Teaching methodology of Croatian

STIMULATING SPEECH WITHIN THE CONTEX OF SATISFYING CHILDREN'S NEEDS IN CONTEMPORARY KINDERGARTENS

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Summary - *This paper deals with the issue of stimulating speech at the preschool age, while taking into consideration the aggravation of young people's language competence, as well as the increase in the number of speech and linguistic difficulties. The causes of these phenomena have been analysed. With the purpose of understanding and improving this condition, an extensive empirical research into the attitudes towards the faculty training and kindergarten teaching as a profession has been carried out. The aim of the research was to establish the basic attitudes, skills and values among 3rd year students at the Faculty of Teacher Education, among in-service kindergarten teachers, their similarities and differences, while paying special attention to teaching methods and techniques in kindergartens, to a higher or lower level of adjusting certain teaching techniques to children's age and their impact on speech development, as well as educational content necessary for children's speech development. The results obtained in this research showed that both students and kindergarten teachers, regardless of minimum differences in attitudes are extremely well-acquainted with the modern pedagogical approaches, and that they pay a great deal of attention both to developing the sense of togetherness and security, and to the communication between kindergarten teachers and children. They are aware of the importance of familiarizing children with the appropriate art and literary content and their impact on speech development.*

Key words: attitudes, literary and art content, preschool children, speech, teaching techniques,

INTRODUCTORY ANALYSIS

Stimulating speech is one of the important topics that scientists and experts have been increasingly analysing over the past ten years. The reason for that is the evident aggravation of young people's linguistic competence, as well as the increase in the number of speech and language difficulties detected in extensive research. The causes of these phenomena have been frequently discussed among scientific circles. The following have been contemplated as potential causes: the lack of communication and interaction, the impact of the media and insufficient satisfying of children's needs at the preschool age, as the basis for speech development. According to the above mentioned potential causes, we should consider the current state of affairs in educational practices, the opportunities for stimulating speech, as well as the kindergarten teachers and students' attitudes towards the importance of satisfying   children's needs at the age of 1 to 3, and from the age of 3 to school start; that is, recognizing these needs.

According to the research conducted in the United States in 1997, American parents spent 40% less time with their children than thirty years ago (Benoit, 1997, 20). Hammel mentions research results according to which children at the age of 10-17, who are currently growing up in the contemporary culture of the electronic media, are going to have about one third fewer social contacts throughout their life than people who were children twenty years ago (Hammel, 1999, 79). The fact has been known that the challenges posed by the immediate human interaction with children provide the best possible experience for reaching emotional maturity and quality social contacts in the future. Human communication develops primarily through speech. The research has also shown that the time parents spend with their children in active speech is getting shorter and shorter. According to European research, a mother on average spends twelve minutes a day talking to her child (Borbonus, 1997). The experts in the field of speech pathology point to a great increase in speech difficulties which do not have a medical background, but are primarily caused by the change in socio-cultural conditions of living, and accordingly, the insufficient communication between children and adults. The fact that there has been an increase in speech difficulties among children has been proved by extensive research. European data show that, on average, 25% of preschool children have more or less serious speech difficulties; a half of them have less serious speech difficulties, and a quarter have medium or serious speech difficulties (Heinemann, 1997, 13). According to the Croatian Logopedic Association's data from 2008, 20-25% of preschool children have language or speech difficulties (European Day of Logopedics, March 6, 2008).

Psychologists Alison Garton and Chris Pratt, having done an extensive study of scientific bibliography, have come to the conclusion that it is the stimulating social contacts with people with good speech competence that appear as the constant factor in the research carried out into children's speech, reading

and writing. (Garton and Pratt, 1998, 218-220). Children (and adults) who are deprived of direct contact with other people are exposed to the danger of lagging behind in speech development and language use (Patzlaff, 2001). Also, the lack of social linguistic experience in childhood (that is, the lack of qualitative verbal and non-verbal communication) can in the long run contribute to the reduction in the ability of oral and written expression, written composition production, self-understanding and logical-analytical thinking (Healy, 1998). In 1996 in Great Britain, after the problems in not only inadequate usage of written language, but also inadequate and deficient ability of speech production had been noticed, targeted programs were introduced for the first graders, in which children practice elementary speaking skills, such as greeting, asking questions, giving answers etc. (Patzlaff, 2004, 100).

