

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING STRATEGY FOR ASD (AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER) STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the realization of English language teaching strategies for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) students, especially in terms of the implementation of teaching strategies. This study took place at SMPLB of Curup, Bengkulu, Indonesia. Drawing upon a constructivist epistemology, this study applied a descriptive qualitative method to reveal the data. There was only one English teacher who taught ASD students, and the teacher was involved as the subject of this study. The data were garnered from interviews and document analysis. The data were further analyzed using an interactive model extending to data collection, data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions. The results showed that the teacher used three strategies in teaching children with autism, namely developing oral language comprehension, echolalia, and communication skills enhancement through the PECS method. In addition, the teacher also modified the form of the strategy according to the needs of students with autism.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder, teaching strategy, children with special needs.

INTRODUCTION

In the field of education, one of the hardest challenges for teachers and families is to treat children with special needs, such as those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Denne, Hastings, & Hughes, 2017), in order that they can learn and receive proper education (Guldberg, Achtypi, D'Alonzo, Laskaridou, Milton, Molteni, & Wood, 2021; Hidayah & Morganna, 2019; Parsons, Kovshoff, & Iivil, 2020). Many autism students have not developed as they are supposed to be and must therefore be supported by special education which fulfills their needs (Parsons et al., 2020; Preece & Howley, 2018; Ravet, 2018). In terms of

subjects taught, inclusive education theories inform that any students, including ones with special needs, have to be served with the same components of learning subjects with diverse compositions dependent upon students' competences and needs (Efendi, 2018; Murawski, 2005; Wibowo & Muin, 2016; Friantary, Afriani, & Nopitasari, 2020). As the foregoing, English subject is no exception. Once students with special needs are thought English, it is also expected that they are guided by teachers to build up their English communicative competences so that they can take part in English communication as well. In the present study, we orient our efforts to address English teaching strategies for students with special needs, namely children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Educational programs for students with ASD are developed through a process of information gathering and consultations to determine the individual learning profile for each student (den Houting et al., 2019; Keen et al., 2017). For many ASD students, the most suitable educational program includes a combination of Ontario academic goals with the required accommodation or modifications, as well as alternative program objectives that support the development of the student's competencies, communication, social and functional skills (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). Students who have an ASD have various learning profiles, and not all students with an ASD receive a specific method or program of education. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a group of complex disorders of brain development, characterized in varying degrees by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, and repetitive behaviors (Berry & Goin-Kochel, 2020; den Houting et al., 2019; Goel et al., 2018; Goldin & Matson, 2016; Rosen et al., 2018; Stout, 2016). These difficulties adversely affect an individual's functioning. Autism is usually a lifelong condition (Hwang et al., 2017; Newcomb & Hagopian, 2018; Van Der Miesen et al., 2016). Education is currently the primary form of treatment for autism. Chiang (2017) argued that Autism spectrum disorders are lifelong developmental disabilities that can impact how people understand what they see, hear and otherwise sense. This can result in difficulties with social relationships, communication and behavior (Alberta, 2003).

From the above explanations, it is known that Autism is a disorder of nerve development. This means that autism involves disorders of the brain in ways that can be observed through the behavior and emotional characteristics of a person. Many children who have autism spectrum disorders (ASD) but have a desire for knowledge, academic achievement, and the opportunity to prove their intellectual abilities (McMahon et al., 2016; Rysstad et al., 2020), therefore we as teachers must also be able to help students well in gaining their knowledge. One of the crucial ways to be taken in efforts to help ASD students is to provide them with proper teaching strategies. Teaching strategies, in this sense, refer to

the structures, systems, methods, techniques, procedures, and processes that a teacher uses during instruction as ways to help students learn better. In the field of English education, the subject that has been part of the present study's orientation, teaching strategies play a crucial factor as well, especially in terms of teaching ASD students. With proper English teaching strategies, teachers can help students build up their competences in analyzing, identifying problems, solving problems, and making decisions. By so doing, teaching autistic children is of course different from teaching other students in general because we must have specific guidelines for teaching different skills and strategies.

