

The Effects of Learning Foreign Language on the Development of Linguistic Abilities of Iraqi Autistic Children: A Psycholinguistic Study*

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ABSTRACT:

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder. It shows an imbalance in social interaction, characterized by repetition of certain behavioral patterns and challenges in verbal and nonverbal communication with others. Over the last few decades, its prevalence showed a dramatic rise; an observation that encouraged many researchers across the world to try to explore all its aspects and find the best ways of the treatment of persons who have autism. The current study investigates the effects of learning foreign language (which is English language in the present study) on the development of the linguistic abilities of Iraqi autistic children. This study consists of five sections: the preliminaries (which present the fundamentals of the study), the second section is the theoretical background (which states the theoretical bases of the study), the third section is the methodology and data collection (which present the basic parts of the experiment), the fourth section is the results and their analysis (which show the outcomes of the experiment in every linguistic area and their analysis), finally chapter five offers the conclusions which could be drawn from the results.

KEY WORDS: Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), autism, neurodevelopmental disorder, symptom, echolalia, mental imbalance, diagnoses.

INTRODUCTION

Children with natural abilities can develop their language as they grow day by day and communicate with each other in their daily interaction.

That leads to effective communication which leaves all parties involved satisfied and feeling accomplished. By delivering messages clearly, there is no room for misunderstanding or alteration of messages which decreases the

potential for conflict. Unlike children with unnatural abilities that finds some difficulties in communication and interaction with others due to some reasons. Among those children are autistic children who face difficulties concerning language skills, that children without a disorder do not have to encounter.

Children with autism spectrum disorder(ASD) can find it hard to relate to and communicate with other people. They may be slower to

develop their language, have no language at all, or have significant problems with understanding or using spoken language. In this study, we want to state whether taking care of such children through teaching them another language (in this study the English language will be used) will develop their linguistic abilities in their mother tongue or not.

1.1. Preliminaries 1.2. The Problem of the Study

ASD children are often self-absorbed and seem to exist in a private world in which they have limited ability to successfully communicate and interact with others. They may also have difficulty in developing language skills and understanding what others say to them. They often have difficulty in communicating nonverbally, such as through hand gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions. Such children need some specific care of their families and people around them to develop their language skills and enable them to pass such difficulties safely. This study seeks to determine the effectiveness of learning another language in improving language and social skills for children with autism.

1.1.2. The Research Questions

Some questions that are relate to the subject of this study are asked and the answer for them is what the study aims to improve. The questions are:

1-Do learning another language by autistic children develop their linguistic skills in their first language?

2-Do the autistic children's vocabulary and grammar in their first language be better, if they learn the vocabulary and grammar of another language?

3-Do the autistic children learn how to speak and communicate with others when they learn speaking in another language?

4-Do autistic children pronounce the words better after learning the pronunciation of another language?

5-Are autistic children able to express their ideas and feelings if they learn to do that in a language other than their first one?

6-Can autistic children interact with natural ones without shyness and fear when they learn to interact in another language?

7- Can children with autism speak without echolalia in the first language if they learn to speak in another language?

8- Does learning how to communicate using non-verbal means in another language facilitates using them in the first language by autistic children?

1.1.3. The Hypotheses of the Study

In this study, some hypotheses are put and indicate whether they are improved or not. These hypotheses are:

1-Learning another language by autistic children develop their verbal linguistic skills in the first language.

2-Acquiring vocabulary and grammar of another language effects positively on the vocabulary and grammar of the first language.

3-Learning speaking in another language help autistic children to communicate with others using their first language.

4-Learning to pronounce letters in another language improve autistic

children's pronunciation in their first language.

5-Learning another language helps to minimize the shyness, hold back and fear that autistic children suffer when they deal with others in their first language.

6-Learning how to express their feelings and thoughts in another language help autistic children of expressing them in the first language.

7-Learning how to speak in another language reduces the repetition of words (echolalia) that autistic children are characterized with.

8-Learning another language improve autistic children's non-verbal means in their first language.

1.1.4. The Objectives of the Study

As for any study, there should be some specific aims to make it clear and state its direction. This study has some objects that seeks to achieved.

1-To focus on developing spoken language of autistic children through learning another language.

2-To prove that how autistic children's vocabulary and grammar in their first language can be better if they learn another language.

3-To state that learning another language help children with autism to pass the impairments in social interaction and communicate with natural people.

4-To discover whether the pronunciation of autistic children can be developed through learning the pronunciation of another language.

5-To prove that learning how to deal using another language enable autistic children of expressing themselves correctly in their first language.

6-To state that minimizing the repetition of the heard words by autistic children during their speaking is happened when they know speaking in another language.

7-To indicate how children with autism can get rid of their shyness and hold back, while they try to communicate with others, when they learn to speak in another language.

