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OF SANTIAGO DE GUAYAQUIL**

**FACULTY OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES**

**SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

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**Literacy Instruction and Self-efficacy in an English as a  
Foreign Language Learner with Asperger Condition in the  
Third Grade of a Bilingual School**

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**SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR  
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**CERTIFICATION**

We certify that this research project was presented by **Cabrera Quiñonez, Erika Vanessa** as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the **Bachelor Degree in English Language with a Minor in Educational Management**.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to determine that an EFL classroom with a student with Asperger's condition should be fostered in language proficiency in a way that is both supportive and responsive to their unique learning needs. This involves providing tailored instruction that accommodates any challenges the student may face with language processing, social interaction, or sensory sensitivities. The focus should be on enhancing the student's abilities in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, while also building their confidence and reducing anxiety in the learning environment. The data was collected through the use of unstructured observations applied in the reading, vocabulary, and writing, working directly with the student in the language arts classes. The findings showed that the student scored low in each evaluated skill, considering that each test significantly affected his self-efficacy, causing his behavior to be difficult to control when the teacher did not provide techniques and strategies to improve their academic performance, and the actual methodology applied mixed methods and a descriptive design involves integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Thus, the mentioned techniques and strategies are to be applied to the student in the classroom to solve the problems found in this research project.

***Palabras Claves: Asperger´s, EFL, literacy, behavior, Reading, writing, self-efficacy***

## INTRODUCTION

Literacy instruction plays a crucial role in the early stages of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for young learners. Literacy instruction not only facilitates the development of essential reading and writing skills. Also supports broader cognitive and academic growth. For young EFL learners, early exposure to literacy in English helps them build a strong vocabulary and enhances their ability to comprehend and use the language effectively. The National Reading Panel (2000) mentions that literacy instruction is defined as the teaching practices that are designed to help students develop the ability to read and understand texts. This includes instruction in key areas such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), decoding is a fundamental skill that plays a critical role in language acquisition and literacy development. International Literacy Association, (2018) states that decoding is the process by which students learn to read written words by understanding and applying the rules of phonics. It involves recognizing letter patterns and translating them into sounds, which is essential for reading accuracy and fluency. Strong decoding skills build confidence, allowing learners to approach more complex texts with comfort, ultimately leading to greater success in their language learning journey.

Self-efficacy plays a significant role in influencing learning outcomes in elementary school. Therefore, the development of self-efficacy in elementary students is essential for promoting resilience, encouraging a love for learning, and supporting long-term educational success.

In general, decoding and self-efficacy are closely intertwined in the learning process, particularly for young learners. The relationship between decoding and self-efficacy highlights the importance of building foundational literacy skills to foster a confident, motivated, and resilient learner.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The Ecuadorian Intercultural Education Organic Law (Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural, LOEI) emphasizes the inclusion and accessibility of education for students with special educational needs. The law mandates that the national educational system must be inclusive and accessible to all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. According to Art. 2-V, the law acknowledges "...groups with special educational needs and develops an ethic of inclusion with affirmative action measures and an inclusive school culture in theory and practice..." (Ministerio de Educacion, p.11, 2015). Educational institutions are required to provide the necessary support to ensure that students with special educational needs can participate completely in the educational process.

Literacy EFL instruction is essential for academic success in elementary school, especially for students in bilingual education settings. Broughton (2013) states that "designers of syllabuses and writers of EFL texts are now concentrating on techniques of combining the teaching of traditionally necessary aspects of the language—grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation—with greater emphasis on the meaningful use of the language" However, this task becomes more complex when considering students with special needs, such as those with Asperger Syndrome (AS).

Asperger Syndrome, a condition on the autism spectrum, is characterized by difficulties in social interaction and nonverbal communication, alongside restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior and interests. This condition can significantly impact language acquisition and literacy development, particularly in a third-grade student who is also learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a bilingual school environment.

In a bilingual school of Daule, it was observed a student presented difficulties processing information not in the same way as the rest of the students. The student mentioned shows frustration when trying to accomplish a task given,

he would even start crying, he is always delayed, he needs extra explanations to complete the activities, he does not ask for help from peers or the teacher, he cannot decode or take dictation. He requires differentiated instruction or additional time to complete tasks. Also, his condition affects his ability to maintain attention and focus during lessons, sometimes the student would not engage in classroom activities, for this reason, the teacher has an important role as a supporter, facilitator, advocate, and educator.

The student with Asperger's is studying in a Bilingual school. This EFL instruction offers unique opportunities and challenges for learners. For a learner with Asperger Syndrome, these challenges are compounded by the need to work in a dual-language curriculum while managing the social and communicative difficulties associated with his condition.

The following research work attempts to investigate how to work with the difficulties of literacy in EFL in a student with the Asperger condition in a bilingual school.



## JUSTIFICATION

The Ecuadorian Intercultural Education Organic Law (LOEI) mandates that all students, including those with special educational needs, must have access to inclusive and equitable education. This legal framework underlines the importance of creating an educational environment that supports the diverse needs of students, ensuring their full participation in the learning process. However, implementing these legal requirements in practice, particularly in specialized educational contexts such as bilingual education, presents significant challenges.

In the case of a third-grade student with Asperger Syndrome (AS) in a bilingual school in Daule, the complexity of providing effective literacy instruction in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) setting is intensified by the unique characteristics of the condition. Asperger Syndrome, as a part of the autism spectrum, presents specific challenges related to social interaction, communication, and behavioral patterns, which can significantly impede language acquisition and literacy development. The difficulties observed in the student—such as frustration, delayed task completion, difficulty in decoding, and challenges with dictation—underscore the need for a tailored approach to literacy instruction.

The educational system's responsibility to provide differentiated instruction and additional support is critical in helping the student overcome barriers to literacy development-specific techniques and strategies. This research is justified by the need to explore effective strategies for literacy instruction that are specifically adapted to the needs of students with Asperger Syndrome in a bilingual EFL context.

By investigating the specific difficulties faced by the student and exploring tailored instructional approaches, this research aims to contribute to the broader goal of creating an inclusive educational environment as envisioned by the LOEI. It seeks to offer practical solutions that can be implemented not

only in this particular case but also in similar educational settings, thereby enhancing the quality of education for students with special educational needs.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

How does literacy instruction affect EFL self-efficacy in a third-grade learner with Asperger's condition in a bilingual school setting?

## **OBJECTIVES**

To analyze the reading and writing characteristics of a third-grade EFL student with Asperger's condition and its effect on self-efficacy within a bilingual school setting

- To observe changes in the student's engagement and motivation toward reading and writing activities
- To assess explicit phonics instruction for learning decoding skills of EFL a third-grader with Asperger's Syndrome.
- To establish the difficulty level of the vocabulary list provided by the textbook for developing English literacy in the student with Asperger's.
- To determine the effectiveness of the textbook reading scope for enhancing reading skills in an EFL learner with Asperger's condition.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The main topic of this research is literacy instruction, some concepts about it will be explained as follows. The relationship between language and literacy is essential. As the author mentions, written and spoken language are combined. Oral or sign language is symbolically represented in written language. (Litt, Martin, & Place, 2015). Peterson (2020) defined literacy as a tool for a commitment to society—and presented 5 suggestions for embracing literacy for global citizenship in the classroom.

Litt, Martin, & Place (2015) mention that literacy primarily means the ability to read and write at a basic level. Understand that literacy has the function of developing letters and the ability to write and read to develop naturally from childhood and without stopping at each stage of life. This was often limited to reading religious texts or performing simple arithmetic. Over time, the concept of literacy has grown to broaden a range of skills, such as critical thinking, comprehension, and the ability to engage with a variety of texts in different contexts. In this way, it is understood that literacy has progressed over the years following the needs of the times. (Gee, 2015) claims that “literacy is not a minor or isolated topic; it is too big for one discipline. It must be studied by a team effort equipped with different disciplines, skills, insights, and methods.”