Further, quality speech is a prerequisite for mastering reading and writing skills, and "…good readers begin as people who can recite well and as good orators" (Sanders, 1995, 320).

The above mentioned data raise again the issue of teaching methods and techniques employed in kindergartens; of a higher or lower level of appropriateness of teaching techniques and of their impact on speech development, as well as of educational materials all of which, besides the abundance of teaching materials from their stimulating environment, influence children's development enormously, but have recently been neglected in pedagogical practice.

POTENTIAL APPROACHES TO THE ORGANIZATION OF KINDERGARTEN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Lately, a great deal of papers analysing modern tendencies in preschool education have presented assertions that a kindergarten, an institution considered to be an educational organization, should overcome traditional and deterministic view of the world (Slunjski, 2006, 5) and should flexibly adapt to and adjust to the changes for the unexpected, unpredictable and uncertain future (Capra, 1986, Morin, 2002, according to Slunjski 2006.).

However, "within human organizations we should search for the strategies of continuous and flexible adjustments to the unexpected and unplanned situations"; that is, to learn "(…) to sail the ocean of uncertainty from an archipelago to an archipelago of certainty." (Morin, 2002, 22, according to Slunjski, 2006)

If we read the quotations above carefully, we can conclude that from the social development context the conclusions are drawn about the need for a new type of educational activities organization; that is, about the need to prepare the employees and children for new challenges. However, the final quotation warns us that within the uncertainty, instability and unpredictability which surround us, there should be "archipelagos" of certainty, both in the childhood and adult age.

A preschooler's needs differ somewhat from the needs of a child at the school age, so children should not be seen as small "adults" to whom the same laws of the contemporary world apply. At the preschool age, while caring for children we should primarily satisfy their needs, the basic ones being the need for security, love and belonging. In order to satisfy these needs we should provide children with predictability instead of insecurity, linearity instead of networking, rhythm instead of chaos, rituals instead of uncertainty. In that way a child becomes ready for the challenges that await him in the contemporary world in which precisely those opposite features prevail. We should give a child security in order to enable him to deal with insecurity. Throughout their everyday life adults also have rituals which present a break within the chaos. It is these rituals that make our everyday life easier and protect us from fear which, according to extensive research, is present to a great extent among children and young people. The rituals provide security and present archetype material which is common to all cultures and in that way they enable us to experience the value of life and let us know that we are not only those people who fulfil their obligations and achieve success (Preuschoff, 2000). C.G. Jung studied the meaning of rituals and perceived them as a potential way out of the oppression of banal life (Jung, 1974). Rituals, or social contacts, are related to emotions, and dynamic emotional interactions, or emotions, have an intense impact on language development and encourage it (Greenspan, Lewis, 2007). Children, according to numerous authors, learn by doing, constructing, and co-constructing their own reality.

"Within a learning organization, the focus of the teaching and educational process is placed on **learning by doing**, through which a child is given the opportunity to construct actively the knowledge of the subject being studied, in his own, unique way. The most important of all is that a child learns by doing. By crawling, it learns to crawl. By walking it learns to walk, and by speaking it learns to speak …" (Dryden and Vos, 2001, 231, according to Slunjski, 2006, 24). In this approach a child has an active position, while the position of an adult is a reactive one, and refers to the direct support to a child's learning by creating physical and social environment which promotes learning by doing and participating. (Slunjski, 2006, 24).

Within this context a question should be raised whether a child really learns to speak by speaking or it needs stimuli such as a good speech model and qualitative speech environment, or speaking space which has various aspects, and which will be analysed later on in this paper. In order to realize the act of speech, it (unless it is a monologue) is basically directed to someone and accepted and recognized by someone as such. The message should be inferred and returned. During speech acquisition in childhood the reversible social reaction is extremely important (a child utters sentences and sees how the environment reacts to them, whether the sentences would be corrected or accepted). In that way children learn to speak; that is, by speaking, but also by listening. The external reversible reaction is significantly stronger than the inner one, throughout the entire preschool age.

