

Article

Linguistic Manifestations of Autism as Specific Language Impairment: A Qualitative Study of Two Nigerian Children

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Abstract

This study investigates autism as a form of specific language impairment (SLI). The main objective is to examine language use in two autistic children, specifically the manifestations in their expressive (production) and receptive (comprehension) language skills. Adopting a phenomenological research design, the study collected data through participant observation and unstructured interviews with two purposively selected autistic children, supported by two research assistants. Findings reveal low levels of expressive language ability in the participants, characterised by poor oral motor skills that manifest in dysarthria, substitution, and omission. The participants also demonstrated deficits in receptive language (comprehension), particularly with complex materials. The study recommends further investigation into other areas of linguistics in autistic individuals and calls for intervention strategies led by government and other stakeholders.

Keywords: Autism, Behaviour Interference Theory, Complex Information Processing Disorder Model, Language disorder, Specific language impairment

Introduction

Some children experience significant challenges in meeting the communicative, educational, and social expectations of their society because of the demands of language acquisition (Tomblin & Buckwalter, 1994). These children with developmental language disorders are categorised into several groups. One such group exhibits unexplained difficulties in acquiring spoken language that are not associated with other developmental disorders – that is, difficulties not attributable to pervasive cognitive, socio-emotional, or motor problems that would otherwise interfere with language learning and use. These children are described as having Specific Language Impairment (SLI), a category that includes autism.

As a neuro-developmental disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is enormously heterogeneous. Contemporary scholarship views ASD as a neurobiological disorder with genetic causes and behavioural markers (Guthrie, Swineford, Wetherby, & Lord, 2013). The two main criteria by which these observable markers are identified are: (1) deficits in social communication and interaction, and (2) restricted, repetitive behaviour, interests, or activities (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). Corroborating this position, the Autism and Developmental Disability Monitoring Network (2025) describes ASD as a developmental disability marked by difficulties with communication and the presence of restricted interests or repetitive behaviours.

A growing body of research over the years has focused on the language abilities of children with communication difficulties and how these affect their understanding and use of language. However, most of this research has been conducted by foreign-based scholars using foreign patients. This situation hampers a deeper understanding of the subject by

indigenous scholars and limits their awareness of the scope of the problems associated with it. The researchers' interest in language impairment also stems from their observations of autistic children at the Autism Day Care Centre at Abakpa Nike, Enugu, during a preliminary visit to the facility. The present study therefore seeks to bridge this gap by using local participants as the objects of study.

The aim of the study is to investigate autism as a specific language impairment. In specific terms, the study seeks to examine the different manifestations in the symptoms, and in the expressive (production) and receptive (comprehension) language abilities of children with autism. Although the investigation of autism as a specific language impairment has received considerable attention in the Western world using different approaches and foreign patients, relatively little has been done locally. The current study therefore provides insight into the manifestations of autism in behaviour and in the expressive and receptive language skills of autistic children in a Nigerian context.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What phonetic manifestations of expressive language deficit are observable in the speech of the two autistic children?
2. What is the level of receptive (comprehension) ability of the two autistic children when processing complex material?
3. What social-behavioural features associated with autism are observable in the two children, and how do these relate to their language use?

Literature Review

It is important to examine some related works in this area of study and to briefly discuss the theories that form the study's framework.

Review of Selected Studies

Courcy et al. (2023) explored autistic identity at the intersection of biomedical, neurodiversity, and social disability models, examining the semantic relations between autistic individuals' conceptions of autism and these three frameworks. The study collected data from 450 participants across France, Belgium, Switzerland, Senegal, and Quebec in Canada. The findings show that individual representations of autism mobilise different aspects of the biomedical, neurodiversity, and social disability models, and that these models are often complementary rather than mutually exclusive. The study also found that autistic individuals have a distinctive understanding and experience of the world which, if not acknowledged by society, can lead to exclusion. The present study shares with Courcy et al. (2023) an interest in autism, but differs in focus and scale: while Courcy et al. examined self-conception among autistic adults across several countries, the present study examines the language disorder in autistic children within a single local care setting, using two participants rather than 450.

Marinho, Avejones, and Rhein (2023) studied the impacts of visual neuro-rehabilitation on autistic children, using an online questionnaire based on the emotional and functional

development scale of the DIR/Floortime model with 34 children. The results suggest that when the visual contact of the autistic child is facilitated, motor, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and especially social learning are facilitated. The reviewed study resembles the present study in that both investigate autistic children, but they differ in objective and methodology: Marinho et al. examined a therapeutic intervention using a quantitative survey, whereas the present study investigates language manifestations without intervention and uses qualitative observation.

