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Faculty of Education

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**Using authentic materials for learners with Asperger syndrome  
in ELT classroom**

Diploma thesis

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I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently, using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.



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**Abstract:**

This diploma thesis deals with the use of authentic materials for learners with special educational needs in the first and second grades, especially in the 3rd and 6th grades of elementary schools for pupils listed in § 16, paragraph 9 of the Education Act, the attitude of teachers and how authentic materials are used in English language classes. The work is divided into a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part first deals with the teaching of the mother tongue at lower secondary, the teaching of a foreign language at lower secondary, then basic knowledge about the problems of children with specific needs in language learning and then methods of using authentic materials in the English language. The practical part aims to find out how the level of knowledge differs with the English language in the 6th and 9th grades of pupils at elementary schools for pupils listed in § 16, paragraph 9 of the Education Act. For the purpose of this study, a questionnaire survey was implemented. The results and conclusions are processed in the practical part. The practical part also examines the popularity of authentic materials among teachers and learners. The work includes lesson plans on how authentic materials can be effectively used in lessons.

**Key words:** learners with special needs, autism spectrum disorders, Asperger syndrome, foreign language, authentic materials



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	<i>Attention deficit hyperactivity disorders</i>
ANX	<i>Anxiety</i>
AS	<i>Asperger Syndrome, Asperger's</i>
ASD	<i>Autism Spectrum Disorder</i>
CLT	<i>Communicative Language Teaching</i>
EFL	<i>English as a Foreign Language</i>
ELT	<i>English Language Teaching</i>
ESP	<i>English for Specific Purposes</i>
IQ	<i>Intelligence quotient</i>
L1	<i>First Language</i>
L2	<i>Second language</i>
MDD	<i>Major depression</i>
SCZ	<i>Schizophrenia</i>
SEN	<i>Special Educational Needs</i>
TEACH	<i>Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children</i>
OCD	<i>Obsessive-compulsive disorders</i>
PDD-NOS	<i>Pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified</i>

## Introduction

The choice of the topic has been motivated by the practical experience with teaching SEN<sup>1</sup> learners at lower secondary school for pupils with special educational needs. In choosing to write this diploma thesis, I decided to select something that was close to my profession, my field of study and my heart. I mainly work with learners with autism spectrum disorders<sup>2</sup> that leads to developmental delays that can cause significant social, communication and behavioural changes. Second language acquisition for learner with Asperger Syndrome and other forms of Autism Spectrum Disorder is a vastly under researched field, yet language teachers have these learners in their classrooms every day. Statistics<sup>3</sup> show that 111 855 pupils with disabilities were educated in the 2021/2022 in Czech primary schools, of which 4 214 were pupils with autism spectrum disorders. Every year around 1500-2000 children with ASD are born in the Czech Republic.

When I started teaching at a primary school established in accordance with the provisions of Section 16, Paragraph 9 of the Education Act No. 561/2004 Coll., I asked myself a question: *Can children on the autism spectrum acquire a second language?* The next question then became whether a second language should be taught to children on the autism spectrum. My learners are those with Asperger Syndrome<sup>4</sup> (AS) which is known for its milder symptoms of autistic disorder. These people might have social challenges and unusual behaviours and interests. However, they typically do not have problems with language or intellectual disability. In my classes I have noticed that learners with Asperger have no difficulties in learning English while they are having problems with learning Czech. Teaching heterogeneous classes where learners have learning disabilities, interests or different abilities is a challenge. This grouping allows learners

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<sup>1</sup> SEN learners = Special Educational Needs <https://www.msmt.cz/areas-of-work/social-programs/the-education-of-pupils-with-special-educational-needs>

<sup>2</sup> ASD = Autistic spectrum disorders <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/facts.html>

<sup>3</sup> Statistická ročenka školství – výkonové ukazatele školního roku 2021/2022 <https://statis.msmt.cz/rocenka/rocenka.asp>

<sup>4</sup> AS = Asperger syndrome, Asperger's <https://www.autismspeaks.org/types-autism-what-asperger-syndrome>

to learn from each other's differences and at the same time they share their unique abilities and interests.

The thesis deals with the potential of authentic materials for ESL learners at lower secondary school. Authentic materials give me plenty of invaluable and abundant resources that can be used in English language classes. Teaching classes with mixed-grade learners where each learner has their own diagnosis, must be well prepared and organised. Authentic materials provide more intense and focused motivation for learners. The main elemental idea of using authentic materials during English lessons is to build learners' self-expression, which leads to increased interest in the language. Materials used in lesson should help learners to identify with the language. Authentic materials are considered a great tool in teaching English and their choice but, the way they are used in the class is not as simple as it might initially seem. I have dealt with many types of learners during my teaching experience, each of them has its own likes, needs and motivation.

The main aim of my diploma thesis is to present the benefits of using authentic materials in English language classes with learners who are diagnosed with Asperger syndrome. The diploma thesis is divided into a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part has four chapters. In the first chapter, authentic materials, their distribution, and the advantages of using them during teaching are characterized. The second chapter is devoted to pupils with autism spectrum disorders and appropriate teaching approaches in teaching these learners. The third chapter focuses on learners with Asperger syndrome, the triad of disabilities accompanying this diagnosis, and a suitable approach to teaching these learners English. In the last chapter of the theoretical part, the thesis deals with criteria of selecting authentic materials for AS learners, special aids for teaching English learners with ASD, the role of the teacher and, finally, the teaching of the English language at a special elementary school established in accordance with the provisions of Section 16, Paragraph 9 of the Education Act No. 561/2004 Coll.

The practical part is aimed at pupils with Asperger's syndrome while learning English using authentic materials. In this part, a qualitative method is used, which includes interviews with pupils with AS. The main goal of the research investigation is to find out which authentic materials are most suitable for AS pupils. The partial goal is to reveal how satisfied these learners are with the teaching of the English language without the use of these materials, only with the use of the coursebook. The appendix also contains an interview with English language teachers of pupils with Asperger Syndrome and, samples of the work of pupils with AS. In conclusion, the results, conclusions, and data analysis of the research investigation are mentioned. The main research questions of the study were defined as follows:

**Question No. 1:** How does the use of authentic materials impact learners with autistic spectrum disorders' motivation and engagement in English language learning?

**Question No. 2:** How do learners with autistic spectrum disorders respond to authentic materials in English language classes, and what are their perceptions of the use of such materials?

**Question No. 3:** What types of authentic materials are most effective for promoting language acquisition among learners with autistic spectrum disorders in English lessons?

**Question No. 4:** To what way learners with Asperger syndrome adapt to the English language study time?

**Question No. 5:** What motivates pupils with Asperger syndrome to learn the English language?

The findings of this study may hopefully contribute to ongoing discussions and development within the pedagogy field.

# THEORETICAL PART

## 1. Authentic materials for English language teaching

The concept of authentic learning is based on the belief that learners are more likely interested in what they are learning through real objects than by presenting grammar and rules in coursebooks. Whether learners are more motivated to learn new concept and skills or not depends on the way teachers implement authentic materials into their lessons. Several definitions of authentic materials that have been used in literature over the years can be found in literature. What all definitions have in common is that they 'unmask real language and its use in its own society'. To some extent, authentic language material can be characterized as the one that has been created for native speaker by native speakers and not for language learners. Authentic texts comprise both of spoken and written language samples. (Qamariah, 2016, p. 23).

The rise of the Communicative Language Teaching<sup>5</sup> in the 1970s resulted in the use of authentic materials in EFL<sup>6</sup> classes (Martinez 2016, p.6). Authentic materials are prepared for native speakers and are not aimed to be used for teaching purposes. The main purpose of authentic materials was for native speakers use and it was meant to apply them as possible second language learning materials. Common interest for English language teaching, mainly in EFL classes is preparing learners for real life situations. Teachers need to "find ways and means of exploitation authentic materials in classroom instructions "as it is mentioned in Bacon and Finnemann (1990, p.459). As reported by Rixon (1989, p.13) many teachers prefer to offer their learners something practical to study from. Teachers who use authentic materials as a common thing in their lesson may cause that the learners increase their interest in foreign language not only during classes, but also in the world outside the classroom.

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<sup>5</sup> Communicative Language Teaching is an approach that aims to achieve communicative rather than linguistic competence through learner interaction <https://online.ulm.edu/degrees/education/med/curriculum-and-instruction/communicative-language-approach/>.

<sup>6</sup> EFL classroom= English as a Second language. <https://oupeltglobalblog.com/2011/07/12/how-esl-and-eFL-classrooms-differ/>.

Nowadays, society demands great independence, purposefulness, and interest in the subject from learners, and therefore many teachers see the method of using authentic materials as desirable. There has been a growing trend in recent years towards the use of authentic materials in language classrooms (Kramsch,2004, p.145-168; Tomlinson, 2012).One of the advantages of living in today's world is that we are not limited only to the printed inputs. We can use the vast offering of materials on the Internet if we want to use listening resources, social networks can serve as means of communication through which we can arrange online classes. This type of material is believed to provide learners with a more realistic and engaging language experience as it exposes them to language as it is used in real-life situations (Ur, 2012, p,116-138). The number of materials is not limited as it used to be in the past. As for the difference between modified texts in coursebook and authentic materials, it is considered that the modified texts in coursebooks are taken out of context and are not authentic. In other words, authentic material is a piece of authentic language and show how language is communicated in a real-life situation. In a study by Peacock and Ho (2003), learners who were exposed to authentic materials in the classroom reported higher levels of motivation and interest in the course than those who were not. Similarly, Tomlinson (2012) found that the use of authentic materials helped increase learners' understanding of cultural practices and social contexts, as well as their ability to use language in authentic situations.

The language learning experience can be enriched by using authentic materials in lesson. In some school it is not customary to use authentic materials in English language classes for various reasons. Some teachers prefer to use outdated textbooks that they have been using for many years and refuse to adapt to new teaching trends. For some teachers the preparation of lessons using authentic materials is time-consuming and therefore they prefer to choose a captured form of teaching. Teaching English language solely from textbooks may not provide learners with a complete language learning experience. While textbooks can be a valuable resource in language teaching, they do not fully capture the complexity of language use in real-life situations (Cook, 2001,p.76). This approach does not provide learners with exposure to the nuances of language that are essential to communication. Authentic materials can be used in different ways, whether they are materials intended for listening practice, reading practice, conversation practice or writing practice we should try to include them in foreign language classes. If only textbooks are used in foreign language classes, there is a risk that the topics are out-of-date, unpopular

among learners and they thus lose motivation to learn. Research has shown that language learning involves more than just memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules (Ellis, 1997; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2014). Language use is a dynamic and context-dependent process, and textbooks alone cannot provide the rich, real-life contexts that learners need to develop communicative competence (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2014).

Teaching solely from textbooks has some advantages, such as providing a clear and structured curriculum, ensuring that all learners receive the same information, and being a time-efficient method of delivering information. However, there are also several drawbacks to this approach. Firstly, textbooks often present information in a dry and abstract manner that can be difficult for learners to engage with and apply to real-world situations (Lansford, 2014) This can lead to a lack of interest in the subject matter and hinder learners' ability to retain and apply what they've learned. Secondly, textbooks may not provide up-to-date or diverse perspectives on a given topic, as they are typically written by a limited number of authors and subject to bias. This can limit learners' understanding of the world and prevent them from developing critical thinking skills. Thirdly, teaching solely from textbooks may not cater to individual learning styles and abilities, as some learners may require more hands-on or interactive learning experiences to fully understand and apply concepts. Furthermore, relying solely on textbooks can limit learners' ability to engage with the language and develop their own creativity in using it (Swan, 2005,p.75). The use of authentic materials and communicative activities can help learners to see the language as a means of communication, rather than just a set of rules to be memorized. Overall, while textbooks can be a valuable resource for teaching, it's important for educators to supplement this approach with other methods, such as experiential learning, discussions, and multimedia resources, to engage learners and foster a deeper understanding of the subject matter. If teaching is to run smoothly and efficiently, then authentic materials are among the most important teachers' tools. The necessary knowledge to all learners is transmitted through the using authentic materials (Swan, 2005,p.96-125).

## 1.1. Authentic and authenticity

Several definitions of what is authentic and what is authenticity can be found in dictionaries. The most typical synonyms for *authentic* are *real* and *genuine* (Thesaurus.com, 2013). All language skill can be taught through the usage of authentic materials.

It may be helpful to look at a few definitions of authenticity of teaching materials:

- “*An authentic text is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort*”, the definition with which comes Morrow (1997, 13).
- “*Authentic texts (either written or spoken) are those which are designed for native speakers: they are real texts designed not for language learners, but for the speakers of the language in question*” Harmer (2007, p 273) and he adds that that the normal, natural language of authentic texts allows no concessions to foreign speakers, and it is important to teach such language because that is what learners encounter in everyday life.
- Peacock (2003 p 146) identifies authentic materials as “*materials that have been produced to fulfil some social purpose in the language community*”.
- As explained by Nunan (1999, p 35), authentic texts are “*written language data that has been produced in the course of genuine communication, and not specifically written for purposes of language teaching*”.

The noun *authenticity* is most often described as the quality of being authentic, real or true. Lee identifies the term authentic to “*real-life purposes*” (Pinner, 2016, p 324). Hedge (2000) claims the notion of authenticity came to the surface in association with communicative approach in the language teaching. Widdowson (1990, p.45) defines authenticity as “*a natural language behaviour*’, because it focuses mainly on the meaning of an authentic material rather than its form”. He explains that authenticity itself needs to understand the language in as many different contexts as possible to the prejudice of the formal text properties.



## 1.2. Classification of authentic materials

Authentic materials can be classified into several categories based on their source and purpose. One classification scheme distinguishes between materials that are primarily linguistic in nature, such as newspapers, books, and magazines, and those that are primarily visual or auditory, such as films, TV shows, and music (Tomlinson, 2012, p.143-179). Another classification scheme distinguishes between materials that are informational or educational, such as news articles and documentaries, and those that are primarily for entertainment or cultural enrichment, such as movies and TV dramas (Peacock, 1997, p.144-156).

Gebhard (1996, p.103) distinguished several categories of authentic materials. Radio news, cartoons, songs, or any other audio materials belong to the category of authentic listening materials. Street signs, magazines, post cards, newspapers, pictures fall under the category of authentic visual materials. The third category is authentic printed materials where we can find for example sport reports, newspapers, restaurant menus or traffic tickets. Another category with objects of everyday use like coins, currency is the category of realia used in EFL classroom (Richards,2001, p.105-115).

However, Genhard's division did not find appreciation among all authors dealing with the topic of authentic materials and language teaching. Sally Ianiro (2007) divides authentic materials into *printed materials* like websites, coupons, newspapers, traffic tickets, street signs and into *auditory* ones which contain TV programmes, movies, e-books, phone messages, broadcasts, or podcasts. Within each category, materials can also be classified based on their level of difficulty or appropriateness for different proficiency levels. For example, news articles might be classified based on the level of vocabulary and grammatical complexity, or films might be classified based on their cultural and linguistic content.

## 1.3. Advantages of authentic materials

There are several advantages to using authentic materials in language learning. First, authentic materials provide learners with exposure to real-world language use, including idioms, slang, and cultural references that may not be found in textbooks or other instructional materials (Brown, 2007, p 45-68). This exposure can help learners develop more natural and fluent language skills. Second, authentic materials can help learners develop strategies

for dealing with unknown words and expressions in context, which is a key component of effective language learning (Tomlinson, 2012). By encountering new vocabulary and grammar structures in authentic contexts, learners can develop their ability to infer meaning and use context clues to aid comprehension. Third, authentic materials can make language learning more engaging and relevant to learners' interests and goals (Ur, 1999, p 25-54). By using materials that are personally meaningful to learners, such as movies or music, teachers can increase learners' motivation and investment in the learning process. Finally, authentic materials can help learners develop cultural competence and awareness by exposing them to the cultural norms, practices, and values of the target language community (Tomlinson, 2012). This exposure can help learners develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the culture, as well as facilitate communication and interaction with native speakers. Overall, the use of authentic materials in language learning can have a range of benefits for learners, including improved language proficiency, increased motivation, and engagement, and enhanced cultural competence.

