teacher knows that any change will occur, they should prepare

the child beforehand (warn them with enough time in advance so the child can get used to the new idea).

- *Visual stimuli:*

Most of children with ASD learn better through stimuli, therefore, it is important to use them. For example, figures in pictures in the room can help the child leaving the backpack in right place, pictures of children sitting in a circle near the educator help the child to understand what you should do. Make a picture frame that represents the rules of room, which will help the child to follow them. Visual cues are very important tools to the classroom.

- *Simplify:*

When the teacher is giving instructions, make sure they are very simple, by using concrete language and referring to the figures in order to show the child a concrete model of what you're talking about. Also, they should refrain from giving too many instructions at once. For more complex instructions, dividing them into parts, offering the child a step by step well-structured that she must do, is considered a better alternative.

- *Avoid distractions:*

The advert warns the teacher to avoid as many distractions as possible. If the environment is too noisy, too hot or cold, or with a very bright and strong light, it can become even more difficult for the child to concentrate and feel comfortable, both of which, may hinder learning experience.

- *Training / Technical assistance:*

In this topic, it is stated that while playing, the teacher should try to teach the child how to do it in steps; and they should invite another child to play along, this way to share and borrow things, and how to be more flexible about where to play and about when it's everyone's turn to do so.

- Special monitoring:

While not always the case (even if it would be beneficial), some schools offer a special tutor to accompany the child at certain times. The monitor can offer the child individual attention and excellent opportunities of teaching and training, helping them to learn, interact and to better resolve conflicts of everyday life. If the child cannot rely on a tutor, it can be a bigger benefit for them to study in smaller classes (up to 12 students).

- Partner system:

Another approach teachers may want to apply, is to put children in different pairs depending on the type of activities in which they will be working together. The teacher should gather children with complementing skills, in order for them to be able to learn from each other. For example, place a child who talks a lot with one which speaks very little (usually the autistic child). Thus, the quieter child can create confidence to talk more and more, and the child who talks a lot can learn to wait their turn to speak when the educator asks.

- Rewards:

In order to motivate the students, the teacher may utilize some common themes when teaching, such as promoting activities that utilize the drawings and character the autistic child enjoys more; if applied correctly, the teacher may observe that the student becomes more attentive, responsive and also will stay motivated for longer periods. The students should also be rewarded for demonstrating and maintaining good behaviours, such as completing the instructed tasks. They may use, for example, stickers, drawings or even specific rewards of the child's choice; when the child is deserving of a reward (which should follow a criteria pre-established by the teacher) they should be rewarded, not only for academics activities, but whenever they interact properly with the other students and follows the instructions laid by the educator.

- Homework:

On this subject, Costa mentions that the autistic child may need additional time at home to catch up to their classmates in some specific skills. The author encourages parents to chat with the teacher about the type of activities that they can try to perform at home with the child to help them improve their skills and include them on their daily activity routine. It is also

advised to include in this routine some time for the autistic child to spend with other children, perhaps once or twice a week. That way, they can continue developing important social skills that are learned at school, which instruct in detail how the child must act when he is with classmates/other kids.

### **3.3 RESOURCES**

Nowadays there are plenty websites and books which provide materials for you to work with autistic children, for example: the website Super Simple<sup>15</sup> and the British Council<sup>16</sup> website, and the reason for the choice of these two websites is due to their good materials such as, printable flashcards, printable images to colour, songs and etc. There are also books, and the best ones for this specific purpose are the ones usually reserved for courses.

The possibility for teachers to also build materials on their own is something to be considered as a necessary part of working with children in the autism spectrum. Being able to build puppets, cards and even games that can give the teacher alternatives to work with the child through the TPR methodology; they may even build specific materials and objects based on what they know about their students, creating ways of dealing with the kids' needs and their behavioural specificities.

To sum up this topic, it is indeed possible to find and utilize resources in order to help with the teaching of autistic children. However, the success of the classes is not guaranteed, as the materials available all have their own benefits and detriments; the teacher should plan their classes and choose their materials and strategies with great caution, and they should always focus on the students' necessities when doing so.

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<sup>15</sup> Available at: <https://supersimple.com/> . Last access: May 29, 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Available at: <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/> . Last access: May 29, 2021.

