

Children in the autistic spectrum disorder

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Autism Spectrum Disorder is a developmental disorder manifesting itself in the first two years of life, being 3-4 times more common in boys than in girls. Most children with autism also suffer from mental retardation. Among those with low intelligence, the boys-girls rate tends to equalize. This disorder affects language, play, cognition, social development and adaptation skills, causing ever deeper delays for children of the same age. Autistic children do not learn as other children learn. They seem unable to understand the simplest verbal and nonverbal communication, sensory information leaves them confused, and they are characterized by varying degrees of isolation from the world around them. They develop an excessive interest in certain activities and objects that interfere with everything, at any time, since they tend to be repetitive, and they are very little interested in other people, they generally do not notice and imitate them.

In over a decade of teaching teenagers, teaching English to teenagers in the Autistic Spectrum Disorder, has proven to be as interesting as difficult, in the context of individualizing teaching according to specific abilities, likes and patterns in a group of thirty and sometimes over thirty teenagers, all with different levels of language acquisition, different interest, different motivation (if any), different abilities and learning techniques. Autistic students frequently encountered difficulties in abstracting rules, inhibiting irrelevant responses, containing emotions while performing a didactic task, distribution of attention, offering feedback, understanding a joke in native language, deciphering the answer of colleagues, writing or remarks, as well as the simultaneous holding of more information while making a decision. Some create their own words and phrases that can only be understood by

people familiar with the child's way of communicating, thus a permanent communication with families dictates the speed and length of his development and advancement in any area of his acquisitions, language not being an exception.

Children in the Autistic Spectrum Disorder do not express the desire for interpersonal contact with even the closest people, are not interested in discussing with others, do not show concern in expressing their feelings or emotions, do not express their desires; do not feel the need to be comforted or praised; he either seems careless about the objects and people around him, either manifest language and vocabulary that may seem violent to others, which makes establishing rapport very difficult for teacher and colleagues. Most such students do not look the interlocutor in the eye, not establishing a visual contact, giving the impression that he is distracted or uninterested. Rarely, the adult can capture the attention or interest and may have visual contact only for very little time, more by means of objects that are of special concern to the student, depending on the severity of the diagnosis. It is very difficult to work in pairs or in groups since they do not play with other children, preferring solitary, stereotypical, poor, unrelated games in their native tongue. The autistic teenager may have gestures, attitudes, facial movements, or stereotypical posts that he can maintain for a long time. Dealing with teaching material he may either reject it (through yelling, spitting, leaving the place, jumping, covering their fingers with their sleeves so that it cannot touch them etc.) or accept it, examining it as a foreign object, smelling or touching them with their tongue, singing, listening to the noise they are making, seemingly fascinated by what they discover.

Language (verbal and nonverbal) has lost its communication function, the pupil has semantic difficulties in understanding the meaning of words or sentences in Romanian and English, and / or has difficulty in using language in an appropriate context. They have difficulty understanding some words, and if used, the new vocabulary can only be added in a certain context and in association with something he has previously learned. An autistic student can learn new words only relying on perceptual similarities, more than functional attributes; he may have difficulty in understanding the words in several ways, and arguing why a certain word is called that, or why cold means rece when it sounds like cald (meaning warm) and why library doesn't translate into librerie (meaning bookstore). They have a tendency to repeat new vocabulary (known as immediate echolalia), which is useful for further learning. Sometimes they may develop a strange attachment to a handout, a pen, a piece of material. They may react at or against the paper rustle, against the creaking of the chalk, or can spin or touch endlessly an object only for the sound it produces, which will interfere with the flow of the activities. Any change in stereotype and ritual may lead to extreme anxiety and agitation, pulling their hair, hitting their chest or desk, biting their finger and so on.