Learners have various reasons for studying a language – at lower secondary school it is just a need because of the curriculum but when they grow up most learners ultimately want to be able to communicate with native speakers. A powerful reason for using authentic texts is that they provide wider input than coursebooks. By being in contact with authentic materials learners are exposed to wider sphere of their interests. The gap between the school and outside world can be erased. Teachers can increase learners' motivation by letting learners collect their own authentic materials. Not only the teacher but also learners should participate in the process of learning. Berardo (2006, p 64-67) implies that authentic materials can be useful in language lessons and mentions five advantages of authentic materials. Firstly, authentic materials can motivate learners to achieve better results if they are chosen correctly and engage learners during lesson. Secondly, authentic materials also give us an insight into the culture of other nations. Learners can thus gain a greater overview of the culture, customs, and traditions of another nation. Furthermore, another advantage of authentic material is the exposure of learners to a foreign language in real life situations. Above all, the use of appropriate materials supports a creative approach to teaching. Finally, it is important that the use of authentic materials considers the needs of learners and is tailored to their interests and goals. As Ur (1999, p.249) notes, "*materials should be as close as possible to the real-life needs and interests of learners and should respect their rights as individuals to make choices and to control their own learning.*" Therefore, teachers should

consider the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their learners, as well as their learning styles and preferences, when selecting and adapting authentic materials for the classroom.

To summarise, below are some ways in which authentic materials can benefit learners in the ELT classroom:

Exposure to real language use: Authentic materials provide learners with exposure to the language as it is actually used in real-life situations. This can help them develop their listening, reading, and comprehension skills, as well as their understanding of colloquial expressions and cultural nuances.

Motivation: Using authentic materials can help motivate learners by making the language learning process more engaging and relevant to their real-life interests and experiences.

Language variety: Authentic materials can expose learners to a wide variety of language forms, accents, and dialects, which can help them develop their ability to understand and communicate with a diverse range of English speakers.

Cultural insights: Authentic materials can provide learners with cultural insights and perspectives, which can help them develop their intercultural competence and understanding of the cultural context in which the language is used.

However, it is important to note that authentic materials can also present challenges for learners, particularly in terms of difficulty level and unfamiliar vocabulary. Therefore, it is important to carefully select and scaffold authentic materials to ensure they are appropriate for the learners' level and needs. Additionally, it is important to provide appropriate support and guidance to learners when using authentic materials, such as pre-reading/listening activities, comprehension questions, and post-reading/listening discussions (Dörnyei, 2001).

## 2. Learners with special educational needs

"Zvláštní vzdělávací potřeby" is the Czech term for Special Educational Needs (SEN) learners. According to Průcha, zvláštní vzdělávací potřeby refer to "a wide range of conditions or difficulties that significantly impede the learning and educational progress of a student" (Průcha 2011, p. 293). SEN learners are children with "*intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopaedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities*". Hutchins (2011), who was one of the first pioneers in the research of foreign languages teaching to learners with special educational needs, emphasized the reason why more attention should be paid to the area of foreign language education to learners with SEN. In his statement, he stated the following as the reason: „*For the student unencumbered by a learning disability, foreign language study is indeed an enriching and rewarding experience. For the learning-disabled student, however, it can be an unbelievably stressful and humiliating experience, the opposite of what is intended* “. According to the Ministry of Education we classify pupils with special educational needs into the following categories:

- pupils with a need for support in education due to a health condition. This group includes pupils with physical, visual, and hearing disabilities, pupils with mild mental disabilities, pupils with combined disabilities and pupils with weakened health, long-term illness or minor health disorders leading to learning disabilities.
- pupils with speech disorders. this group includes disorders of the processing of language information, both during its reception and during its production. These include aphasia, dysphasia, dysarthria, mutism, atactic speech in disorders of the cerebellum.
- pupils with specific learning, attention, and behaviour disorders to this group belongs dyslexia, dysorthography, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dysmusia, dyspinxia, dyspraxia, ADD, ADHD behaviour disorders.

- pupils from different cultural and living conditions. Here we are talking about pupils with a low socio-cultural status, pupils with ordered institutional education or pupils with ordered protective education.
- pupils whose mother tongue is not Czech.
- gifted and exceptionally gifted pupils if they have associated educational needs. To this group belongs gifted pupils with Asperger syndrome.

Learners with special educational needs include pupils with an autism spectrum disorder, which includes Asperger's syndrome. More detailed differences between autism spectrum disorders and Asperger's syndrome are given in the next part of this chapter. As this diploma thesis is focused on pupils with Asperger's syndrome, it is important to mention one of the basic differences between the two diagnoses, namely IQ<sup>7</sup> and communication. People with Asperger's syndrome tend to have average or above-average intelligence, while those with other forms of autism may have a range of intellectual abilities, including intellectual disability (Grandin, 2014, 12-24). This means that learners with Asperger's syndrome may be able to excel academically with appropriate support and accommodations. Another difference is in communication. While people with both Asperger's syndrome and other forms of autism may struggle with social communication, people with Asperger's syndrome typically have better language skills and fewer delays in language development compared to those with other forms of autism (Grandin, 2014, 12-24). However, they may still struggle with nonverbal communication, such as understanding facial expressions and body language.

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<sup>7</sup> IQ classification retriever from: <https://www.iq-testy-online.cz/hodnoty-iq/>

	Asperger's Syndrome	Other Forms of Autism
IQ (based on standardized assessment measures)	Average or above average	Lower
Communication	No delay in speech development	Delayed speech development
Age of detection	Usually detected later, e.g. when the child starts going to school and has difficulties with social interactions	Detectable by age 2 or even earlier

Figure 1 Asperger's Syndrome and other forms of autism differences according to IQ and communication

Source: The Layman's Guide to Autism: What is the difference between Asperger's Syndrome and Autism? 2019., retrieved from: <https://allin.guide/blog/the-laymans-guide-to-autism-what-is-the-difference-between-aspergers-syndrome-and-autism>

## 2.1. Autistic Spectrum Disorders characteristics

"Autistic Spectrum Disorders" is a term used to describe a range of neurodevelopmental conditions that are characterized by difficulties in social communication and interaction, as well as restricted and repetitive behaviours and interests. The term is often used interchangeably with "Autism Spectrum Disorders" (ASD). According to Thorová (2016), individuals with ASD may also experience sensory processing issues, difficulties with emotional regulation, and challenges with executive functioning. ASD is often referred to as a spectrum disorder because it encompasses a wide range of symptoms and severity levels. Some individuals with ASD may have only mild symptoms and be able to live independently, while others may have significant challenges with communication, social interaction, and behaviour and require ongoing support and intervention (Thorová, 2016, p-33-79).

The prevalence of ASD in the Czech Republic is estimated to be around 1%, which is similar to rates in other countries (Matoušek, Kožený, & Dufek, 2019). Support for individuals with ASD in the Czech Republic includes a range of interventions, such as behavioural therapy, speech and language therapy, and educational accommodations.

However, as noted by Kratochvíl and Urbanek (2019), there is a need for more resources and specialized services for individuals with ASD and their families in the Czech Republic.

Individuals with ASD who are learning a second language may face unique challenges due to their neurodevelopmental condition. ASD can pose unique challenges for individuals who are learning a second language. According to Jelinková (2008, p.33-67), individuals with ASD may struggle with language acquisition in general, as well as with the complexities of learning a second language, such as navigating social cues and understanding idiomatic expressions. Additionally, individuals with ASD may have difficulty with executive functioning skills, which can impact their ability to plan and organize their learning.

However, Thorová (2016) note that there is limited research on the specific challenges faced by individuals with ASD who are learning a second language. They suggest that more research is needed in order to better understand these challenges and develop effective interventions to support this population. Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), is a broad range of conditions related to social skills, repetitive behaviours, speech, and nonverbal communication. There is a wide variety of symptoms, which is why it's called a spectrum. In general, we can speak of ASD's core symptoms as social communication challenges and restricted, repetitive behaviours.

## **2.2. Asperger Syndrome characteristics**

Asperger Syndrome is typically characterized by impairments in social communication and interaction, along with the presence of restricted interests and repetitive behaviours. These characteristics are also present in other forms of ASD, including classic autism and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) (World Health Organization, 2018).

Asperger syndrome (AS), which is considered a part of the autism spectrum disorder (ASD)<sup>8</sup>, can affect an individual's ability to communicate and socialize effectively. Some people with Asperger's may have difficulty learning languages due

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<sup>8</sup> F80-F 89 Poruchy Psychického vývoje, F84.5 Aspergerův Syndrom retrieved from: <https://mkn10.uzis.cz/prohlizec/F80-F89>

to challenges with social communication, nonverbal cues, and auditory processing (Tager-Flusberg, 2004, p.225-254). While individuals with Asperger Syndrome do not typically have delays in language development, they may still struggle with the pragmatics of language, including understanding figurative language and social cues.

However, it's important to note that everyone with Asperger's is unique, and some may excel in language learning due to their heightened ability to focus on and memorize details. Additionally, some individuals with Asperger's may have a special interest in languages, which can motivate them to learn and excel in this area (Grandin 2014, p.24). Overall, the impact of Asperger's on language learning will vary from person to person. Some may face challenges due to their social and communication difficulties, while others may excel due to their focused attention and interest in language. It's important to support individuals with Asperger's in their language learning efforts and provide any necessary accommodations or assistance.

	Asperger's Syndrome	More Severe Forms of Autism
Social communication and interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Problems making or maintaining friendships</li> <li>- Poor eye contact</li> <li>- Isolation or minimal interaction in social situations</li> <li>- Trouble interpreting body language, humour, irony or sarcasm</li> <li>- Problems expressing empathy, controlling emotions or communicating feelings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prefers to be alone</li> <li>- Avoids or rejects physical contact</li> <li>- Avoids eye contact</li> <li>- Does not understand or use non-verbal communication</li> <li>- Not recognising sarcasm or jokes</li> <li>- Does not recognize or express emotions</li> <li>- Impulsive and/or aggressive behaviour</li> </ul>
Speech and language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advanced vocabulary and good grammar skills</li> <li>- Might not be able to use language appropriately in social situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Delayed speech and language skills</li> <li>- Not using or rarely using common gestures</li> </ul>
Cognitive ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Superior memory</li> <li>- Focus on details, missing "big picture"</li> <li>- Intense focus on certain topics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fixations on certain activities or objects</li> <li>- Short attention span</li> <li>- Narrow or extreme interests in specific topics</li> </ul>
Routines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prefer strict schedule</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gets upset when a routine is changed, even slightly</li> </ul>
Physical signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Problems with coordination</li> <li>- Sensitive to sounds, smells, textures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Repetitive behaviours such as hand-flapping</li> <li>- Lack of coordination</li> <li>- Extremely sensitive to sounds, smells, textures</li> </ul>

Figure 2 Common symptoms of Asperger's syndrome and other forms of autism

Source: The Layman's Guide to Autism: What is the difference between Asperger's Syndrome and Autism? 2019., retrieved from: <https://allin.guide/blog/the-laymans-guide-to-autism-what-is-the-difference-between-aspergers-syndrome-and-autism/>



### **2.3. Education of learners with autistic spectrum disorders and Asperger syndrome**

In the Czech Republic, children with disabilities, including ASD and Asperger's Syndrome, are entitled to equal access to education according to the Law on Education No. 561/2004. The law emphasizes that children with disabilities should be placed in the least restrictive environment possible, meaning that they should be placed in the most inclusive setting possible to meet their individual needs.

When determining the appropriate educational placement for a child with ASD or Asperger's Syndrome, the decision is made by a team consisting of the school psychologist, special education teacher, and class teacher. The team assesses the child's abilities and needs and recommends the type of educational support that the child requires. In some cases, children with ASD or Asperger's Syndrome may also have other co-occurring diagnoses, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or anxiety disorders, which can impact their educational placement. The assessment team should consider these additional diagnoses and provide appropriate accommodations and supports to help the child succeed in their educational setting (Bělohávková 2010, p.34-68). The Czech Republic also offers specialized classes or programs for children with ASD or Asperger's Syndrome, which provide additional support and accommodations tailored to the needs of these learners. These classes are typically smaller in size and provide specialized instruction and support, as well as opportunities for socialization and interaction with peers.

Overall, the educational placement of a child with ASD or Asperger's Syndrome in the Czech Republic should be based on the unique needs of the child and should provide them with the best possible opportunity to succeed in school.

## **2.4. Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication Handicapped Children**

Most learners with autism spectrum disorders or Asperger's syndrome struggle with language and functioning according to culturally normal social standards. The TEACCH<sup>9</sup> (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children) program is a comprehensive intervention program that was developed by Eric Schopler and colleagues at the University of North Carolina in the 1960s. It is designed to support individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in their learning and development. It is generally characterized by five basic principles, which intertwine with all activity with children with ASD (Bartoňová, Bazalová, Pipeková 2007, p.141). These five basic principles are:

- Physical structure – daily activities (playing, eating)
- consistent schedules
- Establishment of expectations
- Maintenance of a routine
- Implementation of visually based cues

The TEACCH program is based on a methodology that is successfully used in the Czech Republic, and which is referred to as Structured Learning (Čadilová, Žampachová 2008, p.29). The essence of both programs is the application of the principles of individualization, structuring and visualization (Jelínková, 2008, p.28).

One of the key principles is to break activities into small steps more often. The difficult part should alternate with quiet activity. In lessons for ASD learners, it is advisable to include a moment of rest as learners can lose their interest or motivation due to long-term reading and concentration. According to the learners it is important to choose

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<sup>9</sup> TEACH - Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication Handicapped Children  
[https://psychology.fandom.com/wiki/Treatment\\_and\\_Education\\_of\\_Autistic\\_and\\_Related\\_Communication\\_Handicapped\\_Children](https://psychology.fandom.com/wiki/Treatment_and_Education_of_Autistic_and_Related_Communication_Handicapped_Children)

a suitable form of teaching. It can be suitable individual teaching, differentiated teaching, which is based on the division of pupils into groups according to various criteria or project teaching, where the teacher has the function of an advisor (Bazalová, 2011).

#### **2.4.1. Structured learning**

Tuckermann (2014, p. 6) defines Structured Learning as a comprehensive, special pedagogical approach that is adapted to the specific needs and learning style of individuals with autistic spectrum disorders. Hrdlička and Komárek (2014, p. 174) characterize Structured Learning as *"learning, which emphasizes the use of individual abilities, training independence and self-service, uses alternative communication methods and emphasizes the necessity of cooperation with family. Other priorities include the training of social skills and work behaviour"*.

Structured learning environments can be beneficial for individuals with Asperger's syndrome as they provide clear and predictable routines and expectations that can help reduce anxiety and improve learning outcomes (White, 2002, p.449-461). Visual aids and schedules can be helpful for individuals with Asperger's as they often have a strong visual memory and may struggle with auditory processing (Attwood, 2000, p.47). However, it's important to note that everyone with Asperger's is unique, and what works well for one person may not work for another. Therefore, it's important to work with the individual and their support network to develop a personalized learning plan that considers their strengths, interests, and needs. Overall, structured learning environments can be a valuable tool for supporting individuals with Asperger's in their learning and development, but it's important to approach this in a personalized and individualized manner.