## **4. LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE – INTERVIEWING**

In order to further understand autism and its characteristics in the children's learning, two interviews were done, one with Priscila Vicente, an English teacher, who brought her professional experience with autistic children; and the other one with Marilene Lovison, a mother, whom on the interview, talks about her experience in being a mother of an autistic son.

Both interviewees were selected for their contact and experiences with autistic children, and were chosen via indication. Although, as previously stated, their interviews weren't subjected through the UCS Ethic Committee, both interviewees had given full consent for their interviews and all the data collected and presented in this paper.

### **4.1 TEACHER EXPERIENCE**

The first question made for the teacher was what is her educational background, and she said that she has a major degree in Portuguese and English, and she is specialized in psych pedagogy. Then it was asked about her experience in teaching English with autistic students, she answered that since her specialization, her role as a teacher started to be different, in fact the autistic students were always there, they were always in the classroom and what changed was when she started to acquire a little more of knowledge about how to deal with them. She was asked then about the greatest difficulties faced by these students in learning English, to which she replied that the biggest challenges are not due to English itself, the social aspects and what happens within them is much more challenging than the subject itself, so she thinks that including them in the group, making them present in the moment to learn are the biggest challenges; afterward, in relation to the subject of autism, it was mentioned that their biggest difficulties are: communication, interaction and lack of attention, and she also went on to state that they find difficulty in the area of socialization.

A question about the greatest facilities presented by autistic students in learning English were made, and the interviewee thinks that the fact that they have the ability to have their own world, and when we (teachers) talk about teaching English, we talk about creating the English environment so that the student lives in that environment, they create alone, so when they

look at us and know that we speak that way, not exactly a language, especially when they are tiny, that no child has the notion of what is English and what is Portuguese right up to the age of 7, they realize that we speak differently, so she thinks this is easy for them, they live in that world when they like it, they live in that world and give themselves to that.

It was asked if she notice any change in her attitude towards autistic students compared to the attitude towards non-autistic students, then she said that we need to be different, not just with them, we live with many people so, even in our daily lives we end up acting differently, when she is a daughter she is one person, when she is a teacher, she is another person, so it is the same idea, but much more important and much more necessary, if she act with everyone the same, maybe she will not have so many problems but if she act the same way that she act with other students the way she acts with autistic students maybe she will have problems, maybe they do not understand, maybe they do not get as close as she hopes they will approach or get involved, so yes , but she doesn't see it as a negative thing, she sees it as a normal thing, that we need to act according to each reality that we live, here it is important to know the student's background, to see how can you act with him/her.

The teacher was questioned if she uses any specific methodology and in what way, and she answer that yes, and she believe in the methods combined, in the attempt, and thinks that for these students we need to understand how each one learns, so we can't say that we have an autistic student, this is what I'm going to do and it will work, she thinks experimentation is the best method, and know about different methods, when you know the limitations and skills within the spectrum and then experiment and discover what works with each student, here we need to know the student, know which level and type of autism the student has, to see how they learn and which method you can use.

It was also asked if she sees any advantage in using TPR with autistic students and if it there are obstacles or disadvantages, she says that there is advantages, for example, get the students involved, they don't necessarily have to socialize with you, they feel they are learning by themselves, even though you're guiding them, she thinks this is a great advantage, she also says that there is no obstacle or disadvantages, just something that at the beginning you may need to control, if you do something very big and that they will get very excited, maybe if it is a movement, sometimes hitting on a classmate, more practical things like that, but for learning in itself she can't imagine, so as it was mentioned when we talked about TPR, such methodology could prove to be especially beneficial for the work with autistic children,

seeing as their difficulty in communication can be circumvented and better developed throughout the TPR's application.

The next question is if she has already done activities like miming, storytelling, role play or something like that for her students, and she said that yes, all of it work a lot, role play maybe depending on the student if he/she doesn't like interaction, you might need to work on it a little bit, but if he/she is already at the level and already used to the class that has some classmates, it makes it easier, this kind of activities are used a lot in TPR method, and as it mentioned before, it is beneficial for children with ASD. Then she was questioned if she does different activities for autistic students, and she answers that she thinks that differentiating is to include, you have to leave them in the same space with which they live with others, however when necessary, yes, there is differentiated activity, there is types and levels of autism, one can learn more than the others, so sometimes, a different activity is needed. The last question was about what kind of activities or *stimuli* she does to make the autistic children learn English better, she said that she thinks it is very important to see what the student needs to work, so one of the examples is gross motor coordination and fine literacy, it involves what all the teachers in the life of this child can contribute to know where he/she is, not simply with autistic children in the sixth year she does this, so know your student, know the level of autism of the student has is important to see how you can help him/her.

