

**10th Congress of
Baltic States SLTs'**

Stronger together

10-11 April, 2026



LATVIJAS LOGOPĒDU
ASOCIĀCIJA
- par skaidru valodu





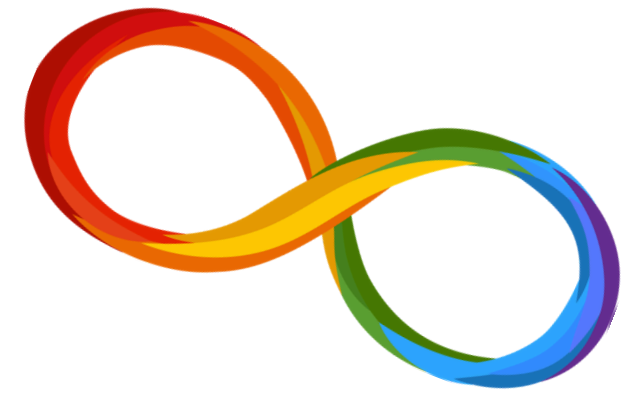
EXPERIENCES OF AUTISTIC PARENTS IN DEVELOPING SOCIAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN THEIR AUTISTIC CHILDREN

Authors: Jurgita Mitė (email: jurgita.mite@gmail.com)
Dr. Julija Grigėnaite
Vytautas Magnus University



SHORT INTRODUCTION

- Social communication interventions are often **designed without autistic input** (Gillespie-Lynch et al., 2017; Milton, 2012);
- Even evidence-based methods may fail when **neurodiversity principles are ignored** (Gillespie-Lynch et al., 2017; Milton, 2012);
- Autistic adults offer **unique insights** based on lived experience (Gillespie-Lynch et al., 2017; Kiblen et al., 2024);
- Their perspectives help **shape more effective, respectful, and relevant interventions** (Gillespie-Lynch et al., 2017; Kapp et al., 2013).



Why Autistic Voices Matter?

- Autistic adults understand autistic communication from the inside (Milton, 2012);
- They can identify strategies that helped them from childhood to adulthood (Kiblen et al., 2024);
- Autistic people are **critical autism experts** (Gillespie-Lynch et al., 2017; Kapp et al., 2013; Milton, 2012);
- Including autistic perspectives improves **quality and relevance** of support (Gillespie-Lynch et al., 2017; Milton, 2012).



OBJECTIVE AND METHODS

OBJECTIVE: The study aims to reveal the experiences of autistic parents for developing social skills for their autistic children.

METHODS:

- Grounded in a **qualitative methodology;**
- **Semi-structured individual interviews;**
- Participants: **9 autistic parents raising autistic children;**
- **Thematic Analysis** (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To explore how autistic parents develop social communication skills in their autistic children.

This includes:

- Their priorities
- Their chosen strategies
- Their views on neurodiversity vs behaviourism
- Their expectations for professionals



What do autistic parents do?

RESULTS (1)

Educational Strategies Used by Parents

Ensure Stability

- Create predictable routines and minimise unexpected changes to help child feel safe.

Use Visual Supports

- Provide visual schedules, picture cues, and step-by-step guides to make information clearer.

Apply Skills in Real-Life Situations

- Help their child practise social and daily-living skills in natural, everyday environments.

Behaviourism vs. Neurodiversity

Use an Individualised Approach

- Adapt support to their child's unique profile, needs, and pace.

Carefully Apply Behaviourist Methods

- Use behaviour-based strategies only when necessary and only in ways that respect the child's emotional well-being.

Recognise and Embrace Neurodiversity

- Value their child's natural development, sensory profile, and autistic way of being, rather than trying to "normalise" behaviour.



What do autistic parents do?

RESULTS (2)

Factors Supporting Successful Social Skills Development

Create a Safe Relationship

- Build trust by offering emotional safety and predictable interactions.

Connect With Same-Neurotype Adults

- Encourage children to form relationships with autistic peers and adults who understand.

Collaborate With Specialists

- Work closely with professionals to ensure consistent, child-centred support.

Use Sensory Diets

- Adjust daily activities to match the child's sensory needs and help with regulation.

Respect and Support Stimming

- Allow self-stimulation as a healthy way for the child to regulate emotions and communicate.