8-To conduct that autistic children's ability to focus on and use their non-verbal means in communication can be developed through learning to use them in another language. **1.1.5.**

The Limits of the Study

As with any research, there are limitations to this study. This study is limited to practice learning of English language as a foreign language to show its effects on the children with autism. Autistic children or (ASD) are another limit for this study that seeks to indicate whether learning another language develops their first language skills, enables them to inter social interaction, understand the others and at the same time be understood.

1.1.6. The Significance of the Study

Nowadays, such studies that relating to autism are so important and take care of many people due to the rate rising of births for children with autism especially among boys than between girls. This study as one of many others is important for the people currently affected as well as for those who can prevent symptoms in the future. Simply it is important to learn more about autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and that may mean better treatments and school

programs down the road, it also may provide a good understanding of ASD.

So such a study shows how to develop the autistic children's abilities to speak and communicate as well as enhance their social behavior to be clear for their families and teachers to put some special programs that suit such cases and even for researchers who work in this side to get some benefits and clear points that they will need in their next work.

1.1.7. The Procedure of the Study

One –Group Pre and Post-test Design is the type of research design that will be used in this study to measure the same dependent variable in one group of participants before and after a treatment. The study will have based on selecting the members of the sample (four children with autism) with about convergent ages and they nearly have the same linguistic problems. There will be a pretest to know and list the limits of their linguistic abilities and social interaction with each other and with natural children and adults. After that the simple course of learning English language, that composites of lessons and situations resemble those of ordinary life, begins with autistic children. These lessons and situations involve some sounds of the letters, vocabulary, grammar, ways of solving problems they may face in social interaction.

Then there will be a post-test to list the changes that happen on autistic children's abilities to speak and communicate effectively. The differences of autistic children's social and linguistic behavior after learning English language than before learning English language will identify whether learning another language makes some positive effects on the

autistic children's abilities to use their first language in communication or not.

Theoretical background

2.1. Definition of Autism Spectrum disorder

ASDs are portrayed as "a gathering of formative inabilities described by impairments in social cooperation and correspondence and by confined, dull, and generalized examples of conduct" (Ackert et al. (2012: 1), as cited in Beecroft (2013:6)).

ASD is a typically characterized neurodevelopmental disorder related with the presence of social-correspondence deficiencies and limited and tedious practices. Arciuli and Brock (2014:6) indicate that kids with autism experience contrasts in their communicative advancement contrasted with their normally developing peers. Correspondence impairments can be broad and may incorporate, to shifting degrees, language, signal, and pragmatics. Language results for kids with autism are incredibly fluctuated, with certain youngsters showing intelligent language aptitudes while others never secure the utilization of utilitarian discourse.

Communicative impairments, in general, show up at an early age and are regularly the trigger for guardians to talk with pediatricians about their youngster's turn of events (Arciuli & Brock, 2014:11). At first, guardians may look for an appraisal of their youngster's hearing, suspecting that this may clarify the kid's absence of reaction to hearable upgrades, for example, not reacting to their name when called, these examinations may occur a long time before other formative challenges are recognized and a diagnosis of

autism received (Arciuli&Brock,2014:14).

2.3. History of Autism

In 1910 as stated by Gallo (2010:1), the Swiss psychiatrist Bleuler, while speaking on schizophrenia, an idiom that he made, utilized the Latin item autismus as a manner of depicting several symptoms of the disorder. The item autismus is taken from the Greek idiom autos, which signalizes “self”; and the translation of autismus to English language is “autism”. The soonest known reported instance of autism was in the legal dispute of Hugh Blair of Brogue. In 1747, Blair’s younger sibling showed up in court for a choice on Hugh's intellectual ability to get a marriage. He effectively requested of the cancellation of his marriage so he can pick up his sibling’s legacy.

Hugh's contention was that his sibling was intellectually flimsy. There was no verification that Hugh had autism except for there was clear proof that he indicated attributes of autism(Atkins,2011:4). The term autism was coined by Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler in 1911.Bleuler used the term to indicate withdrawal into fantasy and selfcentered thinking observed in schizophrenia. Historical accounts on autism in modern textbooks almost invariably begin with Leo Kanner’s 1943 report of 11 children with a set of symptoms that came to be called autism (Davis et.al.,2014:3). Notwithstanding (Schopler et.al,1985:2) the serious and beginning stage of issues in social connections, tedious practices, customs, and scholarly pinnacle abilities, Kanner saw autism as an issue of impairment in interaction and difficulties in using language.

2.4. Types of ASD

ASD is a group of complex neurodevelopmental disabilities that differ greatly from person to person. Depending on the vast amounts of syndromes, scientists divided autism into several types. The main types of ASD include:

1-Autistic disorder, also known as "classic autism" and sometimes called ‘Kanner’s autism’ (Sicile,2014:1). The syndromes of this type as stated by Cohen (2008:16) are significant difficulties in using language, social and communicative impairments, and some strange behaviors.