Regardless of specific orientations towards ASD and English education, in terms of teaching students with special needs, there have been a couple of studies working on the issues of teaching strategies. Those studies inform various strategies teachers can apply. For example, according to the study conducted by Tichá, Abery, McMaster, Avagyan, Karapetyan, and Paylozyan (2018), teachers should use the peer-assisted learning approach (PALS) or peer-tutoring strategy, cooperative learning, direct instruction strategy, and play-based strategy. Abery and Harutyunyan (2018) advocated for the use of constructive learning strategies in the classroom. Lawrence-Brown (2004) encouraged differentiated learning through the use of a variety of realistic methods in multicultural classrooms in order to address the needs of heterogeneous students. Subsequently, there are three studies, which could be identified, that have worked on the issues of teaching strategies for ASD students. Those are the studies conducted by Liliek (2018) on Learning Strategies of Autism Children In SLB, Tipton et al. (2017) on parent Strategies for educating ASD children, and (Murray, 2015) on practical teaching strategies for ASD students.

However, to the best of our knowledge, very few or no studies have been undertaken on English teaching strategies for ASD students. In the present study, we strive to fulfill this void by working on English teaching strategies for ASD students in SMPLB of Curup, Bengkulu, Indonesia. As the foregoing, fulfilling such a void is of this study's novelty which provides certain experiential insights concerning a few strategies which could be applied for teaching English specifically in the context of AS students. Learning from a couple of related theories, British Columbia Ministry of Education has offered some strategies which could be applied in teaching ASD students (see table 1).

Table 1. Teaching strategy for ASD students based on British Columbia Ministry of Education

No	Teaching strategy	Description	Indicator
1.	Learning to listen	Students will learn how to listen better if they listen well, to answer their teacher's questions. The student must be taught to face his teacher, look at one spot (it does not mean that he has to make contact with the eye), and put his hands in a planned position.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. by learning to listen to students will better understand how to respond the questions and understand what the teacher is talking about 2. Students listen what the learning materials that the teacher conveys
2.	Developing oral language comprehension	Use visual input to aid comprehension of oral speech. Visual aids help obtain and maintain the student's attention. Speaking with the corresponding objects, photos and other visual supports may assist in the understanding.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Visual input helps student understanding speech with relevant objects, images, and other visual support 2. Students are able to understand oral speech and maintain student attention.
3.	Developing oral language expression	In order to communicate well, the teacher reads the student expressions. Teachers and families must accept limited verbal and nonverbal efforts as communicative for students with limited verbal expressions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. students can communicate with the teacher when the teacher is able to understand the expressions of their students 4. students interact when learning with expressions and the teacher teaches students to express their adaptation to the conversation
4.	Developing conversation skills	Structured play opportunities that misrepresent the interests of the student. For the facilitation of attention, imitation, communication and interaction, modeling, physical prompts, visual signals and reinforcement are available. Structure interactions around and routine student preferences, to facilitate social communication.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitate social communication; arrange interactions around students' activity preferences and routines. such as: Modeling, physical drive, visual cues, and reinforcement can be used to facilitate attention, imitation, communication, and interaction.
5.	Echolalia	The student repeats, several months or years later, and then communicates what has just been heard or can repeat later Use consistent language style, Limit vocabulary and Please have instructions detailed then Solve tasks in easy steps Use yes or no to reply to the next question Give the child time to answer Speak in a calm voice and Increase social skills (e.g starting conversation keep conversation) (e.g starting conversation keep conversation)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students can avoid repeating questions 2. students will start to get used to answering questions instead of repeating questions
	Using	An augmentative communication system	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. increase the way students communicate