Promote Inclusion in Society

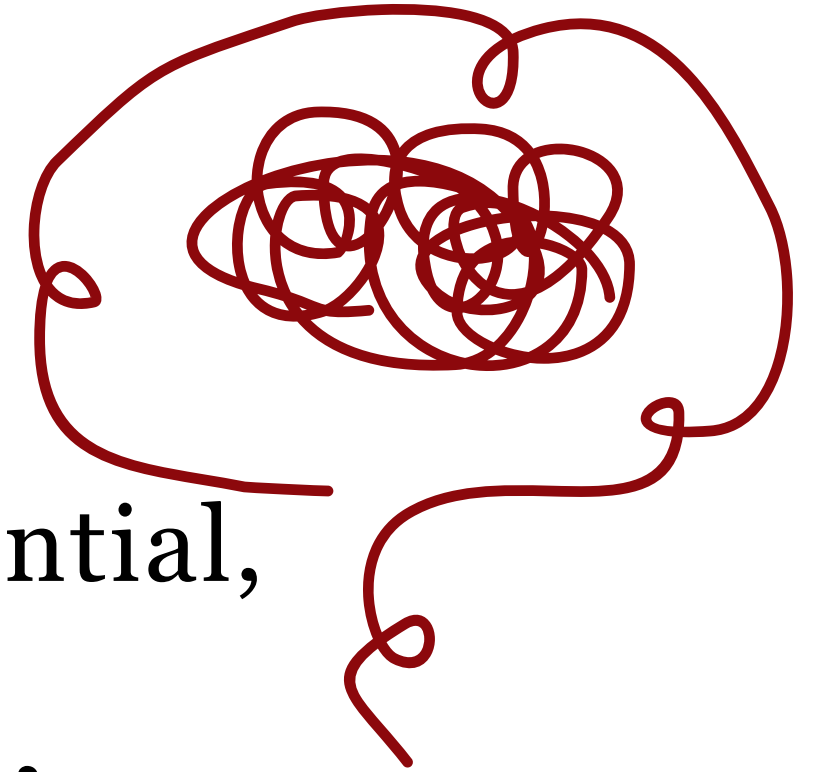
- Involve their children in community activities and everyday environments.

Advocate for Better Environments and Professional Growth

- Push for improved school environments and encourage specialists to deepen their understanding of autism.

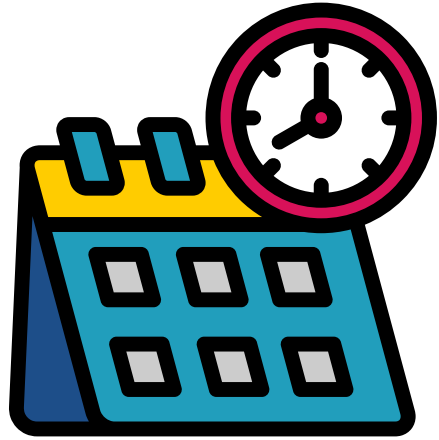


CONCLUSIONS



1. Autistic parents' **self-advocacy** provides essential, experience-based insights.
2. These insights strengthen **speech therapists'** understanding of autistic social communication.
3. Collaboration grounded in **neurodiversity** leads to more effective, respectful support.





Implications for Speech Language Therapists

Speech therapists should:

- Use **visual and experiential learning tools;**
- Prioritize **sensory-friendly, emotionally safe** environments;
- Follow the child's **interests and communication style;**
- Avoid behavioristic methods;
- Collaborate with parents and autistic adults;
- Embrace **neurodiversity-affirming practice.**





REFERENCES

1. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
2. Gillespie-Lynch, K., Kapp, S. K., Brooks, P. J., Pickens, J., & Schwartzman, B. (2017). Whose Expertise Is It? Evidence for Autistic Adults as Critical Autism Experts. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8(438). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00438>
3. Kapp, S. K., Gillespie-Lynch, K., Sherman, L. E. & Hutman, T. (2013). Deficit, difference, or both? Autism and neurodiversity. *Developmental psychology*, 49(1), 59.
4. Kiblen, J. C., Shogren, K. A., Scott, L., Kan, D., Bossen, B., & Hume, K. (2024). Perspectives of autistic students and their teachers on self-determination and peer support. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 117, 102438. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2024.102438>
5. Milton D. E. (2012). On the ontological status of autism: The “double empathy problem.” *Disability & Society*, 27, 883–887