2-Asperger syndrome – Symptoms are less bad than those of classic autism. There are social difficulties and uncommon conducts (Turkington&Anan,2007:10) there may be usually no linguistic problems or intellectual deficiency.

3-Pervasive developmental disorder – can be described as "atypical autism" (Towbin,2005:165) individuals from this kind have some criteria of autistic disorder or Asperger syndrome, but not all of them. Syndromes sometimes be fewer and milder than autistic disorder and Asperger syndrome. Those children may have social problems and difficulties in either restricted behaviors or interaction.

2.5. The diagnostic Criteria for ASD

The criteria of ASD are:

A. Constant shortfalls and impairments in social connection (Arciuli&Brock,2014:11) with others in different daily situations.

1. Deficiencies in social-enthusiastic correspondence, going, for instance, from

strange social way and disappointment of ordinary communication; to disability of sharing their interests, feelings, and needs; to inability to start or react effectively to social interactions (Schopler&Mesibov,1985:58-60).

2. Deficiencies in nonverbal communicative practices, as pointed out by O'Reilly and others (2017:47-49) used for social association, running, for instance, from inadequately of using both verbal and nonverbal means correctly; to the difficulties in making eye to eye connection and using body language and facial expressions; to the problems in understanding other's verbal and nonverbal communication.

B. Limited, repetitive examples of conduct, interests, or actions.

1. Generalized or redundant motor moves as Turkington and Anan (2007:1) believe, utilization of things, or discourse (e.g., simple games, arranging things in a specific manner, and repeating the sounds and words that are heard).

2. Emphasis on similarity and ritualized examples of verbal or nonverbal conduct (Emmons&Anderson,2005:33-34), (e.g., extraordinary trouble at little changes, challenges with changings, inflexible reasoning patterns, focus on taking the same course or eating the same food every day).

C. Autism is called (spectrum) because of the various symptoms that differ from child to child. However, all autistic children have some problems with communication and social interaction (Ingersoll et.al.,2010:5). **2.6. Autism and Brain**

There is a constant exploration about the ASD with novel outcomes that being made regularly.

Canavan (2016:6) calls attention to that it has been discovered that individuals with mental imbalance have bigger estimated cerebrums contrasted with those of the normal, and that their minds have higher amounts of dim and white issues. According to Canavan (2016:10), dim issue has to do with information preparing and extraction from tangible organs and hence is connected to muscle control, emotions, and memory. Of course, it is the white issue that moves information around the cerebrum by means of electric and compound action.

Frith (2008:52) groups mental imbalance as a neurodevelopmental issue that impacts the cerebrum's data measures. Allegorically, it might take a few diversions, which without a doubt can delay the excursion, for the mind to show up at point B (arrangement) from point A (question or issue) in the pathway of data handling. As it stated by Frith (2008:55) dim and white issues are inconsistent disseminated in the mind of a medically introverted individual, this can likewise prompt alternate ways from beginning stage A to end B, which can be shown, for instance, in uncommon aptitudes in arithmetic, photographic memory and dialects. Subsequently, the cerebrum's data preparing framework is influenced by autism with milder or more extreme indications in different aptitudes.

2.7. Difficulties in Language and Communication in ASD

Patel and Greydanus (2012:20) showed that problems in communication is one of the center- shortfall areas used to decide a finding of ASD in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Interactive disability is portrayed by an absence of open motion use and is communicated in language advancement, challenges in the capacity to start

or look after discussion, and uncommon language use, for example, echolalia or eccentric utilization of words.

Unordinary (Patel&Greydanus,2012:130) autistic child utilizes incorporate private illustrations (eg, kid says "frozen yogurt trees" to allude to snow-covered trees, or "fix the croc" to allude to fixing a tear on a book page that resembles a gator); gestalt or unanalyzed expressions (eg, youngster rehashes "Don't contact the pizza" at whatever point they see something hot); and video contents (eg, utilizing definite exchange from the Cars film when playing with a companion). The social correspondence and social collaboration shortages of individuals with autism show difficulties in socialpassionate correspondence, going from an absence of inception, to an unusual methodology in a social setting, to disappointment in to and fro conversational trades, and also restricted interest for sharing enthusiastic and full of feeling responses.

For O'Reilly (2017:47) there are some noticeable problems for persons with ASD in both verbal and nonverbal communication, and in their ability to express and understand others' speeches. Some autistic individuals never develop much of their vocabulary, while others are extremely verbal, but use this in a socially unsuitable way. For example: an individual with ASD may speak a lot on some topics of his choice, but does not carefully listen to the response of the recipient, so that the conversation is regarded as not active or only one-sided.