6.	alternative or augmentative communication systems	is any approach that supports, enhances, or adds to the way a person tells you something. It may be used with non-verbal students and also for students who have verbal expression, but appear unable to use speech in a functional way to express wants	well by adding communication approaches
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Table 1 presents some strategies for the development of communication amongst ASD children whose orientation includes: learning to listen, developing oral language comprehension, developing oral language expression, and developing conversation skills, Echolalia (Chiang, 2017). One more strategy for teaching autistic children based on the Autism PLB Teacher Learning Module Competency group C can be viewed in table 2:

Table 2. Teaching strategy for ASD students based on the Autism PLB Teacher Learning Module Competency group C

No	Teaching strategy	Description	Indicator
	Communication Skills Enhancement Through PECS Method	The PECS method combines a profound knowledge of speech therapy through understanding communication, in which students do not have a word interpretation, lack communication understanding, the aim of which is to spontaneously help children to exercise communication interactions, help children to understand how the communication works and to develop communication skills.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. children can express their thoughts well using the Picture Exchange Communication System 2. students use PECS adapted to the communication development of autistic children

Based on PLB Learning Teacher Module, the PECS method is a technique that combines in-depth knowledge of speech therapy by understanding communication where students cannot interpret words and lack understanding in communication. The goal is to help children spontaneously express communicative interactions, help children understand the function of communication, and develop abilities communicate (Lisdiana & Haryana, 2016). Based on the theoretical void presented above as well as sophisticated strategies for teaching ASD students displayed in tables 1 and 2, the present study is oriented towards investigating English teaching strategies for ASD students at SMPLB of Curup, Bengkulu, Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method (Ary et al., 2010; Fraenkel et al., 2012) in order to investigate English teaching strategies for ASD students at SMPLB of Curup, Bengkulu, Indonesia. The subject of this study was one English teacher at SMPLB of

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Curup chosen based on purposive sampling (Fraenkel et al., 2012). We chose only one English teacher at this school as the research subject because the teacher met the criteria as subject's requirements. The ideal requirements or criteria that we set to select the participant encompassed three points. First, the subject must be an active English teacher at SMPLB of Curup. Second, the subject must have adequate experiences in teaching English for ASD students. Third, the subject was willing to take part in providing detailed data required by this study. The English teacher who taught autism classes at SMPLB was the only English teacher, and the teacher met the subject's requirements. The teacher was an active English teacher at SMPLB of Curup, had been teaching English there for more than six years, and was willing to voluntarily join the research and provide the data as needed. Also, the teacher adequately understood English teaching strategies for ASD students at the junior high school level.

In gathering the data, we used document analysis and interviews. Document analysis was an alternative technique that we chose over observation because this study was undertaken during the governmental social distancing program due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Direct observation could not be made in light of social distancing rules. However limited, document analysis could be of ideal techniques since this technique was aligned with the online teaching mode the teacher held. In this case, we received any instructional documents (including lesson plans, book recourses, and all related instructional media, that the teacher utilized when teaching ASD students. The data garnered from document analysis were further used to be compared with the data obtained from interviews.

This study was qualitative in nature, so we did not validate the interview protocol because this study drew upon the epistemology of constructivist paradigm. As informed by Yazan (2015), in a qualitative study informed by the constructivist epistemology, validation is on the data but not on the instrument. Instrument validation only occurs if a study refers to a realistic paradigm, the paradigm which informs a quantitative study. Therefore, to validate the data of this study, we used the triangulation strategy in which we compared between the data gathered from document analysis and those of interviews in order to avoid bias. The credibility of data was also pursued by re-interviewing the participant until the data were sufficiently holistic and consistent. There were two main theories that we deployed to help guide us in our efforts to investigate English teaching strategies for ASD students. They referred to teaching strategies recommend by the British Columbia Ministry of Education and PLB Teacher Learning Module (See tables 1 and 2 for the details of the theories). The two theories become the bases or indicators leading us to construct interview protocol and document analysis guidance.

