

Intuitive Strategies Used by Untrained EFL Teachers to Teach Autistic Students

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Ni la Universidad El Bosque, ni el jurado serán responsables de las ideas propuestas por los autores de este trabajo.

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Abstract

This project is related to the teaching strategies that teachers intuitively implement in English as a foreign language classes. This, considering the inclusive education guidelines for special needs students in Colombia. The research is focused on different English teachers' classes and their autistic students in a private inclusive school in Chia - Cundinamarca. Therefore, the objective in this work is to identify the intuitive strategies applied by the teachers without previous knowledge in special needs, in order to deliver their classes into an inclusive environment for the autistic children. That said, it is important to remark that this is a qualitative research, as it is taken into account each experience, opinion and concept in the learning process with autistic children; also, the data collection methods selected were interviews, field notes and observations to obtain more detailed information. In addition, this project include the findings about the strategies that teachers used intuitively, which are divided into different categories such as impact of art as a means of stimulation in the teaching of English, importance of new vocabulary to learn a second language, simplification of explanations, and result of group activities as a means of development in EFL classes. In this way, it is expected this project will be useful in terms of strategies for autistic students, despite the lack of teacher training in this field.

Keywords: Autistic Spectrum Disorder, English as a foreign language, Inclusive education, Special education needs, Intuitive Strategies.

Resumen

Este proyecto está relacionado con las estrategias de enseñanza que los profesores implementan intuitivamente en las clases de inglés como lengua extranjera. Esto, considerando las pautas de educación inclusiva para estudiantes con necesidades especiales en Colombia. La investigación se centra en diferentes clases de profesores de inglés y sus estudiantes autistas en una escuela privada inclusiva en Chía - Cundinamarca. Por lo tanto, el objetivo de este trabajo es identificar las estrategias intuitivas aplicadas por los docentes sin conocimientos previos en necesidades especiales, con el fin de orientar sus clases hacia un entorno inclusivo para los niños autistas. Dicho esto, es importante destacar que se trata de una investigación cualitativa, ya que se tiene en cuenta el proceso de cada objeto de estudio involucrado y, asimismo, los métodos de recolección de datos seleccionados fueron entrevistas, notas de campo y observaciones para obtener información más detallada. Además, este proyecto incluye los hallazgos sobre las estrategias que los docentes utilizaron de manera intuitiva, las cuales se dividen en diferentes categorías, como el impacto del arte como medio de estimulación en la enseñanza del inglés, la importancia del nuevo vocabulario para aprender un segundo idioma, la simplificación de explicaciones y resultado de las actividades grupales como medio de desarrollo en las clases de inglés como lengua extranjera. De esta manera, se espera que este proyecto sea útil en términos de estrategias para estudiantes autistas, a pesar de la falta de formación docente en este campo.

Palabras clave: Trastorno del Espectro Autista, inglés como lengua extranjera, educación inclusiva, necesidades de educación especial, estrategias intuitivas.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Inclusive education in Colombia requires teachers with knowledge in all areas, but especially in the area of special needs. According to United Nations Educational et al. (2005, cited by Cely and Abreus, 2022) “the purpose of inclusive education is to allow teachers and students to feel comfortable about diversity and perceive it not as a problem, but as a challenge and an opportunity to enrich the ways of teaching and learning” (p. 180). Having said that, "Very little is known about inclusive education in Colombia" a (Moreno and Gabel, 2008; Kamenopoulou, 2018b, cited in Kamenopoulou, 2020, p. 1794). This is due to the lack of teacher knowledge that promotes educational quality in terms of special needs. That said, special education, and more specifically, the autistic spectrum disorder, and the educational process of English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher dealing with this disability are the main axis of this project. Therefore, it is important to have the right knowledge to implement strategies that help these students learn in a meaningful and noticeable way. Furthermore, Golshan et al. (2019) suggest that “Over the last few decades, educational research has advanced tremendously in areas such as special education and language learning” (para. 3).

Therefore, knowing that today it is essential to know about this problem, educational institutions are working on applying inclusion strategies inside their classrooms. Teachers must also be prepared to share new instruments which help to reach and complete their students' needs since they require different teaching strategies, that is why it is important to identify effective EFL planning that can be applied and adapted to all students in inclusive settings.

Linked to the above, this project aims to remark both how important it is for teachers to have knowledge regarding meaningful and effective EFL strategies at the moment of

teaching students with autism and to have better teaching-learning processes during the lesson's development. Consequently, in this chapter, you will find information about the problem statement, which includes our research question and research objective.

Statement of the problem

Talking about inclusive education, it is well known that prior training to teach autistic children is necessary, since teachers do not have the essential training in case of facing the challenge of teaching students with special needs. As Johnson et. al., (2021) expressed:

Teachers in inclusion classrooms want and need more professional training in basic knowledge about Autism Spectrum Disorders, more resources to accommodate social needs of students in the classroom, and more understanding of how to advocate for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders in their classrooms (p. 3).

In this way, teachers can or not acquire prior knowledge on inclusive teaching strategies, but what really matters is how they would face these challenges of applying effective action plans in classrooms where there are students who require special strategies. That said, not knowing how to react to these students with special academic needs, radically affects their educational process, since teachers do not have enough knowledge on how to treat these students; consequently, they only act by intuition. For this reason, we want to describe the effect of the teaching strategies that EFL teachers intuitively implement with autistic students.

As pre-service teachers, we were able to notice the lack of knowledge to teach a second language to children with special needs. This important aspect was the fundamental pillar to encourage our desire to create this research project, since little research related to this important topic has been done in our country. That is why it is crucial for us as future teachers to acquire adequate preparation to face this situation. According to Gałązka and Dick-

Bursztyn (2019) “our concern is with foreign language teachers, who sometimes have to face the above problems without adequate preparation in foreign language teaching methodology for inclusive education” (p.192). This evidence shows that there are cases in which teachers have to instruct these children with autism, even without having the necessary knowledge to face this challenge.

In addition, we cannot ignore the fact that this lack of preparation from teachers regarding EFL strategies for teaching autistic students ends in a search for new ways to adapt the class to orient learning in them; and sometimes, one way that teachers find to adapt their teaching methods is their own intuition: an intuition fostered by their experience. Contrary to what is commonly said, intuition can be a really useful tool inside the classroom; “Because intuition can spontaneously generate ideas, alternatives or solutions; it predominantly serves decision-making, problem-solving and creativity. Therefore, intuition seems indispensable for teacher pedagogical tact too”. (Sadlet and Smith, 2004; Dane and Pratt, 2009 cited by Sipman et al., 2019, p. 1188). Nevertheless, the conclusion whether the use of intuition as a teaching strategy will be determined by the adaptation and progress that students with special needs have with it.

Taking into account that we are focusing on inclusive education related to autistic students, it is important to talk about the English teacher’s performance in classes where special strategies are needed. However, EFL teachers have not been trained in this field during their formal educational process due to the fact that there are no subjects focused on this area in the college programs; so they must follow their intuition to deliver their lessons. Despite this, as Forlin (2010) mentions “there must be a greater link between teacher training institutions and schools themselves and greater cross-pollination between special education and other disciplines during initial training in order to better prepare teachers for the reality of the inclusive classroom” (pag. 7).

Research question:

- What happens when EFL teachers intuitively implement teaching strategies with autistic children?

Research objective:

- To describe the effect of the teaching strategies that EFL teachers intuitively implement with autistic students.

Specific objectives:

- Characterize the strategies implemented by English teachers in educational inclusive settings
- Analyze the results obtained from the intuitive intervention given by English teachers in classes with autistic students.

Rationale

Our interest as future teachers is to provide a quality education for all types of students. For this reason, our heed in researching about how not knowing about inclusive education is a problem for teachers is our central focus. Therefore, the main purpose of this project is to describe the effect of the teaching strategies that EFL teachers intuitively implement with autistic students. Thus, we think that teacher's preparation to face classes with students with special needs in an inclusive environment is indispensable. As a result, we highlight the importance of providing knowledge and preparation in special education to teachers, since it implies valuable advances in inclusive education.

Regarding the benefits that this research provides, we can find that the students who are not taken into account are the most benefited, given that qualified teachers would help them to have a proper development in their educational context and at the same time, it would facilitate their English learning process. Also, education in the country benefits, since very little research has been done in this regard and this helps to improve professional training in teachers to provide quality education in students with special needs. It is to remark that the interest in researching about this topic aroused when we carried out our internship in inclusive schools where there were students with autism.

Moreover, as future teachers, and taking into account that not having previous preparation in inclusive education becomes a problem in teaching practices, this research group is aware of the importance of including inclusive education subjects in the EFL teachers training curricula. As McGee & Morrier (2005; Simpson & Myles, 1998. cited by Morrier et al., 2011) claims, "Each student with ASD possesses a unique set of educational needs, making teacher training for this population of students fundamentally challenging and complex" (p. 120). This idea supports one of the benefits of our project as it was observed

and identified in some English classes how the lack of prior knowledge of the EFL teacher plays a vital role in the inclusive education in Colombia. In the same line, the study made by Alfaro et al. (2015), proposes that “preparation for teachers of students with special needs is a crucial step in the success of the teacher and education in general” (p. 2). This holds up the initiative to improve the quality of education for children with special needs that is proposed in our project, since to be successful it is necessary that future teachers have adequate preparation to treat these children.

In this way, with our research we will find many benefits not only for autistic students, but also for teachers since they will have an inclusive education training and they will have better preparation at the moment of facing a challenge like this. According to Brown et al. (2008) “Results indicated that embedded instruction significantly increased teacher candidate's knowledge of inclusion terminology and assessment adaptations, and improved confidence levels in meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities” (para. 1). Thus, it is demonstrated that special education instruction for future teachers is of great importance in the educational field and, in the same way, it trains more complete and versatile teachers.

In conclusion, it is important to recognize that having knowledge about inclusive education plays a key role in the development of teachers' teaching skills, which takes a crucial part at the moment of facing different situations during their teaching practices. Thus, inside these situations we can certainly include autistic students, who require a special education process to have a proper learning. Also, the fact of not having many articles related to our subject is central to continuing researching and working on this field. For this reason, this research is relevant to the community and our field since we will suggest a possible solution to a social and educational issue.

Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

In the following pages, we will explain the different theoretical constructs our research project is based on. We will first describe one of the concepts of study, that is inclusive education in Colombia and its importance to our main focus, also, intuition in EFL teaching and another main considerable point which is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) students. Lastly, we will continue talking about EFL teaching strategies in students with autism.

Inclusive Education in Colombia

Inclusive education is usually a challenge due to its complexity, but at the same time, it contributes to the development of institutions and improves educational quality; as Gutmann (2021) mentions "Inclusive education is a right that boys and girls have, but it is also a challenge for the educational establishment because it leads to an educational change towards quality" (p. 10). In our research project, it was taken into account the model of inclusive education which is full-inclusion, according to Dinsdale (2022) "The full-inclusion teaching model believes that all students belong in a mainstream classroom, meaning learners with disabilities (visible or hidden) learn alongside their peers" (para. 14). With this full-inclusion model, the idea is to clarify that there should not be any frontier between peers during the learning process. The foregoing mentions an important point that is about educational quality, because it is considered that reaching this is a challenge, and it involves changes to which our educational system is not prepared yet, such as the preparation of teachers to treat students with special needs.

Considering the above, to talk about inclusive education, we should talk about quality education. That is, one of them leads to the other, in this case, inclusive education leads to

having a quality education because it provides spaces and physical contexts that are necessary for people with special needs, but it also implies having behaviors suitable for being able to treat these students. As Ochoa (2016) claims "Thus, being inclusive is not only a matter of providing a physical context for people with impairments but also entails rethinking various preconceptions, behaviors and attitudes to ensure that these learners can truly develop within conventional environments" (p. 77). It means that apart from providing spaces for interpersonal development, support is necessary through attitudes that strengthen the personal development of each student, which generates an increase in educational quality.

In addition, the challenges faced by English educators in terms of both the implementation of educational strategies, and the provision of appropriate environments for the management of students with disabilities such as autism, have triggered endless problems because there are no spaces for the development of these children with special needs; in fact, "Lack of special environments and appropriate conditions for inclusive education has constituted one of the major challenges that English teachers have had to deal with in the last decades" (Ochoa, 2016, p. 80). In this sense, to have a true inclusive education, certain conditions are needed to treat these students with special needs. However, these conditions and the future teachers' preparation in universities have not been included in our educational system yet, which causes the educational quality to decrease, even when el Decreto 366 del Ministerio Nacional de Educación (Decree 366 of the National Ministry of Education) establishes that:

Educational establishments that report enrollment of students with cognitive, motor disability, Asperger syndrome or with autism must organize, make flexible and adapt the curriculum, the study plan and the evaluation processes according to the

conditions and strategies established in the pedagogical guidelines produced by the National Ministry of Education (Article 4).

