From Difficulties to a Kaleidoscope of Possibilities

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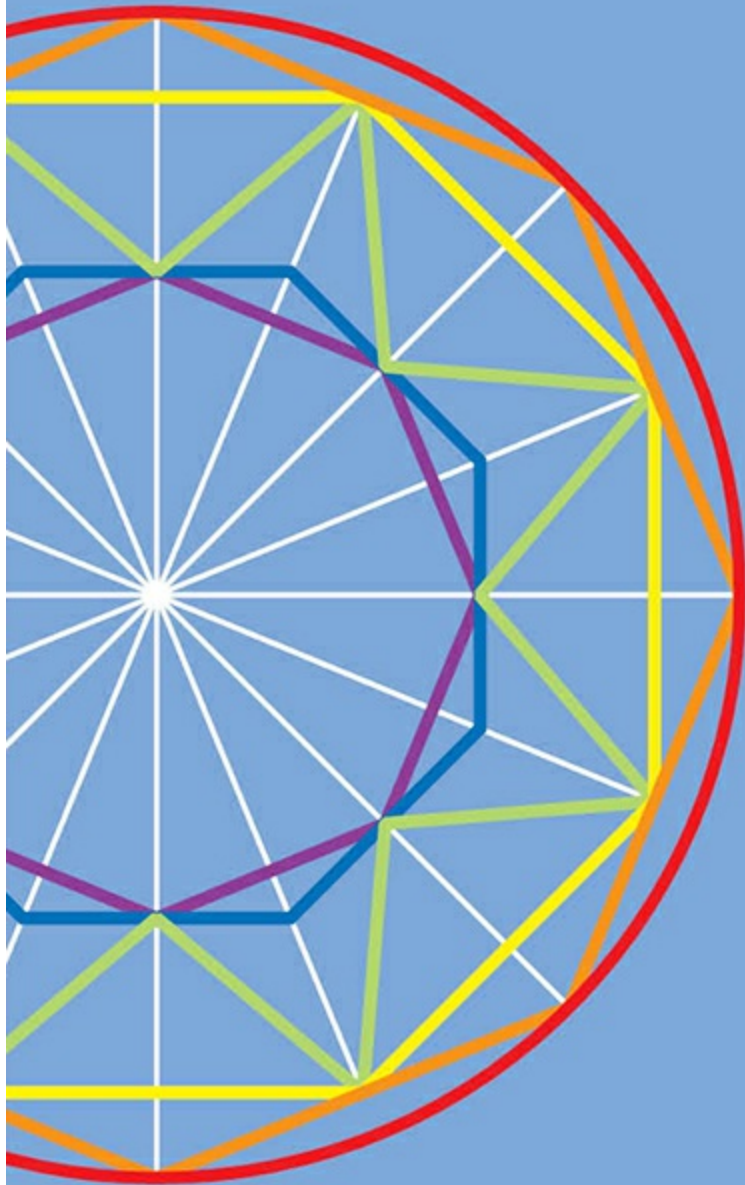
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Foreword

The book *From difficulties to a kaleidoscope of possibilities* is the authors' contribution to marking the centennial anniversary of the birth of academician Petar Guberina; author of the verbotonal method and founder of The Polyclinic for the Rehabilitation of Hearing and Speech SUVAG in Zagreb.

The verbotonal system and the verbotonal method of rehabilitation and education put the spotlight on the child/man, encouraging the realization of all his potential while respecting the holistic development of personality.

The accounts of working with children with hearing, speech and language difficulties presented here confirm once again that these children are creative and that there are gifted children with great achievements among them. Furthermore it shows that their developmental path can be creative and very successful.

All of the outlined games, exercises and work practices are geared towards the students, encouraging them to search for individual solutions and to discover themselves and their capabilities. They are the key with which students with hearing, speech and language difficulties enter a classroom and feel just as free as their peers with whom they will be able to develop potential and accomplish educational achievements on equal terms.

Feelings of success and recognition in a particular area of study are a strong incentive for all the students, especially for those who often face obstacles in mastering the curriculum due to specific learning disabilities.

Therefore, support, encouragement and praise are highly important because they are the most significant driving forces of creativity for these

children.

The students of The SUVAG Polyclinic Elementary School participate on an equal footing with students of regular schools at festivals, competitions and exhibitions. Praise and accolades given for their art, literary, technical and theatrical works, confirm to students that they have found a media in which they can express what they think, what they know and how they feel. They also show them that their environment recognizes their talent and excellence in a particular area, rather than their difficulty.

High efficiency of enrolment and graduation of our children in regular programs supports the importance of early stimulation and guides interest and develops abilities. So it is confirmed that the use of the verbotonal method opens up a kaleidoscope of possibilities for growth and helps direct the child's interests, encouraging the development of creative potential in different areas.

Therefore, on the occasion of the centennial anniversary of the birth of the academician Petar Guberina we can once again confirm that our Professor with his visionary ideas almost prophetically charted a socially more equitable path for these children in the third millennium, while leaving behind a rich scientific body of work for many generations to come.

Zagreb, May 2013

Editor in chief
Assist. Prof. Adinda Dulčić, Ph.D.

1. CHARACTERISTICS OF SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN WITH SPEECH AND HEARING DIFFICULTIES

1.1 HEARING IMPAIRMENT

The process of speech comprehension and production is a complex ability unique to man.

The receiving and transmitting of speech signals involves the entire human organism, but its individual parts are of special importance. Sensations on which man builds experience reach his consciousness through the sensory organs (senses).

Damage to one channel of perception inevitably affects the whole perceptual-motor organization and thus the overall development of the child. Sensory impairments affect the pathways of information on the basis of which the child discovers the outside world, organizes his temporal and spatial relations and interacts with his environment. Consequences of hearing loss are varied and largely depend on the time when the damage occurs, the type of hearing impairment, how the environment relates to a person with disabilities as well as the influence of the environment on encouraging the child's development, and the time between the occurrence of damage and the onset and type of rehabilitation process.

Hearing impairment can be defined as an inability or reduced ability to receive, implement and register auditory stimuli due to congenital or acquired defects, underdevelopment or reduced functionality of the hearing organ,

auditory nerve or auditory centres of the brain (Padovan et al., 1991). Hearing impairment is one of the most common congenital defects and in 80% of cases it is present upon discharge from the maternity clinic, and is reported among 1-3 children per 1000 births (Marn, 2005). The causes of damage are varied, and often unknown. Most are due to genetic factors, certain postnatal diseases or diseases which occur during pregnancy, a very difficult delivery, complications during and after childbirth, etc. Early detection of hearing impairment is necessary for a timely and appropriate rehabilitation that reduces the consequences of hearing impairment in all areas of child development. Any delay in the identification and rehabilitation of a hearing impairment causes irreversible reduction or loss of communication potential.

The severity and scope of the consequences of hearing impairment depend on the cause, type and grade of hearing impairment, age of onset of hearing impairment, psychophysical personality structure and the influence of the social environment. Depending on the severity of impairment we can differentiate hearing impairments from mild dullness of hearing to deafness. Depending on the type of impairment we can differentiate peripheral and central impairments. Peripheral impairments develop from the periphery to the hearing nerve and they are: conductive, perceptual (sensory and neural) and combined impairments. Central damages develop from the entry point of the hearing nerve into the brain stem to the cortical level (Padovan et al., 1991).

Degrees of hearing impairment are classified as follows:

- Normal hearing – up to 10 dB in the ear with better residual hearing in the frequency range of speech
- Hearing within physiological limits– from 11 to 26 dB in the ear with better residual hearing in the frequency range of speech
- Mild hearing loss– from 27 to 40 dB in the ear with better residual hearing in the frequency range of speech
- Moderate hearing loss– from 41 to 60 dB in the ear with better residual hearing in the frequency range of speech
- Severe hearing loss– from 61 to 93 dB in the ear with better residual hearing in the frequency range of speech

- Deafness – above 93 dB (ANSI, 1996)

There are three kinds of partial deafness: conductive, perceptive and mixed partial deafness.

Conductive partial deafness (hypoacusis conductiva) occurs as a result of damage to the conduction of sound through air and bone. The damage is located in the outer or middle ear, which makes the conduction of sound waves to the inner ear difficult. Common causes of conductive partial deafness are the build-up of earwax (cerumen) in the ear canal, congenital malformations of the outer and middle ear, limited mobility of the eardrum and ossicles (the malleus, the incus and the stapes), injury, or inflammation of the middle ear, tympanosclerosis, otosclerosis, etc.

Perceptive partial deafness (hypoacusis perceptiva) is a disorder regarding the perception of the intensity and frequency of auditory messages. Causes include inflammations of the inner ear, Ménière's disease, noise exposure, congenital partial deafness, age-related hearing loss (presbycusis), injury to the inner ear, auditory nerve tumours, etc.

Mixed partial deafness (hypacusis mixta) is a combination of conductive and perceptive partial deafness. This is most commonly caused by the transition of illness from the middle to the inner ear (Padovan et al., 1991).

The first and main result of hearing impairment occurs at the level of recognition, or the ability to discern between sound stimuli. The complexity of problems will increase substantially if damage occurs at the age of language and speech development, because without listening, there can be no thinking with speech. The theoretical introduction to the linguistics of speech (verbotonal system) emerged from the study and application of the procedures we use to communicate words, i.e. words and all of the actions used with the word. Within the theory of the verbotonal system, speech includes a set of lexical and non-lexical means of expression. Lexical means of expression are all of the procedures that consist of words (lexical and grammatical systems in a broader sense, i.e. phonetics, morphology and syntax), while the non-lexical means of expression are called values of spoken language: intonation, rhythm, intensity, tension, pause, tempo, mimicking, gesture, posture, body tension, the

body in general, the psychological aspects of speech and motivation while speaking (Guberina, 2010).

During the process of the perception and production of speech, our body integrates sensory information from all five spacioceptional senses. The connection between visual and auditory pathways has long been known to scientists (McGurk and McDonald, 1976, according to Gick and Derrick, 2009). In the rehabilitation of hearing and speech, according to the verbotonal method, the somato-sensory pathway for listening has an irreplaceable role in the rehabilitation process, although the integration of auditory and tactile stimulation has only recently been scientifically proven (Gick and Derrick, 2009).

Prelingual deafness is particularly important in the field of language and speech communication as speech and language are naturally and spontaneously adopted by listening, without any special effort. Speech behaviour, as a specific form of the conscious activity of man, is not just a communication function. In the phase of expanding speech utterances, between the second and fifth year of life, speech becomes a tool for thinking, the initiator of actions and behaviour control. That is why slower language development and difficulties in verbal communication consequently lead to difficulties in other areas as well, not just in terms of the development of speech and language. Even in optimal conditions of rehabilitative therapy these children fall behind in the use of vocal language, adopt it slowly and the final linguistic achievement of those who are hard of hearing or practically deaf differs from hearing speakers. The consequences of prelingual deafness will depend on the interaction of the degree of impairment and the age when the impairment occurred, the presence of any further difficulties and the attitudes and support of the environment (parents, family members, classmates, teachers and others), and the timeliness, quality and quantity of rehabilitation and educational procedures. Development of diagnostic instruments as well as early screening (SPNOS) in the maternity clinic has reduced the average age for identifying hearing impairment, leading to earlier involvement in the rehabilitation process.

If a hearing aid does not provide the necessary level of audibility, a cochlear implant is installed. A cochlear implant is a technical device that

enables better hearing. Figuratively speaking, we could say that it is a sort of 'inner ear prosthesis', which is surgically implanted for the deaf, i.e. the damaged sensory hair cells are bypassed via the implantation of an electrode into the cochlea and the stimulus is lead to branches of the auditory nerve. The research results confirm better rehabilitation outcomes in children with cochlear implants fitted before eighteen months of age. The authors associate this with the concept of the critical period of the development of language and speech, so that auditory stimulation provided by the artificial cochlea provides conditions for a normal development of the auditory pathway (Vlahović & Šindija, 2004, Hammes et al., 2002, Novak et al., 2000, Ponton et al., 1996). Early cochlear implantation reduces the average duration of deafness, i.e. the duration of auditory deprivation, which also correlates to the success of rehabilitation. Research by Ponton et al. (1996) on differences between children with normal hearing status and children with cochlear implants in latency of the P-1 wave, showed that during the period of deafness no progression occurs in the maturation of cortical auditory function, which shows the necessity of the early rehabilitation of hearing in order to provide the functional maintenance and development of hearing pathways (auditory nerve and the auditory areas of the cortex).

Figure 1: *Positioning of the cochlear implant processor*

1.2 COGNITIVE PREREQUISITES FOR SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Causes of speech and language disorders are still not clear, despite many studies in the field of speech pathology (SLP), neurology, psychology and other complementary areas of science. Based on recent scientific insights it can be concluded that verbal-linguistic knowledge, or functioning, is widely represented in the cerebral cortex. The brain controls our voluntary movements, coordinates reflex movements, monitors vegetative centres, stores our memories, realizes our thoughts and ideas, and it is responsible for other numerous functions as well. Although the brain is the main supervisory organ of the human body, its functioning is still insufficiently explored. Mildner (2003) states that speech and language functioning can be described as a sort of neural network with predominantly parallel processing on several levels.

The neurobiological basis of language and speech disorders is the subject of numerous researches throughout the world and in Croatia. To better understand the difficulties that a child encounters during language development, it is important to emphasize some of the cognitive conditions that are necessary for the smooth adoption of these skills, under the assumption that the cognitive development of the child is regular (intellectual status).

Memory is a psychological phenomenon which at the experiential level includes processes of adoption or memorizing and retention of different content, while at the behavioural level (external) it is reflected in the repetition and recognition of content (Hayes, 1994).

The reduced capacity of short-term memory has significant consequences, which are not only related to the significantly reduced storage capacity of long-term memory. It also significantly reduces the successful analysis and synthesis of information that a person receives at any given time.

As a system of short-term memory involved in the temporary processing and storage of information, working memory is included in a series of daily activities (e.g., mental arithmetic, memorizing different data types, etc.) as well as in language processing (vocabulary acquisition, oral expression, reading and writing skills, comprehension, etc.). In terms of contribution to language

comprehension, it is important to distinguish between short-term memory and working memory. The span of working memory is usually evaluated by testing the ability to repeat numbers backwards or the subjects' ability to repeat or read sentences, while memorizing the last words in the sentence. This variable in particular proved to be a key predictor of reading comprehension (Friedman and Miyake, 2004). Based on the factor analysis of results from short-term and working memory tests, we come to the conclusion that short-term memory is important for comprehension because of its role in retaining specific words and sentences in your mind, while working memory is important for building a mental model of the text (Swanson and Howell, 2001). Here it should be noted that some models of working memory, like The Baddeley Model (Baddeley, 2000), consider short-term memory as a subsystem of working memory.

Perfetti (1985, according to Rončević, 2005) believes that children with non-automatic reading skills pay a greater amount of attention, i.e. a greater amount of short-term memory capacity, which is in itself limited, to the local processing of text (phonological coding), which leads to a neglect of language understanding.

It takes a lot more to understand text, more than automated decoding or scope of vocabulary, there should also be a certain level of knowledge about the subject of the text being processed. This knowledge allows the reader to find meaning in the text, to notice essential elements for understanding. It is precisely this knowledge that is stored in long-term memory as schemes that allow the interpretation of incoming information, using knowledge that was previously stored in long-term memory, all have the aim of directing the flow of information processing for a more efficient understanding of what is being processed (Hirch, 2003). Children with better knowledge of a particular topic, knowledge that is better organized in long-term memory, will recall the data required for analysis more effectively. Children with language disorder, as well as children with hearing impairment, will always have more difficulty in the interpretation and reading comprehension of text due to more poorly structured data in long-term memory. In addition, they encounter more difficulties in discerning structural levels within the text, that is they find it difficult to differentiate the important from the unimportant, and tend to

neglect inconsistencies and errors in the text (undeveloped skill of self-supervision in reading). In addition to the influence of lower level vocabulary and decoding difficulties, comprehension difficulties in the upper grades of elementary school reading will also be caused by a lack of experience with complex syntax and reduced general knowledge. This will be especially noticeable when reading expository texts (e.g., scientific texts) where, unlike narrative texts, knowledge of the area contributes significantly to the reading comprehension of the text (Best et al., 2004, according to Rončević, 2005).

In the process of language development the function of phonological working memory is also important. It allows the listener to encode ("switch") the acoustic-phonetic signal to phonological representation and temporary storage to the phonological short-term storage system. This skill specifically allows the listener to process the information and start creating a more lasting phonological representation of new verbal material in long-term memory (to remember the word and to store it in its correct form in his mental lexis). We could figuratively represent the phonological short-term storage system as a train composition where each car carries one speech sound, and the entire composition represents the word. Speech sounds "get aboard" and the word is stored in long-term memory with a clear semantic and phonological structure (sequences of sounds within words). Phonological difficulties and hardships in the working memory obstruct the adoption of new concepts, which consequently leads to a blurred image of words, especially in less frequent words because the phonological structure of words are not properly stored. In their early school years these children will say temptation (*kušnja*) instead of mowing (*košnja*), and later on they won't be certain whether the proper choice of word would be continuous (*kontinuirano*) or contaminated (*kontaminirano*). This is why, when the child is given the option to choose the correct answer in customized test materials, the words in the answers shouldn't be phonologically similar because this creates the possibility of evaluating the child's difficulties, instead of their knowledge.

1.3 TYPES OF SPEECH AND LANGUAGE

Children with speech and language disorders very frequently encounter certain difficulties in later life that most often manifest in the retention of improper pronunciation. The basis of the problem is not always in motor performance (articulation) but also in the inability to build clear mental images of words. Phonological disorders implicitly include both phonetic (motor) and phonemic (mental) representation of voice (Bauman-Waengler, 2000). This is a disorder of motor performance (phonetic) and of linguistic representational image of speech sounds (phonemic). So, the term 'phonological disorders' contains two diagnostic sub-entities one of which (the motor performance disorder) refers to the aspect of articulation (which is still often diagnosed in speech pathology findings as dyslalia), while the second refers to the lexical and mental representations of speech sounds (phonemic). Phonological disorders according to ICD-10 are located in the chapter: Specific developmental disorders of speech and language as a diagnostic entity F80.0 Specific disorders of pronunciation/enunciation. DSM-IV defined them more precisely in the subsection: Communication disorders as a diagnostic entity, Phonological disorder (F80.0). This is why it is extremely important to distinguish the prevalent component during the logopedic examination since this will probably determine the duration of speech therapy.

Children with phonological difficulties (with the prevailing phonemic component) are not sure which vocal sound should form the structure of words or in what order the sounds should be. Phenomena such as omissions or substitutions of speech sounds in the words are therefore formed on the basis of phonological deficiencies (a phenomenon still often diagnosed in logopedic findings as lexical dyslalia), and not just on the basis of motor impairments when performing a certain vocal sound. Phonological interferences are most manifest among the speech sounds with low discriminatory levels, that is, those speech sounds whose acoustic differentiation is made difficult due to their dominant similarities. This group of speech sounds is comprised of: ć-č; đ-dž; l-lj; l-r; s-š; z-ž; t-k; d-g; i-e, etc. These difficulties often have an impact on the child's ability to acquire reading and writing skills.

With these children the problem occurs at the command level, i.e. the incorrect instruction travelling from the central level to the peripheral speech organs. Pronunciation in these children is characterized by a high variability. It is precisely the inconsistency of pronunciation that can suggest that the mechanisms are not sufficiently stabilized in the schema that define the phonetic and phonemic structure of maternal language.

The child develops the ability to observe and distinguish phonemes when it masters the content of the language, so it can focus its attention better on those phonemes that are less distinctive.
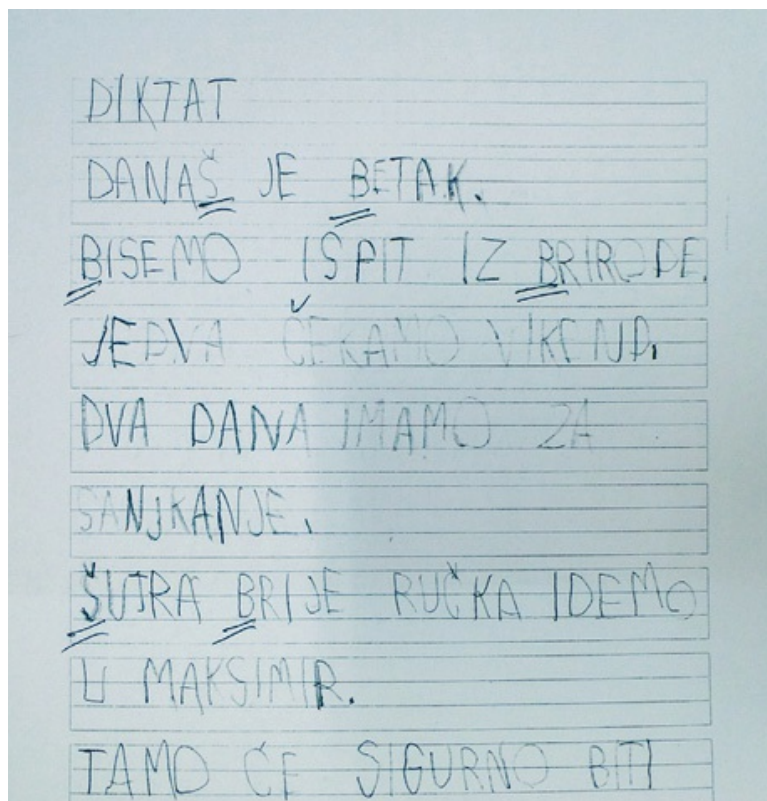
Figure 2a: *Example of phonological difficulties in writing (young girl, 1st grade, Dg: Language disorder)*

During the initial adoption of reading and writing skills children often don't differentiate between phonologically similar speech sounds, encounter

difficulties separating the first and last speech sound, with the auditory analysis and fusion.

Some authors believe that difficulties with the adoption of reading skilsyls arise from the difficulty to discriminate between speech sounds, or the difficulty to process rapid and short acoustic information with a narrowed scope of short-term verbal auditory memory, which consequently makes it difficult to remember longer sentence structures as well as the order of speech sounds and words (Tallal and Gaab, 2006). Other authors however, place the emphasis on the interaction between time and the frequency processing of sound stimuli (Goswani, 2011). The lack of rapid encoding matches the lack of quick memorizing, so that the verbal information is erased before it is permanently stored. Difficulties with auditory perception can be overcome by using other modalities such as the use of visual pathway and tactile-kinaesthetic guidance, as well as adjusting the pace and speed of speech according to the capabilities of the child to process language and vocal messages.
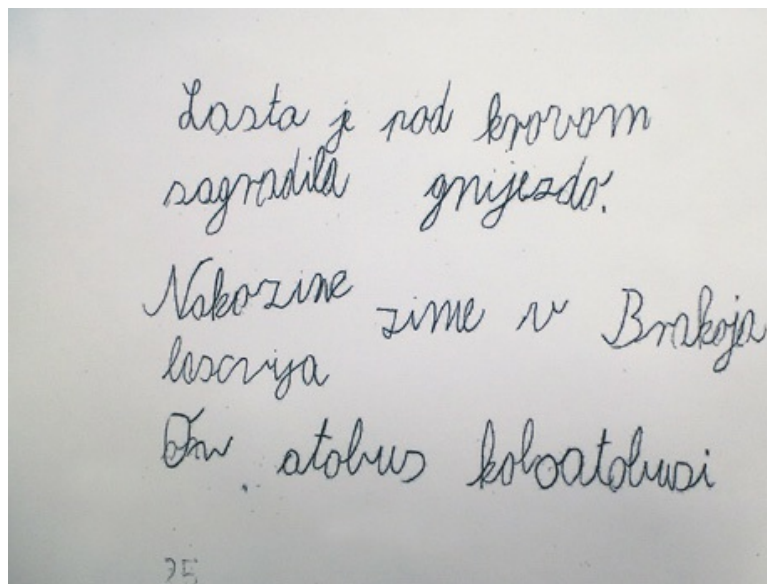
Figure 2b: *Example of omitting graphemes and linking words due to poor phonological skills (a boy, 2nd grade, Dg. Specific reading and writing disorders)*

Working with children with language disorders we have witnessed that the child always needs a lot of repetition to adopt a new word. Children with language and speech disorders need systematic speech therapy to help them to overcome or mitigate language difficulties, which will not disappear just by chronologically increasing age (developmentally).

Specific language impairment – SLI occurs in about 6% of preschool children. A large number of primary school students overcome difficulties so that within the school population we can estimate that there are about 3% of children with specific language impairments (Muter, Likerman, 2010). In children with SLI we can observe orderly functioning of a number of non-verbal skills, with the noticeably inadequate development of the entirety, or a part of their language skills not due to neurological damage, hearing loss, emotional problems or other cognitive deficits. Specific language impairments include a difficulty in understanding and in the production of one or more linguistic elements. At the level of phonology, problems manifest themselves in the form of difficulty with composing meaningful phonological units (erratic errors of pronunciation), and at the level of morphology with difficulties in omitting auxiliary verbs or the misuse of grammatical morphemes, as well as difficulty with understanding syntactic structures, and the use of language – pragmatics (Rice, 1999).

These difficulties significantly affect the storytelling ability in children with SLI as storytelling incorporates all language components. Storytelling is therefore a highly suitable exam by which we can estimate linguistic ability in general, which also makes it a very fitting indicator of language development. Stories by children with SLI are shorter, linguistically simpler and they are formed with a large number of morpho-syntactic errors..The children need more encouragement and narrative digressions, and interruptions and repetitions occur more often during storytelling (Arapović and Kuvač 2003; Grobler, Arapović, 2006). However, it is important to emphasize that, regardless of these difficulties with storytelling, children with SLI do note the fundamental elements of stories, allowing for an assessment of structural characteristics (Bogetić et al., 2008). A survey by Kelić, Hržica and Kuvač Kraljević (2012) showed that with a greater number of words, but with more variety in the form of entries children with normal language development,

when chronologically equated with children with specific language impairments, produce a smaller number of utterances, which are on average longer. The data suggests that children with normal language development produce a smaller number of longer and more complex utterances, unlike children with SLI, who produce more utterances of shorter average length (the difference being in the variety of words used by both groups). Furthermore, children with SLI change the narrative more, which is reflected in the smaller average length of dialogues. The authors state that the obtained data indicates a need to encourage their narrative pattern more frequently in order to maintain storytelling in the dialogue form. Children with proper language development slightly modify, or generally narrate using the monological form (without the need for encouragement during storytelling).

In earlier literature as well as in speech pathology practice, specific language impairments were terminologically designated as dysphasia, auditory agnosia, linguistic weakness, dyslalia with linguistic weakness and underdeveloped speech.

Although ICD-10 contains no explicit diagnostic entity for specific language impairments, language disorders are located in the chapter, Disorders of psychological development (F80-F89) in the subchapter, Specific developmental disorders of speech and language (F80). Given the predominant symptoms, or the clinical description of the diagnostic entities within the specified subsections, specific language impairments are located under two diagnostic entities i.e.: Expressive language disorder (F80.1) and Receptive language disorder (F80.2) as these two entities correspond to the expressive and receptive type of specific language impairments. According to the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 1996), they are to be found in the subchapter, Communication disorders, as 'Expressive language disorder' (F80.1) and 'Mixed receptive-expressive language disorder' (F80.2). A revision of DSM (DSM-V) is expected to feature a more precise definition of diagnostic entities related to language and communication disorders.

Specific learning difficulties include specific reading disorders (dyslexia), writing disorders (dysgraphia) and specific disorders in calculation skills (dyscalculia). According to the ICD, these difficulties can be found in the

chapter, Specific developmental disorders of scholastic skills (F81) and as the diagnostic entities, 'Specific reading disorder' (F81.0), 'Other developmental disorders of scholastic skills' (F81.8) and 'Mathematics disorder' (F81.2). According to the DSM-IV they are listed in the subsection, Learning disorder, which includes the diagnostic entities: 'Reading disorder' (F81.0), 'Mathematics disorder' (F81.2) and 'Other developmental disorders of scholastic skills'/'Disorder of written expression' (F81.8). Alexia, agraphia and acalculia indicate a complete loss of the ability to read, write and perform mathematical calculations.