#### **2.4.2. Individualization**

Individualization, or individual approach, is based on the individual getting to know a child with ASD and identifying his deficits and needs, so that we can then choose methods and procedures that consider their peculiarities. This principle also includes the choice of aids,

space arrangement, appropriate communication, and motivation. In the approach to children with ASD we must also focus on details (i.e. size of objects, colour, location of the object or room equipment). Even these insignificant elements can disrupt education of children with ASD (Čadilová, V., Žampachová, Z. 2008). Individualized approach to learning and support are essential for individuals with Asperger's syndrome, as each person with Asperger's has unique strengths, challenges, and needs (Klin, 2006). Individualized learning plans can be developed with the input of the individual with Asperger's, their family, and their support network to ensure that their learning environment and supports are tailored to their specific needs.

In addition to academic support, individuals with Asperger's may benefit from individualized support to help them navigate social situations and build relationships. Social skills training and therapy can be helpful for individuals with Asperger's, as they often struggle with social communication and nonverbal cues (Hendricks, Wehman, & Molinelli, 2015). Overall, individualized approaches to learning and support are essential for supporting individuals with Asperger's in achieving their full potential and improving their quality of life.

### **2.4.3. Structurization**

Structurization, or providing a structured environment and routine, can be beneficial for individuals with Asperger syndrome. This can include structured learning environments, such as the TEACCH program, as well as structured home and community environments (Attwood, 2007, p.60-101). Structured environments can help individuals with Asperger syndrome better understand their expectations and responsibilities, reduce anxiety and sensory overload, and improve overall functioning (Attwood, 2007, p 102-103). Structured routines can also help improve communication and social interaction, as individuals with Asperger syndrome may struggle with understanding social cues and expectations. It's important to note that structurization should be individualized to the person's unique needs and strengths, as some individuals may require more or less structure than others. Additionally, it's important to balance structured environments with opportunities for flexibility and creativity, as individuals with Asperger syndrome may struggle with adapting to unexpected changes. Overall, structurization can be

a helpful strategy for supporting individuals with Asperger syndrome, particularly when combined with individualization and other evidence-based interventions. The term structuring means division. It is important for learners with ASD to clearly create the given structure of the arrangement of space, time, and individual activities. Such arrangement will give them a sense of safety and security, they will better orient themselves in the environment and react more flexibly to changes. Failure to follow this principle will result in confusion and stress (Thorová, 2016, p.331-358).

### **3. Learners with Asperger Syndrome**

The IQ of individuals with Asperger Syndrome (AS) is normal, sometimes above normal scale as it is shown in the table number one. Speech is almost unimpaired, but there may be a disorder or pronunciation, strange intonation and the voice may have an unusual timbre. They have a good mechanical memory, like to mentor children, and have superficial conversation. They often mature prematurely (Thorová,2016, p.185-190).

Learners with AS prefer to play alone as they find it difficult to participate in collective games. Those learners are not very often team players. Hrdlička and Komárek (2014, p.50) state that children with Asperger's realize the isolation syndrome. They are sometimes wrongly perceived as those who lack interest in others. One of the main problems is that they cannot understand the unwritten rules of behaviour. They intervene inappropriately in the conversation; they insult and therefore are often considered rude. What can happen during lessons is that a learner with AS checks other children's compliance with the rules.

Attwood (2012, p.17.) mentions major symptoms that are typical for a learner with AS:

- A lack of empathy
- A limited ability to make and maintain friendship.
- One-sided conversation
- Intensely experienced hobbies
- Clumsy movements
- Limited social skills
- Clumsiness in maintaining a conversation.
- Deep interest in a specific area or phenomenon

### **3.1. The triad of impairment**

The triad of impairments in Asperger's syndrome refers to the three key areas of difficulty that individuals with the condition may experience: social communication, social interaction, and social imagination. The triad of impairments is often used to diagnose Asperger's syndrome and is an important part of understanding the condition (Frith 1994,p.115-132).

According to a study by Frith (1991, p 27-39), individuals with Asperger's syndrome may have difficulties with social communication, including understanding nonverbal cues, maintaining eye contact, and interpreting social cues. These difficulties can make it challenging for individuals with Asperger's syndrome to engage in social interactions and establish relationships with others.

In addition to social communication difficulties, individuals with Asperger's syndrome may also struggle with social interaction. According to Beranová (2012, p 167-177)), individuals with Asperger's syndrome may have difficulty with social reciprocity or the ability to understand and respond appropriately to social situations. This can lead to difficulties with initiating and maintaining conversations, as well as making friends and developing social networks.

Finally, individuals with Asperger's syndrome may also struggle with social imagination. This refers to the ability to understand and interpret the perspectives of others and to engage in pretend play or imaginative thinking. According to Jelínková (2008, p.12-64) individuals with Asperger's syndrome may have difficulty with abstract thinking, imagination, and creativity, which can make it challenging for them to engage in imaginative play or to understand the perspectives of others. In summary, the triad of impairments in Asperger's syndrome includes difficulties with social communication, social interaction, and social imagination. These difficulties can impact an individual's ability to form relationships, engage in social situations, and understand the perspectives of others.

### **3.1.1. Social interaction and social behaviour**

Social interaction and social behaviour are often challenging areas for individuals with Asperger's syndrome (AS). They may have difficulty with nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions and body language, and may struggle to understand social norms and conventions. According to Jelínková (2008, p.5) children in this area tend to have typical problems with reciprocity and the effort to share attention, which they lack. Children do not brag about the pictures they have painted; they do not need to show others their creations. They often consider people as object; therefore, they do not initiate contact and often do not respond to peers. Individuals with AS may have difficulty with initiating and maintaining social interactions and may struggle to make and keep friends. They may also have difficulty with empathy or understanding others' emotions and perspective. When a person struggles with making eye contact it looks like he or she avoids the contact on purpose, but this is not the case. They just do not like to use it to communicate.

Baron-Cohen's (1988, p.351-360) theory of mind hypothesis suggests that individuals with Asperger's syndrome have difficulty understanding and predicting the mental states of others, which can impact their social interactions. According to Baron-Cohen, this difficulty in theory of mind can result in a lack of empathy and difficulty with social communication. Frith's study (1991, p.25-39) on social cognition in individuals with Asperger's syndrome suggests that these individuals may have difficulty with social cognition, including processing facial expressions, interpreting emotional cues, and understanding social norms. Attwood's work (2012, p. 67-85) on Asperger's syndrome emphasizes the importance of teaching social skills to individuals with the condition. According to Attwood, individuals with Asperger's syndrome may have difficulty understanding nonverbal communication and social cues and may benefit from explicit instruction in social skills.

However, it is important to note that social deficits in AS are not always the same in all individuals. Some individuals with AS may have more pronounced social deficits than others, and some may excel in certain areas of social interaction, for example in discussing a specific topic of interest (Thorová,2016,p.221-268).



### **3.1.2. Communication**

Communication can be a significant challenge for learners with Asperger's syndrome. Many individuals with Asperger's have difficulties with social and pragmatic aspects of communication, including difficulties with understanding nonverbal cues, taking turns in conversation, initiating, and maintaining social interactions, and using appropriate tone and intonation. It is also important for educators to be aware of the unique communication needs and preferences of learners with Asperger's. Some learners may prefer written communication over spoken communication or may benefit from the use of visual supports or technology to aid in communication (Klin, 2006, p.3-11).

During the basic school years, children with AS may struggle to interact with peers and make friends. They may prefer to play alone or may not know how to join in during group activities. They may also have difficulty with turn-taking and sharing and may not understand the rules of games or social activities (Frith,1994, p 98-137). It is important for parents, teachers, and other professionals to provide support and guidance to children with AS in developing their communication skills. This may include strategies such as social stories, which help to explain social situations and appropriate responses, and role-playing activities, which allow children to practice social skills in a safe and structured environment (Geva, 2006).

According to Hedricks (2015, p 73-84), children with Asperger's syndrome may have difficulty with pragmatic aspects of language, such as using language in a socially appropriate way and understanding figurative language. They may also have difficulty understanding humour and sarcasm, which can make it difficult for them to participate in informal conversations with peers. To support communication development in primary-aged children with Asperger's syndrome, Hurtig and Gauffin (2009) suggest providing structured opportunities for social interaction, such as social skills groups and peer mentoring programs. Additionally, speech therapy and occupational therapy may be helpful in addressing specific communication difficulties. Overall, while communication can be a challenge for children with Asperger's syndrome during the primary school years, with appropriate support and intervention, they can develop the skills they need to communicate effectively and participate in social interactions with their peers (Atwood, 2012, p. 56).

### **3.1.3. Imagination, interest, and play**

Asperger learners of a second language have unique characteristics that affect their language acquisition. One of the factors that can enhance their language learning is their imagination and interest in the topic. Asperger learners have a tendency to become hyper-focused on specific topics that they find interesting, which can lead to a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Barber,1996, p-19-24). Therefore, incorporating topics that are of interest to the learner can be a useful strategy in promoting engagement and motivation in language learning.

Children with Asperger's syndrome often have a narrow range of interests and may engage in repetitive or stereotyped play behaviours. However, they can also have intense interests in specific topics, which can be a valuable resource for teachers and therapists to engage them in learning. According to Attwood (2012, p.101-103), these intense interests can be used to promote social interaction and communication skills by creating opportunities for joint attention and turn-taking. Furthermore, children with Asperger's syndrome often have difficulties with imaginative play and may struggle to engage in make-believe scenarios. This is thought to be related to their literal thinking style, which can make it challenging for them to understand abstract concepts or appreciate different perspectives (Baron-Cohen, 2002, p.329-350). However, imaginative play can be fostered through structured activities that provide clear guidelines and allow for repetition and predictability (National Autistic Society, 2019).

According to Čadilová (2008, p.475), children with Asperger's syndrome may have difficulty with imaginative play and may prefer to engage in repetitive or ritualistic behaviours. They may also have narrow interests and may become fixated on certain topics or objects. Attwood (2012, p.21-34) suggest that it is important to support the development of imaginative play and interests in children with Asperger's syndrome, as these skills are important for social development and can help children to engage with their peers. They recommend providing structured opportunities for imaginative play, such as drama or art activities, and encouraging children to explore a range of interests. To support play and imagination in primary-aged children with Asperger's syndrome, Rixon (1998) suggests providing structured activities that allow for repetition and predictability, such as games

with clear rules and routines. Additionally, sensory-based activities may be helpful in engaging children with Asperger's syndrome in play. Overall, while imagination, interest, and play can be a challenge for children with Asperger's syndrome during the primary school years, with appropriate support and intervention, they can develop the skills they need to engage in imaginative play and develop a range of interests (Attwood 2012, p.35-75).

## **4. Criteria for selecting authentic materials for learners with Asperger Syndrome**

Selecting appropriate materials for learners with Asperger syndrome requires careful consideration of their unique needs. Authentic materials, such as newspaper articles, advertisements, and real-life videos, can provide valuable opportunities for language learning, but they must be selected with care. As teachers, we have many options where to find authentic materials. Searching for these materials can be time-consuming and at the same time it can also be a challenging process. Setting the right criteria should never be forgotten, we should also think of appropriate level for the learners and their educational needs (Hendricks 2015, p.1671-1682). One of the basic skills of a teacher should be the ability to create his or her own materials based on the needs of his learners. We must not forget about:

### **The language level of learners**

When selecting authentic materials for learners with Asperger's syndrome, it is important to consider their language level. Authentic materials should be challenging but not overwhelming for learners and should be appropriate for their language proficiency level (Geva & Zadeh, 2006). For example, for learners with lower proficiency levels, materials with simpler language and clear illustrations may be more appropriate, while more advanced learners may be able to handle more complex materials such as authentic news articles or short stories. The materials should be a little bit of a challenge but not too demanding. We must consider what kind of support they need to understand the content of the materials. Whether it is intended as an individual work, pair work, group work or if there is a possibility of a teacher assistant who can help during the activity.

## **The lesson content.**

In addition to language level, it is also important to consider learners' interests and preferences when selecting authentic materials (Scherer & Schicke, 2017). For example, if a learner is interested in sports, authentic materials related to sports may be more engaging and motivating for them. Similarly, materials that relate to learners' personal experiences or cultural background may be more meaningful and relevant to them. The content of the lesson should be motivating for learners. Learners should be familiar with the topic, concept and vocabulary in L1. We should think about what language structure or skill we want to cover.

### **4.1. Asperger syndrome and sensory sensitivities**

Asperger syndrome is a developmental disorder that affects social interaction, communication, and behaviour. One of the characteristic features of Asperger syndrome is sensory sensitivities, which can include hypersensitivity to sensory stimuli, such as sounds, lights, textures, and smells. These sensitivities can have a significant impact on learning and communication, making them important to consider when selecting materials for language learning. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that the authentic materials are appropriate for learners with Asperger's syndrome in terms of their sensory sensitivities. For example, learners with sensory sensitivities may find certain sounds or visuals overwhelming or distracting, and so materials that do not trigger these sensitivities may be more appropriate (Scherer & Schicke, 2017).

The authentic learning material should take into account the learner's sensory sensitivities, avoiding excessive use of bright colours, loud sounds, or strong smells (Attwood 2012, 127-137). Attwood also mentions the following:

### **Age of the learners**

Authentic materials can be used even with early learners. The aged does not only affect what types of materials they can relate to but also their special educational needs. Tasks should be easy enough to be carried out successfully.

### **The learners' interests**

What we should know about our learners is their interest. We must be careful about their traditions, culture, habits but also, we need to know whether they like reading, listening to music or playing with cards, puzzles etc. We should also think of a learner diagnosis to avoid possible issues which can ruin whole lesson.

### **The length of material**

There is a common rule that the lower the learner's language level the shorter the material should be. It is important to find balance. Learners can lose their interest and get bored if the material is too short and easy. On the other hand, if the material is too long and challenging for the learners, it will harm both their motivation and their confidence. Harmer (2007) says that choosing the proper authentic material is extremely important, because otherwise a lot of problems may appear.

## **4.2. Asperger syndrome and concentration span**

According to Thorová (2016, p. 47-69), children with Asperger's syndrome may have difficulty with attention and concentration, which can impact their ability to learn and succeed in school. They may become easily distracted or may struggle to focus on tasks that are not of interest to them, and it is challenging for them to stay focused during lessons. According to Tuckermann (2014, p.117-125), some learners with Asperger syndrome may have difficulties with shifting attention between different stimuli, resulting in reduced attentional control. As a result, they may require additional support and accommodations to maintain their focus and engagement during lessons.

Qamariah (2016) suggests that it is important to provide structure and routine to support attention and concentration in individuals with Asperger's syndrome. This can include providing clear instructions and breaking tasks down into manageable steps. They also recommend providing a distraction-free environment and minimizing sensory input when possible. To further support attention and concentration in individuals with Asperger's syndrome, Thórová (2016, p.71-76) suggest using visual aids, such as diagrams or mind maps, to help organize information and make it easier to understand. They also recommend using technology, such as audio recordings or computer programs, to help individuals with Asperger's syndrome stay focused and engaged.

Overall, while attention and concentration can be a challenge for individuals with Asperger's syndrome, with appropriate support and intervention, they can develop strategies to improve their ability to focus and succeed in learning and other activities. To address this challenge, it is recommended that lessons for learners with Asperger syndrome be structured in shorter intervals. For example, White, (2002, p.29) suggests that lessons should be no longer than 45 minutes, with a break of at least 10 minutes between lessons. Additionally, lessons should be structured in a predictable and organized way, with clear expectations and routines, which can help learners with Asperger syndrome to feel more comfortable and secure in the classroom (Kuusikko-Gauffin et al., 2009).

