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**Teaching Strategies to Support the Learning Process of Students with ASD: EFL teachers’
perceptions**

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Abstract

There has been a worldwide increase in the number of students diagnosed with ASD; therefore, previous studies have provided key information on teaching strategies used in general classrooms and EFL classrooms of special schools. However, researchers have not tended to focus on strategies used to teach English in mainstream schools. To fill this void, the purpose of this field study is to examine the variety of teaching strategies considered as useful among English as a Foreign Language teachers when teaching students with Autism Spectrum Disorder from first to fourth grade in Chilean mainstream schools. Data from this study were collected conducting online semi-structured interviews to seven specialized EFL teachers with previous experience working with students on the spectrum in mainstream settings. The findings of this dissertation indicate that the strategies considered as useful among educators include visual representations, the granting of different alternatives when evaluating, TPR activities, multisensory materials, among others.

Key words: ASD, EFL teachers, teaching strategies, mainstream schools.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Nowadays, the amount of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) enrolling in Chilean mainstream schools is increasing day-to-day. Even though there is no official data, the inclusion law launched by the Ministerio de Planificación (2010) allows this group of learners to take part in regular educational settings through the Programa de Inclusión Escolar (PIE) attached to the decree 170, enacted in the same year. This is a true picture of the world-wide increase of the population diagnosed with ASD, which has resulted in having more students on the spectrum being included in foreign language classrooms (Wire, 2005). Even though several studies have provided general teaching strategies for educators to consider, little research has been conducted in the educational context of EFL classrooms in regular schools. In light of this, it is of great importance to do further research in order to guide educators who face the challenge of teaching students with ASD.

As far as the Chilean educational context is concerned, Escobar and Soto (2019) recently implemented a strategy to teach English based on the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) with a student with ASD. Nevertheless, a huge gap is found regarding the use of a greater variety of teaching strategies in the EFL classroom. It is due to this lack of research available that teachers do not feel prepared and struggle to face the varied situations that may arise at the moment of teaching English to students on the spectrum. Consequently, in order to address this issue, the research question driving this study is: What teaching strategies are perceived as useful among EFL teachers to support the language learning process of students with ASD when teaching first to fourth grade in Chilean mainstream schools? Therefore, this field study aims to examine the variety of teaching strategies that are perceived as useful among EFL teachers to support the language learning process of students with ASD. To pursue the main objective, three specific

objectives have been established: (1) To collect general teaching strategies used among EFL teachers in a regular classroom to teach first to fourth grade students with ASD. (2) To identify teaching strategies that are perceived as useful to support the language learning process of students with ASD. (3) To analyse features shared by the teaching strategies proposed as useful by EFL teachers.

This qualitative field study is focused on 7 Chilean specialized EFL teachers with previous experience working with students diagnosed with ASD –from 1st to 4th grade– in mainstream schools. In order to find these participants an exploratory survey was shared via email and social media. Then, they were contacted through email to confirm their participation in the study by completing an informed consent. An additional investigation tool was a pilot interview that was carried out before the online semi-structured interviews. The interviews were of approximately 45 minutes long and carried out in Spanish via Zoom. This methodology was chosen due to the pandemic sanitary conditions. Finally, the undergraduate researchers answer the research question by developing a content analysis of the interviews. An encoding system and thematic networks were designed based on the information emerged from EFL teaching experiences and perceptions of educators in the field.

The evidence found in this study shows that Chilean EFL teachers are implementing a greater variety of strategies than the ones found in literature. The teaching practices perceived as useful by this group of teachers go hand in hand with the use of visual representation and Total Physical Response strategies. Furthermore, results have shown new strategies that are considered helpful and have not been largely researched, such as including sensory materials in the EFL lesson.

The present study will be structured in six chapters. Being the introduction the first

one, the second chapter comprises three sections in the theoretical framework, these are:

Language students with ASD, EFL Teaching Approaches in Chile, and Teaching Strategies Used with Students with ASD. Then, participants of the study, data collection procedures, tools, and type of analysis are thoroughly described in the third chapter. Afterwards, the fourth chapter gathers the main results of the research project and the fifth one analyses and discusses the findings to reach the conclusions found in chapter six.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2. 1. Language Students with ASD

For the time being, the amount of population diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD henceforth) has notoriously increased, as well as the awareness of this lifelong condition. As a result of the increase in prevalence of ASD, more students on the spectrum are now being included in regular educational settings (Soto-Chodiman et al., 2012). Additionally, this matter is also reflected in the foreign language classrooms, where teachers have encountered a larger number of pupils diagnosed with this developmental disorder (Wire, 2005). To an extent, a child with ASD will have two options to access education: special schools and mainstream schools. It is not uncommon that educators in regular schools have less training and poorer knowledge of how to address the challenge of teaching students with ASD (Helps et al., 1999). Whilst special educational teachers demonstrate to have a greater competence when teaching this group of learners since they apply effective teaching strategies that meet their pupils' needs and support their learning process (Helps et al., 1999). Nevertheless, research in the field of inclusion of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN from now on) in regular education classes has yielded proof that children with ASD not only experience a broad range of benefits present in the mainstream school context, but also have the opportunity to boost their social skills (Roeyers in Helps et al., 1999). In view of these facts, it is crucial for foreign language teachers, in regular schools, to understand the profile of a student with ASD along with language acquisition of learners on the spectrum.

2.1.1. The Profile of Students with ASD

It is of paramount need that teachers have knowledge of the implications of this disorder. While definitions of ASD vary among authors, the intricacy of the condition is defined by

Copeland (2018) in American Psychiatric Association as a developmental disorder which presents difficulties in social interaction and communication, including verbal and non-verbal use of the language. Alongside the impairments in social skills, people on the spectrum also present a repetitive and restricted behavioural pattern. On that basis, the development of each individual involves miscellaneous implications throughout their lives that vary according to the severity of symptoms. The diagnosis fluctuates during the first three years of life, however its manifestation also depends on children's unique and own abilities (American Psychiatric Association, 2020; Frith & Happé, 2005). Furthermore, ASD manifestations are different in every individual, yet they have in common three prominent difficulties known as the triad of impairment (Wing, 1996). Following this approach, Wing (1996) states that “disorders share a triad of impaired social interaction, communication, and imagination, associated with a rigid, repetitive pattern of behaviour.” (p. 327). This triad is found in all individuals with ASD, despite the degree of severity of their condition. All in all, Bailey et al. in Helps et al. (1999) argued that in order for teachers to understand the causal processes on the spectrum, it is fundamental to have an insight regarding physiopathology knowledge, as well as cognitive and emotional features specific to people with some degree of autism. Therefore, having considered the aforementioned issues, it is of great importance that educators have knowledge of ASD, thus they are able to understand in greater depth the challenges they face when teaching students with autism.

Once teachers have clear insights of the disorder and its implications, they will have less trouble understanding the profile of a student with ASD. In light of the triad of impairment mentioned above, the three core features of ASD behaviours are reflected in the classroom environment. In the first place, the impairment in social interaction is, in other words, the

adversity and discomfort of having a conversation with others, which could be seen as a rude social manner, typical of people with ASD. Inside the classroom this results in showing indifference or dislike of working in teams or couples (Wire, 2005). Additionally, pupils who have ASD are observed playing in solitary due to their difficulty to form close friendships (Lord, 2000; Frith & Happé, 2005). Moreover, in a study carried out by Soto-Chodiman et al. (2012) a teacher recounts how she dedicated a great deal of time shepherding her student who struggled in times of interacting with other peers inside and outside the classroom. In the same line, Soto-Chodiman et al. (2012) stated that pupils with ASD struggle to put themselves in somebody else's position, as it is hard for them to acknowledge others' opinions and sympathize with their classmates' feelings. Secondly, social communication is described as an unstable verbal communication, resulting in raising their voice, echoing others' speech, giving interminable speeches, or even not talking at all (Wire, 2005). Their social communication skills are impaired by many factors around the classroom, Frith and Happé (2005) developed a case study in which a student diagnosed with ASD manifested himself by screaming when changing activities. Likewise, teachers have reported communication difficulties with their students since there is no response from them to teachers' instructions (Soto-Chodiman et al., 2012). This communication issue cannot only be discerned from teacher-student interaction but also between students on the spectrum and their classmates. Thirdly, and lastly, flexible and imaginative thinking. In terms of flexibility, learners with ASD's adaptability is restricted due to their lack of tolerance to changes (e.g. a new teacher), since they need and benefit from structured environments. New routines and activities' transitions during the lesson, despite being drastic or minor ones, may bring unfavourable consequences, such as feelings of confusion or frustration, that could negatively affect the classroom learning environment (Marks et al., 2003). Hence, it is recommended to

prepare pupils and warn about any innovations in advance (Wire, 2005). With regard to imaginative thinking, it is possible to perceive students with ASD's "pragmatic understanding of language" (Soto-Chodiman et al., 2012, p. 103) in their struggle to understand their classmates' jokes, imitations, or sarcasm (Frith & Happé, 2005). Owing to imaginary situations are not possible in their brains, it is easier for them to use visual supports as a communication mode (Meadan, 2011). Therefore, it can be said that children on the spectrum better understand concrete and clear intentions through visual representations, since these avoid ambiguities in comprehension.

On the whole, these situations are a few examples of what teachers experience inside their classroom. Being aware of this triad helps educators to have a better understanding of the disorder. Therefore, it becomes a useful tool to better support students' learning process and address the manifold challenges that daily arise in the school context.

2.1.2 Language Acquisition in People with ASD

According to what it has been described above, teaching students with ASD seems to be a daunting task for educators. However, this group of learners is perfectly capable of learning a language, despite the difficulties they encounter on a day-to-day basis. Among the three areas in which a toddler diagnosed with ASD presents complications, the focus will be on the use of language in social communication. To look further into this issue, Þráinsson (2012) argued that children with ASD show unusual pitch and intonation, inaccurate lexical stress, a narrow range of vocabulary and syntax, and difficulty with pragmatic functions and speech domain. Furthermore, the study of Tek et al. (2008) revealed that children on the spectrum struggled with "lexical/categorical organization" (p. 221). According to the authors' findings, these characteristics, together with the fact that children with ASD did not show a shape bias, are

connected with the variety of language mechanisms that individuals with autism have in the acquisition of new lexicons. Therefore, an explanation for this phenomenon could be that “Brain mechanisms that process language in individuals with autism, in fact, can be underintegrated with an increased reliance on visual networks to process language comprehension” (Kana et al. in Tek et al.; 220-221). In this vein, the evidence provided demonstrates that the language comprehension process is better reached through the construction of visual networks.

Additionally, little socialisation contributes to deficiency in their language development, resulting in failure to communicate successfully. Consequently, in view of the language impairments associated with the disorder, it has been suggested that individuals with ASD should only focus on developing fluency in their mother tongue. Despite the foregoing caveat, people with ASD are able to learn a new language and overcome the challenges of second language acquisition (Esmaeeli, n.d.). The previous idea is reinforced by Moghadam et al. (2015), whose study suggests that Persians students on the spectrum were capable of learning new vocabulary in English. In the same vein, Wire (2005) states that

“Having worked with pupils with ASD over several years, I am very much aware of their strengths, and keen to contradict the widespread view that they are unlikely to make much progress in a foreign language and that this subject should be the first one to be discarded.” (p. 127)

This claim renders the fact that students with ASD are perfectly capable of learning a foreign language. Notwithstanding, in order to make acquisition happen, it is crucial to recognize the positives and pay special attention to their strengths and abilities. Hence, it is based on their strengths that researchers have asserted that even though children’s lack of flexible thinking is considered a drawback, teachers who harnessed this feature and work with it in their favour are

able to successfully teach a foreign language to students with ASD. On the grounds of their love for routine and repetition, these students learn new lexicon, numbers and grammar structures by means of visual aids and direct instruction (Wire, 2005). In brief, their strengths are key to foster the process of second language acquisition. Moreover, Þráinsson (2012) argues that every child benefits from acquiring a second language, and so pupils with ASD are not an exception to the rule. In this sense, bilingual children who have ASD have “no additional impairments in language development compared with their monolingual peers. There are, instead, areas in which autistic children may be more proficient than monolinguals.” (Esmaeeli, n.d., p.6). Consequently, the experience of learning an additional language can benefit students on the spectrum. Creating social opportunities to a greater extent will encourage them to interact with their peers, discover new countries, and open their minds to diverse cultures (Wire, 2005), which means going beyond their comfort zone.

