

UNIVERSIDAD MAYOR
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS SOCIALES Y ARTES
ESCUELA DE EDUCACIÓN



How Role-play affects students with autism spectrum disorder and their active participation in the classroom in the context of secondary education in Chile from the perspective of teachers

Trabajo de investigación para optar al Grado Académico de
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Estudiantes:

Araneda Terán María José

González Gehrmann Francisca Alejandra

Moreno Leyton Constanza Francisca Isidora

Pedraza Toro María Jesús

Dr. Miqueias Rodrigues

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Resumen

Esta investigación exploró la intersección del Trastorno del Espectro Autista (TEA), el Role-play como método de enseñanza y la participación activa de estudiantes con TEA en la educación. La investigación pretendió analizar cómo el Role-play afecta la participación activa de estudiantes con trastorno del espectro autista desde la perspectiva del docente, esta se llevó a cabo a través de un cuestionario de trece preguntas abiertas, dirigido a profesores de enseñanza media de tres colegios. Los resultados de este instrumento mostraron que las características más notorias de los estudiantes con TEA son los problemas sensoriales, habilidades sociales débiles y la necesidad por rutinas. Además, se demostró un entendimiento correcto por parte de los profesores sobre el Role-play, y por último, se evidenció que los profesores modifican las planificaciones de clase junto con las evaluaciones para beneficiar a estos estudiantes. La discusión verificó el efecto positivo que tiene el Role-play en la participación activa de los estudiantes con Trastorno del Espectro Autista, siempre y cuando se cumplan las condiciones óptimas en el entorno del proceso de enseñanza.

Palabras clave: Trastorno del Espectro Autista (TEA), Role-play, Participación activa.

Abstract

This research explored the intersection of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Role-play as a teaching method and the active participation of students with ASD in education. The research aimed to analyze how Role-play affects the active participation of students with autism spectrum disorder from the teacher's perspective. This was carried out through a questionnaire of thirteen open questions, aimed at secondary school teachers from three schools. The results of this instrument showed that the most notable characteristics of students with ASD are sensory problems, weak social skills, and the need for routines. In addition, a correct understanding by teachers about Role-play was demonstrated, and lastly, it was evidenced that teachers modify class planning along with evaluations to benefit these students. The discussion verified the positive effect that Role-play has on the active participation of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, as long as the optimal conditions are met in the environment of the teaching process.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Role-play, Active Participation.

HOW ROLE-PLAY AFFECTS STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER AND THEIR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE CLASSROOM IN THE CONTEXT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN CHILE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TEACHERS

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

The most important phenomenon in this research is autism spectrum disorder, which Miles and McCathren (2003) define completely on the basis of impairments in social interaction, impairments in communication, and repetitive and stereotypic behaviors. In addition, Role-play is a teaching method where students must act or do performing activities in order to learn in a more meaningful way. Active participation, according to Godfrey (2013) is a method that allows students to participate effectively in classes and also manage their own learning. The connection between Role-play and active participation in education lies in the fact that Role-play encourages students to actively engage, participate, and immerse themselves in the learning process. Role-play provides a dynamic and experiential approach where students assume roles, explore different perspectives, apply knowledge in practical situations, collaborate with peers, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Through active participation in Role-play, students become active learners who are actively involved in their own learning journey. Role-play can be beneficial for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) because it provides a structured and safe environment for practicing social skills, emotional regulation, flexibility, theory of mind development, generalization of skills, and building self-confidence and self-expression. According to Perabá (2019) inclusion offers an education for any student with the same opportunities as another person. Differently, integration is defined as “Seeks the improvement of people with disabilities without taking into account the rest of the people who, although they do not have disabilities, do have diversities.” (Perabá, 2019). Based on the definitions, role-play focuses on inclusion as it gives students equal opportunities to participate in the classroom activities.

Taking into account the previous concepts, our purpose of investigation in this research is to throw light into the relationship between autism spectrum disorder, Role-play and active participation, that is, how Role-play affects the active participation of students on the autism spectrum disorder from the perspective of the teacher.

Objectives

General

The objective of this investigation is to analyze how Role-play affects the active participation of students with autism spectrum disorder from the perspective of the teacher.

Specific

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To throw light into how Role-play affects the students' active participation in general and for students with autism spectrum.
2. To unveil the actions made by the school community to help students with autism spectrum.
3. To have an understanding of the vision of Role-play according to teachers who do implement it.

Relevance of the study

Due to the lack of knowledge on the effects of Role-play on the active participation of students with autism spectrum in classes, there is a need to understand and fill the gap of knowledge between the two variables, that is, how Role-play affects active participation in general and how it affects students with autism spectrum specifically. Thus, this investigation sought to demonstrate through the advantages and disadvantages of using Role-play how it affects the active participation of students with spectrum autism disorder.

