

PORTRAYAL OF AUTISM IN *ATYPICAL* FILM: PRAGMATIC LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT ANALYSIS

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Abstract: This study investigates the portrayal of the autistic character in *Atypical* film seasons one and two through verbal and non-verbal pragmatic language impairment analysis. The qualitative method and the theory of mind by Attwood (2007) and Stemmer & Whitaker (2008) were employed in the research. This study found that the autistic character in *Atypical* film made 320 language impairments, including verbal and non-verbal languages. For verbal language impairment, literal interpretations and violation of maxims were frequently found, where the repetitions often occurred. Other quite significant language impairments were monologue, odd prosody, and echolalia. Besides, the idiosyncratic speech was rarely used by the character. For non-verbal pragmatic language impairment, the character mainly utilized clumsy or gauche body language, followed by limited use of gesture and facial expressions, inappropriate facial expressions, and peculiar or stiff gazes. These findings proved that the character of the series was represented as the ASD sufferer with the Asperger syndrome spectrum. Language impairment greatly affected the development of thoughts and how the character adjusted tone and intonation of speech. It was challenging to control verbal language well, so non-verbal communication was often disrupted.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorders, *Atypical* Series, Language Disorder, Pragmatic Language Impairment.

INTRODUCTION

For people with disabilities, especially those who experience language impairments, it is difficult to interpret the content and context of a conversation. They also struggle to produce various forms of language to create engagement in communication. In other words, it is challenging for people with language impairment to apply social introductions and adjust to the environment (Taylor & Whitehouse, 2016).

One of the language impairments which is interesting to analyze occurs in practical language use shown by people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). They have limitations in social interaction and communication because of their universal verbal and non-verbal pragmatic language impairments (Woodbury-Smith, 2021, Baird &

Norbury, 2016). The condition can be observed in individuals with Asperger syndrome—one of the high-functioning autism spectrums—when they want to start a conversation with others.

It has been widely reported that people with the syndrome encounter difficulties making friends and participating in other social domains due to language impairment and behavior. It puts the sufferers at particular risk of inadequate treatment. The inability to grasp the meaning makes people with language impairment a typical target of victimization and bullying (Sodian et al., 2016). The condition significantly affects the life of the sufferers, leading them to devastating and long-lasting trauma. Particularly in children and teenagers, the acts were also reported to contribute to the school

refusal of the psychological and physical attack (Adams, 2021, Munkhausen et al., 2019). Therefore, a study on people with ASD is significant in dealing with the problem.

Research on pragmatic language impairment in people with ASD has been conducted, especially in clinical research (Burton et al., 2020, Lockton, 2016). However, only a few studies depicted language impairment from the movie, a popular media that plays a pivotal role in representing social and cultural values. The previous studies only emphasized the verbal problems but did not focus on the non-verbal aspect, which also supports the formation of communication errors. The case of language impairment of ASD, including verbal and non-verbal problems, can be observed in *Atypical Series*, a movie showing the pragmatic language impairment through the ASD character who is different from ordinary people. The film portrayed Sam as the main character, struggling in school and social life.

Atypical is a drama series that aired on Netflix, produced by Gordon. It told about the life of an 18 years old ASD teenager named Sam. His high school life and interaction with a therapist made him think about finding a lover. Since he was passionate about research and penguins, Sam was more selective in his love story when he realized that penguins only made love once in a lifetime. With limited understanding of friends and family, he became restless, often missed social cues, and showed non-verbal limitations. In the film, a slight clue of savant skills, which ASD people rarely attached, was also seen in Sam's character through drawing and observing penguins. Although he got a particular expertise in a field far over average, the character encountered difficulties due to his verbal and non-verbal language impairment.

Apart from the criticism arguing that the film portrayed or strengthened negative stereotypes, the series can also raise awareness about the condition of people with ASD (Woodbury-Smith, 2021). In addition, the series has received much criticism for characterizing the leading actor who does not resemble children with the disorder. Some do not know the differences between people with autism and ordinary people (Baird & Norbury, 2016). Therefore, this study tries to examine the language impairments of Sam, which is

assumed to have an Asperger syndrome spectrum. The spectrum is indicated by the rigid behavior and use of language style. It belongs to the high-functioning autism spectrum, in which the sufferer can still have particular language competencies, such as speaking, reading, writing, or even doing basic life skills (Uddin, 2021). This intellectual ability may cause other people to have high expectations related to their social expertise (Attwood, 2007).