## **4.2 MOTHER EXPERIENCE**

For the mother of an autistic, the first question was at what age was her child diagnosed with autism, she said that he was diagnosed at five or six years old, when it was mentioned about autism on this paper, it was said that the diagnosis can be hard because the same signals may be not present in every case and by the lack of detectible symptoms of the illness on the first years of life. Then it was asked what level of autism her son has, and she said that it is moderate, autism has levels and types and the moderate ones are Asperger's syndrome and invasive developmental disorder, that is level 1 and 2. It was also questioned at what age did her son learnt to read and write, she said that he learnt to read and write at six or seven years old.

The next question was if he were interested in learning English and if was it easy or difficult for him to learn English and she answers that yes, but more what they present for him at home, he doesn't have the initiative to get a book to read, right, he likes more digital things, then she said that he has difficulties to learn English, even today he has a lot of difficulty in learning, she said that it was easier to teach him to read and write than it is now in evolution, well, here we can say that each autistic child is one, each one has a type of autism and has different interests.

Then it was asked where and for how long did her child dedicate himself to learning English, she said that he learned English at the regular school since kindergarten until today, and she adds that he watches a lot of videos and knows songs and that visual things are easier for him, here we can say that there are things that are easier and others that are more difficult for them. The next question was if she know about the method used or what were the *stimuli*, she said that the method they use at school they talk a lot about the aba method ( ABA therapy consists of intensive teaching of the skills necessary for the individual diagnosed with autism or invasive developmental disorders to become independent), the *stimuli* are always diversified, even outside school she always worked a lot with pictures with images with more visual things, like it was said before on this paper, it is important for them to have visual things, like pictures, etc.

It was asked if did learning English provide more socialization for her child, she answers that he doesn't speak English, but he has always had a monitor, and his socialization they had to work a lot with an out-of-school teacher, with speech therapist, to help him to talk and the school also helped with his socialization, on this paper it was mentioned that one of the symptoms of autism is delayed speech and difficulty in socializing, and this is exactly what happened to him. The next question was what level of English does he have today: basic, intermediate or advanced and she said that it is the basic level that he has.

It was also questioned what skill did he best develop: speaking, writing, listening or reading, and she said that neither one nor the other, it was a set of all, he had a serious hearing problem, the speaking he had to go to a speech therapist for many years, and today after he started speaking his reading is very fluent very easy to understand and the writing he only writes with the toothpick and he couldn't learn another type of letter. The last question was about the role of the family in the learning of the autistic child, she said that family is extremely important for his development, and also the school, if you wait only for what

society, school and therapist does and you do nothing at home the work is completely in vain because, so you have to follow everything that is done outside the home.

## CONCLUSION

The development of the present study made it possible to understand some relevant milestones regarding teaching English to autistic children, such as: the importance of teaching English to an autistic child, what autism is, what TPR is, the chosen approach for being an easy and helpful one, how we can teach them with strategies and resources. Each one of these steps were explained chapter by chapter separately for the understanding of the reader about the importance to know about autism and how to work with them, especially teachers and teachers to be.

As Main Objective of this study, it was proposed the discussion of the possibilities to teach English as Foreign Language to autistic children from 4 to 5 years-old in Regular Schools, and we can conclude that it is possible to do so with the strategies and resources appointed.

For the theoretical foundation were mentioned about how the Inclusive education started in Brazil, then it was explained what autism is and its types and levels, when it was discovered the first diagnosis and who made it, when it became to be talked about. It was also discussed what Total Physical Response is, who created it and when it was first used. In the end, it was analysed how we can teach autistic children, which strategies and resources can be used, for example, websites and books, and tailored materials.