## **EMPIRICAL PART**

### **5. Methodology: Research methods, technique**

The research of the diploma thesis focuses on teaching English language using authentic materials at elementary school established according to § 16, paragraph 9 of the Education Act. When setting the goals of my diploma thesis, I mainly focused on providing a view of teaching of learners with autism spectrum disorders based on my experience. For learners with autism spectrum disorders, in my case they are learners with Asperger's syndrome, there is currently not much choice in the selection of teaching materials. Our society only became interested in pupils with autism spectrum disorders few years ago<sup>10</sup>. In my opinion we are still in a phase where many teachers are still learning how to work with these pupils. I have been working with learners with autism spectrum disorders as a teacher for 6 years and I am constantly looking for information in this field.

One of the goals is to investigate the effectiveness using authentic materials in English language lessons on learners' language acquisition and proficiency. If only textbooks and workbooks are used when teaching foreign languages, in my case the English language, these learners are very often bored during lessons. A pupil with Asperger's syndrome does not have an affected mental level, on the contrary, he excels. But unfortunately, thanks to the associated diagnoses, these children usually end up in special elementary schools, where they either stagnate or, on the contrary, their mental level declines.

Another goal is to examine the impact of using authentic materials on learners' motivation and engagement in English language learning. Learners with Asperger's are known for having unusual interests and hobbies which they are very good at. One of the typical interests is working with computers and playing computer games, and this is where these learners learn the English language. Therefore, if they are placed in a class where there are pupils with LMP and they are mentally at a different level, they feel that they are not learning anything new. From my teaching practice, I meet pupils with AS who, thanks

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<sup>10</sup> Asperger syndrome was first described in the medical literature by Austrian paediatrician Hans Asperger in 1944, but remained unknown until the 1980s (Thorová, 2016, p.34).



to computer games, are very good at English and if I didn't adjust their lessons according to their personality, they would very quickly lose interest in the subject. One of the goals that I set during my English language lessons with AS learners and at the same time I set for my diploma thesis is to investigate the impact of using authentic materials on learners' ability to communicate and interact in real-life situations. Here, I see great potential in authentic materials as opposed to lessons that I am used to from the days I went to elementary school - only teaching using a textbook, exercises, and vocabulary translations. At the same time, with the help of this thesis, I would like to pass on my experience to other foreign language teachers on how to work with learners with autism spectrum disorders. I would like to identify the most suitable types of authentic materials for language learning purposes and levels for learners with autistic spectrum disorders.

### **5.1. Main aim**

The main goal of my empirical part is to raise awareness of the fact that authentic materials can be used in teaching English to children with Asperger's syndrome in order to improve the communication skills of these learners, improve cooperation between learners and teachers, and improve learners' interests in learning second language.

### **5.2. Research methods**

The study will utilize a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, including interviews (Appendix A), questionnaires (Appendix B), and lesson plans (Appendix C). Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with each participant to gain insight into their experiences with using authentic materials in English lessons. The interviews will be transcribed for analysis. A questionnaire will be administered to each participant to collect data about their language proficiency, motivation, engagement, and attitudes towards using authentic materials in English lessons. The questionnaire will be designed based on the research objectives and literature review. Lesson plans will be developed and implemented for each group – the 6th graders and 9th graders that incorporates authentic materials. These lesson plans will be designed to address specific language learning objectives and will be tailored to meet the needs of learners with Asperger Syndrome. Overall, this research methodology seeks to gain a comprehensive

understanding of the effectiveness of using authentic materials in English lessons for learners with Asperger's syndrome and to provide practical recommendations for integrating these materials into language teaching practices for this population.

### **5.3. Research questions**

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the basic questions were formulated.

**Question No. 1:** How does the use of authentic materials impact learners with autistic spectrum disorders' motivation and engagement in English language learning?

**Question No. 2:** How do learners with autistic spectrum disorders respond to authentic materials in English language classes, and what are their perceptions of the use of such materials?

**Question No. 3:** What types of authentic materials are most effective for promoting language acquisition among learners with autistic spectrum disorders in English lessons?

**Question No. 4:** To what way learners with Asperger syndrome adapt to the English language study time?

**Question No. 5:** What motivates pupils with Asperger syndrome to learn the English language?

## 5.4. Hypotheses

Setting hypothesis was an important step in the research project. After conducting a literature review on the topic, I had a general idea of what I wanted to investigate. Hypotheses provide a clear direction to my research project.

The first hypothesis helped me focus on what I wanted to investigate and what I hoped to find out.

The second hypothesis is based on my previous observations during lessons with Aspergers learners. Whenever I used authentic materials in teaching, the lesson was more successful, and the learners did not lose interest in the given activities during the lesson. The learners were active during these hours, so I wanted to know if this is the case in other schools as well.

The hypothesis number 3 deals with authentic materials and by using these materials in English lesson, learners with Asperger syndrome can develop language skills that are relevant to their everyday lives. The learning process with using authentic learning materials can be more engaging, motivating and this can help learners develop a positive attitude towards language learning, which is important for successful language acquisition.

### **Hypotheses:**

1. The use of authentic materials in English lesson will increase the motivation and engagement of learners Asperger Syndrome in language learning.
2. The use of authentic materials in English lessons will positively impact the social and communication skills of learners with Asperger Syndrome.
3. The incorporation of authentic materials in English lessons will lead to greater language acquisition among learners Asperger Syndrome.

## 5.5. Research sample

The target group for the research was learners with autistic spectrum disorders, specifically pupils with Asperger syndrome attending elementary schools established according to § 16, paragraph 9 of the Education Act. For my research part, I chose respondents who are based on specific criteria, such as age, gender, and diagnosis. I have selected participants who have a diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome and are enrolled in a school established according to § 16, paragraph 9 of the Education Act. Since Asperger's syndrome is a pervasive developmental disorder<sup>11</sup>, the chances of finding a group of learners who have the same secondary diagnoses, are minimal. Therefore, I present on the following page the figure, in which the basic characteristics of the respondents are presented.

I chose learners from 6th grade and then 9th graders because the classes at these schools are mostly mixed based on grades and disabilities. In these schools, it is customary to have groups where there are the 3<sup>rd</sup> grades, the 4<sup>th</sup> grades and the 5<sup>th</sup> graders in one group. Furthermore, there are groups of the 4<sup>th</sup> graders, the 5<sup>th</sup> graders and 6th graders (which is my case) and a group of learners from the seventh to ninth grade. At schools of this type, the determination of groups and the division of classes takes place according to the diagnoses of the pupils, and therefore mostly they are mixed classes of levels, age and abilities. The arrangement of pupils in classes is regulated by Decree number 27/2016 Sb. §17. This decree regulates the organization and education of pupils with recognized support measures. If we are dealing with pupils with ASD, for example, there may be 6 of the possible total number of 14 pupils in the classes. If these numbers do not lead to the fulfilment of educational needs, it is possible to reduce the number of pupils with ASD to 4.<sup>12</sup>

I consider it very important to mention that I chose learners who were willing to participate in the study. Eight learners were asked, four of them from 6th grade and four of them from 9th grade of lower secondary. The age of the respondents was from 12 to 16. All involved learners' learners agreed to the research investigation.

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<sup>11</sup> Pervasive developmental disorders (PDD) is a term used to describe a group of disorders that affect communication, social interaction, and behaviour. World Health Organization. (2021). Autism spectrum disorders. [https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/autism-spectrum-disorders-\(asd\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/autism-spectrum-disorders-(asd))

<sup>12</sup> Number of learners in the class, <https://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/pocet-zaku-ve-tride#otazka1>

Interview was held in Czech language and learners had printed version of questions. Some learners with Asperger's syndrome have difficulty with handwriting, as they struggle with the fine motor skills required for writing. They also have trouble with the shape of their written text, such as uneven spacing between words and letters, inconsistent letter size, and poor alignment on the page. These issues can make it difficult for others to read their writing and may lead to frustration and difficulty with written communication. And that's why I used the option when the answers were recorded either by teachers or assistant teachers. Pupils are already used to situations where they fill out questionnaires and formal documents and are happy with this option.

Originally, I thought that I would be able to get an equal number of male and female respondents. Asperger's syndrome is primarily known as a syndrome affecting boys. It is debated in medical society whether this is due to a difference in rates of autism spectrum disorders or whether females are underdiagnosed. The prevalence ratios are often cited as about 4 males for every 1 female diagnosed (Ehlers,1993, p.1327-1350),

The following table shows the types of diagnoses for the given learners, so I prefer to explain the abbreviations here as well.

#### **ADHD = attention deficit hyperactivity disorder**

ADHD stands for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, which is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with daily functioning and development (Zelinková, 2015,158-178).

#### **ANX = anxiety disorder**

ANX is a commonly used abbreviation for anxiety, which is a natural human response to stress and is characterized by feelings of fear, apprehension, or worry.

However, when anxiety becomes excessive or prolonged, it can lead to an anxiety disorder (Novák 2019,65-72).

### **MDD = major depressive disorder**

MDD, also known as clinical depression, is a mood disorder characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a lack of interest or pleasure in activities that were once enjoyable. It is a common and debilitating mental health condition that affects individuals across the lifespan (Látalová, 2012).

### **OCD = obsessive-compulsive disorders**

OCD stands for obsessive-compulsive disorder, which is a mental health condition characterized by obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviours. Obsessions are recurring and persistent thoughts, images, or impulses that are often distressing and unwanted. Compulsions are repetitive behaviours or mental acts that are performed to alleviate the anxiety caused by obsessions (Vymětal, 2001, p.40-67).

### **SCZ = Schizoaffective disorder**

SCZ is a complex and chronic mental health disorder that affects an individual's thinking, emotions, and behaviour. The condition is characterized by positive symptoms, such as hallucinations and delusions, negative symptoms, such as lack of motivation and social withdrawal, and cognitive impairments, such as difficulties with attention and memory (Hugo, 2000).

### **Dyslexia**

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that affects an individual's ability to read accurately and fluently, and to comprehend written text. It is a neurological condition that can impact an individual's processing of language and is not related to intelligence

or motivation. Dyslexia can also impact an individual's writing, spelling, and verbal expression. (Zelinková, 2015,121-135).

### **Dyspraxia**

Dyspraxia, also known as Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), is a neurological condition that affects an individual's ability to plan and execute coordinated movements. It can impact a wide range of motor skills, such as fine motor control, gross motor coordination, and spatial awareness. Dyspraxia is not related to intelligence or motivation and can co-occur with other conditions such as ADHD and dyslexia. (Zelinková, 2015,111-120).

### **Epilepsy**

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder characterized by recurrent seizures or convulsions. Seizures occur when there is a sudden, abnormal burst of electrical activity in the brain, which can cause a wide range of symptoms such as loss of consciousness, muscle spasms, and altered sensations. Epilepsy can affect individuals of all ages and can be caused by a variety of factors, including genetic predisposition, brain injury, and infections. (Zelinková, 2015,121-130).

Respondent	Age	Gender	Type of disability	Way of communication	Interests
1	12	Male	AS, OCD , Dyslexia	Interrupting	Trains, boats, encyclopaedias
2	15	Male	AS, OCD, ADHD	Enthusiastic, English speaking during lesson	Mathematics, tables Gardening, space,
3	13	Female	AS, OCD, MDD Dyslexia	Highly active Keen on learning Not team player	Cooking, languages
4	15	Male	AS,ADHD ,dyspraxia, epilepsy	Gestures, mimic expressions	Traveling by train, bikes, timetables
5	13	Female	AS, OCD, ADHD Dyslexia	Little of verbal language	timetables, Sewing, drawing, computers
6	17	Male	AS, SCZ Dyslexia, epilepsy	uncoordinated speech, lack of rhythm, a monotonous pitch	Working with wood, motorbikes, languages
7	14	Male	AS, ADHD, OCD Dyslexia	Talkative, enthusiastic	Encyclopaedias, collecting coins, computers
8	16	Male	AS. OCD, ANX dyslexia	Using lot of filler words um, uh, revision of ideas	Computers, colleting tickets (bus, trains, trams, cinema, Tesco)

Figure 3 Characteristics of the target group, (source, own



## **5.6. Questionnaire for respondents**

These questions with possible answers are designed to collect about on the motivation and engagement of learners with Asperger's syndrome during English lessons, as well as their attitudes towards the use of authentic materials in language learning. The questions also aim to identify the types of authentic materials that are most effective for these learners, as well as any challenges they may face while using them. The results of this questionnaire can be used to inform the development of lesson plans that incorporate authentic materials in a way that maximizes their effectiveness for learners with Asperger's syndrome.

## **5.7. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews of English teachers**

The questionnaire for teachers focused on teaching using authentic materials and their experiences. Next, I conducted a semi-structured interview with the teachers. A semi-structured interview allows freedom of answers. During the interview, it is possible to reformulate the question, ask for explaining the answer or asking additional questions. Interview is the most frequently used method of data collection in qualitative research. Using open-ended questions, the researcher can understand the point of view of other people without limiting their point of view (Švaříček, Šed'ová et al.,2008, p. 159).

## **5.8. Analysis of results and their presentation**

When analysing the results of the interviews and the questionnaire survey, there was an effort to maximize possible clarity. The results are presented in an appropriate form with an analysis for each individual questions. With open-ended questions, it was investigated whether certain phenomena appear in more answers. The obtained data were classified into individual categories based on similarity so that it was possible to clearly describe the knowledge obtained. The results are subsequently presented in the form of graphs and analysis of questions.

## 6. Lesson Plan

I decided to create some lesson plans for lower secondary school learners diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome.

The lesson plans are not strictly intended for certain levels and grades; levels can be used with learners without any diagnoses as well as with older ones according to their skills, level of English and interests.

These lesson plans have various features, that I would like to highlight. I divided the lesson into smaller parts so that there is a more frequent rotation of activities and learners can test their knowledge and mainly communication skills.

When teaching learners with AS, we must always remember that we must adapt the lesson to their needs. Before we plan the exercises, it is good to know the hobbies and interests of the learners to avoid unpleasant situation. If, for example, we have a student who does not like music, then the whole lesson cannot be based only on listening. Or if there is a learner who has just suffered a loss in the family, the lesson about family members would not be appropriate.

Firstly, lesson plans should enrich knowledge through an interesting topic and alternative way of teaching.

Secondly, they should present useful facts and teach skills such as cooperation, communication, searching for information, selecting sources, giving presentation etc.

Thirdly, I would like to demonstrate how important and useful authentic materials are for foreign language teaching. Those materials are very interesting for the learners - they are original, untraditional, or catchy.

Lastly, they meet cross-curricular topics, namely multicultural education, media education and education to think in European and global context.

I believe that using authentic materials can give learners more than simple learning from coursebooks since there are a lot of activities and many things to do condensed in relatively short time that is devoted to authentic lesson plan. The time given depends on the schedule possibilities and learners 'skills.

## **6.1. Time organization (schedule) of the research process according to its phases**

In November, I visited cooperating teachers at their schools, where I introduced them to the topic of authentic materials. I had prepared a small presentation regarding the types of materials and their use so that the teachers would get a comprehensive idea. During this information meeting, I came across the fact that some teachers at these schools are still teaching without innovative methods. I explained the topic of authentic materials referring to real-life materials that have been created for purposes other than language learning, such as newspapers, magazines, TV shows, films, podcasts, and social media posts. These materials contain language that is natural and contextualized, making them more engaging and meaningful for language learners.

The use of authentic materials in language teaching has been shown to promote language learning that is both effective and enjoyable. The purpose of focusing on authentic materials in my diploma thesis may be to explore the potential benefits of using authentic materials in English language teaching for learners with Asperger's syndrome. By using authentic materials in the classroom, I as a teacher can help create an environment that is more engaging and meaningful for learners, which can enhance their motivation and improve their language learning outcomes.