2.8. Reasons of ASD

No single reason is known for autism, however, variations from the norm in mind structure or capacity give off an impression of being

commonly acknowledged as a reason(Teichroew,2016:100) . Hereditary qualities and natural components are additionally to be commonly acknowledged; no solid proof based investigation has connected ASD and immunizations. The problems, as mentioned by Teichroew (2016:102), can influence any youngster, yet a few elements have been read for expanded danger: young men (around multiple times more than young ladies), family ancestry, preterm infants, and kids destined to more established guardians, just as those with delicate X condition, tuberous sclerosis, Tourette disorder, and Rett disorder.

It has long been presupposed by Beaudet (2007:13) that there is a familiar reason at the genetic, cognitive, and neuralgic levels for ASD's characteristic triplex symptom. However, (Beaudet ,2007:19) there is increasing doubt that autism is instead a complex disturbance which main aspects have special causes that usually occur together. Deletion, duplication, and inversion are all chromosome abnormalities that have been implicated in autism. It has a strong genetic basis, although the genetics of ASD are complex and it is unclear whether ASD is explained more by rare mutations with major effects, or by rare multigene interactions among multiple genes, the environment, and epigenetic factors which do not change DNA but are heritable and influence gene expression.

2.9. The weaknesses and strengths of children with ASDs in learning foreign language

The findings of an investigation that was conducted by specialists in autism (Hurtig et.al. 2010:1080-1093), stated that autistic children sustain from the higher appearance of psych

syndrome, such as depression and anxiety. However, the largest symptom is attention shortfall disorder. This deficit causes some difficulties in learning semantics, syntax, metalinguistic, metacognition, and aural processing problems. These students also have problems with difficult situation solving, especially with audio input processing that is raised from the weakly short-term mind that impacts their ability to follow orders, especially in annoying environments of some schools.

It is indicated that autistic children are visual learners, because they have good visual extended-term remembrance. This capacity is very important for learning foreign languages and make learning other languages easy and interesting. Moreover, and as stated by Mottron (2006:30), in contrast with normal people, some students with autism can have a lot of interests. Some persons can acquire language in early stages of their life and achieve a good level of learning by spending a lot of time, if they wish that. They are usually focus on details and may even learn language early so that they acquire sum vocabulary as a linguistic repertoire. **2.10. The Rising rate of autism**

In recent years there is a dramatic rising in the figure of the persons who have ASD, nowadays said to be reaching predominant suggestions in the United States also in other countries(Cicile-Kira,2014:26). In the 1980s, ASD expansion was considered 1 in each 10,000 persons. In March of 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network released speculations that one child in every 88 children had been specified as having autism. These numbers were based on datum gathered

in 2008. Then, before one year in March of 2013, the CDC released new ratings that one child in every 50 American schoolchildren have ASD) (Cicile-Kira,2014:27).

In the early 2000s, researches stated that, the usual figure was one case in each 250 persons (0.4% of the inhabitation). In the last part, investigations have seemed to repeatedly cope each one the other with higher prevalence numbers, ranging from the 2005 Australian figure of one case in every 160 individual (0.62% of the inhabitation), to a new South Korean survey, which set a surprisingly high average of one case in every 38 persons (2.6%).Some researchers began to scout whether there were somethings about our environment that may cause the increasing in the number of ASD children.

<https://www.mcri.edu.au/users/murdochchildrens-media/blig/do-more-children-haveautism-now>

METHODOLOGY 3.1.

Research design

It is an experimental research in which the methodology of the study relies on teaching the English language to a group of Iraqi children who have autism and training them how to use English in social situations. In this study the autistic children are examined twice at the beginning and the end of the experiment in Arabic language to show the results and the impact of learning a foreign language (English language) on their linguistic abilities in their first language (Arabic language). A simple course of study is prepared depending on the linguistic deficits of the autistic children, the present researcher is a teacher who has an experience in teaching English language for

about fifteen years and also has some knowledge about autism and the people who suffer from it because her own child is an autistic boy. The course lasted two months from 2020/11/15 up to 2021/1/15, five lessons each week in (Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday) and each lesson took about one and half hour from three o'clock to four thirty at the afternoon.

3.2. Participants

The sample of the present study is composited of four autistic children whose ages are between 9 and 12 years. They are: Moussa Hasan (9 years), Mustafa Firas (11 years), Mohammad Murtada (11 years), and Hussein Ali (12 years). The children are chosen depending on their symptoms and the required age. As it is mentioned in the previous chapter that autistic children differ from each other in their symptoms and the degree of intensity, each one of the participants in this study has some symptoms which are not exactly similar to the symptoms of the others.

3.3. Programs

When teaching English to students with ASD, a number of different programs and strategies can be used. In the current study, a number of programs are used depending on the deficits of those autistic children as well as their interests and needs. Children with autism have deficits in their linguistic ability as the core symptom, the programs of this study are designed depending on those problems which are in their pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, verbal and non-verbal communication.