As for the methodology of this paper, bibliographic review, case study and interview, focusing on the review of previous experiences and researches, in order to verify approaches and techniques for inclusive education. The interviews were made with people who have experience with autistic child, one is the mother of an autistic boy and the other is an English teacher with practice in this field. An analysis, a correlation of both interviews was made to better understand the subject, for example, a question made about the diagnosis for the mother, she answered that her son was diagnosed at age 6, and on the research, it is mentioned that the diagnosis is hard do be made. Another example is a question made for the teacher, and it was asked if she sees any advantage in using TPR with autistic students, which she says yes, that there are advantages, for example, get the students involved, and it is cited on this research that TPR is useful and helpful for them.

The production of the present study could also provide an increase in awareness and knowledge on the subject, once there are not many studies on this very important subject yet.

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## APPENDIX

### 1. CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH

#### TERMO DE CONSENTIMENTO LIVRE ESCLARECIDO

Prezado (a) Senhor (a), O (a) Sr (a).

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Você está sendo convidada a participar do Trabalho de Conclusão do Curso de Letras/Inglês da Universidade de Caxias do Sul, que tem por título: “TEACHING ENGLISH TO AUTISTIC CHILDREN: A TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE ROUTE”, e é orientado pela Profa. Ma. Samira Dall Agnol. O estudo tem por objetivo avaliar a possibilidade de ensino da língua inglesa para crianças autistas. Essa pesquisa será realizada com uma professora de língua inglesa que trabalha com crianças autistas, bem como será produzido o depoimento de uma mãe de uma criança nessas condições.

Sua participação no estudo consistirá em uma entrevista de, em torno de 20 a 30 minutos, a ser realizada via plataforma online, sobre sua experiência com a criança autista.

Os riscos com esta pesquisa são mínimos, visto que não envolve questões físicas ou de saúde, mas a senhora tem a liberdade de não responder ou interromper a entrevista em qualquer momento, sem nenhum prejuízo. A senhora tem a liberdade de não participar da pesquisa ou retirar seu consentimento a qualquer momento, mesmo após o início da entrevista, sem qualquer problema.

Está assegurada a garantia do sigilo das suas informações. A senhora não terá nenhuma despesa e não há compensação financeira relacionada à sua participação na pesquisa. Caso tenha alguma dúvida sobre a pesquisa, poderá entrar em contato com a orientadora de TCC, a Profa. Ma. Samira Dall Agnol, por meio do e-mail: [sdagnol@ucs.br](mailto:sdagnol@ucs.br), ou pelo Whatsapp 54 9 9998 8846.

Sua participação é importante e voluntária e propiciará informações úteis para analisar a viabilidade do ensino de inglês para crianças autistas. Este termo será assinado em duas vias, pelo senhor e pelo responsável pela pesquisa, ficando uma via em seu poder.

Acredito ter sido suficientemente informada a respeito do que li ou foi lido para mim, sobre a pesquisa: " TEACHING ENGLISH TO AUTISTIC CHILDREN: A TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE ROUTE". Discuti com a graduanda, responsável pela pesquisa, sobre minha decisão em participar do estudo. Ficaram claros para mim os propósitos do estudo, os procedimentos, garantias de sigilo, de esclarecimentos permanentes e isenção de despesas.

Concordo voluntariamente em participar deste estudo.

\_\_\_\_\_ \_/ \_/ \_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assinatura do entrevistado

Declaro que obtive de forma apropriada e voluntária o Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido desta entrevistada OU REPRESENTANTE LEGAL (se for o caso) para a sua participação neste estudo.

\_\_\_\_\_ \_/ \_/ \_

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Assinatura do responsável pelo estudo.

## 2. TEACHER'S INTERVIEW - QUESTIONS

1. Qual sua formação?
2. Qual é a sua experiência no ensino de língua inglesa com alunos autistas?
3. Quais são as maiores dificuldades enfrentadas por esses estudantes para aprender inglês?
4. Quais são as maiores facilidades apresentadas por alunos autistas para aprender inglês?
5. Você percebe alguma mudança de atitude sua em relação aos alunos autistas, comparando sua atitude em relação a alunos não-autistas? De que maneira?
6. Você utiliza alguma metodologia específica (ex.: método de tradução, áudio-lingual, comunicativo, TPR, etc.)? Se sim, de que maneira?
7. Você percebe alguma vantagem em utilizar o método TPR com estudantes autistas? Há algum empecilho ou desvantagem?
8. Você já fez atividades como mímica, contação de histórias, role play ou algo do gênero para seus alunos?
9. Você faz atividades diferenciadas para os alunos autistas?
10. Que tipo de atividades/estímulos você faz para uma melhor aprendizagem do aluno autista?