Additionally, the use of authentic materials can provide learners with exposure to the type of language they are likely to encounter in real-life situations, which can better prepare them for using English in the real world. I also asked the teachers if they could select learners with Asperger's syndrome who would be suitable for my research and at the same time willing to participate in the research. Selecting potential responders for my diploma thesis was an important process that required careful consideration and planning. The responders I chose and met my criteria are the individuals who provide the data for my study, so it's crucial to choose participants who are appropriate for my research questions and who are able to provide the information I need for my study.

These were my criteria:

1. **Diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome:** Responders must have a confirmed diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome to participate in the study.
2. **Age and grade level:** Responders should be either in the sixth grade or the ninth grade, as this will allow you to compare the experiences of learners with Asperger's syndrome at different stages of their academic development.
3. **Similar diagnoses:** Include responders who have similar diagnoses to Asperger's syndrome.
4. **Language proficiency:** Responders should have a sufficient level of English language proficiency to participate in English lessons that use authentic materials.
5. **Attend a special elementary school:** Responders should attend a special elementary school for learners with special educational needs, including learners with Asperger's syndrome.

By following criteria for developing an authentic lesson plan I can develop more effective and engaging authentic lesson plans that are tailored to the unique needs and interests of learners with Asperger's syndrome. During the first meeting, I also asked teachers if they could put together a list of interests and hobbies for me so that I could create the best possible lesson plan. I realize that it is not within the power of any of the teachers to always prepare a lesson plan that suits every learner.

#### **6.1.1. Criteria for developing the lesson plan.**

My criteria for developing an authentic lesson plan for learners with Asperger's syndrome:

1. **Relevant to learners' interests and needs:** Authentic lesson plans should be designed to meet the unique interests and needs of learners with Asperger's syndrome. This means that lessons should be tailored to their interests, abilities, and learning styles.

2. **Incorporate real-world contexts:** Authentic lesson plans should include real-world contexts, situations, and materials that learners may encounter outside of the classroom. This can help learners with Asperger's syndrome develop more practical language skills and prepare them for future interactions in English-speaking environments.
3. **Include a variety of authentic materials:** Authentic lesson plans should incorporate a variety of authentic materials such as videos, articles, social media posts, advertisements, and other types of real-world texts. This can help learners with Asperger's syndrome develop their reading, listening, and critical thinking skills in a more engaging and meaningful way.
4. **Provide opportunities for interaction and communication:** Authentic lesson plans should provide learners with opportunities to interact and communicate with each other, as well as with native speakers of English. This can help learners with Asperger's syndrome develop their social skills and confidence in using English in real-life situations.
5. **Include clear and explicit instructions:** Authentic lesson plans should include clear and explicit instructions that are easy for learners with Asperger's syndrome to follow. This can help reduce anxiety and confusion and enable learners to fully engage in the learning process.

### **6.1.2. Questionnaires distribution**

During the month of January, I distributed questionnaires to responders and teachers. In my classes, I explained the questionnaires myself and the learners filled them in during lessons. I used the possibility of a teacher's assistant, who helped me very willingly. In the other 3 schools, I solved it by emailing the questionnaires to the teachers in advance. If there were any ambiguities regarding the questionnaire, we communicated by phone or in person. Since I am also a student of special education at the faculty in Hradec Králové, I had the opportunity to solve questions related to my diploma thesis with some teachers from practice. Since I have a pupil with AS in my class who is very gifted within language, I had questionnaires prepared in both Czech and English based on my experience working with this pupil. Respondents thus had the opportunity to choose

from languages. Very often they chose a questionnaire in English and the teacher or assistant only made sure that they understood the given question. I followed the following steps:

1. **Explaining the purpose:** It's important to explain the purpose of the questionnaire to the learners and why it's important for your diploma thesis. Let them know that their responses are valuable and will help you better understand their experiences with using authentic materials in English lessons.
2. **Using clear and simple language:** When administering the questionnaire, use clear and simple language that is easy for the learners with Asperger's syndrome to understand. Avoid using complex or abstract language that may cause confusion or anxiety.
3. **Providing examples:** Providing examples of the types of responses you're looking for can be helpful for learners with Asperger's syndrome. This can help them better understand the questions and provide more accurate and detailed responses.
4. **Being patient:** Learners with Asperger's syndrome may need extra time to process information and respond to questions. Be patient and allow them the time they need to provide thoughtful and accurate responses.
5. **Allowing breaks:** If learners with Asperger's syndrome become overwhelmed or need a break during the questionnaire, allow them to take a break and resume later. This can help reduce anxiety and ensure that the responses they provide are accurate and meaningful.

## 6.2. Authentic lesson plan and multiple intelligence

Multiple Intelligences is a theory developed by Howard Gardner that suggests that individuals have different types of intelligences, and that traditional measures of intelligence, such as IQ, are too limited to fully capture an individual's abilities. Gardner identified eight types of intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic (Gardner 1983).

Using authentic materials and activities that reflect the diversity of intelligences can benefit learners with Asperger syndrome and other learners with diverse learning styles.

For example, a lesson plan about traveling by train can include activities that appeal to different types of intelligence. A linguistic activity could involve reading and discussing train schedules and ticket prices, a spatial activity could involve creating a map of the train route, a bodily-kinaesthetic activity could involve role-playing buying a train ticket, and a musical activity could involve creating a song about the train journey. I planned the lesson plan in such a way that it corresponded to all eight types of multiple intelligence, so that every learner had a chance to actively participate.

Linguistic learners could read and discuss train schedules and ticket prices, as well as write descriptions of their ideal train journey.

Logical-mathematical learners could analyse the train schedules and ticket prices and create a budget for their train journey.

Musical learners could create and listen to train-themed music, such as songs that reference trains or mimic the sound of a train whistle.

Bodily-kinaesthetic learners could act out train journeys, including boarding the train, finding a seat, and disembarking at the destination.

Spatial learners could create maps or diagrams of train routes, including different stops and landmarks along the way.

Interpersonal learners could work in pairs or small groups to plan and execute a train journey together.

Intrapersonal learners could reflect on their own experiences with train travel and consider how they might plan a train journey that meets their personal interests and needs.

### **6.3. Lesson plan activities**

Nowadays, thousands of people are travelling abroad every day. Young people and learners get a lot of opportunities to visit foreign countries, meet new people and new cultures, which is crucial for their social development and general awareness.

This is one of many other reasons why to learn languages. I think that it is important to draw learners' attention to this fact and show them how important are English

classes because languages can open doors for them. During my teaching experience at this school, I found out that learners and their families do not travel much. Since I work with learners who mostly come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, with learners who are placed in children's homes, I consider it important to provide them with the opportunity to travel, at least during English language classes. I would like to bring the world closer to them and at the same time impress upon them the idea that if they want to, they can achieve a lot in life.

I believe that motivating through personal experience is highly efficient. All traffic tickets, which are used during the lessons using authentic materials, are therefore my personal and I was able to give my story to the children.

### **Lesson theme: Travelling by train.**

6<sup>th</sup> grade

9<sup>th</sup> grade

45 minutes lesson

#### **1. Ticket reading and comprehension**

The first activity was aimed at getting to know the topic of the lesson and the ticket as such. Each of the pupils received their real train ticket.

During the first activity, I was surprised by the number of learners who did not know what a real train ticket looks like. That's why it took us longer than I expected to get acquainted with the given ticket. I learned the same from the teachers who were involved in my research.

I began the lesson by providing the learners with a train ticket and have them practice reading and understanding the information on it. This can include the train number, the departure and arrival times, the seat number, and any other relevant details. I also provided additional examples of train tickets for the learners to practice with.



I wrote words like From. It? When? Tim? How much? on the board and learners had to complete the data found.

Practiced grammar: Wh questions.

Vocabulary: destination, date, time, price, ticket office

After the initial familiarization with the data on the travel document, the learners received a worksheet. They were supposed to fill in the information on this worksheet. For this exercise, each student was given the same amount of time to complete. The purpose of this exercise was to find out if learners were able to remember new words from the first activity. Each of the learners had a different travel document so that it was verified whether they really understood the given vocabulary.

## **2.What is the budget?**

This task focused on repeating numbers. Based on the information obtained from the train tickets, I found out the price of a one-way ticket or return tickets. One student in this activity pointed out the price increases month after month.

Practiced grammar: Wh questions

Vocabulary: one way ticket, return ticket, discount, numbers

Traveling is also intertwined with the topic of being able to plan and organize your finances. In this part, the interviewers' mathematical ability was also practiced, as the goal was to find out the price for a return ticket from the place of residence to the destination and back. Train travel often requires purchasing tickets and managing finances. Use the train ticket as a way to teach budgeting and money skills, such as how to calculate the cost of a train trip, how to pay for a ticket, and how to manage expenses while traveling.

It was even interesting how some pupils with AS watched the development of ticket prices. They discovered that most of the tickets were to the same destination, so they compared the dates and times.

### **3.Songs, fairytales**

In this activity, we focused on songs related to the environment of trains. I had prepared hints in the form of flashcards such as pictures from Tales of Machines, a picture of the band Train. This activity was relaxing since the learners had the opportunity to look up on whether there are any fairy tales or songs about trains on their tablets.

### **4.Role playing – buying a ticket**

I had two versions prepared for this activity.

One of the versions was that the learners would work in pairs and try to talk to each other.

The second version was that we would appoint one person to sell tickets and the others would buy them.

I let the learners decide which version they wanted and surprisingly they all chose the version with the ticket seller.

I supported this activity by creating a queue for ticket sales and the pupils could demonstrate real behavior while waiting in line.

I wrote down the new phrases that appeared during this exercise in the presentation that I had prepared for this lesson.

Practiced grammar: Wh questions + answering

Vocabulary: repeating new vocabulary

In this activity, learners had the opportunity to divide the roles of dispatcher and passenger and practice questions based on the given travel document. This section was devoted to repeating Wh-questions and answers. The goal of this exercise was communication, cooperation and not the correctness of grammatical phenomena. All learners participated very

actively in this activity. Since the teachers were introduced to this activity, the learners had the opportunity to find the most important wh-questions. Whether the class posted a poster on the topic of wh-questions or had their flashcards, they managed this activity very well. At one of the schools, the teacher even prepared a guide's uniform, which significantly boosted enthusiasm and interest in the given activity. This activity was not time-limited, all participants were given a chance to take turns.

Traveling by train often involves interacting with others, such as train conductors or fellow passengers. Using the train ticket is a great way to teach social skills such as initiating conversations, making small talk, and asking for help when needed.

### **EXPECTED PROBLEMS**

Among the problems that I expected was, for example, a failure of the Internet connection. I was prepared for this using flashcards or prepared pictures. The problems among the pupils that I expected were reluctance to cooperate with each other or lack of interest in the given topic. I also counted on the fact that if I have the presentation of the lesson on the interactive whiteboard running at the same time, then the learners will not concentrate and will only watch the blackboard.

I expected the cooperating teachers to have essentially the same problems as I mentioned in the previous paragraph. I also expected that they would not discuss all the exercises that I had prepared.

### **EXPECTED OUTCOME**

I hoped that pupils would like the topic because travelling is one of the most frequent hobbies. The lesson should have supported them and show them that it is not impossible to visit a foreign country, that it is not impossible for them to buy a ticket and to show them that they do not have to be afraid of making mistakes. I expected the same outcome from cooperating teachers as I mentioned.

### **UNEXPECTED PROBLEMS**

I didn't expect to have an extra student in my class during this lesson. I didn't know anything about this student because he was a student who was placed with us from a facility

for children requiring immediate help. Despite this unexpected situation, I managed to get the student involved in the actin lesson.

With cooperating schools, I did not expect that there would be a with the main teacher being ill. At one school, the English language teacher fell ill, so the class was replaced by another English language teacher. Since it was a long-term illness, I consulted my lesson plan with the new teacher via Zoom.

#### **6.4. Lesson plan activities timetable**

<b>1. Organizational part</b>	2 minutes
<b>2. Introductory questions based on presentation</b>	5 minutes
<b>3. Motivation part</b>	15 minutes
Ticket reading and comprehension exercise What is the budget?	
<b>4. Introduction of main activity</b>	20 minutes
Role playing	
<b>5. Feedback</b>	3 minutes

## **7. Data analysis**

The data that was collected and analysed using quantitative research methods will be presented in this chapter. The study gathered numerical data from respondents and analysed it from the learners' perspectives. This included the learners' self-assessments of their English language skills, their attitudes towards learning English, and their responses to an engaging lesson that incorporated authentic materials. The study also examined whether this lesson sparked learners' intrinsic motivation and whether they planned to do voluntary homework, promoting autonomous learning. Additionally, the teachers' perspectives and evaluations of the lesson will be presented.

### **7.1. Questionnaire for learners - results**

The questionnaire can be found in Appendices.

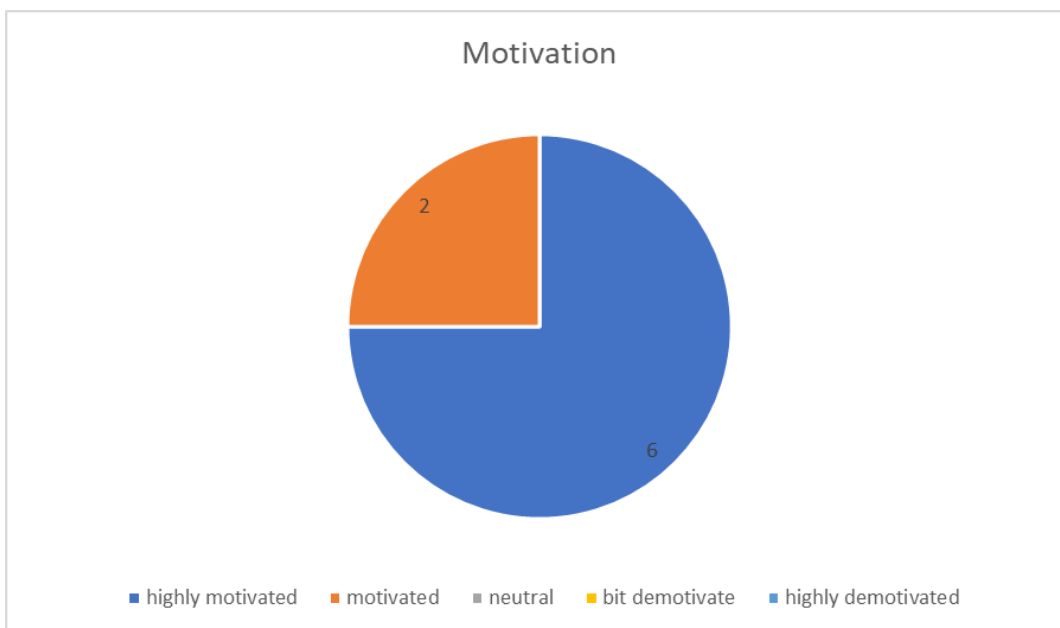
The questionnaire contained 6 questions related to authentic materials. The questionnaire contained possible answers so that learners did not have to write long sentences and spend more time than necessary on the questionnaire. The questionnaire was created in Czech language so that the questions were understandable for all pupils.

The purpose of the questionnaires was to spark learners' interest in the lesson by using authentic materials. The survey allowed learners to gain knowledge about what counts as an authentic material and also provided them with the opportunity to engage in discussion about potential ideas for upcoming lessons.

**Question number 1:**

**Jak se cítíš, když pracuješ s autentickými materiály (např. novinové články, videa, fotografie)?**

How do you feel when you work with authentic materials (e.g. newspaper articles, videos, photos)?