Based on the explanation above, this research focuses on the form and the effect of pragmatic language impairments in an autistic character in the *Atypical Series*. It analyzes Sam's verbal and non-verbal records and observes other characters' reactions to the primary role of Sam, who has ASD. This research employs the theory of mind from Atwood and Stemmer & Whiteker (2008) to investigate the types of pragmatic language impairments in the autism character in the *Atypical Series* and explain the depiction of verbal and non-verbal pragmatic language impairments found in the main character with ASD. The research is significant to study since it can give a deeper understanding and awareness of people with autism and, on a broader scale, could also be a reference for other researchers on ASD in any field.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is in the field of discourse studies. It studies the organization of language in a sentence or clause (Calvo et al., 2017). It also analyzes linguistic units such as a conversation or written text. The qualitative method is used in this research by obtaining and describing the data (Creswell & Zhang, 2009). The research instrument is the data card, a collection of data in the form of research-related information. The researcher obtained sources of information from documentation, books, archives, and other media, such as Netflix. The collected data was then written on a data card and other important information for research purposes.

The analysis unit of this study is *Atypical series* seasons one and two. It collected the data by using documentary techniques. According to Sugiyono (2016), the documentary technique is a data collection technique in text, images, films, photos, and something related to the type of work. The

following were the steps of data collection in this study: 1. Watching the *Atypical* movie by listening to the storyline related to language impairment. 2. Recording the flow and the dialogue in the scene with language impairment. 3. Identifying and classifying the data according to the type of language impairment and finding the causes.

Therefore, the researcher carried out several procedures in analyzing the data. First, identify various types of verbal language impairment using the theory of Stemmer & Whitaker (2008) and non-verbal language impairment using Attwood’s categorization (2007). Second, classify and describe the kinds of language impairment in autistic characters. Third, interpret and explain the data that has been classified and conclude the result.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher identified the verbal and non-verbal language impairment found in the speech and actions of an autistic character. The data were collected in groups based on each episode showing verbal and nonverbal disturbances.

Types of Pragmatic Language Impairments in Autism Character in *Atypical* Series.

The data collection and classification results showed verbal and non-verbal pragmatic language impairment in the autistic character in the *Atypical* film, which explains as follows.

Verbal Language Problems.

According to Table 1, the autistic character made 184 pragmatic verbal errors. The character most frequently used the literal interpretation with 64 times of occurrence, followed by the violation of cooperative maxims 40 times. Other language problems, including pronoun reversal, politeness difficulty, and turn-taking violation, roughly had a similar frequency. Meanwhile, monologue, odd prosody, and echolalia significantly occurred in the film. Lastly, the least frequent non-verbal language impairment was idiosyncratic, where it occurred only twice.

Table 1: Pragmatic Language Impairment of verbal language

No.	Verbal Language Problem	Frequency
1.	Violation of Cooperative Maxims	40
2.	Literal Interpretation	64
3.	Monologue	7
4.	Pronoun Reversal	12
5.	Politeness Difficulty	16
6.	Pedantic Speech	17
7.	Odd Prosody	6
8.	Turn-Taking Violation	14
9.	Echolalia	6
10.	Idiosyncratic	2
<i>Total</i>		184

1. The Violation of Cooperative Maxim

According to Stemmer (2007), violating the maxim is one of the most visible language errors in people with ASD. If the maxim is not conveyed completely, incomplete information will cause misunderstandings between the speaker and the hearer. In the film, the maxim violation was repeated 40 times in the dialogue, which indicates that the character had a disability in retaining information. Violation of the maxim is divided into several types, such as maxim of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner.

a. Maxim of Quantity

Maxim of quantity describes something informative. This maxim must convey enough information; it should not be less and not be more. If the information is less or more, the speaker violates the maxim of quantity. From the data found, the autistic character in this film violated the maxim of quantity accounted for 16 times. This maxim showed the violation when Sam did routine therapy with Julia.

Time: (22:13) S1:E1

Julia: So, how's your week?

Sam: Well, I still don't have a date, and I scared a girl off from across the room, and we had meatloaf twice, and I hate the meatloaf.

Julia: Wow, how?

Sam: My mom just made it in the oven

Julia: [chuckles] I mean, how did you scare her away?

The conversation took place in Sam's therapist's room. At that time, Julia asked about people with autism who were allowed to have relationships like other ordinary

people. Next, Julia asked about Sam's daily progress in finding a partner, and Sam replied that he had met a girl at work. However, Sam scared the Girl with Sam's stiff facial expression after Sam added information about "meatloaf," which was not the information Julia needed. Then, Julia responded to the first answer, but Sam kept answering her statement about "meatloaf." In the maxim of quantity, the speaker must provide sufficient information, no less and no more. Therefore, from the data above, Sam violated this maxim because he lost the focus of the discussion.

b. Maxim of Quality

In principle, the maxim of quality is saying something true or not lying. Therefore, if the speaker says something not true, then the speaker violates this maxim.