Altogether, considering the increase of language learners with ASD now included in the mainstream school context, it is essential that teachers are aware of the emerging challenges. In order to do so, it is crucial for foreign language teachers to understand the profile of a student with ASD along with language acquisition of learners on the spectrum. The triad of impairments is not a drawback but just the opposite, since it helps teachers to identify and seize their strengths to provide them with opportunities and special support. Thus, any assumption must be left behind, educators need to accept that this group of students are perfectly capable of acquiring a new language and break down all barriers.

2.2 EFL Teaching in Chile

The world-wide increase in the prevalence of ASD represents a true picture of the current Chilean reality. Nowadays, there are no large-scale epidemiologic studies that indicate the

number of individuals with ASD in Chile. Still, the latest official data published by the Ministry of Health (2011) revealed an estimated number of 2,156 children diagnosed with this developmental disorder, of which 589 had access to education in special schools. In addition, as far as mainstream schools are concerned, there is scarce information available since this guidance document merely reports that, during the pre-scholar phase and primary education, about 589 pupils with SEN display behaviours and attitudes specific to ASD. Yet, these outdated figures no longer represent the country's reality forasmuch as, in the years that followed, the government enacted the law of school inclusion which allowed students with SEN access mainstream education. In consequence, more children with ASD are now active participants in regular classrooms. With regard to the teaching of international languages, in the Chilean mainstream school context, English is taught as a foreign language rather than as a Second one, in as much as students live in a "non English-speaking environment" (Inostroza, 2015), which means they have little interaction with the target language outside the classroom. Furthermore, including the English subject is not compulsory for young children, since the official English curriculum starts from fifth grade. Nonetheless, the government provides guidance and encourages schools to teach the language in early stages (Barahona, 2016). In light of the Chilean educational context, it is of great importance to understand how the language is usually taught inside the EFL classroom, before going deeper into the teaching approaches used in the country. In the same line, EFL teachers could consider the inclusive approach to better attend the special needs of students with ASD.

2.2.1 Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Over the years, teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL from this point forward) has been a challenge for educators, who look for different options to help students throughout

their learning process. Therefore, teaching approaches and methods have emerged on account of diverse conditions (such as experiences) and contexts (e.g. political) (Lio & Shi, 2007).

Consequently, a significant amount of educational approaches and methods have been created in order to fulfil what the society stands in need. Among the variety of ways of teaching, it is noteworthy to mention the Total Physical Response that reinforces listening comprehension by means of body movement. In this spot, speech along with body language take the lead in order to become the main comprehensible input in the EFL classroom (Intarapanich, 2013; Astutik et al., 2019). Moreover, it is a helpful and effective alternative, yet it only aims to enhance two skills instead of all of them. The previous active learning is closely bound to the drama approach, whereby students are involved in their own learning process (Pereira & Martinez, 2011). Using drama in the EFL classroom engages students with an array of activities entailing storytelling, acting games, among others drama techniques (Kao & O'Neill in Pereira & Martinez, 2011), offering an interactive and safe space for learning dynamically. Furthermore, it has been of great interest the participation of students in their educational paths and the communicative approach fulfils this feature. The latter idea is endorsed by the claim that the major characteristic, as well as benefit, of this focus is learner-centred teaching. Implementing this pedagogical approach in the EFL classroom enhances the chances of acquiring the new language (Ahmad & Rao, 2012; Pereira & Martinez, 2011). Thus, students are offered the opportunity to have a voice in their education. In addition to the aforementioned, it also sets the sight on the mastery of the four language skills rather than just one or a few of them. Thereby, it pays close attention to the communicative experiences (Liu & Shi, 2007). To do this, studies in the field suggest that group work activities are considered the most suitable ones to foster a communicative environment for language exchange (Intarapanich, 2013). In this sense, this type of communicative settings grant

language students a worthwhile learning experience. Lastly, unlike the previous approach that focuses on meaningful communicative encounters, the grammar-based teaching goes to the opposite route; it gives special emphasis to language structure and aims to strengthen the skills of writing and reading (Richard-Amato in Sandoval & Jara, 2012; Liu & Shi, 2007). This systematic educational practice lacks classroom interaction since fondness and motivation are not taken into account (Englishraven in Pereira & Martinez, 2011). Some existing methods frequently used by EFL teachers are direct translation and memorization of grammatical rules, demonstrating no communicative intention (Sandoval & Jara, 2012). Despite the drawbacks this approach holds, it cannot be denied that when well implemented, it can have a positive impact on students who like learning through structured patterns. Finally, once EFL teachers are aware of the most current ways of teaching developed in the field, like the ones previously mentioned, they cannot be distant from the reality in which they and their students live.

It is crucial that Chilean educators understand the limitations and opportunities that daily life can bring to the EFL classroom at the moment of opting for one way or another. At the present time, the Ministry of Education upholds the implementation of the communicative approach in the EFL classroom (Barahona, 2016). Nevertheless, in Chilean reality “English is not taught communicatively, but grammatically” (Sandoval & Jara, 2012; p. 17). Thus, the country replicates the same focus used along the length and breadth of the Americas, the grammar-based teaching (Krashen & Terrel in Sandoval & Jara, 2012). The main drawback about this is the unbridled use of this method (Pereira & Martinez, 2011), which sidelines the rest of the teaching approaches and methods along with the one proposed by the government. This proposal suggested the use of communicative activities and group work (McKay, 2003). The reason for bringing into play this way of teaching is that it motivates students to actively

participate in the EFL lesson (Barahona, 2016). Notwithstanding, the reality of Chilean classrooms is not favourable to achieve the communicative competences in language students due to the large amount of pupils as “many primary schools in Chile are characterised by an average of over 35 students per class” (OECD, 2004, p. 7 in Inostroza, 2013). This context does not help to foster language acquisition satisfactorily since it is hard for EFL teachers to maintain a positive classroom management, hence to create opportunities for students to interact and use the target language (Inostroza, 2013). If such obstacles were to be addressed by the government, it would be possible to carry out a range of diverse activities by meeting students’ interests and needs.

By means of these brief notes, the above mentioned approaches represent only a portion of the large variety that EFL teachers have the possibility to choose from. Styles among educators are different as well as their students' learning styles. Therefore, they have the license to choose the most suitable approaches that best fit the Chilean context they are teaching in. On top of that, it is essential that EFL teachers do not aim attention at one singular approach or method, but instead are aware of the broad range of available options. Thus, all four skills can be developed by complementing the existing pedagogical ways of teaching, which will allow teachers to provide an inclusive environment that meets students’ diverse needs and build up their strengths.

2.2.2. Inclusion in the Chilean Context

In Chile, despite teaching English as a Foreign Language in early school years is not compulsory, it does occur. Although, there is no official data regarding the amount of students with ASD in primary educational settings, it is fact that they are being now included in all levels of mainstream schools (Ministerio de Planificación, 2010; Ministerio de Salud, 2011). Therefore,

having in mind those previous facts, it can be assumed that young children with ASD are taking part of EFL lessons. In light of the above, using the different teaching approaches promoted in the field of language acquisition helps to better attend the varied pupils' learning styles.

However, it is equally important to promote the implementation of an inclusive approach in the EFL classes in order to support the learning process of students with ASD and other special needs.

A wide variety of definitions arise to explain the concept of 'inclusion' depending on the context. In this line, the experts on the field Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) came to the conclusion that this concept can be understood as a "never-ending process" (p. 25) since it is constantly evolving according to society's needs. Inclusion goes hand in hand with exclusion due to its constant fight against the latter. Soon after, UNESCO brought this concept to the educational field by referring to 'educational inclusion' as a "strategy for responding to the needs that any student could have [sic]" (as cited in Villafuerte & Mosquera, 2020, p. 76). Based on this focus, educators are able to create an inclusive environment in their EFL classroom, where all students have equal access to education, participate in their own learning process, and achieve the goals of the class (Valencia & Hernández, 2017); this is what is recognized as 'inclusive classroom'.

In view of the foregoing, the course of inclusion in Chile started in the year 2004. However, it was in the year 2009 when this focus began to be in the limelight with the general educational law 20.370, which directs attention to the recognition of learners with SEN in the mainstream schools for the first time (Ministerio de Educación, 2009b). In the same year, the decree 170 was issued, stipulating specifications in order to determine which students with special needs will receive state subsidy (Ministerio de Educación, 2009a). Thereafter, more

Chilean legislations and policies followed, being worth highlighting those that have had a direct impact on the education of pupils with ASD. One year later, the government enacted the law 20.422 that guarantees inclusion and equality by granting changes when necessary, in the social and physical environment, embracing all aspects that could help meet the needs of this group of learners in order to ensure their continuity in the regular classrooms (Ministerio de Planificación, 2010). These previous policies are evidence of real commitment from the government to make progress towards an inclusive education for those children who have been historically left behind.

In the aftermath of these enactments, the year 2015 underwent a great positive change following the appearance of the law of educational inclusion. This law warrants the admission to regular schools of all students and disposes of the shared financing system as well as profit in education (Ministerio de Educación, 2015a). As a result, discrimination in school admission is no longer allowed and diversity gathers momentum in the classroom. During this same period, the 83 decree was issued, specifying guidelines for curriculum adaptation, with the aim of meeting the special needs of students from the elementary and primary level. This document aims to give an answer to the diversity present in the Chilean classrooms (Ministerio de Educación, 2015b). In order to do so, the Ministry of Education launched a promising inclusive strategy called ‘Universal Design for Learning’ (UDL henceforth), whose purpose is to boost students’ learning by taking into consideration that every student builds knowledge differently. The rich diversity is seen in three aspects among students, these are: multiple learning styles, unique pace of learning, and individual likes and dislikes (Valencia & Hernández, 2017). This governmental decision represents the willingness to speed up inclusive education since it promotes the use of a strategy that is not rigid and considers that education is for all. This idea is in close alignment with

Aisncow, Booth and Dyson's (2006) perspective, however it is difficult to put it into action because it requires a lot of dedication and time, and it is the latter that educators are lacking.

Following this glance of inclusive education in Chilean schools, the application of UDL in the EFL classroom has bear fruits and bestowed benefits to students with ASD. In this regard, Escobar and Soto (2019) addressed an important issue revealed during their teaching practicum as their school showed no support to address behaviours specific to the spectrum. Besides, the authors realized that the strategies used involving this cluster of learners were not suitable or non-existent at all. Given this situation, the researchers applied a strategy based on the UDL and results showed that aiming attention at students' special needs is of great help to stimulate pupils' willingness to actively participate and follow teacher's instructions in the EFL lesson. At the same time, this case study demonstrated that the use of the design proposed by the government works positively on students' behaviour since "it helps to decrease tantrums and decompensation of the learner" (p.33). Evidence like this supports the idea that implementing inclusive teaching strategies based on the UDL helps children with ASD to achieve the academic goals of learning a foreign language.