The present study extends these bodies of work in two respects. First, by focusing on the linguistic (rather than the social-conceptual or therapeutic) dimension of autism in a low-resource, non-Western setting. Second, by demonstrating that qualitative, small-scale case observation can complement the large-sample survey designs prevalent in the literature, offering fine-grained phonetic detail that questionnaire-based methods cannot capture.

Theoretical Framework

The explanation of autistic behaviour has proven difficult, if not impossible, to pin down to a single theoretical framework. Accordingly, two complementary theories – the Behaviour Interference Theory and the Complex Information Processing Theory – are adopted for this study.

Behaviour Interference Theory (BIT). Bijou and Ghezzi (1996) proposed Behaviour Interference Theory as a developmental theory that views autism as a developmental disorder arising from natural abnormalities in an individual's sensory make-up. According to the theory, sensory abnormalities hinder a child from developing conditioned positive social stimuli, which normally aid reinforcing, discriminative, and generalised reinforcing functions during child-caring activities. The sensory abnormalities on which Bijou and Ghezzi focus are the tendencies to escape and avoid tactile and auditory stimuli. The resulting lack of reinforcing social stimuli during initial child-caring activities ultimately leads to limited development of later social and verbal behaviour, and may result in delayed or absent attachment, which is not uncommon in children with autism. Additionally, Bijou and Ghezzi hypothesised that most abnormal behaviours seen in autism serve to compensate for deficiencies in social, emotional, and verbal behaviour.

Complex Information Processing (CIP) Disorder Theory. The Complex Information Processing disorder theory, by contrast, is a multiple primary cognitive-deficit theory proposing that the demands of complex information processing give rise to the pattern of deficits observed within and across domains in autism. Proposed by Minshew and Goldstein (1998), the theory characterises the impairment as a general deficiency involving several modalities and cognitive domains that depend on distributed cortical systems responsible for higher-order abilities. It claims that the deficits involve information *processing* rather than information *acquisition*. The underlying neurological principle is that brain abnormality results in an array of signs and symptoms, and that the common denominator of this constellation provides a clue to the responsible brain regions while explaining why the symptoms co-occur as a syndrome. Autistic individuals have deficits in complex motor movements, in memory for complex materials, and in the interpretive aspects of language. The theory holds that in simple associative processes and basic language skills such as decoding, reading, word fluency, and spelling, autistic children do

not measure up to typically developing children of their age, and moreover show obvious deficits in higher-level language abilities such as reading comprehension and verbal reasoning that would be expected on the basis of their age, verbal IQ, and basic language skills.

These two theories were selected because, together, they address the two poles of the study's objective: BIT accounts for the social-behavioural and sensory features of the participants, while CIP accounts for the cognitive and linguistic deficits observed. The data elicited from the two autistic children and the interviews with the research assistants are analysed through the lens of these theories.

Method

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research paradigm and adopts a phenomenological approach to data analysis. Phenomenology is appropriate for this study because it seeks to describe and interpret the lived experience of the participants – in this case, their experience of language as it manifests in daily communication – rather than to measure or quantify it. The design allows the researchers to capture the rich, contextual detail of participants' expressive and receptive language in natural settings.

Area and Context of the Study

The study is situated in the field of psycholinguistics, specifically within the study of specific language impairment. Data collection was conducted at the Daycare and Therapeutic Centre, Abakpa Nike, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Population and Sampling

The population of the study consisted of two autistic children enrolled at the care centre: Subject A (aged 10) and Subject B (aged 12). According to the director's report, both subjects began manifesting autistic behaviour in early childhood – at age two for Subject A and age one for Subject B. The participants were purposively selected because they had known profiles of autistic behaviour, as confirmed by the staff of the centre. Purposive sampling was appropriate here because the study required participants who would illustrate the phenomenon of interest (autistic language impairment) rather than a statistically representative sample. The limited scale is intentional: this is an illustrative case study designed to generate detailed, qualitative insight, not to support generalisation to the wider autistic population.

Research Assistants

The director/head teacher of the centre and one caregiver served as research assistants. Their roles included facilitating access to the participants, providing corroborating information about the children's developmental and behavioural histories, and helping the researchers interpret the children's behaviour in context.