Besides that, a child enriches the vocabulary in various ways – by imitating the speech in his surroundings, by creating his own linguistic structures on the basis of his experience and innate process mechanisms for speech production. Certain experience, encouragement from his environment and imitating are necessary prerequisites for speech development, as well as the qualitatively developed innate speech ability on the basis of which speech abilities would be developed (Apel, Masterson, 2004). Communicative language function is only one of its components and is based on the pragmatic vocabulary. If speech is considered to be only communication, it is then reduced to the conceptual meaning. If a child is expected to explore only the conscious reality, to know the objects that surround him and to learn individual meaning of objects, it does not gain the mediated language experience, but this experience is determined by the scarce material around him. A child gains the mediated language experience exclusively through auditory sense of perception. This means that if we want a child to be creative in speech production and interaction, we should, apart from the communicative function, expose a child to listening various qualities of speech, their internalization and according to that, perception and construction of meaning.

A child gains this kind of experience by listening to stories, fairy-tales and poetry, and later through creative language games in which it can express the meaning in one aspect.

Speech is a part of culture and is developed not only by speaking, but also by listening, and through interaction with collocutors, in qualitative social surroundings. Speech is used to pass on culture, which can also be passed on through literature, which again is based on language. In order to enable the acquisition of moral and cultural values, an appropriate social context is required. A kindergarten teacher has to provide stimulating environment for all aspects of a child's development, including speech. In order to provide the stimulating environment, it is not enough to offer "speaking space"; that is, to enable a child to speak within small groups of children, such as in pairs, or even in front of entire groups. It is also necessary to provide children with a qualitative language content and input, and enable them to listen and to hear qualitative, mediated speech. A child does not possess that kind of content in his experience if he has not heard it before, so that content can be considered a stimulating environment if we do not see "the environment" merely as a material context. We live in the time when there is less and less reading, story-telling and speaking in the families. Besides that, considering the ratio of time spent in the kindergarten and at home, it is the task of the kindergarten as an educational institution to provide a child with that kind of stimulating environment aspect as well as the acquisition of complex speech and linguistic experience, so that a child could use it as a foundation to co-construct and construct his own reality. Similar to Croatian research, research carried out throughout Europe indicates, as has already been mentioned, that almost every fourth child exhibits speech or communication impairments, and the deficiency can be found at various levels (Ferrari, 1998), which corroborates the final assertion even more.

Therefore, communication with children is crucial for normal speech development. In the first seven years of life, a child is extremely open to imitating the models. The model has more influence than any kind of up-bringing or education. A child has to be enabled to be near its model (Prekop, 2008). Also a child learns through the materials presented to him by the kindergarten teacher, as the centre and speech model. A child looks forward to this material, considers it important, talks to other children about it, and creates on it. That is a part of social learning, acquiring and sharing common experience.

Acquisition of common experience plays an important role in the entire childhood, and that role is especially important in the first years of life (Largo, 2007). The picture presented to children by adults shapes a child to a greater extent than any other methods and rules of education.

At the same time, it should be pointed out that stimulating speech development in children cannot be summarized exclusively into short programmes or time-limited activities. Communication with children is an on-going process and takes place in each moment we spend with them. Teachers should constantly re-examine their behaviour and actions, as well as examine their own speech, speech they present to children, as well as speaking and linguistic input, and art and literary materials which children are exposed to, the appropriateness of these materials and the environment adequacy for listening to and reception of the material.

It is only through the analysis of one's own speech that we can draw basic conclusions on the speech of children within a certain group. In order to acquire speech, a child, as we have already mentioned, apart from practicing speaking by speaking, needs the model, the content and new words which it will hear from someone, if we want to simplify what has previously been said.

When we talk about the speaking competence of children, there is almost no expert or practitioner who will not agree that speaking competence has to be encouraged, just as any other kind of expression and speech production. Unfortunately, the practical examples show that the encouragement of this competence has been quite neglected. This is partly due to almost complete abolishment of methodological practice of gathering children into groups (of course, voluntarily) for socializing, talking, reading, story-telling, listening to poetry, playing games with total physical response and games to encourage speech production; that is, the previously mentioned "speaking space" which children are entitled to. The lack of speaking competence accounts for insecurity which can be manifested in timidity or aggression later on in life.

Children have to be given "speaking space" primarily to make them feel accepted, understood and loved, so they could develop positively in all aspects, especially in speech. A child should have a feeling that it can express himself within his group, that it can say anything and that it will not be derided, misunderstood or invisible. Children have to be given an opportunity to speak and talk, using the standard language or a dialect, loudly or quietly, as extroverts or introverts.

