

Recognizing and Overcoming Language Impairment of Young English Learners

Maltar, Lucija

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**SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET
ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE**

LUCIJA MALTAR

DIPLOMSKI RAD

**RECOGNIZING AND OVERCOMING
LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT OF YOUNG
ENGLISH LEARNERS**

Zagreb, srpanj 2019.

SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET
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Ime i prezime pristupnika: Lucija Maltar

**TEMA DIPLOMSKOG RADA: Recognizing and Overcoming
Language Impairment of Young English Learners**

MENTOR: doc. dr. sc. Ivana Cindrić

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Hvala mojem zaručniku na potpori, ljubavi i dijeljenju radosti.

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SUMMARY

This thesis focuses on recognizing and overcoming language impairment of young English learners. Language impairments are common among young learners and may have an effect on their success and further education. The key to dealing with language impairments is in their early discovery. The aim of the research conducted for the purpose of this paper was to raise awareness of language impairments in classrooms, to offer solutions of dealing with language impaired students and to motivate pre-service teachers and in-service teachers to research into this topic in order to enable success for their students.

In the first part of this paper, the author analysed literature on language impairments, language impairments in schools, how to diagnose them and which solutions are offered for dealing with them in practice. The second part presents the study conducted for the purpose of this paper. The study included a semi-structured interview with an experienced English language teacher in a Croatian school who has been dealing with language impaired students for twelve years and has shared her personal experience with impairments, as well as offered numerous advices on overcoming them.

The findings confirmed that language impaired students must be integrated into system and schooling programme. They need to be approached individually, formatively assessed and offered modified materials based on their language impairment. Each student is an individual, therefore, there is no unique method for dealing with language impairments. However, every student should be enabled to participate in lessons and receive an adequate education they have the right to get.

Key words: young English learners, foreign language learning, language impairment, specific language impairment

SAŽETAK

Tema ovoga rada je prepoznavanje i nadilaženje jezičnih teškoća kod mlađih učenika engleskoga jezika. Obilježja jezičnih teškoća često se javljaju među mlađim učenicima te mogu utjecati na njihov uspjeh i daljnje obrazovanje. Ako se jezične teškoće otkriju dovoljno rano, moguće ih je nadići i omogućiti učenicima prikladno školovanje. Cilj istraživanja provedenog u svrhu ovoga rada bio je podići svijest o postojanju jezičnih teškoća u učionicama, ponuditi rješenja koja je moguće primjeniti na učenicima s dijagnosticiranim oblikom jezičnih teškoća, te motivirati sadašnje i buduće učitelje na učenje i istraživanje ovoga problema kako bi omogućili svojim učenicima uspjeh.

U prvome dijelu rada autorica analizira literaturu vezanu uz temu jezičnih teškoća kako bi dobila uvid u trenutno stanje u školama i općenito u situaciju jezičnih teškoća kod djece, kako ih prepoznati i dijagnosticirati te koja su rješenja ponuđena za rad s djecom s jezičnim teškoćama. U drugome dijelu rada prikazuje se istraživanje provedeno u svrhu ovoga rada. Autorica je provela polu strukturirani intervju s učiteljicom engleskoga jezika u hrvatskoj školi koja 12 godina radi s djecom s jezičnim teškoćama. Ispitanica je odgovarala na pitanja vezana uz praksu podučavanja engleskoga jezika, kao stranog jezika, kod učenika s jezičnim teškoćama te je savjetovala kako integrirati sve učenike u proces poučavanja.

Rezultati su potvrdili da se učenike s jezičnim teškoćama treba integrirati u nastavi. Potrebno im je pristupiti individualno, formativno vrednovati njihove uspjehe i prilagoditi materijale i zahtjeve s obzirom na učeničke sposobnosti, uzevši u obzir njihovu nemogućnost. Svaki je učenik individualan. Iz tog razloga ne postoji jedna određena metoda kako pomoći učeniku s teškoćom. Svaki bi učenik trebao dobiti priliku za sudjelovanje u nastavi i primjereno obrazovanje na koje ima pravo.