Theoretical Framework

Over the past few years, there has been a growing concern about making education inclusive in the Chilean educational system, as policies seem to have encountered barriers to their implementation. More specifically, the inclusion of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (henceforth, ASD) seems to have faced the most implementation difficulties. This thesis analyzed and discussed how Role-play affects students with autism spectrum disorder and their active participation in the classroom in the context of secondary education in Chile from the perspective of teachers.

Role-play

Role-play is defined as a recreational activity that entertains, amuses, and enables participants to acquire new knowledge in a significant way. Conforme and Torres (2013, as cited in Rojas Encalada & Villafuerte, 2018) explain that implementing RP in the classroom can help develop English as a Foreign Language (henceforth, EFL) speaking skills. This learning method works as a form of storytelling, and helps children create an imaginary world within the real world. As a consequence, storytelling as a learning method helps teachers to educate in a more creative way and adds the students' imagination to the process. Additionally, it is a great recreational activity that can encourage creativity, improve language fluency, and promote student interaction during class. According to Maley and Duff (2005, as cited in Cutiño, Díaz & Otárola 2019) Role-play helps to lower the threshold of unconscious resistance to learning a foreign language, and to foster more open, creative work in subsequent activities. It is important to note, after creating a safe environment in the classroom, that this methodology becomes a friendlier experience for students because there is enough confidence to act in front of others without feeling shame or afraid to do so. According to Rojas Encalada and Villafuerte (2018), Role-play is a valuable tool to improve the inclusion of students with developmental disabilities. When promoting empathy, fomenting communication, and creating an inclusive environment, RP can help students with special needs to feel more integrated and supported in their education.

Game-based Learning

Game-based learning (henceforth, GML), according to Trybus (2015, as cited in Pho & Dinscore, 2015), “refers to the borrowing of certain gaming principles and applying them to real-life settings to engage users” (p. 1). One of the most important aspects of game based learning, according to Presky, (2003, as cited in Cárdenas, Veliz & Véliz, 2020), is the motivation, entertainment, engagement, and enjoyment that games offer so that classes become more attractive for students. Role-play is part of GML as they both can be effective tools in the teaching process for high school students. Some of the benefits are: active learning, which can help them better understand and retain concepts; and collaboration, which enables students to develop important social and communication skills through games and Role-play. This benefit frequently involves teamwork and partnership; real-world application since it can provide real-life situations for them to apply their acquired knowledge as well as help them better understand the relevance of the learned material. According to Cárdenas, Véliz and Véliz (2020), GML promotes more engagement in the class since it can make learning funnier, which leads to a better retention of information, and last but not least, differentiation, a way to distinguish and meet the needs of diverse learners. Overall, Role-play and game-based learning can be incorporated in the learning and teaching process and can be a valuable way of enhancing student engagement and understanding.

Developmental disabilities

Developmental disabilities (Henceforth, DD) have been described as a group of conditions caused by a deficiency in areas of learning, language, behavior, or physical areas (CDC, 2022). These conditions begin during the developmental period (DP) and can affect people's daily functioning, and generally last throughout life (CDC, 2022). Additionally, according to CDC (2022), there exist seven types of developmental disabilities: Autism Spectrum Disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), infantile cerebral palsy, intellectual disability, learning disability, hearing loss, and visual deficiency. The seven different types of DD named before share three of the most serious difficulties from which students suffer the most. The first is their inability to follow someone else's speech, as the teacher's or other classmates', for example; the second one is their lack of social and communication

skills; and the third one aims at their difficulties to help them stay focused during class time.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

A neurodevelopmental disorder associated with the presence of social-communication deficits and restricted and repetitive behaviors (Ousley & Cermak, 2014), ASD is a spectrum of associated disorders in which individuals can exhibit a variety of characteristics and symptoms, for example, difficulties in communicating and socializing, repetitive or compulsive behavior patterns, sensory sensitivity and difficulties processing sensory information, difficulties in understanding emotions and intentions of others, and a tendency to focus on specific details and patterns. Furthermore, according to the dsm-v APA, ASD refers to a persistent difficulty in the development of the socialization process (social interaction and social communication), along with a restricted pattern of behaviors and interests, within which include sensory restrictions. (2013 as cited in Toledo & Basulto, 2020). It is important to remember that each person with autism is unique and may exhibit a unique combination of characteristics and symptoms. Their characteristics can vary significantly from one person to another, but those mentioned previously are considered the most common.

According to Ousley and Cermak (2014), autistic spectrum disorder can be subtyped in two groups. The first one is according to cognitive and language abilities. As it is mentioned in the name, it refers to a pattern of strong nonverbal reasoning, relative to verbal reasoning. Both subtypes deal with problem-solving, but the difference is that the nonverbal reasoning refers to the use of pictures and diagrams, while the verbal reasoning refers to the use of words and letters. The second subtype is according to genetic and medical conditions. Investigations into the genetics of ASD have shown that “up to 20% or more of individuals have been identified as having a genetic or genomic disorder and that over 100 known associations exist, which also overlaps with known causes of intellectual disability” (Ousley & Cermak, 2014, p. 23).