According to Freire (2005),

Acquiring literacy is more than psychologically and mechanically mastering reading and writing techniques. It is to dominate these techniques in terms of consciousness; to understand what one reads and to write what one understands; it is to communicate graphically. Acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words, or syllables but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context. (p.67)

Literacy is the ability to read, write, and understand information, qualifying individuals to effectively communicate, comprehend texts, and engage with written and spoken language.

The author Kern (2000) claims literacy in education is a principal component, encompassing a large variety of competencies and practices essential for students' academic success. Literacy involves interpretation and collaboration to contribute the motivation, knowledge, and experience to make the writing meaningful. Litt, Martin, & Place (2015) mention literacy is developed from the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional. That is to say, experiences are necessary that help in the development of their skills by applying strategies that help the development of reading and writing.

### **Writing Literacy**

Alberta Education (2015) mentions that literacy is engaging with language to acquire and communicate meaning in all aspects. An important element of literacy is writing, according to Grant & Travis (2019), writing skills develop in most children during the first or second grade. The more a child is exposed to real text, such as advertisements, restaurant menus, or even to-do lists at home, the child develops a word bank.

McBdrige (2024), mentions that writing starts with the basic skill of letter formation and then continues with the action of conveying ideas and information through written language. It is an essential life skill. According to Reading Rockets (2024), Writing is a process that involves different skills: solid vocabulary; text structure and voice; basic grammar and punctuation skills.

<b>Focus on students' own stories.</b>	Find ways to center their experiences.
<b>Hold all of the languages your students speak.</b>	Having linguistic structures as a tool within society is important and every student should have access.
<b>Provide regular access to diverse stories, images, experiences, and perspectives.</b>	Provide access to different materials to increase their knowledge and abilities.
<b>Place value on reading, writing, speaking, and listening in your students' work.</b>	Encourage and recognize achievements, helping in their self-esteem and motivation to continue learning.

<b>Read aloud together, and often</b>	Is an effective strategy to increase their knowledge and abilities.
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Table 1 Five suggestions for embracing literacy for global citizenship in the classroom from the work of Peterson (2020).

## Letter Formation and Tracing

According to Beck (2021), letter formation is a complex process from an early age. This process focuses on different aspects that are specific to achieving correct writing. McBdrige (2024) mentions that writing skill begins at an early age, which requires practice and constant feedback so students can master the skill in the early stages of their literacy development. As students in their early years begin to learn and develop the foundational skills for letter formation. Some skills have to be covered to achieve an appropriate formation of the words.

<b>Proper Grip</b>	Helps students to write as efficiently as possible.
<b>Fine Motor Control</b>	Activities that strengthen students' hand muscles.
<b>Hand-eye Coordination</b>	Control hand movements while following the visual progress on paper.
<b>Posture and Paper Position</b>	Sit upright, hold the paper with the non-writing hand, and position it at an appropriate angle to have good letter formation.
<b>Pre-writing Strokes</b>	Start with vertical and horizontal lines, curves and circles.
<b>Letter Formation</b>	Begin with uppercase letters and gradually move to lowercase letters.

Table 2 Fundamental skills for letter formation work from McBdrige,(2024)

Reading Rockets (2024) lists the appropriate activities to construct word formation with the students in the classroom.

1. **The alphabet-matching:** designed to young learners recognize uppercase and lowercase letters of the alphabet. It is appropriate for preschool or early elementary education. A child's writing process goes hand in hand with their reading development. Which is created with basic tools such as pencil, pen, crayons, scissors, and markers.

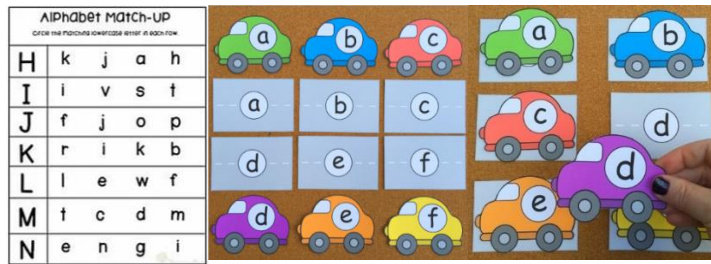


Figure 1 Begin with uppercase letters and gradually move to lowercase letters work from Reading Rockets (2024)

2. **Shaving cream fun letters:** this activity is for students to practice letter formation, identify letter sounds, start to write the names, and find uppercase or lowercase letters in the shaving cream Work in small groups or with a partner.



Figure 2 Shaving cream letter activity work from Reading Rockets (2024)

3. **Headline, belt line, and shoe line:** it's a perfect tool for students, help them locate themselves on the page, and locate and trace the letters as they have been taught.

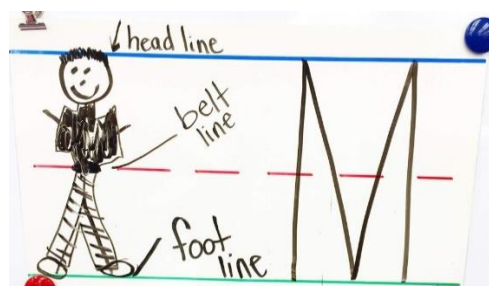


Figure 3 Activity – Head Line, belt line, and shoe line.

4. **Race track alphabet:** It is a fun way to practice letter formation by “driving” a toy along the track that has the direction of the writing letter. Also, print the letters with the directions of the writing letter.

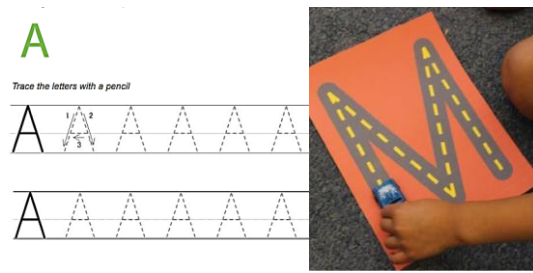


Figure 4 Tracing Letter Worksheet – Race track letter (concrete material)

## Decoding

Understanding the relationship between decoding and literacy is essential for effective education, particularly for young learners and those learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Hoover & Gough (2021) claim decoding is the ability to apply knowledge of letter-sound relationships, including knowledge of letter patterns, to pronounce written words correctly.

Tunmer & Gough (1986) claim the theory of decoding and understanding language are necessary for the experience of a text to occur. Still, it must also be recognized that they are not sufficient. Catts (2018) mentions that in the initial courses, decoding skills develop the most understanding, which is why decoding skills should be encouraged as they represent a greater impact from an early age.

Decoding is a fundamental skill in the early stages of reading development, this is considered an important component to develop an effective reading. Bright (2021) mentions that decoding involves two major skills, phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge. One is the ability to listen and play different sounds and phonic knowledge is the ability to understand the letter sounds, both work together to read words.

## Reading Techniques and Strategies

Bright (2021) exposed some essential keys for teachers to achieve effective decoding as taught through explicit instructions, including seeing similarities and differences in words with similar etymology, such as define, definition, and definite, also built by teaching segmentation of words (breaking words down into individual sounds or syllables) and leads to fluency.

Tankersley (2003) mentions It must be taken into account that decoding language must include the visual, syntactic, and semantic aspects of language development such as the cueing system.

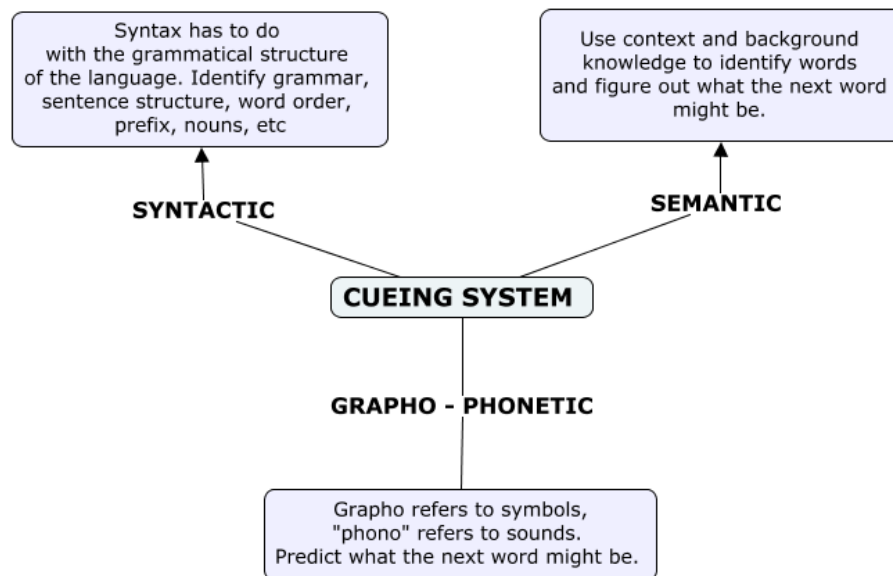


Figure 5 Cueing System summarized upon the work of Tankersley (2003).