Document analysis was used to collect all documents the English teacher used in teaching ASD students. Those documents included syllabus, teaching materials, lesson plan, and teaching artifacts. To get the data about strategies, we used personal documents. Personal documents referred to any first-person narrative describing an individual's actions, experiences, and beliefs, personal documents included materials collected through interviewing. Thus, much of the data we discussed as transcripts would be considered personal documents. The data of the present study were analyzed using Miles' et al. (2014) interactive model which comprised data collection, data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusion. The researchers used document analysis and interviews as the techniques to reveal and collect data. The overall collected data were systematically grouped based on the coded themes discovered in order to represent any necessary information pertinent to each problem of this study during the data condensation process. Concerning data display, the properly grouped theme-based data were subsequently displayed or tabulated along with detailed elaborations that followed. Furthermore, the study's findings were discussed. In turn, in terms of drawing conclusions, a brief and representative summary relevant to the displayed and discussed data was written in the end.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The teaching strategies used by an English teacher for ASD students at SMPLB Curup

The research analyzed the document of English teachers and conducted in-depth interviews with autism teachers at SMPLB in teaching English to know the types of strategies used by the English teacher of SMPLB Curup for special education needs.

The first source of data was taken from document analysis of English teacher in teaching an English class, The data was taken on the 19th of November 2020 as for the documents used by the teacher, namely seven documents in the form of lesson plans, syllabus, teacher's notes, props and, books, visual aids, learning aids, letters and number cards, which were usually used interchangeably at every hour of English lessons. The results of data analysis could be viewed in table 3.

Table 3. The results of the data analysis

Document	Type of document	Note
Lesson plan	Lesson plans made by teachers who teach at SMPLB contain strategies, steps, assessments	- Echolalia, - Developing oral language comprehension - Communication Skills Enhancement Through PECS Method
Syllabus	The syllabus contains material that the teacher will teach students during one year	- Developing oral language comprehension - Communication Skills Enhancement Through PECS Method
Teacher's notes	Teacher notes written in notebooks for students after teaching in autism class	- Echolalia - Communication Skills Enhancement Through PECS Method

Books	English books and color books	- Communication Skills Enhancement Through PECS Method
visual aids	Sculptures and objects around the classroom	- Developing oral language comprehension
Learning aids	Whiteboards, computers, video animation, projectors and audio learning	- Developing oral language comprehension - Communication Skills Enhancement Through PECS Method
Letter and number cards	Origami paper, pictures suitable for learning and display cards	- Developing oral language comprehension - Communication Skills Enhancement Through PECS Method

Based on the table of document above, the research found that the strategies used by the teacher were three of seven theories. The lesson plan contained teaching steps by avoiding the children from repeating words or echolalia, such as when the children repeated a word more than five times, the teacher would give the children a picture or color that could make them stop repeating the word. The teacher also developed oral language comprehension and then used color drawings and picture books with the communication skills enhancement through PECS strategy.

In the syllabus section, it portrayed what media were used in helping children learn so that the researchers could find out that the teacher used two strategies, namely Developing oral language comprehension and also Communication Skills Enhancement Through the PECS Method. Teacher's notes were used by the teacher when there was something that needed to be improved either in the learning process or when there was a child's behavior in interactions with friends and teachers, and then the teacher also took a note of the media that had been used previously as well as those which would be used later on.

The visual aids that teacher used usually depended on the material to be delivered to students to help understand and make students communicate well with their teachers. Learning aids were used when the teacher delivered a difficult material to make it more interesting, such as an animated video containing lessons on the names of animals and fruit. Letter and number cards were needed in every English class to help children understand what the teacher was saying. The following tabulated presentation of interview results serves as to confirm the data of document analysis.