### **3. MOTHER'S INTERVIEW - QUESTIONS**

1. Com que idade seu filho foi diagnosticado com autismo?
2. Qual o grau de autismo que apresenta?
3. Com que idade se alfabetizou?
4. Apresentou interesse em aprender inglês? Teve facilidade ou dificuldade em aprender?
5. Onde e por quanto tempo seu filho se dedicou ao aprendizado do inglês?
6. Você tem conhecimento sobre o método utilizado ou quais foram os estímulos?
7. Aprender inglês propiciou mais socialização para seu filho?
8. Qual o nível de inglês que ele apresenta hoje: básico, intermediário ou avançado?
9. Qual habilidade ele melhor desenvolveu: fala, escrita, audição ou leitura?
10. Qual o papel da família na aprendizagem da criança autista?

#### 4. TEACHER'S INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

Priscila Vicente

1. Qual a sua formação?

Eu sou graduada em letras português e inglês e tenho pós-graduação em psicopedagogia.

2. Qual é a sua experiência no ensino de língua inglesa com alunos autistas?

Na verdade, desde que eu comecei a fazer a pós-graduação que a minha atuação como professora passou a ser diferente né, na verdade eles sempre estiveram lá, sempre estiveram na sala de aula e o que mudou foi quando eu passei a ter um pouquinho mais de conhecimento sobre como lidar com eles então, eu conto mais talvez desde quando eu comecei a pós foi em 2011.

3. Quais são as maiores dificuldades enfrentadas por esses estudantes para aprender inglês?

Eu costumo falar que na verdade eu acho que os maiores desafios não são pelo inglês em si, eu acho que a questão de sociabilidade, é a questão social mesmo e do que acontece dentro deles é muito mais desafiadora do que o conteúdo em si, então eu acho que os incluir no grupo, fazer com que eles estejam no momento presente para aprender são os maiores desafios.

4. Quais são as maiores facilidades apresentadas por alunos autistas na aprendizagem do inglês?

Aí eu já até começo abrir um sorriso né, porque eles são incríveis, eu acho que o que eu sinto assim, e é uma coisa minha mesmo assim, a partir de tudo que eu estudei de tudo que eu vivi é algo que eu tenho em mim, assim é que eu enxergo que possa ser isso, eu acho que o fato deles terem essa habilidade, eu vejo como habilidade de ter o próprio mundo, e a gente fala muito quando a gente fala de ensino de inglês, a gente fala muito de criar o ambiente, criar o ambiente do inglês pra que o aluno viva aquele ambiente, eles criam sozinhos né, então quando eles olham para gente e sabem que a gente fala daquele jeito, não exatamente uma língua, principalmente quando eles são pequenininhos que nenhuma

criança tem a noção do o que é inglês do que é português né até os 7 anos eles percebem que a gente fala diferente, então eu acho que isso para eles é uma facilidade, eles vivem aquele mundo quando eles gostam, principalmente e normalmente eles gostam, eles vivem aquele mundo e se entregam àquilo né, então é até o a gente esperaria de outros alunos né.

5. Você percebe alguma mudança de atitude em sua relação aos alunos autistas comparada à atitude em relação aos alunos não autistas?

A gente precisa ser diferente né, e não só com eles, acho que a gente precisa ser diferente, a gente convive com pessoas diferentes então, até nas nossas convivências diárias a gente acaba sendo pessoas diferentes, quando eu sou filha eu sou de um jeito, quando eu sou professora eu sou de outro jeito, então eu acho que é a mesma ideia, porém muito mais importante e muito mais necessária né, se eu talvez agisse com todo mundo igual talvez eu não vá ter tantos problemas mas se eu agir da mesma forma que eu ajo com outros alunos com os meus alunos autistas pode ser que eu tenha problemas, pode ser que eles não me compreendam pode ser que eles não se aproximem o quanto eu espero que ele se aproxime ou se envolvam, então sim com certeza, mas não vejo como uma coisa negativa, vejo como uma coisa normal que a gente precisa agir de acordo com cada realidade que a gente vive.