Dyslexia (or specific reading difficulties) occurs in early childhood and is often only revealed during the school-age years. Between 5 – 10% of school-age children fail to acquire reading and writing skills in spite of normal intellectual abilities and systematic teaching (Habib, 2000). The word dyslexia is derived from the Greek word "dys" (meaning poor, inappropriate) and word "lexis" (meaning language, word). Evolutionary speaking, speech is quite an old skill, while reading and writing are relatively new modalities of human communication. The origins of writing go back to "recent human history" and represent a significant milestone in human evolution. Reading depends on recognition of letters, noticing their proper order, the orthography (spelling) of language as well as visual and auditory skills (capacity for auditory analysis – synthesis and fusion – analysis).

The International Dyslexia Association stresses that dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty of constitutional origin. Constitution is genetically inherited and gained in the period before and during birth. For now, there is no clear diagnostically confirmed structural damage to the central nervous system in people with dyslexia that would directly lead to a connection with existing difficulties. Difficulties associated with dyslexia manifest during the use of writing codes, in alphabetic, numeric or music notation.

Dyslexia occurs in all cultures and languages with writing codes, including those languages that do not use alphabetical coding (i.e. the Korean or Hebrew language). Difficulties manifest themselves in all the elements of language through changes in the shape and suffixes of words, the misinterpretation of the meaning of words, misuse of the order of words in a

sentence, and at the phonological level. In other words, the existing level of reading and writing skills is significantly lower than expected given chronological age, intelligence and education.
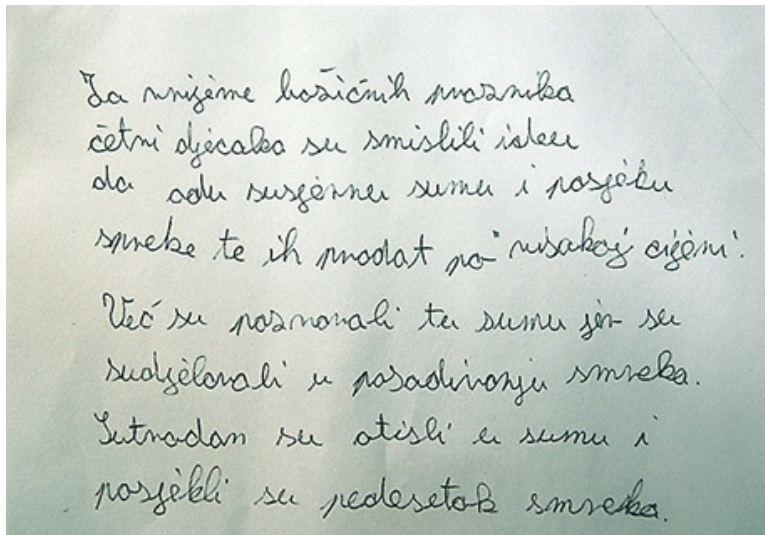
Children with dyslexia slowly and often inaccurately analyze both the orthographic and phonological features of words. The difference lies in the manifestation of symptoms, i.e. in the English language it is most often manifested as a difficulty with the correct decoding of unknown words, while in languages with consistent orthography it is more commonly manifested in the form of difficulty with reading fluency, i.e. the reading is correct, but slow (Grigorenko, 2001; Ziegler, Goswami, 2005). Croatian is one of the transparent languages (with consistent orthography) i.e. a very few words in Croatian have differences between orthographic and phonetic structures (e.g. *gradski/gracki* or *tko je/ko je*). The results showed that the adoption of literacy is easier in languages with transparent orthography than in deep orthographies (Ellis et al., 2004). That's why writing dictation exercises in a foreign language (in Croatian schools English is the most common foreign language) is extremely demanding, both for children with language difficulties due to difficulties with phonological processing, and for children with hearing impairment.

The basis for reading is quickly connecting visual symbols with auditory representation and meaning. In case of dyslexia the information flow is slower, making it difficult to connect the orthographic, phonological and semantic components of words. One slow process will also affect the functioning of the processes that follow. For example, focusing on the reading technique reflects on the performance of reading comprehension and poorer memory and the ability to connect information referred to in a text, because an essential part of the cognitive resources is spent unevenly on one of the components within the process. Uneven waste of resources causes fatigue and a feeling of inefficiency in a child, which consequently leads to the inability or difficulty in independent learning.

Regardless of the cause of the disorder, most researchers agree that dyslexia is a language-based disorder and is therefore inseparable from phonology (Bishop, Snowling, 2004). The most common symptoms of reading disorders such as the impairment of phonological awareness, phonological memory and phonological designation, confirm language impairment as the

basis of this disorder (Ramus, 2003). Dyslexic children have difficulties in coding and linking graphemes to phonemes. They read slowly, make specific errors by replacing visually or audibly similar speech sounds that are visually similar (m-n, j-l, b-d, p-b, e-a, k-g); they add or omit letters and syllables, and often invert speech sounds and/or syllables within a word. The research carried out by the authors Lenček and Ivšac (2007) showed that Croatian children often have difficulties with speech sounds that are typical for the Croatian Latin alphabet when reading lists of words. In reviewing samples of written works of children with dyslexia we often notice omissions of diacritical marks and constituent parts of certain graphemes e.g. the dot on the letters i or j, and the bar on the letter t (Lenček, Peretić, 2010). The disturbance of intonation patterns occurs very often during reading, i.e. children intonationally end the sentence according to the graphic parameters of the text (the end of the line), which together with a number of specific errors in reading significantly impairs reading comprehension. Difficulties manifest themselves at the level of the recognition of boundaries between words, often leading to errors in writing, such as connecting functional words with lexical words (e.g. Vidioje auto. – Hesaw the car).

Dysgraphia, i.e. specific writing disorder is the inability of the child to master writing skills (according to the spelling rules of the language), which manifests itself in many lasting and specific errors. The essential features of dysgraphia (according to DSM-IV) are: significantly lower than expected writing skills for their age and intelligence and age-appropriate education measured by individually administered standardized tests (or functional assessments of writing skills) (Criterion A). Disturbances from criterion A significantly impact the achieved level of academic or everyday activities that require the preparation of written texts (e.g. writing grammatically correct sentences and organized chapters (Criterion B). If there is a sensory deficit, difficulty with writing is considerably more significant than those that usually occur with such a deficit (Criterion C).

Figure 2c: *Example of language difficulties that manifest in the use of simpler sentences, omitting diacritical marks, aggrammatisms (boy, 7th grade, Dg. Specific reading and writing disorders)*

Based on clinical experiences we can conclude that specific difficulties in mastering writing skills manifest themselves as difficulties with part/whole perception, the adoption of the motor formula of the grapheme, i.e. the child checks more often how a letter should be written, speed and difficulty with handwriting because this skill includes a series of uninterrupted successive motor acts, making the acquisition of orthographic rules difficult as well. Difficulties become particularly noticeable with schoolwork such as writing written compositions or later on, essays. The child has difficulties with organizing sequences of sentences because it finds organizing the structure of the written utterance difficult.

These essays are often very incoherent, chaotic and the children often consecutively use simple sentences because this way, the sentences are mutually independent (e.g. *Vani je bila velika oluija, kiša je jako padala, vjetar je puhao. / There was a great storm outside, it was raining heavily, the wind was blowing*). In order to make writing compositions easier for children, they need to be taught how to build the structure of a written phrase. The easiest way is to use additional questions with which we can dictate the essay form. Children with

specific learning disorders need a clear structure in order to fill it in with content, taking into account temporal and spatial relations and causal and effectual relationships and the morpho-syntactic structure of sentences.
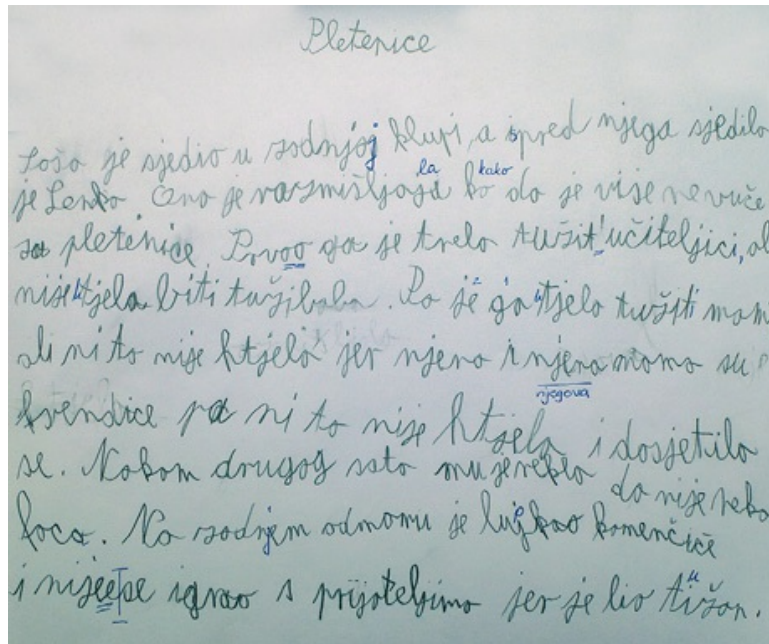
Figure 2d: *Example of difficulties with structure in writing and morpho-syntactic difficulties (girl, 4ᵗʰ grade, Dg. Specific reading and writing disorders, Expressive language disorder)*

Isolated dysgraphias are very rare. These cases usually turn out to be motor dysgraphia. They appear as a consequence of insufficiently developed motor movement for a certain grapheme. Children with this form of dysgraphia know what the letters look like; they learned their shapes but make mistakes in writing similar letters (e.g. written /o/ and /a/). When we observe their handwriting we are under the impression we are looking at a series of graphic shapes made by quick movements, with pronounced peaks (such as spikes) and a lack of mutual differentiation, which makes reading comprehension significantly more difficult. In isolated motor dysgraphia there are no mistakes on the morphosyntactic level, and the written text is coherent. These clinical features show us that the etiology of motor dysgraphia is

completely different from the type of dysgraphia in which the written utterance is marked by numerous linguistic errors. It shouldn't be forgotten that non-automatic writing skills present a significant physical exertion for the children, due to which an intensified psychomotor restlessness is noticed during writing assignments.
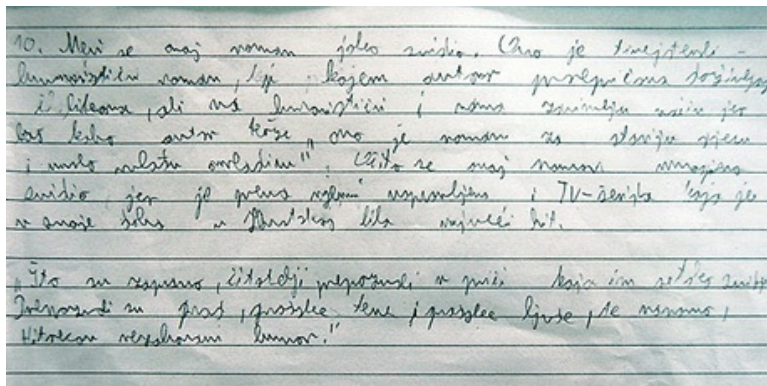
Figure 3a: *Example of motor dysgraphia (boy, 7th grade, Dg. Written expression disorder)*

Dyscalculia, i.e. a specific disorder in calculation abilities which is a partial disorder in the process of acquisition of mathematical skills, and can occur in all or only certain mathematical areas. Important characteristics of dyscalculia (according to DSM-IV) are: significantly lower than expected (considering the age, measured intelligence and age-appropriate education) mathematical ability (measured by standardized tests of mathematical computation and thinking) (Criterion A), mathematical difficulties significantly affect the achieved academic level or everyday activities that require mathematical skills (Criterion B) and if there is a sensory deficit, difficulties with mathematical capabilities are much more pronounced than those that usually occur with such a deficit (Criterion C).

For a child to be successful in mathematics the following skills are required: good short-term memory, the concept of numbers, visual-spatial skills and the ability to plan and organize, as well as the ability to memorize, or store information. The clinical picture of a child with dyscalculia is dominated by many difficulties among which the most obvious are: difficulty in

understanding the proposal and poor spatial organization, difficulties with visual-spatial pairing, incorrect assessment of quantity (more, less), lack of numerical sequential knowledge, counting difficulties (backwards, fast counting, counting sequences), difficulty in writing numbers from dictation, incomprehension of number lines, assigning inappropriate meaning to symbols (mixing calculations represented by symbols), problems with remembering basic mathematical facts, wrong answers to simple mathematical tasks like addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, ignorance of the commutative property, choosing the wrong computing strategies, inability to resolve problem-solving tasks and frequent difficulties with geometry.

Table 1: *Classification of diagnosis according to ICD-10 and DSM-IV*

Code	According to ICD-10	According to DSM-IV
F80	Specific developmental disorders of speech and language	Communication disorders
F80.0	Specific speech articulation disorder	Phonological disorder
F80.1	Expressive language disorder	Expressive language disorder
F80.2	Receptive language disorder	Mixed receptive-expressive language disorder
F81	Specific developmental disorders of scholastic skills	Learning disorders
F81.0	Specific reading disorder	Reading disorder
F81.2	Specific disorder of arithmetical skills	Mathematics disorder
F81.8	Other developmental disorders of scholastic skills, Specific spelling disorder	Disorder of written expression

Regardless of the type of language disorders or specific learning disorders, the children find mastering the curriculum to be a very demanding task, and we dare say that the schooling period is among the most difficult times in their lives because they are confronted daily with failure in skills that are essential for achieving a good academic performance. That's why they

need our help, both in terms of understanding their specific disorders and in concrete assistance during schooling.

Therefore, specific learning disorders imply that children can master all educational contents, with the help of adequate speech therapy and the support of the educational system (Buljubašić-Kuzmanović, Kelić, 2012).

1.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF LANGUAGE VARIATIONS IN A CHILD WITH SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DISORDERS AND A CHILD WITH IMPAIRED HEARING

Most school educational activities include speaking, reading and writing. The acquisition of new knowledge, i.e. the degree of formal education depends on language capabilities, or reading and writing skills. The clinical picture of language and speech disorders manifests itself as the inability or difficulty in the pronunciation of a large number of speech sounds, verbal memory difficulties, difficulties with the adoption of new words, the improper use of grammatical forms and difficulties with verbal expression. The degree of difficulty is different and can vary from major difficulties with language comprehension and expression, which will manifest in distinct lexical, semantic and grammatical difficulties, to seemingly regular speech, but with difficulties in reading and writing. Here, the speech therapist often reveals the consequences of language difficulties whose pathology in early childhood was more pronounced.

In the clinical picture, difficulties with adopting the categorization of concepts, identifying similarities, understanding abstract concepts and a more permanent adoption of instructional content tend to manifest, because children are unable to receive, retain and reproduce a larger amount of data and store it successfully in their long term memory. There are also difficulties with generalization, which manifests through the impossibility of using previously acquired knowledge in a new, albeit similar situation. The aforementioned difficulties are especially observed when starting school because the child is

confronted with new words and new ways of expression. Furthermore, during the preschool period communications requirements of the child are less demanding and more focused on everyday, pragmatic speech (what did you do, what toys did you play with in the kindergarten, what did you eat, etc.). Additionally, statements are more corroborated by the non-verbal context, which places less emphasis on the understanding of the relationships provided by the grammar in the spoken language message (Blaži and Banek, 1998). The aforementioned socio-linguistic factors mean that children alter and shape their style of expression during this period of life, which is a big problem for children with language difficulties. Consequently, through difficulties with adopting instructional content their academic achievement and the election of their vocation become questionable.

Below we describe the most common problems that children with language-speech difficulties and hearing impairment encounter with various language components, both at the level of expression, and at the level of understanding.

1.5 DIFFICULTIES AT THE LEVEL OF SEMANTICS

Semantics examines the meaning of words, and the meaning of a word is its use in language. The scope of vocabulary has long been emphasized as one of the important ways of predicting successful reading, comprehension and academic achievement (Joshi, 2005). It is known that knowledge of vocabulary highly contributes to solving various tasks and that a lack of achievements of children with language difficulties can have multiple negative effects on their academic and life outcomes (Lenček, Ivšac Pavlišić, 2011).

Practical examples

Girl, 5th grade of elementary school, Dg: Receptive language disorder.

The task consisted of retelling a text that had just been analyzed. Although the word **knight** *was mentioned several times in the text, the girl used the phrase "**he who wears a**

sword". Only with the phonological assistance of a speech therapist (by providing the first syllable), did she manage to remember the words.

*Another case was a ten-year-old boy (Dg. comprehension disorder) who instead of using the word **various** used the word **foreign** in the sentence "Foreign flowers are growing in the garden." To him the concept* foreign *represented something different, varied, which led to the replacement of words within semantic categories. A similar situation was observed in naming different types of fruit when instead of the word "pear" the boy said "stewed fruit".*

In the third case, a boy was reading a text (4th grade with Dg. F81.0 – specific reading disorder) in which the phrase summer heat *occurs. He was asked to find another word that could replace the word "heat". After that, the speech therapist gave an example of "January is cold" and the task to replace the word "cold" with another word with the same meaning. After several minutes, the boy was asked which month of the year was very cold, and the boy replied, "November." In the above examples it can be seen why it is often necessary to check whether the child understood verbal instructions, and whether meanings of all the words are clear.*

When learning words the child picks out things and activities that they relate to the word and then binds them to a specific situation, thus creating concepts and categories of words. The meaning of words represents experience, knowledge of phenomena and objects. As the child grows, his experience becomes richer and the meaning of the word gradually broadens. The first commonly used words are mostly related to objects, events and actions, then the adjectives and adverbs that complement the familiar nouns or verbs. Words that express temporal and spatial relations are slower to adopt, more so if they are abstract. Nouns are more specific because their meaning is derived from an actual situation, and the objects to which the nouns refer generally have constant characteristics. Unlike nouns, verbs are transient and their use is more complicated which is why children use them less frequently than nouns.

In addition, verbs often present both process and state and to children they are less specific than nouns, i.e. from the point of view of the child they are more abstract. We should not ignore the fact that verbs are based on the perception of time (in grammar, time is expressed most frequently with verbs or verb forms), be they permanent, current or frequent. Difficulty in

understanding temporal relations is one of the major problems that children with language and speech disorders and hearing impairment face every day (Vladisavljević, 1983).

In addition to a poor vocabulary, nominal difficulties or difficulties with naming are also frequently observed in children, as well as replacements within the semantic category of words (instead of *goat* they say *sheep*). In such situations (of nominal difficulties) children will often resort to verbal paraphrases or natural gestures, thus trying to clarify what they mean.

The meaning of a word has two dimensions: horizontal and vertical (Vladisavljević, 1983). Horizontal meaning includes an increasing number of components related to a particular concept, and the term vertical includes a stratification of meanings from the most concrete to the most abstract. Children with language difficulties, as well as children with hearing impairments, remain in the stage of concrete meanings of words for a long time (e.g., *flower, types of flowers, parts of a flower, etc.*), and they need more time to understand the abstract level (for example, that a *flower is the symbol of something beautiful*).

The adoption of words that express abstract concepts is extremely difficult. Research conducted by Vladisavljević (1983) shows that for children homonyms develop first (one word with multiple meanings), then antonyms (words of opposite meaning), synonyms (different words with the same or similar meaning) and lastly metonyms (transitive, allegorical meaning). A survey conducted by Vancaš and Kuvač (1999) shows that nine year olds have the greatest difficulty with the adoption of synonyms, then homonyms, and the least difficulty is caused by the adoption of antonyms because they are clearly adopted from the earliest age. Results of the research carried out by Kuvač, Vancaš (2003) show that nine year olds literally interpret phrases and idioms and that the first phrases that are correctly interpreted are those with properties and characteristics of animals (e.g. As hard-working as an ant, etc.). Since children with language disorders need longer on the actual level of the meaning of words, it is expected that the development of this conveyed meaning occurs even later in such children, because it is much harder to draw an important feature from the word and give it a figurative meaning. The use of adjectives is therefore rarer because we use adjectives when we want to

single out a word that would better emphasize the characteristic of a particular subject or person. Isolating the important elements, i.e. noticing details is an extremely challenging task for a child with language disorders. Just as they have more difficulty with noticing the important elements on the word level, such problems are transferred to the level of discourse, where it is often hard to see the cause and effect relationships within the text as an inference and interpretation of what is read.

If a word was adopted in one context, children with language disorders will rarely use it in another context. Sometimes one gets the impression that the adopted word is firmly fixed and difficult to use outside of the learned context, i.e. associations that link the current information with already existing knowledge in long-term memory will be conjured more slowly. That is why using the learned word in a larger number of different syntagms and different situations is especially beneficial in the therapeutic process, i.e. using it with the values of spoken language, as if to "strengthen" its communicative power. The same sequence of words uttered with variations of values within the spoken language carries another meaning. Guberina (1952a) in his book "Sound and Movement in Language" very analytically elaborates on the use of spoken language values in everyday communication, allowing speech therapists a very wide range of possibilities in the rehabilitation of language and speech disorders. "These elements of spoken language values, as already mentioned, do not appear. They do not become realized in the linguistic expression one by one, but all values of spoken language are constantly present together to a greater or lesser extent, together with words, or instead of one part of a lexicological expression. Thus they always compose the entirety of the expression, which as a whole can be felt both in the whole and in its parts" (Guberina 1952a, p. 52).

The use of certain words by children with language disorders is very rare, particularly the use of conjunctions and particles such as *however, therefore, if, even though*, etc. because they are found in complex sentences that children rarely use in spontaneous speech. But why is this so? It is important to note that children in spontaneous speech use the sentence structures they understand. So, oral expression is determined by speech understanding. Children with language disorder have difficulties with understanding complex

sentence structures. To a child with language disorder the sentence, "*I won't go ice skating, even if the weather is nice.*" presents a major problem in understanding because it implies that the child understands the exclusion of something even if favourable conditions for achieving it are secured. In the example above, the child must understand that, although the weather will be nice, the speaker won't go skating.

Adverbs and prepositions indicate temporal and spatial relationships; they are the link between other words or, at a higher level, between ideas. This is why they are called function words, because they are used in order to realize the connections or relationships between words. The idea of time is related to the idea of causality and a cause and effect relationship can only be noticed when we are mobile in the space/time coordinate system, and if we adopt signs and symbols as a means of communication. Understanding the weather signs and symbols and their integration in spontaneous speech develops beyond the space/time understanding about ourselves and the world we live in (Dulčić, Bakota, Šaler, in press).

Inversion is similarly understood. If a sentence is written in an inversion, e.g. "*After seeing the film, Marko tidied his room*", in answer to the question, 'what did the boy do first? ' there is a high probability that children with language disorder or hearing impairment will answer that he saw the film, and tidied the room afterwards. But why is this so? Children will always perceive the first action in the sentence as the first one that occurred. It should be noted that this type of sentence also concerns the understanding of inverse temporal structures (what was before, and what later). Understanding these sentences is made more difficult by the use of temporal adverb *after* whose meaning children with language impairment and hearing impairment are uncertain about – maybe it was before, and perhaps later. Clinical experiences in Croatia with those children show us that children are much better at defining temporal meaning with the temporal adverb, *when* (e.g., *After watching the film, Marko tidied up his room*). Therefore, in preparation of any type of material intended for children with language disorders or hearing impairment it is very important to take into account that inverse constructions should be avoided and that the adverbs of time should be additionally clarified.

Studies have shown that children with hearing impairment easily overcome the adoption of nouns and verbs, and that they retain content, not including the formal suffixes (Craig, Gordon, 1988, Pribanić, 1998, Nishida, 2011). The easiest words to acquire are those words that denote specific terms. Temporal adverbs such as: *before, after, following, while,* etc., can be the cause of misunderstanding a text. Dulčić, Bakota and Šaler (in press) investigated the acquisition of temporal relations on lexical, syntactic and pragmatic levels. The results showed that students with hearing impairment in the older school age group have difficulties understanding temporal relationships, which is necessary to take into account during their educational process.

Although most of the words children with language disorders use are of simpler phonological structure, we can conclude that the phonological structure is probably not the deciding factor for the frequency of use because of the use of pronouns. Although pronouns are simple words by their phonological structure, children with language disorders use them relatively rarely. Pronouns belong to complex linguistic categories according to their semantic and syntactic deistic characteristics and their later reporting can be attributable to complex language processes (Vladisavljević, 1983). Personal pronouns as a separate category are used to emphasise, while in daily speech their agglutinative verb form is sufficient (*I run* is enough to inform that I am the runner). Personal pronouns enter the category of deistic words, which means that the person to whom they relate is constantly changing, which is why it is important to understand context. Switching roles and actions from one person to another or others is a complex process to a child with language impairments.

Practical examples

"While I was waiting for Janko to come, I was sitting next to the fence. Suddenly I saw him. He was walking alongside a boy. All the time he was glancing at the boy, making sure that he didn't notice."

To the question who eyed who, the boy (6th grade, Dg. Receptive language disorder) answered that the girl (the narrator) was looking at Janko, but did not want Janko to notice. From the above example we can see the impossibility of understanding the text in

which the determination of a person who performs the action is expressed by the abbreviated form of the pronoun.

1.6 DIFFICULTIES WITH MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAXIS

Difficulties with morphemes are manifested in the use of prefixes such as thoughtful/conceited – **za**mišljen/**u**mišljen, which completely changes the meaning and understanding of an utterance. Also, children often incorrectly change grammatical morphemes and lose grammatical words. Very frequently they use only basic forms, i.e. they encounter difficulties when making new words using prefixes and suffixes (e.g. kupiti, **ot**kupiti, **is**kupiti, **pre**kupiti). They also less frequently use words of a paradigmatic character, which gain a new meaning by changing suffixes (tisak, tiskara, tiskanje…), regardless of whether or not the new word remains in the category of the initial word, i.e. in the broader context. In analyzing the sentence "The girl was strolling (šetuckala) around the room looking for a solution", when asked what does the word *šetuckala* mean the nine-year old girl replied that the girl was *štucala* (hiccupping). In this case, there are two aggravating circumstances: first, it is a word of paradigmatic character, and secondly there is a phonological similarity to the word whose meaning is well known. From this example we can see how little it takes for a child to completely misunderstand a verbal statement.

Incongruent sentence structures (mismatches of gender, numbers and cases between words within sentences – a lack of congruity) can often be noticed in children with language disorders. Agrammatisms point to a difficulty with controlling all language relations within a sentence. Understanding attributive relations (e.g. mother's daughter or brother's father) represents a particular difficulty as well. Understanding these phrases implies the ability to make adjectives from nouns, and also to place words in a meaningful relation. Family ties have a recursive relationship and they are used to linguistically express something that is not on the same axis. Therefore, the lack of understanding of these attributive relationships is a

question of poor morphological skills. Likewise, if a child receives the task to pair images with sentences e.g. *Students are standing in front of the book closet / Students with books are standing in front of the closet*, it is highly likely that they will make mistakes when choosing the images, even though they understand all the words in the sentence, precisely because of the difficulty with understanding grammatical relations between the words that define the meaning of a sentence.

In spontaneous speech, and in writing, children often use the present tense, which is specific and the child experiences it directly. Guided by the principle of maximum simplification, the present tense is most often used because it is closest to the child. In addition, the present time is the simplest in its structure because there are no auxiliary verbs. Frequent use of the third person is most likely a consequence of it being the form that the child most often hears when addressed and has the most experience with it.

In clinical practice, it is essential to define the clinical signifiers of language disorders. Varlokosta et al., (in press, according to Kuvač-Kraljević, 2012) state that in clitic languages children aged five do not omit the clitic in the third-person singular and they have morphosyntactic knowledge about the proper placement of the clitic (example: *A girl caught a butterfly and the butterfly cannot fly anymore. Why can't a butterfly fly? A butterfly cannot fly… because the girl caught.*) One of the clinical signifiers for identifying children with SLI is the omission of a clitic in third-person singular or the ignorance about the production of the clitic in compulsory contexts (in this example the clitic **ga/it** is omitted).

Children with hearing impairment and children with language disorders have significant difficulties at the level of syntax as well as at the level of morphology. Syntax is the linguistic discipline that studies the congruence of words in the sentence, i.e. relations between words and the rules by which words are put together in a sequence. Children with language disorders use non-prototypical sentences more often (for example, *Why do children many love chocolate?* instead of *Why do so many children love chocolate?*) as well as difficulties with congruence.