Table 4. The interview result of teaching strategies used by an English Teacher of Autism strategy

No.	Strategy	Indicator	Interview result
1.	Learning to listen	Students understand what the teacher is talking about and how to respond to the teacher's questions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The teacher does not use the learning to listen to strategy because they are more obedient to the teacher and the specialty of these autistic students, they like to learn even though understand learning is not easy. Teaching autistic students is a strict system b. To attract students' attention, the teacher makes a sound like hitting a blackboard or table and has to call out the child's name, c. If the child is still not focused, he must approach while calling his name and tell the child to focus on learning
2.	Developing oral language comprehension	Developing oral language comprehension can be assisted by visual aids to increase students' understanding.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The aids used to help children with autism in learning and communicating are cards and pictures so that students understand better 2. The process of learning to develop children's spoken language using visual aids and the teacher inviting children to speak by exemplifying then asking students to repeat it because autistic children do not understand how to use a dictionary so the teacher must have the media in developing children's spoken language.
3.	Developing oral language expression	The teacher is able to understand students' expressions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To find out what children with autism are talking about, the teacher usually repeats the question very slowly and then asks the autistic child to answer it, not by looking at the students' expressions. Because in communicating with children with autism there is not too much, so it must be little by little so that he understands what we are talking about, if through expressions they usually only show like or dislike b. The way autistic children speak if they have difficulty explaining the meaning is to draw or write the appropriate words so that autistic children will draw something they want to talk about do not use expressions.
4.	Developing conversation skills	The teacher facilitates students' social communication by establishing interactions related to their routines.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The teachers usually do not use English communication activities to develop social communication for autistic students such as English communication activities with students' daily routines because it is difficult to build English interactions between autistic students.
5.	Echolalia	Teachers help autistic students with echolalia answer questions rather than repeating questions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For children experiencing echolalia, the teacher must pay attention to children who often repeat words by asking students to say different words in English that make the child not repeat the same word, then changing the sitting position of autistic children is also necessary to avoid echolalia.
6.	Using alternative or augmentative communication systems (AAC)	Increase the way students communicate well by adding communication approaches.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The approach taken by the teacher not needed at Curup High School, the teacher usually understands the character of the students better because the autistic teacher at SMPLB has taught the same autistic students since SDLB and the teacher really understands the character of the students and is also firm in teaching students with autism, 2. Autistic students usually use language and writing when speaking, so if they only use spoken language, students will have difficulty communicating
7.	Communication Skills Enhancement Through PECS Method	Children can express their thoughts by using Picture Exchange Communication System adapted to the development of communication with autistic children.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In teaching students with autism really need pictures and cards to increase understanding of what the teacher says in the teaching and learning process because if you use only oral, the child will be confused and find it difficult to focus on learning. 2. In using pictures, either cards or colors, the teacher usually explains the learning material very simply and the teacher asks the students to repeat what the teacher said and the teacher will start asking the children one by one in a language that is easy for students to understand.

The researchers discovered some types of strategies used by the English teacher for autism students based on the results of interviews. The first step was to learn to listen. Because students were more obedient to the teacher, and this is of the autistic children's characteristics, they liked to learn even though they found it difficult to understand what was learned. Teaching children with autism was a rigid and unyielding system. To attract students' attention, the teacher must make sounds that could attract students' attention, such as hitting the blackboard or table, and had to call the children's names, at which point the children would begin paying attention to the teacher. If the children were still not paying attention, the teacher should approach while calling their names and tell them to concentrate on what was learned.

The second step was to improve oral language comprehension. The teacher used visual aids to help autistic children learn and communicate. The aids used to help autistic children learn and communicate were cards and pictures so that students understood better. The teacher then invited children to speak by exemplifying the word in English and then asked students to repeat it, because autistic children did not understand how to use a dictionary, so the teacher must have media in developing children's communicative competence.

The third step was to improve one's oral language expression. When the teacher tried to figure out what children with autism were talking about, the teacher usually repeated the question very slowly and clearly before asking the autistic children to answer it, rather than looking at the students' expressions. It was because communicating with autistic children could not be done too frequently due to their nature which was easily confused. Communication must be established gradually so that they could understand what was saying.