Ključne riječi: mlađi učenici engleskog jezika, učenje stranog jezika, jezične teškoće, posebne jezične teškoće

INTRODUCTION

Teachers working in primary schools nowadays increasingly face the challenges of working with mixed-ability classes and with learners with special educational needs (Pinter, 2017). One of the disabilities teachers may have to face in their classrooms are language impairments. Language impairments are present among young learners even though they may not be obvious at first. According to Eurostat's (2014) statistics, every year between 2500 and 3000 children with language impairments start their primary education. In order to help those students, teachers need to be prepared and educated to decide which steps to undertake in such situations and how to approach them. Language impaired students in their classrooms, who may not be able to follow the set programme, seek for an individualized approach and a teacher who will understand their needs and abilities. According to Pinter (2017), the teachers' willingness and readiness to monitor the opportunities and limitations of their students are the basis of success. If language impairments are recognized on time, a child can get an adequate education accommodated to their abilities and manage to succeed in the process of education itself. There is no unique method for dealing with language impaired students. In order to recognize and overcome language impairments in their classrooms, teachers should continuously explore and research into this topic.

Prompted by these thesis, the author of this paper decided to conduct a research which would raise awareness among pre-service and in-service teachers about the importance of this topic and provide solutions and methods for dealing with language impaired students in classrooms.

1 LANGUAGE

Language can be defined as the key characteristic people possess. Even though, it seems to be crucial for human race and their lives, there is still no complete definition that would cover all of its features and present its importance. Language is often defined as “a system of symbols with defined meaning and set of rules which apply to those symbols” (Hržica, G.; Peretić, M., 2015, p. 9) and connects them in units. “Language is manifested through speech” (Hržica, G.; Peretić, M., 2015, p. 11). The discipline which is specialised in analysing language is called linguistics (Kovačević, 1997). Even though language is, as already mentioned, human’s key characteristic that serves as an aid for communication, which is crucial in order to function in a society, it seems to be impossible to research language thoroughly enough to discover all of its details. For that, it is said to be “impossible to describe the unique chronology of language” (Kuvač, Jelena; Palmović, Marijan, 2007, p. 13).

1.1 HISTORY OF LANGUAGE RESEARCHES

The complexity of language itself has been researched into, described and observed numerous times throughout the history. The one segment that has perhaps been the most intriguing is child’s language and its development. Kuvač and Palmović (2007) mention Charles Darwin as the initiator of the researches focused on child’s language. Due to his contribution to language researches, a child has become the centre of the research for the first time in history in the 19th century. Darwin followed his own son’s journey in language acquisition and published an article called *A Biographical Sketch of an Infant* (1877). There he described every detail of the child’s language development starting from his earliest phase, where he describes his first steps in the process: “...before he was a year old, he understood intonations and gestures...” (Darwin, 1877, p. 294), and continuing through the crucial years of the language acquisition. Despite its constant researching, it is still hard to define the correct and adequate way of how people acquire language. Bloomfield tried to define it in 1933 saying language is “an inherited feature and children pick up language by imitating their environment” (Bloomfield, 1993, pp. 29-30). Due to that, language acquisition seems to be inherited. That is the supposable reason of why children do not need to be taught their mother tongue, but they seem to know it from the start and they just need to come to the phase where their brain is capable of producing it. They seem to

understand their mother tongue much earlier than they are able to produce it and communicate verbally with their community. Children are able to acquire language seemingly very naturally and easily. The amount of knowledge and information they are able to take in is often compared to “sponges” and the sponge’s capability of absorbing and containing a large amount of water. Children seem to have the ability to acquire knowledge in a broad quantity just as sponges have the capability of easily containing large amount of water. Since people perceived the possibilities the children have, the need for the acquisition of more than one language, at the very early age, has now become widely spread among people. Finally it is said that a person’s worth can be measured in the number of languages they use. Having said that, the importance of language has been explained.

1.2 FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AT HOME AND IN SCHOOLS

Agudo (2017) claims that, thanks to globalization, the English language has expanded and is now recognized as “the most influential language of international communication around the world” (Martinez Agudo, 2017, p. 1) which resulted in development of World Englishes. Gačić and Šamo (2014) agree and add that the need for teaching and learning languages from a very young age in schools is now globally recognised. Parents seem to have realised the importance of the language knowledge in their children’s lives so they insist on an appropriate language education. Looking back on couple of decades ago, not many schools around the world offered the possibility of learning a foreign language. Only a couple of generations back, people did not have the opportunity to learn another language at the young age, apart from the people who had the privilege to be taught by a private tutor or their parents if they were highly educated and knew another language. It seemed that knowing another language was not crucial for having an average life and was thought to have been “reserved” for the wealthier families who supposedly needed it. Children could not get the education modern children get nowadays. Looking back from today’s point of view, it seems strange and incomprehensible, but this was the situations only a couple of generations ago. The acquisition of a foreign language seems to be essential in today’s modern world, and it is well spread that school education and home education cannot be equalised and the role of the school education has been upraised. The boundary for starting a foreign language acquisition has been set to the start of child’s

primary education. However, nowadays, it has been moved to the point that children start learning another language even before they turn one and start speaking their mother tongue. In addition to that, more and more children start their primary education already knowing more than one language and the primary school program often serves only as an upgrade to their possessed knowledge.