Instruments and Data Collection

The researchers used two instruments for data collection: unstructured interviews and participant observation.

Instruments. In the unstructured interviews, the responses of the respondents were recorded on paper. The two autistic children were given different linguistic tasks, including comprehension reading and storytelling. In addition to these tasks, the participants were secretly observed over time, usually during recreation periods and during classes, to assess their level of social interaction with their peers.

To strengthen the reliability of the observation data, the researchers used a documented observation protocol. Behaviours and speech productions were recorded as they occurred, and speech samples were transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Observed phenomena such as "sing-song intonation" and "inappropriate speech volumes" were noted by at least two observers (a researcher and a research assistant) to reduce the risk of individual bias. Where behavioural features are reported in the analysis, they are drawn from these systematic observations.

Data sources. Three complementary sources of data were used: (1) direct phonetic transcription of the children's speech during comprehension tasks; (2) records of the children's success or difficulty in responding to comprehension questions and in initiating stories; and (3) field notes from observational sessions during class and recreation.

Data Analysis Framework

Minshew and Goldstein's (1998) Complex Information Processing Disorder Model and Bijou and Ghezzi's (1996) Behaviour Interference Theory served as the analytical framework, given their suitability for addressing the study's objectives. Data were categorised into phonetic features (from expressive speech production), cognitive features (from receptive/comprehension performance), and social-behavioural features (from observation).

Ethical Considerations

Only minimal, non-invasive data were collected from the participants during their ordinary activities at the centre, and the researchers worked in close consultation with the director and caregivers. To protect the children's privacy, pseudonyms are not used; participants are referred to only as "Subject A" and "Subject B," and no identifying information is disclosed.

Data Analysis

Here we analyse data on the different linguistic manifestations in the expressive and receptive language abilities of the two autistic children, and on the social behaviour that affects their linguistic behaviour.

Phonetic Manifestations of Expressive Language Deficit

The phonetic features were observed in the participants' expressive skills, manifesting in the following speech impairments.

Dysarthria

Dysarthria is difficulty in articulating words – a motor speech impairment affecting the tone, strength, and coordination required for speech movements (Pennington, Parker, Kelly, & Miller, 2016).

Table 1 *Subject A Speech Sample*

Intended	Produced
Jeje married a wicked fairy.	Jeje married a wicked fairy.
Jeje was a beautiful girl.	Jeje was a beautiful girl.
She was the only daughter.	She was the only daughter.
She was determined to teach the girl some lesson.	She was determined to teach the girl some lesson.
They came with a bag of money, gold and diamond.	They came with a bag of money, gold and diamond.
Jeje walked round to examine her suitors.	Jeje walked to examine her suitors.

Source: Field survey, 2019.

From the data in Table 1, Subject A showed difficulty in articulating some words, especially longer words such as *comprehension*, *determine*, *daughter*, and *examine*. This is consistent with the motor-speech difficulty characteristic of dysarthria.

Substitution

Substitution is the replacement of one speech sound with another. As a cohesive device, it is normally a marker of language competence (Pacuik, 2011). However, in the present data, what is substituted is a vowel within the same word, and this represents not language proficiency but an expressive-language deficit, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 *Subject A: Vowel Substitution*

Speech sample	Gloss
/dispt/ instead of /dispart/	despite
/prɪd/ instead of /praid/	pride
/sætɪsfɪd/ instead of /sætɪsfard/	satisfied

Speech sample	Gloss
/brɪt/ instead of /brʌɪt/	bright
/ɔ:ɡnɪz/ instead of /ɔ:ɡnaɪz/	organise

Source: Comprehension passage in Appendix Ei.

From the data in Table 2, it is observed that Subject A substituted the vowel /aɪ/ with /ɪ/ in word-medial and word-final positions. This systematic pattern suggests a phonological or articulatory constraint rather than random error.

Omission

Omission (or ellipsis) occurs when an item is left out of speech. In the present data, the past-tense marker {-ed} was omitted in the participant's pronunciation of certain words, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 *Subject B: Omission of Past-Tense Marker*

Speech sample	Correct form
enjoy /ɪndʒɔɪ/	enjoyed /ɪndʒɔɪd/
pass /pɑ:s/	passed /pɑ:st/
walk /wɔ:k/	walked /wɔ:kt/
play /pleɪ/	played /pleɪd/
jump /dʒʌmp/	jumped /dʒʌmpt/

Source: Field work, 2019.