Time: (11:17) S2:E4

(setting: in the work area, Zahid is using marijuana)

Mr. Bob: Dang it, Zahid. That's strike three. It's time to drop the hammer.

Zahid: huh

Mr. Bob: you're fired. You left me no choice.

Zahid: What? You can't do that. Please, Bob.

Sam: Bob, wait, that's my marijuana. Also, nice shoes.

Mr. Bob: Sam, you use marijuana? Like, for your Autism?

Sam: Obviously

Mr. Bob: I find that very hard to believe.

In this situation, Sam lied to Bob's manager to not fire Zahid. Therefore, he lied to protect Zahid. Sam followed Zahid's advice to learn to lie in certain situations in the dialogue. It is rare for people with autism to lie because they have a sincere nature to judge or talk about something on their minds (Baixauli et al., 2019). However, Sam lied with the exact words and intonation as Zahid taught.

c. Maxim of Relevance

To maxim of relevance, each interlocutor must tell something relevant. If one of them means something irrelevant about the topic, it has violated this maxim. There were 17 violations in the maxim of relevance committed by Autism characters.

For example, Sam maximized relevance when his father asked Sam about keeping Paige in the closet.

Time: (21:18) S1:E5

Dad: Sam.. that's weird. Why?

Sam: Hey, Dad, did mom used to touch all of your stuff? How did you get her to stop?

Dad: Uhm.. I don't think I ever did

In this situation, Sam's father is shocked by Sam's treatment of locking Paige in his wardrobe. Sam did it because Paige was always talking, and she had been holding her beloved turtle, so Sam locked Paige away from holding her turtle. Because Dough did not think Sam would do that. Then, Dough asked Sam why he did that weird thing. With a flat expression, Sam even asked about another topic. It implies that people who have autism may not understand whether they are doing it right or not (Attwood, 2007), so according to Sam, it was not something wrong. That's why Sam did not provide information that matched Dough's question. In this case, Sam violated the maxim of relevance.

d. Maxim of Manner

In its use, the maxim of manner means clear telling information. If the information obtained is not understood by the interlocutor because the information is not clear, then there is a violation of this maxim. In this film, Sam has repeated this offense five times. First, the breach shows when Sam boarded a public bus; then, the bus driver greeted Sam.

Time: (31:23) S1:E8

Driver: Sam? (smile) is everything okay?

Sam: Adelie, chinstrap, emperor, Gentoo

In that situation, Sam experienced anxiety because Julia said something rude, which Sam had never been treated like before. Then the driver asked about Sam's condition at that time. Sam just answered, "Adelie, chinstrap, emperor, Gentoo" actually, the word had its meaning for Sam, but Sam answered the driver with these words, which the driver did not understand. From this, Sam did not give clear information to the driver. As a result, the driver did not know Sam's condition then.

2. Literal Interpretation

There are types of literal interpretation for someone who interprets a meaning

without going deep into context, figurative meaning, idiom, a kind of joke, or hidden meaning. So it is because the theory of mind problem in people with Autism interprets all meanings literally. However, it isn't easy to get the hidden meaning of a particular language (Attwood, 2007).

a. Figure Language

In this regard, Sam also performed a literal interpretation. Sam makes 28 out of 64 literal interpretations. Sam made a Literal Interpretation in this part when Casey assessed Sam's new clothes.

Time: (12:03) S1:E3

Casey: Cool shirt.

Sam: Thanks. I'm hoping it'll get me a practice girlfriend

Casey: I was being sarcastic. You look stupid

Sam followed Julia's advice to be independent by buying and choosing clothes according to Sam's personality. Then Sam decided on a shirt with a whale picture, one of Sam's spirit animals. However, Casey mocked Sam's whale suit. Saying "Cool Shirt" for Sam was a compliment. Sam said "Thanks" because Sam took Casey's words literally without knowing what Casey meant and was sarcastic after Casey explained the truth.

b. Idiomatic Expression

The data shows Sam's difficulty in interpreting the meaning of idioms. The errors occurred 17 times out of 64 literal interpretations made by Sam. This part happened when Sam asked his father about stealing a girlfriend.

Time: (29:10) S1:E2

Sam: and You stole mom away from him?

Dad: Something like that

Sam: How?

Dad: I just stuck around being my sweet, charming self.

Sam: And that worked?

Dad: well, the proof is in the pudding, right?