Qualitative discussions and exchange of experience have a great value. At the same time, "speaking space" enables children to receive and notice speech as well as perceive the meaning based on auditory experience.

In order to create "speaking space", some prerequisites have to be met. It is important for all kindergarten teachers to be aware of the need for creating these prerequisites, of the need for an adequate organization of teaching and educational materials in which children's needs would be satisfied, and which are vital for the qualitative speech development. According to that, it was necessary to carry out research and to analyse the attitudes of kindergarten teachers and 3rd year students of preschool education at the Faculty of Teacher Education (future teachers), and use the obtained results as the foundation to include all those elements into the preschool education curriculum.

RESEARCH ON THE ATTITUDES THAT KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION HAVE TO THE IMPORTANCE OF SATISFYING CHILDREN'S NEEDS AT THE AGES 1 TO 3 AND FROM THE AGE OF 3 TO SCHOOL START

Within the scientific project "Methods and Models in the Education of Preschool Children in Kindergartens" at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb, extensive research has been carried out on how students perceive their studies and their future profession.

The aim of the research was to establish the basic attitudes, skills, and values of 3rd year students of preschool education at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb, and of the already employed kindergarten teachers, as well as their similarities and differences.

The questionnaire - method

For the purpose of this research questionnaires have been designed and applied for the 3rd year students of preschool education and the employed kindergarten teachers. The questionnaires refer to the expectations, motivation and attitudes to the need and importance of satisfying children's needs, the methods and models in kindergartens, as well as to the need and importance of incorporating certain materials into work with children. The research was carried out in May 2008.

The research used the particles referring to the evaluation of importance of satisfying children's needs at the ages 1 to 3 and from the age of 3 to school start, primarily those needs which refer to the methods and models used in preschool education and their impact on speech development, as well as educational materials which influence children's development, especially speech development.

Respondents

101 3rd year students of preschool education took part in the research, as well as 90 employed kindergarten teachers (*Questionnaire: The importance of satisfying children's needs at the ages 1-3),* and 93 3rd year students of preschool education and 88 employed kindergarten teachers (*Questionnaire: The importance of satisfying children's needs from the age of 3 to school start*).

Presentation and analysis of the results

The importance of satisfying children's needs at the ages 1–3 - 3rd year students of preschool education and employed kindergarten teachers

	Respondents' group	N	M	SD	Difference significance t(df), p *
1. need for security (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	4,88	,516	
	Employed teachers	90	4,92	,455	
2. structured / guided daily activities (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	3,54	1,082	
	Employed teachers	89	3,39	1,062	
3. love and belonging (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	4,86	,401	
	Employed teachers	90	4,89	,507	
4. leadership by adults (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	3,80	1,077	
	Employed teachers	89	3,75	,980	
5. strict discipline (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	100	2,94	1,270	2,240 (187), p<.05
	Employed teachers	89	2,54	1,178	
6. stimuli for games and activities (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	4,62	,583	
	Employed teachers	90	4,60	,634	
7. social skills acquisition (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	4,62	,661	
	Employed teachers	89	4,44	,753	
8. constant presence of a child's teacher (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	4,54	,671	
	Employed teachers	90	4,67	,561	

	Respondents' group	N	M	SD	Difference significance t(df), p *
9. the person they trust (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	4,87	,440	
	Employed teachers	89	4,93	,252	
10. familiar environment (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	4,68	,528	
	Employed teachers	90	4,68	,557	
11. free playing activities (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	4,76	,532	
	Employed teachers	90	4,81	,447	
12. timely detection of potential developmental difficulties (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	4,76	,472	
	Employed teachers	90	4,77	,498	
13. constant development monitoring (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	4,66	,553	
	Employed teachers	90	4,68	,557	
14. introduction to picture books (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	4,20	,872	
	Employed teachers	89	4,24	,708	
15. creativity in playing (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	4,41	,802	
	Employed teachers	90	4,24	,825	
16. communication with the teacher (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	4,73	,546	
	Employed teachers	90	4,79	,437	
17. optimum number of children in the kindergarten group (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	100	4,61	,803	-2,449 (188), p<.05
	Employed teachers	90	4,84	,448	
18. introducing children to poetry (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	3,84	1,056	5,282 (189), p<.001
	Employed teachers	90	2,99	1,176	
19. introducing children to stories and fairy tales (up to the age of 3)	3rd year students	101	4,36	,832	2,468 (188), p<.05
	Employed teachers	89	4,03	,971	