Having understood what inclusion involves, it can be said that the inclusive approach could go hand in hand with the communicative one, proposed by the Chilean government to teach English. In lieu of focusing on only one teaching approach, as uncovered that some educators do, these last two approaches are an ideal complement to each other since they boost the four language skills together with paying attention to students' special needs. Furthermore, the course of inclusive education in Chile seems to be on the right track. However, it has become evident that despite the laws and decrees that have emerged over the years, it is not simple for EFL teachers to bring them to reality due to the diverse educational contexts they teach in. In

spite of the great efforts that it takes, it is important that EFL teachers at least consider adopting the inclusive focus even though it is not specific to the field of language teaching, since previous research has shown to be a great help for language students with ASD and SEN.

2.3. Teaching Strategies Used with Students with ASD

In the wake of this thorough revision of the profile of language students with ASD and the diverse ways of teaching commonly implemented in the EFL classroom, this last section will review the core of the matter: the teaching strategies that better support the learning process of pupils on the spectrum who are included in mainstream schools. As noted before, many educators in regular settings do not feel well prepared for facing the challenge of meeting the needs of students with ASD. Therefore, they are constantly worrying about their learning difficulties and behavioural issues that may arise during the lesson. In this sense, Leach & Duffy (2009) classify strategies into three categories: preventive, supportive, and corrective. This view emphasizes on avoiding critical incidents by using inclusive teaching strategies and reducing the barriers in the learning environment. Given that little research has been conducted in this area, it is essential to have a clear idea on what happens in general classroom settings and inside EFL lessons in special schools around the world. This will guide the research in the field of teaching English in Chile and contribute to the design of inclusive teaching strategies to be implemented with this group of learners.

2.3.1. Teaching Strategies in general classrooms

Teachers play a pivotal role in the educational system since they are considered as agents of change. They are constantly going in pursuit of strategies that facilitate a meaningful learning experience. In view of the above, it is substantial to draw attention to the development of inclusive practices that will be beneficial in the inclusion of students with ASD. In this regard,

Leach and Duffy (2009) group teaching strategies under three main categories. The first type involves prevention, whose aim is to avoid the uncertainty that some strategies involving classroom arrangement and practices may cause in students. In order to do so, these are planned before class time. Thus, planning ahead gains strength, since it is the foundation to create a structured and organized learning environment, which will address one of the main difficulties of children with ASD; their lack of flexibility. During the creation of lesson plans, practical strategies should be taken into account, Iovanonne et al. (2003) and Marks et al. (2003) support this view and propose considering activity transitions since changing activities may cause struggles for these students. Therefore, an effective teaching strategy is to start the lesson with a less preferred task, since it will facilitate the transition to a highly preferred one (Mercer & Mercer in Leach & Duffy, 2009). Moreover, alternating methods of instructions in the activities is crucial to maintain children's attention throughout the lesson. Autonomous work, whole group instructions, the use of technological devices, and peer work are some of the alternatives that teachers can take advantage of, since the application of a single approach during the entire class, such as employing group work activities only, may overwhelm students with ASD, considering it involves plenty of interaction and they make great effort to participate (Leach & Duffy, 2009). By the same token, Marks et al. (2003) recommend providing diverse opportunities for students to express what they have understood. For instance, written activities are challenging for children with ASD, hence they propose to divide one assignment into different stages, provide written assignments with less requirements, or provide additional alternatives, such as drawing or videotaping the assignment. An additional preventive strategy is providing stimuli in the classroom environment and taking into consideration the arrangement of the furniture (Kluth in Leach & Duffy, 2009). These aspects related to lesson preparation will not only benefit students

with ASD but all pupils in the class, considering that the alternatives given are different and can suit the variety of learning styles present in the group of students.

Another key aspect to be looked at when using preventive strategies is the family involvement (Iovanonne et al., 2003). Research has yielded proof that involving caretakers in their child's educational life will bring benefits to their academic success and social development (Schultz et al., 2016). By doing so, teaching strategies are more likely to be effective when they are implemented at school and reinforced at home, and vice versa, reaching all contexts to establish continuity and consistency (Iovanonne et al., 2003). Furthermore, this focus is supported by Marks et al. (2003), who brings forward priming activities that involve giving parents an outline of the contents to be seen in upcoming lessons, which would allow students to prepare in advance. In this manner, being familiar with the contents will enable pupils with ASD to be engaged and participate with greater confidence. Lastly, it cannot be denied that "students with ASD are heterogeneous in their presentation of behaviours and in their unique preferences, interests, and learning styles" (Iovanonne et al., 2003, p. 153). For this reason, it is necessary to have fluent and bidirectional communication with the students and their close relatives in order to get acquainted with the unique characteristics mentioned before.

The second category proposed by Leach and Duffy (2009) is called supportive strategies which draws attention to the strategies applied at the moment in which the lesson is being carried out. In this aspect, some of the strategies proposed by the authors to enhance engagement are role plays (e.g. perform actions), physical participation (e.g. use of gestures), and group response (e.g. options for answering are offered by the teacher, such as a mini board, thumbs-up or down, and use of fingers). An additional supportive type of strategy is offered by Marks et al. (2003) stipulating that an outline given beforehand with the focal points would

enable the student to keep up with the lesson and register important notes. This would also guide their autonomous work at home in preparation for exams. Furthermore, even though the use of multisensory tools is not very commonly suggested, it is an aspect worth highlighting since, according to the study developed by Yusop et al. (2020) in primary levels, these have demonstrated to be of great contribution to the development of language skills in students' mother tongue. Finally, there is broad consensus among the authors Iovanonne et al. (2003), Leach and Duffy (2009), and Marks et al. (2003) on the fact that using visual representations and considering students interests are successful teaching strategies. As far as visual displays are concerned, they gain great significance amongst children on the spectrum, since they can be given numerous purposes from which an array of pedagogic strategies emerge. These visual cues could contribute to establishing the classroom arrangement and management, complementing verbal instructions, providing timelines and schedules through graphic organizers, and adopting it as a communication mode. As for students' interests, they have to be considered when designing teaching strategies due to the fact that they are crucial to fully engage pupils with the class content. Students with ASD will be more willing to answer a question if a topic of their interest is being named during the lesson. This is when family collaboration becomes relevant, inasmuch as the information they provide related to their child's preferences is necessary for the development of this strategy.

The third and last category, according to Leach and Duffy (2009), is the corrective one. This is a disciplinary strategy used when critical incidents occur during the lesson. In this situation, the teacher's duty is to reorientate student's attention. For this to be accomplished, it is recommended that educators recourse to parents' advice in problem-solving in order to formulate new strategies that will address the particular students' requirements. Beyond this, the authors

highlight that teachers can avoid implementing corrective practices by dedicating special effort to the preventive and supportive ones.

In brief, the three types of strategies proposed by Leach and Duffy (2009) help teachers to guide the design of activities that will support the learning process of students with ASD. In this light, it can be concluded that family is a fundamental and transverse element that is present in all categories. Besides that, it is of utmost importance that educators understand there is no single recipe to follow, inasmuch as all students possess unique characteristics and the application of some strategies may be more successful than others. However, all categories aim to address the most common special needs among children with ASD.

2.3.2. Teaching Strategies in the EFL Classroom

As seen previously, there is a strong body of evidence and theoretical underpinnings providing teaching strategies to be implemented in a general classroom setting with students with ASD. Nonetheless, there has been much less research on teaching strategies that are considered useful in the context of language teaching. Additionally, several authors have described the teaching of EFL to pupils on the spectrum and their behavioural characteristics as a big challenge, but only a few have addressed the use of the appropriate pedagogic techniques as a path to overcome this issue.

Due to this lack of research in regular education settings, it is studies in special schools that have addressed this latter more precisely. In light of this, Farzana et al. (2018) developed a field study that included the use of visual strategies in the EFL classroom. In accordance with one of the most supported strategies implemented in the general classroom, the authors employed visual cues such as “body language, environmental cues, objects and signs,

[...]” (p. 106) and tools including authentic material (e.g receipts, instruction manuals) and communication aids (e.g. picture stories, behaviour scripts, activity schedules). After analysing the pupils with ASD’s performance, through their parents and teachers’ opinions, they concluded that using diverse types of visual displays boosted their social skills, engagement, and helped them adapt to changes in routine. Furthermore, in the same context of special schools, Adisti (2019) proposes that teaching strategies that are based on the TPR approach described above are one of the most suitable for teaching this group of learners. The author states that by developing activities such as singing, dancing, playing games, using their body as a media of learning, as well as giving simple verbal instructions, show positive attitudes, great interest, enthusiasm, and improvement of language skills in students with ASD. It is worth reminding that these studies were carried out in special schools, which means all students have some kind of impairments. Teaching in this context has faced some criticism since special schools pay overmuch attention on students with individual needs, leaving crucial contents of the curriculum that are covered in mainstream schools aside (Shah, 2007). In view of this, researchers in the field have claimed that children with ASD get better results in terms of social skills when placed in regular educational settings (Padmadewi & Artini, 2017; Leach & Duffy, 2009). Despite the above mentioned, the fact that these previous studies were developed in special educational settings is not necessarily a drawback, since the strategies the authors provide can help as a guidance for EFL teachers to implement them in mainstream schools, considering the lack of evidence in regular contexts.

As seen in the previous sections, during the last couple of years researchers have shown great interest in the study of Autism Spectrum Disorder, being one of the most studied developmental disorders worldwide. However, limited research has been conducted in Chile regarding the teaching practices in the EFL classroom when teaching primary students on the

spectrum in mainstream schools. In view of the foregoing, two specific studies have covered the area of foreign languages and autism, Fischer et al. (2018) sought the views of different actors in the school community, including EFL teachers, regarding English lessons to students with High functioning Autism. Notwithstanding the fact that their aim was not to investigate teaching strategies in depth, these come to the fore in teachers' opinions. The EFL teachers mentioned that the use of technological educational tools was of great help to engage students. Furthermore, they suggested paying attention to their student's interests at the moment of planning lessons. Promptly after, in 2019, a case study was carried out by Escobar and Soto, who developed a strategy based on the Universal Design for Learning. Their aim was to implement this strategy in the EFL classroom with an 8-year-old student with high functioning autism as a participant. To do so, they considered his special needs to design a strategy based on the use of pictures as visual aids. Thus, they could evidence improvement in the student's attitudes and performance. This recent study proves the importance of the implementation of appropriate inclusive strategies when teaching a foreign language to children with autism. Finally, one condition these studies share is that they both focused on students diagnosed with high functioning autism, leading to an uncertainty regarding the teaching of English to students with a less degree in the manifestation of the condition.

After reviewing the scarce research on teaching strategies used in the EFL classroom with children on the spectrum, it can be concluded that this is an issue that largely remains to be explored. The increase in the number of students with ASD attending mainstream schools has not been covered by the Chilean government since the official data -published 10 years ago- has no foundation on a real census of the population with ASD. Thus, it seems relevant to raise awareness of the prevalence of this condition since this can be a great tool

against discrimination and prejudices regarding that individuals with ASD. Additionally, it is crucial to get acquainted with the diverse difficulties and strengths students may present. In this sense, the triad of impairments (Wing, 1996) and the pedagogic strategies suggested for general classrooms, can guide teachers to design new inclusive strategies according to students' unique characteristics, and minimizing environmental barriers to avoid unintended critical incidents. Consequently, this chapter has shown that there is a vast amount of studies to teach pupils with ASD in general classroom settings. Nevertheless, there is still a void in the body of literature regarding English teaching practices, especially when it comes to the strategies that educators perceive as helpful when teaching young children with ASD in Chilean mainstream EFL classrooms.