In the same way, to achieve an inclusive education it is necessary to prepare the teachers who are in the classrooms, because they do not have the necessary knowledge to treat these disabled students. As Gutmann (2021) mentions "Many teachers do not know how to work with students with disabilities and lack an understanding of specific disabilities" (p. 12). Teachers do not have knowledge about teaching students with special needs and even worse, there are no educational subjects in universities that help address this lack of knowledge, which leads the country to not have a good educational quality.

Finally, in order to have an inclusive education, it is not only necessary to prepare teachers to deal with those who require special guidance, but it is also necessary to be prepared for the challenges that may emerge so that we can achieve a true education with quality and records for all. Also, the change begins with us as future teachers because if we really want the current state of the country to change, it is essential to realize the lack of these subjects to treat students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the classroom and that is what really matters in order to have an inclusive education in Colombia, focusing in EFL classes.

Intuition in EFL Teaching

Intuition is a tactic that is useful in different aspects, since with it we are able to visualize an image of people without being close to them. In the aspect of inclusive education for autistic children, it is essential to be able to measure the development of our autistic children observing their actions, as stated by Sipman et al., (2019) "intuition seems indispensable for teacher... Conceptualisations of intuition vary greatly... This variety offers a view of intuition in its broadest sense: as direct knowledge without conscious information

processing” (p. 3). The previous words confirm that the lack of knowledge on the part of teachers in the management of strategies that help the development of autistic children is not a limit to achieve significant learning.

Another important concept to be able to understand the importance of intuition in the development of inclusive classes is pedagogical tact. As mentioned by Sipman et al., (2019) "pedagogically tactful teachers share what they know, and create conditions in which young people can take their process of becoming into their own hands" (p. 2). The idea of the pedagogically tactful is to make it easier for teachers to understand the learning process and look for strategies that can be significant in the classroom. The best way for teachers to have these strategies is to develop in an environment where they can meet each of their students individually, bearing in mind what they have theoretically learned and raised previously with their intuition and how they believe they can create an enjoyable class for students in general.

On the other hand, the inclusion of autistic children in the classroom is increasingly seen, causing many of the teachers to present difficulties in the development of their classes due to lack of training in the matter: "lack of knowledge and understanding can undermine the motivation and self-efficacy of teachers and future teachers, making them less likely to accept responsibility for this group of students" (Busby et al., 2012, cited by Ravet, 2018, p. 176). For this reason, in many states like Indiana and North Carolina, workshops to train teachers have been implemented, as Bellini et al. (2011) say "To fill gaps in training, a number of states have funded centers to provide professional development and other technical assistance to school providers (e.g., Indiana, North Carolina, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Virginia)” (p. 38). Achieving more management fields for teachers in the area of development, both cognitive and social of autistic people.

In this vein, it is important to highlight that these trainings are not entirely the solution to obtain an optimal class, since these classes are theoretically based and many times

experiential moments are the best way to learn, even more when it comes to teaching autistic children. In this vein, it is important to highlight that these trainings are not entirely the solution to obtain an optimal class, since these classes are theoretically based and many times experiential moments are the best way to learn, even more when it comes to teaching autistic children. As Luckner & Nadler (1997 cited by Gerald, 2009) says that "In experiential teaching and learning students are involved directly in an activity, discuss the activity and build awareness and insight, and, it is hoped, incorporate their new understanding into their daily lives" (p. 16); In this case, intuitive education using experiences with each student is a good way to achieve a significant learning process, uniting the bases that have been fostered in the workshops and the intuitive reading that each teacher has achieved from the children. In this case, intuitive education using experiences with each student is a good way to achieve a significant learning process, uniting the bases that have been fostered in the workshops and the intuitive reading that each teacher has achieved from the children.

To conclude, the theory reviewed to develop the theme tells us, first, the lack of teacher training in handling autistic children, who, although they are pedagogically trained, do not have sufficient knowledge to develop a class with autistic children. Second, that the theoretical basis, although necessary, must include useful strategies for the skills development of autistic students, since they require a special education more focused on their shortcomings. Finally, intuition in the classroom helps teachers implement useful strategies to contribute to the understanding of all the aspects associated with this special need, since there is no special preparation to meet these needs, even when they are professional teachers.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is defined by Mohammad et al., (2019) as "a disorder of social development that affects the development of the brain, and hence the

behavior of a person” (p. 48). Brain areas are altered by autism in children and the most common ASD symptoms might affect verbal and non-verbal communication, they can provoke difficulties in interpreting emotional situations, interaction between peers and different tones of voice from the people around them. According to Bamicha and Drigas (2022) “Autism Spectrum Disorder is a complex, heterogeneous disorder that affects perception, information processing, social interaction, verbal, and nonverbal communication, and social, and cognitive behavior” (pag. 42). On the same line, and focused on children with autism, they might present “a significant delay in language acquisition, use of words inappropriately and without communicative coherence” (Mohammad et al., 2019, p. 49); which could probably end in a difficulty when learning a second language in a non- inclusive environment.

We have to remark that there are several autism names but each one refers to different levels, with different symptoms and different ways to work depending on the ASD person and their reaction to the outer world. As Shiva et al., (2021) affirm “ASD is currently defined as Autistic Disorder, Asperger’s Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), Rett’s Disorder and Childhood Disintegrative Disorder” (pag. 2). Taking into account these types of ASD, and according to Palko et al., (2020) “Every individual with ASD is unique in their abilities and challenges” (para. 2). That said, the type of autism that individuals have, including children, are unique and will only be determined by the behavior; so, the teaching strategies and educational approaches will not be the same for every kid with ASD. Thus, talking about ASD, according to Padmadewi and Artini (2017) “The student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is less likely than his normal peers to initiate conversations, respond appropriately to the conversational turns and be able to understand the intention and the illocutionary force of utterances” (p. 161). Therefore, serving

a child with ASD is determined by the child's individual needs', so the type of autism that individuals have, will only be determined by their behavior.

It is important for our research project to understand that every child with ASD has unique strengths and learning processes that are necessary to be taken care of by teachers. In the same line, teachers need to be aware of these learning processes of all the students in the classroom, in order to plan and apply the activities using strategies that everyone in the class can understand and acquire. That said, EFL teachers need to realize what the language skills of the autistic and non-autistic children are to adapt the strategies into a good development of them; considering that these cognitive limitations that autistic students have, might interfere with their oral and written communication skills.

EFL Teaching Strategies in Students with Autism

Considering the idea that teachers have no knowledge about autistic students, there are little-known strategies that are used to teach them. Some strategies that teachers implement include group activities, the use of art and the simplification of some explanations. However, as there are not many known strategies, this aspect makes the teaching process difficult for teachers in the classroom. According to Ekblom (2021) "the topic of ASD in a school context is quite complex, making it a jungle for teachers trying to navigate amongst all students in the classroom" (p. 3). This could be a daily situation in a teacher's life and that is why we, as educators, must be able to recognize the difficulties of ASD and likewise, be aware of the teaching strategies that could help facilitate language learning for the affected ASD-students.

Likewise, Golshan et al., (2019) explain that the importance of "the presence of open-minded educators is to embrace pedagogical adaptability based on the needs of each individual so that it results in successful language learning" (p. 63). Thus, a teacher's willingness to go deeper on the factors required in a language classroom for students with

ASD is essential so that ASD students have the opportunity to receive quality education that really takes their process into consideration in order to generate meaningful learning for them.

In the same way, Richards & Farrell (2005; Burns, 2010 cited by Rezvani, 2017), affirm that “teacher’s professional development was developed based on the assumption that teachers can improve themselves when they are engaged in a learning process to identify their strengths and weaknesses in their teaching practices” (p. 1), which means that while we are looking forward to helping our students, we are also improving ourselves from a professional perspective. On the other hand, in addition to our intention to improve every day in our role as teachers, we also want to make an impact on other EFL teachers.

As stated in Rezvani (2017), “most teachers working with autistic students do not have adequate knowledge and skills required to teach to this group of students” (p. iii), which is a very unfortunate fact since educational sector should worry about all type of students and think of ASD learners as equally important as regular ones. Then, EFL teachers must put themselves in the place of their autistic students and look for the necessary strategies to contribute to their correct development of skills from the second language. In addition, it is essential to mention and highlight the role of universities and the importance of adequate training in terms of inclusive education, which future language teachers should receive.

In relation to the above, Golshan et al., (2019) state that “Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a lifelong neuro-biological disease that has drastically increased with an incompatible rise during the past three decades” (p. 62). As educators of all types of students, including ASD students, this is a concern that should make us reflect on how efficient our strategies are when it comes to teaching autistic students and, if they are not, how we can educate ourselves in order to become better language teachers.

To summarize, recognizing the difficulties of autistic students and identifying the best strategies between teamwork, use of art or simplification of explanation can help in the development of autistic learning process and also helps teachers to cope with daily classroom situations. In addition, responsive pedagogical adaptability to the needs of each ASD student by teachers, is critical to meaningful learning. Besides, it is important to keep in mind that we can improve as teachers during the practice itself, which is where we will better recognize our weaknesses and strengths. However, it is also essential to reflect on the value of the training offered by universities in undergraduate programs and its impact on educational practice.

Literature Review

As future teachers, we prepare ourselves to face the different challenges that may arise, both in the social and educational sphere, because for us it is necessary to know how to face these challenges in order to do it in the appropriate way. Considering our previous knowledge about children with disabilities, especially those with autism, we want to reduce gaps that may be found in the implementation of strategies to treat these students. For that reason, in this literature review, we will show you different projects focused on: inclusive education, EFL teaching, different teaching strategies and the learning process of autistic children.

Inclusive Education

It is currently known that being inclusive is a fundamental part of education, which is why the articles used in this research agree that having inclusive education, especially for people with disabilities, provides great benefits to the educational community. Al-Shammari et al., (2019) claim that “Individuals generally advocate for inclusive efforts because of the benefits, not only those being included but for those in the school community as a whole, on the basis that it should promote tolerance, understanding, and respect for diversity” (p. 408),

but it is also known that not everyone agrees that it is beneficial, as Scruggs & Mastropieri (1996, Cited in Kurth et al., 2018) mention “When teachers consider inclusive education, they tend to contemplate practical difficulties rather than the benefits to students” (p. 473). This means that teachers do not always think about the benefits and advantages of implementing inclusive education, since good results are not always obtained when trying to do so, since it is difficult to integrate students with autism.

On the other hand, one can speak of the transformation that education has had in terms of the concept of inclusion, becoming the central point of the processes in education, as Castillo et al., (2021) consider "this notion of inclusion has transformed education in recent decades, and for Colombia, it becomes one of the transversal axes of educational processes" (p. 6), but other authors have considered a different perspective since "Although there are all the ingredients for inclusive education to become a reality in schools, there is an excess of theory and a deficit in the effective development of this new paradigm" (García et al., 2020, p. 4). Which means that although they are trying to carry out the process of implementing inclusive education, the cross-cutting processes have not yet been achieved at all; “Key factors in inclusive education implementation include school and classroom level implementation such as school reviews and plans; training and supporting all teachers in inclusive practices, not just ‘specialized’ ones; and supporting school leadership to enact an inclusive vision for their schools” (Schuelka, 2018. p 2).

In addition, it is of paramount importance to our research that teachers are able to treat children with disabilities, especially autism. For this reason, some authors define that not all teachers have the necessary skills to face this, as Gómez et al., (2021) argue "teachers need to be equipped with appropriate knowledge about special education and inclusive environments, so that they are more competent in teaching students with ASD" (p. 2), but it has also been found that teachers or future teachers do not have this necessary knowledge to treat children

with autism, as was mentioned in an investigation about the knowledge and awareness of autism which was implemented through online survey package with 551 pre-service teachers enroll in 10 different teacher education programs in two universities in Turkey. As a result of this research, they found that pre-service teachers across teacher education programs had inadequate knowledge of autism (Rakap et al., 2018), which means that these authors agreed that teachers are not prepared to face a classroom with autistic children.

Finally, it is very important for our research project to take into account inclusive education as the central focus of our project, since it involves the most main part of our purpose, which is to investigate strategies and methodologies that are useful for autistic children and that are taught by teachers so that they can deal appropriately in a classroom with those who suffer from this disability.