From the above data, Subject B showed omission in his pronunciation of some words; the observed omissions were of the past-tense marker {-ed}. The subject also displayed sing-song intonation and inappropriate speech volumes (see Appendix C no. 7 and Appendix D no. 7). Additionally, despite persuasion by the researchers, Subject B could not pronounce all the words. On a separate occasion, when asked to tell a story, he totally ignored the researchers rather than complying – an indication that individuals with autism often have a general lack of interest in others and difficulty orienting to and engaging others in the social environment.

Cognitive Manifestations of Receptive (Comprehension) Deficit

Table 4 *Participants' Receptive Skills*

Subject A	Subject B
Provided correct answers to some of the questions from the passage (see Appendix E[i])	Unable to write answers to the questions from the passage (see Appendix E[ii])
Was able to initiate a story of "the shark, the ship and the sea monster"	Was unable to initiate a story

Source: Field survey, 2019.

The data show that Subject A was able to answer some of the comprehension questions correctly, indicating that some autistic children retain generative language capacity. This is consistent with Schindele, Lüdtkke, and Kaup (2008), who found that autistic children can construct and understand new sentences formed from familiar constituents and are overall comparable to typically developing children in using syntactic rules and strategies both to produce and to comprehend sentences. However, neither subject demonstrated full comprehension of the complex material, and both showed deficits in memory for complex materials. Memory refers to the process of recording, retaining, and retrieving information—the knowledge acquired from experience, remembered events, and applied expertise (Brewer, Gabrieli, Preston, Vaidya, & Rosen, 2007). The pattern observed here—partial success with familiar, sentence-level material and failure with extended, multi-proposition material—is consistent with the CIP prediction of a deficit specifically in *complex* information processing rather than in basic comprehension.

Social-Behavioural Manifestations

Table 5 *Observed Social-Behavioural Features*

Subject A	Subject B
Paid less attention in class and participated minimally in class activities	Did not pay attention at all and was constantly monitored by the caregiver, who always sat close to him; unable to sit quietly and totally inattentive
Held an apple (on the first day), which he was hitting continually and eating intermittently throughout the class period	Always laughing or smiling and continually hitting his forefingers together
Avoided body contact with his mates by staying aloof	Also avoided body contact and always sat at the edge of the classroom
Avoided eye contact with the researcher	Avoided eye contact with the researcher
Always mumbling and saying meaningless words repeatedly, such as <i>kii kii, uuu uuu, eyii eyii</i>	Continually nodding and smiling; repeated the researcher's questions (echolalia)

Subject A	Subject B
Regular unusual blinking	Always closed his ears on hearing the sound of a vehicle or the blaring of its horn
Not noticed	Noticed

Source: Field survey, 2019.

The data in Table 5 showcase the behavioural characteristics of the participants. While Subject A paid little attention in class, Subject B was totally inattentive despite the caregiver's efforts. These features were confirmed by the caregiver (see Appendix B). Such conditions lend credence to the view that many children diagnosed with ASD face co-morbid challenges including intellectual disability, restlessness, motor-coordination problems, poor attention span, and overactivity; they find it difficult to concentrate and can be hyperactive or impulsive.

Also observed in the two subjects was stereotypic or repetitive behaviour: the continual hitting of an apple, regular unusual blinking, and persistent mumbling of meaningless words in Subject A; and constant nodding, smiling, hitting together of two forefingers, and the echolalic repetition of the researcher's questions in Subject B. Both subjects thus exhibited the repetitive behaviour characteristic of autistic individuals, but with different manifestations—confirming that not every person with a diagnosis presents all traits, and that individuals are not affected by these features in identical ways.

Discussion

The language of the two participants, aged 10 and 12, was analysed with a focus on their expressive and receptive abilities.

The findings confirm that there are different characteristics falling within the categories of the spectrum; not everyone with a diagnosis presents all of the same traits, and not everyone is affected in the same way (Barrett, 2016). Autistic individuals also exhibit high variance in language use (Cooley, 2012). Within the study of developmental disorders, language acquisition and language use have been studied to assess the severity of the disorder and the expressive capability of those affected (Kumar et al., 2016), such that differences in the manifestation of symptoms between and among individual cases can be evaluated. Consistent with Eunice (2017) and others, both participants in the present study began manifesting autistic behaviour in early childhood—at ages two and one respectively, according to the director's report—which aligns with the finding that the behavioural symptoms of autism often appear between the ages of one and three.