Chapter III: Methodology

This field study seeks to examine the variety of teaching strategies that are being useful among Chilean EFL teachers when working with students with ASD. The need to support the language learning process of children with autism has become a challenge for educators from mainstream schools. To date, this issue has received scant attention in the research literature concerning the teaching of English. This dissertation intends to fill in the existing gap by answering the following research question: What teaching strategies are perceived as useful among EFL teachers to support the language learning process of students with ASD when teaching first to fourth grade in Chilean mainstream schools? Therefore, there are three specific aims of this study: 1. To collect general teaching strategies used among EFL teachers in a regular classroom to teach first to fourth grade students with ASD. 2. To identify teaching strategies that are perceived as useful to support the language learning process of students with ASD. 3. To describe features shared by the teaching strategies proposed as useful by EFL teachers.

3.1 Research Design

This study is descriptive and phenomenological in nature since it focuses on the study of experiences about similar situations lived by individuals and told from their own perspectives (Álvarez & Jugerson, 2003; Giorgi, Moustakas in Creswell, 2014; Cohen et al., 2007). By following a qualitative approach, Chilean EFL teacher's perceptions were collected as data through semi-structured interviews, in order to investigate useful teaching strategies developed with children on the spectrum. This type of interview was chosen in view of the fact that it provides flexibility by virtue of a combination between a structured list of questions and the possibility of asking to delve into a specific point (Thomas, 2013). The

subjects were recruited by the snowball sampling method whereby the participants who met the criteria contact other possible candidates, and so forth (Cohen et al., 2007). Afterwards, interviews were carried out in Spanish for a better understanding since it is the interviewees mother tongue (Cohen et al., 2007). Finally, the data gathered was examined using a strategy of content analysis (Cohen et al., 2007) in order to guarantee an accurate interpretation of the communicative material by the codification of interviews transcriptions.

3.2 Participants of the study

In the present study, researchers selected seven EFL teachers from Chilean public, subsidised, and private schools. The eligibility criteria required subjects to have previous experience working with students diagnosed with ASD from 1st to 4th grade in mainstream schools. Additionally, eligible teachers must have a professional degree on English teaching. Furthermore, seven participants were excluded from the study on the basis of not matching the criteria selection in terms of having experience working with upper levels such as, secondary and university contexts.

Table 1

Participants' background information

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6	Teacher 7
Number of students with ASD	2	2	3	2	Unclear	2	3

Type of school	State- subsidise d	Public	Private	Public	State- subsidise d	State- subsidise d	Private
Students' year	Third grade	First grade	Third grade	Second and third grade	Fourth grade	First to fourth grade	First grade and fourth grade
Number of students per class	22-24 students	unknow n	12 students	35-40 students	42 - 45 students	40 students approxim ately	30 students
Years of experience	3 years	1 year	3 years	3 years	4 years	12 years	3 years

In order to determine a specific group of interest, a purposive sampling strategy was applied through an exploratory survey (Cohen et al., 2007) shared via email and social media. This sampling strategy allowed researchers to choose the subjects who had specific characteristics, experiences, and knowledge in the particular area of interest (Cohen et al., 2007). Then, tentative subjects were contacted through email to confirm their participation in the study by completing an informed consent (Cohen et al., 2007). The E-message also included a note appealing to their willingness to share our contact with other colleagues who met the criteria. This snowball sampling method was used to reach and invite more teachers to

collaborate with the study.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Before contacting the participants, the researchers completed an Ethics Application Form for Students (Adapted from Moray House Ethics Committee, 2016) for the purpose of anticipating potential risks and to ensure ethical clearance through the supervisor's review. Subsequently, subjects were given an information letter and informed consent (see Appendix A & B) to guarantee participants rights and anonymity. Participants did not receive any monetary retribution for being part of this study. However, a brief overview of the findings raised in the present study was shared with all EFL teachers who were interested in taking part of the study, including those who did not meet the criteria.

3.4. Data Gathering

This study followed a qualitative approach since it sought EFL teachers' perceptions on useful teaching strategies to support the learning process of students with ASD in general educational settings. Following this approach allowed researchers to understand in greater depth the personal history, context, and perspective of the subjects regarding the phenomena to be explored in this study (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Therefore, the instrument used to gather data was an online semi-structured interview. Hereunder, the instrument and the procedures of this study are presented in depth.

3.4.1. Instrument

The data were collected using semi-structured interviews via Zoom of approximately 45 minutes duration. These meetings were conducted in Spanish, subjects' mother tongue, to ensure understanding and create a comfortable environment. Thus, discussions are not influenced by the language factor (Cohen et al., 2007). The interview's schedule (See appendix C) consisted of an

estimated number of 20 questions that were designed based on the literature found in the theoretical framework. In order to gather the required data a pilot interview was carried out before the online semi-structured interviews. Piloting was needed to test time management and the design of the questions (Cohen et al., 2007). Subsequently, the online modality was selected since it offers timing and place flexibility to participants by conducting real-time and synchronous meetings at their convenience (Cohen et al., 2007). The data were recorded using the same software platform Zoom and later transcribed by the researchers.

3.4.2. Procedure

Before commencing the study, the exploratory survey mentioned above was developed to eventually contact the participants who took part of the study through email. The purpose of the research was clearly explained in this E-message that included an information letter and a formal invitation to confirm their willingness to participate by dint of an informed consent (Cohen et al., 2007). Before carrying out the actual meetings, the interview was piloted with an EFL teacher who had previous experience working with students on the spectrum in a subsidised mainstream school, yet the criteria required was not met since the educator's school level of experience was between 5th to 8th grade. After testing the interview schedule, four questions were dismissed owing to the limited time available. The selection of these questions was in relation to the degree of relevance. Once the necessary modifications were covered and after obtaining written informed consent, interviews conducted between September and December of the year 2020. Furthermore, the meetings' recordings are being stored with password security. The final stage of the data collection comprised the transcription of the interviews to be analysed later. Lastly, the entire form of data collection was internet-mediated on account of the difficulty to reach the tentative subjects for the study (Cohen et al., 2007) due to the worldwide pandemic. Despite the

previous complication, the interviews were carried out in a synchronic mode through a video call ensuring validity and reliability.

3.5 Data Analysis

The study uses a qualitative approach in order to gain insights into the perceptions of EFL teachers by interpreting their narratives about working with students with autism. This approach was chosen to obtain a profound understanding of the phenomena of interest by creating themes and codes to later note patterns among them (Cohen et al., 2007; Snape & Spencer, 2003). The method adopted for this study was content analysis since it is particularly useful in studying the data in a systematic way which will allow the identification of trends in open-ended questions as well as their frequency and importance according to the EFL teachers perspectives (Cohen et al., 2007). The qualitative data was summarized and categorized to facilitate the thorough examination of the content (Flick, Mayring in Cohen et al., 2007). Thus, in order to facilitate the coding of open-ended questions, researchers pre-coded the interview's schedule (Cohen et al., 2007) by following Leach and Duffy's (2009) categories for teaching strategies: preventive, supportive, and corrective; as well as the triad of impairments found in Wing (1996). Then, the information gathered was examined and post-coded (See appendix D) to later organize the data and develop an overview table of the codes (See appendix E) that allowed the creation of thematic networks (See appendix F). Furthermore, a combination of deductive and inductive approaches was used in the data analysis since researchers started the analysis inductively by inferring themes based on the literature research. Therefore, once data was gathered, they proceeded deductively by verifying the previous themes and moving forward to new ones (Creswell, 2014).

3.6 Validity and Reliability

In this study, qualitative validity is addressed through honesty of the interviewees' answers and researchers' objectivity (Winter in Cohen et al., 2007) since perceptions are portrayed in the voice of experienced EFL teachers that collaborated to the search of teaching strategies to work with students with ASD. Additionally, the strategies arisen from teachers' narratives were set side by side with the existing body of literature by the researchers. Complementarily, reliability is enhanced through the piloting of the instrument (Silverman in Cohen et al., 2007) to achieve righteousness of the study.

Chapter IV: Results

The results of this study arise from the voices of seven specialized English teachers who had previous experiences working with students with ASD from 1st to 4th grade in foreign language classrooms depicted through semi-structured interviews. The researchers decided to group and organize the results according to the following categories: strategies that involve visual cues, body movement, multisensory tools, staff support; consider classroom arrangement, students' interests; encourage participation; and provide students different alternatives for answering. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that the categories mentioned emerge from the literature developed in the theoretical framework, the interviewees' narratives, and the insights of the authors of the present study.

4.1 Strategies that involve visual cues

The most significant aspect of the data found among strategies is the inclusion of visual cues, considered as a crucial and recurrent element in the EFL lesson. In all cases, the informants reported to make use of visual representations in different situations since their responses show that visual strategies are closely connected to many others, such as: time management strategies, instruction delivery, stimuli in the environment, activity transitions, consideration of students' interests, among others.

When asked about the use of visual support, teacher 6 responded that a useful strategy is to put an icon next to the headlines referring to the skill to be developed in the task or the type of activity. Thus, the teacher reported that if students struggle to understand the task, they can take a look at the icon which will give them a hint of what the exercise is about. In this vein, the teacher adds: *"Our icons are small drawings that go before the task. So, if I do not know what to*

do ‘Look at the picture’... If the reading icon has a book in its hands. Ok, I have to read”. This strategy was used in different contexts, such as classroom activities, handouts, and assessments.

Another aspect in which visual strategies are implemented is instruction delivery. In respect to this point, one interviewee commented how instructions were given specifying every single step sequentially, with drawings and clear instructions in each number. In line of this, another teacher reinforces this idea by stating that “*The age range is a group in which I need to be very clear with the instructions. Brief instructions that include a visual example [...]*”. Therefore, what stands out in this result is that providing visual support along with clear instructions is considered helpful to enhance students’ understanding.

Visual cues are also considered to facilitate the transition between activities since they seem to be a great challenge in the EFL classroom due to the difficulties that often arise. In this sense, three teachers referred to the relevance of telling students in advance the upcoming activities, as well as the timing for each one of them. From this standpoint, teacher 7 narrates that the strategy that has been of great help is to visually anticipate when the activity is coming to an end by drawing in the board a balloon or bomb indicating the minutes left and erasing part of it when the time moves.

Turning now to the final visual strategy, teacher 2 highlighted the use of large size picture books, from Oxford University Press and Books & Bits, to tell stories and carry out literacy activities. Talking about this matter, the participant commented: “*they were good, big, included texts and giant letters [...] they [student with ASD] liked it because they had photos, drawings, they could read it [...]*”. This strategy is acknowledged as useful to catch students’ attention and boost their reading comprehension skills.

In a nutshell, the above mentioned outcomes gain strength and demonstrate that visual

support can be implemented in a variety of circumstances that go from planning the lesson to preventing critical incidents. For this reason, this is one of the most remarkable results to emerge from the data since visual strategies are recurrent and considered useful among all participants of the study.

4.2 Strategies that involve body movement

When asked about body movement, participants on the whole referred to it as a practice that is included in their EFL lesson in both students and educators. A riveting teaching strategy mentioned by an EFL teacher was taking active pauses at a certain point of the lesson. The participant commented that they *“use Just Dance as an active pause, they love dancing”*. This helped the educator to motivate students and increase engagement. Moreover, the implementation of activities based on the Total Physical Response method is worth highlighting since the majority of respondents indicated that carrying out these types of kinaesthetic activities in their class was of great support to engage this group of learners. In this sense, two examples provided by teacher 2 and 3 are to dance along with “head, shoulders, knees, and toes” and play “Simon says”.

Regarding teachers' kinaesthetic practices, four participants brought up in the discussion of this theme the use of body language. In this line, teachers 1 and 2 mentioned the use of this tool at the moment of giving instructions in order to ensure understanding. Additionally, teacher 4 reported to use body language as means of positive reinforcement. An example of this is raising the arms when saying “very good”.