Children with language disorders and children with hearing impairment have difficulties understanding sentences with inserted, distal structures (e.g.

understanding sentences with embedded parts: Mama said she'll read me the book, which she brought from her last travel, before bedtime). Kidd and Bavin (2002) point out that the adoption of relative clauses, or sentences with embedded parts, is a very demanding task for all children, especially for children with language disorders (Balija, Hržica, Kuvač Kraljević, 2012, Balija and Krnjajić, 2010, Friedmann and Novogradsky, 2004, Novogrodsky and Friedmann, 2006). Scientific research, as well as clinical practice, confirms the rule that the lingual development of speech expressions generally follows understanding. However, it seems that the process is exactly the opposite in the case of relative clauses. The research results in other languages show that the production of relative clauses already occurs at the age of three, but that understanding occurs two or three years after their appearance in spontaneous speech (Friedmena and Novogradsky, 2004, Hakansson and Hansson, 2000). This is precisely why we shall devote a little more attention to difficulties with understanding relative clauses in this part.

What are relative clauses? In English the term is defined as relative clauses, in Croatian terminology they are known as *zavisne atributne rečenice* (Balija, Hržica, Kuvač Kraljević, 2012). In psycholinguistic research, this term is too broad because it combines a number of procedures required for their processing. This is why scientific research uses a descriptive name for the relative clause thus highlighting some aspects of its treatment (later on we will discuss relative clauses with a shift from the subject or object position).

According to generative theory, in order to understand relative clauses it is necessary to implement several procedures in the sentence (syntactic) structure which are the prerequisites for its understanding. This mainly concerns the syntactic shift of a noun phrase from the position of subject or object; for example, in the sentence *This is a boy who teaches his sister*, the antecedent boy in co-sentence *who teaches his sister* moves from the position of subject in the main sentence once again to the position of subject in the co-sentence, while in the sentence *This is a boy who is taught by his sister*, the antecedent *boy* moves from the position of the subject in the main clause into the position of the object in the co-sentence. Syntactic movement leaves a trace, meaning that the child must understand these shifts of word functions, which defines their thematic role. So the thematic role of the shifted element is

defined by the connection with the verb, and it also defines the choice of the relative pronoun (who or whom – *koji ili kojeg*).

By analysing the processes involved in the creation and understanding of relative clauses, it is clear that relative clauses represent one of the major achievements of the development of language. This justifies the great interest of psycholinguistic researchers and the implications when they appear too often, especially in textbooks designed for children of lower school age (Kordić, 1995), which may influence their process of understanding educational content.

Research in the Croatian language has shown that relative clauses are adopted later, especially those with a shift in the object position, both in children with proper language development, and in children with special language impairments (Balija, Krnjajić, 2010, Balija, Hržica and Kuvač Kraljević, 2012). Balija and Krnjajić (2010) conducted a study on the production of relative clauses on a sample of children with proper language development at ages four, five and six. The results showed that the chronological age of children indicated the level of success of their production. It is important to emphasize that the understanding of relative clauses with a shift from the object position was a challenging task, even for the oldest group, i.e. the six year olds. Based on the results the authors concluded that the period between the ages of four and five is the age of syntactic development, which allows for a more successful understanding of relative clauses. The results of the research into the production of relative clauses in the Croatian language with children of older preschool and school age, of proper language development, aged 6.9 to 10.9 years (Balija, Hržica and Kuvač Kraljević, 2012) confirmed that it is only justified to expect them to have mastered the production at around the age of ten (especially the sentences with a shift from the object position).

Figure 3b: *Example of difficulties understanding relative clauses (boy, 5th grade, Dg. Receptive language disorder)*

Results from research into the production of relative clauses in children with SLI (Novogradsky and Friedmann, 2006) have shown that the greatest difficulties are observed in the production of relative clauses with a shift from the position of object, in relation to the production of relative clauses with a shift from position of subject. The authors note that the most common mistakes that the children made were the assignment of incorrect thematic roles, or the use of simpler relative clauses with a shift of the subject position. Research into the production of relative clauses in children with SLI in the Croatian language also points to a later adoption of this type of sentence (Balija, Hržica, Kuvač Kraljević, 2012). As for the distribution of errors in children of older preschool and lower school age, the authors state that when composing relative clauses with a shift from the object position of the object younger children with SLI make the most mistakes in the allocation of thematic roles (e.g. in forming the sentence *I'd rather be the boy woken up by the alarm clock*, while children with SLI of lower chronological age give the answer *I'd rather be the alarm clock that wakes the boy*), while children of older chronological age with SLI still make mistakes in understanding the relationship between the shifted element and its original position. The

difficulties with understanding these connections are usually manifested by duplicating the antecedent (the authors give the example, *I'd rather be a boy that the elephant lifted the boy*). Unlike children with SLI, children with normal development, when doubling the antecedent, do it in the accusative form of the pronoun in the first or third person singular.

Similar results were obtained when evaluating the use of relative clauses in children with impaired hearing. We know from clinical experience that children with impaired hearing (often just the same as children with normal peripheral hearing, but with language speech disorders) rely on the order of words in a sentence in a way that the first noun is understood as the agent. Their sentences are often agrammatical (incongruent), and they encounter particular difficulties in understanding passive clauses. Such a sentence structure makes their determination of the agent difficult and eventually leads them to the wrong conclusion about the agent, because they rely on the order of words in a sentence for understanding. Friedmann and Szterman (2006) point out that there is a big difference between children with language disorder but orderly peripheral hearing and children with hearing impairments in problem solving when pairing relative clauses with a shift from the object position and the appropriate picture. In order to understand and produce such sentences the hearing impaired use the help of relative pronouns/clitics, because they rely on the help of a relative pronoun to understand the sentence. Based on clinical experience in working with children with hearing impairments we have noticed that they more often use the pronoun form rather than the one for nouns, to further confirm the thematic role of the antecedent (e.g. This is the pedestrian **who** was struck by a car., or This is a pedestrian who was hit by a car **him**.).

Because of their production, data on the production of relative clauses is of crucial importance for the speech therapy diagnostic algorithm for the assessment of children with suspected specific language impairments, i.e. the type of errors in their production, is a good clinical indicator of said difficulties. It is especially important information because research has shown that even children of school age with SLI show irregularities in the formation of syntactic structures of relative clauses (omitting the antecedent, omitting

the relevant pronoun and parts of relative co-sentence), and use them more rarely in spontaneous speech (Marinellie, 2004).

From all of the above it is evident that significant delay in understanding and production of all linguistic elements is observed in children with language disorders and hearing impairments, especially in complex sentence structures, which should be taken into account in the educational process. Linguistically unadapted text, i.e. text that is structured by inverse or passive sentences with a larger number of relative clauses, as well as text with a large number of unknown or phonologically similar words will be difficult to understand for a child with language disorders or a child with hearing impairments.

If the child's difficulties are ignored and he is given tasks he is unable to solve, it is very likely that ultimately it is the child's impairment that will be evaluated instead of the child. And that is exactly what we would like to avoid, by focusing on achieving the optimal education for each individual. That is, the balanced ratio of a child's possibilities and the didactic and methodical approaches to the process of education.

1.7 DIFFICULTIES WITH PRAGMATIC AND SUPRASEGMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SPEECH

Pragmatics is the study of the use of language in relation to language structure and the non-linguistic context of speech that studies the relationships between language forms and the use of these forms (Ivšac, Gaćina, 2006). The central use of language is reflected in communication and understanding, and pragmatic studies try to determine the success of language use. Long ago in the fifties, in his book "The connection between language elements" Petar Guberina (1952b) clearly points out that language, apart from expressing reality, expresses action and an invitation to the other party to perform a specific action, which emphasizes the pragmatic dimension of language. According to ASHA (2005), the difficulty with pragmatics (social communication) are reflected in the use of unusual words and unusual

syntactic patterns, the severe suppression of irrelevant associations, difficulty in sticking to the topic of conversation, answers that are often imprecise with the insertion of elements that are self-explanatory, difficulty understanding mental verbs (think, believe, could, etc.), difficulty making conclusions or predictions about another person's behaviour, and often the use of unusual and inappropriate prosody. Children with a pragmatic disorder have difficulty posing questions to the interlocutor, not because they don't understand the topic in question, but because they find adjusting the language to the current situation and the interlocutor difficult (language usage in accordance with the recipient and the context in which the conversation is taking place).

Also, in a larger number of children with language disorders a disruption of prosody is noticed (at the suprasegmental level of speech) which affects both speech and the ability to understand speech. Changes in suprasegmental features (prosody) in the interlocutor's speech can cause difficulties in understanding for children with language and speech disorders (e.g. change of emphasis on words). When observing the language and speech development of every child, we see that first they are aware of intonation, and then elements of articulation. The gradual synthesis of these elements leads to semantics and syntax. Due to the reduction of prosodic elements (intonation, height, pace, pause), the speech of children with language difficulties, especially children with hearing disabilities, often has a monotonous intonation. In connected speech, the boundaries of the main syntactic entities are reliably marked by prosodic keys. Prosodic information thus provides an important determinant for detecting the syntactic structure of language (Jusczyk, 2002). Research by Sabisch et al. (2009) showed that children with SLI are not able to use prosodic information like children with normal language development. Differences in the processing of prosodic information may hinder development of syntactic processing, which leads to difficulties with morpho-syntactic language treatment. While reading the text, children with reading difficulties often direct their attention to the borderline, i.e. intonationally ending the sentence according to the graphic parameters of the text (the end of the line), not according to the content of the sentence. This disregard for the borders of sentences often leads to a misunderstanding of what is being read because the intonation patterns connect words that do not belong together (prosodically

disrupting the syntactic unit). Due to this inability to recognise prosodic elements and prosodic units, children often can't fathom the context of some sentences (e.g. they cannot recognize sarcasm).

The role of speech values in speech reception and speech production has always been an integral part of the verbotonal idea, which is why Guberina used the syntagm "Spoken language". Language is created and implemented from oral speech, leading Guberina to believe that language and speech should not be researched or rehabilitated separately. In the preface to his book "Sound and movement in language" he emphasizes the importance of the values of spoken language: intonation, intensity, pace of sentences, pause, facial expressions and real contexts (Guberina, 1952). For him, speech is simultaneously a social and an individual phenomenon, from which language arises and through which it is realized. He, therefore, formed the concept of the study of language as dynamic structuring in which segmental language material and suprasegmental values of spoken language are associated with the actual context, i.e. dialogue relations of interlocutors, paving the way for modern cognitive linguistics with his verbotonal system (Pavelin Lešić, 2012).

Early diagnosis, early rehabilitation, monitoring and counselling are of undisputed importance in stimulating auditory development and the development of speech and language, and indeed the general development of the child. A close correlation between diagnosis and rehabilitation is one of the features of the verbotonal approach to the early diagnosis and rehabilitation of children with hearing impairments and children with language and speech disorders. Rehabilitation is directed by diagnostic procedures, and rehabilitation confirms and eventually expands the diagnostic evaluation. At the centre of verbotonal theory and practice is man and his need to express himself through speech (to express thoughts, affective states and aesthetic experience), his speech habits (first language or mother tongue) and his capabilities (pathology of hearing and/or speech). Verbotonal theory shows that man wholly participates both in the perception and in the emission/reproduction of speech. In order to successfully reconcile tension and motor skills, harmoniously innervate speech organs and the body, the verbotonal method also introduces special methodological procedures – phonetic rhythms (stimulation through movement and musical stimulation),

and dramatization. The aim of verbotonal rehabilitation is to enable the development of all cognitive, social, emotional and creative potential, thus enabling the prerequisites for successful inclusion. A series of targeted exercises and structured work can help alleviate the symptoms that prevent children with language/speech and language disorders and hearing impairment from progressing in learning and education.

In determining the rehabilitative optimal it is important to use all modalities of receiving information (the visual, auditory, tactile or kinaesthetic input of information), to take account of the child's personality, his social needs, abilities, memory, verbal and other skills. The aim is to define effective strategies which will help the child to succeed in developing his full potential. With children who are visually oriented it is important to use as many visual contents as possible (images, illustrations, mind maps, charts, diagrams, coloured markers for highlighting key ideas, films, video, information technology, etc.). Whereas for children who prefer the auditory channel of receiving information the use of a voice recorder is recommended instead of writing, as is the use of rhymes as mnemonics and encouraging reading aloud etc. For children who are more sensitive to receiving kinaesthetic information, learning through touch and the manipulation of concrete objects is recommended.

The key to success is to enable the use of the sensory modality that is most efficient in a child, i.e. the development of the skills that the child has to help and encourage language development within their further development. For children with language disorders and the hearing impaired, in addition to the modalities that are most effective, learning is also made easier by the presentation of the whole before they start analyzing the content itself.

Although we noted the many difficulties that children with language and speech disorders and hearing impairment live with, the fifty year long practice confirms that these difficulties do not have to be an obstacle to a successful life. The key to successful educational integration is the understanding of how children with speech and language disorders and hearing impairment function, their possibilities and impossibilities, and knowledge of modern techniques in teaching that can affect a child's motivation and creativity, as well as positive attitudes in the wider community.

2. THE ROLE OF PLAY IN TERMS OF EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION

Regular schools with inclusive orientations are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, by creating communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. Moreover, they provide the effective education of children and improve the efficiency and finally the cost of the entire education system (UNESCO, 1994).

Modern schools are trying to respond to the different needs of students, including those of gifted students and students with disabilities. Adapting methods, requirements, resources and content, the educational staff strives to provide the highest quality education for all. Inclusive education in Croatia in the 1980s opened the door for those students who were excluded from regular education because of their difficulties. Since then, there has been a lot of talking and writing on how to implement inclusive education, what are the essential conditions that should be followed in the preparation and implementation of educational integration and how it can improve the quality of education of students with disabilities. Educational institutions are increasingly recognizing and responding to the different needs of its students by adapting methods, learning materials, curricula and instructional strategies, using resources and partnerships within their communities.

A large number of children with disabilities encounter difficulties when reading educational content written 'in an adult language' that must be understood, memorized and the knowledge of which must be fluently reproduced. While learning, their attention will quickly wander away, and some will feel bored. At the mere mention of learning many students with

disabilities, and their parents as well, report feeling discomfort and resistance. Learning in the most hassle-free way seems like an impossible mission which requires "secret recipes of great masters."

Observing children in parks, playgrounds, or at home, it can easily be noticed that they are able to play for hours without feeling fatigue or boredom. Playing is always stimulating and fun, and they passionately indulge in it from day to day. In pre-school, play is the most important form of learning. Play affects the physical and psychological development of children, and through play the youngest link together all of their collected knowledge. Play enriches the vocabulary of toddlers; by playing they gain knowledge on various concepts and develop their own personality. It helps them to acquire a number of useful habits, and children become more independent and responsible. When the child starts school, teachers and parents often forget the benefits of play, leaving it in the domain of free time, though play is the most effective form of learning. The strict separation of learning and playing prevents play from becoming a powerful ally in the learning process. It is known that "repetition is the mother of wisdom", but it seems that for the students, the frequent repetition of material is the most repulsive. Therefore, the introduction of play in the classroom proved to be an effective solution, because games can serve as good practice of new concepts, making repetition fun, and increasing attention. Playing allows learning from multiple stimuli, which engages the entire brain and gives better results.
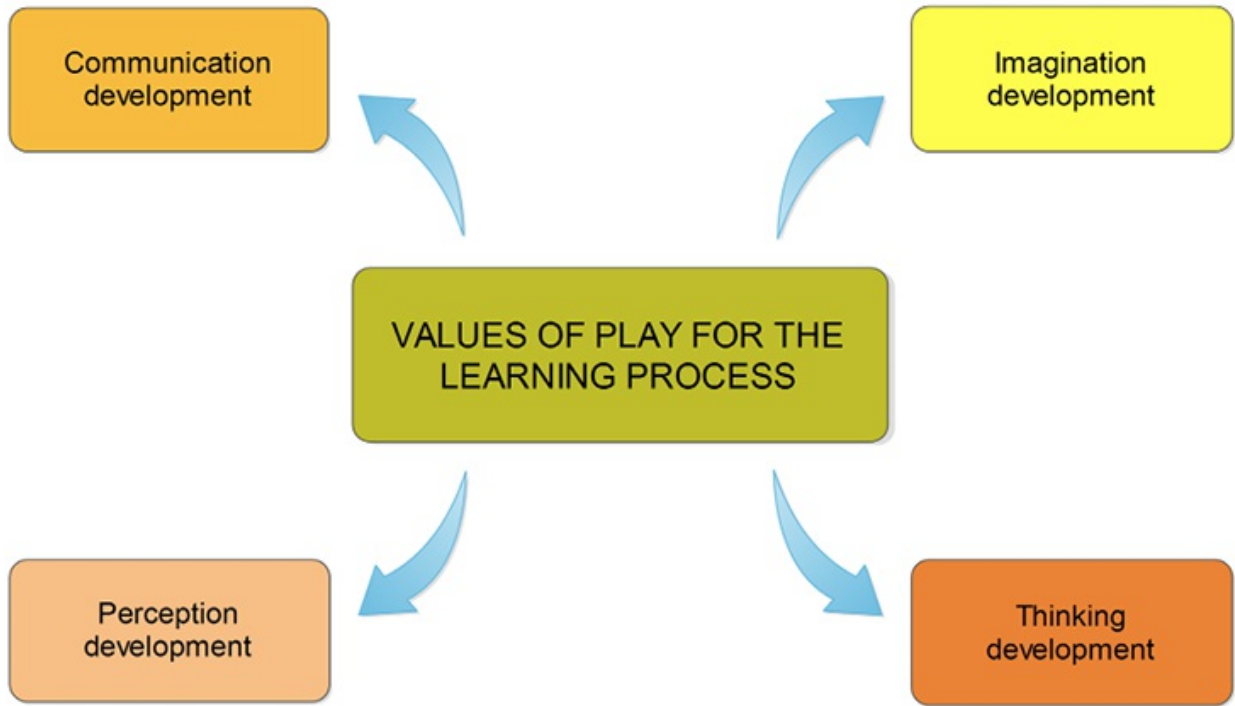
Figure 4: *Values of play for the learning process*
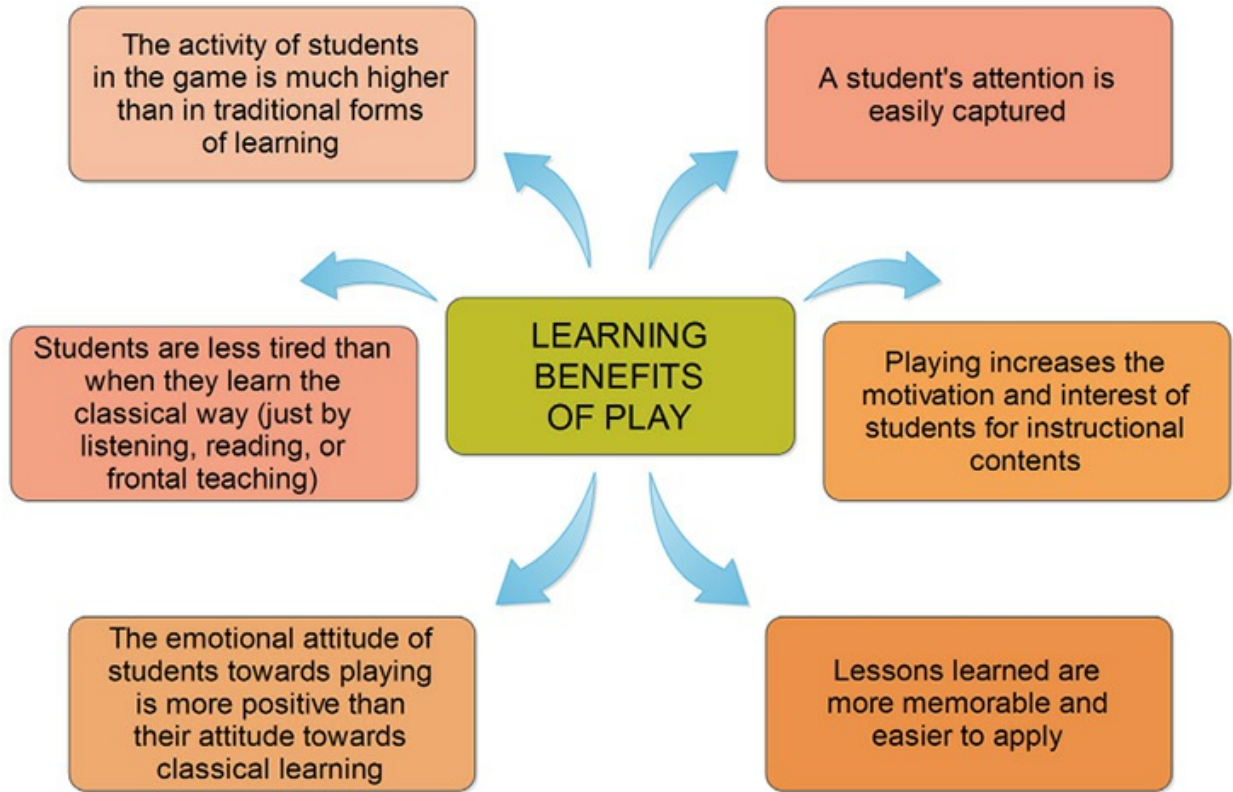
Figure 5: *Learning benefits of play*

Recent studies support the hypothesis that multiple concurrent stimuli change the structure of the brain and positively affect thinking and memory (Cytowic, 2002; Noë, 2004; Biti, 2007, Rosenblum et al., 2008). Arar and Rački (2003) pointed out that the results of different studies suggest that creative individuals have access to primary process thinking. Dailey and Martindale (1997) indicated that synaesthesia and physiognomic perception are aspects of primary thinking; defining synaesthesia as merging or simultaneously experiencing different modalities of sensations. Domino (1989) found that a greater ability of synaesthesia allows for significantly higher scores when measuring creativity.

Contemporary trends in teaching reveal that learning does not have to be the prosaic acquisition of facts that must be adopted as soon as possible. New habits and skills, such as planning and organizing can be easily mastered and applied to the everyday life of each student with hearing and/or speech

impairments. Skills acquired this way strengthen the confidence of students with impairments and guarantee success in education.

Playing offers a variety of beneficial effects that can be greatly used in the modern educational system. It is the foundation for the easier adoption of social, emotional, motor and cognitive skills. It has also been shown that through playing a disabled child can release frustration easier. The main benefit of educational games is the use of motivational opportunities and the joy that they give children. Motivation to learn emanates not only from the teaching content, but also from the learning processes. Students prefer the type of work that creates pleasure. Satisfaction is higher as teaching methods and forms become more diverse, and the participation of students in teaching is more active (Strmčnik, 2001; Trškan 2006). Modern education should embrace new ways of learning because they, apart from facilitating the whole process, make learning an enjoyable and fun activity. When specific reasons for playing are cited, it becomes clear that there are multiple aspects that appeal to kids, such as active participation, fantasy, escapism, collaborative interaction, satisfaction of being in control or violation of social rules and conventions in a safe environment.

Through play, the child matures and gains knowledge of interpersonal relations. Playing is an excellent tool for developing communication, which most children with impaired hearing and/or speech have difficulty with. Group games are not just a pastime; they contribute to getting to know the rules. Children very soon realize that they will achieve results and gain others' acceptance only by playing by the rules. Those who disobey the rules and disrespect their teammates will get expelled. An entire series of positive traits develop through playing. Although children are very impatient by their nature, little by little they will realize that patience can be of great help when playing. Playing develops not only those social and communication skills that are very important for the development of children with language and speech difficulties or hearing impairment, but also of importance for the development of psychological personality traits.

In addition to meeting others, children learn best about themselves through play and this contributes to their emotional maturity. They learn behaviour when they lose, but they also learn it when they win. For children

who are not emotionally mature enough for their biological age or in turn haven't developed the sociological component of their personality, playing can have a therapeutic effect. After playing, many of them often analyzed what they have lived through and created actual step-by-step strategies in order to perform better next time. When they realize the errors, they try correcting them in the next turn.

Children with hearing and/or speech impairments have difficulty in spotting metaphors and often do not understand figurative meaning or humour. Educational and rehabilitational games help to evolve their perception and thinking. Malone and Lepper (1987) have pointed out that imagination can provide analogies or metaphors for those processes in the real world, which allows the user to experience phenomena from different perspectives. In short, their study suggests that material can be learned more easily when it is presented in a fictional context, unlike when it is presented in a generic or decontextualized form. Previous studies point out that educational content wrapped in imaginative contexts leads to a higher interest among students and better learning (Parker & Lepper, 1992; Cordova & Lepper, 1996, Wilson, et al., 2009). Imaginative play allows them to interact in situations that are not a part of real experience. Thomas and Macredie (1994) noted that the lack of impact of participants' actions on the real world is the key feature of play (they describe it as "a world without consequences"). Imagination facilitates focus and attention and the child's complete immersion in the play activity.

Experientially gained knowledge and skills are best acquired through playing different games. Regardless of the rules of the game that give it a solid structure, each time a game is played it is different and offers many opportunities, it develops resourcefulness and problem-solving skills. The incredible educational potential of play constantly opens up new possibilities. In addition to children finding it easier to memorize information through play, many of them will understand them better because they are active participants in the process, and the only sort of learning of which there will be any true benefits is learning with understanding.

Children who have certain learning difficulties often suffer from lack of motivation and curiosity, which prevents them from expressing a desire to

adopt new knowledge and skills. Motivation is the driving force of learning and it is associated with positive attitudes toward schooling, as well as with academic achievement, better discipline and a greater satisfaction of students and teachers (Vizek-Vidović et al., 2003). Trškan (2006) states that teachers can use a variety of motivational techniques in teaching such as: crossword puzzles, word searches, finding hidden shapes in images, association games, quizzes and mind maps. Also: riddles, rebus puzzles, hangman games, short sound recordings, short videos, caricatures, sketches, mime, pantomime, clothing, objects, models, balls, puppets, collage, various games (drawing straws, treasure hunting, etc.), drawing, short funny stories, anecdotes, quotations, metaphors, etc.

Play will be of great help to children with hearing and/or speech impairment and will become a great helper in learning. Students with hearing and/or speech impairments have great difficulty with the adoption of abstract concepts. Playing can help them to understand basic information more clearly, link causal connections and to better understand course content. Games can be successfully used in the educational process from the lowest chronological age of the child until the end of their schooling.

Educational games and games for rehabilitation, among other things, can help develop speaking skills, logical thinking, orientation in time and space, micro and macro motor skills and many other skills needed for successful educational integration. Importantly, playing develops focus and concentration which is essential in the learning process and it is precisely the lack concentration that which is one of the major problems in learning and equitable education.

Thorough preparation is of priceless importance in the implementation of a variety of games into teaching activities. You must carefully consider which methods and media are the most appropriate in a given moment to better achieve the desired goal. Likewise, one should determine which teaching aids will yield the best results.

Even the place and the conditions of teaching are of importance. Apart from the objective possibilities of certain educational institutions, one should carefully consider the needs and readiness of students before the introduction

of new activities. You need to take the whole picture into account and assess whether a child with disabilities can be equally involved in the game.

It should also be taken into account that children learn from each other. This means that those who were slightly less successful at the beginning of the game can learn from others straight away and soon become equally involved in all the upcoming games.

Figuratively speaking, the role of educators or teachers can be compared with the role of the conductor who conducts a well-tuned orchestra. He is responsible for the thorough preparation of a certain activity and its monitoring from the first steps to the very end. Having felt the pulse of the class, including the consideration of the abilities of all students with disabilities, he must allocate tasks. If they encounter any lack of clarity, students can turn to a teacher or an educator for help in every moment. It is very important that at the beginning of each activity all the rules of the game are explained to children in detail, but it is very likely that along the way children will have plenty of questions. Therefore after a basic explanation they should be guided throughout the entire process. It is also the teacher's duty to create a stimulating atmosphere in class. This primarily means to offer words of encouragement to everyone, which will greatly impact children's self-esteem. When a disabled child or community in general performs the task entrusted to them well, they should be praised. In educational institutions that keep up with the times, interactive multimedia games are used more and more for educational purposes. Interactive games can include a number of interesting elements, such as those taken from the theatre, science experiments and art-related skills connected with painting or music. Games in which students actively participate may resemble knowledge tests as seen in popular quizzes or solving mathematical puzzles. Many computer games will surely attract and keep the students' attention longer and improve their understanding and adoption of new data.