EFL Teaching

According to Padmadewi and Artini (2017) “Equality and equity in education needs to be strengthened and supported to confirm the need of giving care and attention to all including the students with special needs” (p. 159). In this field, language teachers and their attitudes towards inclusive education play an important role inside the educational process of students with different learning needs and specifically ASD students. For this reason, we consider that it is worth it to look forward to the diverse strategies used by language teachers inside inclusive classrooms with ASD students.

In addition, “The students with ASD are special and the uniqueness requires explicit need for teachers to identify individualized approaches to help them achieve their academic goal” (Mayton, et al., 2010; Accardo, 2015 cited by Padmadewi and Artini, 2017, p. 161), consequently, language teachers and teachers in general, should be prepared enough to face inclusive classrooms and likewise there should be valuable resources to guide them through their teaching path. Choate (1993; Nordlund, 2003 cited by Padmadewi and Artini, 2017)

proposes that “An individualized strategy for ASD students can be in the form of differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction is the instruction provided to students based on the different needs of the students in the same classroom” (p. 161), which we consider of great help to our research due to the fact that this type of strategies could be related to teachers’ intuition directed to ASD students in the way that teachers must analyze students’ needs in order to decide what best works for each student.

Boarding the language education context, more specifically with Spanish as a foreign language, according to a study about autistic people with high functioning in Colombia Acosta and Reyes (2020) mention “There is a population of students, those with ASD, that possibly have not been taken into account when designing the EFL course curriculum, or when creating the materials for the teaching-learning of this language” (p. 14) and they also affirm that: according to the interviews carried out with two EFL teachers who have had students with ASD, when asked if they had previously received any type of instruction or preparation about ASD or other types of neurodiverse students, they assured that they had never studied about it. (p. 15). These investigations affirm what is established in this research which is that many teachers do not know how to treat students with autism, so they do not have the necessary bases for the development of classes focused on autistic students.

On the other hand, teachers’ perceptions and attitudes towards inclusive education is an important condition inside this work. As Mónico et al., (2020 cited by Aksu and Taşçı, 2020) mention “teachers are more likely to maintain positive attitudes when they have the appropriate knowledge and skills to use inclusive pedagogies” (p. 362), which is seen in our context the more prepared teachers are in terms of inclusive education strategies, the more confident and positive they will be inside the classroom. Likewise, more specifically with EFL teachers, referring to a study conducted in Serbia, Savić and Prošić-Santovac, (2017, cited by Aksu and Taşçı, 2020) affirm that “the participants generally held negative attitudes

towards inclusive language education. Moreover, teacher competences and conditions, not to the severity of children's disabilities, were found to be key factors influencing teachers' attitudes towards inclusive language education" (p. 363), which led us to concern about the lack of spread of strategies in language classes that seriously affect inclusive classes quality.

For that reason, realizing that there is no evidence of intuition as a means of instruction as a consequence of the lack of such strategies, we firmly believe that it is valid to make a deeper study about how language teachers do deal with autistic students in the classroom, also, the characteristics of the strategies that teachers intuitively implement to teach to those students with autism.

Different Teaching Strategies

Different studies have been focused on the strategies that a teacher should use to teach English to autistic children, here we will show some projects related to this topic and the diverse points of view of various authors. Taking into account that many of the teachers do not have a specialized preparation to teach children with autism. For this reason, we will see the variety of methods that distinct teachers have used in their classrooms, with the purpose of learning more about the subject.

Ekblom (2021) mentions that "Some forms of ASD make it impossible to learn a language as the diagnosed person may be completely non-communicative. But striving to improve learning conditions for those who are able should be in the best interests of all educators" (p. 5). Referring to the fact that as teachers we must take into account the different types of autism, since it is not possible to generalize them all at the same level. Taking into account what was mentioned above by Ekblom; Gledhill and Currie (2020) talk about three strategies that could be more effective in the classroom and taking into account the different levels of autism. These strategies were put into practice in different places in the United States and Spain. The first method mentioned was generating routines. Gledhill and Currie

(2020) state that "classroom routines build structure, improve student understanding of what is expected, and help reduce the possibility of conflict" (p. 8). In another investigation carried out by Golshan et al., (2019) mention that "it is important to generate routines from home since this helps the development of autistic children in different social aspects" (p. 10).

The second strategy refers to the use of body language. "Students with ASD require explicit and repetitive instruction on how people use their bodies to express themselves" (Gledhill and Currie, 2020, p. 10). This is with the purpose of teaching children how to differentiate emotions and gestures, so that through these they learn to communicate, since, as mentioned above, some autistic people are not capable of communicating verbally. In the same line, regarding the teaching of English through body language and expressions, Mendoza (2020) mentions that "The elementary purpose is to use activities in which students use body language as educational strategies to teach linguistic elements" (p. 29). The main idea of this teaching method is that autistic people are able to understand and communicate through their gestures and their body in different situations related to the themes of the classes.

The third strategy proposed by Gledhill and Currie (2020) talks about the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) tools in the classroom. They explain to us that ICT can support the different social interactions of students with ASD, they also mention that "As they use the program, their communication skills develop and they know the expectation of how to use those keywords and how to use images to get what they want or need" (Gledhill and Currie, 2020, p. 10). In academic terms related to the teaching of English, Herrera (2017) states that " ICT can open the door to an immense world of possibilities to improve the quality of life and attention of students with ASD, thus achieving equal possibilities" (p. 30). The idea of implementing the help of virtual tools in the classroom can

positively help the development of autistic children, since this will help them learn different vocabulary through images, videos, songs and even games.

Hence, it can be seen how the different strategies used by other teachers have given very good results in autistic children, and have also helped with the great development of teachers, although they are not fully trained to dictate to autistic children, they have managed to find different ways by their own means to achieve a positive development of their classes and the learning of a second language to autistic children. That said, it should be noted that for us it is essential to know these strategies for the development of our investigative work.

As a way to conclude this stage of our research, it is important to remark on some key points that we found after our literature review was made. The first of these aspects that we discovered, is the fact that there exist several thoughts and opinions about the inclusion of ASD children in the educational environment, positive and negative, in favor or against it; but all of them with valid arguments that gave us a different perspective about it, and despite this, it reinforced our decision of looking for the strategies that teachers apply to make of their classes an inclusive and effective atmosphere, as we strongly believe education must be for everyone.

To give a closure and a final direction to our research, based on the articles and works that we had the chance to read, we discovered that most of them have some points in common, such as the development of the inclusion during the classes, the way and differences that some children with ASD have to acquire the knowledge, the strategies that some teachers implement during their lessons, among others. However, an aspect that we consider very important is that in hardly any work, if not any, we were able to find the role of teachers' intuition in the classes; how teachers make use of their intuition at the moment of facing these challenges that inclusive education carries on, is something that we did not evidence and that we believe might be a huge gap in this educational focus.

Chapter III

Research Design

In the process of identifying the intuitive teaching strategies implemented by EFL teachers in the classes with students with ASD, it was planned a complete research design that embraces the type of study, context and population, data collection methods, and finally, the ethical considerations. Having this whole design in mind, allows us to understand the implementation and development of the project.

Type of Study: Qualitative Data Study

The type of study selected for our research is a Qualitative Data Study as “Qualitative studies can be directed by a conceptual framework, suggesting, in part, a deductive thrust, or driven more by the data itself, suggesting an inductive process” (Mihás, 2019, para. 1). The reason why we selected this type of study is because it will help us to interpret the results of the investigation in an interpretative way. We consider this qualitative research since this "involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research" (Bhandari, 2020, para. 1). Keeping this in mind, our work will have a methodology focused on collecting data on the experiences of the participants.

Design: Multiple-Case Study

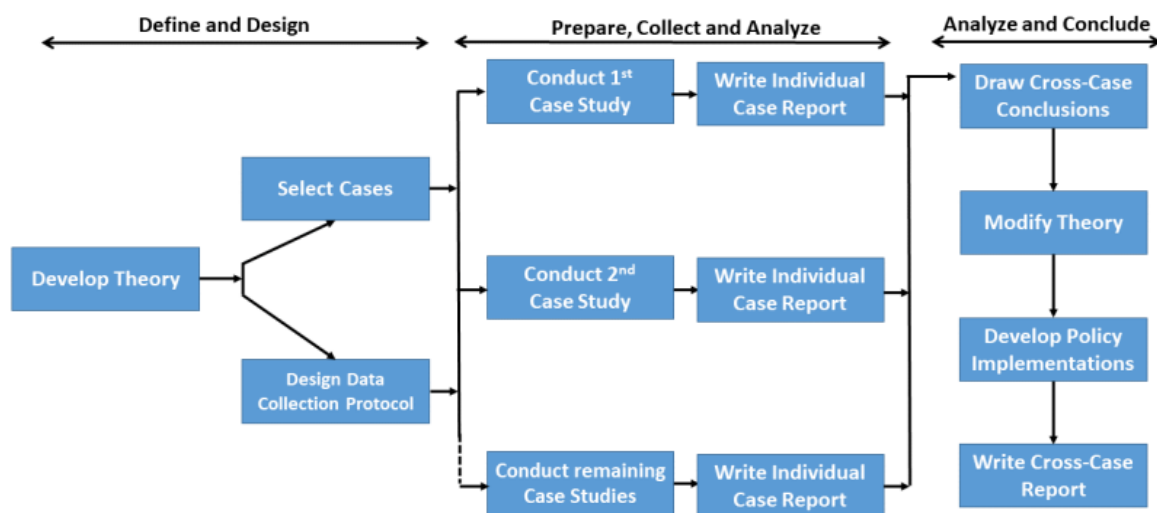
That is why, we decided to use Case Study which is considered as “a useful research model to collect information in contexts of real life” (Stott and Ramil, 2014, p. 3), since it is focused on collecting data based on experience, we will be able to interpret different perspectives on the same topic, thus coming to contrast different points of view to solve our

research question. Due to this, the type of case study we selected is Multiple case study, in this sense, “A multiple-case study allows a researcher to investigate a social phenomenon, comparing and contrasting differences between cases in the same social context while contemplating each participant as a separate entity” (Yin, 2017 cited by Halkias and Neubert, 2020, p. 14).

We believe that this design fits our project, since the idea is to use three different methods to collect information, and with this design it is possible to follow a process and make a triangulation to obtain results that help us develop our research, as shown in figure 1.

Image 1

Multiple-Case Study Method



Note: The image shows the steps that must be followed for the development of a multiple case study. (Yen, 2013 cited by Asfour et al., 2019, p. 34).

Multiple case study allows us to choose different cases and work on them individually, taking into account that all of these must be focused on the development of the same objective, which in our case is to find the strategies used in the classrooms for autistic children without prior teaching guidance. The purpose of using this research design is to get to know and compare which strategies have been effective and which ones have not.

Additionally, we want to be more aware of the intuition of each teacher when adapting the different strategies and the possible positive results inside the classroom.

Thus, this design will help us to develop our research project, in the sense that through it we will have the opportunity to inspect different teachers who must work intuitively with autistic children since most of them have not acquired professional training for handling these children in class. We will also learn about the strategies used by each of them, whether it is an adaptation of existing strategies or even the fact that they have created their own strategies.

Context and Population

Our research was developed with six 5th and 7th grade English teachers, where there was one autistic student in each of them; this population belongs to a private inclusive school located in Chía, Cundinamarca. Likewise, each of these teachers are focused on different subjects, like: English, Math, Technology, Biology, among others. Many of them argue that they did not have adequate knowledge to deal with children with special educational needs and their way of dealing with this was through strategies that they were learning from their colleagues, intuitive strategies from what they had learned, and senior teachers' help since they had had previous experience with these children. These teachers who shared their techniques had no college learning about autism or relationship to the types of strategies used to teach autistic children; for that reason, they only used strategies that had worked with these children in order to continue the learning process with each student they could find. It could be noticed that these strategies were only used in children with autism to see their development in learning and thus get them to learn a second language.

This population was chosen because a member of our group did her practicum there at this private school where she was able to learn about it and experience this situation up close;

in fact, the idea of this research arose thanks to the lack of strategies that our group member encountered, so we decided to investigate in order to find solid foundations and be able to teach children with autism. That is the reason why she became aware of the situation, and she wanted to investigate further how these children were treated since she has not received any indication from the university to be able to handle these children with special needs. In addition, as a research group, we have been looking for a way in which teachers face this situation and get ahead using their own strategies and not only ignore the fact that they are working with children who require special learning, attention and much more dedication to be able to generate in them a desire to learn, because it has been difficult for them to concentrate and maintain their attention on what was being explained. Having said this, as future teachers it is very important to investigate these strategies and how to use them when dealing with these children.