* Only statistically significant differences have been indicated

The obtained results have shown that both employed kindergarten teachers and 3rd year students hold in high regard (grade higher than 4.5) children's need for security, need for love and belonging, stimuli for games, social skills acquisition, constant presence of the teachers and trust in them, familiar environment, free playing activities, timely detection of potential developmental difficulties, constant development monitoring, communication with teachers, and the optimum number of children in a kindergarten group. They evaluated introducing children to picture books, stories and fairy tales and creative playing activities with a grade between 4 and 4.5. Grades 3 and 4 were given to structured (guided) daily activities and leadership by adults, introducing children to poetry (students graded it with 3.84, the teachers with 2.99), while strict discipline was given grade 3.

The importance of satisfying children's needs from the age of 3 to school start – 3rd year students of preschool education and employed kindergarten teachers

	Respondents' group	N	M	SD	Difference significance t(df), p *
1. need for security (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	4,71	,502	
	Employed teachers	88	4,74	,597	
2. structured / guided daily activities (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	4,23	1,085	
	Employed teachers	87	4,01	,921	
3. love and belonging (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	92	4,88	,326	
	Employed teachers	88	4,84	,398	
4. leadership by adults (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	3,95	1,077	2,162 (179), p<.05
	Employed teachers	88	3,61	,988	
5. strict discipline (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	3,47	1,273	4,018 (178), p<.001
	Employed teachers	87	2,70	1,304	
6. stimuli for games and activities (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	92	4,77	,447	
	Employed teachers	88	4,64	,571	
7. social skills acquisition (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	92	4,78	,465	
	Employed teachers	88	4,86	,345	
8. constant presence of a child's teacher (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	4,25	,803	
	Employed teachers	88	4,10	,947	

	Respondents' group	N	M	SD	Difference significance t(df), p *
9. the person they trust (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	4,71	,563	
	Employed teachers	87	4,71	,608	
10. familiar environment (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	4,34	,827	
	Employed teachers	88	4,16	,856	
11. free playing activities (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	4,75	,525	
	Employed teachers	88	4,77	,473	
12. timely detection of potential developmental difficulties (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	4,77	,492	
	Employed teachers	88	4,89	,319	
13. constant development monitoring (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	4,61	,643	
	Employed teachers	88	4,75	,485	
14. introduction to picture books (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	4,25	,843	-2,766 (179), p<.01
	Employed teachers	88	4,57	,708	
15. creativity in playing (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	4,70	,567	
	Employed teachers	88	4,82	,417	
16. communication with the teacher (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	4,76	,540	
	Employed teachers	88	4,85	,387	
17. optimum number of children in the kindergarten group (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	4,61	,708	
	Employed teachers	88	4,78	,490	
18. introducing children to poetry (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	4,48	,669	2,519 (179), p<.05
	Employed teachers	88	4,20	,818	
19. introducing children to stories and fairy tales (from the age of 3)	3rd year students	93	4,66	,599	
	Employed teachers	87	4,68	,560	

* Only statistically significant differences have been indicated

This part of research has shown that both employed teachers and 3rd year students consider as equally important almost all the needs which were also highly evaluated in the questionnaire regarding children up to the age of 3. The grade given to these needs was 4.5. A somewhat lower grade (4.25 by students, 4.1 by teachers) was given to the importance of constant presence of a child's teacher, as well as the familiar environment (4.34 by students and 4.16 by teachers). However, the difference in these results is not statistically significant. At this age group, more highly graded was the significance of creative play, introduction to picture books and poetry. A significant increase is seen in the evaluation of the importance of structured activities (up to the age of 3: 3.54 by students, 3.39 by teachers; from the age of 3 to school start: 4.23 by students and 4.01 by teachers). There is a minimum difference in the evaluation of leadership by teachers, which implies that both students and teachers detect children's well-conditioned specific needs. In the particles where a significant statistical difference was found between the grades given by students and those given by employed teachers, the direction is the same, except in the evaluation of the importance of one area – introduction to picture books which teachers evaluated as more important than students did. Other significant differences were found in the fact that students' evaluations are higher than those of teachers.