Some collective educational games are: simulation, dramatization, predicting the outcome and many other games (Bognar, 1991 and Rendić, 2000). These are the games that clearly and empirically demonstrate to students, especially those with disabilities, how certain activities affect the final

outcome in certain social situations. Otherwise, students with disabilities have difficulties understanding social relationships that are layered and non-linear.

Simulation games allow the understanding of all phases of a specific social process. Basically all simulations tend to reveal the connection between cause and effect. The advantage of this way of learning is that students are not only observers but active participants who see a particular situation as an experience of their own, and this fact goes to contribute to a better understanding and memorizing of educational content. Preparing for simulation games requires great effort on the part of educational professionals who at the very beginning of the game must specify the steps that will highlight the goals that must be reached in every phase of the game. First of all, the teacher should distinguish what he wants the children to learn during a particular simulation. Students must be well prepared so that they can dedicate themselves completely to resolving various problems. If they make a wrong step, their mistakes will be without those consequences that would exist if the situation occurred in real life. Freed from such pressure, students will be able to make various decisions unencumbered, to try out strategies and hone their critical thinking (De Kanter, 2005). One of the games can be, for example, the simulation of negotiations at a peace conference. At the beginning students should familiarize themselves with the content of the subject at hand. The teacher must also submit all required information and make sure that everyone has understood the given topic. Students must clearly understand why there has been a certain conflict and who is on the opposing sides. Only when it is resolved, should a specific division of roles of all participants of the imagined peace conference be undertaken.

Dramatization is a dynamic and active way of learning. It is a game that helps all the participants observe certain problems from another angle. The distribution of roles allows viewing the situation through the eyes of another person. Dramatization helps establish correlations between teaching subjects (e.g. history and Croatian language…). In each dramatization a good division of roles according to the abilities of students with disabilities is important, as well as a selection of scenarios. It must be clearly explained to students what is required for the performance of assigned roles, and how much room for

improvisation they have. They need to be given some time to get used to their assigned roles. The value of dramatization lies in transforming the entire body into an instrument for the expression of certain emotions, moods, attitudes and opinions. Learning nonverbal communication is as important as practicing verbal communication. Each movement must have its own goal and show a reaction to a particular situation. Dramatization develops lexical and nonlexical means of expression. Lexical means of expression are those procedures which consist of words (lexical and grammatical system in a broad sense, i.e. phonetics, morphology and syntax), and nonlexical means of expression are the values of speech language (intonation, rhythm, intensity, tension, pause, punctuation pace, mime, gesture, position and tension of the body, tone of the body in general, context and motivation when speaking) (Dulčić et al. 2012). Students can also use their voice to highlight a particular mood. Higher tones signalize anger, while speaking silently indicates insecurity or sadness. Some of the positive effects of such games are the expanding of vocabulary and development of analytical thinking. Students learn the art of public speaking and listening carefully. Children are taught to properly communicate with others, creating affiliation within the group. Through playing certain roles they develop the ability to pose questions and give responses. In addition, the ability to focus becomes stronger through dramatization.

The success of each assigned role depends on whether the student manages to identify with it and complete it with his own creativity and imagination. At the end of the game it is necessary to talk with students and ask for their opinion and how they felt in the role they played. They can also express how much they related to a certain character and how they would react in certain situations.

Prediction game – predicting the outcome could be very interesting to students because they gain great freedom of thought and strengthen their mutual communication and exchange of views. Yet again the teacher must be well prepared to provide a good foundation for the game and its success. They have to clearly set the goals, present them well, and properly divide children into teams. Teams shouldn't be too large in order to have better

communication between teammates and for every student to get a chance to contribute to the discussion. Special attention must be dedicated to including students with disabilities in the team where they will give his best. In order to avoid conflict within teams, it is important that each student realizes what his task is. Individual roles of team members should not be allowed to overlap, and if necessary, they should be able to change. Students should be taught methods for resolving conflicts, and it should be explained to them that certain decisions or priorities can be changed on the as and where appropriate.

At the beginning of the game the teacher should thoroughly analyze specific educational content by giving all the facts and highlighting the problem, without providing guidelines to how a specific situation ends. Students should then discuss possible outcomes with their teams. They can write down their own ideas, creating a list of all possible outcomes. They must come to a conclusion about the causes that leads to certain consequences, and finally opt for the most likely outcome, which they will present in front of the whole class. After each team thoroughly explains their choices, teacher will reveal how the situation ended, and announce the winning team. It will be the team whose vision of events came closest to a most realistic outcome.

In order for play to successfully take place in the educational process, due to its exceptional dynamics it is necessary to devote more attention to discipline in the classroom than under other circumstances. Discipline as the child's self-control is a prerequisite for independent work, as well as group work, and in this sense it is pedagogically justified (Spajić-Vrkaš, Kukoč, Bašić, 2001). Playing develops positive moral qualities such as a sense of justice, fairness, friendliness and a penchant for helping others. The modern educational system tends to regard discipline as a set of rules that allow for discussion and for students to give their own opinion and question the rules defined by the authority. However, all students should always know who is "the ship's captain" of their class, who can "save the ship and crew in turbulent times" with their knowledge and experience. Discipline as unconditional submission is a thing of the past.

For the game to be successful, its design should satisfy a number of conditions. It should above all be adjusted to the age and ability of all students. This means that the game must not be too difficult, nor should it be too easy.

Non stimulating activities do not hold the interest and attention of children and they soon become bored. If, on the other hand, a too demanding activity is chosen, children will find it difficult and could be unable to finish the task. Therefore, they will feel incompetent and will slowly lose faith in themselves. The optimal duration of certain activities should also be taken into account; if an activity is too long, children will have difficulty concentrating, while in the case of games that are too short children won't be able to relate and they won't learn a lot. Problems may arise during the forming of certain teams within the class because in each class there are students who socialize in their time of leisure, but also those who don't particularly get along or even who argue, and it is therefore to be expected that these relations will sometimes transfer to the teaching process as well. To avoid side effects and enable the acceptance of a student with difficulty in the classroom, a great effort should be made to prepare students, parents and others involved in the educational process. The class should cultivate the spirit of positive competition, which means that it should be explained to children that there will always be winning and losing teams, but that everyone will always get another opportunity. It is very important to strengthen the child's fragile self-esteem and praise each and every success, even the smallest one.

The constant exploration of new teaching methods raises the educational standards, and makes the school a pleasant oasis for the students. Every educational institution that embraces the use of well-designed educational games will, as a result, have happy students regardless of their difficulties.

3. ENCOURAGING CREATIVITY IN STUDENTS WITH HEARING OR SPEECH DIFFICULTIES

Creativity makes the world go 'round, changing it from day to day, from year to year, over the centuries. If there were no creativity, many works of art or inventions, without which we can't even imagine our everyday life, would not have seen the light of day. Creativity relies heavily on imagination and breaks the chains of daily routines. This is not a phenomenon that can be observed from one viewpoint and because of this it is not easily moulded into a strict definition (Isaksen and Parnes 1985). Many authors agree that it is an innate ability to create something new that may be in the area of the spiritual or material. One of the generally accepted definitions of creativity is that it is a process of discovering the unknown and creating something new. Somolanji and Bognar (2008) mention a number of authors who believe that creativity is expressed in solving problems in an entirely new way, which had not been known before (Mail, 1968, Ozimec, 1987, Kaufman, 2002 and Plucker and Beghieto, 2002). Stevanović (2001) points out that creativity is not always reflected in a new work, but can be expressed by connecting previously unconnected ideas.

Gulford (1967, 1968) and associates were among the first who conducted psychometric tests and investigated the correlation between intelligence and creativity. J. P. Guilford and E. P. Torrance argued in their writings that creativity is an ability possessed by all people. Many call Torrance "the father of creativity," because he dealt with this issue for more than sixty years. He constructed a test to measure creativity which is still used today (Burleson, 2005, according to Bognar and Kragulj, 2011). His research has shown that the

level of creativity can be reduced or increased by practical activities and that creativity can help in increasing the academic success by compensating for a lack of intelligence (Palaniappan, 2007, according to Bognar and Kragulj, 2011).

Torrance's surveys (1965, 1970) in the second half of the last century have already shown that creativity can be boosted in all students, not only the talented ones. In this context, he singled out five principles back in 1965, which can stimulate the creative process in the classroom:

- pay attention to unusual matters,
- pay attention to imaginative and unusual ideas,
- show students that their ideas have value,
- occasionally give students the opportunity to do something practical that won't be graded,
- connect evaluation with causes and consequences.

In the past fifty years many authors have investigated creativity and creative problem solving at all levels. Skills relevant to creativity, among other things, include an understanding of complex relationships and situations and the possibility of disassembling mental structures and assembling new ones during problem solving.

Table 2 shows some of the attitudes of researchers who study creativity.

Table 2: *Some of the principles of creative problem solving derived from contemporary theory and research (according to Treffinger, Isakson 2005)*

SOME OF THE PRINCIPLES OF CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING DERIVED FROM CONTEMPORARY THEORY AND RESEARCH	
Taylor and Sacks, 1981. Torrance, 2000.	Creative opportunities exist in all people.
Torrance and Safter, 1990.	Creativity can be expressed by all people in an extremely wide range of areas or objects, perhaps in an almost endless number of ways.

Dunn, Dunn and Treffinger, 1992. Selby, Treffinger, Isaksen and Lauer, 2002. Selby, Treffinger, Isaksen and Lauer, 2004.	Creativity is usually approached or displayed in accordance with interests, preferences and individual styles
Neethling, 2000. Alenikov, 2002.	People can work creatively while in a creative mood, according to different degrees of achievement or importance.
Neethling, 2000. Selby et al., 2004.	Through personal assessment and deliberate intervention that is to say, through education individuals can make better use of their creative styles, increase the level of their creative achievement and thus fully realize their creative potential.

Research on creativity can also be distinguished with regard to methods of research. The psychometric approach is based on methods that allow direct measurement. Alongside experimental approach, there is also the biometric approach that uses various modern techniques in neuroscience to measure brain activity. Neurologist Alice Flaherty presented the model of creative functioning through three important factors (Flaherty, 2005).

She described creativity as a result of the interaction of:

– the frontal lobe,
– the temporal lobe
– dopamine from the limbic system.

The frontal lobe is considered responsible for the formation of ideas, while the temporal lobe is held responsible for the processing, correction and evaluation of ideas. High levels of dopamine in the body increase the arousal of the organism during a goal-oriented activity and reduce latent inhibition.

Historiometric and biographical approaches deal with the investigation of the creativity of significant individuals. The biographical approach is based on case studies of individuals while the historiometric approach analyses historical and biographical data and the historical circumstances in which a person created (Balaško 2007).

Stevanović (2003) distinguishes ten creative models: the creative model, the problematic-exploratory model, the receptive-aesthetic model, the essayist-synthetic model, the algorithmic-mathematical model, the exemplary-paradigmatic model, the multimedia/multi-source model, the computer-simulation model, the literary-artistic model and the structural- graphic model. He points out that the concept of creativity in school involves a set of pedagogical, psychological, organizational and didactic-methodological measures to achieve progressivity in planning, organizing, implementing, elaborating, the application of educational work in creative interactive relations of teachers and students, active participation of educational content and the connection of schools and society. Treffinger et al. (2002) divide the characteristics of creativity into four categories, with the following features of creative people:

1. Creating ideas – fluency, flexibility, originality, elaborateness and metaphorical thinking;
2. Deepening the idea – analyzing, synthesizing, reorganization, evaluation, finding relationships, the desire to create order from chaos or to resolve ambiguities;
3. Openness and courage to explore ideas – problem sensitivity, aesthetic sensitivity, courage, a sense of humour, playfulness, fantasy and imagination, risk acceptance, perseverance, etc.
4. Listening to their "inner voice" – awareness of creativity, perseverance or endurance, self-guidance, internal control, introspectiveness, freedom from stereotypes, concentration, energy and work ethics.

Children who have problems with hearing and speech have difficulty in expressing their feelings and needs. They lack self-confidence, social skills and verbal skills. It is frustrating for children and traumatic for their parents, but a challenge for their teachers. Encouraging creativity and finding talent is important for all children, but especially for children with disabilities. Numerous studies show that children with disabilities can be creative, and gifted and thus break down stereotypes and prejudices about the possibilities of

students with disabilities. Eisen (2001) studies the creative abilities of children with learning disabilities using diagnostics designed for assessing creativity, without the use of verbal or analytical skills. The study included 16 children without disabilities and 16 children with learning disabilities. Children with learning disabilities achieved significantly higher results on non-verbal tests, but not on the control verbal task.

Czernecka and Szymura (2008) examined relationships between alexithymia, imaginative thinking and creativity levels. Contrary to previous studies, a behavioural method for measuring imagination was used (neutral and emotional versions of the Mental rotation test). The level of creativity was measured by the Urban-Jellen test and the Creative visualization assignment. The NEO-FFI personality test was applied as well. It is assumed that individuals with a high alexithymia score will have a reduced imagination, as well as low levels of creativity. In a sample of 136 subjects, individuals with alexithymia have proved to be significantly less creative than individuals who did not have alexithymia. However, there was no difference in imagination with regard to the existence of alexithymia here.

The results are discussed in the context of the impact of personality on the performance of cognitive tasks, which also sheds new light on correlates of alexithymia. Taft and Hameedy (2009) have studied positive and negative aspects of dyslexia in Iran. 26 elementary school students with dyslexia and 26 elementary school students without dyslexia participated in this study. The Diagnostic Reading Test was applied in order to identify differences in reading skills between the two groups. The Torrance Test of Creativity and the Visuospatial processing test were used for measuring creativity.

Children without language difficulties have achieved significantly better results on visual and verbal memory tests for words and concrete objects, and abstract concepts. Students with dyslexia achieved significantly better results for the visual and auditory memorization of specific objects. Their visuospatial memory was better than visual semantic memory. Furthermore, they remembered the image better than verbal content. An interesting finding is that students with dyslexia achieved better results than non-dyslexics in original thinking, as well as in creativity in general. These findings indicate that a change of attitude towards students with dyslexia is required. This is

supported by the following chapters, which will address the development of literary and artistic creative expression and talent in children with hearing and/or speech-language difficulties.

Meng-Jung, Wei-Lin, Le-Yin (2011) were interested to see if children with Asperger syndrome show creativity, and they explored the relationship between nonverbal creativity, nonverbal IQ and vocabulary range. Sixteen children with Asperger syndrome and 42 of their peers without the syndrome solved divergent thinking and feeling tests. Results showed that subjects with Asperger syndrome have significantly higher results in originality and elaboration compared to their peers. Nonverbal divergent thinking was associated with non-verbal IQ in children with Asperger syndrome. The results demonstrated a better performance in originality and a lower performance in flexibility which suggests that developmental opportunities for children with Asperger syndrome might lie in subjects which interest them.

There are methods that can stimulate creativity in children with disabilities and/or awaken affinities or even talent while simultaneously strengthening cognitive, psychological, language and speech, tactile, visual, sensory and motor skills. Teachers or rehabilitators, who lead them through this process will introduce them to their own skills and open a door to entirely new opportunities. The teacher should know the students well and be able to plan step-by-step activities that will help achieve what he wants. Planning and the creative process are more important than the result, because through them the student learns about himself and how to develop their skills. The assessment of skills and acquisition of more knowledge about the students and their individual characteristics will help the teacher to find out their interests and preferences, and determine the most appropriate learning strategies. Developing plans, finding a way out of unsuccessful situations, the acceptance of obtained results even when they are not what we imagined; these are the universal guidelines for life that naturally occur when using a creatively encouraging education for students with disabilities. Students are taught that mistakes are part of the preparation for success because we learn from our mistakes.
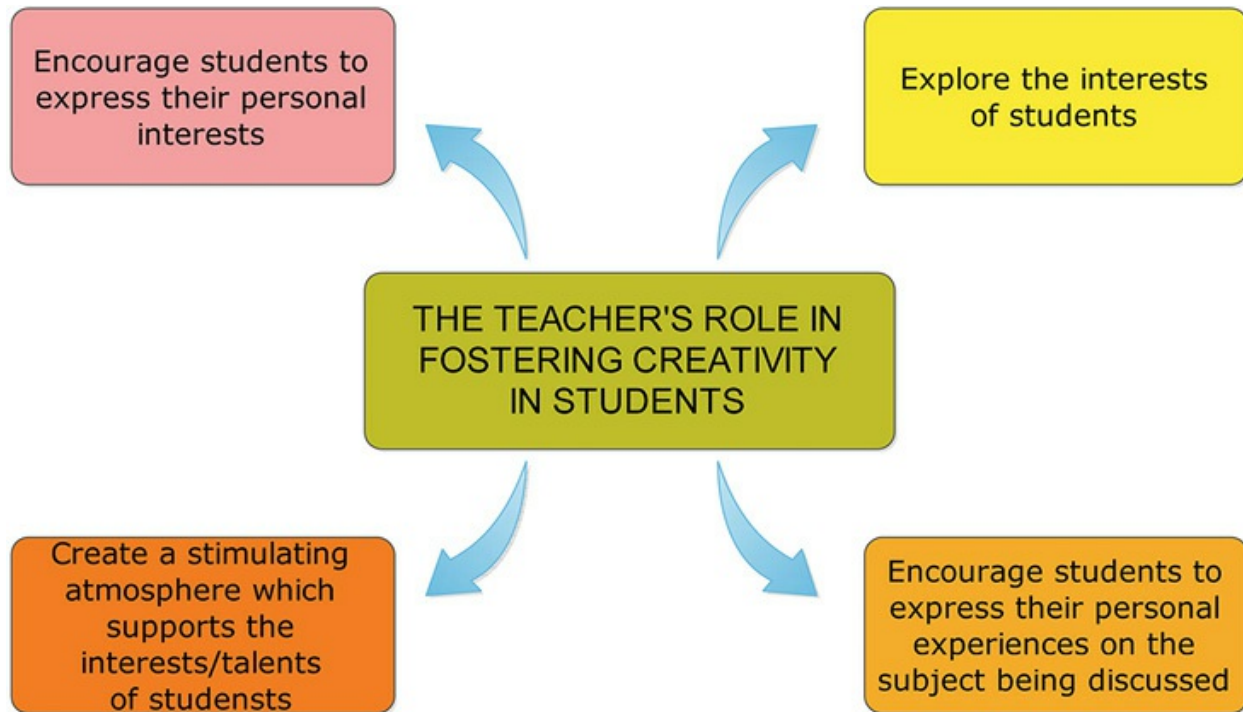
Figure 6: *The teacher's role in fostering creativity in students*

Many teachers and educators still believe that creativity refers only to the gifted and talented children, while children with developmental disabilities are not perceived to possess such potential. Ambar Chakravarty (2009) has suggested that children with learning disabilities should be encouraged to develop their talents at full capacity, instead of subjecting them to an exaggerated correction of irregularly coded symbols and operations.

Changing negative attitudes and prejudices, recognizing future talents within their environments, as well as support from family and teachers, are all immensely important. Like all students, students with disabilities are also interested in activities they are good at because it is satisfying to succeed. The prerequisites for developing creativity are boosting self-esteem and self-confidence from the earliest age. Regardless of their difficulties, the students' creations are to be measured by their therapeutic and aesthetic values. The particular importance of encouraging creativity is that students develop a sense of worth and pride due to their achievements and build a positive attitude towards themselves and the school.

As we have already pointed out, the creative problem solving model has expanded and changed in many ways since its beginnings five decades ago. Researchers from the fields of psychology, cognitive science, anthropology and educational sciences explored the process and its rules and how it can help students to be more effective and creative in solving complex tasks. Modern science has moved away from the model that prescribes specific steps which must be applied in a fixed, rigid sequence. The present day creative problem-solving model requires careful, free choices in which methods and tools that will most suit the requirements of the student and his work will be elected to solve problems. This approach to creativity makes the process more efficient and stronger, students can learn more about their own creative abilities and styles, learn to appropriately apply useful strategies and achieve better results and satisfaction during the education process.

Educational institutions should be cradles of creativity. It is very important that employees in educational institutions create an atmosphere where creative development is not suppressed, but on the contrary, very much encouraged. Bouillet and Bijedić (2007) note that a positive, supportive and culturally sensitive atmosphere contributes to higher student achievement.

The aim of encouraging creativity is to enable students with disabilities, and their teachers, to achieve the highest degree of motivation that will create the most efficient model for acquiring educational content. Students with disabilities can be talented for art or technical creativity, just like any other children. It is a question of the skill of parents and teachers as to whether or not these talents or preferences are detected on time. In the institution where we work, rehabilitators and teachers, together with an expert team at the school, dedicate a great deal of attention to finding and developing talents. In order for children with disabilities to be successfully socialized into mainstream education it is especially important to allow them to participate in activities which, despite their disabilities, they can take part in equally and be successful (Dulčić et al. 2012). A disabled child learns how to be creative by exploring, experimenting and dreaming, guided by a teacher or a rehabilitator. This skill is honed through playing, which is why we have emphasized its importance. It is particularly important to what extent and how the environment influences the creativity of the individual. Every child should feel

like a useful member of the community, and his feelings and personality must be respected. Teachers need to have faith in the abilities of students with disabilities and support their maximum achievements.

Creativity can be developed, and for it to develop, many components must overlap. Various factors have been shown to be associated with creativity, of which the most important include cultural diversity, availability of the ideal (a role model), availability of financial support and the like (Simonton, 2000, according to Arar and Rački, 2003).

Creativity does not develop equally under all conditions. Hong and Milgram (2010) examined the relationship between general and specific factors of creativity. Influences of learning disability, ethnicity, gender and age on general and specific creative thinking were tested. Based on the results, the authors have concluded that different life experiences (education and cultural affiliation) have a greater impact on specific creative thinking than on the general creativity. It is very important to create situations that will motivate students. Creativity will flourish only in those educational institutions where new ideas are encouraged, as well as their exchange. Jeffrey and Woods (1996) conducted a study which came to the conclusion that the atmosphere in the classroom and school influences creativity.
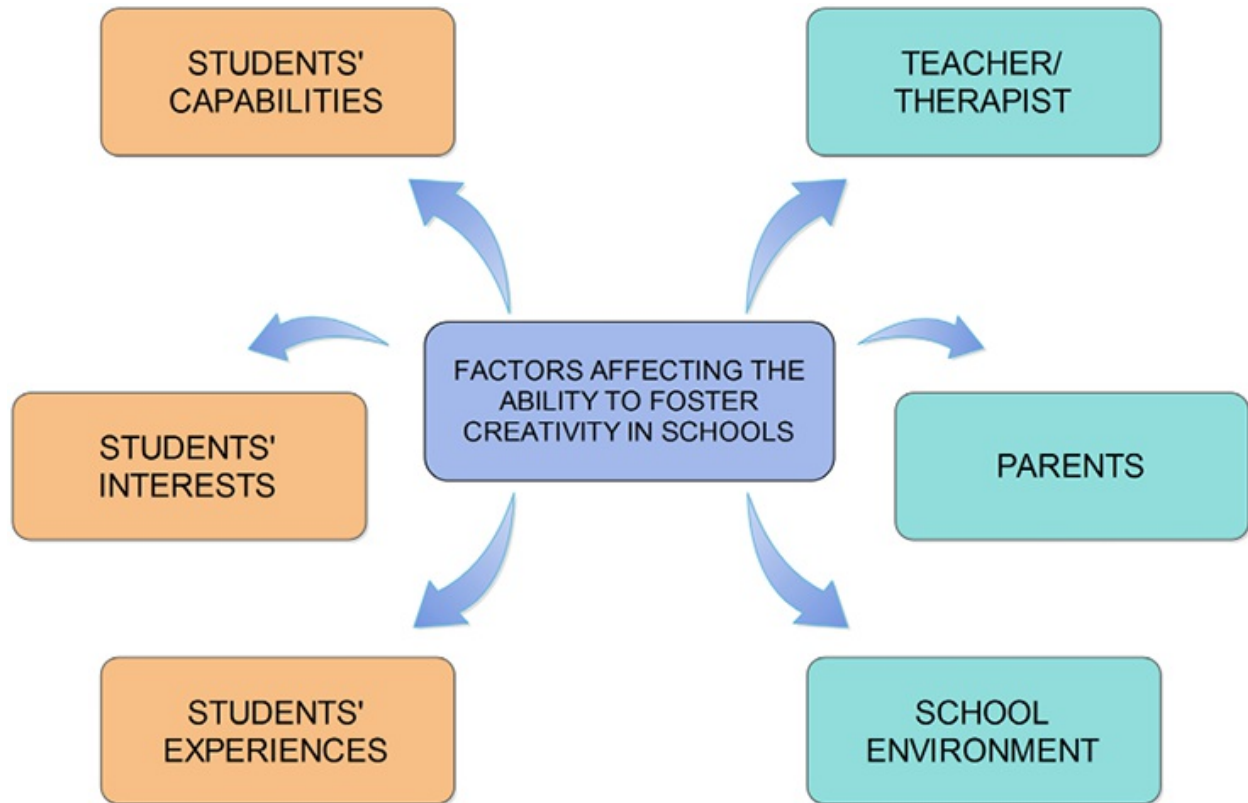
Figure 7. *Factors affecting the ability to foster creativity in schools*

In practice, unfortunately, negative patterns may often be noticed in certain educational institutions. Teachers should be more tolerant and open to various possible questions, but also ready for unusual answers. An authoritarian attitude by school staff does not create a stimulating atmosphere in the classroom. Ignoring the students or teacher's ideas, as well as intolerance to errors on both sides, isn't a path to progress either.

The development of creativity in children with developmental disabilities is also affected by some objective reasons that hinder this process. These are, for example, too many students in the classroom, teachers' lack of education, and inadequately elaborated work programmes. Sometimes teaching is interfered with by a lack of time, inadequate teaching spaces, but also a lack of money to provide new opportunities. Regardless of the circumstances and the students' difficulties, the task of any educational institution is to encourage creativity in children. Children are taught that

inspiration can be found anywhere, thus awakening their innate curiosity and instinct.

The development of teaching techniques that achieve self-fulfilment and creativity in children is among the most important goals of our society because it determines our future. To facilitate the understanding and implementation of this concept, the educational staff must have the opportunity to develop new teaching strategies through a process that stems from personal motivation and a stimulative social climate. By showing examples of good practice resulting from the application of the verbotonal method of rehabilitation in the education of students with impaired hearing and/or speech, we strive to provide examples that can be applied in regular schools in terms of educational integration.

In the following chapters that address working with students in the area of artistic and literary expression, the authors offer numerous and diverse approaches resulting from years of practice, which are designed and directed to encourage all of the expressive possibilities from artistic and literary expression.

The diversity of approaches enables and opens a wide field of challenges in which each student finds their own interests and mode of expression. This methodologically diverse approach activates a great creative momentum, which has resulted in numerous successes in both areas, as a confirmation of the presence of the great creative potential of students regardless of their speech language-hearing difficulties.

4. VISUAL AND ART EDUCATION AS AN INCENTIVE FOR VERSATILE DEVELOPMENT

Visual and art education should be understood very widely, not only as an education and training area allowing individuals to develop sensibility for the use of art techniques, but primarily as the content that encourages a comprehensive development of almost all the sensory areas, the development of opinions and the building of a well-rounded personality. The invaluable potential of teaching art/visual culture lies in integral learning through a number of different research areas, from nature and society/biology to computer science. Research and learning through art requires linking cognitive, sensory and motor areas. Arts as an area of study is inextricably linked to other content that students encounter during school, it offers a "space" for research and the personal upgrading of these components (Košćec, Bračun, 2011).

To put it briefly, visual arts education in elementary school has two basic, interrelated, goals: the development of visual thinking and the development of the individual expressive abilities of students.

The very term *visual thinking* shows us that thinking as a cognitive process is necessarily related to visual perception. For visual thinking to be more complete and of higher quality, it is necessary to encourage the development of a range of skills in students, such as: visual perception, memory, the analysis and synthesis of form (grasping the whole and dismantling it into parts), the capacity to identify characteristics and mutual relationships between forms (visual logic), etc. Students are encouraged to

continually complete sensory integration, which for some of them, because of specific difficulties in early development, may be reduced.

All of this encourages the development of abstract and divergent thinking which are the preconditions for every creative process (features of divergent thinking, as opposed to convergent, logical thinking, are: redefinition, sensitivity to problems, fluency, originality, elaboration and flexibility (Guilford, 1950).