Sam: I don't like pudding

Dad: well, forget the pudding. The point is, you're young, Sam, you know.

The conversation above illustrates Sam, who asked for tips to steal someone's girlfriend, as his father did when he snatched Sam's mother from her ex-boyfriend, and it

worked. Then his father used the idiom "proof is in the pudding" to express his success. The Webster dictionary defines the idiom "proof is in the pudding" as proven successful (www.merriam-webster.com). However, Sam took it literally by saying that "he does not like pudding." From this statement, Sam did not understand the idiom's meaning and did not try to understand the intonation and expression on his father's face. Therefore, Sam did not accept the purpose.

c. Indirect Request

One of the problems in people with Autism is a lack of understanding of indirect commands. In this context, there are eight times indirect requests occurred. Like the one where Sam asks Madison to date him.

Time: (27:00) S1:E3

Sam: Would you like to go on a date with me?

Madison: That's so nice, but I'm busy. (smiles)

Sam: okay. But wait. I didn't tell you when the date is. Friday, 6:00 p.m., Eastern.

Madison: I'm still busy

Sam: if Friday is terrible, I could do Thursday instead

Madison: oh my god! I don't want to go out with you.

The conversation above shows that Sam asked Madison to go on a date with him, but Madison refused the invitation by choosing indirect words, intending not to hurt Sam's heart. Madison used the term "busy" to say no. However, Sam did not understand the other meaning of "busy ."Sam thought that on Friday, 6:00 p.m., Madison would be busy doing something, so Sam changed the day to Thursday. Although after that, Sam realized that Madison refused his invitation after Madison explained the reason.

d. Joke

Autism characters in this film also experienced difficulty in identifying jokes. Sam received at least four jokes. It was shown when his friends at school teased Sam.

Time: (16:11) S1:E2

Sam: I'm researching how to steal a woman, and Bailey is the perfect test subject because she's a skank

Friend: (laughing)

Arlo: so you're doing research on how to steal a woman? Awesome!

Henry: you trying to get laid? You gonna tap some ass? (laughing)

Sam: I don't think so. What does that do?

In this situation, Sam was ridiculed by his schoolmates for presumptuously asking sensitive questions. As Sam continued to take their questions seriously, they became more and more specific with the excuse of making more of a mockery. However, Sam still did not get the context of the jokes. Sam thought that the question needed a relevant answer. It happens because, for autistic people, it is difficult to see the context of being spoken or get other meanings in the language (Stemmer & White, 2008). Just like what happened to Sam when his friends teased him.

3. Monologue

This monologue language problem occurs in people with Autism when they voice out what is on their minds. People with Autism do it when they are talking about something, and they immediately voice out what they do and do like one-way communication. In this film, Sam performs the Monologue seven times, as Sam did when he was on the bus.

Time: (36:19) S1:E1

(settings: In the bus)

(Sam as narrator: There's a type of Antarctic cod with a special protein in its blood that stops it from freezing. [chuckles] Antifreeze in fish)

Sam: [laughing]

(people staring at Sam, feeling confused)

Sam: I was just thinking about Antarctic cod.

In that situation, Sam focused on thinking about Antarctica. However, it became strange when he voiced loudly what he was thinking, but it was clear that everyone on the bus did not understand what he was saying because they did not need the information. In people with Autism, this often happens because they always think about what they like, regardless of the social context (Stemmer & Whiteker, 2008).

4. Pronoun Reversal

The use of pronoun reversal by people with Autism is due to the problems in

understanding ToM, which causes them to have difficulty analyzing pronouns. It also affects the problem of social communication. In this context, there is 12 times the occurrence of pronoun reversal in Sam. It can be seen when Sam chatted with Julia after helping her buy a new tv.

Time: (24:52) S1:E7

Julia: It's great to see you. It made my day

Sam: seeing you has made my day

In this part, when Julia wanted to thank and say that Sam made her happy by using the word "you" to mean Sam, Sam didn't do a pronoun reversal, which Sam should take that expression. It was Sam who looked grateful to Julia. This pronoun reversal change results in the loss of meaning given to the interlocutor. Frequently, the interlocutor does not immediately understand what the ASD said because it depends on the perspective of how they speak (Stemmer and Whitaker, 2008).

5. Politeness Difficulty

In people with Autism, it is difficult for them to act politely. Usually, they ask sensitive things to ask other people. ToM influences the sense of honesty that people with Autism have; they do not even realize that they have offended another person's feelings. In this section, 16 times, Sam's politeness difficulties occurred. In part, Sam asked Bailey how to get a girlfriend.