To enhance reading comprehension, applying the Question-Answer Relationship technique mentioned by Tankersley (2005), he states that it helps the student understand the different types of questions and how to approach answering them and become more skilled and confident readers.

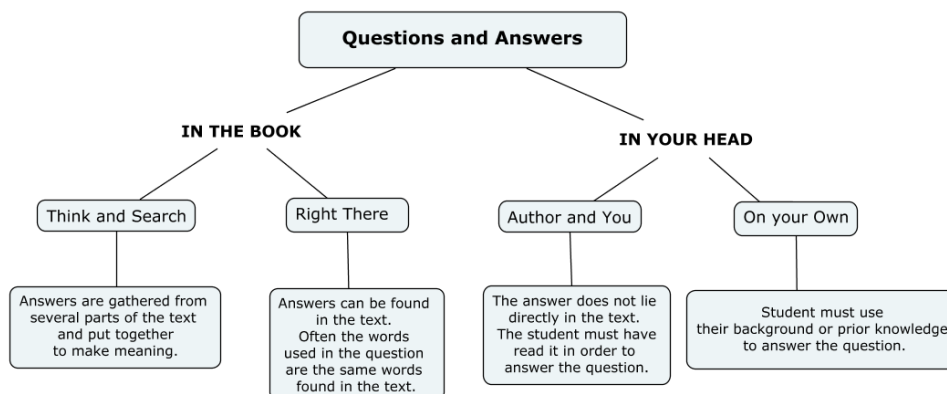


Figure 6 Questions and Answers Relationships from the work from Tankersley, Literacy Strategies for Grades 4 – 12 (2005).

Fondrk & Frasca (2005) expose the recalling details in sentences with the technique of recognizing and recalling details using who, what, where, and when, describe how a child reads something like this in a story. Each sentence



can talk about something they are doing, somewhere and when it happens. The child needs to understand who, what, when, and where events take place in a story without knowing the details.

According to Fondrk & Frasca (2005), teachers can apply the following instrument during reading time in the classroom, it is useful to create mental images to understand the content of a story.

WHO-WHAT-WHERE-WHEN BOARD

Who?	
Where?	
When?	

Figure 7 Who - What - Where - When Board, retrieved from the work of Fondrk & Frasca (2005)

### **Self- Efficacy**

Bandura (1977) states that the individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task or academic performance. Self-efficacy is a key concept in educational psychology, originally developed by Albert Bandura. It refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task. This belief significantly impacts motivation, learning, and performance.

Bandura, Albert (1986) expands on self-efficacy within the broader framework of social cognitive theory, discussing how beliefs, attitudes, and intentions drive human behavior.

Zimmerman (2000) stated that the role of self-efficacy in the learning process, linking it to academic achievement and self-regulation. Promoting self-efficacy in Students:

- Use peer modelling to allow students to observe others' success.

- Offer consistent, positive reinforcement and constructive feedback.
- Help students manage stress and maintain a positive emotional state during learning activities.

Understanding and fostering self-efficacy in students, especially those with challenges like Asperger syndrome, is crucial for their academic success and overall well-being.

### **Inclusion - Asperger's syndrome**

Villa & Thousand (2005) mention that inclusion assumes that living and learning together, benefits everyone, not just children labeled as having differences. It involves creating a culture and environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and supported.

There is no doubt that inclusion is a word that we hear frequently at the school level, from kindergartens to high schools. According to Cabero & Cordoba (2009), inclusion was born from the high rates of exclusion in the social and educational field at an international level. Today it is known that it is an issue on which the society works at a political, social, cultural, economic, and educational level to promote what we call inclusion.

The aforementioned authors indicated that people have a poor concept of inclusion, although the concept is widely promoted, it is often misunderstood or insufficiently implemented since many understand educational inclusion as a synonym of school integration. (Cabero & Cordoba, 2009).

Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey (2005) claim some teachers are misinformed and confused about inclusion. It is better to say that it is not inclusion such as educating children part-time in special schools is not inclusion. Educating children in special contexts, mostly segregated, environments in regular schools is not inclusion. The authors said that inclusion means children with diverse abilities in all aspects of schooling that regular children can access and enjoy.

According to Ministerio de Educacion (2013) in the LOEI (Organic Law of Education) Art.12 mentions that offering inclusive education promotes respect,

tolerance, and solidarity. Likewise, eliminates barriers to traditional education and forms autonomous, independent citizens who can participate in the social and work environment.

### **Asperger Syndrome**

This research specifies the Asperger's syndrome, Gomez de la Cuesta & Mason (2011) note that Asperger's syndrome is another form of an Autism spectrum condition that affects a person's ability to communicate and interact with other people. Gillard (2011) referred to Asperger's Syndrome as part of the autism spectrum disorder involving difficulties in social interaction, flexibility of thought and imagination, and repetitive behavior and interest.

The mentioned author Gillard (2011) claims that children, teens, and adults with Asperger's Disorder present problems with socializing, thinking fast, expressing emotions, speech development, motor skills, and sensitivity to the sensation of sounds, light, or touch.

Within some theories, Ashcroft, Argiro, & Keohane (2021) mentioned that Asperger's Disorder is characterized by changes in their behaviors that include restricted interest, unusual sensitivity to sound, light, or touch, and present repetitive mannerisms.

Children who have Asperger Syndrome present different symptoms of this disorder. Use different strategies to help them with difficulties teachers and parents. The authors Betts, Betts, & Gerber (2007) mention this students need special accommodations made for school days to propose an environment more comfortable and safe for them. These children do not absorb the school rules quickly, they need support from the school staff so that they can function and learn.

### **Asperger Characteristics**

According to Winter & Lawrence (2003), these are some strategies for the classroom with children who have Asperger Syndrome. They mention that these children need plenty of structure and will react negatively to changes.

Nationwide Children’s (2024) mentions that each child with Asperger’s Syndrome is different, they may present poor social interactions, speech patterns, and limited facial expressions.

According to Wilmshurst & Brue (2010), Children with Asperger’s Syndrome present several characteristics or patterns in four areas: Language and communication skills, social interaction, behavior patterns, and learning or development.

<b>Language and communication skills:</b>	Language is likely delayed, if present, with minimal nonverbal communication (for example, pointing, and directed eye gaze). Children with high-functioning syndrome may talk with others" on topics of high interest to themselves while ignoring their audience.
<b>Social interaction:</b>	Often seem to be in a world of their own and do not participate in social interaction. They do not develop age-appropriate play (e.g. fantasy), they are more interested in playing with parts of objects such as spinning a toy wheel.
<b>Behavior patterns:</b>	It is difficult to get them out of their concentration on repetitive motor movements such as flapping or turning their hands, which prevents them from participating in their social world.
<b>Learning or Development:</b>	They show difficulty in certain subjects of their learning but also develop a greater interest in languages and arts.

Table 3 -Asperger’s Syndrome presents several characteristics work from Wilmshurst & Brue (2010).

**Interventions: Classroom Techniques**

Interventions for specific problems for student in the third grade, each action (intervention) aims to improve his literacy instruction for English as a Foreign Language. According to Harwell & Williams Jackson (2008) visual perceptual deficits such as itchy eyes during reading, inability to copy accurately, suggesting enlarged printed material for classes and homework, pictures reproducing in Zoom, avoiding using multiple colors on the board, and thus not show difficulty when copying from the board.