The additional fostering of these skills is of particular importance for students with hearing and speech/language difficulties. Many of these skills may prove to be of importance for overcoming difficulties in learning and communication.

The other, equally important aspect of teaching art/visual culture is its aim is to train students to shape their ideas i.e. expressions through practical work in a particular medium, regardless of whether it's a draft/plan of an imaginary house, an emotion or some other, abstract idea. Through this process the student develops cognitive and motor skills, adopts practical skills, but also builds his own image of himself and the world around him.

Also, one of the characteristics of teaching art is that it implies greater freedom in the adoption of content. Students do not feel the pressure of providing correct or incorrect solutions, and individual experience takes precedence over the adoption of abstract actions and procedures. Many of them experience the process of forming and creating as a relaxing, almost therapeutic activity. Therefore, it's no wonder that in the visual arts students with hearing and/or speech/language difficulties will find a medium in which they can compensate for possible difficulties encountered in other areas.

4.1 SPECIFICS OF TEACHING ART WHEN WORKING WITH STUDENTS WITH HEARING AND/OR SPEECH/LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

How a child with impaired hearing or speech/language difficulties will respond continues to depend on many factors – on the type and extent of

damage to the students' individual abilities to adapt to working methods or the dynamics of the group. On the other hand, art classes offer great versatility depending on the type of content, methods and the media of expression. Most students positively respond to this diversity because it allows them to find a medium in which they can best express themselves. In this respect it is important to individually approach each student, following his abilities and affinities while avoiding generalizations. However, we can observe some specifics in teaching art to students with speech and language difficulties.

4.1.1 SPECIFICS OF STUDENTS WITH SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES IN ART CLASS

Dyslexia may present difficulties in spatial and temporal orientation which can create a general feeling of disorganization and disorientation. Students will therefore have difficulty in following complex instructions and tasks that require longer and more complex elaboration. Orientation on paper will be poor and students will have difficulties with presenting spatial relationships. Their work will often be imprecise and messy. Students who have difficulty with fine graphomotor skills will have difficulties in working with specific materials and art techniques. Some students with language and speech difficulties have difficulty with maintaining attention on certain content, which sometimes results in motor restlessness. In verbal communication with students, misunderstandings can arise when using abstract and ambiguous terms. However, the presence of visual material and the use of art techniques help to overcome them.

On the other hand, many students with this difficulty have the ability to change their point of view during problem solving, which is a prerequisite for the development of creativity. They are playful and curious by nature and often notice a multitude of details, received information leads to unexpected connections, and their attention is guided by free association. Should they be given time and a way to express what they are experiencing or thinking, an extensive but unarticulated inner wealth will be revealed. Therefore, in working with students with language and speech difficulties it is continually important to recognize and raise awareness of the current understanding and

skills and help them find ways to articulate them. Teaching should not be focused on the subject matter being offered to students through the finished formula and unambiguous solutions, instead they should be encouraged to be independent in structuring their own thoughts.

4.1.2 SPECIFICS OF STUDENTS WITH HEARING DIFFICULTIES IN ART CLASS

For a child who cannot hear, visual information becomes the mainstay in communication. Therefore, most students with hearing impairments have sharp visual perception.

In art class, these students will respond nicely to tasks which are based on precise observation of the visual characteristics of forms and its transfer into the medium of drawing, painting and three-dimensional models. They will manage well with the application/use of linear perspective, tonal or graphic modelling, tasks that are based on an understanding of ratios and proportions of shape, etc. Students feel safe with precise technical instructions and they are quick to remember and imitate demonstrated actions. These characteristics should be nurtured and guided, especially as some students will continue their education in areas where the quality and speed of visual perception are essential. The precision of visual/art expression will take precedence over spontaneity.

Due to a heavy reliance on the concrete – pictorial meaning of forms, students will find it harder to deal with contents that are unavailable to them in this form. They are less familiar with the language of metaphors and abstract symbols and therefore slower to open to new meanings. Also, their slower and more difficult speech/language communication and narrowed vocabulary can affect the way and the speed at which certain subject matter is treated, new concepts introduced or different areas linked.

We could say that in students with language and speech difficulties the problem results in their difficulty to screen and organize the available information, while the students with hearing impairments sometimes tend to reduce too much during screening.

Generalization and screening govern our observational activity and affect how we build our picture of the world (Damjanov 1991). However, it is possible to develop these capabilities and thus cultivate our attention and thinking. The aim is to teach construction and not reduction. Visual exercises and art tasks can play an important role in education.

4.2 PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF WORK

Gordana Košćec, an art teacher, has developed specific methods and forms of work developed from her experience and long-standing practices in working with students in the elementary school at The SUVAG Polyclinic. Adapting arts classes to students with hearing and speech/language difficulties doesn't signify reducing the teaching content, it means structuring teaching in such a way that all students can follow and adopt the contents, regardless of whether they have difficulties or not.

Classes are organized so that each student can experience, perceive and express himself, and follow contents according to his/her individual abilities.

4.2.1 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF WORK

- **Gradually approaches and maintaining attention through short tasks**

Students who have difficulties organizing content may find it difficult to follow long and complex instructions. The gradual approach to work with shorter assignments allows for easier orientation. Different levels of tasks complement one another and are built upon gradually.

For students with hearing impairments gradual work helps to avoid possible misunderstandings in communication and gives time to confirm and further enrich the information received.

- **Linking sensory, cognitive and motor experiences**

Because of the content overload of many subjects, classes are often based on abstract tasks removed from concrete actions and experiences and removed from any context. Due to the specificity of the method used to process and interconnect facilities, students with hearing and language and speech difficulties find that this kind of work makes their adoption of content more difficult. Therefore, they should be allowed to work from primary sensory stimulus, to verbalize it, connect it with existing knowledge through games and associations, put it into context and to expand and transfer from one medium to another. Connecting and upgrading these experiences facilitates the absorption of new knowledge. In this process the concreteness of visual examples and direct work with art materials certainly helps the students.

- **Linking different sensory areas**

The verbotonal method and its actions toward the rehabilitation of children with difficulties of hearing and speech at The SUVAG Polyclinic encourages children to use all their sensory resources to build the best possible communication with the environment. For art classes, students are encouraged to connect and "translate" the image (what is seen) into sound, sound into movement, movement into visual form, etc.

- **The research approach to work**

Students are never offered ready-made solutions and answers, but instead they are provided with contents and methods that encourage self-exploration and expression because the experience that leads to reaching a decision is as important as the solution itself.

- **Developing social skills through alternate work in groups, pairs and individually**

Hearing and speech/language difficulties affect the quality of communication and thus, in many social situations, feelings of self-confidence as well. Through the alternation of different types of work students are encouraged to be flexible in communication.

Through wellstructured playing they learn independence in their work, but also how to be members or leaders of the group, to help others or to seek help.

4.2.2 METHODS

Teaching visual culture offers great methodological diversity. Games and exercises based on visual research, experimenting with art materials including movement, acting, the interpretation of music, visual puzzles, work on texts, etc. – all of this can be 'a tool' to access content in the field of art/visual culture.

Using different methods allows students to acquire different approaches to a particular problem. This promotes flexibility in work and communication, which is of particular importance for students with hearing and language/speech difficulties.

It is important to mention that the games, exercises and tasks used in teaching the arts and visual culture are based on visual contents i.e., visual art (art works and visual language). This provides additional quality of content, which is never unambiguous but already enriched with different levels of sensory and cognitive stimuli.

4.3 EXAMPLES OF EXERCISES AND GAMES IN ART CLASSES

Exercises and games that we present here allow for the classes to be conducted in accordance with the principles listed. By their structure, they provide many variations. They can be short or the entire lesson can be based on them. They are also applicable to different types of content and the scope of the content we want the students to learn.

Games engage the complete attention of students and focus them on various aspects of the content. They encourage imagination and intuition, which certainly affects the originality and richness of artistic expression.

Apart from descriptions of exercises, we also provide examples of art works created from such practice in art classes at The SUVAG Polyclinic Elementary School.

4.3.1 GAMES/EXERCISES IN ART TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS

We stressed the importance of constantly connecting the motor, cognitive and sensory experiences and their gradual upgrade in creating integrated knowledge for students with hearing and speech/language difficulties.

In games with art techniques students first have the opportunity to explore the characteristics of the material and visual tools through short exercises, regardless of whether it is drawing, painting or sculpting. So, we will start with the concrete experience of working in a particular material and new activities and tasks are based on this. For students with language and speech difficulties the advantage of this form of work is freedom from predetermined results, which allows them to relax and spontaneously try out art techniques. They observe that there isn't a procedure that is 'wrong', but only one that more or less allows them to express their idea. Also, the gradual nature of the work (the sequencing of short tasks) allows them to slowly connect and build their experiences, consciously constructing a whole. Students with hearing impairments are encouraged to experiment through these games and remain open to the unexpected new meanings that a form can carry.

In games where we explore drawing techniques, students receive different short assignments of 'scribbling'; blacken the paper, fill out the paper as quickly as possible, fill it with dots, draw 10 completely identical lines, draw in the rhythm of clapping, make a drop of ink 'take a walk' on the paper by tilting the paper, etc. The instructions are in a way very precise, but a part of them allows the students to create their own drawing, and at the end they are encouraged to devise and set the rules themselves. It is a similar method with the choice of techniques; in some tasks only pencil/charcoal/pen and ink are used, and in others the students themselves choose what they will work with.

Between the tasks we talk about the experience of scribbling/drawing, the energy or concentration that we needed for a specific task to succeed,

about how our pencil or pen behaved, what was created on the paper… Then, we link associations to the resulting drawings, connect them with our personal experience, tell stories, etc. So together, based on the direct experience of working with/in a particular material, we can find a motivation for upgrading these small drawings: we can make a collage from them or draw additional forms on them, and finally art works are created out of 'scribbles' – new, personal 'stories' by the students.

When researching painting techniques it seems that the tempera painting technique offers the most features for playing. Students apply tempera to the base/medium using different methods: dripping, spraying, spreading with a piece of card, applying with a brush in spots, trying different brush strokes, applying layer over layer, scratching, scraping… After trying out several different procedures, each student chooses the one he likes the most. Then, depending on the group dynamics, we choose the motif together or individually, i.e. the topic you want expressed in this technique.

When working with paper sculptures students have a variety of tools and paper types at their disposal, which vary in their thickness and texture. By playing with materials: squashing, bending, twisting, folding, piercing/perforating, cutting and tearing them, we compete to shape the most symmetrical/regular or interesting shape… Then we connect the characteristics of shapes with feelings or experiences: a tired shape, an angry or a cheerful shape, a tough shape, a gentle one… the stormy surface of the sea, the touch of old hands, the shape of a flame… Finally we bond and collage the obtained forms into units in which we recognize new motifs and meanings.

J. D., *6th grade, combined techniques*

L. Z., *5th grade, combined techniques*

Figures 8 and 9: *Students' works created by playing with art materials*

4.3.2 VISUALIZING THE IDEA

We play games like the popular board game "Pictionary". These games of drawing and guessing encourage the students to quickly share ideas and analyse and synthesise shapes. Besides drawing shapes on paper or a board, the game can be transferred to the medium of clay. Working with clay is especially interesting for children because they get "carried" by a sense of creating. As they advance, students gradually close off and lose their spontaneity which

should be stopped by constantly offering new levels of play. Also, students who have difficulties with fine graphomotor skills can resist/refuse to work in clay because this material is more difficult to manipulate. "Pictionary" gives an opportunity to react very spontaneously, through playing (the group competition factor is especially important) quickly and easily, in the form of sketches/krokija, and to model forms they would otherwise claim they do not know and can't form.

The game takes place as follows: Students are divided into two groups. Group A gives one student from group B a specific concept that is written on a piece of paper (e.g., cat). His task is to shape ("visualize") in clay the given concept as soon as possible so that his group can guess the concept in question. The teacher partially directs the students in the selection of concepts to ensure that the demands of a particular task are suitable for all students, but also to encourage them to slowly broaden their meaning. Concrete concepts are the starting point (cat, tree, glasses…), transitioning to more abstract ones (rain, crowd, laughing, love…). In presenting such abstract concepts, students spontaneously use visual symbols and associations. There is a certain difference in the reactions of children with hearing and language/speech difficulties. Children with hearing impairments quickly master the structure of forms, ranging from what is typical (e.g., long neck of a giraffe) and recognize shapes within 20-30 seconds, but will often have difficulty with the naming/specification of certain forms. Here arises the possibility for new research because, rather than naming the form (object, concept), they describe some of its other characteristics. Children with normal hearing but with severe disabilities in reading and writing will experience the same difficulties in structuring shapes. They will build forms more slowly, starting with the less important details and the game dynamics will be much slower. In an attempt to guess the mystery object/concept, students often use very different terms and associations. Therefore, they are asked to explain their associations and link/connect them with characteristics of forms in clay. Additional wealth is generated when the whole group corrects the student who moulds the clay and those who guess the shape.

"The Dragon"

"Hearing Device"

"Touch"

"Rhythm"

Figures 10 a, b, c & d: *Visualizing in clay*

4.3.3 DESCRIPTIVE GAMES/EXERCISES

When describing what they see, the modest vocabulary at their disposal will present the greatest difficulty for pupils with hearing impairments. Therefore, the descriptive exercise is enriched by writing out a series of terms/words that can help them with the task. The terms/words that are less familiar to students are also mentioned and further explained before the task. "New" words gain use value only through their frequent use in a specific context. This procedure can also help students with language and speech difficulties who will, due to difficulties in short-term memory, have a clearly visible (printed) reminder in front of them to help them structure their descriptions. To maintain the highest possible attention span of all the students in the group, describing turns into a game, one student describes and other students, following his description, guess the object/phenomenon in question. This way, student focus is maintained and their imagination is encouraged to convert verbal information into a visual image. In addition to describing what is observed (reproductions, photographs, objects or phenomena), it is also possible to

describe what is experienced by other senses (e.g., touching objects in a bag). The objective of the descriptive game is to focus perception, expand vocabulary and maintain a high level of focus on the content. It should be considered that the ability for precise and detailed observation affects the wealth of the artistic expression of students.

4.3.4 GAMES/EXERCISES WITH ART REPRODUCTIONS

The content of an artwork can be a great template for different aspects of working with children regardless of focus, practicing thinking or experiential motivation. This content can be presented to students through a variety of visual puzzles.

- **Blurring projections**

We perform an exercise in which the image projection is blurred. Students have the task to describe and then paint the shapes and colours they distinguish. This way they spontaneously read the compositional structure of the image regardless of whether it is figurative or abstract. Every five minutes the projection gradually sharpens so it is possible to identify and paint in more new shapes. The aim of this exercise is to sharpen visual perception, practice focus and encourage the students to use their imagination and intuition in interpreting what they see. It is important for the students to experience that each of their interpretations (their art works) are different.

Figure 11. *Works created after observing the blurred projection of* Composition IV *by Wassily Kandinsky*

Some students perceive small details or changes in colour, while others start from the clear compositional structure of the whole. And again, the students observed that there are no true or false solutions, and that people see and perceive differently. Almost every student will notice something that the others didn't, and thus the entire group enriches their perception of the whole.

Children with hearing impairments may initially show some resistance to this exercise; they are angry that they "can't see anything". For a child who cannot hear and whose thinking process is primarily based on visual perception, the content which is not "concrete" (concrete – visual) is not understandable nor is it purposeful. Over time, as students get used to the different types of work, the joy of playing begins to prevail over the fear of the unknown and the "unrecognizable".

- **Spot the difference**

In this game, through an intervention in a reproduction artwork, we shape visual puzzles like those in children's magazines, offering two variants of one reproduction, one of which has a few details changed. The revised details can be aimed at directing students' attention to minor changes in character shapes (lines, shades of colour, etc.), or discovering the illogicality in the fabric of the whole (perception of symmetry, order of alternation or repetition of elements, etc.). The ultimate goal of these exercises is to focus visual perception, develop visual memory and logical opinions. Students can be assigned to make corrections on a photocopy of a drawing by themselves, by drawing or erasing. The game continues in that manner, and the students themselves participating in redefining what they have seen.

- **Finishing pictures or drawings**

The game starts so that we single out smaller details from art reproductions (drawings or paintings). Outside the context of the whole we see them as complexes of lines, dots, surfaces and colours… Then we write down associations that can be linked to what we see in an isolated detail. For example, a collection of stains will remind us of rain or rhythm, and a winding line of dancing or busyness, etc. We can describe these forms using words, movement, tapping, voice, etc. A task follows in which the students on the basis of these incentives "continue" the drawing, drawing around the singled out detail. Upon the completion of the drawing we observe the entire art reproduction from which we have singled out details together and we compare it with the students' work. We see where playing with the lines took the artist, and where our imagination lead us.

This is one in a series of exercises that promote abstract thinking in students with hearing impairments. To students with language and speech difficulties the initial detail around which they build a whole will give a foothold for easier visual orientation on paper.

V. K., 5th grade, black ink, wooden stick, brush

Figure 12. *Drawing made by continuing the line detailing from a baroque fence*

4.3.5 GAMES OF RECOMPOSING, REDEFINING AND VARIATIONS IN SHAPE

We have already mentioned that unlike convergent thinking which is selective and based on monitoring logical reasoning, divergent thinking implies leaving the existing well known trails behind and searching for new, unanticipated solutions. In exercises of recomposing, redefining and variation, the completed

form/object/work of art becomes an incentive for playing in which intuition and imagination become priorities.

At the beginning of the class the chosen form/object/artwork is touched, described and regularities in its structure are observed. We pose the following questions: what would happen if we kept the same structure and changed the format, or used the same elements but organized them according to different rules, or put them in a new and unexpected context, etc.? The quick sharing and creation of original ideas among students is encouraged, which is then followed by the development (elaboration) of original ideas in detail.

For students with disabilities in reading and writing those exercises in which the shape of a letter is redefined are particularly interesting. The letter is interpreted as a visual form, freed of its symbolic meaning. First, we observe and describe letters and note the laws of material forms: symmetry, the combination of straight and curved lines, similarities and differences between the letters… Then we deduce the "rules of the game" from what we observed; we change the shape of the letter and invent its meaning, i.e. give it a voice, a sound or even a word that would fit this form. There may be many variations of this exercise; for example, the transfer of a letter into a three-dimensional shape by moulding clay or shaping tinfoil, wordplay, or even designing an entirely "new typeface". These exercises are also recommended for individual work with students. Through the laborious mastering of reading and writing skills they provide a space for the student to play and make it easier to remember and adopt the characteristics of a font.

The more complex the structure and meaning of what is redefined, the greater the amount of game content. Redefining visual artwork carries additional layers of meaning and the redefinition game will be structured in accordance with the age and interests of students. For example, sixth grade students will use their knowledge of geometry in the reconstruction of a compositional network on a work of art, and eighth-grade students will explore and express how they see themselves and their relationship with others by redefining artistic portraits.

K. D., 6th grade, collage
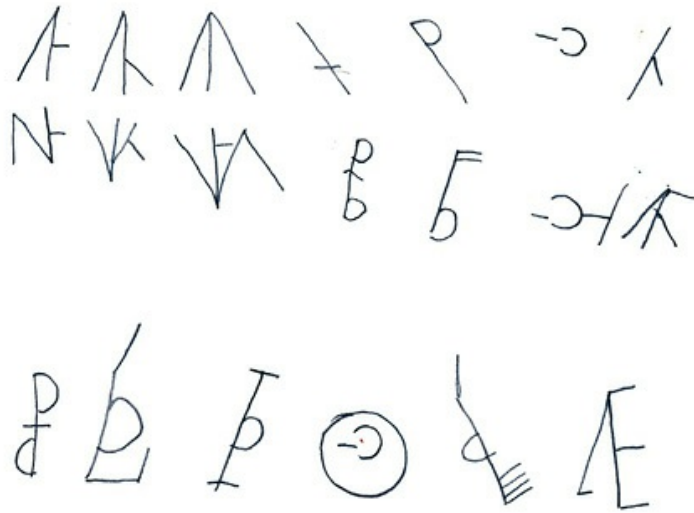
A. G., 5th grade, pencil

Figure 13. a & b: *Games of varying letter shapes.*
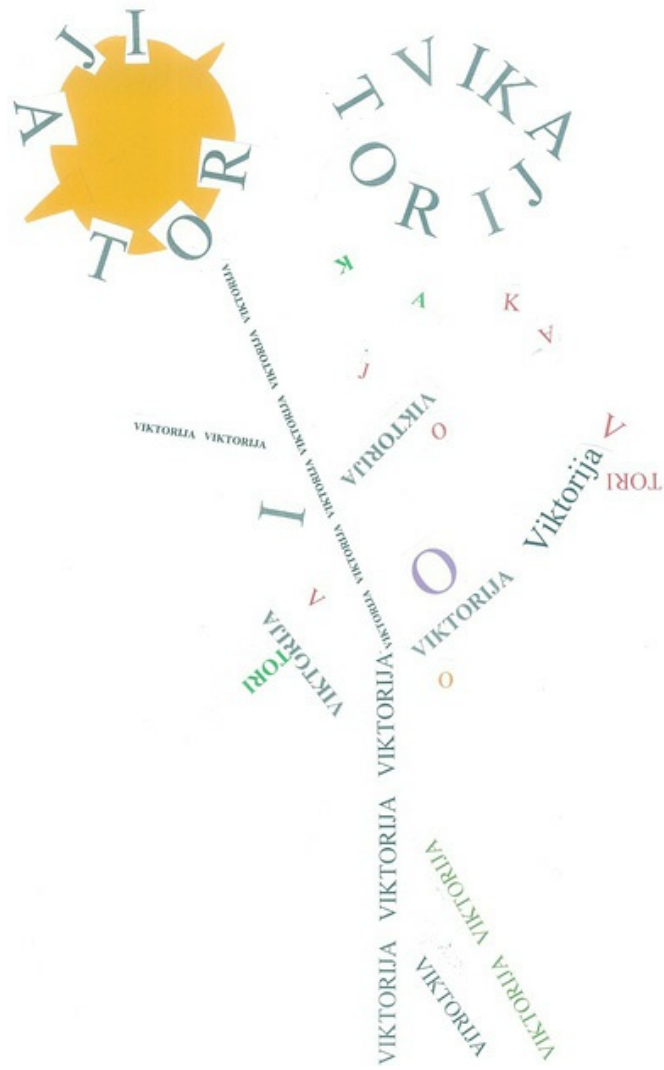
V. K., 5th grade, collage

Figure 14. *Playing with their names*

D. G., 5th grade, clay

Figure 15. *Varying the shape of an apple*
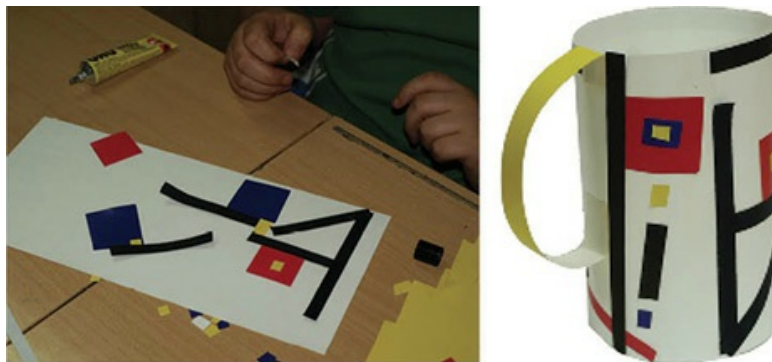
B. J., 6th grade, collage

Figure 16. *Redefining Piet Mondrian's* Composition

A. B., 8th grade, collage

Figure 17. *Redefining the portrait of* Joan of Aragon *by Francesco Laurana*

4.3.6 GAMES/EXERCISES OF CONNECTING DIFFERENT SENSORY EXPERIENCES

The verbotonal method that underlies the complex rehabilitation of students in the elementary school of The SUVAG Polyclinic emphasizes the importance of a multisensory approach to working with students with hearing and/or speech/language difficulties. Teaching visual arts allows such an approach to work and students are encouraged to transfer experiences from one sensory area to another during which a wide range of cognitive processes is activated.

- **Movement**

Most of the forms that we see have features such as rhythm, symmetry, flow, direction, intensity… those values that we recognize as characteristic of movement. Games that include movement are used to guide and maintain

focus on a particular content and to enable a better experience of the works and, indirectly, to enrich the students' visual expression. In order to interpret the observed work through movement the student uses the attention of the entire body. The student spontaneously engages the whole as well as details, constantly evaluating and comparing what is being observed. Students with language and speech difficulties may have problems with spatial orientation (with relations such as front – back, left – right, etc.), which is another reason why they should be encouraged to have these experiences.

Games involving interpretation through movement can be very short and suitable for performing in any part of the lesson. For example, when we want to further focus the students' attention on some content, we can perform an exercise in which what is seen we interpret by drawing with a finger in the air. Exercises can also vary throughout the lesson according to the various forms and characteristics of body in motion. Most often we use them when we observe sculptures and content related to three-dimensional shaping and projecting sculptures filmed from different angles. We start with the analysis of the surface detail of sculptures, imagining and describing the way the surface feels to touch. Then the students interpret the form of the sculpture using their hands or the movement of the whole body, individual parts or the composition as a whole. In addition to movement, what is seen and experienced is converted to form in clay, wire or paper. Isolated from the original whole, the form is now possible to interpret with new meanings: be it sharp, strong, or gentle, like a wave… The exercise can be upgraded by observing recordings of dance and dance moves. While watching them we pay attention to forms in space resulting from the dancers' movement. Based on these incentives an assignment is elaborated upon with the students; using modelling materials they build three-dimensional forms with which they interpret a certain movement, emotion or phenomenon.

At the end of the lesson the students can interpret their art works using movement.
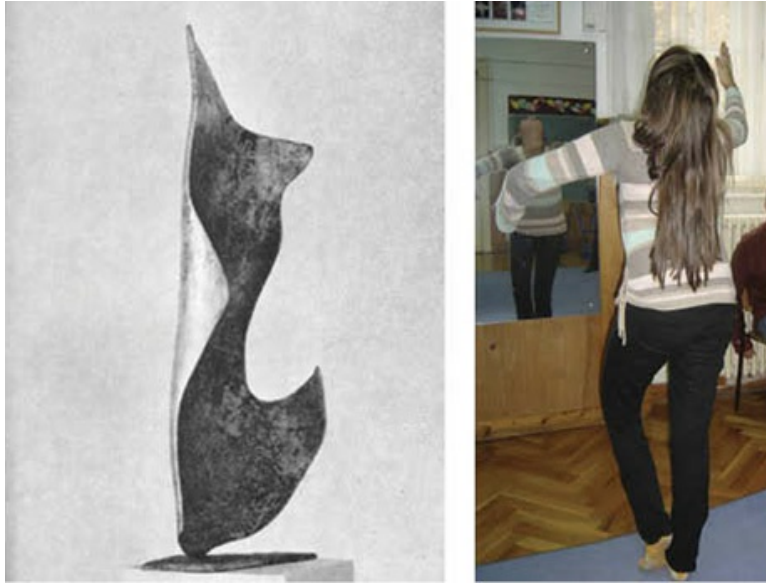
Figure 18. *A student interprets a sculpture by Vojin Bakić with her body movements*

Artwork by 7th grade students

Figure 19. *Interpreting movement through drawing, aluminium foil and paper sculptures*

- **Interpretation of rhythm**

Rhythm is one of the most important organizing principles. We recognize it in movement, speech, music, the visual environment, heartbeats, inhaling and exhaling, etc. Recognizing and controlling rhythm are important for listening, speech and reading.

In a visual environment and the visual arts, rhythm is recognized as repetition and the exchange of lines, colours, stains, surfaces and weight… Students are encouraged to transmit experiences from one medium to another and back again using rhythm exercises (sound – picture – sound) and spontaneously decode and interpret what they see and hear (sensory –

conceptual – sensory). So the students can clap the rhythm of their drawings, interpret the rhythm of someone's movement, speech or music, using drawings or paintings. The range varies from simple and recognizable rhythmic sequences to complex and freer rhythms which we recognize in works of visual art and music.

Joint artwork, 7ᵗʰ grade students, cardboard print

Figure 20. *The interpretation of rhythm in compositions played by Kodo drummers*

- **The interpretation of sound, voice and speech**

Sound, voice, and especially speech carry a lot of information from which we, just like the ones we visually receive, often pick and choose only the information which allows for faster and easier communication. Games based on the interpretation of sound, voice and speech encourage the students to sharpen their auditory attention and become aware of everything that affects the final experience of what they are listening to.