Time: (16:49) S1:E2

(settings: school)

Sam: Excuse me. Bailey? I'm the boy whose sister punched you. I noticed yesterday you were kissing Henry, and today, you're kissing Arlo, and I was wondering how did he woo you. And please be specific.

Arlo: Dude, what the hell?

Sam: I'm doing research on how to steal a woman and Bailey is the perfect test subject, because she's a skank

Bailey: Hey!

In this situation, Sam asked Bailey how to get a girlfriend. Sam asked a sensitive question because he asked directly in front of Bailey, Arlo, Henry, and her friends, making Bailey very offended and embarrassed. Sam was not aware of the condition. According to him, what he asked was what he wanted to ask. People with Autism may ignore the surrounding situation when asking for

something. They can immediately ask about people with Autism see (Stemmer, 2008).

6. Pedantic Speech

In verbal language, there is Pedantic Speech in which someone has to tell or give an informative answer with efficient information. Usually, people with ASD tell more about something by using adjectives that they feel are not needed to be used. However, with too detailed delivery of the questions, the speaker experiences pedantic speech with the explanation above and looks formal. In the Atypicalseries where Sam did a pedantic speech, Sam did it when his brother helped him find a date.

Time: (32:39) S1-E1

Clarey: okay, finish this sentence. "I spend a lot of time thinking about?"

Sam: Easy. penguins. And, especially I'll say chinstrap penguins. They're my favorite bird, but all four types of Antarctic penguins are good. Did you know early explorers thought they were fish and classified them that way? Not birds, fish.

Clarey: Okay, I'm gonna put "sports."

When her sister Clarey helped out with dating, Clarey asked about Sam's passion for something. Then Sam answered quickly, "Easy. Penguins.". Penguin is a favorite thing, so that is what Sam said right away. Because of his passion for researching penguins, in this context, Sam gave more information about penguins which were the four best types of penguins in Antarctica, which was not required for the online dating question because the answer was felt to be enough on the word "penguins" at the beginning.

7. Odd Prosody

An error that often occurs in communication with people with Autism is the use of Odd Prosody. Placement of emphasis in the wrong word will make the message meaning strange or not readily accepted. For people with Autism who can only use monotonous intonation without expression, the sense of sentences is difficult to obtain. Like in the scene where Sam invited his old friend to go on a date because Sam had difficulty using flat intonation and limited expressions, it is difficult for the other person

to receive messages directly, as in the conversation below:

Time: (27:03) S1:E2

Sam: Hey Madison bEE MiNE

Madison: Um... what?

Sam: Would you like to go on a date with me?

Madison: That's so nice, but I'm busy

From the data above, there is strange prosody when Sam says "Bee Mine," which, according to Sam word means "Be Mine ."The stress Sam used in the word becomes "bEE miNE" which makes the meaning strange because of the wrong emphasis and intonation. As a result, the other person did not immediately receive the message with the proper expression. The word was romantic and had a meaning to tease Madison. However, there was a rejection of meaning because Sam used a flat intonation and expression, which made Madison not receive the message directly.

8. Turn-Taking Violation

For people with Autism, the difficulty in managing turn-taking is also often a problem. In addition to ignoring the other person, turn-taking can interrupt people's conversations and talk to people's turns as autism can not respond to the warning signs correctly (Attwood, 2007). In this section that Sam did turn-taking vilification 14 times. The violations were as follows:

a. Ignoring

People with Autism often "ignore" other people while talking. They tend to leave or not give answers to the other person. Sam committed this offense seven times, as seen when his father told him to remove the woman's hair in front of him.

Time: (30:16) S1:E4

Girls: ah! What are you doing? Oh!

Dad: Sam, what are you doing?

Sam: [silent, hold the hair]

Dad: Sam? let go

Girl: what's happening?

Sam: [Silent, hold the hair]

Dad: Let her go! Sam, let's go!

The above situation occurred when the woman's hair blocked and interfered with Sam's vision, and then without thinking, Sam immediately grabbed the woman's hair without saying a word. His father saw Sam

holding the woman's hair and told Sam to take it off, but Sam ignored his father and continued to hold the woman's hair without explaining.

b. Interrupting

Interrupting or interrupting a conversation while someone is talking is also a turn-taking violation. It happened four times, like when Sam wanted to tell Zahid about Paige, receiving customers.

Time: (11:24) S1:E6

Zahid: we are our customers first, so I'm going to help you..

Sam: [come] I'm not ready to take the D-train to bone town.

Zahid: [speak to the man] Sir, I got to handle this. Any other nerd in a blue shirt can help you.