Data Collection Methods

Before the description of the data collection methods chosen for this research is presented; it is necessary to understand what a data collection method is. According to Kabir (2016), “Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes” (p. 202). For that reason, and bearing in mind this qualitative research, the data collection methods selected are: interviews, questionnaires and the observation method; which will be described and sustained on the reason for their choice.

Interviews

For this research, the first data collection method selected are interviews, whose main characteristic is their allowance to stray from the structured guide of questions when

appropriate for both the interviewer and interviewee. In this sense, the type used for this research are semi-structured interviews. This, with the objective of better organizing and collecting the responses given by EFL teachers without prior professional knowledge in special needs for autistic children; in regards to the intuitive strategies that they use during their classes to make the environment an inclusive one for all the students. One of the main reasons for the selection of this type of data collection, is that we proposed these interviews to the chosen population and this gave plenty of answers. In fact, interviews have different advantages, as for instance:

interviews are interactive, interviewers can press for complete, clear answers and can probe into any emerging topics. Hence, interviewing is expected to broaden the scope of understanding investigated phenomena, as it is a more naturalistic and less structured data collection tool” (Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 40),

which will result in a variety of different helpful answers to our investigation project.

As it was said, one of the advantages of the interviews as a data collection method is the variety of responses that the interviewees will provide. Thanks to this variety, we were able to make some comparisons among each answer, taking into account some interesting aspects about the respondents; such as the experience they may have working on inclusive education, the educational experience they have as teachers, the contexts they have been working on, among others. Taking into account this diversity of answers we obtained, this data collection method was a key inside our qualitative research project and it helped us with the development of it.

Following the proposed data collection method, we have created eight specific questions that were key for the development of this research. These questions were thought taking into account the research methodology chosen; and they are:

Table 1

Interview Questions

Questions

1. What do you think about inclusive education for students with autism nowadays?
2. Why is it important to teach English as a foreign language to autistic children?
3. What strategies do you implement to teach to autistic spectrum disorder students?
4. How do you prepare your classes at the moment of teaching English as a foreign language to an autistic child?
5. What do you think about inclusive education training for teachers?
6. Implementing inclusive education in Colombia is a realistic goal for the academic institutions?

Note: In this table it is possible to identify the questions that will be used in the interviews with teachers of English as a foreign language. Created by researchers of this project.

Based on the proposed questions, our main goal is to identify how prepared EFL teacher are to face the true challenge that is teaching to ASD students in inclusive environments, and to acquire this information, we consider relevant to know the experience of the professors in the EFL area, as well as their own perspective of their preparation to teach students with special needs.

Field Notes

Field notes is the second data collection method chosen. This type of data collection allows us to create and conduct a field study to remember the behaviors, events, activities, expression, characteristics and attitudes of an individual in an observational setting. The type of field notes used in this project is descriptive notes in which observed events are described. The main reason for its selection is the adaptation they have to qualitative studies, as “Field notes situate qualitative studies within a larger societal and temporal context. [...] When field notes are disclosed with other study information, they allow for transmission of the full depth of the study context” (Phillippi and Lauderdale, 2017, p. 381-382). Based on that, as in this research there is more than one data collection method, the usage of field notes helped the deep development and analysis of the results by the end of this investigation.

Observation

The third data collection method selected is the observation. According to Kumar (2022) “Observation method is described as a method to observe and describe the behavior of a subject and it involves the basic technique of simply watching the phenomena until some hunch or insight is gained” (p. 2). Based on this short definition, this type of collection method properly fits with this research as one of the purposes is to identify the strategies that EFL teachers implement when they teach students with ASD in an inclusive classroom. Because of that, this method is one of the most qualified for the research.

Taking into account the method selected, it is important to remark that the observation can be participant and non-participant. In this case, the type of observation selected is non-participant, where “the observer takes a vintage position, from where he can observe in detail the behavior of the subjects, with least disturbance to group” (Kumar, 2022, p. 7), and in

which a record of the classes observed will be carried out taking into account the behaviors seen.

In order to systematize and follow an order at the moment of observation, the next form which contains the aspects to observe was applied.

Table 2

Observation Aspects

Aspects
1. Inclusive space. There are students with autistic spectrum disorder and students without this condition inside the classroom.
2. Engagement. ASD students seem to be attentive and engaged to the teacher's explanation of the subject.
3. Inclusion. Teacher tries to include every student at the moment of making any activity.
4. Acknowledgement. Teacher shows interest in looking for the ASD students' benefit, by making sure they are following her/him.

Note: This table shows the aspects that the researchers will take into account for the different observations in the classes. Created by researchers of this project.

Data Analysis

Triangulation refers to the use of three different instruments that serve to collect data in a research project; being the interview, observations and field notes, the instruments to be used in this research project. It has been decided to choose the triangulation method as a system of validation for the different instruments. This triangulation was carried out through the collection of data and the results obtained in the interviews, observations and field notes, this helped to detect a pattern of repetition in the information analyzed and thus find similarities between the determined group of data collection. Considering that, triangulation is a type of analysis used in qualitative research, that is why this method will be of great help for the research project, according to Roulston (2018) "It is important for researchers using qualitative designs and methods in their research to consider the limitations and benefits of their choice of methods" (para. 8). Which means this helped make profit in the research process; this is why triangulation becomes the type of validation instrument for the research project, helping to find a pattern between interviews, questionnaires and observations.

In addition, triangulation contributes to the construction of the truthfulness of our instruments, since when collecting the data, it was possible to verify that they all have a single pattern in common, which results in an answer to the problem raised at the beginning of this project. And thus, we could avoid erroneous conclusions, since considering several points of view gives a broader clarity to the research problem, according to Ballamingie and Szanto (2022) "By considering multiple vantage points, there is less likelihood of error, meaning that findings are more valid and reliable than if we had used only one or two points" (pag. 509). What brings us closer to having a truth in what has been collected.

Once the triangulation has been made, some different codes appear throughout the process of analysis. These codes were extracted from the patterns discovered during the triangulation, and they are shown in the table below along with the definition of them.

Table 3

Triangulation

Common codes	Citations
Art	“The elements provided by art interventions appear to facilitate social learning in children with ASD” (Bernier et. al, 2022, para. 35).
Simplify explanations	Pandina et al. (2021) mentions that “the simplification of the instructions, removal of some items, simplification of the phrasing of some items.... This instrument can be considered content valid across a wide range of verbal ability for children and adults with ASD” (p. 12).
New Vocabulary	Massaro, D & Bosseler, A. (2006) “This learning and retention of new vocabulary, grammar, and language use is a significant accomplishment for autistic children”
Teamwork	“Many children with more severe special educational needs and disabilities are more comfortable with peers who have similar interests, difficulties, abilities and disabilities to themselves, so this must be taken into account when considering educational placements” (Hornby, 2015, p. 8).

Note: This table shows the codes obtained after carrying out the triangulation using the three data collection methods: observations, field notes and interviews. Created by researchers of this project.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are a fundamental and important part when carrying out research work. As Arifin (2018) states "The protection of human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles is important in any research study" (p. 30), ethical principles and considerations help protect the rights of each subject when conducting research. For this reason, this study takes into account all the principles and considerations that are necessary to guarantee compliance with the rights of each subject who has been interviewed and observed.

For this reason, the purpose of this ethical consideration has been to protect the intellectual property rights of each participant, to be responsible with each of the respondents, each information collected will be for educational purposes, the researchers will be respectful and will not pressure or modify the words of the participants in the interviews, each person will have the right to what they want to say and it will not be modified. All this, together with all the rights that involve people have been taken into account for the realization of this investigation.

Similarly, each participant has had an informed consent to ask the questions, which means that each one has been investigated voluntarily, and the confidentiality and privacy of each participant has been respected and ensured, all this information could be found in the Appendix A. In addition, all the data used in this research work is only for educational purposes, for the collection of data on the strategies that are used by each participant to develop a class in English with autistic children.

Chapter IV

Findings and Discussion

The main objective of this research study is to describe the effect of teaching strategies that EFL teachers intuitively implement with autistic students. For that reason, this research was created based on the lack of teacher training for inclusive EFL teaching classrooms with autistic children, taking into account the investigation, the aim was directly focused on the strategies that teachers intuitively used to develop their classes. In the same line, the purpose of this chapter is to analyze the information gathered and classify the effects that were observed during the interventions done. In that way, this chapter gives an answer to the importance of teachers' strategies that help in the educational process for autistic students. Consequently, the four categories that were found were: impact of art as a means of stimulation in the teaching of English, importance of new vocabulary to learn a second language, simplification of explanations and result of group activities as a means of development in EFL classes. These categories are organized based on the previous codes obtained in the triangulation above.

First Category: Impact of art as a means of stimulation in the teaching of English.

Considering one of the approaches of this project, which is to characterize the strategies implemented by EFL teachers in inclusive education environments, it is necessary to identify the similar effects of teaching strategies that EFL teachers intuitively implement with autistic students. For that reason, it was possible to identify how teachers develop their classes around the artistic side of the autistic students. With that, it was evidenced in the recording where the teacher explained that depending on the level of autism, the strategy could vary, because depending on the level, the autistic children will need a special strategy.

After analyzing the interviews, observations, and field notes, it was found the impact of the use of art as a means of stimulation in EFL classes.

Excerpt 1. Biology teacher and researcher. Recording 1

Original Language (Spanish)	Translation (English)
<p>(2:04) Entrevistador: ¿Cuáles son las estrategias que tú implementas para enseñar a los estudiantes con Trastorno del Espectro Autista?</p> <p>(2:17) Profesor: “Dependiendo del tipo de grado de autismo que tenga el estudiante intento manejar una estrategia diferente, a veces colorear... a veces pintar, a veces plastilina, varía dependiendo el tema”</p>	<p>(2:04) Interviewer: What strategies do you implement to teach to Autistic Spectrum Disorder students?</p> <p>(2:17) Teacher: “Depending on the type of degree of autism that the student has, I try to use a different strategy, sometimes coloring, sometimes painting... sometimes play doh, it varies depending on the topic”</p>

The former information indicates that teachers have to think of the autistic student level based on what they have observed of each student, whether autistic or without any cognitive disability to implement a specific strategy that works in an inclusive environment. In addition to this, the materials might vary depending on the topic because some of them are complicated for children, so it facilitates the teaching process.

In the same way, the obtained data is a clear sign that what was observed in the classes matches with the teachers' strategies implemented during the classes. For instance, in the class observation done, it was observed that the Math teacher used some colors and materials to catch the students' attention; autistic children used these instruments to complete an activity

which was explained at the beginning of the class, but finished at the end of it. This can be evidenced in the class observation below:

Excerpt 2. Math teacher and researchers. Observation 5.

Class observation:

- (1) At the end of the class the teacher did an activity where the students could create a
- (2) **drawing and decorating** it with different materials.

Bearing in mind the previous observation, in line 2 it is mentioned the use of drawing and decorating as a way to stimulate the interest of the students at the moment of learning a foreign language. As it was said, the teacher implemented these colorful materials to motivate and inspire the autistic students to learn and make the learning process more significant for them; not only for the ASD children, but for the entire class as it is an inclusive educational space.

In fact, it is possible to associate this specific observation with another situation presented in the classroom with autistic children on it, which is the case where the student uses different colors for special occasions depending on the subject and what she is about to write, as it is shown in the field note excerpt beneath, which demonstrates that the autistic students prefer to use color in the development of each activity. As a way to illustrate, in the class field notes from *excerpt 3. Biology teacher and researchers. Field notes 1*; the autistic student demonstrated a **preference for painting** more than writing; it appears to be **easier to draw the instructions** of the class than writing them.

As a way to understand the previous field note, it is known that teachers are constantly looking for an easy way to make students understand all the topics; that is why they make use of colors and materials in the classes so the children can have several options to choose the

one that works to their learning process. In this sense, both teachers and autistic students have benefits from these strategies such as the use of colors, images and materials because teachers facilitate the process and students look for alternatives to develop the topics in a proper way.

Concluding, it was analyzed that the use of art and colors stimulate students' interest, making the effects of the strategies that teachers intuitively implement generate an engagement to learn in students. This is due to “through art activities, children with autism may express imagination and abstract thinking” (Nai-Cheng and Plavnick, 2015. p. 54), thanks to those strategies, teachers could create new ideas to teach ASD students and provide a solution to the lack of teachers' preparation for inclusive education.