For example, students can get the task to use colour and painterly gesture for interpreting various forms of speech: whisper, quarrelling, singing,

screaming, etc. By painting they bring awareness to various characteristics of voice and speech as well as their own emotional response to what they hear. To maintain the pace of work and improve the focus of students, smaller paper sizes are used for painting. This will leave enough time for students to comment on their works and to verbalize what they were thinking and feeling during painting. That which they painted on paper helps them to further raise awareness and build upon their auditory experience. This kind of exercise adds to the auditory rehabilitation in which these students are involved.

Artwork by 5th and 6th grade students, watercolour

Whispering
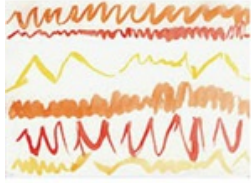
Screaming

Arguing

Singing

"*Mum is talking softly*"

Figure 21. *Interpretation of speech and sound. Works by students (5th and 6th grade), watercolour.*
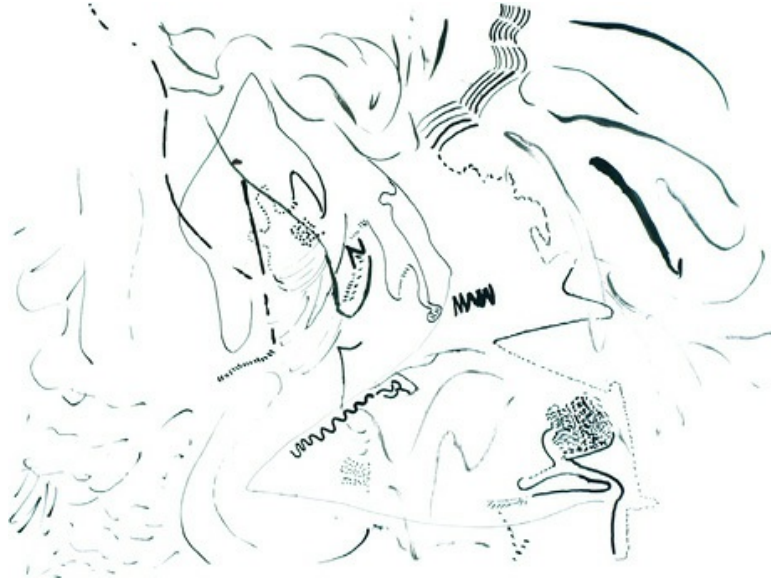
T. L., 6th grade, black ink, pen

Figure 22. *Interpreting the sound of a storm*

Exercises in which we start by observing an art work take the opposite direction. Students are told to interpret the colour blots and lines on the artwork using their voice. Sound is thus added to the image and students discover new meanings from what they are observing. The richness and stratification of their observations will influence their artistic expression as well. So following the analysis of Vincent Van Gogh's drawing "Starry night", we had a conversation about the sounds we perceive in nature (noises, the wind, falling raindrops, etc.). We enriched the conversation by listening to the songs "Sounds of Velebit" by M. Meštrović, where piano melodies are interwoven with footage from sounds of nature. Students then interpreted their own experience of a certain "auditory/acoustic scene" by drawing.

- **The interpretation of music**

This exercise is particularly encouraging if it is performed in groups of students with and without hearing damage. In the reactions of their hearing friends, students with hearing impairments will find support that will help them to overcome their own uncertainty while listening. It is important to pay a lot of attention to listening and to explore different aspects of music through the games. We can connect the flow of the melody with the flow of a line, the rhythm of music with the changes of visual forms, tempo and expressiveness with brushstrokes, the sound of individual instruments can provide an association to a certain colour, etc. We use games such as: linking concepts (e.g., connect the sound of the instrument with a colour or some art material, connect the mood of the piece with a certain emotion, etc.), follow the rhythm of the song by 'conducting', 'draw' the flow of the melody, accompany the volume and the intensity of music with body movements, etc. Students are encouraged to establish relationships between music, movement and visual forms. Attention is thus focused on different elements which form a more final and complete "picture" of what is being listened to. When describing the music, students are encouraged to broaden their vocabulary and avoid general and vague descriptions such as "strange" or "nice". Students react differently while listening to and analyzing music, and performing art tasks. During analysis, even though there are so called commonplaces to which all students react similarly or the same, associations and links between music and the conceptual depend on personal experience and the experience of each student. Raising an awareness of individual diversity is one of the objectives of these exercises. Students themselves choose the art technique in which they want to interpret a particular musical composition. In their art performances students with hearing impairments usually create ready-made mental images based on a preliminary analysis, which are then transmitted to the visual medium (e.g. choosing colours in advance and clearly organizing a composition). Students with language and speech disabilities are more prone to follow music spontaneously and listening to music affects their performance in the visual/art medium. Therefore we recognize greater expression based on the spontaneous gesture of their work (they form free and open compositions in which expressive brush strokes or pencil strokes are visible). Students describe their works later on and they are encouraged to explain the reasoning behind

their selection of techniques, to describe how they felt while they painted, drew or modelled, to explain which part of the drawing refers to which part of the musical piece or perhaps to interpret the sound and tone of each instrument, etc. There is often a warm, special kind of atmosphere in such classes, and so the conversation can be extended to a variety of topics close to students or those we want to put extra emphasis on. In this case, listening to music and artistic creation has a specifically therapeutic effect.

K. N., 6th grade, colour ink, brush

Figure 23. *Interpretation of the composition,* Anna polka *by Strauss*

A student's comment*: Something heavy and condensed… from which a line of sound comes out and wanders.*
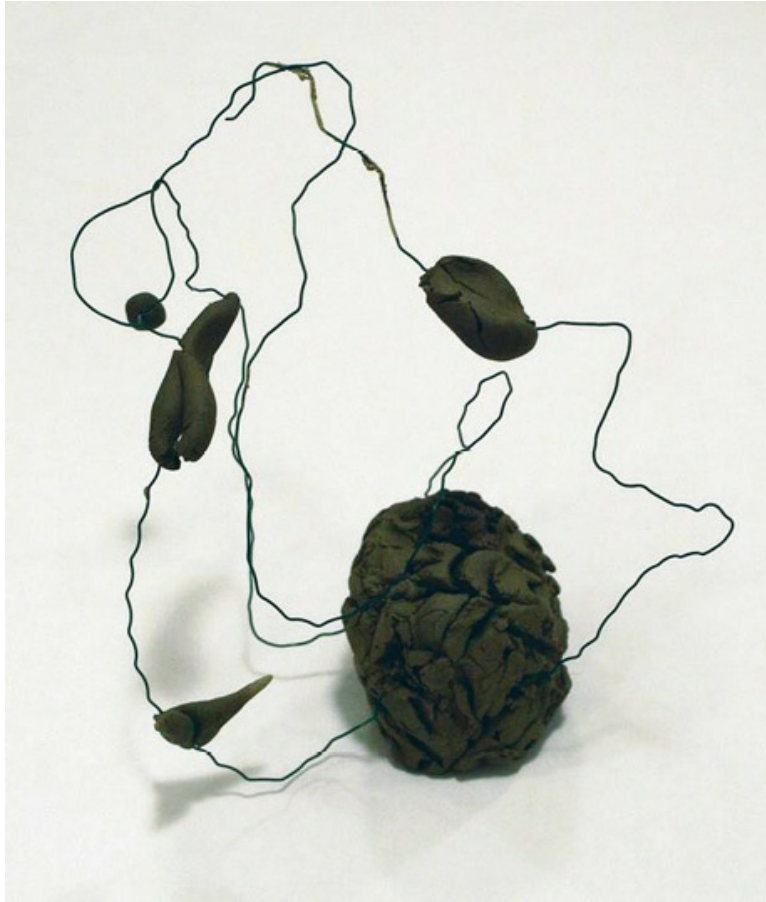
I. C., 7ᵗʰ grade, clay, wire

Figure 24. *Interpretation of* Adagio *from the oboe concerto in d minor by A. Marcello*

Many exercises described here aim to encourage students to "think" with all their senses and to spontaneously use different media in order to achieve the best possible communication with their environment.

"Practicing and gradually becoming aware of different media from the early stages of childhood is an irreplaceable contribution to their sensory reflexive relationship to the world. Each medium in itself is already a thought, but thoughtfulness can only be developed through all of them. It is dangerous to absolutize a medium because the entire range is needed for the development of sensibility, which is thoughtfulness. Using only one medium is like using no medium at all, because one picture of the world can easily replace the entire world" (Damjanov, 1991, p.24).

All the games and exercises are aimed to encourage students to seek individual solutions and get to know themselves and their own capabilities. These exercises become fully meaningful only in a class where teaching is continuous, methodically diverse and associated with other life and school contents. They are the "key" with which students with hearing and speech – language difficulties enter the classroom where they will feel just as free as their peers and can develop their potential equally.

4.4 SELF-AFFIRMATION OF STUDENTS IN ART/VISUAL SUBJECTS

For students with hearing and speech/language difficulties art/visual culture can become an area in which they affirm themselves through participation in various activities and competitions, and develop some of their potential. For some students this will determine their continuation into further education and their professional affirmation.

Here are a few positive experiences from the elementary school at The SUVAG Polyclinic in Zagreb.

4.4.1 ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

In The SUVAG Polyclinic Elementary School, students have the option of joining a series of activities and projects that further stimulate their interest in the field of the visual/fine arts and culture. Their out of class activities include visits to monuments, exhibitions, studios and museums, participation in art workshops and direct contact with artists, designers and architects. Art culture is an integral part of every school project so students have the opportunity to use their knowledge of the visual language in the processing and presentation of other subjects.

Figure 25. *Animation workshop*

Students can get involved in art and photo clubs.

In the art club students are not grouped by age, but the work is organized so that everyone can participate according to their abilities and interests. Students often report that they find this activity relaxing. They enjoy the process of creation and the ability to express themselves in a variety of media. They participate in the renovation of the school, building the stage and props for numerous school events, etc.

Figure 26. *Photography club*

Figure 27. *M.S., 6th grade*

Figure 28. *K.H., 6th grade, prize-einning photograph*

One medium that has proven to be extremely appropriate for these students is photography. The orientation of students with hearing impairments towards the visual cultivates their ability to observe quickly and accurately. On the other hand, students with speech and language disabilities have the ability to detect unusual details and relationships. Students participate in competitions and photography exhibitions of elementary school students, often receiving recognition and awards for their work. Of course, alongside a 'good eye' it is also important to teach visual thinking as well, and for some students knowledge of the medium of photography will be an incentive for further career guidance.

4.4.2 FURTHER EDUCATION

When choosing their future occupation many students with hearing impairment are directed towards those professions in which their knowledge of visual language comes to the fore (e.g., graphic design and text processing, photography, technical drawings, various forms of applied arts, etc.).

After finishing elementary school a relatively high percentage of students with hearing and speech/language difficulties continue their education in programs, which as the qualification standard, apart from the success achieved,

require the visual resolution of certain tasks (for example, the School of Applied Art and Design, Graphics school). The highly successful enrolment and completion of these programs speaks for the importance of early stimulation and direct interest and the development of skills in the visual field/arts.

Figure 29. *Additional work with students who continue their education in the arts (T. M., 8th grade, pencil)*

4.4.3 COMPETITION SUCCESSES

At exhibitions, art festivals and competitions students participate equally against students from regular schools. The praise and accolades received for their artwork confirm to the students that they have found a medium in which they can express what they think, what they know and what they feel. This

also shows them that their environment recognizes their talent and excellence in a particular area, and not their impairment.

It is especially noteworthy that each year the students participate in art class competitions organized by the Croatian Education and Teacher Training Agency and achieve outstanding results at county and state level. In the period from 2003 to 2012 their artworks were present three times among the 20 best-rated works by elementary school students in Croatia. They also successfully participated in competitions in Technology and information education (in photo techniques), achieving very good results at the county level.

Figure 30. *Artwork from a county competition, LIK. (M.S., 6th grade, mixed media)*

The feeling of success and recognition in a given area is a strong incentive for all students, especially for those who, because of specific learning difficulties often face obstacles in mastering the curriculum. Such experiences help them build a positive self-image, which is the precondition for prosperity and growth.

5. THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERARY EXPRESSION IN CHILDREN WITH HEARING AND/OR SPEECH IMPAIRMENTS

Errors in linguistic components (phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax and pragmatics) to varying degrees in this population of children don't hinder, but obstruct and sometimes slow down the development of language expression. Errors are most evident in individual written expression because it unites more competencies that are insufficiently developed in children so after all the necessary procedures of verbotonal diagnostics, these competencies should be systematically developed. Exercises in essay writing also help with the rehabilitation and development of linguistic expression.

Many years of experience in the rehabilitation of hearing and speech in children with normal hearing and children with language and speech difficulties gives us the opportunity to witness the existence of one of the forms of literary expression by these children, regardless of the differing degrees and duration of hearing and speech/language difficulties present in their development during elementary school.

Through the rehabilitation of speech in children with language and speech difficulties, a fresh, spontaneous and child-like expression emerged because of a need to express their inner experience of the world. This expression determined its own form and easily took shape in the forms of literary expression. Be it verse, a sketch, a literary essay, a review or other form of critical writing, or a travelogue, it is undisputable that each child has a form of linguistic expression he is close to. This linguistic form can be nurtured

according to their interests in reading and their desire for a greater knowledge and understanding of the written language, or their own development of expression through literary values (an observation resulting from the author's many years of practice).

Students can be enticed in many creative ways to develop their speech in a way that is close to their personal sensibilities and preferences. It is important to recognize this expression in speech, to allow it to develop and to help shape the direction that would be the most natural and closest to the child. Regardless of the speech and language impairments in this population of children, my experience of teaching them literature has shown that they are especially close to the poetic world and that the short and concise haiku form of poem writing (the three verse form) is very close to their linguistic expression, which is somewhat more concise and more scarce in their everyday expression.

5.1 FORMS OF FICTION

It is important to constantly encourage a child's desire for verbal and written expression, especially that form which he for some reason prefers and finds easier; both forms are expressions of language as we both **speak and write** in a language. It is of great importance for the overall language development of the child to encourage writing, which as an activity takes longer in relation to speech and the student may express himself easier and more accurately. Very often the literary compositions of our students have the characteristics of certain literary and artistic styles and can be classified within certain literary genres such as travelogues, sketches, short stories, lyrical miniatures, anecdotes or critical reviews. Various text forms and genres form themselves according to the features by which they can be classified as a literary form.

5.2 METHODS OF COMPOSING WRITING

How do these compositions come about? In many different ways!

From the practice of teaching Croatian language it can be noted that each student has something akin to a certain style in his expression. **One must start from what a student has in his speech and what he is thematically close to**. Ways in which a student can be helped to form and write compositions can be grouped into several methods i.e. methods suitable for 'drawing out' linguistic material from a student and shaping it into a composition.

5.2.1 THE RECORDING METHOD

There are many talkative students in this population and their statements are often very colourful, original and fresh with interesting remarks but it can all be lost when the student is prompted to write down what he just said. This will result in getting a few brief sentences without any sequence or composition. **In this case, one should start from the richness of their utterance and simply write it down.** The utterances of children concerning a subject should be quickly written down, i.e. their speech should be literally written down in shorthand. Later during remedial classes the student is given the time necessary to properly and neatly write his sentences down and this can be shaped into a grammatically correct text. The student should be helped to organise **these freely composed spoken** sentences into a written text in compliance with linguistic norms. So we are working on their language statement (rehabilitation is immediate). When forming the text we shouldn't be exceedingly correctional but instead we should take care that this spoken text is formed with as few cuts – corrections as possible so that the student notices that what he has to say is good and interesting and that it should be shown to others. So **we should allow for greater linguistic freedom in shaping sentences**. This linguistic freedom is necessary because it frees children to speak as they know and as they can, that is how their own language development permits them. If the student speaks using the kajkavian (or chakavian) dialect he needs to be allowed to write using kajkavian because this is when he is at his freest and most spontaneous, not to mention the wealth, depth, authenticity and vividness of dialectal words and phrases which might

be new to other students in the class. This allows them to learn the vocabulary of other Croatian dialects in a very spontaneous way, which is indeed part of the curriculum of the Croatian language as dialectal literature.

After the text, which was previously possible only as the spoken word, is written in this manner, there follows an expressive reading of the composition in front of all the students, of course, only if the student wants to (and he usually does, since he is aware that this is good) or reading in remedial classes. The student will prefer and find it a lot easier to practice reading his/her own essay rather than using another text, and will incorporate speech values and respect the patterns of expressive reading much easier because the context is their own. This way the student has their own model of shaping speech into written text and can 'build' a composition with more and more success, which is a major difficulty to this population of children. Of course, it is necessary to emphasize to students that the essay was written in the kajkavian dialect and in the end it can also be read in the shtokavian dialect, which is taught in school.

This way a spoken text is transferred into a written text, therefore helping to transfer spoken text into another medium with its own laws that must be respected. It is precisely this link of transmission that is weak, and in this way it can be supported gradually and cautiously, using the rules of spelling and grammar. This **method of writing down utterances** directly supports the development of composition writing while adopting the rules of writing and sentence organizational principles. It is very important to gradually manage and support the originality of observation and the student's desire to communicate what he thinks about a topic or to write it down briefly, so that later on it can be processed in school (this way the student is freed from the fear of writing).

The use of this method has helped to create a lot of beautiful original works – compositions that have been successful at children's literary competitions.

(Some of the students have written essays on Kaikavian dialect spoken in the wider Zagreb area – they are translated to English by Visnja and Graham McMaster.)

Example:

A family soup

This summer I went to Kraljevica with the school for ten days. There was lots to see, lots to learn. We all came from our families, but what they are all like, only the dear Lord knows, and I know too.

It's a well known thing that your family teaches you about life for you to be able one day to cope and behave yourself in life. You can see very well what kind of family someone comes from when it's time to eat. My roommates were an utter disaster. I was amazed when I saw that they didn't know about some food. They didn't know how to eat it, and still worse, didn't want even to try. I saw one of them picking through his soup putting the carrots to one side, and then the pasta. He ate almost pure water. Then the teacher scolded him and he pushed the pasta back into the soup. I wondered what kind of family he comes from. We can't begin eating without soup. I think that everybody who is normal eats soup. It doesn't have to be cooked every day, but once a week gets cooked up in a big pot. I can do it too. You take a saucepan full of hot water, and then you put in carrot and parsley, celery and perhaps bay leaf, and then a whole hen. Got to be a grahorka *hen, because it's got more fat, and then it drips off it when it's cooking. Then everything over a low heat an hour and a half. Then drain it in a colander into another pot. Then you want pasta, gnocchi, dumplings… every day some variation, and that is it. I heard that in the city they make chicken soup of wings, they have no idea, in wings there is no fat, it's just skin and bone. Tomato soup can be made in a hurry, I can do that, it's still easier. Even instant soup will do from time to time, but without soup, lunch isn't quite right.*

My other roommate opened everything there was at breakfast, butter, and jam, and honey and cheese and chocolate spread and didn't eat any of it up. I felt awkward in front of the waiter because of him. In the room he was weird as a roommate. I would say, one of his own. Either they spoiled him rotten at home or didn't teach him table manners. I would say he was very spoiled.

I think these kids don't do anything at home and don't learn any manners. In the countryside, they don't turn blind eye to skiving. My mum sits and crochets, and listens to whether I am reading properly, and looks after the mill grinding the corn. And is bound to be thinking to herself what else there is to do. And all of it at once.

Fine, my family isn't any top-class family, but you have to know your manners at table. My sisters will sometimes row ferociously about jewellery. Katarina got all sorts of stuff for her confirmation, and Martina took some of it without asking, and at once there was a quarrel. Now they've agreed that it will all belong to both of them and now there's

peace on earth about the jewellery. Every disagreement can be settled and discussed calmly. It's true that sometimes it gets on your nerves, and it gets on my mum's, and so she sometimes tells dad not to preach at her. But who is going to teach you about all things in life if not your mum and dad? And so in Kraljevica I had good table manners and didn't disgrace my family like some children from the city.

I am proud of my family for they are good, they have taught me everything, they are hardworking and always honest, and they have strong nerves, though constantly frayed by me.

<div align="right">

J. K. (12 yrs, 6th grade)

</div>

This composition also has a sociological component with a criticism towards his colleague who didn't seem to have proper table manners. The educational message is very directly and clearly sent from the child's perspective: he observes, compares and judges, and reaches a conclusion from a very clear position, and thus spontaneously forms an essay with very precise composition (introduction, plot, climax and denouement).

A student who needs to read his essay to other students is aware that he must read it aloud well (accurately and expressively) because he is the author, so he is very motivated to rehearse the reading, which is sometimes prepared with all the attributes of a stage voice (in the beginning it is always good to practice reading and rehearsing in remedial classes and only when the student has mastered the text and became sure of himself, can he be confronted with a public reading in front of the class). The help that this gives the student to acquire self-confidence is apparent, and it can become the 'trigger' for further writing as the student becomes aware that they **can** write essays with some assistance and that sentence and compositional organization can be learned; that actually, there are no big obstacles to his/her writing being good. Now they know that there are rules of writing that are different from those of speech and that they must adopt them and adhere to them.

The benefits of reading these compositions to other students are manifold: they listen very carefully and with interest about the student's experience, reflect on his observations and judgments, observe dramatic tension and involuntary humorous style that is otherwise evident in the child's

speech communication, develop a debate on the topic, and most importantly, observe how a theme is developed, i.e. the gradual writing of a composition that must have its order. In this way, students directly learn and acquire a model of shaping their thoughts in written sentences and building a longer text.

Often, after reading several successful compositions aloud, students come forward who would also like to write, but they say, there's nothing interesting in their everyday life because they don't live in a big family, they don't have a pet and so on. They can also be assured that their every day is interesting and that they can write something down each and every day, whether it's about their thoughts, gatherings, friends, problems or hobbies or wishes and plans for the future.

Through the recording of a conversation with a student who regarded his everyday life as uninteresting, there originated an essay about his hobby that surprised the entire class. When asked about his family relationships he said that he is at "war" with all of them and when we finally wrote down his monologue (with a few additional questions) we thought about the title of his essay, which he himself humorously formulated. So the topics do not have to be predetermined in order to encourage students to write. Indeed, it seems they are freer without a title because they get inspired by something from their life, usually something that somehow emotionally consumes or troubles them as is the case in this student's essay because the background of his story is actually a "pubescent conflict" with all of his family members, which bothers the student and so he wants to talk about it, i.e. write. The student has transcribed his text very neatly (almost unrecognizable considering how he normally writes), which means that he is very invested. The text is built mostly by simple sentences, simple like his speech, which should always be respected in writing. When he begins using more complex sentences in speech (which will follow the reading of demanding entries from readers and other textbooks, and consequently the development of his linguistic expression), he will also start using them in writing. It is important that there is not a big divide between spoken and written expression, that is, the sentence structure of written expression should mirror the spoken word.

Naturally, praise and encouragement from teachers (See, you can do it! This is a very interesting essay! Something interesting happens to you every day, pay attention!) is necessary because it is precisely this that drives the will and desire to write. Support and help is crucial in forming an attitude towards writing. If you convince a child that they have a lot of interesting things to say and help them shape their speech into written text, you are opening a door to a personal experience of the world, not to mention progress in the writing technique.

Example of a composition:

Warrior in the kitchen

I am a warrior on the wrong path and in the wrong place.

At school, I am at war with assignments, at home I am at war with everybody, as soon as I open my eyes I am ready for fights and duels. I always have duels with my brother. We never manage to conclude a contract on not quarrelling. It is hard on my mum, I can see that, but my brother is nervous and I am hyperactive. I like to go to school for the company, but I do not like studying. But there is something in which I am interested and which I like to do, and that is cooking. I like the kitchen to be tidy, which is why I like to wash dishes, the pans, the pots, the spatulas. The pots that have handles, the pans, they are my heaven. I like to chop onions, bell peppers, tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, and I cut them all to be the same size and make a tasty salad in no time. I can also make several dishes, e. g. minced meat with spaghetti, scrumptious! In fact, I help my mom cook every meal. She can make lasagne all the friends talk about. It seems I take after her. If I am hungry, I find a way to deal with it very soon. Within moments, I remember that I could make crepes, and within 10 minutes the pan is heated up. Sometimes I make them from the old-fashioned black pan and sometimes from the big Teflon pan, which makes things quicker. Then I put a 1 centimetre thick layer of chocolate spread on the crep so that you can't even see the crep. Yum! I am hyperactive everywhere, only in the kitchen am I the most calm. Making dinner and washing dishes is like diazepam to me. If there were a subject in school called "cooking" and if there were homework about food and dishes (I mean in primary school), I would certainly be best, and maybe there would be several of us who are good! "Cuisine" is also an art, and a very useful one. We are not all good at visual arts or music, and nutritional culture is very important for children's growth and development, not to mention the calming of the nerves.

Perhaps some time in the future you will hear about a new chef called Stefano, not the French one but me, a chubby Posavina man whose hyperactivity turned into creativity in the kitchen.

T. Z., 8th grade

It is interesting how badly the children want to be successful in writing when they see that writing from their own experience is actually very easy. They lead the conversation and 'build' their composition, and given their loquacity and vividness of speech the literary material exists in abundance, but it should be systematically organized so they can be helped to transform their thoughts and speech into written form.

5.2.2 THE INTERVIEW METHOD

For students whose expression in speech is more humble and who mainly provide simpler answers to questions, the interview method is suitable in assisting them with the composition of writing. Through questions that should be answered with a few sentences, students can be shown how to write about a topic. Compiled answers make up a composition. Questions help with developing themes and need to be posed so that the student understands the gradual progression of composing a story. There is no need to ask for extensive narrating, or to ask a lot of questions, it is instead better to reinforce the structure of the story using only crucial questions. After a few brief but successful compositions the student should be stimulated by additional questions and encouraged to write in greater detail. Sentences should be appropriate to the student's expression of speech, without burdening them with detail and descriptions.

This is a good model for gradually shaping the composition and students will eventually start writing compositions on their own, relying on their own imaginary questions that lead them through the process.

Example:

Ten is a lucky number

There are 10 of us -- nine brothers and sisters and mum.

This is the sequence in which we came into this world: Linda, Zoran, Albin, Roberto, I, Alisa, Jasmin, Ivan, and Lorenco. They all came, and in the end dad left. We are fine without him because we have a mum who will never leave us. Mums have a different heart. We are all still together, even though Linda is 20 and engaged to be married. And she is pregnant and carrying twins. And that means that I am going to become an uncle, which none of my friends are yet.

I have not seen dad for 10 years now, and even though I miss him, I do not want to see him because he does not want to see me either. Who knows, maybe we will see each other in the future and maybe it will be a nice surprise for both of us. Until then, I am managing without him.

I am looking forward to the future because some day I will be a Croatian soldier who will go on missions to Iraq and Afghanistan and wherever else is necessary. I will defend those who are not defended by anyone.

And I will see the world!

H. Z., 6th grade

5.2.3 THE METHOD FOR RECORDING SPONTANEOUS DIALOGUE

Sometimes an interesting dialogue on a specific topic develops between students and it needs to be written down quickly – this is how numerous dialogues have emerged, which demonstrate the mindset of students; their diverse ideas, attitudes and maturity.

After posing the question, "why does the poet so often repeat some words?" a spontaneous dialogue started and developed gradually (during which the teacher wrote it down quickly). A dialogue requires careful listening to the speakers, thinking about their narratives/utterances, and using imaginative comments and jokes to further develop the conversation, which is actually one of the aims of teaching expression – to develop dialogic forms and the art of conversation.

Once the teacher has read the dialogue back to the students, which the students sometimes then fill out with details that the teacher accidentally

omitted, the students themselves determine the title. This is followed by a dramatization that can only be role-played, to practice speech expressiveness. The various benefits of writing, editing, working on their own reading of the text and role-playing, help the students directly observe the formation of a script, alongside the development of topics. These texts are always "little mosaics" of the students' personality and they encourage socialization in the classroom.

Example:

Brainstorming

Teacher: Why does the poet repeat some of the words so many times?

Josip: To emphasise them, and also for the sake of the rhythm of the poem.

Martin: And so that it catches the children's ears more easily.

Teacher: Yes, Martin!