6. Você utiliza alguma metodologia específica (ex.: método de tradução, áudio-lingual, comunicativo, TPR, etc.)? Se sim, de que maneira?

TPR eu acho que é básico né, principalmente para qualquer aluno com algum transtorno, qualquer necessidade especial eu acho que tpr é o mínimo que você pode fazer, e eu sinto que todo professor ele tem um instinto de quando ele não sabe o que fazer tentar trabalhar com tpr, então eu acho que sim, que é muito importante mas mais que isso assim além de tpr esses todos que você citou né áudio-lingual, comunicativo, eu acredito na combinação de todos e na tentativa eu acho que para esses alunos a gente precisa entender como cada um aprende, a gente entende o que é o autismo, quais são as características dentro do espectro mas aí como é esse aluno em específico, eu tenho hoje alunos que nem falam, nem se comunicam verbalmente e tem alunos que são os melhores da sala, então eu não posso falar ah eu tenho um aluno autista é isso que eu vou fazer e vai dar certo, eu acho que a experimentação é o melhor método né e aí você conhecer de diferentes métodos né,

conhecer as limitações e as habilidades dentro do espectro e aí você experimentar e ir descobrindo que que funciona com cada aluno né.

7. Você percebe alguma vantagem em utilizar o método TPR com estudantes autistas? Há algum empecilho ou desvantagem?

Muito, muito eu acho que faz com que eles se envolvam e não tenham necessariamente que socializar com você, eu acho que eles se sentem aprendendo por eles mesmo né apesar de ser você que tá guiando mas quando eu falo outra coisa eu faço tal movimento então sou eu que tô aprendendo né então, eu acho que essa é uma grande vantagem, ele vê como um momento de talvez ele tá buscando conhecimento né.

Eu acho que talvez se eles se empolgarem muito, não um empecilho, mas algo que no início talvez você precise controlar né saber quando usar e principalmente na aula presencial né se você fizer algo muito assim muito grandioso e que ele vá se empolgar muito talvez ele possa se empolgar demais se for algum movimento não sei às vezes bater em um colega coisas mais práticas assim mas para aprendizagem em si não imagino pelo menos mas é aquela coisa né cada aluno é um aluno então às vezes pode ser que para alguns sim e aí vai de você entender porque que para aquele não deu certo e buscar outras formas né.

8. Você já fez atividades como mímica, contação de histórias, role play ou algo do gênero para seus alunos?

Sim, eu acho que todos que você citou funcionam bastante role play talvez dependendo do aluno se ele não gostar muito de interação talvez você precise trabalhar um pouco com isso né mas se ele já tiver no nível que já tá acostumado com a turma que tem alguns colegas né aí eu acho que já facilita agora story telling nossa eu tinha um aluininho pequenininho que quando não era story telling eu tinha problemas de engajar ele na aula ele é bem pequenininho ele o ano passado tinha cinco anos e se formou do jardim 2 mas as aulas de storytelling até as professoras porque né só professora de inglês então as professoras dele da turma mesmo elas ficavam impressionadas como ele não se preocupava de querer que eu traduzisse e ele parava para escutar e ele era muito agitado muito muito agitado então eu acho que essas atividades podem sim ajudar na concentração até para outras atividades e para novamente para engajá-los né engajá-los na aula a

socializar com a com a turma né e nas atividades ele não gostava muito de desenhar por exemplo mas quando era para desenhar a história ele desenhava então.

9. Você faz atividades diferenciadas para os alunos autistas?

Quando necessário sim, e eu tenho alunos que não, que fazem absolutamente tudo inclusive prova iguais mas alguns precisa né porque o que eu falo incluir é você dar as mesmas possibilidades para todos os alunos então se eu der uma aula tem um aluno por exemplo de 6º ano que ele não se comunica nem verbalmente como é que eu vou ensinar o to be e o simple present para um aluno que nem alfabetizado é então se eu falar não vou fazer diferente porque isso não é incluir é um equívoco né porque incluir é dar oportunidade com que ele participe assim como os outros não fazer a mesma coisa então ele faz atividade dele totalmente diferente quando dá eu costumo usar o mesmo tema então por exemplo quando os outros a unidade dos outros falava sobre school objects eu ensinei para ele alguns school objects mas aí ele ficou todas as aulas daquela unidade falando só sobre isso e fazia desenho e fazia pontilhado das letrinhas mas o tema quando eu consigo combinar eu tento nem sempre dá né mas eu acho que diferenciar é incluir você tem que deixá-los hoje com online é mais difícil mas deixá-los no mesmo espaço com que convivam com os outros mas quando necessário sim tem a atividade diferenciada eu faço sim.