Second Category: Importance of new vocabulary to learn a second language

According to one of the main points of this research project, which is inclusive education, there were found intuitive strategies used by teachers to teach a second language through new vocabulary. For this reason, it was possible to realize the importance of vocabulary to ensure that students know how to develop their learning process. In that way, this category mentions the importance of acquiring new vocabulary for autistic children to learn a foreign language, and how important these strategies are to help in the educational process. That said, the following instruments such as field notes, interviews and classroom observations demonstrate the importance of including new vocabulary in the development of EFL classes.

Therefore, it was noticed that students felt more comfortable learning a second language if the teacher gave them new vocabulary. In the same line, the learning process was facilitated once they understood each of the new words taught; it made them feel more confident to achieve each proposed goal in learning a language. This can be evidenced in the excerpt of the field notes that mention: *excerpt 1. Math teacher and researchers. Field notes*

5; the teacher **explained each step using different color markers** and **writing** everything with **new vocabulary**.

In order to understand the former field note, it was perceived that the use of new vocabulary is useful for both teachers and students, since it facilitates the teaching-learning process; the students have success in acquiring a second language and it is easier for the teacher to explain the steps in a specific topic. It demonstrated that the strategy that the teachers intuitively implemented had an impact for children with autism since it provided them an easier way to understand each topic, and this made them feel more comfortable and motivated in the class.

Furthermore, this annotation coordinates with the following observation that was evidenced in the classroom with the teacher. Here, the teacher presented a table with new vocabulary about adjectives and each student had to explain those through new words; hence, each student with autism could identify phrases, structures and the foreign language. This situation is manifested in the following class observation:

Excerpt 2. English teacher and researchers. Observation 3.

- (1) The teacher allows all the students to decide on making the project in groups,
- (2) including the autistic child and the other students with special needs.
- (3) **The teacher showed all the class a table on the board with new vocabulary**
- (4) that students could **use to develop their activity**.

To summarize the previous observation, in lines 3 and 4, it was analyzed that the teacher used new vocabulary to develop the activity, so it helps the autistic and non-autistic

students to work on their own skills in a more significant way, by letting them know first words that cannot be common for them. Additionally, the development of the EFL classes is more significant for both teachers and students, as teachers implement vocabulary in the target language so students can actually understand it and make use of it during the activity they are working on.

On the other hand, the affirmation “The acquisition of vocabulary is an important part of the learning process, especially in English language learning” (Hashim et al., 2022, p. 2), in this way, the process of learning vocabulary of the target language helps the students at the moment of communicating with different people who speak this second language. A proof of this, is when the math teacher mentions, there might be difficult topics to teach, not only in the foreign language, but also in the native, so the idea is to simplify them with easy vocabulary from the language that is being learned, in order to make it easier for the students to understand and this is a case that can be inferred from the recording excerpt below:

Excerpt 3. Math teacher and researchers. Recording 4.

Original Language (English)
(2:54) Interviewer: What strategies do you implement to teach to Autistic Spectrum Disorder students?
(3:01) Teacher: I do not really take into account the grammar that they may be using but the vocabulary that may be key for another person to understand them.

In consequence, this interview denotes that it is important to teach new vocabulary to students with autism since it provides them a better understanding of the language and also, it

allows the teachers to know their students' abilities and people could understand them. In addition, the teacher emphasized more in the new vocabulary acquisition than the grammar aspects, since for autistic children it seems to be uncomplicated to learn a foreign language through vocabulary.

To conclude with this category, it was evidenced that teaching new vocabulary of the target language to incorporate the autistic children in an inclusive environment results pertinent for the learning process of the students. This, due to the strategy of teachers of using new vocabulary to make the learning process more significant and easier for each student. According to Hashim et al. (2022) "it is believed that there is a need for a study to investigate and analyze the challenges faced by children with autism in their English vocabulary, as well as their needs to help them to have a smooth sailing English vocabulary learning journey" (p. 2). Bearing that in mind, children with autism obtain benefits from the acquisition of new vocabulary, because it contributes to the process of learning a new language as well as the development of their communicative skills.

Third Category: Simplification of explanations

Taking into account that the main objective of this project is to describe the effect of the teaching strategies that EFL teachers intuitively implement with autistic students; it was necessary to take the code "simplification of explanations" in order to analyze the effect of simplification of instruction in language classes, through the different instruments used such as interviews, field notes and observations and thus get to know what happens when EFL teachers intuitively implement teaching strategies with autistic children.

For this code, it examined the relevance of the use of different strategies for the simplification of instructions and explanations. Thus, in the sessions it was noticed that much

of this simplification had to do with the use of images, these images were fundamental in the learning process since they provided a clear and effective methodology for autistic children. In the same way, it was possible to notice through one of the class observations, as the images were shown in the presentation, they greatly caught the attention of the 7th grade autistic student, who actively participated throughout the class, adding comments on different moments in regards to the images and explanations of the teacher, who in turn was willing to address the concerns and comments of the autistic student. The following class observation illustrates the former assertion:

Excerpt 1. Science teacher and researchers. Observation 1.

- (1) The students are learning about bats and their characteristics through the teacher's
- (2) **explanation supported by a presentation with images.** The students seem to be
- (3) **quite interested in the topic,** especially the autistic student, who is evidently
- (4) fascinated and curious about the class.

Linking the interview above, it is explained in line 2 that all the instructions and explanations are presented through images; making the understanding more dynamic and interesting for the 7th grade autistic student. In addition, in line 3 it was demonstrated that although those images might be more attractive for all the students, at the same time, it seemed that the autistic student was more engaged with the topic.

Furthermore, it was noticed that images serve as an aid for the development of activities; that is, when the teacher simplifies the instructions and shares in advance the way in which they are going to work during the session, autistic students understand the dynamics of work more clearly. A demonstration was taken from the field notes in which it was clarified in the *excerpt 2. Tech teacher and researchers. Field notes 4.* in which the students

were **working on an essay** and **learning to make references**. The 5th grade autistic student **started to work by himself**; nevertheless, the teacher **mentioned again** that the work had to be done in pairs and **she gave other details** of the class flow.

To be sure, the previous annotation mentioned that the teacher made sense of the importance of working in pairs, so she gave the explanation of the activity and the details that each student had to follow on. Adding more ideas, it was noticed that the teacher focused on the 5th grade autistic student, as sometimes, it is difficult for them to understand the instructions, which may be one of the reasons for her to give the necessary explanation to follow the class.

On the other hand, a clear thought about this category is that a teacher in an interview said that she needed to use vocabulary to explain the topic. The teacher clarifies this is a way for the students to understand the subject in which the teacher is trying to explain, and use vocabulary as a technique to simplify the information given. It can be evidenced in the following interview:

Excerpt 3. Math teacher and researchers. Recording 4.

Original Language (English)
(2:54) Interviewer: What strategies do you implement to teach to Autistic Spectrum Disorder students?
(4:37) Teacher: Managing the vocabulary that I use with them is a way for them to understand the vocabulary of Math in another language.

To explain the interview, it was observed the idea of using vocabulary as a way to simplify the information for the students. It demonstrated once again that the use of vocabulary is fundamental to the learning development of the autistic students, because it contributes to the student's knowledge about another language. With this knowledge, they can implement this language into the classroom and make the process more significant for them.

Finally, after reviewing the observations, field notes, and interviews, it was noticed that the use of images is a resource widely used by teachers and it is also linked to the code simplification of information to the extent that resources such as pictograms, simple vocabulary and anticipated instruction are means to achieve the simplification. According to Margulis (2009) “the pattern of alterations found, the memory of autistic people could improve if the amount of information presented is reduced, the information is simplified or the processing time is increased” (p. 45). Thus, having in mind this category, it was possible to appreciate the effect of this teaching strategy used by EFL teachers, who intuitively implement these simplifications with autistic students so they can learn in a meaningful way.

Fourth category: Result of group activities as a means of development in EFL classes.

In accordance with one of the specific objectives of this project, which is to characterize the strategies implemented by English teachers in educational inclusive settings, a strategy that is important for the learning process in students with autism is group activities. This strategy is a main piece of the development in EFL classes for ASD students, since it provides collaborative work between peers. Consequently, this category was proved by the different instruments such as interview, field notes and class observation, which each of them demonstrated the importance of using group activities to develop EFL classes.

According to the data collection application, we could identify that one of the most used strategies to teach English to autistic students are group activities. Taking into account

the triangulation made, where was considered the three data collection methods implemented, it was possible to evidence that in all of them, teamwork during the classes was presented.

Based on that, some of the reasons for teachers to implement group works in the sessions were not only for an academic purpose, but also for a social one; it is evidenced in the session where the teacher mentioned the importance of using group activities as a way for the students to communicate among themselves. This specific assertion is shown in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 1. Technology teacher and researchers. Recording 6.

Original Language (English)

(2:56) **Interviewer:** How do you prepare your classes at the moment of teaching English as a foreign language to an autistic child?

(3:48) **Teacher:** We have to **plan creative activities or works in group**, because sometimes the student with **ASD does not talk to his partners** in class

Added to this interview done with the teacher, it was possible to identify that for teachers, it would be important to consider the autistic children's communicative skills in order to make group activities easier for them. This, because the ASD might create some barriers for the students at the moment of interacting with their peers. Due to those possible barriers, teachers encourage the students to work in groups, so they can develop this social skills class by class, while the activity established by the teacher is being made.

On the other hand, this methodology of completing the tasks in groups was identified during the classes thanks to the observations made. In most of the sessions observed, if not

all, teamwork was the common strategy implemented for teachers to integrate the autistic students with their partners and with the class; it occurred in a technology class, where the students needed to form groups and practice for a presentation. On this occasion, the ASD student receives help from her classmates. This situation appears in the following class observation below:

Excerpt 2. Technology teacher and researchers. Observation 7.

- | |
|--|
| <p>(1) Autistic student worked with her classmates</p> <p>(2) and gave a presentation alongside her classmates</p> |
|--|

Taking into consideration the previous excerpt, in the lines 1 and 2 it is mentioned that all the students in the class worked together to complete an assignment and then present it to their classmates. These specific activities, such as working together to create a presentation, is one of the activities where the students can share ideas, talk to each other and participate actively in the creation of the assignment. In this sense, they will not only work on the presentation, but also will develop their communicative and social skills during an educational environment.

In addition, the following instrument, which is field notes, illustrates the use of group activities to develop the independent work of autistic students. In this occasion, the individual work of the ASD student is recognizable when all the students are working in groups but one, which is the autistic child. As it remarks in the *excerpt 3. Technology teacher and researchers. Field notes 7*. At one point **autistic student practiced with her group and they helped her correct some things**.

To give an explanation of the previous field note, it was realized that working in groups is one strategy implemented by teachers not only for academic purposes for the students, but also to help them with the development of social skills as autistic people and all

what it implies during their learning process. During the classes, the students with autism were integrating themselves in the groups, sometimes with help of the teacher, but mostly on their own. By doing this, they were developing their social abilities meanwhile the class projects were being done.

To conclude with this category, “teachers offering opportunities for group work and interaction are viewed more favorably by their students, signifying the importance of peers for learning and engagement” (Dillon et al., 2014, p 5). As it has been said, it is more favorable for students to work in groups since it is a benefit for their development skills and abilities. Thanks to the interaction between peers, students with autism and students without special needs interact with each other, and collaborate to complete the activity assigned, making the class and the project an inclusive environment.

As a conclusion, the presentation, explanation and analysis of these categories have helped us to give response to the research question and the center of this project, which is What happens when EFL teachers intuitively implement teaching strategies with autistic children? Little by little, the different categories have contributed to answer the research question and to understand which strategies do EFL teachers use when teaching autistic children; and not only to understand which strategies they implement, but also to understand why they do it and how these strategies help both the teacher and the student in the inclusive academic field.

Chapter V

Conclusions

In order to start with the final chapter of this research project, it is necessary to remark that this investigation focus was to describe the effect of the teaching strategies that EFL teachers intuitively implement with autistic students. Bearing this purpose in mind, it was proposed the following research question: What happens when EFL teachers intuitively implement teaching strategies with autistic children? which resulted in the base to start the investigation and everything that came with it along the way.

Keeping the research question as the base, this chapter will present the conclusions of this research supported on the different actors and steps that were implemented during the process. Initially, different instruments were used in order to give an answer to the main question; among them, interviews, field notes and class observations; which helped in the process of constructing and reaching a conclusion. Each data collection method provided various perspectives helpful to show the impact of using intuitive teaching strategies as a way to learn a second language with autistic students.