Morin & Osewalt (2019) mention that teachers should change or include certain routines and materials in the classroom.

- Provide visual schedules, notes, and announcements, but also say them out loud.
- Describe, explain the visual presentations aloud then ask some questions about the explanation.
- Build in time to summarize the important information from each lesson.
- Provide a highlighter to use to highlight information while reading.
- Include simple diagrams or images to help clarify written directions.

If the student presents slow, laborious handwriting, the suggestions according to Harwell & Williams Jackson (2008) allow the student to take oral tests, shorten assignments, the test, or worksheets to use true-false or multiple-choice answers as much as possible. If the student presents an auditory processing deficit, in other words, the student can understand a conversation at normal speed but is unable to distinguish between spoken sounds. the recommendations are:

- Sit the student close to the teacher to watch the teacher's lips.
- Ascertain the student paying attention before you speak, give the instructions slowly, and repeat if necessary.
- Choose a patient student to help and repeat the information of the class. (helper student)
- Use digital programs to improve the development of the class and achieve the aims.
- The teacher shows where to place the tongue and lips to make the sounds he does not hear or understand.

Conceptual deficit, the student cannot read or interpret social situations, and read words but not change to mental pictures. according to Harwell & Williams Jackson (2008), teachers should be applied some strategies:

- Role-play social situations in circle time in the classroom and act out the scenes of the stories or situations.

- Make strategic groups where the student with difficulty is involved to play and act the assignment activity.
- Use concrete material or real pictures in the projector on the board, to create significant knowledge.
- Lastly, the teacher asks questions about the story and changes some situations to achieve the creativity of the student.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The main topic of this research is literacy instruction, some new perspectives about it will be explained as follows. According to Fuchs, Kahn-Horwitz, & Katzir (2019), acquiring literacy in English as a Second Language is essential because it helps first language development. In addition, the website Learn Alberta Education (2022) mentions that students who acquire other languages develop different stages of their language proficiency. Students meet stages, which can vary from one student to another.

These stages describe the skills and behaviors when acquiring an additional language. The following stages of second language acquisition are developed by Hill & Flynn (2019):

Stage I:	Observing, Listening, and Gesturing	English language learners at this stage would have been exposed to English instruction for approximately 10 hours to 6 months.
Stage II:	Simple Comprehension and Production	English language learners at this stage would have been exposed to English instruction for approximately 6 months to 1 year.
Stage III:	Expanding Language Proficiency	English language learners at this stage would have been exposed to English instruction for approximately 3 to 5 years.
Stage IV:	Functional Academic Language Proficiency	
Stage V:	Native-like Proficiency	English language learners at this stage would have been exposed to English instruction for approximately 5 to 7 years.

Table 4 Stages of Second Language Acquisition from the work of Hill & Flynn (2019)

Unal-Gezer (2021) mentioned that early literacy skills that are stimulated from an early age determine academic performance, such as knowledge, attitudes, and skills for reading and writing, which will help to develop these skills in the school years. Likewise, Saracho (2017) mentions in the following article that there are disagreements about teaching reading and writing within literacy. The author mentions that there are two methods, the first demands the students to memorize words, look at them, and identify them (Sightwords); and the other is the phonetic method where they learn to pronounce each letter of a word to identify it (Synthetic Method).

Bibi & Pujari (2023) mention some advantages of the sight word method such as the ability to recall sight words after some time, sight word recognition is the ability to recognize and read aloud high-frequency words with automaticity and decodable words that follow phonetic patterns and can be sound out. Likewise, Simonton (2019) mentions that the sight words method is recognized, pronounced, and understood by readers without any effort. and recognizing sight words is having the ability to read words accurately and automatically, it is an early literacy skill that plays an important role in reading development.

On the other hand, there are no disadvantages but have difficulties following the sight word method. According to Hartley, Mottin, & Sexton (2022), readers often struggle to learn and recall sight words. Students don't follow the letter-sound patterns they have begun learning for this reason the letter-sound patterns refer to the sounds that the letters refer to. It is easy to sound out and read "stand". In contrast, "should" is a much harder sight word to learn. That's because "should" doesn't follow early letter-sound patterns.

According to Wan (2023), the synthetic phonics method assumes that children learn to read by memorizing words as whole units, rather than by decoding them into individual sounds. Also, is more structured and comprehensive, providing children with a clear pathway to mastering phonics.

<b>Advantages</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides children with a clear pathway to mastering phonics, with a specific order for teaching sounds.</li> <li>• Emphasizes decoding skills, which are essential for developing fluency and comprehension in reading</li> <li>• Incorporates visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning, making it more engaging and effective for children with different learning styles.</li> </ul>

Table 5 Advantages and Disadvantages of Synthetic Phonics



<b>Disadvantages</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not be as flexible: Because synthetic phonics is a more structured approach</li> <li>• Reading materials need to be carefully selected</li> <li>• Focus on decoding vs. meaning: Because synthetic phonics emphasizes decoding skills, there is a risk that children may focus too much on decoding and not enough on comprehension and meaning.</li> </ul>

Table 6 Disadvantages and Disadvantages of Synthetic Phonics

### **New Literacy Methods**

According to Rush (2023), the method, Effective Component of Literacy Instruction is the essential component to develop in early childhood. Some studies show that children with higher literacy levels don't present struggles to graduate from high school and college. According to Yatvin (2000), there are five essential components to literacy instruction: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These skills are interrelated and mutually supportive, requiring consistent practice and emphasis. Implementing programs, strategies, and techniques that build upon your literacy instruction is when students will see improvements in all areas of literacy.

In addition, this is a quick breakdown of the 5 essential components of literacy according to the Institute of Multi-Sensory Education ( 2023):

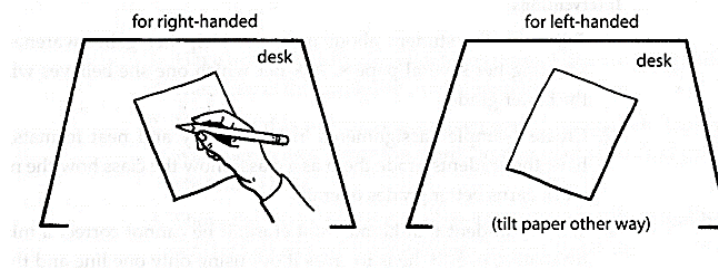
- **Phonological awareness:** The ability to hear sounds in words. It helps children learn how to blend sounds to read words.
- **Phonics:** The understanding that letters represent individual sounds. It helps children recognize words when they see them, which helps them learn how to spell new words.
- **Fluency:** The ability to read smoothly and accurately with expression. Fluent readers can read a text accurately and with expression at their own pace.

- **Vocabulary:** The number of words your child knows and understands the meaning of. A large vocabulary will help your child become a better reader and writer.
- **Comprehension:** This means understanding what you have read or heard—that it makes sense and that you can relate it to other things you know about or experience in life (like the plot of a story).

## Letter Formation Technique

One of the difficulties of writing starts with letter formation. According to Holt, (2018), students must first master the essential pre-writing patterns and then they are ready to begin learning correct letter formation. Research and studies show that a cognitive approach should be used to help understand and retain the proper information about the letters more effectively.

According to FUN Adventure Coloring Books (2024), one of the techniques is to develop or improve the form of the letter. Teachers should remember the students in every class, the correct place of the paper and the proper slant, put the appropriate grip on the pencil then how to form or trace each letter.



Also, other techniques that teachers should apply in the classroom, according to Crisp (2021) working in small groups, and teaching letters by similarity strokes. Engage in activities like painting, drawing, tracing, paste little pieces of paper in these groups on a large sheet of paper.