Active Learning

According to Prieto (2005), class participation is understood in education as a didactic strategy to acquire knowledge and critical thinking through challenges and guide students to manage their own learning. This strategy is essential for learning in view of the fact that knowledge is best acquired when it involves student activity. As it was mentioned before, when students participate during the classes, they become responsible for their own learning and knowledge acquisition which leads to improving their self-esteem and motivation. As reported by Prieto (2005), creating a habit of constant class participation inside of the classroom develops the active learning of students.

According to Godfrey (2013), active learning is a method of education that allows students to participate effectively in class. It takes students beyond the role of being a listener and note taker and permits students to take some direction and initiative during the class with their acquisition of the knowledge. The role of the teacher in the active learning method is to be a facilitator, a guide for the students and allow them to discover the materials, contents of the classes, by giving them their own space.

Bonwell and Eison (1991, as cited in Godfrey, 2013) established that strategies which foster active learning have five common characteristics: Students are involved in class beyond listening, there is less emphasis on transmitting information and more emphasis on developing the skills of the students, the students develop critical thinking such as analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluation, they are also involved in activities and lastly, the significant emphasis is on the exploration of students' values and attitudes.

Fidalgo, Sein-Echaluce and García-Peñalvo (2019) describes how the implementation of an active methodology affects the active participation of students in the classroom through the execution of a spiral cycle of educational process, formed by four phases. This approach differs from the normally used linear cycle of educational process which consists of only three, preparation, final evaluation and feedback on the evaluation. As the former cycle, it has an extra phase, which is the results of micro-works students must do before the final evaluation. The study developed by Fidalgo, Sein-Echaluce and García-Peñalvo (2019) concludes that there are no major changes in two of the three variables analyzed, when comparing the methodology that was being used before and the new method was applied by the researchers, in the students' behavior nor their academic results, except for an increment in the attendance to classes.

Students' participation in schools has decreased within the classroom due to the traditional and slow pace of approaches and methods implemented by teachers, which prevents knowing and listening to what students think, feel, and learn. These approaches and methods implemented by teachers can be considered as clientelist participation, which according to Anderson; Heras, De La Riestra and Burin, obeys the rationality of private companies, in which citizens can participate but under methodological proposals constructed externally to the community in which they will be installed, and that require an expert-authority to materialize. (2002; 2010, as cited in Ascorra, López & Urbina, 2016) If we translate it into the educational context, it means that students can participate in classes while following the structures already created by the establishment and must obey the teacher.

The participation of the students in class allows them to improve their critical thinking, to visualize their own understanding about the reality that they live within their school context as, through this, they manage to define themselves, what they think, experience, and expect from the educational system.

Even though there are different types of participation inside a classroom, for example, verbal, physical, collaborative, decision making, among others, it cannot be ignored that it is not only necessary, but also essential in the classroom if the purpose of the schools is training autonomous, active, and responsible people for their personal development.

2. METHODOLOGY

Methodological Design

To carry out the study, qualitative research was applied. According to Gerring (2017), qualitative work is expressed in natural language, employs small samples, draws on cases chosen in an opportunistic or purposive fashion, and lastly is often focused on particular individuals, events, and contexts, lending itself to an idiographic style of analysis. As the aim of this investigation is to get to an understanding of the active participation of students in the classroom using Role-play as a teaching method, and its impact on students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder through the data obtained from the teachers of those high school students in Chile, the study explored

and explained the relation between the three issues and how they are perceived by the teachers.

According to (Aspers & Corte, 2019) qualitative research is a

“multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives”. (p. 142)

Considering the provided definition, it was concluded that qualitative research represented the most suitable approach for the study. This choice was driven by the desire to conduct an in-depth exploration of the research subjects, who happened to be students. Qualitative research allows one to gain a comprehensive understanding of these students' experiences, particularly within the natural and familiar context of the school.

Furthermore, it is acknowledged the significance of involving experienced professionals in the research, specifically teachers. Teachers, as individuals working at the forefront of education, held valuable insights into the daily challenges and successes of students. By including the teachers' perspectives, a more holistic view of the educational context can be achieved, ultimately enhancing the quality and depth of the research findings.

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interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:2)

Participants and background

The Metropolitan Region of Santiago de Chile was the location of the study, which included ten teachers of 3 different schools. These instructors work with high school students with ASD in their respective schools. This experience provided them with the necessary insights to offer their opinion on the matter under examination and allowed them to be able to answer the questionnaire with their knowledge and experience in the topic. Worth noting, that all study participants were volunteers and had complete freedom to express their opinions without outside influence or pressure. Additionally, the questionnaire went through an examination, which was conducted by the “*Jefe de UTP*” (Head of Technical-Pedagogical Unit) of each establishment, to decide if the instrument could be carried out in said schools and later on, sent to each teacher whom we ask for their participation, in this case teachers of the Spanish Language, Specialized Reading and Writing, Musical Creation and Composition, Musical Arts, English Language and the head teacher of each high school grade.