From this situation, Sam interrupted Zahid's conversation with his customer. Sam looked so frustrated that he ignored the customer talking to Zahid. Sam violated the turn of Zahid's conversation with the customer during this incident.

c. Talking in people's turn

People with Autism often do not listen well to the other person's message, so they ask something else outside the context of the discussion (Attwood, 2007). Sam did this three times when Sam asked Julia what she liked when she was talking.

Time: (31:20) S1:E2

Julia: So last week, you have a problem with your ...

Sam: What's your favorite type of lemonade?

Julia: Uh, regular?

___ (another question) ___

Julia: Anyway, it's great that you're showing so much interest in others. We've been working on that [fading], but how about we get back to you? Now, when Mr. Tavern's voice bothers you...

In the above situation, Sam was doing routine therapy with Julia. However, when Sam was with Julia, he thought about what Julia liked. Then, in the middle of Julia's explanation, Sam immediately asked Julia's favorite thing when Julia had not finished her conversation. In this case, Sam performed a turn-taking violation, which caused a loss of

context of the previous meaning given by the other person. According to Attwood (2007), when talking with Autism, most people will feel a little annoyed at interrupting conversations and violating social rules because Autism can not respond to warning signs correctly.

9. Echolalia

Repetition in this context includes repetition of intonation and tone of the words spoken by someone that can affect people with Autism. Usually, they repeated the words that Sam had thought of before. However, in this case, Sam did echolalia six times when Casey said Bailey Bennet was a twat.

Time: (24:25) S1:E1

Casey: Bailey Bennet is a twat.

Mom: Casey Gardener, language.

[Sam talks to heart: twat. tweet. Twat, twat, twat, twat, twat, TWAT, TWat, twat, twAt]

[Beth comes to give Casey chocolate cake, outside the house]

Beth: Hey, Casey, I brought you a chocolate cake. I make amazing cakes. I won three bake-offs at my church. This is my brother Evan. He drove me here

Casey: Hey, thanks

[Sam opens the door and leaves the house screaming]

Sam: TWAT!

Evan: God! What the hell is wrong with him?

Sam repeated what Casey said about Bailey Bennet, that she was a twat in the scene. The words "twat" became the words that Sam remembered after that. It looks like Sam also followed how Casey said that way. However, when Sam said the word aloud as Casey did to Evan, even Evan did not know what happened. It showed that Sam did it for no reason.

10. Idiosyncratic Use of Language

People with Autism often use strange language. The strange language comes from other people's input and comes from their thoughts. In this case, Sam used idiosyncratic twice, which happened when he wanted to tell Zahid something.

Time: (14:20) S2:E4

Zahid: We are our customers first, so I'm going to help you..

Sam: [come] I'm not ready to take the D-train to bone town

This scene happens when Sam is very nervous because he is not ready to have sex. As Zahid described sex, Zahid called it "D-train to bone town," which means "making sex." However, this time Sam used the idiom to have sex.

Non-Verbal Language Problems.

The study found 136 nonverbal errors, displayed in the table as follows.

Table2: Pragmatic Language Impairment (non-verbal problem language) used by Autistic characters in Atypical films

No	Pragmatic Language Impairment (non-verbal problem language)	Frequency
1	Limited Used of Gesture	40
2	Clumsy/Gauche Body Language	64
3	Limited Facial Expression	7
4	Inappropriate Facial Expression	12
5	Peculiar/Stiff Gaze	16
	Total	136

The table above illustrates that the autistic character in the *Atypical* film made 136 non-verbal pragmatic errors in every dialogue and scene. Clumsy or gauche body language was the most frequently used by the character, for it occurred 64 times, followed by limited use of gestures that also significantly occurred. In addition, other impairments such as limited facial expression, inappropriate facial expression, and peculiar/stiff gaze were quite significantly utilized. People with Autism usually have more language problems in their daily communication.

1. Limited Use of Gestures

People with Autism are complicated to express the emotions they feel. Likewise, when they reveal something, they tend not to

do much body language (Attwood, 2007). In this case, Sam met a new therapist.



Figure 1.

Time: (16:35) S1:E1

Therapist man: So In that way, I wouldn't even call it therapy, as much as I ould call it raps time with a friend [give hand tapping]

Sam: ...

In this scene, Sam refused to hand tap with the therapist. Sam only did one activity with a rubber in his hand. Like people with Autism, Sam was like everyone else. They often do not have direct contact with other people. Sam's Attitude made the therapist confused because he did not get an answer as to whether Sam accepted his help or not.