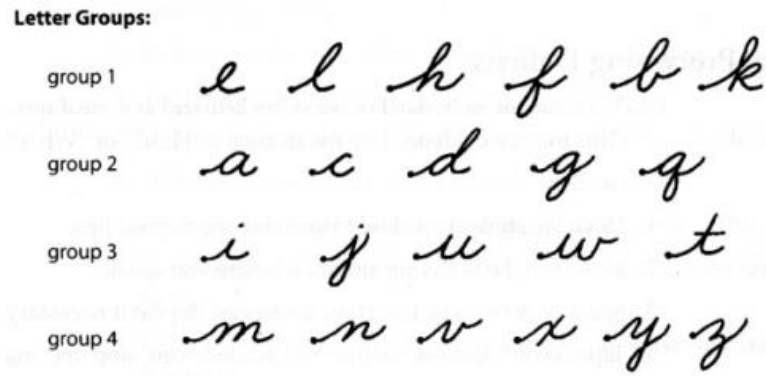


Figure 8 Letter groups for early writing skill work from Harwell & Williams Jackson (2008)

According to Beck (2021), letter formation in a specific order is essential to improve step by step the control of the pencil, motor skills, eye-hand coordination, speed writing, and placement of letters on the correct line or space.

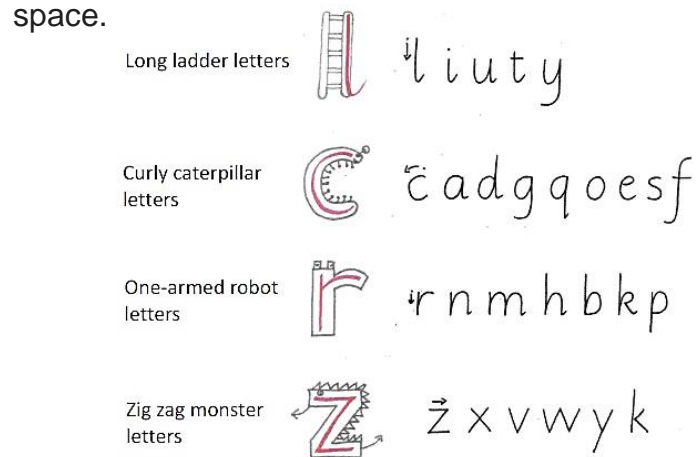


Figure 9 - Each group of letters using the grouping below according to McLeod (2018).

# METHODOLOGY

## Mixed Methods

In order to analyze the reading and writing characteristics of a third-grade EFL student with Asperger's condition within the context of a bilingual school and its implication in self-efficacy development, the following research is going to be based on a mixed methods approach with a descriptive design.

According to Mertens (2020), mixed methods research combines qualitative and quantitative research approaches within a single study or series of studies. This approach is often used when neither a purely qualitative nor purely quantitative approach is sufficient to address the research questions comprehensively. George (2023) states that mixed methods research combines elements of quantitative research and qualitative research to answer the research question. Mixed methods can help to gain a more complete picture than a standalone quantitative or qualitative study, as it integrates the benefits of both methods. Lall (2021), states that mixed-methods research collects both quantitative and qualitative information. This combination of approaches is a complete comprehension of problems. Both types of data are considered essential to the study.

## Descriptive design

Shields & Rangarajan (2013) mention that descriptive design is a research method aimed at systematically describing a situation or problem. It does not involve manipulating variables but instead focuses on providing a detailed account of what is occurring. Doyle, McCabe, & McCann (2019) mention that descriptive design is widely used in various fields, including social sciences, education, health, and business, to gather information that provides a foundation for further research, and decision-making.

Magilvy, Thomas, & Kotzer (2009) states that the primary goal of a descriptive design is to describe the characteristics, behaviors, or conditions of an individual, and the data is collected through observations and interviews. The data gathered provides a specific of the situation or problem at a specific point in time.

## **Data gathering tools**

This descriptive study is going to collect information through the use of academic tests and unstructured observations.

The tests are based on the EFL program that the student follows at the school. These are three tests that could tell about the literacy level of the student. The aim is to determine the level of knowledge in each of the following: Vocabulary, reading decoding, and self-monitoring. While the tests are conducted, the author will collect the frequency of self-monitoring behaviors observed. According to the IRIS Center of Peabody College (2024), students evaluate their own behavior and document their findings. While this process doesn't develop new skills or knowledge, self-monitoring can influence how often, how intensely, or how long certain behaviors occur while learning. Examples of self-monitoring include the repeated times the student observe his classmates, usually for comparison, and hesitation (doubt about performance).

Another instrument chosen is the unstructured observation journal. This data-gathering tool was selected because it could comprehensively show the student's reaction to the tasks proposed, as it collects emotions, behavior, and knowledge. Also, this instrument may not be perceived by the student, which permits a confident environment for a student with Asperger's.

According to Merriam & Tisdell (2015), unstructured observation is a qualitative research tool where the spectator records all relevant behaviors and events as they occur, without the use of a predetermined coding scheme or checklist. This method allows for a more natural and open-ended collection of data. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2000) mention that unstructured observation is characterized by a flexibility of approach to the observation of behavior. The observer simply records what they see in whatever way they can, allowing for a more holistic and detailed description of events. Bryman (2012) states that unstructured observation is a method where the researcher enters the field with no predefined notions about what will be observed. It allows for the discovery of new phenomena by capturing the full complexity of social situations.

## **Participant**

The subject of study is a student at a bilingual school nearby Daule, who receives ten hours of EFL a week. It is a seven-year-old boy formally diagnosed with Asperger's condition, going in the third grade, and assisting in a regular basis.

## **Protocol**

For the application of the data-gathering instruments, it was chosen regular class time for language arts. The researcher prepared a similar activity for the rest of the class so that the student would not notice that he was taking an adapted test. The test was applied at 09h30. Since the student is always seated by the teacher, it was possible to monitor the test in front of him. Three tests were applied, one for reading, another for vocabulary, and a mixed vocabulary and reading test.

A quantitative analysis is going to be conducted on 3 tests to evaluate errors in the following skills: vocabulary recognition, reading–decoding (not comprehension), and writing–vocabulary. The aim is to determine two elements that may give evidence of self-efficacy: First, the level of English knowledge in the form of unit vocabulary discrimination; reading, and writing by spelling or word decoding. The second element is the frequency of emotional behaviors that accompanied completing the activities asked. It is going to be observed and counted the hesitation frequency (erasing, tapping, fidgeting, rewriting) and the self-monitoring instances (checking the activity of peers).

## Data analysis

Unstructured Observation 1: Vocabulary
<b>Time:</b> 09H30 <b>Class:</b> Language Arts <b>Topic:</b> Places in Town <b>Time:</b> 30 minutes
<p>Starting the Language Arts class, the teacher announces a vocabulary activity focusing on "Places in Town." The students are instructed to write down the names of various places, such as "library," "park," and "museum, ". In specific, the student was asked to complete a book activity about places in town. The objective was to label the picture with the word bank. The student appears attentive when the teacher explains the task. As the activity starts, the child immediately begins working, but the writing pace is noticeably slower compared to their peers. The student was asked to read the words and identify the images without pressure for time or grade.</p> <p>First, the student recognized cognate words like hospital and park. Then the student started to copy the words on the lines with fluency. Four words out of ten correspond to cognates. The rest of the words presented problems.</p> <p>The student frequently pauses, staring at the paper, seemingly struggling to recall the correct pronunciation of the rest of the words. The student often looks up at the ceiling or down at his hands, as if searching for the right answers internally.</p> <p>He pretended to write. The student seemed hesitant to commit to writing, often erasing parts of words multiple times. The boy couldn't decode some words. When he writes, the letters are formed with effort, and the words sometimes lack proper spacing, making the process difficult. The book only provides a short line to write. In words like "swimming pool" and "movie theater," the student feels frustrated by leaving the space assigned by the text. The student begins to cry and get angry. He seems frustrated the moment he writes a word and runs out of space.</p> <p>Then, the student exhibits a clear struggle with recalling and writing the correct vocabulary. There is a visible effort to remember spellings, which is compounded by confusion between words with similar letter patterns. For example, when trying to write "swimming," the child hesitates and pronounces "window." He seems confused by the similarity of the initial letters and struggles to differentiate between the two words.</p> <p>This pattern of confusion is repeated with other words that share similar structures. The student attempts to correct these mistakes are often unsuccessful, leading to further frustration. The student shows a strong sense of persistence in the task despite obvious difficulties. There are brief moments where the student shows signs of self-affirmation, such as nodding his head after writing a word, even when it is incorrect, and showing confidence in his work.</p> <p>Finally, throughout the 30-minute evaluation, the student demonstrates a strong effort to complete the vocabulary task, despite significant difficulties with writing and recognizing vocabulary, particularly when words have similar letter patterns.</p> <p>The confusion between words like "swimming" and "window" highlights a challenge in differentiating words based on their structure, which further</p>

complicates their ability to correctly complete the task. Despite these obstacles, the student determination and self-efficacy are evident, although his frustration grows as the task becomes more challenging.