Procedure

The questionnaire was prepared through Google Forms along with physical copies (said documents created on Word) for the participants to choose the form they prefer to answer more comfortably. The questionnaire is reckoned to answer each specific objective of the investigation as follows: Questions 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 to throw light into how Roleplay affects the students' active participation in general and for students with autism spectrum as stated in the first specific objective. Questions 10 to 13 unveil the actions made by the school community to help students with autism spectrum, based on the second specific objective. Furthermore, questions 3 and 11 correspond to the third and last specific objective which submits an understanding of the vision of Role-play according to teachers who do not implement it. Teachers from high school were chosen specifically to fill in the questionnaire, based on the subjects they teach, which are: Spanish Language, Specialized Reading and Writing, Musical Creation and Composition, Musical Arts, and English Language as well as each head

teacher from each grade. They had the opportunity to answer the questions from June 5 until June 12. Due to the delay of the participants in answering, the results analysis took place on September 1st, with a total of 10 answers. The questionnaire is estimated to have taken the participants between thirty to forty-five minutes to complete.

Instruments

The Questionnaire contains thirteen questions. The 1st and 2nd ones are formulated in order to get specific characteristics of the students with autism spectrum disorder. The 3rd and 11th one was asked in order to get an idea of the understanding teachers have about role-play. The 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th questions give different perspectives on how active participation works with the students of each teacher. Questions 8 to 10 are focused on the characteristics of the behaviors of the students with ASD in class and methodologies, methods, and approaches related to the topic, lastly, questions 12, and 13 inform of the actions taken by the educational community to help the students. Teachers were given an entire week to answer the form, and at the moment of answering, they took approximately thirty to forty-five minutes. The questionnaire was carefully designed to gather information that could be used to improve the educational experience for students with ASD. The responses provided by the teachers will be analyzed to identify areas where improvements can be made and to develop strategies for providing better support for these students. Overall, the questionnaire was a valuable tool for gathering information about the experiences of teachers working with students with ASD. The results will be used to develop more effective teaching strategies and to provide better support for these students in the future.

Ethical considerations

Before the instruments were implemented, each participant was provided with a letter of informed consent (refer to Appendix C for the Informed Consent). The letter stated that participation was voluntary and anonymous to safeguard their privacy, and their personal information would neither be required nor used for any other purpose. Participants signed the informed consent letter to confirm their willingness to

participate and authorize the use of their answers in the study. The questionnaire was validated by the thesis's guide teacher and the degree coordinator.

Analysis plan

The guidelines for the analysis plan provide a framework for interpreting the data collected in the study. The methodology used in this study is qualitative research, which is an appropriate tool for exploring complex and nuanced topics such as the impact of active participation on students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). By utilizing a questionnaire with both specific and open-ended questions, the researchers were able to gather rich data from the teachers about their experiences with ASD students and their perceptions of their active participation in the classroom.

Additionally, the choice to conduct the study in four schools is significant as it allows for a localized and contextualized understanding of the topic yet ensures the study with different backgrounds. This approach recognizes the importance of considering cultural and societal factors that may influence the experiences of ASD students in this particular community.

It is also worth noting that the specific questions asked in the questionnaire reflect a deep understanding of the unique challenges and strengths of ASD students. By asking about the students' preferred learning environments, communication styles, and skill development, the study seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of how to best support these students in the classroom.

Overall, the methodology used in this study is well-suited to the research questions at hand and provides a thoughtful and thorough approach to understanding the experiences of ASD students and their active participation in the classroom.

3. RESULTS

This section presents the results of the analysis of the data collected. The results are shown per research objective. Figures are used to summarize the results, followed by a description of the information.

Research objective 1: To throw light into how Role-play affects the students' active participation in general and for students with autism spectrum.

Figure 1 below shows the results regarding the answers to the first nine questions of the questionnaire applied. A participation chart with nine affirmations and examples for each, which gives information in relation to Research Objective 1.

Figure 1

Role-play and students' active participation in general and for students with autism spectrum.

	Yes	No	Examples
Most notorious characteristics.	✓		Loud sounds, problems socializing, routines.
They work better individually.	✓		Individual work is easier for them compared to group work.
Affects students' active participation.	✓		Socializing problems affect them participating in classes
Role-play, positive change in active participation.	✓		As it is a routine activity, it makes them more comfortable.
Consistent in the way they		✓	It depends on their interests and

participate in class.			their emotional states.
ASD students' active participation is always manifested in the same way.		✓	They answer out loud, they don't answer out loud but they have all the answers written in their notebooks, they offer to help inside the room instead of answering when asked, always raise their hands and wait for confirmation to answer.
One of the hardest skills to develop is "speaking".	✓		skills in comparison, listening, reading or writing. In soft skills such as teamwork or time management.
Doing handicraft is easy for them.		✓	paint, make origami or make models.