2. Clumsy/ Gauche Body Language

Lack of motor skills causes people with Autism to have difficulty controlling their bodies and suits in carrying out certain activities. People with Autism have more clumsy body language, which prevents others from fully understanding their goals. In this case, there were 14 repetitions occurred. Sam also did the same when he lost his portfolio.



Figure 2

Time: (16:13) S2:E8

Sam: Oh no! my portfolio it's not here. It's not in here!

Zahid: Deep breath. Where was the last place you saw it?

Sam: I don't know! I don't know! [clumsy body]

In this scene, Sam performs a rigid activity while losing his portfolio. Apart from not providing much information, all Sam could do was pull the ends of his hair behind him without making much movement. It confused Zahid about the form and chronology of the portfolio loss.

2. Limited facial expressions

In people with Autism, using facial expressions is a difficult thing to do. Therefore, they find it difficult to express their emotions, whether they are happy, sad, or angry. Sam's emotional limitations were accounted for 13 times. For example, it can be seen when Sam tells Casey that he has entered the Denton campus.



Figure 3

Time: (27:31) S2:E9

Sam: I won't be that far. I'll only be at Denton

Casey: You will?

Sam: Yes. I got my acceptance letter to the scientific illustration program this afternoon.

Casey: That's huge news! Why didn't you say anything?

In this scene, limited facial expressions were observed when Sam received the news that he had been accepted at the Denton campus. Unlike Casey, who showed a happy expression when he heard the big news, it proved that people with Autism sometimes find it difficult to express the correct expression in conveying certain situations.

4. Inappropriate Facial Expression

Limitations in showing facial expressions also cause them to use inappropriate or placement of confused expressions when happy and vice versa.

However, people with Autism only use one expression for all emotions, namely anger, and use strange terms to show it (Trevisan et al., 2018). Therefore, it causes the information to be conveyed, not by what is felt. In this case, Sam used 12 inappropriate facial expressions. In this part, Sam was doing while watching the penguins with his family.



Figure 4

Time: (28:05) S2:E9

Sam: What a great day [smile]. I mean, except for when I lost \$700 [smile]

Mom, Dad, and Casey: what!?

Sam: Best day [Smile]

An inappropriate expression can also be observed when Sam said "great day" with a happy face when he had lost his \$700 money. It was not like his family, who was shocked and confused about the missing money. Instead, Sam's expression turned to the penguin, but still, he said he had lost his money with a happy expression.

5. Peculiar/ Stiff Gaze

People with Autism often make eye contact with the other person rarely. As a result, they have a tough time catching messages from different people. Although occasionally looking into the interlocutor's eyes, they stared blankly but could not seize the message. Autism also prefers to look at different objects, such as hands or other external objects. In this case, the use of peculiar/stiff gaze occurred ten times.



Figure 5

Time: (03:31) S1:E3

Paige: Hi! I like your shirt.

Sam: are you being sarcastic? (look the other way)

Paige: oh, no, noo

Sam: then, thank you (leave the Girl)

Paige: but wwhat aa...

The scene was when Paige likes Sam's new t-shirt, but Sam says "sarcastic ."Sam misinterpreted the word as "lie" or means "ugly" instead of mocking it in a derogatory sarcastic trope. It was because Sam did not look Paige in the eye when he was talking, resulting in the loss of the hidden meaning behind the sentence. People with Autism like Sam do not show sarcastic expressions. They did not even understand the meaning of satire or allusions, so Sam gave Paige a flat question, and the response convinced Paige. It seems like Sam was giving him a sarcastic meaning. After that, Sam thanked him and left before Paige said anything. When talking, ordinary people tend to look into the other person's eyes so that listeners do not lose their visual meaning and can answer according to the topic and their feelings (Keating & Cook, 2020).

The Factor of Pragmatics Impairment

The analysis of verbal and nonverbal language disorders was carried out by the autistic character in the *Atypical* film. Based on the data collected and analyzed, there were several reasons for language disorders.

a. Lack of Comprehension

In people with autism, it is difficult to convince someone of the information. The difficulty is caused by the inability to understand the information and misconceptions—also, loss of desired information due to ambiguity in meaning. In the film, Sam often lacked comprehension due

to his lack of skills in capturing and interpreting the meaning and often added unnecessary information. As a result, the interlocutor became confused by the information that Sam said.

b. Inability to Talk Based on Context

People with Autism tend to speak out of context. In addition, the context of the location and situation will affect the context of the formality. However, it was difficult for the autistic character in this *Atypical* film to determine the context, such as location or situation. As a result, they often used formal language when talking to their friends and vice versa. They may even speak disrespectfully to older people or speak disrespectfully in inappropriate situations. Pronouns and echolalia could also cause impoliteness making the information not conveyed correctly.