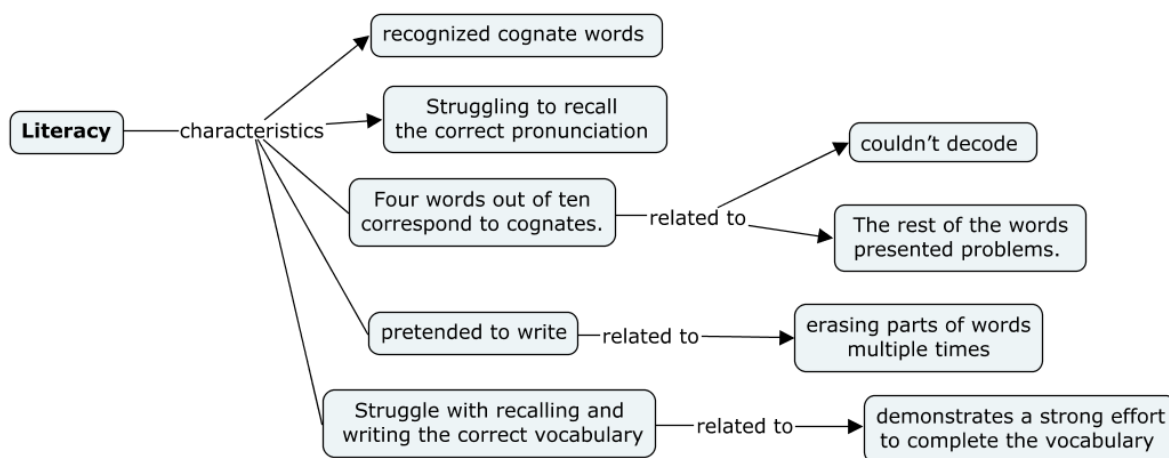


Figure 10 - Qualitative analysis - Semantic Network - Literacy #1 elaborated by the author.

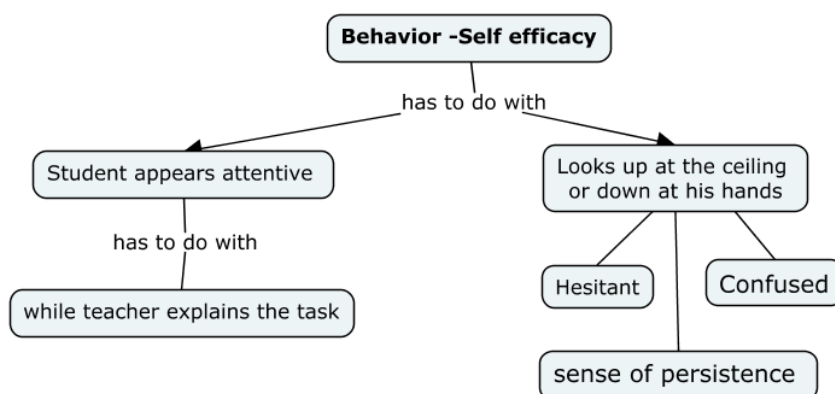


Figure 11 - Qualitative analysis, Semantic Network – Behavior Self Efficacy #1 elaborated by the author.

### Qualitative analysis, semantic network 1

The student's literacy characteristics show that he struggles to recognize cognate words, recall the correct pronunciation, and notice cognates but couldn't decode the rest of the words. Also, the student pretended to write to complete the task in the book but erased parts of words multiple times. It is noticeable that the student struggles with recalling and writing the vocabulary. In the activity, the student demonstrates a strong effort to complete the activity.



The student showed a difficult attitude to control. At the beginning of the task, he was attentive when the teacher explained the task. Then as he progressed with the activity, he began to show frustration and his attitude became hesitant. The student was confused when he did not know or was unsure of certain words. Finally, it could be indicated that his persistence in completing the activity was positive. The student was determined to complete the activity

Unstructured Observation 2: Reading
<b>Time:</b> 10H30 <b>Class:</b> Language Arts – Reading Activity <b>Time:</b> 20 minutes
<p>The reading lesson class begins, and the teacher informs the class that they will be evaluated on their reading speed, pronunciation, and sound recognition. The students are assigned a passage to read aloud, and each takes turns reading in circle time. The student with Asperger syndrome listens attentively to the instructions, but his body language suggests some confusion. When it is his turn to read, the student takes a deep breath before beginning, appearing focused but also tense.</p> <p>The objective was to develop reading skills such as decoding, fluency, reading speed segmenting, and comprehension.</p> <p>The student starts reading, but his pace is noticeably slower than that of their peers. He takes long pauses between sentences, and sometimes even within sentences as if carefully considering each word before attempting to pronounce it.</p> <p>Pronunciation is a challenge. The student struggles with certain sounds (s, th, middle f, ch, final d-t) often hesitating before attempting to pronounce difficult words. For example, he might pause for several seconds before saying a word like "through" and then pronounce it incorrectly, stumbling over the sounds.</p> <p>The slow pace of reading causes the student to take more time, which seems to increase his frustration as he realizes that he is not progressing as fast as others.</p> <p>The student appears to have difficulty recognizing certain sounds, especially those that are phonetically similar, the student often mixes them up, leading to mispronunciations. This confusion seems to cause further delays, as the student rereads portions of the text, trying to correct their mistakes but often repeating the same errors.</p> <p>As the reading task continues, the student frustration becomes increasingly apparent. His shoulders were tense, and he began fidgeting, shifting in his seat and occasionally tapping the book with his fingers he would stare at the rest of his classmates at least 3 times.</p> <p>During the reading evaluation, the child with Asperger syndrome exhibits significant reading speed, pronunciation, and sound recognition difficulties. His slow pace and frequent pronunciation errors lead to visible frustration, but the</p>

student demonstrates resilience by continuing to attempt the task despite these challenges.

The emotional strain is clear, as the student's frustration grows throughout the lesson, impacting their overall performance. The teacher's supportive approach helps to mitigate some of this frustration, but the task remains a source of considerable difficulty for the child.

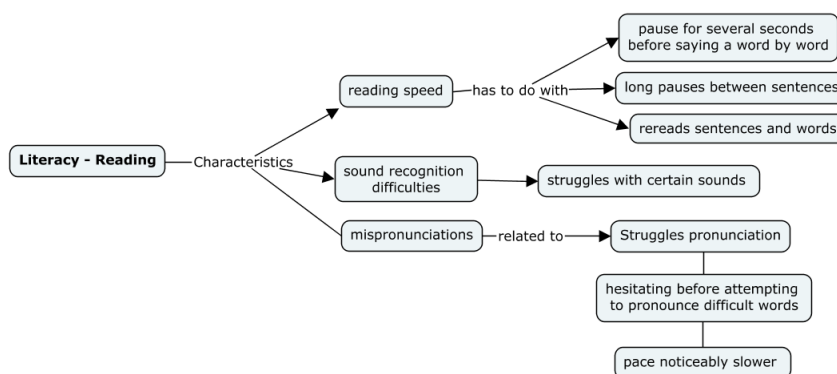


Figure 12 - Qualitative analysis, Semantic Network - Literacy Reading #2 elaborated by the author.