3.3.1 Learning sounds

Children with ASD may pass such phonetic difficulties by training them to pronounce the

sounds through listening to a model many times and repeat those sounds many times too. Before that, the children have to make some training exercises to improve their organs of speech (tongue and lips). By trial and error and giving a gift for each true attempt, autistic children may improve their phonetic abilities. The teacher has to write the letters on the board clearly and say them loudly many times for each letter after that the autistic children try to repeat the sounds of these letters as a group then as individuals.

The children, then, listen to the model says the letters, while they watch their forms on the screen or in the cards, until nearly three letters are covered a day.

To overcome their difficulties in pronouncing the sounds of some letters, the teacher helps the children in making some exercises using many helpful tools as blowing a balloon, chewing a gum, getting their tongues out of their mouths to taste the sugar above and under their lips, and making a massage around their mouths to empower the muscles around their lips

3.3.2. Learning vocabulary

Acquiring some vocabularies may encourage children with autism to communicate with others and rise their desire in interaction. Autistic children may actually excel at visual spatial tasks, such as putting puzzles together, and perform well at spatial, perceptual, and matching tasks. So, in the present study the method of learning vocabularies depends on physical learning or the using of the pictures and the actual objects at the same time of saying their names in order to facilitate the learning process for these autistic children. Learning vocabulary items and trying to use what they learn in games, social sittings, and

tasks can help them to practice the new words in their contexts. The current study followed this way to activate the using of new words in everyday sittings, so that the establishment of various situations and providing different games is the vital part in learning and practicing new vocabulary items. **3.3.3. Learning structures**

This program is designed to help autistic children in understanding the basic grammar of English language to be able to build correct sentences in order to be understood when they talk with others. Using pictures for each part of the sentence to show autistic children the significance of grammatical words by drawing pictures instead of writing the words and hanging them in an order on the board is important to teach them the functional use of language. Explaining with using visual examples can help such children to learn the correct structures with the suitable grammatical means.

3.3.4. Learning non-verbal means

Autistic children are not able to make eye contact with those who talk to them and are unable to lengthen their eye contact, also they cannot use their facial expressions and body gestures to suit what they want to express. Using pictures and cards to represent different feelings and actions and at the same time make specific facial expression for each feeling and specific body gestures for each particular action is the best way for them to learn how to use those means. Asking the children to follow the movement of the light on a wall and moving it up, down, left, and right is a good exercise to strength their control of their eye movement.

3.3.5. Learning social communication

Children with autism should be given an opportunity to develop their ability to understand and use their linguistic repertoire both verbally and nonverbally, also they have to be able to interact with other people in various contexts and situations. Constructing minimal social situations and encouraging those children to use their words and interact with other autistic and normal persons may help them to overcome some of those problems and provide them with some practices and experiences about social communication.

3.4. Activities

Teaching children with autism usually needs special kinds of activities that are suitable to their needs and interests. In the current study the activities are prepared according to the points of weakness that children with ASD suffers of in order to minimize their problems and improve their verbal and non-verbal behaviors. These activities are; presenting some explanation, playing games, doing tasks, watching videos, and exposing the autistic children into some diminutive social situations.

3.4.1. Explanation

Presenting an explanation by using the simple and easy words can provide those children with some information about such basic daily topics and can help them to comprehend those objects and concepts. Some autistic children can comprehend such explanations, but for others especially those with classic autism, who have problems in comprehending what others say, these explanations should be provided with some gestures, changing voice tone, facial expressions, and body movements. Pictures are used in explanation to ease the process of understanding; that is to say the teacher shows

the autistic students the picture of the object while she is illustrating the main aspects of that object using simple short words and phrases.

3.4.2. Games

Games and playing are vital factors that are used in special education for those with special cases to enhance their verbal and nonverbal abilities. Games can be challenging for autistic children, and like many teaching materials, the best games for children with autism are those that favor inherent strengths. Games that are visual, multisensory, manipulative and that challenge special reasoning are good bets.

Games can be considered as powerful tools in teaching matching to memory and social skills for children with autism. The games situation is comfortable for autistic children and encourages them to focus, differentiate, and try to share others in the same game. Playing football is one of the interesting games which helps the autistic boys to get some friends and strengthen their social communication, at the same time it can minimize their psychological stress and provide them with some new knowledge about such a game.

3.4.3. Tasks

In the current study there are many tasks that are prepared to be done by the autistic children in order to develop their linguistic, mental, and behavioral abilities. These tasks involve completing the matching exercise between the parts of the body and the suitable piece of clothes for each part using the pencil and paper. Other tasks include mentioning the days of the week and their numbers, asking each other about their personal information such as the name, age, country, the preferences and so on, and coloring plain pictures according to the model colored picture to make it as required as

possible. Receiving the visitors with suitable greetings and presenting them some water and sweets is another task that every autistic child has to practice in some diminutive situations. Such tasks may help those children to speak, think, move, and do their daily tasks at home.