In the first place, it was noticed that the population was integrated by different students, each one with specific learning characteristics, for that reason teachers had to adapt their strategies in order to assure a successful learning for each child. Nevertheless, this adaptation of the classes from the teachers to the special attention that ASD students needed was not easy. In fact, according to the interviews done to the teachers of the school; they had to implement intuitive strategies such as the use of colors or group activities to make the environment more inclusive and the knowledge more accessible for the students.

In addition, it was evidenced that teachers used group activities because it was fundamental to the personal and academic development of the autistic students, since they learned to work collaboratively; despite this, some ASD students were also able to work independently without problem. Also, in some cases when teachers used group activities, students preferred to work by themselves rather than in groups. This type of action evidenced that they understood the topics and instructions in English. In this way, the intuitive strategies implemented by teachers, worked to develop collaboration between all the students inside the classroom, while they worked on their social skills at the same time.

Furthermore, it was presented that it is important to have special training for teachers in order to implement these kinds of strategies instead of just intuitively. Teachers need to be prepared to face the fact that in some classrooms or schools they could find students with special needs such as autism, for that reason; it is fundamental to have enough knowledge to teach students with this spectrum disorder. Consequently, this lack of knowledge or training in teachers is the result that certain universities do not implement subjects to teach future teachers how to handle a classroom where there can be students with special needs.

Eventually, when EFL teachers implement intuitively teaching strategies with autistic children, they not only permit the development of the class but they also allow the teachers to get to know their students better and, in this way, determine how they could be more attracted to the lessons given. By doing this, teachers can create strategies based on the children's likes that can generate in the kids an interest in assisting the class and completing the assignments motivated, assignments that perhaps would be different if the teacher had previous knowledge and training in inclusive education.

Recommendations

Along the data collection process, it was possible to observe and register in detail the different intuitive strategies that EFL teachers use in class with their autistic students. Also, thanks to that process and after analyzing the interviews, it was possible to notice the lack of academic training that teachers receive in the universities in regards to inclusive education and more specifically in autism, taking into account that this is being presented more frequently in the population worldwide nowadays.

Having this in mind, the need to have teachers trained to serve different types of students and teach their classes assertively becomes evident, which led us to make the recommendation to the different institutions with language education programs to include in their curricula subjects focused on information about inclusion, autistic students' management and strategies to apply in the classroom to build a truly inclusive and quality education for all students.

Limitations

Throughout the progress of this research project, different types of situations happened in the process until reaching the end. Actually, the limitations presented were more than the expected in the beginning. In the first place, and probably the biggest limitation, was the obtention of the permits to access the school and implement the different data collection methods with the population. This situation created an inconvenience in terms of time, as without these permits, the intervention would have not been allowed by the academic institution. At the same time, and related to this, in some institutions where the interventions were intended to be done, teachers had the suspect that some students might have ASD, but they were not medically diagnosed; for this reason, it was not possible to work with this institution, so it was necessary to look for a different school.

Furthermore, most of the studies related to this project were ancient and had no relation directly with the title of this investigation. Most of the studies were older than 15 years, so they did not bring enough information about the topic of this research, but they sometimes mentioned short paragraphs about inclusive education and it was the key for the development of this investigation. The majority of the references used are related to experiences in another country because few investigations have been done in Colombia, but these articles mention about different studies in autistic students, and very little they talk about the strategies that EFL teachers use to teach students with autism.

The last limitation that appeared in this project was the lack of teachers per subject. On this occasion, it was really common to find that one teacher was in charge of teaching different subjects. For instance, the English teacher was also giving the math and technology classes. This situation created even more inconvenience at the moment of creating strategies in the inclusive classroom, because the teacher did not have a degree in math or any related area, and did not have prior training in inclusive education. Taking this into account, this scenario of the same teacher giving different lessons, was a problem at the moment of the creation of the activities to develop.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Letter of consent from the tutor to the school's directors.

Estimados directivos y docentes de la Institución Colegio la Inmaculada, por medio de la presente yo, Margarita Estrada con cc _____, docente tutora a cargo, me permito informarles respetuosamente que los estudiantes Juan Camilo Castaño con cc _____, Valentina Correa con cc _____, Luisa Escobar con cc _____ y Marcela Vélez con cc _____, quienes se encuentran cursando noveno semestre de la Licenciatura en Bilingüismo con Énfasis en la enseñanza del inglés de la Universidad El Bosque, estarán realizando la recolección de datos correspondiente a su trabajo de grado, el cual se titula “Intuitive Strategies Used by EFL Teachers without Prior Professional Knowledge in Special Needs for Autistic Students” dentro de sus instalaciones. Para ello, este grupo de estudiantes estará presente en algunas clases de quinto de primaria y séptimo de bachillerato, realizando de la manera más respetuosa y discreta diferentes observaciones documentadas por medio de video, tomando notas de campo e igualmente realizando entrevistas a los docentes a cargo. Acorde a lo anterior, en este caso serán tomadas en cuenta clases instruidas en la segunda lengua inglés dictadas en aulas inclusivas en donde estén presentes estudiantes con condición del espectro autista. A continuación, se presenta el cronograma de visitas programadas dentro de su institución:

<p>25 octubre 2022</p> <p>Observaciones a cargo del estudiante Juan Camilo Castaño</p>	<p>Math grado séptimo</p> <p>Math grado quinto</p> <p>English grado quinto</p>
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<p>27 octubre 2022</p> <p>Observaciones a cargo de la estudiante Luisa Escobar</p>	<p>Biology grado séptimo</p> <p>Tech and robotics grado quinto</p> <p>Math grado quinto</p> <p>English grado quinto</p>
<p>27 octubre 2022</p> <p>Observaciones a cargo de la estudiante Marcela Vélez</p>	<p>Math grado séptimo</p> <p>English grado séptimo</p>
<p>28 octubre 2022</p> <p>Observaciones a cargo de la estudiante Valentina Correa</p>	<p>Biology grado séptimo</p> <p>Chemistry grado séptimo</p> <p>Tech and robotics grado séptimo</p>
<p>1 noviembre 2022</p> <p>Observaciones a cargo de la estudiante Valentina Correa</p>	<p>Social Studies grado séptimo</p>
<p>2 noviembre 2022</p> <p>Observaciones a cargo del estudiante Juan Camilo Castaño</p>	<p>Social Studies grado séptimo</p>

De antemano les agradecemos grandemente la valiosa contribución y el apoyo para el desarrollo de este proyecto de investigación y su buena disposición para con nuestra universidad.

Atentamente, Margarita Estrada

Docente tutora a cargo.

Appendix B. Interviews collected

Recording 1:

Entrevistador: Hola, profe. Bueno, el día de hoy vamos a hablar sobre educación inclusiva y me gustaría hacerte algunas preguntas. La primera sería, ¿qué piensas sobre la educación inclusiva para estudiantes con autismo en estos días?

Docente: Siento que es un tema muy importante que tenemos que trabajar. Es algo que nos compete a todos los profesores, independientemente de la condicional que se encuentre, pero específicamente en el autismo, siento que hay que comprometernos con la tarea de enseñanza. No es algo fácil que se prepare de un día para otro, sino que es un proceso que se lleva día a día con los estudiantes, dependiendo de las necesidades que tenga ese estudiante. Entonces, siento que es de suma importancia enfocarnos en las necesidades de ese estudiante, del tipo de autismo que tiene, y la forma en que le gusta aprender; si le gusta jugar, si le gusta leer, si le gusta moverse, todo ese tipo de cosas creo que influyen en la forma en la que debemos educar a los estudiantes.

Entrevistador: Ok. Bueno, la segunda pregunta es ¿por qué es importante enseñar inglés como lengua extranjera a los niños con autismo?

Docente: Porque siento que es algo que se está llevando en este siglo, en este siglo 21, y es algo que nos compete a todos; que eventualmente este idioma se va a presentar en muchas áreas de la vida, no solamente acá en la educación, sino que en los colegios y en general, en la vida diaria, en los trabajos, en su día normal. Entonces es algo como que debemos aproximarlos a la realidad de un idioma que está en constante crecimiento, más en nuestro país.

Entrevistador: Ok. Bueno, la tercera pregunta es, ¿cuáles son las estrategias que usted como profesor implementa para enseñar a los niños con autismo?

Docente: Bueno, dependiendo del tipo de autismo que presente el estudiante, yo genero diferentes estrategias. Si el estudiante no evidencia, digamos que un autismo que le impida leer o escribir, obviamente trato de hacer actividades de colorear, de unir las características con el animal, por ejemplo, o características particulares del tema. Más que todo donde ellos se puedan mover libremente, por ejemplo, de unir rompecabezas también. Y en el caso de estudiantes que sí puedan escribir, sí puedan leer, yo intento generar estrategias que se puedan acomodar al resto de estudiantes, que no se vayan excluidos por este tema. Pero en general, dependiendo del tipo de grado de autismo que tenga el estudiante, pues intento manejar una estrategia diferente, a veces pintar, a veces colorear, a veces unir características, a veces construir elementos en plastilina, en... Digamos... que varía dependiendo del tema.

Entrevistador: Bueno, la siguiente pregunta es, ¿qué piensas sobre la educación inclusiva para los profesores? O sea, ¿cómo se preparan los profesores para esto?

Docente: ¿Qué pienso acerca de la preparación?

Entrevistador: Sí.

Docente: Okey. Sí, siento que es algo fundamental que está en el currículum de muchas universidades y siento que se debe implementar de una manera más intensiva, porque no es solo un curso en el que te dicen si este niño tiene autismo, tienes que enseñarle tal cosa, sino que nos enseñen como más estrategias, más mecanismos que podamos abordar al estudiante. Considero que es un elemento importante en la educación de los docentes hoy en día.

Entrevistador: Ok. Y la última pregunta es ¿implementar educación inclusiva en Colombia es como una meta realista o por acá por instituciones académicas? O sea, ¿se ve evidenciada?

Docente: ¿Me puedes repetir?

Entrevistador: La educación inclusiva, ¿la implementación de la educación inclusiva en Colombia como una meta real, realista para las instituciones académicas?

Docente: Siento que es complejo llegar a una educación totalmente inclusiva. Siento que es un reto, pero yo creo que por ahí en unos años podremos estar con una buena educación inclusiva. O sea, es algo que se toca trabajar, no es de un día para otro, pero últimamente sí he visto que pues como que los colegios están más comprometidos con ese tipo de educación. Y siento que todavía está muy lejos el camino, pero sí es posible. O sea, considero que es posible, siempre y cuando contemos con los recursos necesarios para llegar a este tipo de educación, porque no solamente, digamos, es talleres y guías como el resto de estudiantes, sino que necesitamos material, recursos, tiempo y también son recursos que son a veces difíciles de conseguir y muchas veces las instituciones no cuentan con ello. Inclusive también el personal capacitado para hacer este tipo de cosas. Entonces, siento que es posible, siempre y cuando haya la inversión suficiente y estén las personas comprometidas con esta causa.

Entrevistador: Y una pregunta aparte, ¿cómo te capacitaste tú para poder enseñar a la niña con autismo que tienes acá?

Docente: En mi universidad vi una materia que se llama “Necesidades Educativas Especiales”, y en esa materia nos estaban enseñando, nos enseñaron, más bien, como mecanismos de abordar el tipo de necesidades del estudiante. Y pues también nos hicieron énfasis en el que incluyéramos lo más posible al estudiante al resto del grupo. Entonces, de esta manera yo intento, como que, generar estrategias que puedan abordar a todos los estudiantes; y siempre y cuando haya una modificación chiquita o grande, pues se hace, para que el estudiante pueda trabajar. Pero digamos que la capacitación fue tal en mi universidad, en esa específica materia que vi.

Entrevistador: Ok, y ¿de alguna forma intuitiva has hecho alguna clase con los niños?

Docente: ¿Intuitiva? ¿A qué te refieres?

Entrevistador: O sea, como tipo, no sabías cómo tratar al niño, pero como que tu intuición te dijo “Tengo que hacer esto y esto”.

Docente: Sí, sí es algo que me encontré las primeras veces, como que no sabía cómo abordar eso. Entonces, siempre intento hablar como “oye, ¿qué te gusta hacer?, ¿qué podemos trabajar?”. Digamos, por ejemplo, me pasó con un chico que también hace parte de este grupo, que no le gustaba que le hiciera las actividades en español, le gustaba que fueran en inglés, entonces, pues acomodaba la actividad al resto del grupo para que fuera en inglés. Digamos que ya, obviamente, hay algunos casos en el que uno no se puede comunicar abiertamente con el estudiante, pero otros casos sí; entonces, pues cuando no me puedo comunicar, sí intento de manera intuitiva, pues probar qué le gusta y qué no.