4.3 Strategies that involve multisensory tools

The most unexpected result to emerge from the data was the inclusion of multisensory tools in the EFL lesson. First, an effective strategy employed by teacher 7, that is closely related

to classroom arrangement, is attaching bouncy bands to the front legs of the student's chair. From this participant's perspective, this sensory aid was beneficial for fidgeting control.

Second, teacher 3 remarks a special event: *"It was about sensations, about the five senses. So, it was a lot about touching, seeing, smelling, describing what they feel. There, they looked really excited and willing to participate"*. This teacher witnessed the improvements of the student with ASD in the last summative evaluation which was about creating a sensory book that allowed the pupil to communicate sensations. Additionally, teacher 2 revealed to bring into play actual food so that students could see, touch, and even taste it while learning about it. These multisensory activities are carried out during the lesson and these interviewees considered them as useful to engage students.

Third and lastly, it is worth mentioning that the most common reaction to critical incidents among the EFL teachers who took part of this study is to open a dialogue with the student on the spectrum. However, a surprising aspect of the data gathered mentioned by teacher 7 was the use of multisensory teaching materials, such as sensory bottles, Play-Doh, and Legos. This educator states that *"that sort of things helped him a lot to calm crises"*. These multisensory tools are implemented during critical situations and, from this participant's point of view, are advantageous to reorientate students' attention.

All in all, this is a striking finding observed in the data seeing that the teachers who mentioned the use of multisensory tools gave it a great emphasis throughout the interviews and included them in strategies for different purposes.

4.4 Strategies that consider classroom arrangement

Interviews revealed that EFL teachers carefully consider the classroom arrangement when teaching students with ASD. In this sense, a theme came up in discussion of the

“arrangement of the furniture and stimuli in the environment” (Kluth in Leach & Duffy, 2009).

Referring to the first mentioned, two participants shared different teaching strategies: (1) didactic tables with which students are able to work individually or in groups; (2) placing student’s desks in front of the teacher in order to facilitate monitoring their progress throughout the lesson.

Regarding the latter point, four teachers have highlighted the individualized support offered, whether it is for monitoring or guiding students to reach the goals of the class.

In regard to the stimuli in the classroom environment, two of this group of teachers mentioned strategies they successfully implemented in their EFL lessons and are closely connected to the provision of visual cues, being: (1) labelling the classroom setting to avoid bursting regarding the personal space of the student with ASD; (2) placing visual representations as part of the classroom atmosphere to enable students to communicate their feelings. For instance, a teacher referred to having a “traffic light system” on the wall, where each colour represented feelings and, consequently, the student could point at the colour to express their emotions. Thus, the teacher takes action so that the student can reach the green colour which represents a positive feeling.

4.5 Strategies that consider students’ interests

The consideration of the students’ interests seems to have a pivotal role in the EFL classroom of the teachers who were interviewed since six out of seven mentioned it during the encounter. The majority of the participants agreed with the statement that students’ interests and preferences are key to developing a meaningful lesson plan. For example, teacher 5 alluded to a specific experience: *“He liked dinosaurs a lot ... so, we saw numbers and instead of counting kittens or pencils, I put many images of dinosaurs, so that he could count the dinosaurs and he was the most engaged of the class”*. This educator considered dinosaurs while lesson planning

and resulted in successfully engaging the pupil with autism throughout the lesson.

In relation to considering students' interests to facilitate activity transitions, strategies include "starting with a less preferred task which will facilitate the transition to a most preferred one" (Mercer & Mercer in Leach & Duffy, 2009). In this sense, two teachers reported that playful activities usually catch students' attention making the transition to other activities difficult. Additionally, teacher 3 revealed a strategy to address this issue that contemplates starting the lesson with the grammar focused activities (e.g. student's grammar book) to finally develop dynamic activities based on their preferences.

Lastly, it is worth highlighting the strategy proposed by teacher 7 in which the action plan is to create a special folder for each student with ASD. This folder contains material based on students' particular interests and preferences (e.g. handouts, colouring sheets, stamps) and it is used to calm them down in critical situations.

4.6 Strategies that encourage students' participation

Teachers considered participation of students was of great importance to carry out the lesson effectively, but it was also a challenge when teaching this group of learners. In this view, in order to encourage participation, 6 interviewees highlighted the contribution of positive reinforcement with verbal expressions such as, "*you can do it*", "*Very good work*", "*Even though it is hard, you have the skills to do it*". According to the participants, this makes students aware that they are capable of achieving their language goals despite the difficulties.

Another strategy mentioned by two teachers is giving this group of learners a role in the class. As interviewee 2 put it: "*once, we decided, as teachers, to give him the role of assistant and he was fascinated because he could monitor each group*". This decision was taken with the aim of making the student with ASD actively participate throughout the lesson. Furthermore,

participants also indicated the use of games (e.g. hot potato game, word search puzzles), songs (e.g. head, shoulders, knees and toes), and apps (e.g. Bitmoji) in the activities.

As far as family involvement is concerned, none of the subjects manifested to contemplate family's advice in the design of teaching strategies. Nevertheless, two teachers indicated that contacting the families of their students with autism is positively reflected in students' active participation. One of them expressed the importance of involving the family in the learning process of the student as active participants. Complementarily, teacher 7 mentioned the value of communicating the progress of the students by congratulating caretakers on the hard work since this teacher could notice improvements related to their efforts at home.

4.7 Strategies that provide students different alternatives for answering

Interestingly, the total number of teachers responded to this section positively. All participants, with no exception, stated that they do provide different alternatives when evaluating students' progress in written assignments, such as responding orally, drawing, matching, and recording audios or videos.

One concern expressed by the educators was regarding students' difficulty with verbal communication. In this sense, the way they overcome this challenge was providing different options to answer during the lesson. The most common strategy utilized among interviewees was allowing students to point to the correct answer. Thus, teacher 2 and teacher 4 agreed on the fact that when teaching colours students could go to the place where the colour was to finally point to it.

4.8 Strategies that involve staff support

In regard to relying on other people's support, participants did not have a unanimous view; however, turning to PIE¹ staff is common among interviewees in problem-solving situations. Moreover, two interviewees highlighted the importance of staff teamwork. In this sense, teacher 6 suggested that working with the multidisciplinary team is a great strategy that helps to identify patterns in a student's behaviours and strengths in order to work in the progress of the student on the spectrum.

Another strategy mentioned is having an action plan prepared in advance since it allows EFL teachers to react faster and better solve critical situations. Thus, the educator referred to the action plan followed by their entire school community. This involves peer support and additional staff support. Talking about this issue, the interviewee said: *"children can be part of our action plan ... there can be a person in charge, for example, of leaving the classroom to look for [staff] support, not to leave them on their own, neither the child [with ASD] nor the rest of the children"*. In accordance with the teacher's perception, the previous plan shows to be efficient since it is a team work that involves a great part of the school community.

4.9 Strategies overview

The following table contains the teaching strategies perceived as useful among EFL teachers and are summarized into the 8 main categories previously developed.

Table 2

Summary of the data gathered through semi structured interviews.

¹ Programa de Integración Escolar.

Strategies	Description	Purpose
Strategies that involve visual cues	Anticipating when the activity is coming to an end by drawing in the board a balloon or a bomb indicating the minutes left and erasing part of it when the time moves	To facilitate activity transitions
	Putting an icon next to the headlines referring to the skill to be developed in the task	To orientate students during the task
	Using large size picture books for story telling	To engage students during the lesson
	Including drawings to specify every single step of what is going to happen sequentially	To deliver clear and short instructions and facilitate activity transitions
Strategies that involve body	Taking active pauses (e.g dancing)	To motivate students and increase engagement
	Implementing activities based on the Total Physical Response approach (to play “Simon says”, to dance along to “head, shoulders,	To engage students during the lesson

movement	knees, and toes”)	
	Using body language	To ensure understanding and support instruction delivery and positive reinforcement
Strategies that involve multisensory tools.	Attaching bouncy bands to the front legs of the student’s chair.	To relieve anxiety, control fidgeting, and help students to focus
	Incorporating multisensory activities	To engage students during the lesson
	Including sensory bottles, Play-Doh, Legos	To react to critical incidents and calm crises
Strategies that consider classroom	Labelling the classroom setting (e.g. label the coat rack with names)	To define personal space
	Placing visual representations as part of the classroom atmosphere (e.g. traffic light system)	To facilitate students to communicate their feelings and emotions
	Providing a special chair (e.g. specific colour or size)	To define personal space

arrangement	Didactic tables	To allow students to work individually or in groups
	Placing student's desks in front of the teacher	To facilitate monitoring their progress throughout the lesson
Strategies that consider students' interests	Starting the lesson with the student's book or grammar focused activities to finally develop dynamic activities	To facilitate activity transition
	Including visual cues based on students' interests	To engage students during the lesson
	Preparing a special folder for the student with ASD with activities of their interest	To react to critical incidents and calm crises
Strategies that encourage students' participation.	Giving the student a role in the class (e.g. the teacher's assistant)	To promote active participation
	Providing positive reinforcement for students and family	To boost students' participation
	Using games, songs, and apps in the activities	To promote active participation

Strategies that provide students different alternatives for answering	Responding orally, drawing, matching, and recording audios or videos	To give options to demonstrate what they understood
	Pointing to the correct answer	To give options to demonstrate what they understood
Strategies that involve staff support	Working with the multidisciplinary team	To identify patterns in student's behaviours in order to work in the progress of the student on the spectrum
	Having an action plan prepared in advance	To react faster and better solve critical situations

Together these results provide important insights into the variety of strategies used by Chilean EFL educators when teaching students with autism. These findings indicate the dominance of the strategies used by the participants to provide students different alternatives when a written assignment is delivered since all teachers interviewed agreed with this view. Furthermore, unanimity was reached in relation to the effectiveness of the implementation of strategies that involve visual cues and body movement. In relation to the latter, a vast number of participants consider strategies based on TPR useful and dynamic to teach students in primary

levels. Additionally, the majority of the teachers expressed the consideration of the students' interest relevant to carry out the lesson. When asked about student participation, a considerable number of participants acknowledged the benefit of positive reinforcement in order to encourage active participation. Moreover, multisensory activities unexpectedly arose from the interviewees narratives as a helpful strategy, which is closely connected to the multisensory teaching materials used in critical situations.

Chapter V: Discussion

This chapter delves into a thorough analysis of the results by answering the research question: What teaching strategies are perceived as useful among EFL teachers to support the language learning process of students with ASD when teaching first to fourth grade in Chilean mainstream schools? Therefore, the group of strategies that are considered useful among the participants of the current study are: strategies that involve visual cues, body movement, multisensory tools, staff support; consider classroom arrangement, students' interests; encourage participation; and provide students different alternatives for answering. Hereafter, the examination of the strategies found are divided into three main categories proposed by Leach and Duffy (2009): preventive, supportive, and corrective. Results have demonstrated that the strategies proposed to be implemented in general classroom settings, as mentioned in the literature review, are considered useful by this group of Chilean educators to be developed in the EFL classroom. Additionally, other strategies emerged from the participants' narratives and were classified following Leach and Duffy's classification.