3.4.4. Watching videos

Autistic children usually like to watch screens whether it is an iPad, a mobile, or a TV, and the scholars, teachers, and the specialists who are responsible for the training and education of those children have to take advantage of this point to improve those children lives. Watching educational videos about the daily objects, concepts, doing tasks, and social situations which can be presented through screens is a helpful means in the treatment of children who have autism. Listening to songs on screens or in MB3 at the same time about basic concepts is also necessary in the training process and enjoyable to minimize their sense of boredom and tiredness.

3.4.5. Diminutive representative situations

Creating social situations that resemble those in the real world around them may provide children who have autism with some experiences about how to speak and behave. When an autistic child acts in a small social situation he may not be able to speak or behave correctly, but by trying many times and making errors he may learn to comprehend how he should act in such a situation and then practice his experience in the outside world (real world). In such social minimal situations, there should be some normal people to deal with those children to help them in understanding the situation and its dimensions.

3.5. Instruments

Using the effective instruments that are suitable and fit the cases that are dealt with can help in achieving some progress and improvement in what is expected. In this study there are some instruments which are used in the teaching and training processes, those means are a TV set, MB3, a white board, colorful pens, colorful cards, real objects, authentic material, enjoyable games, textbooks of the English curriculum in the primary school. For instance, in the buying situation there are: the small shop, the seller, the real vegetables and fruit, the sweets, the home needs, and the money, while the autistic children act the role of the buyers. Moreover, in the playing situation there are: the court, the chairs, the net, and the ball.

3.6. Subjects

As it is indicated before that, children with autism have a weakness in the functional use of language and the associated social behavior; they have little or no knowledge about their daily concepts. Seasons of the year, days of the week, colors, names of countries and their flags, names of some drinks and foods, names of some daily actions, names of the animals, names of the means of transportation, the parts of the body, the five senses, the pieces of clothes, furniture of the house, personal information, guest reception, serving and depending on themselves, all of these and more are problematic for autistic children to deal with. Focusing on such subjects may enhance their memory and language and by time and continuous training those children may be developed in different areas. **3.7. The role of the teacher**

Children with ASD usually are unable to sit and listen to their teacher also they could not pay

their attention, recognize, and comprehend as normal children do, so working with this kind of population needs some patience on the part of the teacher. Those children need a person who understands their cases, knows their needs and interests, and follows the manner that suits them. In the present study, the role of the teacher is of two parts, the first part of her work is concerned with the children and the second part focuses on their families and the people around them. In working with the autistic children, the researcher goes with their needs to the safe side, she uses their preferences and interests to build the lessons and the activities. She first establishes a friendly relationship with those children to decrease the psychological problems such as fear, anxiety, and shyness. After that, the researcher tries to help those autistic children to learn how to learn by decreasing their hyperactivity, attention deficit, and increasing their focus, also attracting their gaze by using some enjoyable tools, and encouraging phrases in English.

Putting simple rules to be followed by autistic children's parents is the main point of the second part of the teacher's role. The teacher asks the families to hide the mobiles and iPads away from their children with autism, ask them to do their things by themselves, speak and communicate with them along the day, practice the English lessons with them, involve children in life situations, let them depend on themselves in most of the time, and present pieces of advice to those children and tell them that they are growing up quickly and they have to speak and behave well. By doing these tasks, the second part of the teacher's role may be completed, so the teacher has to be on contact with these families every day to be sure whether they follow the plan or not.

3.8. Data collection

In the present study, the collection of data depends on several tools in order to get information with some validity to verify the hypotheses and to find the answers to the questions of the present study. The tools comprise the questionnaire, the direct observation, and the special sheets used by the families to write every positive change in their autistic children's linguistic abilities.

3.8.1. Questionnaire

The kind of the questionnaire which is used in this study is in the written form, in which the researcher used closed questions that are answered either by "yes" or "no". The questionnaire involves questions which are:

- 1-Are there developments in the autistic children's pronunciation?
- 2-Does it become clear and better than before learning English?
- 3-Do they get rid of the difficulty in pronouncing some of the sounds of the letters?
- 4- Do their vocabulary items increase and could they use them in their speech correctly?
- 5-Do they participate in conversation with other people?
- 6-Do the production and perception of speech become better, and know how to initiate and end the dialogue?
- 7-Does their echolalia start to be less used by them, and can the autistic children answer the people's questions with a relevant answer to these questions without repeating the same words after the speaker?
- 8-Do their syntactic constructions become more acceptable and with some correctness?

9- Have their memory and mental processes developed during and after the course of study which can appear in their recognition, remembering, understanding and finding solutions to some of the problems which they face in everyday life?