As can be seen in Figure 1, according to the answers to question 1 the most notorious characteristics in students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder were sensory processing difficulties correlated to noise sensitivity as well as visual reactivity to various images, weak social skills when socializing and interacting with other people, even their environment, and repetitive (sometimes restrictive) patterns which can also be understood as routines. Other characteristics named by the teachers were problems with the language, for instance, correct verbalization, and sudden movements due to nervousness. For question 2, 6 teachers were in favor of individual activities, on the contrary only 1 was in favor of group activities and 3 explained how their behavior in both situations depended on their emotional state along with their interest in the content and/or the class. The main characteristics in Question 4 as to what mostly affects the active participation of students with ASD was in relation to social skills such as socializing, interacting, and being included by peers, sensitivity to noise and disorder in the classroom which leads to anxiety, and lastly, changes in routines. In terms of positive changes due to Role-play in Question 5, all teachers involved explained how it had a positive impact but highlighted the importance of anticipating the activity, giving clear and concrete instructions, as well as constantly monitoring the process. According to the answers to Question 6, the consistent participation of students with ASD depended mostly on their emotional state, followed by their interest in the contents and the class, another important aspect that had to be taken into consideration is their involvement with the teacher. The manifestation of the way in which students decide to participate according to Question 7, it was said mostly to depend on their emotional state and interests in the topics, the highlight lies in how each student decides to manifest themselves differentially, for some speaking aloud will be difficult due to their social skills, other can have strict patterns they must follow such as keeping order inside the classroom or only answering if being asked in specific, on the contrary other students may not follow any class rule, to which the teacher established that recognizing the actions and reactions of the students is the most important. Question 8, evidently showed how speaking is the most difficult skill to develop, followed by writing and group work. Reading, soft skills, and handwork were also mentioned. Lastly, for Question 9, 4 teachers explained how handwork is difficult for their students due to their poor fine motor skills, 3 teachers established that it was helpful for students as it was a way for them to express themselves more clearly

and the last 3 teachers said they didn't do that type of activities in their classes or that it depended in the student.

In summary, the main characteristics of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder recognized by teachers were sensory problems, weak social skills, and the need for repetitive patterns or routines. Individual work is best for these types of students instead of group work. For these types of students, speaking, group work and writing are the hardest skills to develop, as well as hand work since their fine motor skills are debilitated. Role-play is correctly understood by teachers and used by them as it facilitates the delivery of content and helps to retain the content, it was also positively reviewed by them but the highlight was on anticipating and monitoring the activity. The active participation of students with ASD is negatively affected by their social skills, noise or disorder inside the classroom, and changes in routine. The consistency of their participation depends purely on their emotional state and the interest they have in the class. The way they manifest their participation depends on the previous two topics and it was highlighted that the teacher must learn to recognize the actions and reactions of their students to understand if they are participating or not.

Research objective 2: To unveil the actions made by the school community to help students with autism spectrum.

Figure 2 below shows the results regarding answers 10-13 of the questionnaire applied. A participation chart with nine affirmations and examples for each, which gives information in relation to Research Objective 2.

Figure 2

Actions by the school community to help students with autism spectrum.

	Yes	No	Example
Any method, methodology or approach that works best	✓		Personalized work and based on their interests.
Implementation of Role-play in the classroom.	✓		The majority of those surveyed claim to have used role-play.
Modification of the planning.	✓		The content is based on their interest and less vocabulary is taught.
Modification or adjustment to evaluations.	✓		Time, oral tests, more explicit and literal questions

As shown in Figure 2, Question 10 about which method, methodology, or approach has worked best in their cases, expressed personalized and focalized work as well as grammar structures and constructivism, which has direct relation to the topic, as the best strategies to be used with these types of students due to the fact that it makes the experience in classes more significant.

For Question 11, 6 teachers said they had implemented Role-play in their classes for the various following reasons: For students to have a better understanding of the contents, the need to seek and include other experts such as “Differential education teachers”, to help the students get a better understanding of the language structures, as a way to do presentations and using dialogues, lastly, reviewing vocabulary and content in general. 4 teachers said to not have implemented the method because they would need extra help, but in the case of implementing it they

would do it with dialogues, symbolic games and to immerse the students in real-life situations that can be meaningful to them. According to the answers to Question 12 about the implementation of modifications to class planning, 8 teachers explained to have done it in the following ways: Curricula modification, fragmentation, according to their students' interests, focalized work for the speaking skill, giving less vocabulary, less academic load in general, extra monitoring and modifying the time given to answer, lowering grade scales and simplifying questions. 2 teachers said they had not done modifications, only one gave a reason which she explained as needing extra help to be able to do it. For the last Question number 13, about implementing modifications to the evaluations, teachers said to have done it in the following manners: Fragmentation, more oral evaluations, shortening and/or simplifying language, using more oral aids, increasing the levels of monitoring, giving breaks through the tests for students to de-stress, changing written assessments for oral assessment supported by flashcards, giving the students the opportunity to present individually instead collaboratively, shortening questions and verifying the understanding of the instructions, more visual and auditory aids, lastly, using more explicit, literal and simpler language when creating the evaluations. Only one teacher said to not have done any type of modification to evaluations.