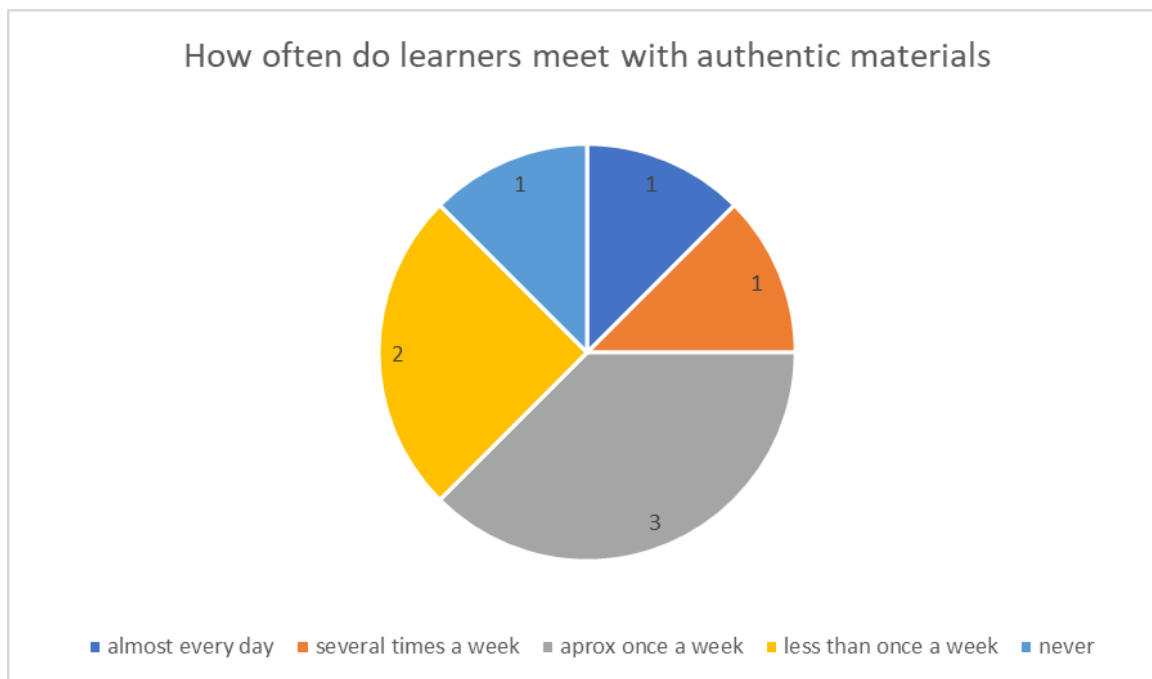
**Figure 4 Motivation – question number 1**

For six respondents, the use of authentic materials is very motivating. Others felt a little motivated but still shared enthusiasm for other classes during the questionnaire (respondents' words). For this question, they told what materials they had already used during English language lessons and what they would like to use in future English language lessons.

**Question number 2:**

**Jak často se setkáváš s autentickými materiály ve svém vzdělávání?**

How often do you encounter authentic materials in your education?



**Figure 5 How often do learners meet with authentic materials**

To begin with, the respondents were informed that the question is aimed to English lessons. Learners were familiar with the topic of authentic materials and before answering this question, the teacher reminded them the examples of authentic materials. At one of the four elementary schools the teacher even provided responders with samples of authentic learning materials. This aided the respondents in recalling their previous English language lessons more easily.

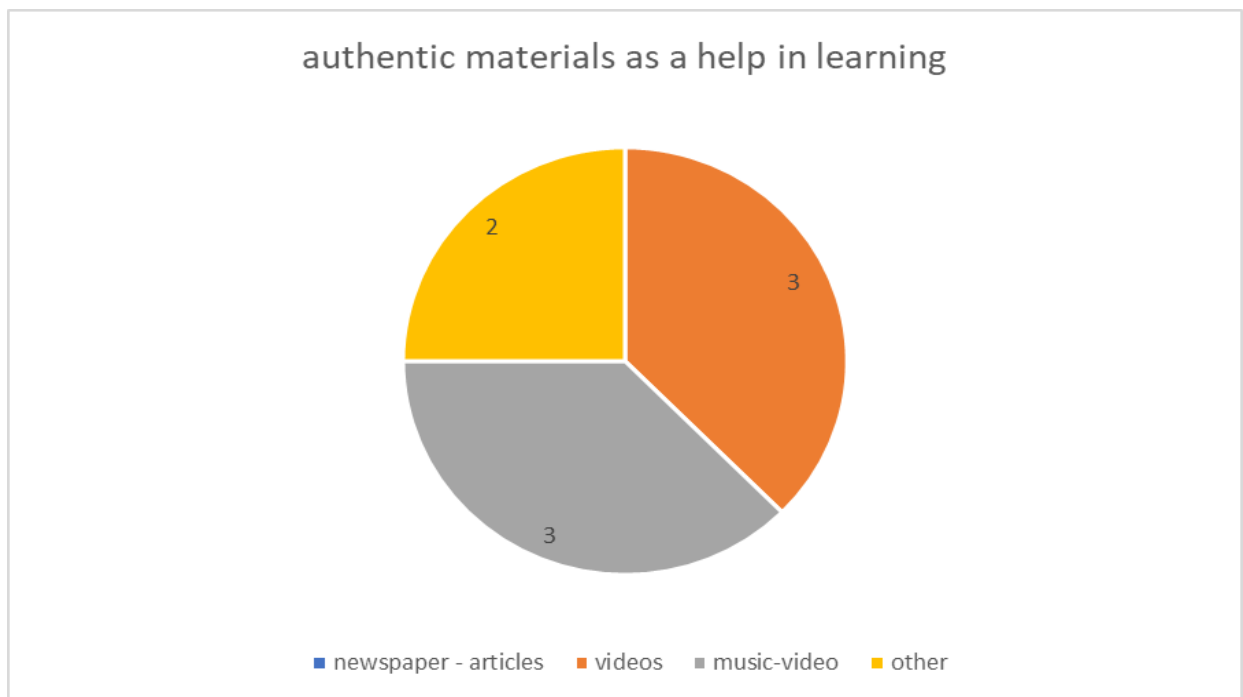
During the survey, the respondents-initiated conversation about English language classes. At one of the four elementary schools, the English lessons were centred around the theme of "*English around us,*" and one of the topics covered was "*Time in the bathroom.*" The teacher brought in various bathroom products, such as soap, shower gel, shampoo and

more products that we use in the bathroom. The learners had to identify the English names on the packaging or find equivalent words in Czech.

**Question number 3:**

**Jaké typy autentických materiálů ti nejvíce pomáhají při učení?**

What types of authentic materials help you learn the most?



**Figure 6 Authentic materials as a help in learning**

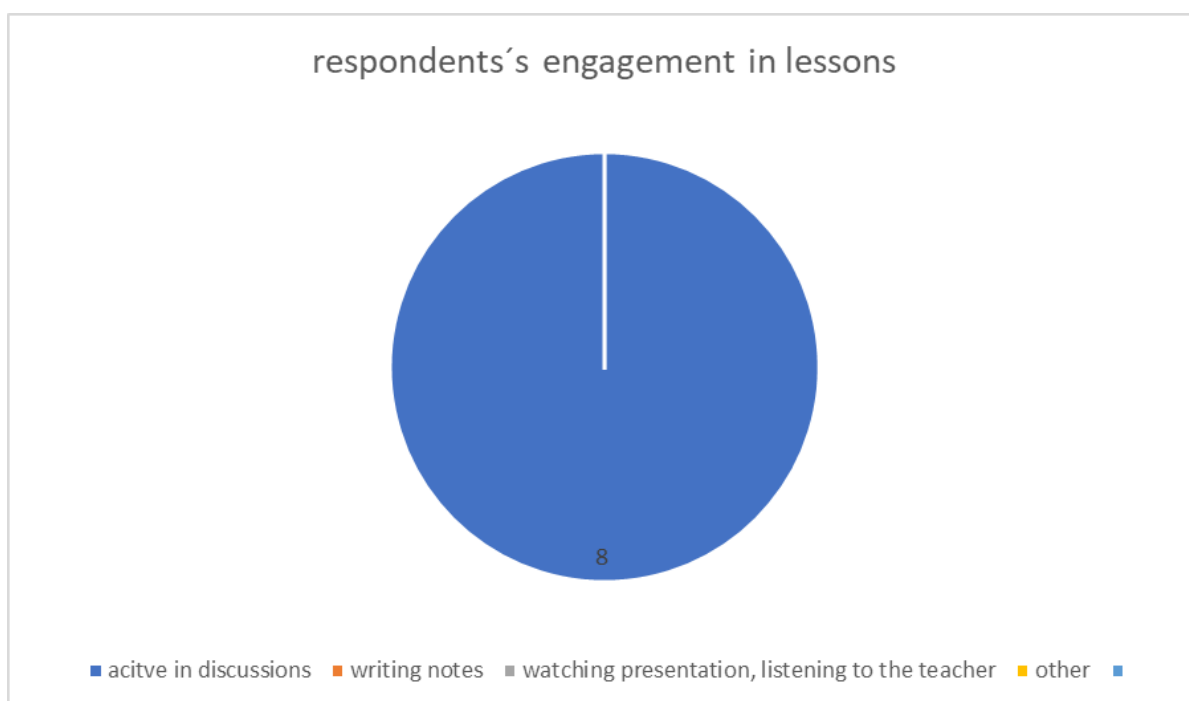
Three participants responded that they would find the lesson acceptable if it involved an English video. It is noteworthy that all of these participants are regular computer gamers who frequently spend their leisure time watching videos related to their favourite games. Three participants mentioned that they acquire English language skills by watching music videos. They do not search for the definitions of the words in the songs but rather repeat the lyrics and guess their meaning. The remaining participants of the study reported utilizing movie watching as a modality for English language acquisition. Notably, a male student disclosed his exclusive preference for movies in the English language saying that he does not like movies in Czech. He is Czech but finds Czech language more difficult than English.



**Question number 4:**

**Jakým způsobem se snažíš zapojit do vzdělávacích aktivit, které využívají autentické materiály?**

How do you try to engage in educational activities that use authentic materials?



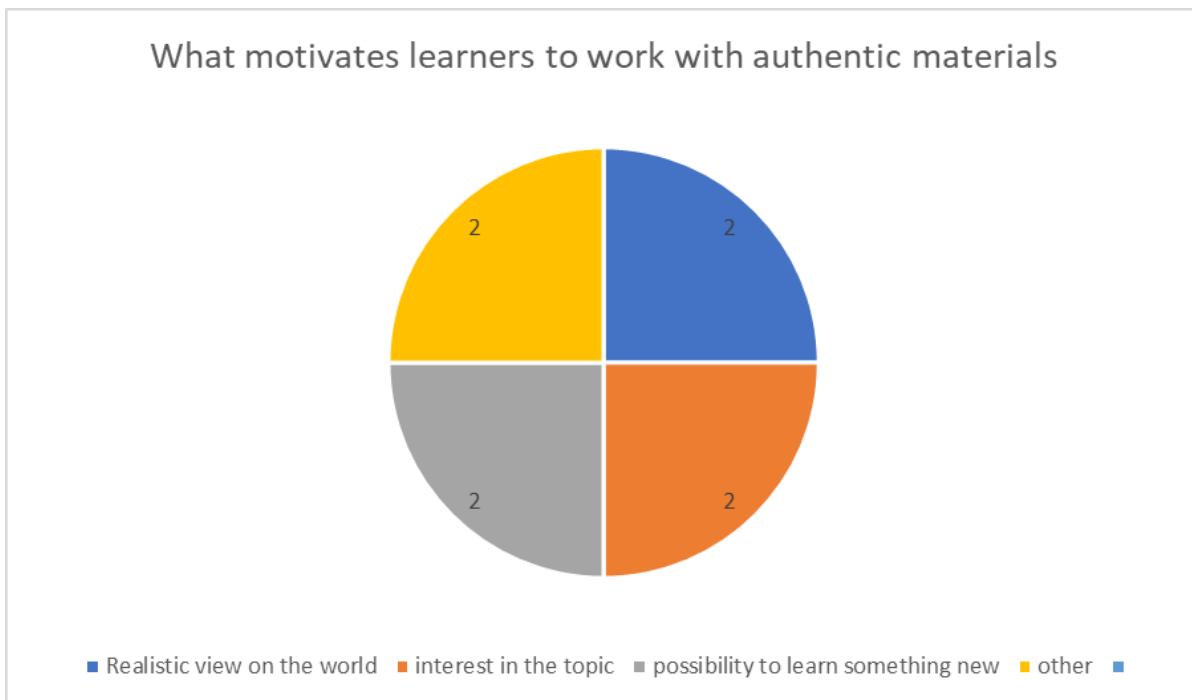
**Figure 7 Respondents' engagement in lessons**

Every respondent affirmed that they engage actively in class discussions when authentic materials were used. All teachers also confirmed that all respondents worked well in the lesson named "*Travelling by train*". The respondents were active during lessons and wanted to learn new terminology and expressions, indicating a higher level of interest in the lesson.

**Question number 5:**

**Co tě nejvíce motivuje k práci s autentickými materiály?**

What motivates you most to work with authentic materials?



**Figure 8** What motivates learners to work with authentic materials

We have two respondents for each answer.

Two respondents were motivated by authentic materials because these materials were “real”.

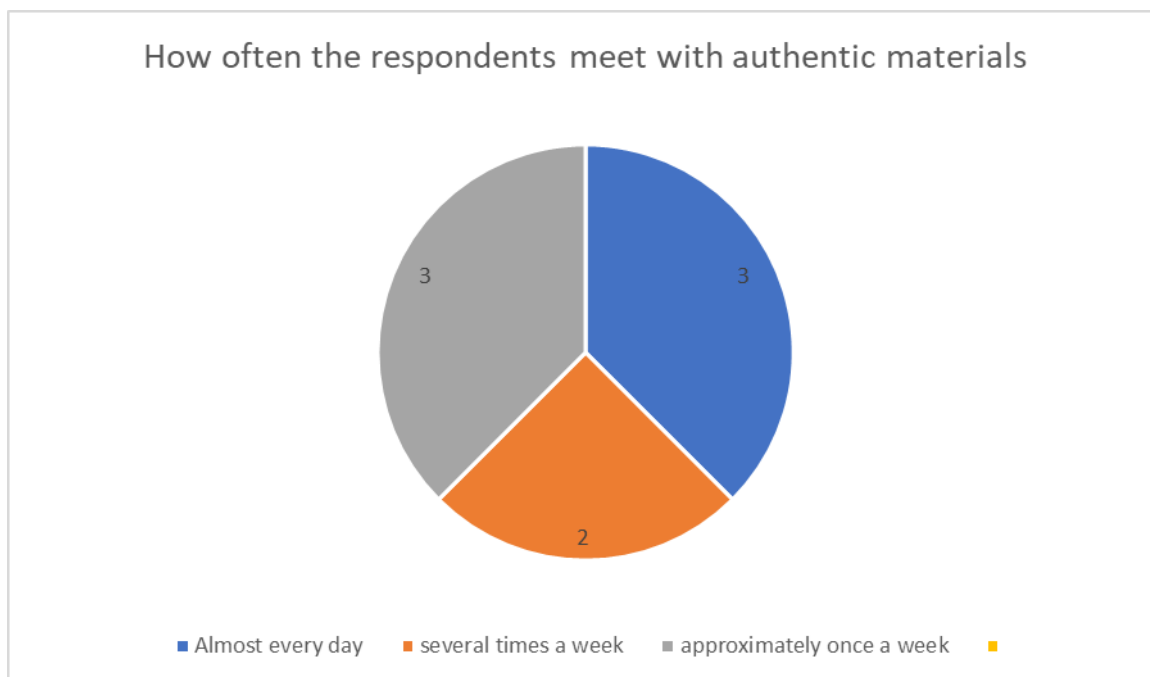
Two respondents found the topic “Traveling by train” very popular because it is their interest.