Martin: I've heard there are things that can get into your brain!

Teacher: Well, it would be good for words to get from one's ear into one's brain.

Josip: And, from the brain, into the other ear, and then out.

Teacher: Surely that is not so!

Anamarija: Not with me, only sometimes. But most often words are stored and remembered in my brain.

Martin: Mine sometimes dance! Sometimes the brain forgets, it is not me that forgets but the brain!

Renato: Maybe you don't have enough workers in your brain.

Martin: What workers?

Anamarija: Renato must be thinking about brain cells.

Renato: No, no! Here is what I think: Nerves are like roads, cells run along them, and the brain is a big city. And in the big city there must be people. Those are the workers I had in mind!

Teacher: Where did you get that idea?

Renato: I saw something similar in a cartoon.

Martin: You know, sometimes it happens that when I'm thinking about something and I want to stop thinking about it, my brain won't. There's music persistently playing and it won't stop until it's done. Sometimes I want to stop doing something but the

brain won't. That brain often won't listen to me! It's my brain that is responsible for me sometimes not being able to remember when the teacher tests me, not I!

Renato: It's not the brain that is responsible but it's you, Martin, who's responsible!

Martin: Yes?

Anamarija: Yes, you are responsible because you haven't been exercising your brain!

Renato: You play computer games and forget everything in your brain.

Martin: Did you know that my PlayStation was broken?

Renato: Still, I know that you play computer games a lot, and computer games can empty the brain or the brain can move to someone cleverer.

Anamarija: You and the brain must spend more time with books!

Josip: Yes! And then you'll be able to control and manage your brain whenever you want, rather than have an empty brain do that with you. And it's not a good idea to some day become a husband without any brains.

Teacher: Where did you hear that?

Josip: Oh, I've known that for a long time!

Renato: Josip's right. For example, one day you have a child who asks you something and you don't know the answer! What kind of dad does that make you?

Josip: A dad without any brains! And how do you intend to stand up to all and sundry, to react and defend yourself?

Martin: Hm!

Anamarija: That's why you'd better exercise your brain so that words stay in it, arrange themselves, and dance. Teacher, do you know that sometimes there is traffic chaos in our brain?

Denis: Traffic lights go out! And everything gets mixed up in your head, and that's why you shouldn't study too much.

Anamarija: I had a traffic chaos in my brain on Bread Day, when I got confused during the performance. Ugh!

Denis: The postman did not come to your house on time.

Anamarija: I guess so! And do you know what happens when our workers get drunk and have a fight? All kinds of swearwords come out of our mouths! But you should not think too much. My brother does that a lot and talks a lot of nonsense!

Conclusion: In case you didn't know, it is never us who are responsible, it is the workers in the brain!!!

6th grade pupils

5.2.4 DISCUSSING A TEXT

Sometimes after reading a text, a **discussion** develops about a character, his situation and problem and how to solve the aforementioned problem etc., so the students are especially motivated when they can somewhat identify or recognize themselves in the story. Posing direct and stimulating questions may help entice them to express their views and beliefs and deal with different opinions. After an open discussion in the classroom, students can write a short essay on the subject, the attitudes of other students and their own and present a critical review of the problem. The whole essay (short but succinct) is actually an exercise to develop critical thinking that is an important (necessary) part of every essay. Short simple sentences are required to describe a discussion from class that will later be used when writing the essay.

So for example, when reading a passage from "Trouble at Timpetill" by H. Winterfeld we came to the question of the rights and obligations of each student. It turned out that most students are not aware of these concepts and don't consider their activities responsibly, probably because they are not lead to see them as such in their daily lives. But in the **joint discussion** it came to light that there were those to whom this was " immediately apparent". Such discussions produced some very fine essays with very mature judgements by the children, which are truly precious for the entire class because they came to existence as an extended part of the story from the students' reading but with regard to their own experience. Of course, in order to preserve the original children's expressions a greater freedom in shaping sentences must be allowed.

Example:

My rights and obligations

The meaning of this topic is obvious to me at once. But these children from the cities don't really know what it means to have obligations. They are clearer about their rights, but they've learned little about obligations.

I think that every child ought to have obligations, in any place, as they would tell me in my village. I started having obligations when I was still little: feeding the chickens, collecting and washing the eggs, helping in the neighbourhood, that means our neighbours

and godparents, and I help them with the tractor and learning about farming. I ask about everything to do with the land, because I intend to be a farmer one day.

This is how it goes every morning. Mum wakes me up quite early, and then I get dressed and go to the shop for bread, and then I go to feed the pigs, old Bela knows me by now, but the little porkers are still confused about me, then I've got to feed the hens if Mum hasn't managed. Tidy up the room, make the bed, mine and my brother's, because he goes to work at five, open the window to air the room – that doesn't need mentioning, it's all clear. Then I get ready for school. That's how it is every morning.

Every Thursday I collect up all the trash and put it in the bin for Friday. Now we have a big trashcan from the city on two wheels, and that's my concern.

I know how to plough and harrow and sow and I do that at weekends, but this weekend is All Saints and I shan't have to. And now after all these jobs I have to go to school, but these children from the city have only school.

In the spring and in the autumn you can't count up everything that has to be done. It's not exactly a dream in the countryside. They all think that you have food and it's all for free, but they don't think how much work it is. I see that these children from the city have no idea about it. I think that anyone who doesn't know what his obligations are has got a bad lookout in life.

I sometimes drop round to Grandma's and take her some pie, like a boy Red Riding Hood, and I even meet a little wolf – Piko – a little imp, but dangerous, he gets the whole village in an uproar if someone passes. The whole of the street has been bitten by him. Then sometimes Grandma also sets me to work, and I have to go with her with the two-axle trailer and pick up clover from the field.

I could tell you about my obligations for a hundred years, but I'm up to my ears in work.

That's how it is then, I'll get the right to the land with the years, but I have obligations every day.

<div align="right">

J. K. (12 yrs.)

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5.2.5 THE IMPRESSION METHOD

Writing an essay about a poem or even writing poems on the same theme or writing poems about a poem (taking the same phrase from a song or key verse)

is a method of impressions, and it is most evident in writing poems.

A poem by A.B. Šimić, "A prayer on the road," inspired the 7th grade students to write their own prayers. Their poems all have different titles, motives and metres because the greatest freedom imaginable is possible in a poem, including the freedom of punctuation, which in this case coincides with A. B. Šimić's modern writing style. The poem can share the same topic but have a completely different style, from the sublime (Šimić's style) to the humorous, which one student used to form his poem. When writing a poem about a poem discussed in class or a poem with the same theme, the students were trying to observe like a poet, they liberated themselves and used their own sensory universe – their choice of motives, words and verse. Most importantly, doing these exercises – that is writing poems, helps the students to relieve their fear of poetic expression, which is often cryptic and vague to children. After these exercises they interpret poems more boldly because they are slowly transferred to the level of poetic language and they note its abstract principles. They graphically shape their poems more freely and determine the composition of stanzas themselves.

It is curious to note how profoundly the students' work mirrors their personalities and their sensibilities.

My Prayer on the Way

Lord
May peace and not hatred
Rule upon earth

man bestow goodness
upon man

and may death come from age
and not from sickness

K. D.

My Prayer

Please
let me be well tomorrow
and the sky be blue

the sky tomorrow
and the sun greet me
in all their dazzle

may I breathe in life
from the depth of my lungs.

I. K.

A Cook's Prayer

Every cook ought to pray, like this:
Lord,
please let me not over season
or pepper without reason
or make it too greasy,
or cook things to pieces,
make sure the roast's turned,
not get myself burned,
may I treat my guest
while I eat with zest.

J. K.

Please

Do not leave me on my way
alone and weary
give me strength
and
drive away the bad dreams
that frighten me.

5.2.6 WRITING IMAGINARY TRAVELOGUES

Writing imaginary travelogues is very interesting for students; they can freely travel using their imagination and write about a variety of meetings, regions, unusual experiences and anecdotes. This is the preferred writing method of students who like geography and history, and often write about an encounter with a historical personality or a researcher. They include themselves, placing them in an exciting context in a different time.

Example:

An unusual travelogue

My travelogue is unusual because it is a fruit of my imagination, I day-dream and write. I will describe to you my beautiful imagined journey to America.

I got to that distant country by plane. It was my first plane ride and I was a little scared. When I left the airport building, I immediately buttoned up my coat and wrapped my shawl firmly around my neck because it was quite cold so I blushed. First I saw a street full of yellow taxis and snow. Riding on a taxi, I watched the streets and the people. I saw many interesting old and new buildings and huge skyscrapers. My walk through the city was even more interesting because of the many shops and various souvenirs.

What else did I see? The Statue of Liberty and beautiful big parks with ice skating rinks. I decided in favour of a big ice skating rink next to which stood a large pine tree like some kind of protector. I skated for hours and watched the beauty of dusk in the city when the first lamps are turned on. It was simply magical!

My journey continued in Los Anjeles. I felt much warmer than in New York. There was not as much rushing here and the city was much more cheerful. In the distance I saw the hill with the well-known sign, Hollywood, which reminded me of many American movies.

All good things come to an end, and so the time came to go back. It was then that I realized that I loved Zagreb. There is a reason people say, There is no place like home!

5.2.7 MONOLOGUE FORMS OF WRITING

Writing monologue forms about their thoughts, problems, dilemmas, fears, doubts and similar internal states that accompany growing up, is a suitable and necessary form of expression. Remedial classes or extra work is the most appropriate time for this sort of writing as students in a way 'confess' their personal inner world. Usually students already bring a partially written essay, which we elaborate, forming sentences consistent with the child's language development and spoken expression. First, we always consider the thoughts and the condition of the child which encouraged him to discuss it and write about it, and only afterwards the language writing rules that apply to the text. Composing an essay is a 'complex architecture' and the principle of the gradual application of rules is of the utmost significance because the child needs to spontaneously adopt a good model for the transmission of their 'free' inner speech into the 'unfree' arena of writing, which is limited by a number of systematic linguistic rules for writing. This monologue essay can be written on several occasions, gradually, until the topic is completely covered. This is the most complicated way of writing because of its very subject and it requires more work on the text, which can eventually demonstrate the qualities of a small essay.

Good introductory exercises for writing these essays include the student trying to clearly formulate their problem i.e. what 's bothering them, briefly stating what is essential using a few sentences, and then taking a stand on it (which is already treated as critical thinking). Such introductory group exercises can be organized as an expression of the need to assist the students in problem-solving with some advice, after they individually send in their problems in written form (letters, anonymous) to their pedagogue or Croatian teacher. The following essay was created using this type of writing, as an introductory exercise.

Example:

From fears to victory

This is an A student writing – in the eighth grade, a decent and obedient, but very complicated person. Complicated to whom? To other people? No, one would not say so, rather to herself. A very complicated self. The cause is my inner me.

When I was younger, my inner me was shy, afraid of people, avoiding communication with them. It had a short fuse, and was afraid of all kinds of trifles; from the crowing of the cockerels and terrible figures from cartoons, to losing at games and getting cross looks… it was afraid of everything. For all these reasons, at school I wasn't accepted the way I wanted. My inner me wanted everything to revolve around it. It took time for me to realise that my inner me was in fact a spoiled brat that was embittering my life. I made an important decision, that the brat in me and I would attempt to turn a new leaf, because this could not go on. We needed to get stronger, be aware of the fears, and conquer them. Slowly things were starting to improve, but then adolescence was knocking on the door. At this time some children go wild, but I withdrew and became shyer. Everyone thought me boring as a result, and then I felt hurt and bitter, with them and with myself. It seemed that my school friends didn't understand me, only the adults. I rebelled inside me, and decided to show everyone I was a happy and social being that maybe didn't know how to tell jokes and do stupid things, but still liked being in their company. And finally, it slowly took happened. I am surer in myself, and my inner me is also growing up, and I can agree on things with it. I suppose this is called growing up. It is not pleasant, this growing up. It includes endless questions, fears of the new, pointless anger and troubles about all kinds of stupidities. And I know more and more often that they are stupidities.

When I look back, I was really tiring, to myself and others. And my mum. All the stuff my poor mum had to put up with. My teacher said to me that I was turning from a caterpillar into a butterfly.

This gave me wings, big, big wings.

As long as I don't turn into a complicated butterfly!?

<div align="right">

A. B. (14 yrs, 8ᵗʰ grade)

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Writing these essays is very helpful and develops a number of students' skills as well as aiding them in exploring and shaping their own personality, because it involves a self-evaluation of themselves and their actions. A reading by the author of the essay (if they want to) to the class is always interesting;

sometimes it starts a discussion about the person, who suddenly becomes different to the students because they regarded the author differently, or were unaware of their period of growth which wasn't exactly easy and they can finally compare to or identify with and understand the author.

After reading the essay and commenting upon it, it can be followed by a brief linguistic analysis (types of sentences in the text, short interrogative or exclamatory sentences that liven up the text, what the message is, determining compositional parts, etc.).

Sometimes essays written by parents can become a way of learning about writing essays. Since there are children who are reluctant to write essays since they haven't adopted the structure of writing (and the very act of writing may represent an additional difficulty due to poor graphomotor skills, or an awareness that their sentences are badly shaped, sometimes the reason is just their own lack of faith in their writing qualities), their parents can help them with essay-writing in good faith to prevent their child from attending class without any homework. The students need to learn to read the essay fluently and expressively, after which other students in the class can comment on the work (whether they like it, what they liked about it, is there something unusual, what is the message, etc.). So essays written by parents can be used like any other writing. For the student whose parent wrote it, this is also a way of learning, and certainly a reading and writing exercise, and for other students this is another essay read aloud that can be commented on in the classroom. This practice shouldn't be aspired to, but for some students it is just a "phase of necessary help" that will sooner or later be followed by their own attempts at writing, which should be gently and carefully requested from the students.

Example of a parental essay:

Spring

Who calls up the little white heads of the snowdrops and the little yellow hats of the primroses, to show their modest beauty nudging the snow away in front of them? Who awakens the sleepy bear and the hard-working bee? Who fills the hands of every living creature with work?

Whose breath has filled every blade of grass, every twig, and brought life back to the still lake?

Why, it has come again.

Spring has arrived. Without any announcement, it has just come.

The first day it awoke the flowers, the second it spilled its jugs of sap, then blew, then showered… and scented.

And so we know for sure – spring is here.

<div align="right">

Lucija's mum

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Motivation

Students can and should be motivated to write more often, pointing out to them that their everyday life is full of interesting things and that they can keep a diary (to write down something interesting they noticed, which can be discussed later on with the group), which can help free them from the fear of writing. Only in this way will they acquire the habit and need to write and therefore develop and enrich their expression through language. The importance of providing support, encouragement and praise to these children cannot be overemphasized because this is the most powerful driving force of their creative imagination.

5.3 THE DEFINITION OF LINGUISTIC EXPRESSION

Over time, it might be noticed that prose (an epic) as a form of storytelling/writing, is particularly suited to a student and that the student tends to prefer writing autobiographical prose, or critical reviews, anecdotes, and other forms of prose, which stems from personal characteristics and style in their way of thinking and speaking.

So an affinity for **autobiographical prose** can be recognized in a student, where the student is the narrator and the main character of his work and describes events from personal experience.

Example:

The right hand

My family is a cheerful one. There are a lot of us and we are cheerful about everything. We're happy with our cat Silver, who does daft things. He's a member of the family too. Dad is the chief, and we do what he says.

Mum and Dad are good, but if I do something wrong I don't tell anyone, rather at once put it right not to get a slap. Like that there's no shouting and no one gets in a flap. I like messing with cars, and I will quite often get it wrong. But this can happen with real top mechanics too, but it's all right if you know how to arrange it properly. I like driving tractors and cars. I have to move the seat a bit in the car because I am still too short. Mum says I just can't be still and am always up to some devilry. Last month the little Fiat fell on my foot. I didn't say a thing (the dentist once told me I could put up with amazing pains). But afterwards, when I caught my breath, I swore terribly. I can't put this down on paper because the paper would go red from the swear words. Later they took me to the children's hospital and it all ended up fine.

At that time Dad was in hospital because he'd cut his finger with a power saw. He was sawing firewood for Gran because she was nagging him to cut her wood, though her woodshed and shed and barn were full of wood. Afterwards she was sorry and carried on, but why didn't she think of that before?

I mustn't say anything against Gran because I cadge cash from her. She promised me to leave me half her farm and a tractor when she dies. Her farm is the biggest in the village, and I hope to be rich. Now the farm is crammed with old iron, and that will be a lot of money from scrap. I have half a plan ready, I'll rip it all out and renovate it I'll just leave the cottage for wood and trailers.

I should pay a bit more attention to reading and writing and not cars, but I don't have time. On the farm there's always a lot to do. Now it's getting dark at 3 already, and you have to go round the farm beforehand. I am my family's right hand, only they don't know it. Mum thinks I do more damage, but I only do the job.

They'll see one day what there will be. And they'll be glad that I'm their son, and a useful one, too.

K. J. (10 yrs, 5ᵗʰ grade)

A critical review is specific to the essays of some students because they constantly compare, question, evaluate and conclude so essays as such are very

appropriate and help the other students to recognize the style of such way of thinking and writing.

Example:

Nasty words

What bothers me is vulgarity in every place and at every corner without rhyme or reason.

It seems normal to me to swear when something goes wrong, when you can't arrange or put something together the way you imagined. But to curse for no reason, that's not normal. Without even mentioning cursing using the name of God and the saints. I can't get round that. Let's make it clear, it's got nothing to do with me being an altar boy in church. I know an altar boy in school who is always saying Jesus this and Jesus that. He's got no manners, no shame about what he does. My dad occasionally lets out one when he has to repair a car after someone who has already messed up the whole thing. If I were to swear in front of mum and dad, I'd at once be on the receiving end of a hefty wallop, but there's no need for this, because for me swearwords are really nasty. I think that children who are vulgar are badly brought up and you see at once what kind of house they come from and what their parents are like. If you need to swear, rather bite your tongue. Don't let your tongue yap and shame you and disgrace you in front of the world.

If you really have to, then instead of really nasty words, you can say, oh sugar, blimey or what the heck (which is what grandma's neighbour Johnny says).

I think that adults that swear and say vulgar things are humiliated, though they don't see themselves like that, and I don't think they have any character. What surprises me a lot is that there is more and more swearing. Everywhere. Even on the television. I just don't like it.

I think that we need to change. Let's start with nasty words!

I. K. (11 yrs.)

An affinity for **anecdotes** and anecdotal style is a desirable way of writing, and for some children it is the only possible way of expression because this is how they perceive their environment and comment on it in this particular way, which is shown in their writing as well. They describe very simple everyday events which, when described in this way, become adventures with witty children's remarks. Essays that were "inadvertently" written in this

style shouldn't be changed and may later develop to take on the characteristics of the humoresque.

Example:

Brotherly love

I get on well with my brother, best of all when he is not home.

He has got a very bad characteristics, and that is that he likes to be provoking, especially to me. For example, he lets me play on the computer and then after only five minutes, here he comes, opening the door of the room wide, looking at me, and that means "That's enough of that, now do something different." Sheer provocation.

Sometimes we get into a fight. At table he always takes the best piece of meat or one without a bone, and I'll have to nag at mine. I put up with that too. But when he takes the last of the pasta, I can't forgive him. We will get into a fight at table at once on account of macaroni, and then dad wades in and separates us. It's not about the macaroni exactly, but in him provoking me and making me angry. I eat slower and with better manners, and he eats quickly and greedily and makes a mess around him. No matter that I am younger, I have better table manners, and would never just take the last of the macaroni without asking if anyone else wanted some. There has to be some order at the table, only it's difficult to teach him what is right.

But I would like to point out that he is a good brother. There is time, he will learn some order, only by then he will have ruined my nerves.

E. J. (10 yrs, 5th grade)

Sometimes, quite unintentionally, lyrical feeling dominates children's writing so their compositions have the characteristics of **lyrical miniatures**.

These are short compositions in which an event is only the basis for expressing feelings and thoughts. They are emotionally warm and their reading can be used for practicing interpretation (slower pace, quieter speech, emotional pause).

Example:

Grandma's walnut roll

Everyone loves walnut roll, me most of all. Put a gateau on the table in front of me or a walnut roll, and I'll take the walnut.

Grandma made the best walnut roll in the world.

She would take flour, yeast, a bit of milk, boiling water, and put it all in a mixing bowl and roll it around with her hand. Then she would put the pastry on the table and roll it out with a rolling pin. I always used to watch this. Sometimes I would grind the walnuts. If she was short of anything, I would run round to the neighbour's.

When the walnut roll was baking, the whole yard had a strong, wonderful scent like pancakes. Grandma would put the baking sheet to cool, and then would cut cube-shaped slices on a big plate. I would sometimes eat as if I had never had anything to eat. Then she would have to cut it again and arrange it on the plate again. She would cover it with a cloth so that they cat wouldn't jump on the table and knock it all off, and because of the flies too.

Grandma no longer makes walnut roll, because I have lost her. She collapsed in the field and died. Now aunty makes the walnut roll, but hers is somehow different.

No more grandma's walnut roll.

M.R. (10 yrs, 5th grade)

Lyrical prose is more extensive than lyrical miniatures. It has a plot but is filled with feelings so that emotions and the lyrically shaped expression suppress the narrative elements.

Example:

The lovely name Sara

My name is Sara, which is enough for this story.

Just recently we have been getting ready for a festive December full of the light of little lamps and, we hope, of snowflakes, and the more important light, the light in the soul. I rejoice still more, because now in December there is my great holiday of Eid al-Fitr, which we are looking forward to so happily.

How? Like all believers of the world of all faiths, for we all pray to God in the same or almost the same way. We all fast in the same way, give up food by our own will. The object of fasting is not to starve but to feel how it is for the poor who are always fasting, to make a sacrifice to God and to purify yourself. It is not easy to keep up the fast when all

around you are eating, and tiredness overcomes you, but on the other hand you are happy and satisfied inside for you are bearing it with the strength of your will. And you become still stronger inside. On Saturday I regularly go to the mosque, and that is a duty, but not just that, but something I love, because when I give myself over to prayer, I forget about my problems and everything that troubles me.

Actually, my mother is a Christian, and my father is a Moslem, a Palestinian. And they love each other greatly in spite of the different religions. In our house we celebrate both Christmas and Ramadan. But if you ask me why I prefer Islam, it is because of the sound of the prayers, which are like a lovely song to heaven and to God. That's how it sounds to me.

Unluckily, many people don't understand my choice, they mock me and jeer at me – because they don't know anything about it, and it seems that they don't feel anything either. If only they could imagine being somewhere in the middle of Tibet and people laughed at them for being Christians. But it could not happen there. I know for sure that there is just one God whom we pray to in various languages, in various ways. Perhaps it is pleasant to God that I pray to him in the way I have chosen. My parents know this.

They gave me the name Sara, an old name that many think is just a Jewish name, but it is not, it is an old Moslem name, actually an Arab name. It is written down in the Bible and in the Quran. In the Bible there are Sarah and Abraham, and in the Quran Sarai and Ibrahim, but what is best of all is that they are the same people from the same story written in two languages. And what is finest and dearest to me is that my name means "princess", a woman of high birth, she who is close to God.

What a lovely name my parents gave me!

Do you like my name too?

<div align="right">

S. H. (13 yrs, 7ᵗʰ grade)

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The student wrote her essay gradually. First it was written with a multitude of details, which we discussed and tried to determine which would be the most appropriate for the topic. Her epic style of writing is too verbose and so for her, writing represents a way of learning moderation and staying on topic. At the same time she can observe what is essential and what is superfluous and what might interfere with the clarity of the text and strain the composition of the essay.

The need for writing is also her expression of communication with herself. She recalls the emotional moments of growing up and forming her own views, which she argumentatively outlines. Her composition is an example of one style of writing in which lyricality and warmth of personality always dominates.

5.4 THE POETIC EXPRESSION OF CHILDREN WITH HEARING AND/OR SPEECH-LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

This year marks the tenth anniversary of The SUVAG Elementary School students' participation in The Children's Haiku Festival, which takes place every year in March. Works by our students have been noted very regularly and were often rewarded.

Poetic expression is present in students and has been cultivated in several generations (in each generation several students have regularly emerged with an affinity for haiku, and the quality of their work was confirmed and awarded by poets – members of the evaluation committee, V. Devidé and V. McMaster).

How did it all begin?

Ten years ago, in fifth grade, the students were introduced to haiku poetry as part of their regular Croatian language curriculum when they attempted to independently write haiku poems for homework. This brought about many interesting poetic observations, and a proved a convenient way of encouraging children to express themselves poetically.

We can now safely say that it has been demonstrated that for children with language impairment, the short and simple form of expression in haiku is very close to their normal linguistic expression, which is somewhat more 'sparing' in daily communication, but can possess the force of poetic images when it is focused on a specific theme.

The following basic rules of writing haiku poems suit this population of children very well: the poem has no capital letters, no punctuation marks, no rhyme, no abstract words or poetic figures, no contemplative content but merely their direct experience shaped into a triplet of 5-7-5 syllables. A haiku poem doesn't have a title because it would affect the asceticism and brevity of expression. So haiku poetry "ignores" all spelling standards and supports clear and immediate experience without flowery phrases and descriptions, which is very close to, and favours, the linguistic expression of these children.

During these 10 years, the children have created numerous haikus related to the seasons of the year, changes and various natural phenomena and various occasions from their everyday life, which inspired the students to shape their observations and feelings clearly and meaningfully using the haiku form. Reading haikus and encouraging the children to write their own develops many skills. The child learns to perceive, to focus, recognize and name, compare the nuances in the meaning of words, develop associations, research and through it all adopt the proper grammatical standard for language. Moreover it helps them to shape their own linguistic expression, which is actually an integral part of rehabilitating the insufficiently developed linguistic expression in these children. But instead of monotonously using targeted language material, this is a truly creative confirmation of their own abilities, which is perhaps the most important aspect of all.

At the same time the children develop attitudes towards their environment and an awareness of the world and the myriad of forms life is manifested in. Developing their poetic expression demonstrated something unusual, and that is that these children have a great knack for observations. A lack of concentration does not exempt them from this, it just should be directed, i.e. their scattered attention should be focused on the phenomenal world and focused continuously, not just during the lesson. This shift is crucial because until then the children look without seeing, which means that only through directing their attention can they begin to notice. When they are focused on the phenomenal world, their overall perception and attitude towards the environment is changing because they notice 'the secret life of nature' that can affect us. Commuting from home to school, which was bland and tedious now becomes a 'little adventure'. The park is constantly changing;

the sky is different and colours are changing, as are the faces around us with their expressions and thoughts… (observation from the experience of the author).

5.4.1 A SHIFT IN PERCEPTION

Children have a need to talk about what they see, e.g., a girl said that when travelling by tram she saw a man near the lake waving to a swan who then approached the man and that it was "nice to see". Or, travelling to school after a rainstorm she remarked that the mountain is closer and everything is clearer because the "air is washed", which is an excellent observation for a child with an attention deficit disorder. Going through a boulevard on the way to school, a leaf fell in her hair and she says that the leaf "chose precisely me". On their way to school the children gather motifs and memorize them because they want to talk about them and shape them into a haiku.

From this casual experience of their journey from home to school the following poems were created (all haiku poems are translated by Visnja McMaster – croatian haiku poet):

Medvednica
has come closer. The leaf gleams,
blade of grass, my town

P. K. (6ᵗʰ grade)

A river of cars
a feast at the roadside –
sparrows round a doughnut

(common work)

On the way to school
a bud, and upon return
a red flower!