10. Que tipo de atividades ou estímulos você faz para uma melhor aprendizagem do aluno autista?

Eu acho que o trabalho inicialmente né quando a gente conhece o aluno é importante saber se o trabalho de coordenação motora grossa fina vão ser úteis para eles tanto autistas quanto down porque a gente não sabe histórico de cada aluno muito desses alunos às vezes não passaram pela educação infantil não tiveram às vezes um bom trabalho dos professores na educação infantil e nem julgando os professores desses alunos mais às vezes ele estava ensinando aluno a ir ao banheiro sozinho né tinham outras prioridades e aí às vezes acaba chegando no fundamental 1 e 2 e não tendo passado por isso então acho que é muito importante que primeiro você veja isso veja qual a necessidade do aluno para que se trabalha o que ele precisa então um dos exemplos são a coordenação motora grossa e fina alfabetização os tipos de letras letra bastão, letra cursiva eu acho que tudo isso

envolve o que todos os professores da vida dessa criança podem contribuir saber onde ele está não simplesmente a com autista no sexto ano eu faço isso não é com eles não dá para ser assim.

## 5. MOTHER'S INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

Marilene Lovison

1. Com que idade seu filho foi diagnosticado com autismo?

Ele foi diagnosticado na verdade com 5 a 6 anos.

2. Qual o grau de autismo que apresenta?

É moderado.

3. Com que idade se alfabetizou?

Ele se alfabetizou na verdade entre seis anos sete, e daí a gente conseguiu alfabetizar ele, daí claro depois teve toda a caminhada do ensino enfim fundamental né, mas ele conseguiu se alfabetizar mais ou menos nessa idade ali.

4. Apresentou interesse em aprender inglês?

Sim, na verdade mais as coisas que a gente apresentava para ele porque ele não tem como é que eu posso dizer assim iniciativa né, procurar pegar um livro por exemplo para ler né ele sempre foi mais do digital na verdade.

5. Teve facilidade ou dificuldade em aprender?

Bastante dificuldade, bastante e até hoje ele apresenta muita dificuldade na aprendizagem na verdade foi mais fácil alfabetizar ele do que agora na evolução enfim né de todo processo da escola e coisas assim né.

6. Onde e por quanto tempo seu filho se dedicou ao aprendizado do inglês?

Na verdade, sempre na escola né sempre na escola o inglês ele vem desde na escola que ele estuda desde o jardim na verdade, mas ele tem inglês na escola né mas ele assim como é que eu vou te dizer ele acompanha muitos vídeos e sabe músicas essas coisas ali ele tem mais facilidade no visual mesmo né.

7. Você tem conhecimento sobre o método utilizado ou quais foram os estímulos?

Na verdade, o método que eles usam na escola eles falam muito do método aba sabe os estímulos são sempre diversificados na verdade é tipo assim muitas até fora da escola eu sempre trabalhei muito com figuras com imagens com mais coisas visuais não muita questão de livro sabe essas coisas mais coisas visuais mesmo.

8. Aprender inglês propiciou mais socialização para seu filho?

Na verdade assim ó ele não fala inglês né não como é que eu vou te dizer também se tu dá um texto ele não consegue ler né entende, o inglês dele foi tipo só na escola mesmo no caso não aperfeiçoei ele no inglês, uma época fiz espanhol que ele gosta bastante do espanhol na verdade mas hoje ele tá no terceiro ano né terminando e assim dentro como é que eu vou te dizer dentro do limite dele sempre com monitor né depois que a gente conseguiu monitor na escola que não foi fácil né então sempre acompanhado de um monitor né ele não consegue na verdade algumas tarefas ele até desenvolve sozinho né mas a grande maioria das tarefas não desenvolve sozinho não principalmente na questão de matemática essas coisas aí física química, o raciocínio dele não permite com que ele né consiga desenvolver essa parte enfim de qualquer problema que aparece é mais fácil a questão de português, história essas matérias