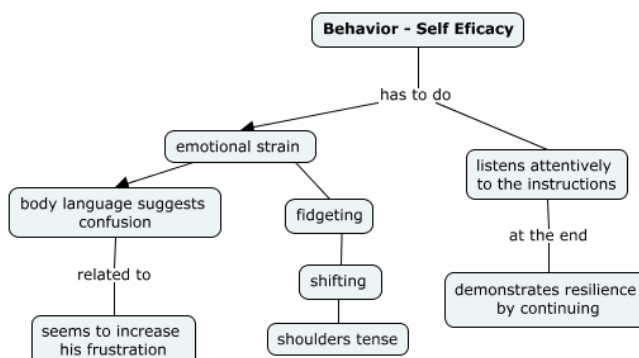


Figure 13 - Qualitative analysis, Semantic Network Behavior - Self Efficacy #2 elaborated by the author.

### Qualitative analysis, semantic network 2

The student's literacy characteristics involved reading speed, sound recognition, and mispronunciations. The student pauses for several seconds before saying a word, long pauses between sentences, and rereads sentences and words for this reason it takes a long time to conclude the reading passage. The student demonstrates a lack of reading speed and has difficulty with

decoding. He struggles with certain sounds and pronunciation for this reason he shows a pace noticeably slower.

The changes in mood, behaviour, and attitude during reading were noticeable. His difficulties in reading caused him frustration and he was quite restless. Reading fluency is important for motivation. During the observation, it was evident that the student was not motivated, since he realized how difficult it was for him. Despite his difficulties and how he felt at not being able to read or recognize a sound, it can be said that he was resilient because he wanted to complete the activity.

<b>Unstructured Observation 3: Writing Vocabulary</b>		
<b>Time:</b> 10H30	<b>Class:</b> Language Arts – Quiz	<b>Time:</b> 20 minutes
<p>The lesson begins with the teacher announcing an evaluation focused on vocabulary and writing. The task involves writing down words related to places, such as "hospital," "swimming pool," and other similar terms. The student with Asperger's syndrome listens to the instructions but appears visibly uneasy. His behavior suggests an initial discomfort with the task.</p> <p>As the student begins to write, he struggles with the quiz, which quickly becomes apparent. He writes slowly, pausing frequently to think about the spelling of each word. The student often hesitates, staring at the paper with a confused expression as he tries to recall the correct spelling.</p> <p>The student demonstrates confusion between words with similar structures. For instance, when attempting to write "swimming pool," he mistakenly writes "wiming" but then pauses, unsure whether it is correct, and eventually abandons the word altogether.</p> <p>The writing itself is inconsistent, with letters varying in size and spacing. The student frequently erases and rewrites parts of words, resulting in smudged and illegible text. This disorganization reflects the difficulty the student has with both spelling and writing.</p> <p>As the task continues, the student frustration grows. He begins to huff and sigh, pressing his pencil harder onto the paper. The repeated mistakes and difficulty recalling the correct words overwhelm the child, leading to visible signs of distress.</p> <p>In conclusion, during the vocabulary and writing evaluation, the child with Asperger syndrome experiences significant difficulties with spelling and recognizing words related to places such as "playground" and "swimming pool." These challenges lead to increasing frustration, which quickly escalates into anger and distress. Despite the teacher's supportive efforts, the student's emotional response to the task overwhelms</p>		

his ability to complete it successfully, resulting in a highly stressful experience for the student.

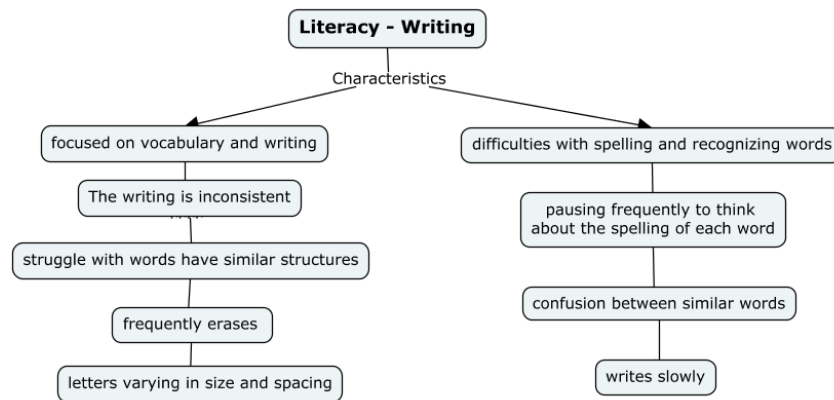


Figure 14 - Qualitative analysis, Semantic Network Literacy - Writing #3 elaborated by the author.

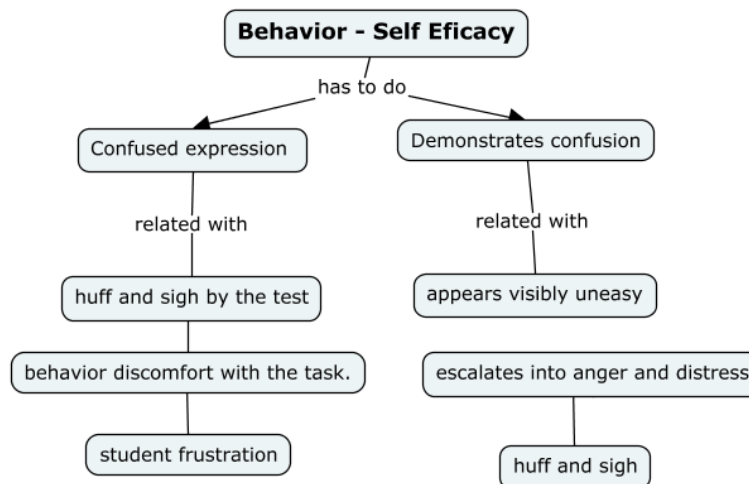


Figure 15 - Qualitative analysis, Semantic Network Behavior - Self Efficacy #3, elaborated by the author.

### Qualitative analysis, semantic network 3

The student's literacy characteristics involved a test to evaluate writing and vocabulary. The student listened to the instructions when he started the test, he showed difficulties with writing, spelling, and recognition of the words. The writing is inconsistent, he has struggled with some words that have a similar structure. For example, writes "swimming pool," for "wiming". His writing is slow and he erases the words and rewrites several times. When he writes, his

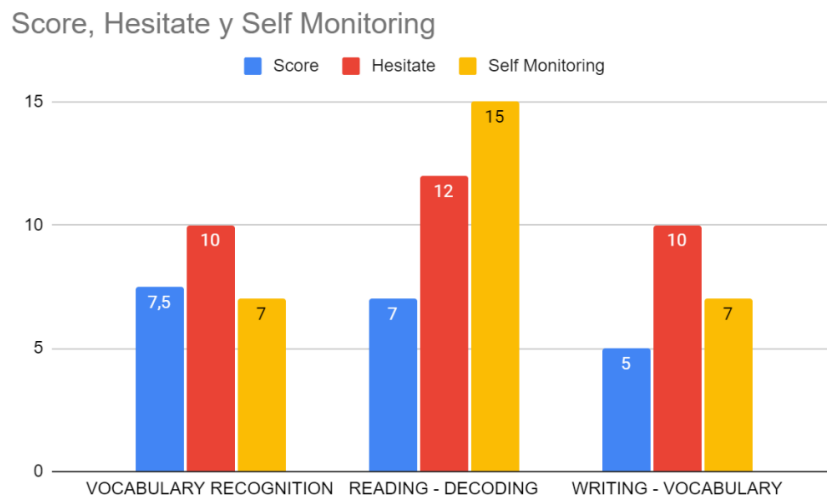
letters vary in size and spacing. He is confused and pauses frequently to think of each word.

Every difficulty for the student demonstrates confusion. In the test, the student was huffing and sighing. He felt frustrated with the test which led to visible signs of distress. The test was a highly stressful experience for the student.

### Quantitative analysis

A quantitative analysis was conducted during class time on the following EFL skills vocabulary – recognition, reading – decoding, and writing – vocabulary to determine the knowledge and gather certain attitudes while the tests were conducted.

The chart shows three metrics—tests scores, hesitate, and self-monitoring—across three different activities: Vocabulary Recognition, Reading-Decoding, and Writing -Vocabulary.