Then, if the teacher was having difficulty understanding and communicating with autistic students, autistic children would usually draw or write appropriate words so that autistic children would draw something they wanted to talk about rather than through expressions.

a. Developing conversation skills

In developing the communication skills of students with autism in speaking English it is very difficult if social interactions are carried out in order to improve students' communication skills by communicating English between friends, autistic students are often confused. so in improving students' ability to communicate is to teach them how to start conversations and answer questions.

b. Echolalia

Echolalia is one of the bad habits of autism students, namely repeating what is being discussed over and over again for a few moments or even several days. The teacher helps autistic students by answering questions rather than repeating questions. For children who experience echolalia, the teacher must pay more attention to children who often repeat words by asking students to say different words in English that make children not repeat the same words, to minimize echolalia in autistic students, it is also necessary to change the sitting position of autism can arise a new atmosphere for them and to avoid echolalia.

c. Using alternative or augmentative communication systems

The teacher of autism students at SMPLB in Improving the way students communicate well does not add a communication approach, because the approach taken by the teacher is usually by getting to know and understanding the character of his child and then having to be firm in teaching children with autism during the learning process.

Autism students in SMPLB have been taught by one teacher autism since SDLB became a teacher who really understands the character of students and how to respond to students in learning. Then in the development of language communication students with autism usually use language and writing when speaking so if only use spoken language students will have difficulty communicating.

d. Communication Skills Enhancement Through PECS Method

The teacher teaches that students with autism really need pictures and cards in the learning process to increase understanding of what the teacher says in the teaching and learning process because if you use it orally, students will be confused and have difficulty focusing on learning. Then in using image media, either cards or colors, the teacher usually explains the learning material very simply and the teacher asks the students to repeat what the teacher said and the teacher will start asking the children one by one in a language that is easy for students to understand.

Based on the explanation above the English teacher used three strategies in teaching students with autism, the strategies are developing oral language comprehension, developing oral language expression, echolalia, communication skills enhancement through the PECS method.

The implementation of teaching strategies for ASD students at SMPLB Curup

Based on document analysis interview result, the English teacher used three strategies in teaching students with autism, the strategies are developing oral language comprehension, echolalia, communication skills enhancement through the PECS method.

a. Developing oral language comprehension

To improve student understanding, the teacher employs visual aids such as cards, pictures, surrounding objects, colors, computer media, videos, and props. Developing spoken language occurs in a variety of ways during the learning process, including: The teacher employs a variety of teaching aids. The teacher places two or more objects at a significant distance from each other on the student's table. The teacher encourages students to speak by demonstrating words in English. The teacher then asks students to repeat it.

b. Echolalia

Autistic students with Echolalia always repeat what was said for a few moments. The teacher can help students with autism by paying more attention to children who frequently repeat words. The teacher uses English words such as "apple, banana, and coconut." The teacher instructs the students to say one word, and then the next word in English is different, causing the child not to repeat the same word. Instead of repeating questions, the teacher directs the child to answer them.

c. Communication Skills Enhancement through PECS Method

Students with autism require pictures and cards to help them understand what the teacher says during the teaching and learning process. As previously stated, the teacher explains the learning material very simply by using cards and pictures based on the learning material. The teacher requests that students repeat what the teacher has said. The teacher begins by asking the children one by one, using pictures and simple language.

Discussion

The teaching strategies used by an English teacher for ASD students at SMPLB Curup

The condition of the autism students in SMPLB Curup based on the researcher investigation, there are five autism students in one class and have different characteristics and conditions, some of them have difficulty understanding what the teacher is saying and some are emotionally unstable.

The strategies used by the teacher were three of the seven theories, as well as many forms of modification made by the teacher in their use. In the theory presented by Chiang (2017) that researchers use, there are seven theories they are Learning to listen, Developing oral language comprehension, Developing oral language expression, Developing conversation skills, Echolalia, Using alternative or augmentative communication systems, Communication Skills Enhancement Through PECS Method. Meanwhile, the finding above shows that the types of strategy that used by the English teachers in SMPLB Curup for autism student.