5.1 Preventive strategies

Results suggest that all teachers, before carrying out their lessons, provide different alternatives when evaluating students, especially when a written assignment is delivered. Complementary, this finding is consistent with that of Marks et al. (2003) who recommended the previous strategies to overcome the challenges that these evaluations may cause in this group of learners. Furthermore, prior studies have suggested family involvement as one of the most crucial aspects when designing strategies to teach students with ASD (Marks et al., 2003; Iovanonne et al., 2003; Schultz, 2016); despite interviewees do not turn to caretakers for advice, they stated that they involve the student's family in other aspects. A possible explanation for this

might be that Chilean English teachers do not have as much contact with students' families as teachers in charge of the group year do. In spite of the above, this strategy is crucial to boost children's skills and evidence improvements in both the classroom and home. In this light, one of the subjects emphasised the latter idea by highlighting the importance of involving relatives to reinforce at home what is being seen at school. This statement is in agreement with Iovanonne et al. (2003) findings which endorse that this modality facilitates the effectiveness when strategies are implemented regularly in both contexts.

In addition to recommendation on the literature regarding fluent communication with parents and involve them in the learning process of the students with ASD (Marks et al., 2003; Iovanonne et al., 2003; Schultz, 2016), the participants of this study manifested doing this by means of providing positive reinforcement to caretakers. Additionally, fluent communication is also needed among the staff teamwork they work with. This multidisciplinary team also demonstrates their active role in the Chilean mainstream schools is crucial when teaching students on the spectrum since working as a team and communicating with each other is helpful to exchange perspectives on teaching strategies that have been successful to boost children's strengths and manage patterns in behaviour. Therefore, this teamwork is able to offer students the best support.

Regarding activity transitions, these results further support the ideas of Iovanonne et al. (2003) and Marks et al. (2003) since a considerable number of EFL teachers mentioned the great significance changing activities have throughout the lesson. In this sense, they stated that the most useful strategy to face conflicting situations is to tell students in advance in order to avoid any unexpected changes in their routine. The implementation of this last strategy may be

explained by the fact that, according to Wing (1996), students on the spectrum lack flexibility. Hence, warning them about upcoming activities and timing is of great help (Wire, 2005).

Another preventive strategy found in literature was “arrangement of the furniture and stimuli in the environment” (Kluth in Leach & Duffy, 2009. p. 33). In this regard, results show that these aspects are considered essential by this group of Chilean teachers in their EFL classroom environment. Their teaching strategies, such as desks placement and distribution, facilitate the monitoring of students’ progress during the lesson. Hence, it could conceivably be inferred that this strategy responds to the difficulty of individualized work due to the amount of students per class in the Chilean context. This allows EFL teachers to make monitoring more accessible with no need of notoriously approaching next to the students’ desk throughout the lesson since the student on the spectrum could feel overwhelmed. In regard to the stimuli in the environment, strategies such as labelling the classroom environment and placing visual representations are considered advantageous to teach students with ASD. This result corroborates the previous idea of Wire (2005) who states that children on the spectrum benefit from structured environments.

5.2 Supportive strategies

In relation to this topic, Iovanonne et al. (2003) referred to the consideration of students’ interests since children on the spectrum present unique and specific preferences. Furthermore, Leach and Duffy (2009) and Marks et al. (2003) agreed that this strategy is key and favourable to engage this group of learners and encourage participation. In line with the previous arguments, most of the participants’ narratives have demonstrated the significance of this matter, it can therefore be assumed that it is of great help to draw the students’ attention using their interests in their favour in order to achieve children’s language learning goals.

Despite the fact that strategies related to task instructions were not a common theme among interviewees, one of them did mention providing clear instructions through the use of examples, visual representations, and step by step explanations. In this sense, it is interesting to note the correlation with what literature revealed since students with autism learning is boosted when repetition and direct instructions are provided (Wire, 2005). Furthermore, despite the fact that Leach and Duffy (2009) suggest that visual cues are mainly used in supportive strategies, the findings presented show that visual icons can be successfully implemented as a preventive strategy to avoid misunderstandings when providing instructions. Hence, it can be said that the use of visual cues is not used in activities development exclusively, since they are considered an essential complement to all stages of the lesson.

As mentioned in the literature review, Leach and Duffy (2009) highlight the importance of giving diverse options for answering in group responses. One of the alternatives proposed by these authors is using hand movements such as showing thumbs-up and down, or even indicating the numbers with their fingers. Accordingly, two EFL teachers gave students with ASD the option of pointing to the most appropriate answer. However, this is considered as a recurrent alternative, not merely used in group responses. In this sense, this can be connected to the use of their hands as a tool for them to demonstrate their knowledge in a particular manner rather than doing it through verbal communication or writing tasks.

Prior studies have reached a consensus in relation to the importance of including visual representations (e.g. environmental cues, picture stories, activity schedules, among others) during the lesson and they have been implemented in different educational contexts, such as: general and EFL classrooms from special schools or regular settings (Iovanonne et al., 2003; Leach & Duffy, 2009; Marks et al., 2003; Farzana et al. 2018). The use of visual support was

brought up to the conversation in diverse opportunities (drawing a balloon or a bomb for time management, putting an icon next to the headlines, using large size picture books, including drawings to specify steps, using a traffic light system); therefore, it can be argued that this group of teachers use them for numerous purposes and on a regular basis. Moreover, according to the present data, it can be suggested that including students' interests in visual cues could create a major positive impact. Utilizing this strategy responds to the difficulty that children with ASD present when imagining situations since visual cues provide clarity when tasks are given in order to avoid confusion (Meadan, 2011). Furthermore, considering their cognitive features, this could be explained by the fact that the language comprehension process of people on the spectrum is facilitated through the construction of visual networks (Kana et al. in Tek et al., 2008). The previous ideas are also connected and supported by Wire (2005) who stated that students show progress when learning a foreign language by means of visual representations regarding grammar structures, numbers, and lexicon.

The most unexpected result to emerge from the data was the inclusion of multisensory activities in the Chilean EFL classroom. In this regard, very little was found in the literature about the use of multisensory teaching strategies with students with autism. Furthermore, no data was found on the association of EFL teaching in mainstream schools and this group of learners. However, a study recently developed by Yusop et al. (2020) implemented a sensory garden for primary levels in a special school setting. This demonstrated the impact that multisensory tools have on children with ASD to boost their first language and communication abilities, learning focus, as well as positive changes in students' behaviour. Hence, the findings of the present study are in accordance with Yusop's et al. (2020) and suggest that multisensory learning may be beneficial for pupils diagnosed with ASD who are learning English as a Foreign Language.

Furthermore, interviewees have indicated to support students individually in terms of monitoring and guiding in mainstream schools. This is consistent with the view of Iovannone et al. (2003) that states this is an advantageous strategy to meet students' unique and diverse needs. Even though participants emphasised on the difficulty to do this in Chilean education reality, they devote considerable effort to the extent possible. This finding may be explained by the fact that the number of students per class limits teachers' actions in terms of classroom management (Inostroza, 2013). In view of the previous facts, it can be said that respecting students on the spectrum's individuality is beneficial for them as far as attainable.

As far as student participation is concerned, teachers' narratives indicate the relevance of providing positive reinforcement to students with ASD. In this regard, limited literature has been found in relation to giving positive reinforcement when teaching this group of learners in the EFL classroom in mainstream schools. However, it is a fact that this strategy is being applied by these Chilean EFL teachers in general settings with great success. Another strategy indicated was giving a role to the students with ASD in the class. It is difficult to explain this result, but it might be related to the strategies that Leach and Duffy (2009) propose to engage students which are role plays, physical participations, and group response; all of them involve students in being active participants in the class. In addition, the value of considering students' interests is closely related to the supportive strategies that encourage student participation. According to these data, it can be inferred that students will show themselves with greater willingness to actively participate when something of their interest is included.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in all seven cases of this study strategies that involve body movement were brought up into the discussion. Following this line, the majority of the interviews considered that strategies based on the TPR approach are useful to teach English

to children with ASD, with special emphasis on primary levels. This statement is consistent with prior studies that have noted the importance of following these teaching practices in special schools (Adisti, 2019). Therefore, this could indicate that when students on the spectrum get involved in activities that connect the English language with body movements, their language learning process is fostered.

5.3 Corrective strategies

In relation to the third category, Leach and Duffy (2009) proposed one unique strategy which is the involvement of caretakers in designing problem-solving strategies. Nonetheless, the findings of the current study add more types of corrective strategies that are being implemented in Chilean mainstream schools. The first practice most utilized among interviewees to react to critical incidents is to hold a dialogue with the student on the spectrum. However, these findings also showed that when EFL teachers struggle with reorienting students' attention they resort to PIE staff or additional staff support. Another strategy named by one of the EFL teachers was a school action plan that offered guidance during incidents that may occur during class time. In this regard, this school action plan can also be considered an individual means for each educator, since teachers can build their own action plan (e.g. special folder) in advance in order to overcome the challenging situations that emerge during the EFL lesson. In addition, an unexpected EFL teaching strategy mentioned was to include multisensory teaching materials (e.g. Play-Doh, Legos) when bursting occurs. In light of this, it can be argued that these multisensory teaching materials can also take part of the EFL teacher's action plan. Finally, based on these findings, it can thus be suggested that developing an action plan with anticipation allows educators to react faster and better solve critical situations.

5.4 Final considerations

Altogether, the greatest agreement found among authors and participants narratives is regarding the implementation of visual strategies since it is recurrent and developed throughout different stages of the lesson. This achieves major impact when visual cues are based on students' interests given that it encourages pupils' participation and engagement. Another strategy that is used for different purposes is the inclusion of multisensory tools. Even though there is little research in this area, it is a surprising fact that these are being considered of great help in Chilean EFL classrooms to support the language learning process of this group of students. Furthermore, strategies based on the TPR method were considered useful by this group of teachers, emphasizing their effectiveness is maximized in primary levels.

These findings contribute in several ways to the existing knowledge regarding the diverse teaching strategies used to work with children with autism and provide a basis for EFL educators who work in mainstream schools. In this line, it is worth highlighting that the strategies found in literature were mostly focused on special schools and in other areas considered in regular settings that are not specialized on language teaching. Therefore, this study has significant implications for the understanding of the profile of students with ASD since the findings of this investigation complements those of earlier studies and provides insights for the strategies designed to teach English as a Foreign Language and support their language learning process.

Chapter VI: Conclusions

The present study aimed to examine the variety of strategies perceived as useful among EFL teachers when teaching students with ASD from first to fourth grade in Chilean mainstream schools. This objective emerged from the world-wide increase of people diagnosed with autism who are now being included in mainstream schools and, therefore, EFL classrooms. It is due to the previous phenomena that inclusion of children with autism has become a major area of interest within the field of English teaching. In this sense, there is a growing body of literature that recognises the implementation of teaching strategies in general classrooms, as well as, in EFL classrooms in special schools. Nonetheless, a search of the literature revealed that there has been limited detailed investigation of teaching practices that best support the language learning process of students on the spectrum from primary levels in general educational settings. To pursue the main objective a qualitative approach was adopted by conducting semi-structured interviews to seven specialized EFL teachers. This method was effective to gain further in-depth information on the perceptions of educators who have previous experience on implementing teaching strategies in the Chilean educational context.

This dissertation sought to answer the research question: what teaching strategies are perceived as useful among EFL teachers to support the language learning process of students with ASD when teaching first to fourth grade in Chilean mainstream schools? The results of this investigation show that the strategies most used by this group of Chilean EFL teachers are: the use of visual representations, the granting of different alternatives for evaluations, and TPR. The participants also argued the usefulness of these strategies since they help catch the students' attention. Furthermore, these are consistent with the teaching practices that are successfully applied in other contexts such as general classrooms and EFL teaching in special schools.

Moreover, one of the most unexpected findings to emerge from this study is the implementation of multisensory materials in activities during the lessons and in corrective strategies.