Expressive deficits and motor skill. The data reveal evidence of dysarthria, substitution, and omission in the speech of the two participants. Dysarthria – disarticulation of words – was found in Subject A's speech, as shown during the pronunciation of certain words in Appendix E(i). Substitution—the replacement of one sound with another—was also observed in Subject A, replacing /aɪ/ with /ɪ/ (Table 2). Omission was observed in Subject B, who omitted the past-tense marker {-ed} in words such as *enjoyed*, *passed*, *walked*, *played*,

and *jumped*, and who also displayed sing-song intonation and inappropriate speech volumes (Appendix D nos. 6 and 7).

These conditions can be explained from the perspective of the Complex Information Processing model of Minshew and Goldstein (1998), which holds that autistic children have deficits in complex motor skills. Motor skills are learned movements and actions of the muscles or bone structures aimed at producing a predetermined movement outcome with certainty, at a rate of success and precision. They include gross motor skills (movement and coordination of the legs and larger body parts) and fine motor skills (coordination of small muscles, including oral-motor movements) (Moyo & Schneider, 2019). Poor motor skills have been linked to low levels of expressive language (Wright, 2013), and expressive language ability is closely tied to oral-motor skills such as lip and jaw movement. Because autistic individuals have deficits in complex motor movements such as oral-motor skills, they tend to speak in an unusual manner, as exemplified by both participants. Articulation requires movement of the lips and jaw, so a motor-skill deficit affects language production. However, it must be acknowledged that articulation errors can have more than one cause; a purely phonological account (difficulty with the sound system, including consonant clusters and diphthongs such as /aɪ/) would also predict some of the patterns observed here. The motor explanation offered by CIP is compelling but is one of several plausible interpretations, and distinguishing between them would require systematic testing.

The expressive-language dispositions of the two subjects further attest to high variance in language use among autistic children: while some children with the condition hardly use spoken language, others use language almost like typically developing peers.

Receptive deficits and memory for complex materials. The data also indicate that the participants have deficits in memory for complex materials. Among the different forms of memory are declarative (explicit) memory – helping individuals recollect facts and events consciously and deliberately – and non-declarative (implicit) memory, which is retrieved not explicitly but incidentally or involuntarily. Although memory difficulty does not normally form part of the diagnostic criteria for ASD, many individuals with the disorder show exceptional competence in rote learning and in establishing habits and routines, while experiencing difficulty recalling personal memories; those who are less able are additionally challenged in memorising facts, especially complex ones (Boucher & Bowler, 2008). Deficits in memory for complex material are known to affect the development of social, language, and communication abilities. For example, autistic individuals show difficulty initiating speech, respond slowly to others, and may stop or freeze during discussion or storytelling. Memory for complex materials in language includes all procedures such as comprehension, utterances beyond simple verbal imitation, and construction of simple sentences. These deficits, as enunciated by the Complex Information Processing model, were evident in Subject A's inability to complete his story and Subject B's inability to initiate any story.

Echolalia and the Behaviour Interference Theory. Evidence of echolalia – the meaningless repetition of an interlocutor's words – was found in Subject B, who repeatedly echoed the researcher's questions. The Behaviour Interference Theory of Bijou and Ghezzi identifies repetitive behaviour as a sensory disturbance arising from innate abnormalities in an individual's sensory equipment. Children with low-functioning autism are often non-verbal; where they speak, their speech frequently consists largely of echolalia. The repetitive

behaviour observed in both subjects – the continual hitting of an apple, unusual blinking, mumbling of meaningless words, nodding, smiling, and hitting together of two forefingers – is, from the standpoint of BIT, an automatically reinforcing operant behaviour, comparable to exploratory behaviour in typically developing children. While their peers were listening to the class teacher, the two participants were more comfortable with their repetitive behaviours, supporting the theory's claim that such abnormal behaviours serve to compensate for deficiencies in social, emotional, and verbal behaviour.