In summary, method methodologies and approaches that allow personalized and focalized work along with a focus on grammar structures, are the most helpful for students with ASD. Role-play works best for a better understanding of the content as well as, reviewing and reinforcing vocabulary and grammar structures which also strengthens the speaking skills of these students as it helps with fluency and accuracy. Finally, to implement modifications in class planning and evaluations, the best is to focus on the student's interests, shortening and simplifying the language used, meaning being explicit and literal when creating the content and evaluations, it's important to verify that the instructions, or questions are correctly understood, giving less academic load and increasing the levels of monitoring as well as the time needed to complete activities or evaluations, lastly, changing written tests for oral tests and having visual and auditory aids.

Research objective 3: To have an understanding of the vision of Role-play according to teachers who do implement it.

Figure 3 below shows the results regarding answers twelve and thirteen of the questionnaire applied. A participation chart with nine affirmations and examples for each, which gives information in relation to Research Objective 3.

Figure 3

To understand teachers' view of Role-play and who they implement it.

	Yes	No	Example
Role-play in the academic context.	✓		Understanding what the concept means in the academic context.
Implementation of Role-play in the classroom.	✓		The majority of those surveyed claim to have used role-play.

As shown in Figure 3 about the teacher's vision on implementing Role-play to their classes, Question 3 contained promising answers as every teacher was able to correctly define and/or explain the concept of Role-play. Moreover, most of the answers had a positive view on the topic as it facilitates the delivery of content and helps the retention of it. According to Question 11, in the same way it was described in the previous figure, 6 out of 10 teachers gave a positive look into the implementation of Role-play to the class, whereas the rest of the teachers, meaning 4 out of 10 said to have not implemented the method but gave ideas as how they would like to carry it out. On the one hand, it was explained that Role-play helped students to have a better understanding of the contents which impacts vocabulary and language structures, meaning students can have an easier time when doing presentations, using dialogues and reviewing. On the other hand, possible implementations following the teacher's ideas would be dialogues and symbolic games, which have relation with meaningful real-life situations.

To summarize the results each figure has delivered varied information on the topic as well as contextualized understanding based on the three specific objectives of the study. Figure 1 showed that the most notorious characteristics of students with autism spectrum disorder lies in sensory difficulties due to sensory overstimulation, the need for routines and problems socializing. The easiest skills for students with ASD to develop, based on the answers of the instrument, were individual work, listening, reading and writing, whereas the hardest skills to develop were teamwork and time management since there is a need for routines and aid from teachers. Handwork is also negative as students with Autism Spectrum Disorder have poor fine motor skills. The study showed that active participation in students with ASD and its consistency depended on their interests and emotional state, additionally it showed varied ways in which these students decide to participate in class. It has also shown how essential routines are for the efficiency of role-play as it helps these students feel more comfortable in the classroom.

Figure 2 ensured that teachers dedicate time to the modifications of planning classes as well as evaluations. All of the modifications must be appropriate to the specific needs that the students require. Some examples given have to do with shortening the number of vocabulary words these students must learn as well as lowering the level of difficulties when creating grammatical structures. Modifications to evaluations are mostly related to extending the time the students have to answer the evaluations, using simple and explicit vocabulary when giving the instructions, replacing written assessments for oral evaluations if needed and using more visual resources such as flashcards as extra help. Figure 3 gave extra information on the same topic, highlighting the importance of the modifications being based on the interests of these students which also means teachers need extra time to get to know the students in depth. In addition, figure 3 showed favorable results for the implementation of Role-play in classes as the teachers who answered stated that it helps students learn in a more meaningful way.

4. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to analyze how Role-play affects the active participation of high school students with autism spectrum disorder from the perspective of the teacher, through a questionnaire as an investigation instrument carried out in three

different schools in which 10 teachers voluntarily expressed their opinions depending on their knowledge and experience. Based on the finding it is correct to assume a positive effect on the participation of said students, furthermore, an evident increase in the level of understanding and retention of the contents studied. It is important to highlight that due to the notorious characteristics of ASD students, those being sensory problems, weak social skills, and the need for routines. There needs to be a correct anticipation of the activity, clear and concrete instructions, and constant monitoring of the process for the students to actively participate in the activity. Even though group work is not the most convenient method to use with these types of students, Role-play with the process established before works fine and positively. The modifications to class planning and evaluations mentioned by the teachers show great interest in the inclusion of students with ASD in classes and the competence of the teachers to be able to modify the curricula in order to incorporate the needs of all students. The investigation results are discussed in more detail following, linking each to the corresponding research objective.