Entrevistador: Listo. Okey, listo, profesor, eso es todo. Muchísimas gracias.

Docente: Bueno, a ti.

Recording 2:

Interviewer: Hello. Good afternoon. Could you please remember your name?

Teacher: (Not shown for privacy reasons)

Interviewer: Okay. So, teacher, the first question is, what do you think about inclusive education for students with autism nowadays?

Teacher: For me, these kinds of students are never, I never take a class with these kinds of students. For me, it's new. But from the beginning, it was very difficult for me to attend them. I don't know what activities teach them. I don't know how to explain to them any activity or

any topic. But during the classes, I look for in the middle of some, sorry, or some kinds of activities to adapt to them. For example, (the autistic student), it was easy because he knows how to speak English. He's very intelligent instead of other students. But the first time, it was new for me. But then it was very easy.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. The second question is, why is it important to teach English as a foreign language to autistic children?

Teacher: It's important because this language is international. I consider others to change my knowledge to others, students or other people who need it fast. To develop the four skills of the language is very important for the students of the other students who are studying English because it's an open opportunity to get employment, studies outside, etc. It's very important to speak English.

Interviewer: Okay. The third question says, what strategies do you implement to teach to autistic spectrum disorder students?

Teacher: Okay. To develop the four skills, it's very important to take into account reading to comprehend the words, the paragraphs, and the context that you are reading to comprehend everything. What I'm reading and speaking is okay to read, but to speak to other people who speak English too. And listening to the sound is very important to learn English because I learn English and the strategies are important. Watch movies without tongue twisters. And always talking about English with others who are speaking English too. And put your cellphone on in English, too. Or write some flash cards then those are the things of your house, the bathrooms, and the kitchens, and the living rooms in the bedrooms. It's very important to use.

Interviewer: From the period you have worked here, have you used any other strategies or special strategies to teach autistic children like (the autistic child)? Have you used special strategies with him?

Teacher: No. In the case of (the autistic child), I didn't apply any special activity. The whole activities for the rest of the students, he did it the same. Instead of the others. But (the autistic child) is adapted with the others' students. At the same time I repeat, (the autistic child) is more intelligent than the other students. He always repeats the instructions that I said before. He's like an assistant.

Interviewer: The fourth question says, how do you prepare your classes at the moment of teaching English as a foreign language to an autistic child? Not specifically (the autistic child) or any other subjects that you teach. But what are those strategies with all their special students, let's say?

Teacher: Well, the development of my classes, the beginnings and the development is at the end in three moments. But we use this book, the whole unit of the topic that we developed, that is it. All the platforms too, in the current person. There's no special strategy, but there are some games. I use a digital presentation. Develop one's skin by the date of the English language. Listen to the sound, watch a short film, and read a short reading. What else? Talking about any topic related to the school. For example, the experience that they have had during this period, the first and the second period, or talking about real life, too, in order to be able to speak a lot during the class.

Interviewer: (Short interruption)

Teacher: (short interruption)

Interviewer: Okay. The fifth question says, What do you think about inclusive education training for teachers? This question is from your preparation in university in your path as a teacher. What do you think about your training for inclusive education?

Teacher: Well, I didn't have this preparation during I was studying at university. I studied English because to teach others. But for example, in Venezuela, there is a school especially for those children, for those special students. They don't teach it. We don't teach English to these kinds of students. This is cool, but it's new for me. So at the end of my English teachers, it was very difficult for me. I was asking the others, looking for information and that way how to apply these strategies for them, or I can treat them personally because I don't know how to do it.

Interviewer: From your experience, your training has occurred or has happened in this school through all your partners, right? Right. They have talked to you about it. Okay. The final question, it says, implementing inclusive education in Colombia is a realistic goal for the academic institution. What do you think? Is it realistic here in Colombia that you think that inclusive education is taken into account?

Teacher: When I consider all the institutions, they must take into account the kinds of students because they need that education. It has the other students too.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. Okay, teacher. Thank you so much.

Teacher: Thanks. Okay. Thank you.

Recording 3:

Entrevistador: Buenas tardes, estoy acá con una profesora del colegio La Inmaculada. ¿Me podrías recordar tu nombre, por favor?

Docente: Mi nombre es ((Not shown for privacy reasons))

Entrevistador: Como ya te mencioné anteriormente, te voy a hacer unas preguntas sobre educación inclusiva. Entonces, la primera es: ¿Qué piensas acerca de la inclusión de los chicos autistas al día de hoy en los colegios?

Docente: Bueno, especialmente en el colegio La Inmaculada nosotros tenemos un programa de inclusión, donde se tienen en cuenta las necesidades especiales de cada estudiante.

Tenemos tres estudiantes con autismo, en este caso, en grado (omitted for privacy) tenemos a una joven, y en el grado (omitted for privacy) un joven, cada uno con un nivel de autismo diferente. La estudiante tiene un nivel de autismo muy leve, y el estudiante del otro grado ya tiene un autismo bastante profundo, este es mucho más fuerte. Nosotros hacemos, durante el año, una planeación de actividades enfocadas a las necesidades de ellos que van a la par con las actividades del curso, es decir, según el tema que estemos viendo, las actividades del curso en general también van para ellos pero van más aterrizadas a las habilidades que ellos tienen. Por ejemplo, podría ser la parte de naturaleza, con el grado (omitted for privacy) tuvimos un proyecto que se llama “ocean research project”, y también los demás compañeros trabajaron en el mismo proyecto, al igual que (student with autism), él también hizo el mismo proyecto y realiza las mismas actividades con un nivel diferente obviamente, porque a (student with autism) también se le dificulta la parte oral. En este caso la estudiante de (omitted grade), lo desarrolló, aunque también tiene una dificultad en cuanto a la pronunciación, pero para eso yo me encargo de hacerle la guía, para que ella pueda hacer sus trabajos bien; de resto, las actividades todo el año se observa en esa forma, teniendo en cuenta las actividades de curso, los temas del curso, también los estudiantes con autismo tiene el mismo tipo de actividad.

Entrevistador: Ya mencionaste anteriormente que ven las mismas actividades con diferentes estrategias, me gustaría preguntarte si... ¿Crees que es importante que los niños autistas vean inglés a la par de sus compañeros?

Docente: Sí, es importante, es un poquito más difícil porque para ellos aún el español, en algunos casos, no es tan fácil, pero sí es importante porque la idea es incluirlos. La inclusión se trata de eso, de que ellos vean lo mismo que ven los demás y no queden aparte con otras cosas... ¿Qué nivel es diferente? sí, el nivel sí cambia, pero las temáticas son las mismas.

Entrevistador: En cuanto a ti personalmente... ¿Hay alguna estrategia que implementes para incluir a los chicos autistas?

Docente: Sí, en las actividades, especialmente con la estudiante de (omitted grade), ella se cita a un espacio de refuerzo interno que tenemos en el colegio en los días 6 en el “playfull day”, donde tenemos una hora donde ella asiste al refuerzo de inglés, por lo que te digo, porque ella en su autismo la pronunciación del inglés se le dificulta mucho, entonces lo que hago es ayudarle, colaborarle en otros espacios.

Entrevistador: Ok, profe. Ahora que mencionas que la estudiante de (omitted grade) tiene un espacio aparte, ¿tú antes de dar tus clases preparas alguna estrategia personal para los chicos dependiendo del caso?

Docente: Dependiendo el caso, con la joven no mucho, porque ella está muy incluida en el proceso de todos los estudiantes, lo que te digo; lo único que ella requiere mayor esfuerzo es en la parte de pronunciación, del habla, del speaking de resto no, en cambio con el estudiante de (omitted grade) sí. Las actividades son diferentes totalmente, son totalmente diferentes porque el nivel de él es un nivel de quinto grado y él está en un grado más avanzado.

Entonces ya llega un tope en el cual él por su condición, porque tengo entendido que él no

solamente tiene autismo, tiene algunos otros desórdenes, entonces no capta cosas más difíciles de lo que captaría un niño de quinto de primaria.

Entrevistador: ¿Y qué piensas, crees que hay entrenamiento para los profesores para enfrentarse a estos casos?

Docente: Sí, nosotros hemos tenido capacitaciones aquí en el colegio al inicio del año, tenemos capacitaciones frente al manejo del autismo, frente al manejo de las situaciones, de las crisis que pueden tener los estudiantes, de cómo abordarlos, del tipo de actividades que tenemos realizar, de cómo se les habla. Por ejemplo a la joven de (omitted grado), yo le hablo muchas veces en inglés y luego le traduzco al español, precisamente por la dificultad que ella tiene de entender el idioma, con el joven de (omitted grade) es diferente porque a él sí toca explicarle todo en español.

Entrevistador: Muchísimas gracias, y ya finalmente... ¿Crees que al día de hoy implementar la educación inclusiva en Colombia es una meta realista?

Docente: Sí puede ser una meta realista, depende mucho de las instituciones están abiertas a poder tener en sus colegios jóvenes autistas e incluirlos como derecho humano. Tú sabes que la educación es un derecho fundamental, yo pienso que es real... Es viable, pero ya es dependiendo las instituciones, por ejemplo aquí en el colegio La Inmaculada nosotros lo tenemos y estamos con las puertas abiertas a estudiantes de inclusión, y obviamente no solo al autismo también al síndrome de down, entonces yo creería que sí pero ya depende mucho del tipo de institución y que es lo que quiere la institución y si abren las puertas para estas personas.

Entrevistador: Vale profe muchas gracias.

Docente: Con gusto.

Recording 4:

Interviewer: So, hello teacher, so well, as you know, I'm going to ask you some questions, so the first question is.. Sorry, what is your name?

Teacher: My name is (omitted name)

Interviewer: Hello (omitted name), my name is (name of the interviewer). The first question is... What do you think about inclusive education for students with autism nowadays?

Teacher: I think that the education for those kinds of students must be, I don't know, categorized, because there are some levels of autism that are different. For example, in this school, in Colegio La Inmaculada, we have students (in different grades) but the level of autism that each one of them have is totally different, so for example, in (a specific grade) that girl has an autism that makes it difficult for her to learn math, but for example in (another grade) the autistic girl is the best one in math. So I think that depending on the level of autism that a student has, the education varies and it has to have the different adaptations that they need to, in order to understand the subjects that they are working on.

Interviewer: Yes, teacher, thank you. So the second question is, why is it important to teach English as a foreign language to autistic children?

Teacher: Nowadays, it's not that big of a barrier, the autism problem, because it's a more inclusive world. But it is more difficult for them to be in an inclusive world that speaks in English and that in most countries is well known that the second language is English always. And if you know English, you can go anywhere and you won't have trouble about it. But I think that one way of opening another door for them, not only in the adaptations that we can give them in order for them to learn, is trying to teach them English in order for them to communicate in other ways that can open a lot of doors for them, not just academically, but

also in other forms of life. I mean, in work, sports, art. It's a way for them to have a lot of opportunities that maybe they wouldn't have if they only spoke Spanish.

Interviewer: Yes. Well, the third question is, what strategies do you implement to teach autistic spectrum disorder students?

Teacher: It depends on the subject. I teach math to all of them. It's mostly vocabulary. Vocabulary because I'm seeing with them topics that are not easy to understand in Spanish, so I cannot bombard them with a full on English explanation because they wouldn't get the objective of the class. So I explained to them in Spanish, but all the exercises are written in English. The vocabulary I use for the comments is in English and the different questions they can make about the topic they are seeing must be thrown at me in the best English that they can. I don't really take into account the grammar that they may be using, but the vocabulary that may be key for another person to understand them. Yes? Because for example, The autistic boy in eighth grade, the level of autism that he has is really severe. In eighth grade, we are watching linear functions, which is an advanced topic, but he's learning how to make and solve problems of addition and subtraction. It's a totally different subject for him to understand because of the cognitive barrier that he has. So I think that managing the vocabulary that I use with them, it's a way for them to understand the vocabulary of math in another language. So they have both of it, the Spanish one and the English one, but not full on grammar sentences that I hope for them to explain to me all the time because it really doesn't help them to understand what they are doing.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you, teacher. So the next question is, how do you prepare your classes at the moment of teaching English as a foreign language to an autistic child?