Other respondents saw an opportunity to learn something new. The rest of the respondents stated that they do not see having to work with textbooks as a motivation.

**Question number 6:**

**Jak často používáš autentické materiály mimo školu?**

How often do you use authentic materials outside of school?



**Figure 9 How often the respondents meet with authentic materials**

The given query proved to be quite challenging for the respondents in question.

It demanded a repetition of phrases like "a week," "once a week," and examples illustrating their usage, such as "on Monday" or "every Monday."

Learners with AS often struggle with expressing time-related concepts such as "a month," "a week," or "a day," making it a commonly encountered obstacle.

## **7.2. Questionnaire for teachers- results**

The questionnaire conducted among English teachers aimed to gather information about their experience with using authentic materials in their lessons for children with Asperger's syndrome, specifically regarding time management, types of materials used, and their effectiveness.

### **Question number 1**

According to the responses received from two teachers, both reported planning their lessons well in advance when using authentic materials. However, the third teacher views authentic materials as an additional activity or challenge, while the fourth teacher uses them as the primary source throughout the lesson. This suggests that there may be different approaches to incorporating authentic materials into English lessons for children with Asperger's syndrome. Some teachers may prefer to use them sparingly as an extra resource, while others may find them valuable as the main teaching tool.

### **Question number 2**

Based on the responses received in the questionnaire, all teachers reported spending between one to two hours to prepare a lesson plan when using authentic learning materials. This indicates that using authentic materials in English lessons for children with Asperger's syndrome may require more time and effort in lesson preparation compared to using traditional materials. However, the benefits of using authentic materials in promoting engagement and language learning outcomes may outweigh the additional time and effort required for lesson planning.

### **Question number 3**

The questionnaire results revealed that three teachers felt they lacked experience in using authentic materials during English lessons for children with Asperger's syndrome. In contrast, one teacher reported feeling very experienced with authentic materials as she uses authentic learning materials as the primary teaching tool throughout the lesson. This

finding suggests that there may be a need for additional training or professional development to support teachers in effectively incorporating authentic materials into their lessons. The experienced teacher's approach may serve as a model for other teachers looking to engage their students with Asperger's syndrome through authentic materials.

#### **Question number 4**

The questionnaire revealed that when it comes to managing their lessons with authentic materials, two teachers reported using only songs and stories, while another teacher preferred incorporating movies as well. The last teacher, however, found using a variety of authentic materials highly enjoyable and effective for engaging children with Asperger's syndrome in their English lessons.

#### **Question number 5**

According to the responses received in the questionnaire, three teachers reported facing difficulty in adapting authentic materials to meet the individual needs of learners with Asperger's syndrome. This highlights the importance of teacher training and development in using authentic materials effectively in the classroom. Lack of experience with using authentic materials may contribute to the challenges faced in adapting materials. It is important for teachers to explore a variety of authentic materials and develop strategies to modify them to meet the unique needs of their learners.

#### **Question number 6**

Based on the responses received, most teachers reported seeing some improvement in their learners' language skills when using authentic materials in their English lessons for children with Asperger's syndrome. However, it was noted that it may take some time to see significant improvement.

Furthermore, some teachers reported noticing improvements in learner engagement and participation during the lesson, as well as improved communication between learners. Additionally, some teachers observed that learners seemed less tired and more energized when using authentic materials, which may contribute to improved language learning

outcomes in the long run. Overall, the use of authentic materials in English lessons for children with Asperger's syndrome appears to have a positive impact on language learning, although further research is needed to fully assess its effectiveness.

### **Question number 7**

Based on the responses from the teachers in the questionnaire, it seems that all of them assess the effectiveness of using authentic materials in their English lessons for children with Asperger's syndrome by looking at the learner engagement and participation during the lesson. They believe that learners with AS need to be engaged and motivated in order to learn effectively. Moreover, they also value communication skills and socialization, which are crucial for children with AS. Therefore, they often observe and assess the learners' communication and socialization skills during the lesson, in addition to looking at their engagement and participation. Some teachers also mentioned that they ask for parent or caregiver feedback as an additional way to assess the effectiveness of their teaching with authentic materials.

### **7.3. Hypothesis Analysis**

**Hypothesis 1:** The use of authentic materials in English lesson will increase the motivation and engagement of learners with Asperger Syndrome in language learning.

Based on the questionnaires, lesson plan observation, and teachers' feedback, it can be concluded that this hypothesis is true. All the teachers reported that their learners with Asperger Syndrome showed increased motivation and engagement when authentic materials were incorporated into their English lessons.

The questionnaire responses also indicated that learners found authentic materials to be more interesting and enjoyable compared to traditional materials. During lesson plan observation, it was noted that learners were more active and participated more during activities that involved authentic materials. Overall, the use of authentic materials

in English lessons was found to be a successful strategy in increasing the motivation and engagement of learners with Asperger Syndrome in language learning.

**Hypothesis 2:** The use of authentic materials in English lessons will positively impact the social and communication skills of learners with Asperger Syndrome.

The hypothesis that the use of authentic materials in English lessons will positively impact the social and communication skills of learners with Asperger Syndrome is also supported by the questionnaires, lesson plan observation, and teachers' feedback.

According to the questionnaire responses, learners with Asperger Syndrome showed improvements in their communication and socialization skills when authentic materials were used in their English lessons. During lesson plan observation, it was noted that learners had more opportunities to interact with each other and the teacher when authentic materials were incorporated into the lesson. Teachers also reported that learners were more willing to communicate and express their thoughts and ideas during activities that involved authentic materials. Therefore, the use of authentic materials in English lessons is an effective strategy in promoting the social and communication skills of learners with Asperger Syndrome.

**Hypothesis 3:** The incorporation of authentic materials in English lessons will lead to greater language acquisition among learners with Asperger Syndrome.

Based on the questionnaires, lesson plan observation, and teachers' feedback, it can be claimed that the hypothesis is true. Teachers reported that the use of authentic materials in English lessons for learners with Asperger Syndrome resulted in greater language acquisition. Learners showed a higher level of language comprehension and production, which was observed during lessons and through assessments. The questionnaires also revealed that learners found authentic materials to be more engaging and helpful for language learning compared to traditional materials. Overall, the incorporation of authentic materials in English lessons resulted in more effective language acquisition among learners with Asperger Syndrome.

#### **7.4. Lesson plan analysis**

Based on the provided lesson plan, it seems that the teacher was successful in engaging and motivating all learners, keeping them concentrated throughout the lesson. The lesson had four activities and all of them had clear objectives with appropriate language practice opportunities in grammar and vocabulary.

In the first activity, learners practiced reading and understanding real train tickets and teachers provided additional examples for practice. This activity was intended to familiarize learners with the topic and travel documents. This lack of familiarity with train tickets likely meant that these learners had not had much experience with train travel or perhaps had not had the opportunity to handle real tickets before. As a result, they may have struggled to understand the format and layout of the ticket, as well as the information that it contained. Overall, the experience highlights the importance of understanding learners' prior knowledge and experiences when designing activities and lessons, as well as the need to be flexible and adaptable in response to unexpected challenges.

In the second activity, the learners were given the task of finding the price of one-way or return tickets. This involved working with numbers, which provided an opportunity to practice budgeting and money skills related to travel. By working with the prices of train tickets, the learners could practice mental math, calculation, and budgeting skills that could be useful in real-life situations, such as planning a trip or managing expenses. This activity not only helped learners improve their numerical skills but also helped them understand the importance of budgeting and money management in real-life situations.

The third activity focused on exploring the cultural aspect of trains through songs and fairy tales. The purpose of this activity was to provide a more relaxed and enjoyable learning experience for the learners. During this activity, learners were given the opportunity to use their tablets to look up any fairy tales or songs related to trains that they found interesting or appealing. By doing so, learners could connect with the cultural aspect of trains, which could enhance their motivation and engagement with the subject matter. Additionally, this activity could help improve the learners' language skills by exposing them to new vocabulary and expressions commonly used in songs and fairy tales. Overall,



this activity was meant to be a fun and engaging way for learners to explore the cultural significance of trains.

The fourth and final activity of the lesson was designed to focus on developing social skills such as initiating conversations, making small talk, and asking for help when needed. Learners participated in role-playing by buying a train ticket, and they were given the opportunity practise playing two roles, that of a dispatcher and a passenger. The aim of this activity was to practice asking and answering wh-questions based on the given travel document and, in the process, improve their communication skills.

As part of the role-playing exercise, learners had to interact with each other and ask relevant questions to get the necessary information required for purchasing a train ticket. The activity provided them with an opportunity to learn how to initiate a conversation, ask questions politely, make small talk, and seek help when needed. By engaging in such interactive activities, learners could build their confidence and develop social skills that are essential in everyday life.

The text refers to the teacher's proactive approach in anticipating potential issues that could arise during the lesson. For instance, if learners did not have access to the Internet, they might have had trouble following the activities that require online resources. Similarly, if the topic was not interesting to the learners, they might have lost interest and not participate actively. Furthermore, the teacher might have been concerned that some learners would not participate and would instead spend the lesson watching the blackboard. However, despite these potential challenges, the teacher's preparation went well, and none of these issues seem to have occurred during the lesson. As a result, all learners actively participated in all the activities, which likely contributed to a successful learning experience.

Since all learners actively participated in all activities, it can be inferred that they enjoyed the lesson and found the topic interesting. The absence of any problems such as lack of interest or Internet connection issues also suggests that the learners were engaged throughout the lesson. Therefore, based on the information provided, it seems that the lesson achieved the expected outcome.

## **8. Outcomes of the research**

The use of authentic learning materials in teaching English to learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has been found to have several positive effects.

### **8.1. Asperger Syndrome Learners' and concentration span**

One of the main benefits is that it can improve the concentration span of these learners. Authentic materials are materials that are used in real-life situations, such as newspapers, magazines, and brochures, and they are typically more engaging and interesting than traditional materials used in classrooms. This can help learners with ASD maintain their focus and attention on the learning task, which can lead to better learning outcomes. The importance of maintaining learners' attention and concentration during English lessons cannot be overstated, particularly when working with learners with ASD. The use of authentic learning materials, such as the "Travelling by train" lesson plan, can be an effective way to keep learners engaged and motivated throughout the lesson.

In fact, in a study involving 8 responders, it was found that they were able to remain active and focused for the entire lesson when using authentic learning materials, such as role-playing activities and real-world scenarios. This is in stark contrast to their experience with traditional coursebooks during which they would typically get bored and lose focus after just few minutes.

The positive results from this study suggest that the use of authentic learning materials can have a significant impact on learners' concentration span and motivation during English lessons. By creating a more interactive and engaging learning experience, learners are more likely to remain attentive and invested in the learning process, leading to improved learning outcomes over time.

Overall, the use of authentic learning materials can constitute a valuable tool for teachers seeking to enhance their learners' attention and concentration during English lessons. By incorporating more practical and relevant activities into their teaching, teachers can create a more stimulating and effective learning environment, improving their learners' language acquisition and overall enjoyment of the learning process.

## **8.2. Learners' increase of motivation**

Motivating learners with ASD to actively participate in English language lessons can be a challenge for educators. However, the use of authentic learning materials can help create a more engaging and interesting learning experience, which can foster motivation and enthusiasm among learners.

One way that authentic learning materials can promote motivation is by providing learners with real-world scenarios and practical applications for the language they are learning. By using materials such as videos, articles, and websites that are relevant to learners' interests, they are more likely to become invested in the learning process and see the value of the language they are acquiring.

Additionally, authentic learning materials can encourage learners to ask questions and seek out new vocabulary with interest. As they encounter new words and concepts in context, learners are more likely to remember and use them in their own speech and writing. This can lead to a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, which can further motivate learners to continue engaging with the language.

In a study involving learners with ASD, it was found that the use of authentic learning materials led to increased participation and motivation among learners. They were more likely to ask questions, express their opinions, and engage with the materials on a deeper level. This highlights the potential for authentic learning materials to create a more dynamic and effective learning environment for learners with ASD.

In conclusion, by incorporating authentic learning materials into their English language lessons, educators can foster motivation and enthusiasm among learners with ASD. By providing practical and relevant materials, encouraging questions and exploration, and promoting an active and engaged learning experience, teachers can help learners develop a deeper appreciation for the language they are learning, leading to improved learning outcomes over time.

### **8.3. Increase of learners' interest in language learning**

When learners with Asperger Syndrome are presented with authentic materials that relate to their personal interests, they are more likely to stay engaged and motivated during the learning process. For example, if a learner has a passion for animals, using materials such as videos, articles, and books about animals can help to capture their attention and interest, making the learning experience more enjoyable and effective.

Moreover, the use of authentic materials in language learning can expose learners with Asperger Syndrome to different aspects of the target culture, which can help them develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the language. This, in turn, can foster a greater interest in language learning and encourage learners to continue exploring the language beyond the classroom.

Overall, by providing a more interesting and relevant learning experience, the use of authentic materials in teaching English to learners with Asperger Syndrome can help to foster a positive attitude towards language learning and motivate learners to continue improving their language skills.

### **8.4. Increase of learners' social interaction**

The use of authentic learning materials in teaching English to learners with Asperger Syndrome can also contribute to the development of their social skills. Authentic materials can provide a window into the real world, and they can help learners develop a better understanding of social norms and conventions in different situations.

For example, videos or dialogues that depict social interactions, such as ordering food in a restaurant or making small talk with colleagues, can help learners identify appropriate language and behaviour in social situations. By observing and practicing social interactions in authentic contexts, learners with Asperger Syndrome can improve their social skills and gain more confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations.

Furthermore, authentic materials can also provide opportunities for learners to engage in collaborative activities, such as group discussions or role-plays, which can further enhance their social skills. Through these activities, learners can practice working with others, expressing their ideas and opinions, and negotiating meaning in a supportive and interactive environment.

In summary, the use of authentic materials in teaching English to learners with Asperger Syndrome can contribute to the development of their social skills by providing opportunities for observation, practice, and collaboration in authentic social contexts.

## **Conclusion**

First and foremost, I am pleased to report that I have successfully achieved the objectives that I set out to accomplish through this research. Both the theoretical and empirical aspects of this paper have substantially contributed to my teaching expertise, enriching my knowledge and skills. Through comprehensive preparation and examination of the topic, which involved collaboration with schools and educators, I have further developed my abilities in social interaction and communication.

The theoretical section of this thesis serves as a fundamental basis for the research and delves into the use of authentic materials by teachers in lower secondary schools for students with special needs, specifically those with Asperger's syndrome. It examines both the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating authentic materials in English language lessons and presents a comprehensive breakdown of the methodology and didactics necessary for developing a lesson plan with this objective.

The author's comprehensive examination of the theoretical foundations of the study reinforces the reliability and validity of the research. It is crucial to note that each Asperger learner has specific language learning needs, and individual differences must be taken into account while planning and implementing a second language curriculum. It is essential to acknowledge that each learner is unique, with their own strengths and weaknesses, and to tailor language instruction accordingly.

The research conducted by the author in the empirical part of this paper is significant, as it sheds light on the learners' and teachers' perspectives regarding the lesson plan designed specifically for them. The research reveals that the use of authentic materials in teaching English language skills is not only highly effective but also well-received by the learners. The findings of the study demonstrate that the learners possess personal awareness of the importance of improving their English language skills and recognize the benefits of authentic materials in achieving this objective.

While it is true that the benefits of using authentic learning materials in teaching English to learners with Asperger Syndrome may vary depending on individual learners

and other contextual factors, the results of the research conducted for this diploma thesis suggest that there are numerous positive outcomes associated with this approach.