Sensory avoidance. The data show that the two children avoided body contact with their peers and preferred to stay aloof. These behaviours support the BIT tenet that autistic individuals have innate tendencies to escape and avoid tactile or cutaneous stimuli. Tactile defensiveness is a pattern of observable behaviour and emotional responses that are aversive, negative, and disproportionate to certain types of tactile stimuli; it reflects a dysfunction in the excitation-inhibition balance of the central nervous system in autistic individuals. Such abnormal responses to touch may exacerbate social and communication problems (International Society for Autism Research [INSAR], 2019). The data also support the BIT claim that autistic children avoid and escape auditory stimuli: one subject continually closed his ears each time he heard the sound of a vehicle or the blaring of its horn. Severely autistic children often show more discomfort than mildly affected children when exposed to ordinary sounds, covering their ears or losing their temper (Tan, Xi, Jiang, Shi, Wang, & Wang, 2012). By this criterion, Subject B and Subject A may be classified as low- and high-functioning respectively. The avoidance of eye contact with the researchers by both subjects reinforces the belief that autistic individuals are less likely to use eye gaze or contact to communicate or to show objects (Shield, 2014), eye contact being perhaps the most powerful non-verbal channel of communication.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be borne in mind. First, the very small, purposively selected sample (two children) means the findings cannot be generalised to the wider autistic population; they serve as an illustrative case description rather than as representative evidence. Second, the unstructured interviews and observation-based data introduce the possibility of observer bias; although two observers were used and a protocol was followed, the study did not employ standardised assessment instruments or inter-rater reliability measures. Third, the data were collected in 2019 and analysed retrospectively, which introduces a time gap but also allowed the researchers to integrate corroborating caregiver reports. Fourth, the paper does not attempt a differential diagnosis distinguishing autism-related language impairment from other SLI profiles. Future research should address these limitations through larger samples, standardised instruments, and systematic comparison groups.

Conclusion

The central concern of this study has been specific language impairment, specifically autism spectrum disorder. The objective was to examine the different manifestations of the symptoms, particularly in social behaviour and in expressive and receptive language ability. The observed manifestations include restricted and abnormal behaviour, stereotypy, deficits in complex motor movement manifesting in oral-motor movement deficit (atypical

language production such as echolalia), deficit in memory for complex materials, and poor interpretive skills – all in line with the tenets of the theories forming the study's framework. The expressive language skills of children with the disorder are largely affected in areas of pronunciation, resulting in omission, substitution, and disarticulation of speech, especially of long words. Receptive language is also affected, particularly in the comprehension of complex information. In social interaction, autistic children show obvious challenges in the pragmatic aspects of language and tend to prefer an isolated existence.

In summary, the results reinforce and validate the study's objectives and indicate that different autistic children manifest different symptoms, or may manifest the same symptoms in varying degrees. The study recommends that further research investigate other areas of linguistics in autistic individuals, and that government and other stakeholders develop and fund intervention strategies to support language development in affected children.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview with the Director of the Centre (Respondent 1)

1. Researcher: Good afternoon, Madam

Respondent: Good afternoon

2. Researcher: May you spare me some minutes to ask some few questions about these your pupils (referring to the two autistic children)

Respondent: Go ahead, please

3. Researcher: When were they brought to the centre?

Respondent: Sunny has been with us for about three years now while Bright has spent four years with us.

4. Researcher: Do you know if any of the relations/siblings of the subjects have autism?

Respondent: Sunny's two older male siblings have more severe cases of autism behaviour.

5. Researcher: What about Bright?

Respondent: The parents said there is none.

6. Researcher: How many siblings does Sunny have?

Respondent: According to his mother, he has four siblings.

7. Researcher: What are their sexes?

Respondent: According to his mother, he has four siblings, two girls and two boys.

8. Researcher: How many of them have autism?

Respondent: According to his parents only the boys were diagnose

9. Researcher: Do you know when their cases started?

Respondent: Information from their parents shows that Sunny started manifesting the symptoms at two years while Bright's case started at one year.

10. Researcher: Can you tell me other likely causes of the spectrum?

Respondent: Brain damage, drugs (vaccine) administered on the child in early childhood and infection of a pregnant mother can cause autism.

11. Researcher: Do you have any further information as to the environmental factors responsible for the spectrum.

Respondent: Premature birth or enduring complications during birth, pollutants, pesticides, toxins etc are also said to be responsible in some cases.

APPENDIX B

Interview with caregiver (Respondent 2)

1. Researcher: Good morning, Madam.

Respondent: Good morning

2. Researcher: What class are you taking?

Respondent: I teach basic 4 classes.

3. Researcher: Permit me to ask some questions about Bright your pupil.

Respondent: Madam, you may go ahead.

4. Researcher: As your pupil, what can you tell me about Bright's behaviour in class?

Respondent: He (pointing at his direction) was brought here about four years ago. He has impediment in speech. He hardly talks and does not participate in class activities which you can see yourself. Most times, he prefers to be on his own and he is always inattentive in class. He is either smiling or doing one thing or the other instead of listening when the class is going on. No matter how hard I try, he does not concentrate in class. It is real trouble trying to control him.