que são mais fáceis para ele né. E a socialização na verdade a gente trabalhou muito fora da escola também né porque eles tem muita dificuldade na socialização dependendo do ambiente né que ele vai tudo é preparado antes né se tu quiser por exemplo ir em festival no teatro no cinema mesmo tudo tem que ser explicado anteriormente na verdade assim ó até que a gente conseguiu socializar ele por causa que a escola ajudou bastante também na socialização e a gente trabalhou muito fora da escola né porque ele não falava né ele demorou muito para falar ele foi falar acho que ele tinha quase 10 anos né então depois que ele aprendeu a falar tipo compreender o que as pessoas diziam foi mais fácil para ele socializar também né e se trabalhou muito com pedagoga fora da escola também eu fiz por uns oito anos mais ou menos três vezes por semana de fono três vezes de psicopedagogia e terapia depois na verdade entrou psiquiatra daí porque ele precisou de medicação e psicólogo né pra intervir na escola é porque as escolas não estão preparadas para absorver não só as crianças com autismo mas criança com problema, muita dificuldade de captação tudo isso aí na verdade a gente tem muito problema teve e tem até hoje assim né enfim a escola não tinha nem sala de recursos aí foi montada uma sala de recursos que já havia passado outras crianças na escola com outros problemas né mas se ninguém luta ninguém consegue nada mas a questão da socialização dele né então dependendo muito do ambiente tá eu vou te dizer que cada um é um e dependendo do ambiente, principalmente se tiver barulho eles são muito sensíveis ao barulho.

9. Qual o nível de inglês que ele apresenta hoje: básico, intermediário ou avançado?  
Básico.

10. Qual habilidade ele melhor desenvolveu: fala, escrita, audição ou leitura?  
Na verdade nenhum nem outro foi um conjunto ali tá porque assim ele teve problema sério de audição teve que fazer uma cirurgia e acabou usando drenos e tal mas a fala que nem eu te falei eu tive que fazer muitos anos né a leitura ele foi bem até hoje depois que ele começou a falar leitura dele foi bem interessante bem fluente bem fácil de entender a leitura dele a escrita ele só escreve eu não sei como é que se chama, só a palito sabe ele só escreve com a palito e não conseguiu aprender outra letra também.

11. Qual o papel da família na aprendizagem da criança autista?  
É todo o papel da família junto com a escola porque assim fora da escola eu sempre me dediquei muito, eu que eu falo é a família né a gente sempre dedicou muito em buscar porque ele tem 18 anos hoje né então em buscar outras formas de alfabetização né existe muito daqueles livros das mil e uma coisas dizia livro é utilidades coisas enfim uma coisa assim então todo dia eu fazia tipo 2 3 páginas com ele né porque ele na verdade ele não sabia nem o que que era uma árvore né então a gente pegava do livro e mostrava e fazia a comparação hoje sim ele tem um entendimento bem grande das coisas assim o que é tipo todo o contexto né a família é extremamente fundamental, apesar do como é que eu vou te dizer do luto que a gente vive depois que a gente sabe do diagnóstico isso é um tempo né depois tu vai ter que respirar né abraçar e seguir a diante porque ele precisa muito da família mesmo né então na minha opinião assim a família ela é como é que eu vou te dizer é extremamente importante para o desenvolvimento dele se tu esperar só o que sociedade escola terapeuta seguem e tu não fizer nada em casa o trabalho é completamente em vão porque assim ó tu tem que dar sequência em tudo que o é feito fora de casa ele vai buscar uma terapia por exemplo uma pedagoga tu vai ter que continuar fazendo o trabalho que a pedagoga faz a escola vai ter que continuar o trabalho que a pedagoga faz, tu vai buscar uma fono tem que dar continuidade daquilo que a fono tá fazendo né mesmo fazendo 3 vezes por semana como a gente fazia mas

era bem importante em casa o estímulo da família para que ele pudesse se comunicar resumindo assim família é a parte principal do desenvolvimento dele tanto social quanto intelectual.