Specifically, the use of authentic learning materials can lead to improved concentration span, motivation, and learning outcomes for learners with Asperger Syndrome. These benefits can help create a more engaging and effective learning environment, enabling learners to develop their language skills in a more meaningful and practical way.

However, it is important to note that the benefits of using authentic materials may also depend on other factors, such as the quality of the materials, the teaching methods used, and the level of support provided to learners. Therefore, further research involving larger sample sizes, more experienced teachers, and a more extensive range of authentic learning materials may be needed to fully explore the potential benefits of this approach.

Overall, the use of authentic learning materials in teaching English to learners with ASD shows promising potential for enhancing their language acquisition and providing a more engaging and relevant learning experience.

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## Appendices

Figure 10 Repondents' questionnaire

### Dotazník pro žáky

Nejdříve bych se vám chtěla představit. Jmenuji se Petra Faktorová, pracuji se žáky jako jsi ty a hledám ty nejlepší možnosti, jak učit žáky anglický jazyk. Proto jsem si pro tebe připravila tento dotazník, a i plán hodiny, který budeš dělat se svoji paní učitelkou. Jestliže na nějakou otázku nebudeš chtít odpovídat, nemusíš, nic se nestane. Uvítám i tvé možné nápady. Děkuji

moc za vyplnění a za tvůj čas.



1. <b>Jak se cítíš, když pracuješ s autentickými materiály (např. novinové články, videa, fotografie)?</b>	a) Velmi motivovaný/motivovaná (b) Trochu motivovaný/motivovaná (c) Neutrální (d) Trochu demotivovaný/demotivovaná (e) Velmi demotivovaný/demotivovaná
2. <b>Jak často se setkáváš s autentickými materiály ve svém vzdělávání?</b>	a) Téměř každý den (b) Několikrát týdně (c) Asi jednou týdně (d) Méně než jednou týdně (e) Nikdy
3. <b>Jaké typy autentických materiálů ti nejvíce pomáhají při učení?</b>	(a) Novinové články (b) Videa (c) Fotografie (d) Hudební videoklipy (e) Ostatní (prosím specifikujte)
4. <b>Jakým způsobem se snažíš zapojit do vzdělávacích aktivit, které využívají autentické materiály?</b>	a) Aktivně se účastním diskusí (b) Zapisuji si poznámky (c) Diskutuji s ostatními studenty (d) Sleduji prezentaci a poslouchám vysvětlení učitele (e) Ostatní.....
5. <b>Co tě nejvíce motivuje k práci s autentickými materiály?</b>	(a) Realistický pohled na svět (b) Osobní zájem o téma (c) Příležitost se učit něco nového (d) Výzva porozumět něčemu novému (e) Ostatní (prosím specifikujte)
6. <b>Jak často používáš autentické materiály mimo školu?</b>	a) Téměř každý den (b) Několikrát týdně (c) Asi jednou týdně

**Figure 11** The questionnaire for English teachers

## **Questionnaire for English teachers**

Dear English teachers,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this questionnaire. The aim of this study is to explore the use of authentic materials in English lessons for children with Asperger's syndrome. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the use of authentic materials in language teaching as they provide learners with the opportunity to engage with real-life language in a meaningful and contextualized way. It is increasingly recognized that all teachers should include authentic materials in their language teaching, regardless of the specific needs of their learners.

This questionnaire will focus on your experiences and practices of using authentic materials in your English lessons for children with Asperger's syndrome. Your valuable input will contribute to a better understanding of the effectiveness of using authentic materials in this context and will help inform future teaching practices.

Thank you for your participation. Your responses will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

Sincerely, Petra Faktorová

**1. How do you manage your lesson when using authentic materials?**

- I plan my lesson well in advance to ensure a smooth flow of activities.
- I incorporate authentic materials into my lesson as an extra activity or challenge.
- I use authentic materials as the primary teaching tool throughout the lesson.

**2. How much time do you spend preparing authentic materials for your lesson?**

- Less than 30 minutes
- 30 minutes to 1 hour
- 1 hour to 2 hours
- More than 2 hours

**3. How experienced do you feel using authentic materials in your English lessons for children with Asperger's syndrome?**

- Very experienced
- Somewhat experienced
- Not very experienced
- Not at all experienced



**4. What types of authentic materials have you found most effective in engaging children with Asperger's syndrome in your English lessons? (Select all that apply)**

- Authentic texts such as articles or stories
- Videos or movies
- Songs or music
- Real-life situations or scenarios
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**5. What challenges have you faced when using authentic materials in your English lessons for children with Asperger's syndrome? (Select all that apply)**

- Difficulty in adapting materials to meet individual needs.
- Limited availability of materials suitable for learners with Asperger's syndrome
- Difficulty in keeping the learners focused and engaged.
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Have you seen improvements in your learners' language skills when using authentic materials in your English lessons for children with Asperger's syndrome?**

- Yes, significant improvement.
- Yes, some improvement.
- No, no noticeable improvement.
- I'm not sure.

**7. How do you assess the effectiveness of using authentic materials in your English lessons for children with Asperger's syndrome?**

- Learner engagement and participation during the lesson
- Language assessment tests or quizzes
- Parent or caregiver feedback
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

# Worksheets : A train ticket (brainstorming activity)

The image shows two examples of train tickets and their associated brainstorming worksheets. Each worksheet is a table with 7 rows and 2 columns, where the first column contains a label and the second column is empty for student input.

**Left Ticket and Worksheet:**

**Ticket:** Features the logo "LET'S GO" with an airplane and a train. Text includes "Cebu: K2 42", "Date: 10/10/2023", "Time: 10:00 AM", "Price: 100000", and "People: 1".

Departure place	
Arrival to	
Date	
Time	
Price	
People	
Kilometres	

**Right Ticket and Worksheet:**

**Ticket:** Features the logo "LET'S GO" with an airplane and a train. Text includes "Aozhuo", "Cebu: K2 79", "Date: 10/10/2023", "Time: 10:00 AM", "Price: 100000", and "People: 1".

Departure place	
Arrival to	
Date	
Time	
Price	
People	
Kilometres	

Figure 12 Worksheet- Traveling by train

Figure 13 Respondents' answers



ČD České dráhy

CD489 0440

1154 \*0818-853 CD0440 UPOK016598

17.02.23 06:53 Pardubice hl.n.

Flexi základní Osob: 1 Trida: 2  
jed-směrná Km: 146

Z: Pardubice hl.n.

Do: Olomouc hl.n.

Pres: Moravan, Chocen, Ústí/Dr., CTreb  
Treb/C, Rudolf/Č, ZábrehM, Cerven

Platí od: 17.02.23  
do: 18.02.23

017 17.02.3 00113

Platí jen ve vlacích ČD.  
Jízdu nutno nastoupit 1.den platn.



Sazba DPH 10%  
ZDD: 65361/67657  
Cena: Kč 267,-

<b>Departure place</b>	<i>Pardubice</i>
<b>Arrival to</b>	<i>Olomouc</i>
<b>Date</b>	<i>17.02.23</i>
<b>Time</b>	<i>6:53</i>
<b>Price</b>	<i>207</i>
<b>People</b>	<i>1</i>
<b>Kilometres</b>	<i>146 KM</i>



CD České dráhy

CD489 0440

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UPOK016598

17.02.23 06:53 Pardubice hl.n.

Flexi základní

Osob: 1 Trida: 2

jednosměrná

Km: 146

Z: Pardubice hl.n.

Do: Olomouc hl.n.

Pres: Moravan, Chocen, Ústi/Dr, CTreb

Treb/C, Rudolf/C, ZábrehM, Cerven

Platí od: 17.02.23

do: 18.02.23

17.02.23 00113

Platí jen ve vlacích CD.

Jízdu nutno nastoupit 1.den platn.



Sazba DPH 10%

ZDD: 65361/67657

Cena: Kc 267,-

<b>Departure place</b>	PARDUBICE
<b>Arrival to</b>	OLMOUC
<b>Date</b>	17.02.2023
<b>Time</b>	18.02, 17.02.3
<b>Price</b>	<del>Osob</del> 267
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<b>Kilometres</b>	146



**arriva**

ARRIVA vlaky s.r.o.  
 IČO: 252205196  
 DIČ: CZ052205196  
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 Vlak ARRIVA

3189 ARR POP0417  
 17.2.2023 5:51

913 1060  
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 Jednotlivé základní (S)  
 Osoby: 1 Třída: 2 Km: 54  
 Dvůr Králové n.Labem

**Pardubice hl.n.**

Jarom, HradKřhl, ParRos/L

Platí jen ve vlacích ARRIVA  
 Jízdu nutno nastoupit první den platnosti.  
 Platí: od 17.02.23 do 18.02.23 23:59

17.02.2023 - 18.02.2023  
 Arriva



**Celkem: Kč 79,-**

Hotově  
 včetně DPH 10%

<b>Departure place</b>	
<b>Arrival to</b> příjezd do	PARDOBICE
<b>Date</b> datum	17.02
<b>Time</b> čas	5:51
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17.02.23 06:53 Pardubice hl.n.

Flexi základní Osob: 1 Trida: 2  
jed. směrná Km: 146

Z: Pardubice hl.n.  
Do: Olomouc hl.n.

Pres: Moravan, Choceň, Ústí/Dr., CTreb  
Treb/C, Rudolt/C, ZábrehM, Cerven

Plati od: 17.02.23  
do: 18.02.23

17.02.23 00113

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Sazba DPH 10%  
ZDD: 65361/67657  
Cena: Kc 267,-



<b>Departure place</b>	PARDOBICE HL.N.
<b>Arrival to</b> KAM	OLMOUC HL.N.
<b>Date</b>	17. 2. 2023.
<b>Time</b> CAS	06:53
<b>Price</b>	267,-
<b>People</b>	1 OSOBA
<b>Kilometres</b>	146 KM



České dráhy, a.s.  
Nabřezí Svob. 122, Praha 1  
PSC: 110 16 DČC 270

1154 CD POP9506 475 1490 2001 19  
13.1.2023 18:13 23418 Hradec Králové

IREDO  
Jednoduchá  
Osoby: 1 Třída: 2 Km:  
Pardubice (600)  
Hradec Králové (100)

www.oredo.cz

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zaintegrovanými dopravci.



Jízdné: Kč 42,-  
(včetně DPH 10%)

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Daňový doklad č. 29506/46877  
Hotově

<b>Departure place</b>	PARDUBICE
<b>Arrival to</b>	HRADEC
<b>Date</b>	13.1.23
<b>Time</b>	18:13
<b>Price</b>	42
<b>People</b>	1
<b>Kilometres</b>	100



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 Přízevčí 442/4 100 00 Praha 8  
 IČO: 220965196  
 DIČ: CZ91 CZ09001947

3189 ARR POP0417 913 1060 \*0025-379  
 17.2.2023 5:51 4385 Vlák ARRIVA

ARRIVA  
 Jednotlivé základní (S)  
 Osoby: 1 Třída: 2 Km: 54  
 Dvůr Králové n.Labem

**Pardubice hl.n.**  
 Jarom, HradKrhI, ParRos/L

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 Platí: od 17.02.23 do 18.02.23 23:59



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 17.02.2023 - 18.02.2023

**Celkem: Kč 79,-**

Hotově  
 včetně DPH 10%

<b>Departure place</b>	DVŮR KRÁLOVÉ N. LABEM
<b>Arrival to</b>	PARDUBICE HL.N.
<b>Date</b>	17.2.2023
<b>Time</b>	5:51
<b>Price</b>	79,-
<b>People</b>	1
<b>Kilometres</b>	54 km





CD České dráhy

CD489 0440

1154 \*0818-853 CD0440

UPOK016598

17.02.23 06:53 Pardubice hl.n.

Flexi základní

Osob: 1 Trida: 2

jednosměrná

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Treb/C, Rudolt/C, ZábrehM, Cerven

Platí od: 17.02.23

do: 18.02.23

17.02.3 00113

Platí jen ve vlacích CD.

Jízdu nutno nastoupit 1.den platn.



Sazba DPH 10%

ZDD: 65361/67657

Cena: Kč 267,-

<b>Departure place</b>	PAR D M BICE
<b>Arrival to</b>	OLOMOU C
<b>Date</b>	17.02.23
<b>Time</b>	06.53
<b>Price</b>	267.
<b>People</b>	1
<b>Kilometres</b>	146.

## Annotation

<b>Jméno a příjmení:</b>	Bc. Petra Faktorová
<b>Katedra:</b>	Ústav cizích jazyků
<b>Vedoucí práce:</b>	Mgr. Josef Nevařil Ph.D.
<b>Rok obhajoby:</b>	2023

<b>Název práce:</b>	Využití autentických materiálů u žáků s Aspergerovým syndromem ve výuce anglického jazyka
<b>Název v angličtině:</b>	<b>Using authentic materials for learners with Asperger syndrome in ELT classroom</b>
<b>Anotace práce:</b>	Tato diplomová práce se zabývá využitím autentických materiálů u žáků se speciálními vzdělávacími potřebami, konkrétně u žáků s Aspergerovým syndromem na druhém stupni základní školy zejména ve 3. a 6. třídách základních škol pro žáky uvedené v § 16 odst. 9 školského zákona, Dále se zabývá postojem učitelů k výuce pomocí autentických materiálů a na využití autentických materiálů v hodinách anglického jazyka. Práce je rozdělena na teoretickou a praktickou část. Teoretická část se nejprve zabývá Autentickými materiály, s pojmem žák se speciálními vzdělávacími potřebami, vymezením pojmu Aspergerův syndrom, dále základními poznatky o problémech dětí se specifickými potřebami ve výuce jazyků. Praktická část si klade za cíl zjistit, jak se liší úroveň znalostí s anglickým jazykem v 6. a 9. třídách žáků základních škol u žáků uvedených v § 16 odst. 9 školského zákona. Pro účely této studie bylo realizováno dotazníkové šetření. Výsledky a závěry jsou zpracovány v praktické části. Praktická část také zkoumá oblibu autentických materiálů mezi učiteli a žáky. Práce obsahuje také plán hodiny s využitím autentických materiálů stanovený tak, aby hodina byla efektivní a u žáků byly využito co nejvíce klíčových kompetencí.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	Žák se speciálními vzdělávacími potřebami, poruchy autistického spektra, Aspergerův Syndrom, cizí jazyk, autentické materiály
<b>Anotace v angličtině:</b>	This diploma thesis deals with the use of authentic materials for learners with special educational needs in the first and second grades, especially in the 3rd and 6th grades of elementary schools for pupils listed in § 16, paragraph 9 of the Education Act, the attitude of teachers and how authentic materials are used in English language classes. The work is divided into a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part first deals with the teaching of the mother tongue at lower secondary, the teaching of a foreign

	<p>language at lower secondary, then basic knowledge about the problems of children with specific needs in language learning and then methods of using authentic materials in the English language. The practical part aims to find out how the level of knowledge differs with the English language in the 6th and 9th grades of pupils at elementary schools for pupils listed in § 16, paragraph 9 of the Education Act. For this study, a questionnaire survey was implemented. The results and conclusions are processed in the practical part. The practical part also examines the popularity of authentic materials among teachers and learners. The work includes lesson plans on how authentic materials can be effectively used in lessons.</p>
<b>Klíčová slova v angličtině:</b>	learners with special needs, autism spectrum disorders, Asperger syndrome, foreign language, authentic materials
<b>Přílohy vázané v práci:</b>	<p>Appendices:</p> <p>Dotazník pro žáky  Dotazník pro učitel  Worksheet Traveling by train  Respondents' worksheet examples</p>
<b>Rozsah práce:</b>	99
<b>Jazyk práce:</b>	Angličtina