5. Researcher: Thank you. How does he relate with his class mates?

Respondent: You can see he is not friendly. He hardly plays with his mates. Even when he does, they always laugh at him because he does not talk clearly. He shows aggression each time his mates make jest of him.

6. Researcher: What can you say about his performance in class?

Respondent: You can see that he is much older than his class mates. By his age, he ought to have progressed to a higher class but because he is dull and pays less attention in class, his performance is not encouraging. We are doing our best.

7. Researcher: How does he perform in written tests?

Respondent: He hardly writes anything.

8. Researcher: What can you say about Sunny?

Respondent: Sunny is much better. At least he can answer questions in class but less than expected of his age. He plays with one object or the other instead of playing with his mates. His major problem is constant blinking and repetition of meaningless words. However, there is improvement in his condition compared to when he came to this centre. At least, he can write simple words and sentences.

9. Researcher: Is there any further information of interest you may wish to share with me?

Respondent: Well, not much again. The only thing is that their class mates usually bully on them because of their condition and they feel worried about it. We try as much as possible to stop them.

12. Researcher: Thank you for your time. I am grateful.

Respondent: You are welcome.

APPENDIX C

INTERACTION WITH SUBJECT A

The subject is a 10-year-old basic 4 pupil who was monitored on May 6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 17, 20, 22, 23, 27, 28, 30, June 3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 17, 20, 27 and July 1, 3, 4 and 24 spanning over a period of two months. Below is the interaction held with him.

1. Researcher: Good afternoon

Respondent: Good afternoon aunty

2. Researcher: How are you?

Respondent: fine,

3. Researcher: What class are you?

Respondent: I am in basic 4

4. Researcher: What are your parents' names?

Respondent: Mommy and daddy.

5. Researcher: Where do you live?

Respondent: At home (while making unusual sound like wuu, wuu, kii, kii etc).

6. Researcher: What do you want to become when you grow up?

Respondent: (smiling) I no know. (continues to make unusual meaningless sound)

7. Researcher: Do you want to become a journalist?

Respondent; Yes, but I no fit talk well well (in a sing song intonation and inappropriate pitch volume). I no go de easy for me

8. Researcher: Can you read this comprehension? (Handing out a sheet of paper headed "Jeje married a wicked fairy" to him)

Respondent: Yes aunty

9. Researcher: Show me your friends.

Respondent: I no get friends. (looking unfriendly)

10. Researcher: You know think say you suppose get friends make you for play with them especially in school?

Respondent: I do not like to play with them.

11. Researcher: Why?

Respondent: They laugh at me (in a very low tone).

12. Researcher: Do you know any story you can tell me?

Respondent: Yes, I know the story of the ship, the shack and the sea monster (in a sing song intonation)

13. Researcher: Please tell me

Respondent: (smiling) (started the story but stopped half way as he tried to remember the whole story to no avail).

APPENDIX D

INTERACTION WITH SUBJECT B

The subject is a 12-year-old basic 4 pupil who was monitored on May 6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 17, 20, 22, 23, 27, 28, 30, June 3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 17, 20, 27 and July 1, 3, 4 Spanning over a period of two months. Below is the interaction held with him.

1. Researcher: Good afternoon

Respondent: Good afternoon

2. Researcher: How are you?

Respondent: Fine

3. Researcher: What class are you? (Trying to hold the child's hand):

Respondent: (withdrawing) what class are you? (repeatedly).

4. Researcher: What are your parents' names?

Respondent: (Silence).

5. Researcher: Where do you live?

Respondent: Where do you live (repeatedly and in a mimicry manner?)

6. Researcher: Can you read this comprehension? (Handing out a sheet of paper containing a typewritten document captioned Jeje married a wicked fairy).

Respondent: Comprehension (repeatedly slowly and in a sing song intonation).

7. Researcher: pronounce the following words for me: *enjoyed, passed, walked, played, and jumped.*

Respondent: *enjoy, pass, walk, play, jump* (without the past tense marker (ed))

8. Can you show me your friends?

Respondent: no, no, no (withdrawing in an unfriendly manner)

9. Researcher: It is good you make friends with your class mates or don't you think so?

Respondent: (starts talking incomprehensible words)

10. Researcher: Please tell me any story you know.

Respondent: (keeps mute and walks away).