S. L. (6ᵗʰ grade)

Every situation can be seen differently if our way of looking is changed and the 'hidden world' of a different existence can be seen in everything. Since a haiku poem has a strong, strictly set structure and is not easy to write correctly, all students participate in its creation; words are chosen and nuances in meaning compared, the key verse and poetic imagery is chosen, syllables are counted and the subtlety and finesse of experience is evaluated. This process of creation is far more important than the poem itself because it requires the activity of all senses in terms of perception and exercises all of the linguistic elements, from choosing word with respect to repeating consonants (alliteration) to a density of metaphorical expression with layered meanings. The practice of reading haikus is an opportunity to talk about the sensations that poetic images and the sound of carefully chosen words inspire in us. Encouraging children to imagine poetic images with all their senses (imagining colours, feeling a scent, what is it like, what do you hear, can you feel the wind…) evokes a polysensory experience and synaesthesia, and thus the children enter into and 'live in the poem' – going through a poetic experience and feeling the moment that inspired the poet himself. This experience of 'living in the poem' is very vivid for the children because they still live in a fantasy world and so become more aware of how easy it is to be a 'participant' in the poem. They enjoy this approach of 'travelling into the poem' and talking about the experience because they are very sure of what they have experienced. This experience is crucial because it negates the famous fear of wondering "what the poet wanted to say" – the children are fully liberated and know what the poet wanted to say because they were in his shoes, 'feeling' his poetic image. This is why haiku as a short form is ideal for this population of children; it is easy to read, easy to remember, the children can observe the basic relationships between words and the hidden meanings 'between the words' and become aware that a lot can be said with a few words. Now they know how to experience a poem and they will use the same method to 'travel' in other more complex poetic forms and stanzas later on (Šimunović, 2007). It seems that's exactly what the poet Baudelaire meant when he said, "The mission of poetry is to open a window to another world, which is indeed ours, to allow me to come out of my borders and expand infinitely" (Pavletić, 1978).

As for language, haiku is an excellent basis for the gradual building and expansion of the linguistic structure.

5.4.2 POETRY GROUPS

This focusing of perception caused by a shift of perception to the external and thus an internal experiential world, gradually "transforms" students because it opens them to various forms of communication. While working on the poetic expression of students, several groups formed:

1. The first group of students who felt the need to **independently** shape their own observations into verses (verses that are written from the inner impulses without straining because they are an expression of the will and the need to communicate in this way).
2. A group of students who also write poetry but at the encouragement of teachers. They need to be given a theme or a drawing with a landscape motif; they seek an **external stimulus**.
3. The third group is made of those who do not write but love to read haiku poems. This is a **recitative group** (for several years they opened Children's haiku festivals), and they choose the poems themselves according to the poetic quality of the poems.
4. This group wants to visually/artistically shape the haiku poems written by the first or second group, making "**haigas**" (a *haiga* is a painted poem in Japanese). It is interesting how many different visual expressions can arise from the same poem. The process can also be reversed, so numerous poems arose from a visual template that provided a motif;
5. This fifth group consists of active **observers** who have taken part in the work of the groups (e.g., have a sense of rhythm and quickly counted the syllables of words that could form the default haiku form of 5-7-5 syllables and so they help the 'little poets' in their choice of words), but they do not see themselves as someone who could write a haiku even though they are very familiar with the

skills (over time they are expected to join some of the above-mentioned groups).

Various incentives and interferences occur within these groups and one does not know in which direction the student will "grow" and develop, but it is certain that this is one of the simplest, most direct and closest ways for children to enter the world of poetry in general. We should not ignore the basic impetus of haiku poetry according to which life takes on a myriad of forms, which is a truly 'wise' way of growing up and maturing. Many students readily accepted this way of observing and writing verses and it almost emerged as a natural way of looking at the world and events around them. This is how, for example, a haiku about a new situation in the family came about:

Mum with the baby
at last another voice
in our nest

The room smells
with my brother in a field
of chamomile

Sunshine breaks through
into the sleeping bedroom
dreams in the air

K. P. (7ᵗʰ grade)

Students began transforming their mundane worlds into a poetic world, recording moments that leave a trace of their own personality (a student said one day that she would show her brother the poem that she welcomed him into the world with), which is the charming naivety of the authentic experience that children are closer to.

Sometimes the tough everyday life is made 'easier' by writing poetry:

Autumn then Christmas,

Valentine's day and Easter
till I meet my Mum.

A bear without an ear –
the only memory
from my childhood

On the corner
a stretched out child's hand
nobody notices

$\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad$ *B. A. (6ᵗʰ grade)*

For some students writing poetry is a form of therapy – that is, it is how they cope with emotional difficulties and chaotic family circumstances. They speak about a subject that was obviously waiting for a suitable form to be expressed.

The motifs of haiku poetry are primarily details from nature woven into the direct observation of the viewer, who forms them using his own personality. Of course, the children hunt for their own style and in this search they should be allowed to express that which is otherwise difficult to express in speech, for various reasons (the emotional background is very often the cause of a scarcity in speech, as was the case in this example).

5.4.3 SEARCHING FOR THE RIGHT WORDS

Joint poem writing is the common creation of something new in which everyone has their share. For example, students give their suggestions which are discussed and one suggestion that best fits into the whole is accepted, they seek and determine the central motif, and then add an action to it (something that is not very common because then it would belong to the normal utterance, but a verb that is very precise and excludes other activities because that is what gives it the special touch). Very often in search of words, particularly verbs, it does well to take the principle of opposition. So some contents are excluded from the verb and the real content of the verb takes on its full meaning. Thus,

the children develop a way of 'questioning' the content of words, and simultaneously learn how a word takes on its meaning. These examples are the best way to teach the verb aspects to children – imperfective and perfective verb aspects or activities that last with minor interruptions.

Example, a poem about daffodils:

Nudging the snow
the tips of crocuses
stretch to the sun.

From the example of the verbs *gurnuti – gurati – gurkati* [shove – push – nudge] the pupils learned the differences in the contents of the words and understood that the tips of the crocuses constantly *nudge* aside the snow, and do not push it, and so one of the schoolgirls said at the end "it's just this verb that is the right one for this picture". The verb *hrliti* [rush towards] is also uncommon and the pupils do not actually use it in their own speech, although in context they recognise it and know its meaning. The question was how and with which verb to describe the movement of the flower that grows and tends only to the sun. After using up all the known verbs (go, grow, bud, move) it was necessary to go over to verbs that describe the meetings of people, for example, mother and child, and from that context, of the close encounter full of love, it is possible to get at the verb *hrliti* – rush [towards] – which in a sense is borrowed and thus, stylistically marked, is associated with the relation of flower and sun. These exercises in seeking for words are exercises in thinking about words that deepen the meaning of the word, enrich the vocabulary and develop abilities to distinguish nuances in meanings.

In the next example, the children sought a suitable adjective alongside the noun *boy*. The poetic image had to conjure up a hot summer afternoon in the park, experienced differently by a boy and his grandfather. The boy revels in the free play of the summer afternoon, while the grandfather is tired by the heat the boy does not even feel. This scene was observed by a girl from the tram on the way to school, and she described it precisely.

Summer afternoon.

A jolly boy
and a tired old man.

     The pupils slowly put the poem together, looking for an adjective that would completely describe the activity of the boy and his glad internal mood because of the game, the play. The boy is playing happily, but not in a single place, rather he is running around, which additionally tires the grandfather, and so an adjective was needed that brought together several characteristics, and the pupils first proposed the following words: *veseo, radostan, razdragan* [merry, joyful, glad] (these adjectives describe the internal mood but do not include the external activity, and so they are incomplete). The words hyperactive and mischievous then came up (which again include the external activity, but without the inner mood being visible). Then they came on the adjective *zaigran*/playful, which is much closer to the notion sought, but this word would rather describe an action taking place in a single spot, which with the prefix *raz* [all around] is changed into *razigran* [playful, but more so, with ideas perhaps of frisky, frolicsome] which completely corresponds to the characteristics sought, and still contains the word "play" (*igra*), which is desirable. In this way by a process of elimination the pupils gradually came at a word they were sure precisely described what they wanted to say. It also turned out that this word is in total opposition with the word weary in the next line, and because of the contrast the scene is still stronger.

     Adverbs are a difficult part of speech for this population of children, for they modify the meanings of words next to them by including components of time and space that are abstract for children and can represent a difficulty.

     From one child's drawing from the art class, several haikus were produced.

Treetop in a gleam
the forest dreams in the fog
the touch of the sun

The first strip of sun
lights up the treetop

forest in a fog

Only *a single crown*
in a glow. The woods **still**
wrapped in fog.

The first two poems were well made, but were static, and only in the third poem does a dynamic come in, with the use of the adverbs *just/only* and *still* (*tek, jos*). Analysing how long the tree top was lit up and how long the rest of the forest would be in the haze, the children came at the aspect of time. They sought a word of similar meaning as the conjunction *samo*, which would have been unsuitable, for it would have included 6 instead of the desirable 5 syllables (*tek jedna krošnja* is better than *samo jedna krošnja* "*just/but one treetop* as against *only one treetop*). Comparing it, the pupils noticed the difference in the poetic image with and without the adverb: without the *still* the image is static and a little colourless, while with the adverb at the beginning of the second image it brings in the possibility of imminent change – the adverb *still* changes the meaning of the whole of the poetic image. As can be seen from this poem, the pupils noticed very well the function of adverbs in the writing of other poems and started to use them more frequently.

Many linguistic elements can be covered in three short haiku lines, a small work of poetry being created at the same time. After they got to know the concept of alliteration in the interpretation of one poem, they started on their own to write a haiku with their "own alliteration". And so poems were created in which the pupils really quite creatively adopted the concept of alliteration and assonance, and later the writing of such poems became fun.

In translation, it is very difficult to achieve alliteration effect.

G*lazba u gnijezdu –*	*Nesting notes from*
grlica gugučući	*murmuring turtle doves*
grli grliće	*breasts embraced*
Leprša lišće	*Fluttering leaves*
na lahoru latice	*petals in the breeze*

<div align="center">

lagano lebde　　　　　　　*lightly lingering*

Šuštanje šume　　　　　　*Rustling in the woods*
šapće mi lišće priču　　　　*the leaves whisper me a tale*
o proljeću…　　　　　　　*of springtame…*

</div>

5.5 MOTIVATION

Motivation to write a haiku poem lies in every moment where the students see something poetic that they want to write about. They should be allowed to devote themselves to the sensation of that moment and share their perceptions with others. Many poems came about in the classroom during a Croatian language lesson, but they appeared casually, driven by something external. For example, as it suddenly began to snow, the children noticed a branch of mimosa and pussy willow left on the windowsill by someone from the morning rounds so they created the following verses:

<div align="center">

Snowflakes once more
but in the school window
a sprig of mimosa

</div>

<div align="right">

M. M. (6th grade)

</div>

<div align="center">

While snow flutters
pussy willow is in bloom
in gentle fur

</div>

<div align="right">

A. B. (7th grade)

</div>

<div align="center">

In the lee
behind a snowy curtain
snowflakes floating

</div>

<div align="right">

A. B. (7th grade)

</div>

During the last lesson, at dusk, a student observed the reflection of the sun on the window of the adjacent buildings, and on his way to school, he noticed the beauty of a small red tree, and a drop of rain in his mohawk hairstyle…

The last beam of sun
golden gleam of autumn
on the windows

M. S. (6th grade)

Autumnal morning
a little red tree
has lit up the park

V. K. (6th grade)

Morning rain
drops in the Mohican
at once I am king

M. S. (6th grade)

The impetus to write a poem may come from a literary text or a poem. After reading and interpreting the travelogue "Srijem" by Matko Peić, students formed verses using the available motifs (Srijem, the sky, the ocean, the Danube, the earth), which expressed the writer's impression of the width of the sky and the river quite precisely:

Far off Syrmia
into the ocean of the sky
flows the Danube

An endless view
in the distance merge
the sky and the land

The plains slumber
the Danube takes dreams away
into the distant sea

(common work, 7ᵗʰ grade children)

While reading a literary text the pupils themselves perceived the poetic images that somehow impose themselves on them because they have become 'sensitive' and sufficiently receptive to the beauty of details in the landscape. Their observations have become keener – finer and their verses therefore become more polished and subtle.

The poem "Long into the night, into the white winter night" by Dragutin Tadijanović inspired the students to write about snowflakes and feelings that arise in man during a winter's night.

In the lamplight's beam
the snowflakes glitter –
again I'm alone

I. D. (8ᵗʰ grade)

A winter evening
I stroll with my own shadow
and with the snowflakes

(common work)

Deserted winter night
only in the lamplight's beam
snowflakes pass by

(common work)

The great benefits of reading and writing haiku poems can be observed in the understanding of and the ability to create metaphors, which presents a difficulty to this population of children. Metaphorical language and the development of metaphorical thinking, as an example of more complex

semantic thinking, is an excellent exercise for developing speech and language in general because the metaphorical (and metonymic) mode of expression in everyday speech is actually the most common and is 'always in use' (Jakobson, R., Halle, M.). Therefore, the exercise of using metaphor in brief haiku triplets as well as writing poetry in general is a valuable way to practice layered thinking and understanding because children are gradually introduced to **higher levels of expression in the dense language of metaphor**.

End of October
in the crown of the linden
more and more stars

Grandma's hands
two weary little birds
in the calm of her lap

A tree in spring -
its wings and its buds
talk to the wind

(common work)

When reading the first poem, students experienced the 'power of metaphor' because even without exaggeration, it is so: imagine being under a tree at night in autumn and looking up – instead of leaves, you see the stars! This is not even a metaphor but mere observation, the nature is a poem itself, you just need to write it down! These examples convince the children that nature offers poems that are not yet written down but are waiting to be 'discovered' and carefully (faithfully) transferred in some form.

Haiku is the art of painting with words. Encouraging students to observe the environment and record their observations also encourages them to experience something beautiful, which can activate a strong need to express their personal experience of the world with their own personal expression, in any form. Thus, after some reading and working on poetic expression, an

excellent perception and highly refined linguistic expression nurtured through haiku poetry, developed in a number of children.

Poems by this student show an ever-greater finesse of experience, which was honed until in 8th grade the experiential and the linguistic and compositional elements joined at last into writing poetic miniatures. Her use of image is more precise, and the more accurate the image, the truer the moment, more honest and more precious due **to its uniqueness**.

In this she captured the essence of haiku poetry – the beauty of the moment:

Frozen brook
snowflakes lilt softly
over the surface

M. S. (6th grade)

A drop on the thread
a spider mends its web
while poppy trembles

M. S. (7th grade)

Night departing
still murmur of drowsy bird
in the trembling dawn

M. S. (8th grade)

In the verses by another student, one can always feel a synaesthesia of stimuli (sound, smell, touch and movement), which makes her poems recognizable. This is her way of leaving her 'handwriting' as a record of her sensations while watching the phenomenal world. In the first poem she suggests that the barking of a dog caused the slight undulation of water lily petals, and thus using the method of contrast (sharp bark and delicate petals of water lily), then alliteration (repeating the L sound six times) she produce a

tactile picture of a swinging water lily. The power of simplicity and subtlety condensed in the short triplet:

> *Barking of dogs –*
> *the leaves of the water lilies*
> *lightly levitating*
>
> A. B. (6th grade)

> *An open window*
> *the classroom full of blackbird chant*
> *and the scent of linden*
>
> A. B. (7th grade)

> *I check my pace*
> *a blackbird couple in the grass*
> *with a new song*
>
> A. B. (8th grade)

The subtlety of experience needs to be most accurately conveyed into words, it requires an adequate subtlety of words, which encourages the children with language and speech disabilities to seek, explore and develop their linguistic expression. Here lies the 'healing' power of poetic language that springs from rich experience and then returns and emerges as some form of creative expression.

5.5.1 PROSE POETRY

Poetic expression can also be expressed in prose. Sometimes this very "mixed" form is suitable for students who lyrically shape a prose form that also contains a poetic form. This kind of writing is called *haibun* and it is very present in Japanese literature. Lyrical expression, i.e. sensory experience is always in the background of this form of writing. It is very suitable for children with hearing and/or speech/language difficulties because it is short and does not require a

great narrative. It may be a purely lyrical text, but also a travelogue, for example, about a student's visit to Vukovar.

The first autumn rain drops

Autumn woke from its summertime dream because it set the clock to 23rd September sharp. As soon as it awoke, the first thing it did was drive away the sun. A little later, it summoned the rain and shook the sad drops from the boughs, leaves, chestnuts… Everything was bleak, but not everything because umbrellas were cheerful and motley! As I walked, I stepped into a blurred little mirror on a little footpath.
    Finally, autumn drove us off to our classrooms.

<div align="center">

Quietly through the window
comes in her motley gown
the lady autumn

A hedgehog, so small
hidden beneath the leaves
shoves a chestnut

</div>

<div align="right">

K. P. (7th grade)

</div>

Case pendant

I set off for a trip to Vukovar with my mum. Why? My mum suddenly really wanted to see the city, and I wanted to go with her. So far I have only heard about the city so I wanted to see it. I set off on the journey with a great deal of curiosity.

<div align="center">

The way to Vukovar
a herd of deer in the grove
the middle of the plain

</div>

    We arrived at about 10 o'clock. I first noticed many houses pierced by bullets. Everything is different there.
    At the Vukovar hospital I watched a video about the war. Those people went through a lot. At the hospital, I saw life-size dolls that represented dead people. I heard

that many children died in the hospital. I also went to Ovčara. It was dark inside, pictures of people who were killed were on the walls, and in the corner under glass on straw there were things belonging to missing and dead persons. On the floor are bullet cases that you can only see half way because they are in concrete. In the souvenir shop I bought a case pendant as a keepsake. A little further from Ovčara is a large grave where we lit a candle and said a prayer for those who were killed.

Later I saw what I wanted, which is a water tower. I was surprised that it was still up, what with all the shells and bullets. Near the water tower is a restaurant on the Danube River and that is where we had lunch. I stood on the bank of the large river.

> *The Danube is wide —*
> *one lonesome rowboat*
> *floats by a duck*

After lunch, we visited the church in Aljmaš, and at the very end we went to Ilok. There I saw a real wine cellar and how to make wine. Ilok is a very nice town and I was sorry it was not daytime so that I could see it even better. We left Ilok for Zagreb full of impressions. That was my unforgettable day trip with mum.

> *Going back home —*
> *my thoughts are still*
> *in Vukovar*

<div align="right">

M. M. (6th grade)

</div>

Students are happy to express themselves in poetry and they should be allowed to express a verse that they feel deeply in prose as well, regardless of its type and form. Developed observational skills that focus on the details of nature are quite evolved in these children, through the use of the previously described procedures. So many of these children record their perceptions this way, rather than using prose.

5.5.2 MOTIVATION BY PICTURE – HAIGA

Certain pictures that come about in art classes are very inspiring and often 'invite' their transcription into poetry. Sometimes, written poems are 'recognized' in a picture and added as its corresponding part. In this way numerous haiga were created as an example of seeking and finding creative expressions, because they are part of a higher-order of existence. Students find it easy to "pair" them due to the openness of a child's perception, which is more straightforward than that of adults.
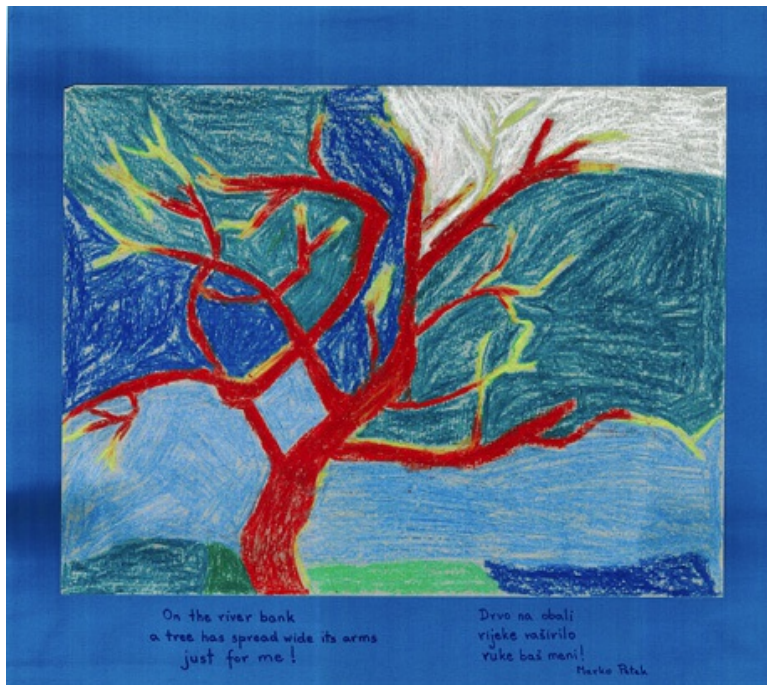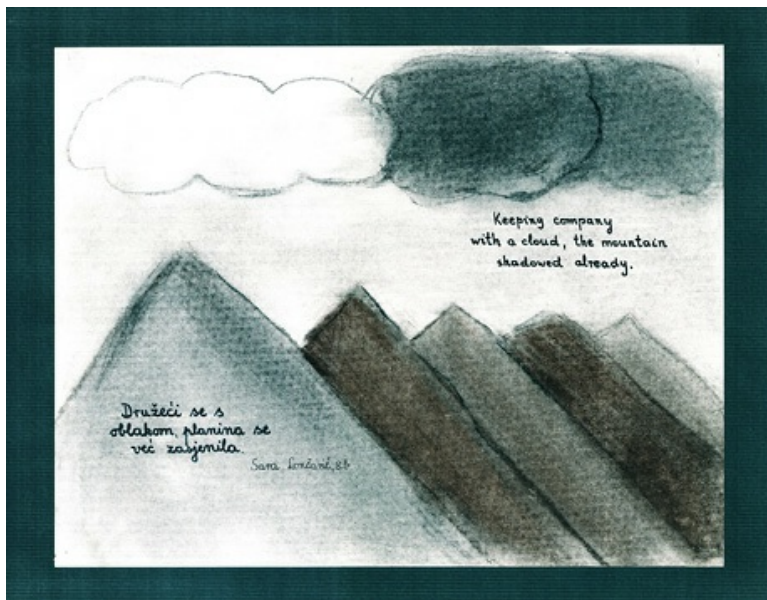

Figure 31

Pretežki oblak
drhti od kapljica
olujne kiše
Marko Štek

The heavy cloud
trembles with the drops
of a rainstorm

Crni oblak —
pubnut će od tereta
ovog trenutka
Sara Lončarić, 8.b

The black cloud
about to burst with its load
this moment

Keeping company
with a cloud, the mountain
shadowed already.

Družeči se s
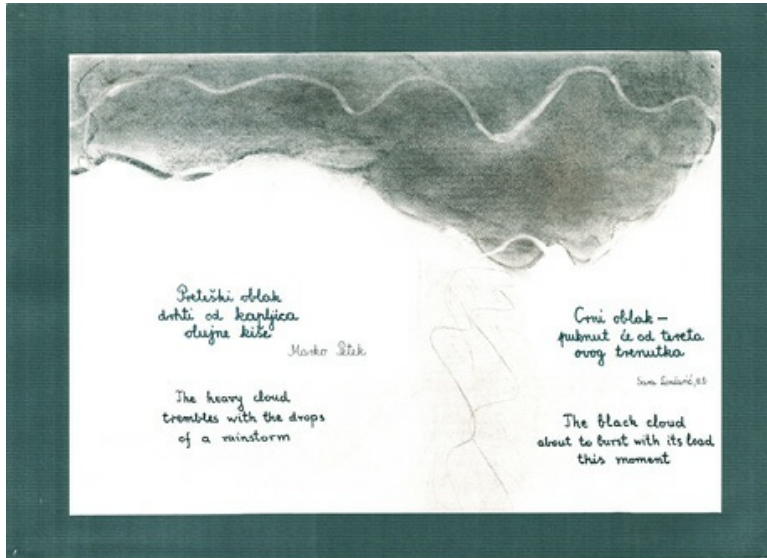oblakom planina se
več zatemnila.
Sara Lončarić, 8.b

Figure 32 and 33

Figure 34

5.5.3 MOTIVATION BY PHOTOGRAPHY – PHOTO-HAIGA

Award-winning landscape photography by professor Mirjana Porupski revealed the poetic world of photography to students. They felt a "visual poem" in the photo that they enjoyed looking at and, leaving the author's poem alone, they wrote another, their own. All photo-haiga included in this book are more or less the teamwork of students who, inspired by the atmosphere, wrote verses that captured the moment in the deeper layers of the image (having anylized the photo together, pupils make poems individually).

The fog still floats
above the sleeping lake
the shadows melt

Break of dawn
the first swan awakens -
dreams in the wing

Figure 35 and 36

At the crack of dawn
the first flapping of wings
vanishes in fog

Just a little while
along the flickering mirror
shadows floating

Figure 37 and 38

The other side
a foggy coppice
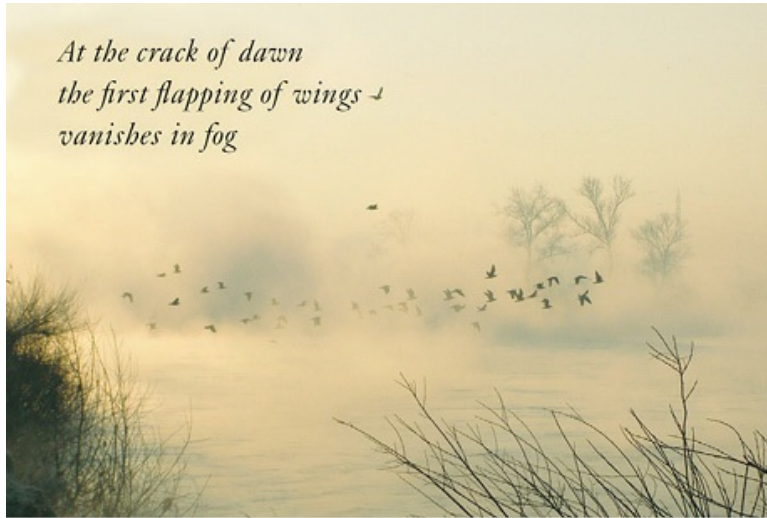gripped by frost

Scattered silver
snowsteps securely
stand as one

Figure 39 and 40

No one anywhere
the snowflakes are seated
instead of guests

Lit by the heart
snowy pine before the window
grows and grows

Figure 41 and 42

In a beam of sun
a swaying ear of wheat
and just one poppy

Figure 43

5.6 THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF WORK IN POETIC EXPRESSION

The achievements of work in poetic expression are as follows:

- students know how to experience a poetic image,
- students know how to recognize and name poetic expressions,
- they can understand the picturesque poetic language of metaphors,
- they can identify with a poetic image,
- they can experience the beauty of nature and express it,
- they can individually shape their poetic expression,
- they develop an understanding of poetic language and its abstract principles,
- they develop their speech/language expression,
- they can express themselves more freely when interpreting poetry,
- they become linguistically creative (conclusions arising from the practice of the author).

It is safe to say that writing haiku poetry is one of the most creative methods of rehabilitation for the expression of language in children with language difficulties, which is confirmed by numerous awards.

The biggest success was our participation in The World Children's Haiku Festival – The world haiga competition for children, 2005 – in Constantza on The Black Sea Coast, where students from The SUVAG Polyclinic Elementary School won first place; **they won first place both individually and as a group on the national level**! Students who have auditory implants but who are very artistically gifted illustrated the students' poetry (the art group is led by prof. Gordana Košćec). Thus, students with normal hearing but with language and speech difficulties achieved great success working together with students who have implants due to hearing loss. It should be noted that this is a competition for students from regular schools in Croatia and across the world.

5.7 EXHIBITIONS

At the request of the Japanese haiku society all of the students' works from Constantza were sent to Japan to Hekinan, translated into Japanese and exhibited at the EXPO in July and August. Then they were exhibited in Sendai – in The Museum of Literature, and in February 2006 at the exhibition of the MIFA festival in Tokyo. After the Children's Festival in Zagreb all of the awarded children's haiga works were sent to Japan – Tokyo for the exhibitions of their haiku societies.

What the students are particularly proud of is that for several years the Children's haiku festivals are opened by the recitation of groups whose interpretations are always a pleasant surprise – as for children with language and speech difficulties, reciting poetry before an audience on a poetry gathering, is the greatest success.

Figure 44. *Exhibition in Sendai, 2006.*

Figure 45. *Exhibition at the MIFA Festival in Tokyo, 2006.*

Figure 46. *Exhibition in Matsuyama, 2007.*

This depiction of working with children with hearing and/or speech/language difficulties using the verbotonal method, which is focused on the child and the development of all of its potential, has once again confirmed that this population of children is creative and moreover that there are gifted children with great achievements and that the developmental path of an impaired/disabled child can be not only creative but also very successful. The verbotonal method and its numerous developmental and educational procedures open a kaleidoscope of possibilities and challenges that may develop and direct a child's interests in various ways and encourage new creative potential, which must surely exist, only 'waiting' to be developed. It is of great importance to identify and creatively direct such potential in a child, helping its experiential and cognitive world to develop diversely and abundantly.