Objective 1: To throw light into how role-play affects the students' active participation in general and for students with autism spectrum.

Regarding Objective 1, from the analysis of the results, it was observed that the students' active participation depends on three variables, their emotional state and their interests. This is even more prevalent in students with Autism Spectrum disorder due to the fact that there are extra factors linked to the previously established variables that can affect their participation. The factors are their most notorious characteristics according to the view of the teachers who answered the questionnaire, sensory difficulties, poor social skills, and the need for repetitive patterns or routines. Moreover, Role-play needs to follow certain rules according to the results of the investigation. For the activity to be successful in the classroom the teacher must correctly anticipate the activity, give clear and concrete instructions, and constantly monitor the process. The teacher must also verify that the students understand the instructions. If there is a correct routine and anticipation of the activity, students with ASD will be able to successfully participate. The teacher must know and understand their students' actions and reactions as well as know how to include the student in the activity, based on their level of ASD. On the one hand, if the student has low to moderate levels they

could be able to improvise dialogues, the teacher can give them keywords they need to use so as to help the student. On the other hand, if the student has moderate to severe levels of ASD, they will need a dialogue written out before presenting in the Role-play activity. It is important to mention the constant monitoring of the process for the teacher to know if the student is correctly completing the activity, and in the case of teamwork, the teacher must monitor that the student is being included and not excluded from the group. Due to the weak levels of social skills these students have, they may be segregated from the group as they don't know how to interact and socialize with their classmates.

With all of the previously mentioned student's needs covered, they should be able to effectively and successfully participate and be part of the Role-play activity which has a positive effect on their learning. They can learn how to effectively express their ideas and emotions, actively listen to their peers, and work collaboratively with others. This method helps them to feel included and taken into account inside the classroom. It helps them understand the content better while providing a secure and structured environment for them. Not only they are able to review, practice, improve, and retain vocabulary and grammar structures, but they also better develop their fluency and accuracy in the language. In the topic of languages, this method and its activities can be adapted to various subjects and topics, making them a versatile tool for English teachers.

Objective 2: To unveil the actions made by the school community to help students with autism spectrum.

Concerning Objective 2, which aimed to identify the actions taken by school communities to support students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, It was observed through the questionnaire that teachers implement personalized work, clear routines and explanations, activities that cater to the interests of students with ASD, and traditional teaching methods, such as the grammar translation method. Additionally, some educators have used Role-play in their classes to teach English vocabulary and grammatical structures, while others have utilized it for presentations and short plays. Some teachers expressed an interest in using Role-play but would need assistance in maintaining classroom management. Others have used it to a lesser extent to interpret vocabulary and relationships between methodology and content. Role-play is a widely

used teaching strategy that involves simulating or enacting scenarios to help students understand and grasp critical concepts and ideas. While it can be an engaging and effective approach to teaching, some teachers may experience classroom management issues during the activity, some of these problems are the noise that students can generate, position changes not permitted, they start to talk about topics they shouldn't, etc. Fortunately, there are various techniques and strategies available to ensure a productive and positive experience for both students and teachers. Conversely, some educators may use Role-play in a limited capacity, such as to clarify complex vocabulary or to demonstrate the relationship between content and methodology. Regardless of how it is utilized, Role-play is a powerful educational tool that can enliven abstract concepts and make learning both enjoyable and effective.

Furthermore, it can be inferred that school communities only support students with ASD inside of the classroom, since no teacher mentioned the school's help to support students outside of the classroom. Which leads to believing that schools are not as committed as the teachers. Overall, the findings suggest that the teachers are making efforts to support students with ASD in various ways, and that there is a willingness to explore new methods and approaches to help these students succeed academically and socially.

It is encouraging to see that educators are taking steps to support students with Autism Spectrum Disorder at least inside of the classroom. The findings suggest that teachers are implementing personalized work, clear routines and explanations, and activities that cater to the interests of students with ASD, among other strategies. Role-play is also being used as a teaching strategy to help students understand critical concepts and ideas.

Summarizing, the study found that teachers are implementing personalized work, clear routines, and activities catering to the interests of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Some are using Role-play to teach English vocabulary, grammatical structures, and methodology. However, it is inferred that school communities are not taking steps to support students with ASD outside of the classroom. While Role-play is an engaging teaching approach, teachers may face classroom management issues during the activity. Overall, the findings suggest that educators are doing their best to explore new methods and approaches to help students with ASD succeed academically and socially.

Objective 3: To have an understanding of the vision of Role-play according to teachers who do implement it.

Regarding objective 3, the study revealed that all of the teachers participating in the research understand what Role-play is. Although everyone understands what Role-play is about, not everyone has carried it out, exactly two out of ten teachers. Among the participating educators, eight teachers shared their experiences of integrating Role-play into their instructional practices. They emphasized its positive impact on students, citing improvements in learning outcomes related to new vocabulary acquisition, grasping grammatical structures, engaging in dialogues, and other language learning facets. These testimonials highlight the tangible benefits that Role-play can bring to language education.