DISCUSSION

The results of both questionnaires, the one which refers to children up to the age of three and the one referring to children from the age of three to school start, have shown that both students and teachers, regardless of minimum differences in attitudes, are extremely well acquainted with the contemporary pedagogical approaches, and that they attach a great deal of importance both to the context of togetherness and security, and to the importance of communication between children and kindergarten teachers, as well as the importance of introducing children to art and literary materials.

In the particles for which a significant statistical difference was found in the evaluations made by students and by employed teachers, the same tendency was exhibited, except in the evaluation of the importance of the optimum number of children in a kindergarten group. In that case the evaluation made by employed teachers is higher than the one made by students.

In all other particles significant statistical difference in the evaluation was found in the fact that students evaluated the importance of satisfying these needs of children as more important than employed teachers considered them to be. Both students and teachers evaluated the need for strict discipline very low for both age groups of children, with a difference in the evaluation made by teachers and students; students consider this need to be more important. This can be explained by the fact that students need to do certain activities with children regardless of the

real children's needs, in order to fulfil their obligations at university. An increase, or a higher rank, was also detected in the particle for children from the age of three to school start, which can be connected with also higher ranked needs for introducing literary and other materials in work with children, according to their age and school start. It remains unclear why introduction to poetry of children up to the age of three was evaluated as less important than the same need for the age group three to school start (up to the age of three: kindergarten teachers graded it with 2,99, students 3,84; from the age of three to school start: kindergarten teachers 4,20, students 4,48), since it has been known that verses as chants, nursery rhymes and games involving gestures and speech, facilitate speech development and present the first encounter of a child with literary world. The difference found in the evaluations made by kindergarten teachers and students indicates a progress in the education of the new generations of kindergarten teachers; that is, it indicates the availability of the knowledge and resources on new scientific research into this field to new generations of students.

CONCLUSION

Empirical research into the attitudes of kindergarten teachers and students of preschool education to the importance of satisfying children's needs at the ages 1-3 and from the age of 3 to school start has shown that the people working in this field of education are aware of the importance and need to satisfy children's needs, especially the need for security, love and accepting, which are also the basis of dynamic emotional interaction; that is, the basis of the emotions which have an intense impact on speech development and which encourage it. At the same time, a great deal of importance was attached to the need for creating a stimulating environment, enabling communication, but also enabling the listening of and the presentation of appropriate literary content to children, in the forms of fairy tales, stories and poetry.

Therefore, it can be concluded that both the employed teachers and students are aware of and that they recognize the importance of the above mentioned needs. However, a lot of methodological guidelines we have in practice have not been based on the nature of children's needs, while as far as encouraging speech is concerned, they have not been based on the nature of auditory perception; that is, the cognition of how the meaning is constructed. The communicative function of language is only one of its components. A child can gain speech experience exclusively through auditory perception, which means that, apart from communicative function, if we want a child to be creative in his language usage and to be able to express himself, a child then has to be given the opportunities to listen to various speech patterns, their internalization, and, based on that, perception and construction of meaning, all based on emotions. A child can gain this kind of experience through listening to stories, fairy tales and poetry, as well as through creative language games in which he can express himself in one aspect of meaning.

Since the contemporary concept of preschool education involves the children's independence in the choice of materials and activities, we think that it is the precise reason why it is crucial to gather children in a group at a certain time every day in order to develop the sense of togetherness, of belonging to the group, and in order to resolve conflicts efficiently, to demonstrate how to resolve future conflicts independently, to enable children to realize their emotions, thoughts and ideas and to share with others. What is actually needed is a qualitative design of the social environment. An independent choice of materials also implies the choice of the materials that had already been chosen and offered, which means that a kindergarten teacher still creates the activities that would take place within a group, together with children. In that context, literary materials also have to find their place in the group, and in order for a child to notice them it is necessary that he hears them; that is, every child within a group has to be given and opportunity to hear the content of this material. How a child would develop and how his speech would develop primarily depends on whether a child feels accepted, regardless of his behaviour and individual peculiarities. The sense of being accepted is created on the basis of common experience, time we spend together and joy we feel and spread in the process.

The context which will stimulate children' concentration, the careful choice of the type and quantity of stimuli, the order, harmony and rhythm in the exchange of materials which develop out of children's spontaneous play are all guidelines which should not be neglected in organizing and planning the time children spend in educational institutions.

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