APPENDIX EI

Comprehension: Jeje Married a Wicked Fairy

Reading: The Proud Jeje

Before you read.

Ask your teacher what a fairy is. Have you been told any fairy tale by your parent?

Jeje was a beautiful girl. She was the only daughter of a rich king who lived about one thousand years ago. Jeje's father took very good care of her. He bought her fine clothes. She ate good food. She never did any hard work. Despite all the good care she enjoyed, Jeje was never satisfied.

When she was old enough to get married, Jeje refused all the young men who proposed to marry her. She claimed they were not rich enough. She always said with pride, "I cannot marry you. You know I'm beautiful. I must marry the richest man in the world".

One day, Jeje's father, the king, organized a big party in his palace. He invited all the richest men around so that his daughter might choose the richest man among them for a husband. A fairy from the magic forest around their village heard about this proud daughter of the king. He was determined to teach the girl some lesson.

On the day of the party, over thousand rich young men came. They were all dressed in their best attire. They came with bags of money, gold and diamond to entice beautiful Jeje. Jeje walked round to examine her suitors.

Suddenly, the fairy who had changed into a handsome young man appeared from a far end of the palace. All eyes were turned to him as he was very richly dressed. Everything he wore was made of gold. His forehead was shining. He came with a white horse. His servant who also rode on a white horse carried all the beautiful gift of gold and silver he bought for Jeje.

Jeje's eyes brightened as she saw the handsome fairy. She was trembling with a strong desire to marry him. She rushed to her father and announced: "Father, I have found him. I have found my husband". The king was happy to hear this and he quickly sent for the lucky young man.

The king wasted no time. He quickly announced to the other suitors. "Thank you all for coming. You are all handsome and rich. But Jeje can only marry one man. Here is the man he has chosen". After this, Jeje was joined with the fairy. Drums rolled and people danced and danced. The fairy lavished money on the drummers and dancers. Everybody ate and drank. The party lasted for two days.

Answer the Following Questions

1. Who was Jeje Jeje was the beautiful girl
2. Why did the king organized the party? Because he is a king
~~Rich~~ men
3. Who were the people expected at the party? Rich men
4. Why did Jeje refused all the young men? Because she is not married
5. What was the mission of the fairy to the party? _____
He is handsome

APPENDIX EII

Comprehension: Jeje Married a Wicked Fairy

Reading: The Proud Jeje

Before you read.

Ask your teacher what a fairy is. Have you been told any fairy tale by your parent?

Jeje was a beautiful girl. She was the only daughter of a rich king who lived about one thousand years ago. Jeje's father took very good care of her. He bought her fine clothes. She ate good food. She never did any hard work. Despite all the good care she enjoyed, Jeje was never satisfied.

When she was old enough to get married, Jeje refused all the young men who proposed to marry her. She claimed they were not rich enough. She always said with pride, "I cannot marry you. You know I'm beautiful. I must marry the richest man in the world".

One day, Jeje's father, the king, organized a big party in his palace. He invited all the richest men around so that his daughter might choose the richest man among them for a husband. A fairy from the magic forest around their village heard about this proud daughter of the king. He was determined to teach the girl some lesson.

On the day of the party, over thousand rich young men came. They were all dressed in their best attire. They came with bags of money, gold and diamond to entice beautiful Jeje. Jeje walked round to examine her suitors.

Suddenly, the fairy who had changed into a handsome young man appeared from a far end of the palace. All eyes were turned to him as he was very richly dressed. Everything he wore was made of gold. His forehead was shining. He came with a white horse. His servant who also rode on a white horse carried all the beautiful gift of gold and silver he bought for Jeje.

Jeje's eyes brightened as she saw the handsome fairy. She was trembling with a strong desire to marry him. She rushed to her father and announced: "Father, I have found him. I have found my husband". The king was happy to hear this and he quickly sent for the lucky young man.

The King wasted no time. He quickly announced to the other suitors. "Thank you all for coming. You are all handsome and rich. But Jeje can only marry one man. Here is the man he has chosen". After this, Jeje was joined with the fairy. Drums rolled and people danced and danced. The fairy lavished money on the drummers and dancers. Everybody ate and drink. The party lasted for tow days.

Answer the Following Questions

1. Who was Jeje? _____
2. Why did the king organized the party? _____

3. Who were the people expected at the party? _____

4. Why did Jeje refused all the young men? _____

5. What was the mission of the fairy to the party? _____