Role-play is beneficial for students with ASD, as it helps them learn in a more active and dynamic way. Encourages a practical and participatory approach to learning. Participants not only hear or read about situations, but experience them directly, which facilitates better understanding and retention of information.

In summary, Role-play is a versatile tool that offers a variety of benefits, from personal development to strengthening professional and educational skills.

Pedagogical Implications

I. Importance of correct understanding of how students with ASD function and how Role-play works.

First of all, an important element that had to be considered was the characteristics of students with ASD, as they were the protagonists of the research. Some of those characteristics were what techniques work best for them, what their active participation in classes depends on, what elements put them off, etc.

As a second idea, it was crucial to ascertain the knowledge that teachers possessed about roleplay, to determine if they implemented it, to comprehend the vision they held about it, and the impact it had on the students.

II. How Role-play affects active participation.

The teachers participating in the research mentioned that the elements that mostly affect the active participation of students are difficulties socializing, interacting, sensitivity to noise and the change in routine. According to this, and considering the data collection, it can be concluded that Role-play has a positive impact on students, since it helps them learn more actively, as they are being the protagonists of their own learning, based on real life situations. Furthermore, they learn in a significant way, since when executing the Role-play, they are being conscious of the learning process and the input they are receiving.

It is important to mention that Role-play must be carried out in a space with optimal conditions for students with ASD. They must be informed of the activity that is going to be carried out so that they become familiar with what they are going to do. The classroom should not be overly noisy, therefore the teacher must ensure control of the rest of the students. Instructions must be delivered clearly and the entire process must be monitored.

In summary, despite all the implications that Role-play carries, it has a positive impact, as long as it is carried out with optimal conditions so that students feel comfortable.

Suggestions for future research

On the one hand, in relation to objective 1, it is suggested to explore more about the relationship between Role-play as an activity that does work for students or if there is any other kind of learning method that works better for the active participation of students with ASD. On the other hand, in relation to Objective 2, it is important to investigate how to provide support for educators who are not familiar with ASD and how to help them create an inclusive learning environment for all students. This could involve training sessions, workshops, and access to resources and materials that provide guidance on how to adapt teaching strategies to accommodate the needs of students with ASD. Additionally, it may be useful to explore ways to involve parents and caregivers in the learning process, as they can provide valuable insights and support for their students both in and out of the classroom. Ultimately, the goal should be to create a learning environment that is supportive, inclusive, and effective for all students, regardless of their abilities or

challenges.

Finally, in relation to objective 3, it is important to understand the perspective of teachers who implement Role-play in their classrooms. This can be achieved through surveys, interviews, and observations to gather feedback on the effectiveness of Role-play as a teaching method. By understanding the vision of teachers who successfully use Role-play, other educators can gain valuable insights into how to implement this strategy in their own classrooms. It is also important to consider the challenges and barriers that teachers may face when implementing Role-play, such as lack of resources or support from their school community. By addressing these challenges, teachers can feel more confident in their ability to provide an inclusive and effective learning environment for all students.

In summary, to achieve the first objective, it is suggested to explore if Role-play as a learning method is effective for children with ASD. The second objective is to provide support to educators unfamiliar with ASD to create an inclusive learning environment for all students. Involving parents and caregivers could also be useful. For the third objective, gathering feedback from teachers who successfully use Role-play can provide valuable insights into implementing this strategy in other classrooms. Challenges such as lack of resources and support should also be addressed.

Limitations of the study

Regarding the limitations of the study, they were related to the difficulty of finding schools that were interested in implementing the investigation and high school teachers with experience teaching students with Autism Spectrum Disorder who wanted to participate voluntarily and answer the questionnaire used for it.

The first limitation was capturing the interest of schools since they, first, needed to know exactly what the questionnaire was about to decide if they, as an institution, were in fact interested in being part of an investigation of this kind. Consequently, they could give the permission to carry the investigation out in the establishment. Furthermore, in the case the school declined it would have been necessary to look for another one and start the process again from the start.

The second limitation was communication, as all the information, questions, and answers went through “*Jefe de UTP*” (Head of the Technical-Pedagogical Unit), who due to their packed schedule took a week to two weeks to answer each email

sent.

The third limitation was the teachers who voluntarily participated in the investigation. Once the schools were assigned and the questionnaire was sent to the high school teachers who had to be involved in it, according to what was asked for based on our interest in the study, only a few of them had the initiative and interest to answer which led to be constantly contacting the school and asking if they could remind the teachers to please answer the questionnaire sent to them.

Finally, the last limitation was the type of answer the teachers gave. The questionnaire consisted of 13 open questions in which they had to develop their ideas. Unfortunately, some teachers did not expand their answers and wrote simple answers with little to no content to be analyzed, or that had to be inferred based on previous answers and so on.

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