10-Do the autistic boys make suitable facial expressions, eye contact, and body gestures while they are speaking?

3.8.2. Observation

In the current study, and along the period of teaching participants the teacher observed the autistic children in a direct and an indirect manner to get more information that can help the researcher in collecting data about what she wants to examine and prove. During the teaching activities, whether they are lessons or games, the teacher observed the children's changes in their linguistic and social behavior and repeated her observation through the recorded videos, then wrote down the main points. At home, the researcher asked the autistic children's families especially their parents to observe their children along the day and list their notes in special sheets as a way for collecting data that can help the researcher in her study.

THE RESULTS

Two tests were made for the autistic children which took place before and after the simple English course of study. Both of them took the same form which is the oral practice and they included the same questions that focused on the daily simple words and basic structures; and along these aspects their pronunciation and non-verbal communication were also tested, in addition to the autistic children's ability to use their linguistic repertoire in social communication. Each child was tested

separately in natural circumstances and a normal environment, where the teacher and the children sat in a room of their homes. Before that, the teacher established a good friendly relationship with them in order for them to be free in their replies to the questions (in the pre-test) and be at their normal ability without any stress or tension to get as natural responses as possible.

Here are the results of the pre-test and posttest which reflect the differences and changes in the autistic children’s linguistic abilities before and

For testing their grammar, there are seven main items which are put to discover their problems in the construction of phrases and their main parts (subject, verb, and object), also to examine their ability to use the personal pronouns and different grammatical forms (singular and plural, feminine and masculine, prepositions, connections, and question tools) which are necessary to be understood. In interaction, there are also five items which are selected as the basic communicative capacities which are used by every person in social

The linguistic area	Hussein		Mohammad		Mostafa		Moussa	
	Pretest	Post-test	Pretest	Post-test	Pretest	Post-test	Pre-test	Posttest
The sounds	2	0	2	0	6	3	5	2
The vocabulary	4	0	12	3	10	3	17	7
The grammar	2	0	6	2	2	0	7	3
The interaction	1	0	4	1	3	0	5	2
The eye contact, facial expressions and body gestures	1	0	2	0	2	0	3	1

after the teaching of the English language in all the limited areas that are mentioned in chapter one and exactly in the hypotheses, questions, and the objectives of the present study. The prepared materials for both tests are selected and designed depending on the basic linguistic abilities which are used in speaking by every person atnearly the same age. The phonological test is composed of ten items which include words of all Arabic letters, while the vocabulary test involves twenty items that contain the main daily objectives and concepts such as names of the surroundings around them that are important to be known by everybody.

interaction. These abilities which are tested in social sittings by direct observation are: Initiate and close a conversation, comprehend what is said to you, produce phrases which are related to what is said before, keep on the conversation without busy with other things or movements, and do not repeat what you hear of words or sounds. To test their ability in using paralinguistic means (eye contact, facial expressions, and body gestures) while they are speaking, these non-verbal abilities were tested during the communicative test.

Below is the table which exhibits the results of the pre-test and post-test for the problems and deficits in each linguistic area for each autistic

In the pre-test, all of the children spoke with difficulties in their pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical structures, interaction, and in using body language but with various degrees as it is stated in the results. Concerning pronunciation, they were all unable to pronounce different letters as Mohammed 's problems in the pronunciation of the letters (ج/ʒ /, غ/ɣ /) Mustafa (ر / r /, د/d /, ط/T /, ظ / ڄ /, ل / l /, ص/S/), Moussa in (ق / q /, ر / r /, س / s /, ظ / ڄ /, ط/T /), and Hussein who has problems only with the letters (ر / r /, ط / T/). The results of the post-test prove their development in the phonological level, as the case with Hussein and Mohammad who managed to overcome their two different problems in pronunciation.

Mustafa also witnessed some changes in his pronunciation which are clear in his ability to pronounce three letters (د / d /, ل / l /, ص / S /) of the six letters (د / d /, ل / l /, ص / S /, ر / r /, ظ / ڄ /, ط / T/) in which he faced problems in articulating them. Moreover, Moussa, as an autistic child who finds problems in the articulation the five Arabic letters (س / s /, ق / q /, ر / r /, ط / T /, ظ / ڄ /), after the lessons of teaching English language for those children, Moussa has become able to pronounce the sounds of three letters which are (س / s /, ق / q /, ظ / ڄ /) as it is stated in the results of the post-test.

In the area of vocabulary, there is a big difference between the pre-test and thposttest. As it is indicated in the present study that autistic children usually have a limited number of vocabulary items and this is also

child of the current study's sample according to the prepared materials:

The results of pre-test and post-test

stated in the pre-test when the teacher asked the children to mention what they know of colors' names, foods, days of the week, the names of countries, the furniture of the home, the parts of the body, the pieces of clothes, the five senses, and many other main words that are necessary for daily usage. In the posttest they prove that they acquired a lot of the everyday vocabulary items as the results of the post-test show. All of the children with ASD have learned many of the basic words which are required for daily usage.