In teaching students with autism, teachers SMPLB prefer strategies that adjust the situation of students and prefer to adapt existing strategies, for example in the second strategy Developing an understanding of spoken language in this strategy the teacher uses learning aids and also singing songs and exciting stories to attract attention students towards learning material.

The implementation of teaching strategies for ASD students at SMPLB Curup

Implementation is to make something that has been officially decided start to happen or be used (Hornby, 1974). It means the application as an action to carry out the plan that has been made. Mulyasa (2008) in his book implementation KTSP says that the implementation is a process the application of ideas, concepts, policies or innovation in practical action that have an impact, either in the form of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. And implementation is put something in to effect.

Based on the result of interview and document analysis to the English teachers, the learning process is carried out according to the plan that has been made, and according to the development of the autistic students themselves. For example, in the floor time learning process the child is asked to do activities on the floor, such as crawling, and the teacher also performs activities for their psychomotor, namely, cooperates, asks friends. The essence of making a good plan for teaching autistic students is also echoed in the study conducted by Romadlon (2018) that made use of speech therapy as a way to get students engaged more in learning. Her study demonstrated that the well-planned speech therapy contribute to a greater extent of autistic students' engagement in learning English. Also as a part of good learning plan, Setiadi (2017) recommended that teachers make a good plan to prepare a balanced degree of teacher's talk to autistic students for the sake of attaining ideal learning outcomes.

Developing oral language comprehension, the first step the teacher takes is that the teacher uses several props to help students understand what the teacher says, and then the teacher places two or more objects on the student's table, at a considerable distance from each other. The teacher places the object far away so that the two objects are visible and the

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teacher begins to invite the child to talk by exemplifying the words in English then the teacher asks the students to repeat it, in students who experience echolalia, the teacher will pay more attention to the students who often repeat the words, then the teacher says a few words in English such as "apple, banana, coconut." Then the teacher asks the students to say one word and after that the next word is different in English so that the child does not repeat the same word. Only after that the Teacher directs children to answer questions rather than repeating questions. The use of objects by the teacher to trigger students to communicate basically echoes the importance of using media as to promote autistic students to communicate. If learned from a previous study conducted by Sari Puspita et al. (2019), there are some more media which can creatively and contextually be utilized by teachers in efforts to help autistic students learn. Those media are videos, pictures, matching exercise, and real objects. The last mentioned media, real objects, are those which are dominantly used by the teacher in the present study. The essence of using media as such is also supported by the study conducted by Padmadewi and Artini (2017)

With respect to Communication Skills Enhancement Through PECS Method, the teacher first explains the learning material very simply using cards and pictures according to the learning material, and then the teacher asks the students to repeat what the teacher said according to the picture used and the teacher will start asking the children one by one using pictures in easy language understood. This set of finding is in some ways echoed in the study undertaken by Padmadewi and Artini (2017) and Sari Puspita et al. (2019) in which visual media such as cards and pictures are very contributive to get autistic students engaged more in learning.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that there were five sub-aspect which is found in the interval positive difficult to the students which are grammatical items, vocabulary, learners' behavior, feedback, and organization. However, mechanic is found negative based on the result of questionnaire. Organization was the most difficult aspect for seventh grade students of SMP Sint Carolus Bengkulu. Finally, the strategies which the students choose to overcome these difficulties are mastering vocabulary and learning from other sources such as books or the internet.

Based on the conclusion above, there are some suggestions proposed in this study. (1) It is suggested for the English Teacher Organization or MGMP to conduct workshops and seminars regarding discussions or presentations of matter which is related to writing skills in hope to help the teachers overcoming the problem they faced in the classroom especially

about students' difficulty in writing, (2) It is suggested for teacher to understand deeply about students' difficulties in writing, and (3) it is suggested to next researcher to conduct similar research in larger scope, and the correlation between students' difficulties and their ability in writing.

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