c. Difficulty in Adjusting Voice and Tone

The voice and tone of the Autism character in this *Atypical* film were often flat. In communicating, voice and tone determine the strength or weakness of the information conveyed. Like the main character in this film, he used a flat voice and tone so that when he raised a protest or emotion, the other person would find it difficult to respond to that emotion. For example, when this Autistic character gives a refusal in one of the scenes, the other person thinks that it is an agreement. Therefore, voice intonation and tone affect conveying information.

d. Lack of Mind Reading Skill

Mind reading is one of the essential things in communicating with someone. Understanding reading signs will make someone interpret a specific meaning that is not spoken. Unlike the Autistic character in the *Atypical* film, Sam tended to be difficult to read someone's mind, so he often interpreted meanings such as figuratively, mockery, and idioms to be taken literally. On the other hand, it was difficult to recognize insults, ridicule, and gestures, so Sam considered it positive. Therefore, reading one's mind is essential for the implied meaning to be interpreted according to the symbolic context.

e. Having Trouble at Maintaining a Conversation

For autistic people, in particular, the difficulty in maintaining a conversation can also be depicted in the character of the *Atypical* film. Therefore, they are more likely to ignore and not respond to the follow-up answers that the other person has to say. Strengthening the dialogue is crucial in maintaining a good relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor. Therefore, it is essential to keep and be responsive in communicating.

f. Incapability to Use Non-Verbal Language Properly

Skills in non-verbal language are also a problem for people with autism, especially for the autistic character in the *Atypical* film. That is, non-verbal skills show information that cannot be expressed in words or show the speaker's emotions. However, the autistic characters in this film often showed monotonous and rigid body movements, so they were ineffective in conveying information.

The non-verbal pragmatic language impairment of autistic characters in this film was limited use of gestures accounted for 7 times, 64 clumsy/gauche body languages, 7 limited facial expressions, 12 inappropriate facial expressions, and 16 peculiar/stiff gazes.

From the results shown above, language impairments were often influenced by misperceptions of the characteristics of Autism. Autism people in that film was difficult to communicate well because it was also hard to understand the context of the conversation. Other factors that influenced the language impairment of this Autism character were difficulty in determining language tone, eye contact, and interpreting literal meanings.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, this study concludes that the autistic character in the *Atypical* film showed ten types of pragmatic verbal language disorders and five types of non-verbal language impairments. These errors included literal interpretation, violation of Cooperative maxims, pedantic speech, politeness difficulty, turn-taking violation, pronoun reversal, monologue, odd prosody, echolalia, idiosyncratic and non-verbal

impairment, clumsy or gauche body language, limited facial expressions, inappropriate facial expressions, peculiar/stiff gazes, limited use of gesture in *Atypical* film.

The language impairments researchers encountered in the film *Atypical* showed that autistic characters here often had difficulty placing the information needed by the interlocutor. For example, the autistic character performed maxim violations such as the maxim of quantity, the maxim of quality, the maxim of relevance, and the maxim of manners. In addition, the most frequent mistakes made by autistic characters in this *Atypical* film were the difficulty in interpreting the message implicitly. Therefore, figurative language such as Idiomatic Expression, Indirect Requests, and Jokes was interpreted literally by the Autistic character. In addition, frequent one-way communication made this autistic character often voice his thoughts in a loud voice called a monologue, without any significant context around him.

Besides, for the autistic characters in this film, it was challenging to be aware of the surrounding environment, the context of the discussion, and with whom they were talking, which caused them to violate politeness with others. In this regard, the actions often taken were turn-taking violations such as ignoring, interrupting, and talking in people's turn. Besides that, odd prosody was used in various linguistic and emotional situations. Repetition of other people's words or echolalia also occurred quite significantly. Furthermore, what was rarely shown was idiosyncratic, related to events. The last thing which significantly affected the occurrence of pragmatic language impairment in autistic characters in this film was non-verbal errors, such as limited use of gestures, clumsy/gauche body language, limited facial expressions, inappropriate facial expressions, and peculiar/stiff gazes.

It is important to note that it is difficult for people with ASD to socialize, especially in a school environment, as Sam experienced in the film. In addition, if the surroundings cannot understand the condition, a deviation such as bullying or discrimination will probably occur. Therefore, although the film *Atypical* can not represent the whole Autism disorder spectrum with its complex and various types, this research is expected to

raise social awareness among the readers, aiming to make them know better. Thus, society can avoid victimization, bullying, or other damaging treatments.

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