Teacher: I'm taking into account their abilities. Most of them are really good at art. So the main reason that I use art and the didactic games for them is that they see it as a game. So

they don't see it as I don't have to open my notebook and copy everything because I get bored and it's another language and I don't want to do it. I want to go outside and play. But I can play in the classroom and at the same time, I'm learning. So with some of them, I use games such as dominoes, tokens one. I use one that is called a pillow, but each one of the figures that is there, they have to tell them in English. So that's the way that I can implement the vocabulary there. And specifically with the girl in seventh grade, I use a lot of the art because she's really good at drawing and she loves drawing. So sometimes when she finishes the exercises quickly, she's like: teacher, can I draw? I say, yes, you can draw, but you have to tell me what you drew in English and she says, okay, I'm going to do it and then she shows me the exercises, explains what she did, and also shows me the drawing that she did after she finished. So it's a way of connecting both of the topics because it's like a reward for her. Like, if I finish the things and I put attention to the class and I do everything that is asked, I can draw and I can show what I can draw. So, that's the main way I prepare my classes for the kids.

Interviewer: That's amazing, teacher. So the next question is, what do you think about inclusive education training for a teacher?

Teacher: That's a complex topic because we are not trained for that. I studied at the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional and there is specifically a whole degree for a person to be educated in how to treat those kind people. But we are not. We have pedagogical basis in how to plan a class, and the practice helps us a lot to do that. But we don't have a capacity of how to treat with, as some people call it, special children. So I think that it's a process in which you are teaching, but at the same time you are learning how to teach it because you can have all the knowledge in the world, but if you don't know how to explain it to them, it's not going to be anything at the end of the day. I think that in Colombia and specifically for the basic

signatures that are math, biology, social studies, and I don't know, some schools manage and other physics and chemistry. There should be specifically like a course that we must take in order for be the best teachers that we can to those children because I don't think that all of the teachers right now in Colombia know how to deal with that population because some teachers go into a classroom, see that kind of students and just say, I can't do it anymore. And they give up. I don't think that that's the right thing to do either, because as I said before, you can learn at the same time that you're teaching the things that the children need to learn but I do think that we should have more education as teachers to be a better teacher for the students.

Interviewer: Yes, and that's the problem that we found in our thesis. So, teacher, the last question is, implementing inclusive education in Colombia is a realistic goal for the academic institutions?

Teacher: Not all of them, because the advantage we have at the school is that as you can see there are not a lot of students in just one grade, the biggest one that we have is sixth grade and there are 21 students there...and that's the biggest group that we have in the school, the other ones, we have a grade that has five student and other one that has twelve, other ones have four, eight and that type of education that is more personalized helps to pay really attention to the students that are indeed specifically in this case without autism but not all the school in Colombia have that chance. I mean, a lot of schools have 40 students, 48, 35 and you don't really have all the power in this world to pay attention to all of them at the same time so, if you can pay attention to autistic students in the moment they need it, you are not going to get the attention from them in another moment that you ask for. I think that it is realistic only in those schools that can have a personalized education, because i know there are foundations that just work with people that has autism, or down syndrome, or other kind of diseases, but the schools that have inclusion programs can't work with a lot of students at the same time

because it's not possible to pay attention to 30 that are normal and that 3 or 5 that have autism or down syndrome or some kind of TOC, so I think that it is possible if the school counts with a personalized education. Another thing is that it has the resources to do it, because i don't know if you saw in (omitted grade), autistic student has to shadows, what we call shadows there are a nurse and psychologist that are with him all the time, because he can't be alone, if he is alone sometimes he gets, I don't know how to call them, they are a little rage attacks in which we need to take out all of the students of the classroom, and for him to calm down before continue with the class and you couldn't do that in a classroom full of 48 students, because you are not in controller all of them at the same time. So, if the school, or Colombia, or the parents have the resources to pay for another help to the teacher, I think that it is really possible to be inclusive, but if there are no those conditions, at least not that easy even if we don't know our hearts, we try, but I think it is possible as long as the people that is in this institution, the parents of the students, and the government itself is compromise with giving this kind of children the supporting.

Interviewer: Okay. That's all, teacher. Thank you so much for your ideas, thank you for your help.

Teacher: You're welcome, and I hope that it is helpful.

Recording 5:

Entrevistador: Buenas tardes, profe. Mi nombre es (not shown for privacy reasons), ¿me puedes recordar tu nombre, por favor?

Docente: (Not shown for privacy reasons)

Entrevistador: Profe (teacher name), te voy a hacer unas preguntas hoy, son seis preguntitas, la primera preguntita es... ¿Qué piensas sobre la educación inclusiva para estudiantes con autismo en estos días?

Docente: Pienso que es un reto bastante grande en el sentido, digamos, que la ocasión inclusiva pues está en auge respecto a las necesidades que tienen las poblaciones hoy en día. Sin embargo, se dificulta en la medida en que, pues, a pesar de que tenemos esa convicción de llevar a los niños con necesidades a la escuela, pues no contamos con todas las herramientas necesarias para poder involucrarlos. Si las herramientas no son solo herramientas de infraestructura, de materiales de clase, sino que son todas las herramientas que involucra un cambio de perspectiva cultural, respecto de cómo podemos tener un niño que es diferente a mí dentro del aula, etc. Entonces digamos que el cambio no solamente es en cuestiones de herramientas muy prácticas o manuales, sino que es un cambio en torno a un montón de creencias y convicciones.

Entrevistador: Toda la razón, profe. La segunda pregunta dice... ¿Por qué es importante enseñar inglés como lengua extranjera a los niños autistas?

Docente: Digamos que el inglés es una herramienta esencial para el mundo de hoy. Sin embargo, al ser una herramienta para el día de hoy, les permite a los estudiantes, no solamente llegar a tener un contacto cultural, sino que le va a dar la oportunidad de conocer otras perspectivas, y digamos que en un mundo globalizado es esencial que los estudiantes puedan conocer diferentes cosas y diferentes cosmovisiones, maneras de vivir, etc. Entonces, para un niño con autismo conocer otras cosas que, pues, no es lo que suelen tener siempre, porque pues por eso es que se caracteriza el autismo, ¿no? Por esa capacidad de que les recuerdan esas ideas constantes, incluso esas ideas que no dejan de ser repetitivas, pues

conocer diferentes maneras de vivir, de ver y todo a través de una lengua, resulta para ellos fascinante.

Entrevistador: Ok, profe, gracias. La tercera pregunta dice... ¿Qué estrategias implementas para enseñar a los niños autistas?

Docente: Digamos que depende del autismo, para los estudiantes que el autismo no es tan funcional, hay que ejercitar muchas actividades prácticas. Con actividades prácticas me refiero a actividades basadas en el juego, en la lúdica, en esa capacidad que ellos tengan para conectar cosas que tengan en su cabeza y que puedan llevarlos a ejercicios muy prácticos, como ejercicio, como saltar lazo, etc. Digamos que eso es en el autismo en la parte que no es tan funcional; para los estudiantes funcionales, se suele trabajar en torno a las temáticas de clase y se genera todo el desarrollo teórico y práctico, pero sin embargo, se da ese toque en el comportamiento social, en el fortalecimiento de habilidades sociales o ciudadanas.

Entrevistador: Ok, la siguiente pregunta dice... ¿Cómo preparas tus clases al momento de enseñar inglés como lengua extranjera a un niño autista?

Docente: Digamos que se prepara dependiendo de, con los estudiantes con autismo, se suele trabajar a partir de una base o una ruta de aprendizaje que ya existe, entonces digamos que el idioma extranjero aparece allí, como dentro de esa ruta, pero en la medida que nos permite o facilita, llevar al estudiante por ese paso a paso que él necesita. Entonces un estudiante con autismo, pues se está preparando en esa segunda lengua, es necesario que se tenga según su ritmo de aprendizaje. Digamos que el idioma inglés tiene que ser pensado según el ritmo de aprendizaje del estudiante con autismo el cual, pues, ya se conoce, gracias a la ruta de aprendizaje que ya se crea, ya conoces cuáles son sus ritmos y tiempos de aprendizaje.

Entrevistador: Ok. La siguiente pregunta dice... ¿Qué piensas sobre la preparación sobre educación inclusiva para profesores?

Docente: Considero que eso debe ser un pilar fundamental, porque siento que por las exigencias, no solamente llamémoslos instituciones, sino por las exigencias casi que tenemos obligación jurídica, como representantes, una legalidad, etc, pues es necesario para nosotros conocer cuáles las herramientas que nos permiten llevar ese camino con el estudiante de necesidades, pero de manera correcta, es decir, teniendo todas las herramientas, porque las herramientas no solo parten del hecho de una infraestructura, sino esas herramientas jurídicas que nos brindan cualquier situación que pueda ocurrir dentro del aula o fuera de ella.

Entrevistador: Ok. Y la última pregunta, profe, es... ¿Implementar la educación inclusiva en Colombia es una meta real para las instituciones académicas?

Docente: Sí, es una meta para las instituciones académicas y es algo que se puede trabajar, pero sin embargo, se necesita de algo más global, o sea, se necesita de una intención prácticamente nacional. No basta solo con que solamente las instituciones educativas estén dispuestas a la inclusión, se trata que toda la sociedad esté dispuesta a la inclusión. Pues es que el ejercicio de incluir a ciudadanos con autismo o con cualquier tipo de neuro divergencia pues es fundamental que se haga desde cualquier lugar. Digamos que la educación es solamente un lugar común, del que pueden ser muchos otros; digamos que las instituciones educativas tratan de promoverlo desde su espacio, pero es esencial que se haga desde cualquier otro lugar, desde casa, desde el barrio, desde los apartamentos, desde los conjuntos, etc, entonces digamos que es un trabajo muy global el que tenemos que hacer, no solamente es un reto de las instituciones educativas.

Entrevistador: Listo, profe. Entonces eso fue todo, muchísimas gracias por tus pensamientos, por tus ideas y por compartirlo con nosotros.

Docente: Vale, perfecto. Muchas gracias.

Recording 6:

Interviewer: Ok, so good afternoon, what is your name?

Teacher: Hi, my name is (omitted name).

Interviewer: You're teaching, technology and math in fifth grade, right?

Teacher: Right.

Interviewer: Ok teacher, so what do you think about inclusive education for students with autism nowadays?

Teacher: I think that nowadays is better, I don't know now, but I think is more inclusive schools have taking into account different students and your difficulties, and I don't know I think in this school is so important because we have...more less ten students that have different types of difficulties, so I think that nowadays is important and I think that in all school have a great impact in the different classes.

Interviewer: Ok thank you, the second question is, why is it important to teach English as a foreign language to autistic children?

Teacher: I think that is so important because these types of children are so intelligent and they have more... I don't know.. concentration in the topics and they understand better the different language, for example (name of child with autism) is so smart for the English, he loves English, so is so interesting because he understands same, but in some cases in different schools they don't have the inclusive level, so for this reason in this case in our school the English for today is taking great level but in the past didn't have a good level of English.

Interviewer: Ok, so the third question is, what strategies do you implement to teach to autistic spectrum disorder students?

Teacher: Ok, I think in our case...in my case, I don't have to create different strategies, in my case I have (name of the child with asd), and (name of the child with asd) doesn't have difficulties because he is so smart in math and we are working in the level of voice but he doesn't have problem with the topics.

Interviewer: Ok, the fourth question is, how do you prepare your classes at the moment of teaching English as a foreign language or in this case, math or technology to an autistic child?

Teacher: First, I need to know what is the difficulty of this student, but I think we can create more didactic activities. In the case of (name of the child with asd) we can create activities like competitions, I think we have to create more strategies like creative, and with images and work in groups. He has some problems because in some cases he doesn't speak with his other partners in the class.

Interviewer: Ok. The fifth question is, what do you think about inclusive education training for teachers? In this case at the level of university, or even when you are working.





Teacher: I think that in the working, in this case, in my school, in this school it is okay, because they prepare us about the type of child that we are going to find here, but in the university I think that it is regular, in my case I also studied in University el Bosque, I think that it is so regular because they don't teach something about this type of children or how we can create this classes because the practices are so regular, so I think that it is difficult and I think we can improve this part... the inclusive part.

Interviewer: And now the last one. Implementing inclusive education in Colombia is a realistic goal for the academic institutions?

Teacher: Yes, I think in this case in our institution it is a rule, because we have (omitted teacher name) and she is the best in the part of inclusion, she is working, working and working in this part, for me it is important and for this institution.

Interviewer: Thank you so much.

Appendix C. Field notes format.

<p>Fecha</p> 	<p>Lugar</p> 	<p>Descripción del evento</p> 	<p>interpretación</p> 	<p>Reflexión</p> 