According to the pre-test, Hussein is the best one of the four members in the current study who has a good repertoire of Arabic vocabulary, while Moussa has very few words so that he could not reply in the pretest except to few questions. Mohammad and Mustafa are nearly at the same level of the vocabulary as it is clear in the results of the pre-test, their degrees mean that they have little amounts of vocabulary but more than Moussa's and less than Hussein's.

According to the prepared materials to test their vocabulary, and depending on the results of the pre-test and post-test, their linguistic ability in this area witnessed a big development compared with the results of the other linguistic areas which are listed in the previous table. Hussein overcame all of his four problems, Mohammad's vocabulary has increased so that he answered most of the post-test questions. Mustafa and Moussa vocabulary repertoire also have developed, and that is clear in the number of their responses in the post-test compared with their responses in the pre-test.

As for the syntactic structures and grammatical forms, autistic children's talk usually lacks these means and is composed of phrases with individual words, phrases without connections or prepositions, incorrect personal pronouns, repetitive words and phrases, no plural forms but only singular ones, wrong usage of feminine and masculine words and question words. From the results of the pre-test, we can say that Hussein has only two grammatical problems in using the prepositions (إلى/ila:/ (to), في /fi:/ (in)), and Mustafa has grammatical problems in using the prepositions (إلى/ila:/ (to), من/min/(from)). They have passed those problems as it is clear in the above table.

Mohammad has difficulties in constructing sentences and using personal pronouns which is the most prominent problem in his speech when he speaks with his family, but after attending the English lessons, his problems have minimized from six to two only. The child who has more syntactic difficulties than the other members of the sample is Moussa. He usually used to say single words and he speaks only with his parents, he could not say a phrase of two or three words, and could not use any grammatical connections. When he learned something about the English language, his syntactic problems begin to shrink from seven to three only.

Examining their linguistic ability in conversations indicates the communicative difficulties which also appeared in different degrees, but in general this shows the deficits and weaknesses in their social communicative abilities. In the pre-test, the results revealed that Hussein has the problem of comprehending

only some of what is said to him and sometimes he does that incorrectly, while in the results of the post-test he did well. For Mohammad, he did not have the ability to interact with others, because he was unable to understand what is said to him instead he only used to repeat it, and so that he could not answer who asks him or talks to him, as if he was out of the communicative sitting. His communicative problems depending on the results of the pre-test were four, but he managed to pass most of them as it is indicated in the table.

Mustafa was able to speak but could not communicate as natural children do because he has several problems such as his inability to answer who asks him a question with the required answer, he used to reply with something that does not have a relation to the question. He had not enough vocabulary to interact with others along with the characteristic of echolalia which sometimes appears in his speech. He did not know how to initiate or close a conversation. After learning English in its simple form, he succeeded in getting over all of his difficulties as the numbers in the table prove. Moussa as one of those autistic children also has proved his development in this linguistic area, which is the use of the language in the social sittings. His results state that he has overcome three of his five problems in interaction. Namely, his comprehension and production of the language, keeping on the interaction and focusing on what is said to him.

The results of their ability to use the nonverbal means in communication has also developed for each of them as it is shown in the

table. Hussein, Mohammad, and Mustafa have become able to use the nonverbal means in their communication. Moussa has become able to make eye contact and body gestures but with some difficulties in using the facial expressions.

CONCLUSIONS

In the present study, teaching English to autistic children achieved the outcomes that are listed in the objectives and found answers for the study questions. The impact of learning English did not only appear on their linguistic abilities but also affected other areas of their life. Choosing English language for teaching autistic children to develop their linguistic abilities proved its usefulness in so many previous studies and that what is also proved in the current study. All the autistic children used to hate to study English, but after presenting several lessons that touch their needs with some fun, they started liking this language and wished to study it more and for a longer period of time. Teaching English to such children, who need some empathy, care, patience with a special teaching method and using the fit aids depending on their features, can result in outcomes more than the expected ones.

This study found that learning English could develop their phonological, semantic, structural, communicative capacities as well as enhance their non-verbal abilities. After learning English, the autistic children could express their thoughts and feelings, also they could communicate with other normal people with little amounts of repetition to what others say to them because they started to comprehend what others say to them.

From what is stated previously, one can say that learning English even in its simplest form can push the children with ASD forwards towards a shining future to be members of the world around them and get out of their closed world in which they live. If such teaching starts at an early stage of the autistic children's age, it may give better results as it is said 'Learning in childhood is like engraving on stone' that is because they are like a white page and their memory is fresh so that it can be developed towards what help them to be as normal children as possible and not vice versa

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