The scope of this study was limited in terms of reaching participants through the context of online-mediation. As a consequence, only seven teachers, of the expected number of ten, contacted the researchers to confirm their participation in the study. An additional limitation of this study, regarding the small sample size, was that teaching English from first to fourth grade in Chile is not compulsory. Therefore, this issue made it more arduous to find specialized English teachers in primary levels. Notwithstanding the relatively limited sample, researchers were still able to interview EFL teachers from all types of Chilean educational establishments (public, state-subsidised, and private schools). Consequently, this work offers valuable insights into the EFL teaching strategies employed in the diverse socio-educational contexts that are found in Chile.

The findings from this study make several contributions to the current literature. First, the strategies found offer guidance for EFL teachers to support the language learning process of the students on the spectrum. Second, these teaching practices help them to be better prepared and to address different situations that could arise during a lesson. In this sense, the categorization followed in the present study facilitates educators to find specific strategies related to the issue they are concerned about (e.g. student participation, reaction to critical incidents, planning). Lastly, it is of great relevance to take into account that all students are unique and learn in different ways. It is for this reason that these strategies do not represent a recipe for success but an orientation to help students on the spectrum to achieve their language learning goals.

Further studies regarding teaching English to students with ASD would be worthwhile. A natural progression of this investigation is to examine the teaching strategies used in secondary

school levels and in higher education. In relation to the latter case, the exploratory survey conducted at the beginning of this study revealed that a considerable number of EFL teachers have taught adults diagnosed with ASD in university contexts. Another fruitful area for further work would be the inclusion of multisensory materials in teaching strategies implemented with students on the spectrum in EFL lessons. This could usefully explore how multisensory tools influence the language learning process of children with autism.

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Appendix

Appendix A



Universidad Austral de Chile
Marcia Castro & Camila Ojeda, Students
Pedagogía en Comunicación en Lengua Inglesa
Universidad Austral de Chile
Valdivia, Chile

Diciembre 2020

Carta Informativa

Estimado profesor(a),

Somos **Marcia Castro** y **Camila Ojeda Pastene**, somos estudiantes de pregrado en la **Universidad Austral de Chile**. Este año académico (2020) nos encontramos cursando nuestro último año en el que debemos conducir un proyecto de investigación para nuestra tesis y nos gustaría que usted sea partícipe. El título de nuestro estudio es **“Estrategias de enseñanza para apoyar el proceso de aprendizaje de estudiantes con TEA: perspectivas de los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera”** y su propósito es describir diversas estrategias de enseñanza consideradas como útiles, por las y los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera, para apoyar el aprendizaje de estudiantes con Trastorno del Espectro Autista (TEA).

Nos interesa escuchar sus experiencias trabajando con estudiantes con TEA. Nos gustaría conocer las diferentes estrategias que ha utilizado para incluir a estudiantes con TEA al momento de enseñar la lengua Inglesa dentro del aula de clases tradicional que generan un apoyo y así mismo una participación de aquellos estudiantes.

Una vez que usted haya compartido dicha información con nosotras, utilizaremos la literatura existente en las áreas de la educación inclusiva y enseñanza del inglés a estudiantes con TEA para analizar sus respuestas, describir sus estrategias e identificar cuales son consideradas útiles por los mismos profesores y profesoras. Por favor, tenga presente que este estudio no pretende criticar sus prácticas ni mucho menos juzgar su trabajo. Por el contrario, esta investigación ha sido diseñada para apoyar el aprendizaje de aquellos estudiantes Chilenos con TEA, y a la vez proveer a los docentes con una oportunidad para enriquecer sus propias prácticas a través de las experiencias y estrategias de sus colegas, todo visto desde el lente de la educación inclusiva.

Pretendemos mantener una conversación con usted por **45 minutos aproximadamente**, acerca de los temas antes descritos. Esta conversación se llevará a cabo vía zoom en el mes de diciembre, en la fecha y hora que mejor se acomode a su disponibilidad. Con su permiso, grabaremos solo el audio de nuestra conversación para poder transcribir con precisión sus opiniones y experiencias. La grabación será cuidadosamente guardada en un computador protegido con contraseña de acceso hasta después de 6 años (2027) una vez publicado los resultados del estudio. Al cabo de ese periodo, todos los archivos serán destruidos. La entrevista será realizada en español, sin embargo, el reporte será escrito en inglés, por lo que tendremos que traducir toda la información que decidamos incluir en él.

Anonimato y confidencialidad:

Toda referencia a su identidad y detalles personales se mantendrán en secreto y se usará un seudónimo para referirse a su participación. Toda la información que resulte de la entrevista será confidencial a menos que ésta contemple datos relacionados con algún niño(a) o niños(as) que se encuentre(n) actualmente en peligro de sufrir algún daño significativo. De ser así, discutiremos el asunto con usted para encontrar alguna solución y/o nos contactaremos con la persona o departamento que corresponda.

Beneficios:

Dentro de los tres meses posteriores al término de este estudio (2021), usted recibirá un resumen de los resultados y las recomendaciones que puedan surgir a raíz de esta investigación. Esperamos que esto le sea un aporte para analizar sus prácticas y las de sus colegas, y tal vez para implementar nuevas estrategias que promuevan un ambiente inclusivo para los y las estudiantes en el espectro autista. Asimismo, las publicaciones que puedan surgir a partir de esta investigación posiblemente le beneficiarán a usted y a otros profesores y establecimientos educacionales.

Sus derechos:

Su participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria y tiene el derecho de retirarse de él en cualquier momento. En ese caso, toda información obtenida hasta ese momento será inmediatamente destruida y todo detalle de su participación se mantendrá anónimo y no será utilizado. Si quisiera ver las transcripciones o traducciones de su entrevista, las puede solicitar enviándonos un correo electrónico a la dirección que encontrará a continuación.

Si quiere formar parte de esta investigación, agradeceríamos que completara el formulario de consentimiento que se encuentra en el siguiente documento. Por favor lea cuidadosamente el **“Formulario de Consentimiento”** y envíelo a cualquiera de las siguientes direcciones de correo electrónico: camil.2821@gmail.com y/o paola9castro@gmail.com.

Este estudio está siendo guiado por la docente de la Universidad Austral de Chile Yesenia Soto Torres, a quien puede contactar a través de su correo electrónico yesenia.soto@uach.cl

Muchas gracias por tomarse el tiempo de leer esta carta. Si tiene alguna pregunta no dude en contactarnos.

Saludos cordiales,

Marcia Castro Fuentes y Camila Ojeda Pastene.

Appendix B**Formulario de Consentimiento**

ESTOY DE ACUERDO CON LAS SIGUIENTES AFIRMACIONES:

- Sé que depende de mí participar o no de este estudio.
- He leído y entendido la Carta Informativa y se me ha dado la oportunidad de hacer preguntas por correo electrónico.
- Puedo retirarme de esta investigación en cualquier momento y sin tener que dar explicaciones.
- Entiendo que Marcia Castro Fuentes y Camila Ojeda Pastene grabarán solo el audio de la entrevista a menos que yo me oponga.
- Entiendo que citas directas de nuestra conversación podrían ser utilizadas en reportes u otras publicaciones pero mi nombre no se usará en éstas.
- Entiendo que la información obtenida en las entrevistas podrían ser utilizadas en otras instancias académicas o de difusión de conocimiento sobre la inclusión de estudiantes con el trastorno del espectro autista en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera.
- Entiendo que de desclasificarse información que involucre a algún niño(a) o niños(as) que se encuentre(n) actualmente en peligro de sufrir algún daño significativo, Marcia Castro Fuentes y Camila Ojeda Pastene podrían desobedecer su compromiso de confidencialidad.
- Entiendo que la entrevista será parcial o totalmente traducida al inglés por Marcia Castro Fuentes y Camila Ojeda Pastene.
- Solo seré contactado(a) a través de Zoom en la fecha y hora acordadas.

Consiento ser entrevistado(a) (Por favor escriba SI en el recuadro).

Por favor escriba su nombre y su dirección de correo electrónico

Yo _____ acepto participar en esta investigación y ser entrevistado(a).

☐

Correo electrónico:

Fecha: _____

Por favor indique una fecha tentativa entre el 28 septiembre y 16 octubre en la que podría ser entrevistado(a). Usted no será contactado(a) sin confirmación previa.

Fecha tentativa: _____

La plataforma de preferencia será Zoom a menos que el participante le acomode otra.

Nombre de las investigadoras: Marcia Castro Fuentes y Camila Ojeda Pastene

Fecha: Diciembre 2020

Appendix C

Interview Schedule

Introducción/preámbulo

Teaching Strategies to Support the Learning Process of Students with ASD: EFL teachers' perceptions

Gracias por aceptar participar en esta entrevista. Quisiera recordarle que esta entrevista es parte de un proyecto de investigación para nuestra tesis de pregrado la cual se titula “Estrategias de Enseñanza para Apoyar el Proceso de Aprendizaje de Estudiantes con TEA (trastornos del espectro autista): desde la perspectiva de profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera”. Su propósito es describir diversas estrategias de enseñanza consideradas como útiles, por las y los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera, para apoyar el aprendizaje de estudiantes con Trastorno del Espectro Autista (TEA). No hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas para las preguntas que le vamos a hacer. Solo nos interesa escuchar las experiencias que ha tenido en la(s) escuela(s) en la(s) que trabaja o ha trabajado.

Información acerca de la entrevista:

- La información que usted comparta será confidencial, sus detalles personales, nombres o ubicación de las escuelas que mencione y cualquier información que lo/la identifique se mantendrá anónima.
- La entrevista durará alrededor de 45 minutos pero podría ser un poco más o menos dependiendo de lo que usted quiera decir.
- En estos momentos está siendo grabada/o, ¿está de acuerdo con eso? Si no, pararemos la grabación inmediatamente y solo tomaremos notas.
- Siéntase libre de detener la entrevista en cualquier momento y de negarse a responder alguna pregunta con la cual no se sienta cómodo(a).

La entrevista será guiada por ambas

¿Le parece si comenzamos?

Primero que todo nos gustaría saber en qué ciudad trabajó con su estudiante en el espectro

- Ciudad
- Tipo de Colegio
- Cuántos alumnos con TEA aprox
- Que nivel de autismo
- Años de experiencia

¿Cómo describirías su clase? En general

- Grupo de estudiantes

- Enfoques o metodologías más usadas
- Estrategias más utilizadas
- Estrategias para el manejo de la clase y tiempo (estrategias)

¿Cuál fue su primer pensamiento cuando se dió cuenta que tendría un o una estudiante con TEA?

- Antes de haber tenido a un estudiante con autismo por primera vez, ¿usted tenía conocimiento previo respecto a esta condición?

Al profesor que **no tenía** conocimiento previo: ¿considera que tener conocimiento previo lo hubiera ayudado a entender en mayor profundidad el perfil del estudiante con TEA? ¿Por qué?

Al profesor que **tenía** conocimiento previo: ¿Considera que tener conocimiento previo lo ayudó a entender en mayor profundidad el perfil del estudiante con TEA? ¿Por qué?

Comportamiento en la clase de inglés

Las manifestaciones del espectro autista son diferentes en cada niña/o, sin embargo comparten 3 características conocidas como la triada. Siguiendo este planteamiento, Wing (1996) estipula que “las condiciones de este espectro comparten dificultades en 3 áreas en particular: interacción social, comunicación social, y en pensamiento flexible e imaginativo.

- Basado en estas aspectos características del espectro autista, ¿ha presenciado alguna situación en la que se vea reflejada esta triada en su conducta dentro de la sala de clases? ¿Cómo cuales? ¿Con cuál de las conductas tuvo más dificultad? ¿Qué hizo al respecto?
- ¿Ha enfrentado alguna vez un incidente crítico con algún estudiante en el espectro? ¿Cómo enfrentó la situación? (estrategias correctivas)

¿Qué fortalezas y habilidades específicas del espectro autista ha notado cuando enseña inglés como lengua extranjera?