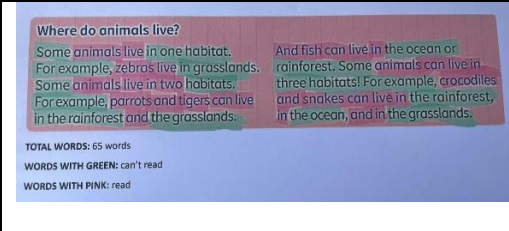


### Vocabulary – Recognition

	<p>Vocabulary score: 7.5</p> <p>Frequency Hesitation: 10</p> <p>Frequency Self-monitoring: 7</p>
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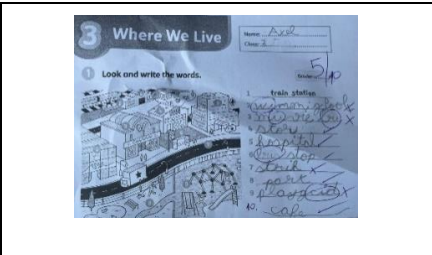
In the vocabulary recognition test the student scored an average grade (7.5) on the vocabulary studied during the past two weeks—the bar chart indicates challenges with vocabulary recognition, possibly due to uncertainty or confusion with similar words. Hesitation is higher than the score, suggesting that the student frequently pauses, possibly due to uncertainty or difficulty recognizing vocabulary. The self-monitoring score is slightly lower than the hesitation score, indicating that while the student is somewhat aware of their performance, he may not be fully able to correct or address his hesitations.

### Reading – Decoding

	<p>Reading – Decoding Score: 7</p> <p>Frequency Hesitation: 12</p> <p>Frequency Self-monitoring: 15</p>
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In the reading–decoding test, the student's score is lower compared to other areas, indicating significant difficulties. Hesitation is quite high at 12, suggesting the student frequently pauses, likely due to problems in decoding words or processing information. Self-monitoring is the highest among all areas at 15, indicating that the student is very conscious of his performance. However, this increase in self-awareness may also contribute to increased hesitation and anxiety, further impacting their reading performance.

### Writing – Vocabulary

	<p>Writing – Vocabulary Score: 5</p> <p>Frequency Hesitation: 10</p> <p>Frequency Self-monitoring: 7</p>
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In the writing – vocabulary test the student’s score is the lowest among the three categories, indicating significant challenges with writing. Hesitation is high, suggesting that the student struggles with writing tasks, possibly due to difficulties in spelling or forming complete words. The self-monitoring score is

relatively low, which may imply that while the student is aware of their performance issues, they are not as conscious of their struggles as they are in reading.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In general, after the analysis resulting from the unstructured observations and the tests applied to the student with Asperger's syndrome, it can be concluded that:

- Literacy instruction gathers reading-decoding and writing-vocabulary skills in a 7-year-old student. In the case of an Asperger's student, it was notorious that frustration grew according to the difficulties encountered while trying to read and write vocabulary previously learned. This frustration provoked a series of behaviors linked to anxiety and even crying. The student would show his inconformity with the activity and would check his peers like trying to compare himself with them. Not acquiring the correct literacy skills at the same pace as regular students would seriously affect the self-efficacy of any student with cognitive disabilities.
- The student naturally demonstrates his frustration with a series of visible behaviors: restless, hitting himself, frequently erasing what he writes, hitting, crying, shifting on his seat, and occasionally tapping the book with his fingers.
- Reading was the most difficult skill for the student with Asperger's condition and showed the highest hesitation and frequent self-monitoring.
- Vocabulary activities show several difficulties for the student with Asperger's condition, demonstrating a lack of knowledge that was not acquired in the previous months. This situation affected the student's behavior and emotions, causing an attitude of rejection, becoming easily distracted, and losing interest in completing the activity.
- The student's writing is inconsistent, the test shows difficulties such as frequent erasing and rewriting of words, writing the correct spelling

especially confusing words with similar structures, missing letters in certain words, and spelling errors when copying dictation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the conclusions mentioned before, the following recommendations are proposed:

- It is highly recommended that the teachers record the repeated behaviors to understand the frustration and anxiety provoked by the lack of appropriate literacy instruction that could result in a lack of self-efficacy belief.
- It is advisable in the structured approaches, incorporating clear, consistent routines and multi-sensory techniques, to help the learner build confidence in their reading and writing abilities.
- Considering the student's unique struggles, it is necessary to develop an individualized education plan that includes specific goals and strategies to address these difficulties, preparing the right adaptations, especially for reading and decoding.
- The student may benefit from more tailored support, such as breaking the task into smaller, manageable steps, providing additional time, or providing a list of words to work on his self-efficacy
- Provide a personalized design and predictable learning environment to reduce anxiety. Clear instructions, visual schedules, and routine activities can help the student feel more secure and less overwhelmed.
- Foster a supportive classroom environment where peers are encouraged to help each other. Pairing the student with a buddy or providing opportunities for cooperative learning can boost self-efficacy.
- Implementing audiobooks, predicting the story, repeating after the teacher, and practicing activities with phonetic rules in reading classes can improve the student's reading fluency and reduce hesitation.



- Incorporate vocabulary learning into real-life contexts, such as, storytelling, and classroom games to enhance vocabulary learning in meaningful contexts.
- It is necessary to incorporate sight words in visual aids around the classroom and recall them in everyday sessions, at least the first 50 words to enhance reading fluency and as a result this will improve writing.

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## **APPENDICES**

### 3 Where We Live

swimming pool park hospital cafe playground  
 street tram station movie theater bus stop school



bus stop



cafe



movie theater



hospital



park



playground



store



street



swimming pool



train station



school

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#### Where do animals live?

Some animals live in one habitat. For example, zebras live in grasslands. Some animals live in two habitats. For example, parrots and tigers can live in the rainforest and the grasslands.

And fish can live in the ocean or rainforest. Some animals can live in three habitats! For example, crocodiles and snakes can live in the rainforest, in the ocean, and in the grasslands.



Total words: 65 words

Words in red can read = 31

Words in green can't read = 34

**3 Where We Live**

Name: Axel  
Class: 3 F

Grade: 5/10

**1 Look and write the words.**

1 train station ✓  
2 swimming pool ✗  
3 market stall ✗  
4 toy store ✓  
5 hospital ✓  
6 bus stop ✓  
7 street ✗  
8 park ✓  
9 playground ✗  
10 cafe ✓



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Yo, **Cabrera Quiñonez, Erika Vanessa**, con C.C: # 0927235812 autora del trabajo de titulación: **Literacy Instruction and Self-efficacy in an English as a Foreign Language Learner with Asperger Condition in the Third Grade of a Bilingual School** previo a la obtención del título de **Licenciada en Lengua Inglesa** en la Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil.

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## REPOSITORIO NACIONAL EN CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGÍA

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<b>ÁREAS TEMÁTICAS:</b>	Enseñanza, pedagogía, educación bilingüe		
<b>PALABRAS CLAVES/KEYWORDS:</b>	Asperger's, EFL, literacy, behavior, Reading, writing, self-efficacy		
<b>RESUMEN/ABSTRACT (150-250 palabras):</b>			
<p>This study aimed to determine that an EFL classroom with a student with Asperger's condition should be designed in language proficiency in a way that is both supportive and responsive to their unique learning needs. It involves providing tailored instruction that accommodates any challenges the student may face with age processing, social interaction, or sensory sensitivities. The focus should be on enhancing the student's abilities in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, while also building their confidence and reducing anxiety in the learning environment. The data was collected through the use of unstructured observations applied to reading, vocabulary, and writing, working directly with the student in the language arts classes. The findings revealed that the student scored low in each evaluated skill, considering that each test significantly affected his self-efficacy, causing his behavior to be difficult to control when the teacher did not provide techniques and strategies to improve their academic performance, and the actual methodology applied mixed methods and a descriptive design that involves integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Thus, the mentioned techniques and strategies are to be applied to the student in the classroom to solve the problems found in this research project.</p>			
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