- ¿Ha notado algún tipo de mejora (por ejemplo: interacción social o en comunicación, flexibilidad, adquisición de la lengua) durante el proceso de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera? ¿Cómo cuales? ¿Cómo? ¿Qué cambió?
- ¿A qué cree que se atribuyen estas mejoras? ¿Hizo algo en específico para promoverlas? ¿Qué estrategias /actividades ayudaron?
- ¿Cree que aprender una lengua extranjera trae beneficios para ellos? ¿En qué aspectos?

Enfoques y Estrategias

- ¿Cómo describiría sus métodos de enseñanza con estudiantes con TEA?
- Cuando se enseña una lengua extranjera se implementan una gran variedad de enfoques (por ejemplo: Natural, Total Physical Response, drama, communicative, and grammar based). De los que nombró al principio de la entrevista, ¿ha notado que uno o varios de ellos funcionan mejor o no cuando enseña a este grupo de estudiantes?

Preventivas

- Cuando planifica una clase, ¿Considera las necesidades/intereses especiales de los estudiantes con TEA? ¿Ha usado el Diseño Universal para el aprendizaje en su planificación?
- ¿Cómo varían sus explicaciones cuando se dirige a los estudiantes con autismo y a estudiantes típicamente desarrollados?
- ¿Considera que la familia tiene un rol importante en el proceso de aprendizaje de estudiantes con autismo? ¿Alguna vez se ha contactado con ella para diseñar estrategias que mejor se adapten a las necesidades y características individuales del estudiante?

Si: ¿Cómo ayudó?

No: ¿Cree que sería útil?

- ¿Presta una atención especial a las transiciones entre actividades? ¿Alguna vez ha tenido un inconveniente en este aspecto? ¿Qué ha hecho en estas situaciones?

De apoyo

- ¿Participan sus estudiantes activamente? ¿Cómo alienta la participación en sus estudiantes con TEA?
- ¿Alguna vez ha considerado los intereses personales del estudiante durante la clase? ¿Cómo? (por ejemplo: Actividades, manejo de la clase)
- ¿Qué tipo de actividades usa en sus clases? ¿Usa más de alguna actividad?
- Considerando la dificultad de comunicación de los estudiantes, ¿Cómo supera/soluciona este desafío? ¿Provee diferentes oportunidades para que los estudiantes en el espectro expresen/demuestren lo que han aprendido?
- ¿En qué situaciones hace uso de representaciones visuales y lenguaje corporal?

Correctivas

- Basándose en su respuesta previa respecto a incidentes críticos durante la clase, usted tiene estrategias de resolución para este tipo de conflictos con estudiantes con TEA? ¿cuáles? ¿Le han funcionado/fallado? ¿Varían de acuerdo a cada estudiante?

PREGUNTA FINAL: Si tuviera que dar sugerencias a otros y otras docentes en el área, ¿qué estrategias/actividades recomendaría para trabajar con estudiantes con TEA?

Appendix D

Example of codification and transcribed interview

Interviewer 2: ¿Cómo varían sus explicaciones?, por ejemplo el momento de dar instrucciones cuando se dirige a estudiantes con autismo, o no varía y les sirven las instrucciones que le da al curso completo.

Teacher 6: No, yo siento que no varían mucho, a lo mejor es algo en donde tengo que poner un poco más de atención, pero no varían en general porque, bueno tengo la experiencia yo por lo menos, de que el grupo etario es un grupo donde **necesito ser muy clara con las instrucciones, instrucciones breves, instrucciones que lleven un ejemplo visual, en donde yo les diga miren aquí sigan ahí (Code: instructions with visual representations).** Entonces, todo este tipo de instrucciones de clase son útiles en realidad para todos, para todo el grupo, no son instrucciones que son exclusivas de. Si lo que hago es que por ejemplo, en clases presenciales es mucho más frecuente una vez dadas las instrucciones, se vuelven a **repetir las instrucciones (Code: instructions repetition)** y si es necesario una tercera vez, se vuelve a repetir una tercera vez porque son así mis niños. Ellos necesitan de repetir bastante y que ya esté comprendido, **una vez que vamos a la actividad puedo ir en forma un poco más individual por ejemplo a mi alumno con TEA y vuelvo a preguntar ¿Está claro? ¿Es lo que hay que hacer? (Code: Individualized support → monitoring)** Me dice que sí, ningún problema, lo dejo y dejo que siga su actividad porque tampoco quiero invadir ese espacio en el que él tiene la libertad de trabajar como el resto de sus compañeros y que yo tenga que estar como constantemente encima no, si me preocupa que sea un par de veces al inicio, durante, al final de la clase pero no atosigándolo de que me dé más información de la que él quiera y se sienta él en entregar.

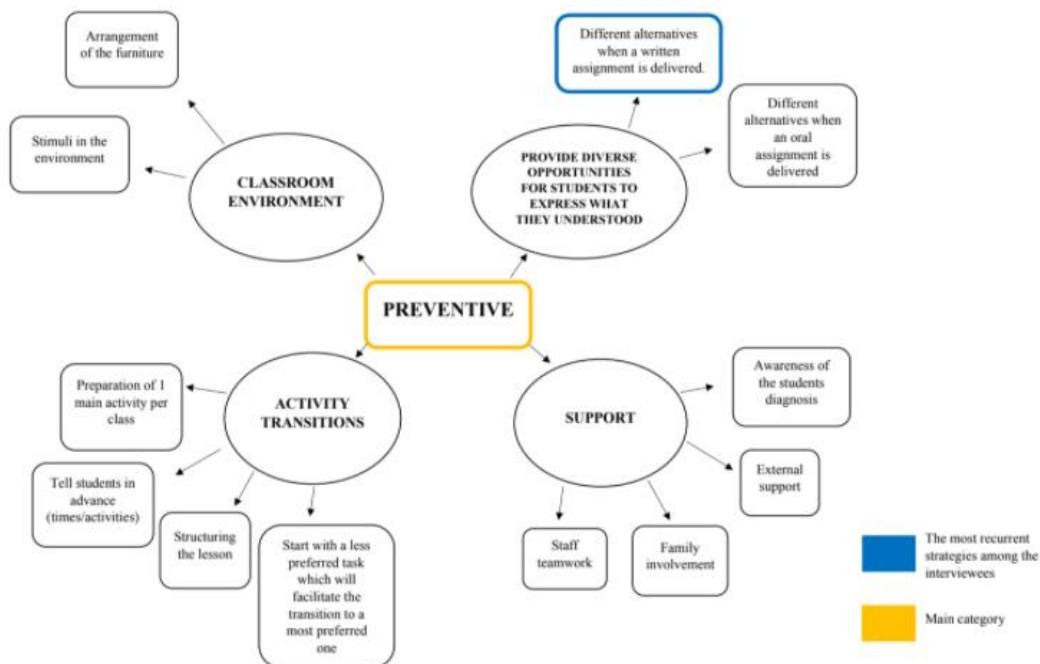
Appendix E

Table of codes

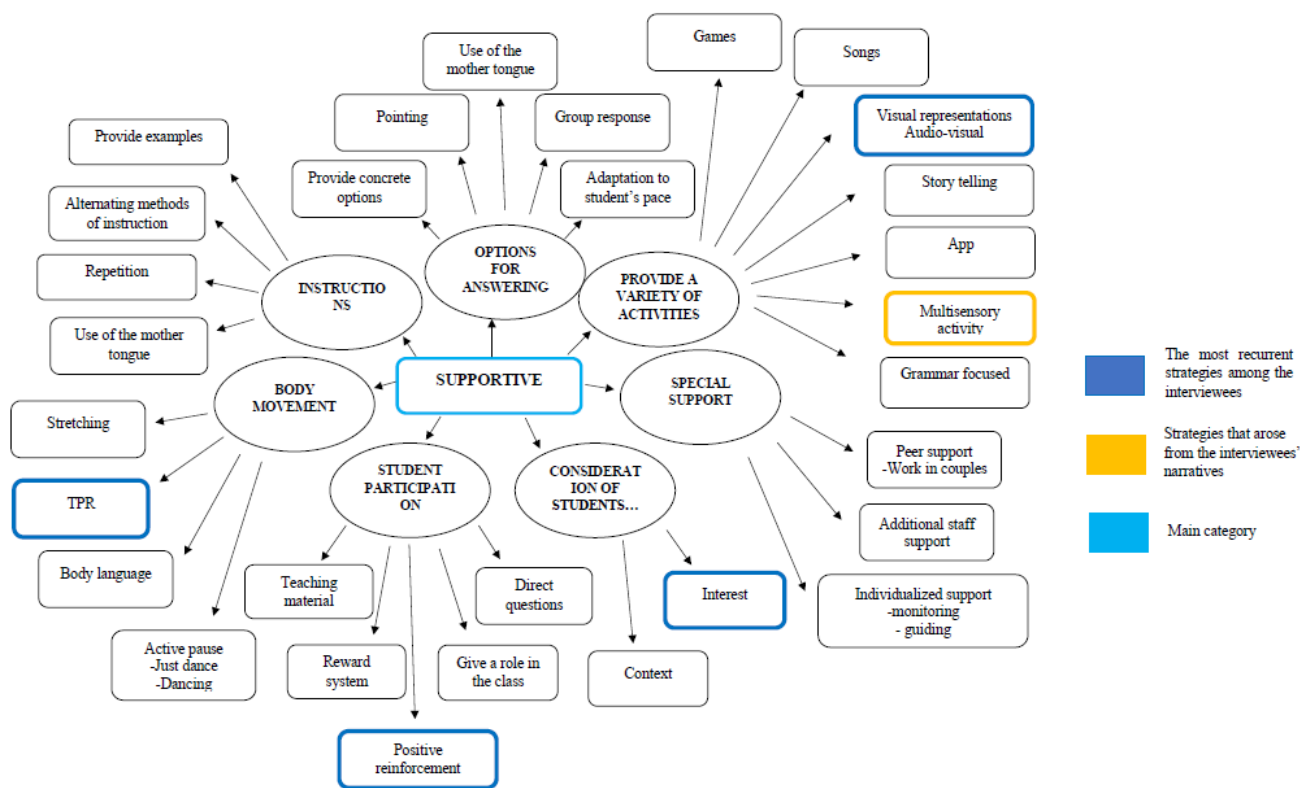
Strategies											
Preventive				Supportive							Corrective
Activity transition	Support	Classroom environment	Provide diverse opportunities for students to express what they understood	Instructions	Consideration of students	Options for answering	Provide a variety of activities	Special support	Student Participation	Body Movement	Reaction to critical incidents
Structuring the lesson	External support	Stimuli of the environment	Different alternatives when a written assignment is delivered.	Provide examples	interest	Provide concrete options	Games	Peer support (work in couples)	Direct questions	Stretching	Multisensory teaching material -Lego
Tell students in advance (times/activities)	Family involvement	Arrangement of the furniture	Different alternatives when an oral assignment is delivered.	Alternating methods of instructions	context	Use of the mother tongue	Songs	Individualized support -Monitoring -Guiding	Give a role in the class	TPR	Action Plan - Folder.
Start with a less preferred task...	Staff team work			Repetition		Pointing	Visual representations (Audiovisual)	Additional staff support	Positive reinforcement	Body language	Teacher-student communication
Preparation of 1 main activity per class.	Awareness of the student's diagnosis			Use of the mother tongue		Group Response	Reward system		Reward system	Active pause -Just dance -dancing	Additional staff support
						adaptation to students' pace	Story telling		Teaching material		
							App				
							Multisensory activity				
							Grammar focused				

Appendix F

Thematic network 1



Thematic Network 2



Thematic network 3