2 CROATIAN SCHOOLING SYSTEM

Primary education differs in various parts of the world. For instance “in some countries children attend primary school from five to eleven years of age, while in other contexts children start school later, at the age of six or seven” (Pinter, 2017, p. 1). Children, in most of the cases, attend primary school until they are fourteen years old. Primary education in the Croatian schooling system is compulsory and lasts for eight years. The Croatian schooling system instructs that all children who turn six years by the end of March in the current year must start their primary education (Gačić, M.; Šamo, R., 2014). Moreover, Gačić and Šamo (2014) mention that primary education is free for all children and they are all obliged to attend primary school by the age of seven. The Croatian National Curriculum (2006) comprises six core subjects: Croatian language, Mathematics, Arts, Physical Education, Music and Science. Also, there is Religion as an elective subject. Besides the core subjects, according to the Croatian National Curriculum, primary school students have to learn at least one foreign language during their primary school education (MZOŠ, 2006).

2.1 FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE CROATIAN SCHOOLING SYSTEM

Foreign language teaching in the Croatian system, “as of 1 August 2003, starts in the first grade of primary education and is compulsory for all learners. In the fourth grade, learners have the opportunity to choose a second foreign language as an optional subject” (Buljan Culej, 2014, pp. 40-41). In their first year the students have to choose between: English, German, French or Italian. The frameworks according to which the students in Croatia are learning a foreign language are CEFR¹ (Council of Europe, 2001) or in Croatian ZEROJ² (Vijeće Europe, 2005). According to ZEROJ (2005), the

¹ CEFR stands for Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment

² ZEROJ stands for Zajednički europski referentni okvir za jezike: učenje, poučavanje, vrednovanje

students have to acquire the five language skills which are: language structure (grammar/vocabulary), listening, speaking, reading and writing. In the process of the acquisition the students are divided into three levels: basic user (level A), independent user (level B) or, the highest level - proficient user (level C). The situation nowadays is that children start their foreign language acquisition even from the earlier age, thus, before they start their official primary education. It has now become a rarity to find children who had never been introduced to a foreign language before the start of their primary education, but it is still possible. Being surrounded by and exposed to foreign languages via media results in faster, yet unconscious acquisition of the language. This has affected diversity of knowledge in today's classrooms around the world. The situation is that some children come to the first grade with certain basic knowledge of the language, while others have only started their introduction to another language systems which often results in inadequate conditions for the teacher who has to be prepared for each student individually and by that, the programme is not suitable. The foreign language teachers today have to be well educated and well prepared to handle any given situation and to help and educate each student individually, having thought of their personal requests and conditions. Their role in a child's development is crucial. The teacher has to be "the crucial thread" (Gačić, M.; Šamo, R., 2014, p. 5) between the learner's characteristics on the one hand and the learning conditions on the other. In order to succeed in that they have to be well educated, prepared and with knowledge of how to plan an adequate lesson where they would engage all students – the ones who acquired language foundations, and others who have just started their language acquisition.

3 TEACHER EDUCATION IN CROATIA

As already mentioned, it is not easy for the modern teachers to offer adequate education for new generations of children in their classrooms. Each generation has their own requests, their own level of background knowledge and their own goals and the results they are heading for. The teachers have been put in a demanding position – their education can never be completely finished. A teacher who wants to follow their students, and offer the best possible education and solution for them, cannot ever stop continuing to upgrade their knowledge and their teaching methods. In order to become a qualified teacher, a person has to obtain an adequate knowledge and education. In

Croatia, teachers are educated at the University of Teacher Education Department Of Teacher Education Studies. They can choose between two programmes: the Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate University Study for Primary Teacher Education with modules, and the Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate University Study for Primary Teacher Education with foreign languages (Faculty of Teacher Education , n.d.). Modules future teachers can choose from are: information sciences, art, educational sciences and Croatian language, while the language programme offers the possibilities to study English and German language. The teachers acquire the obligatory predispositions throughout their five-year education where they attend and listen to variety of pedagogical and educational courses. Throughout their education, on each year, they have several weeks of teaching practice, where they visit different schools and observe and conduct lessons in subjects they will have to teach later on when they finish their education. They are offered to see different styles of teaching by different teachers and to observe their methods and results. Practice courses offer future teachers to be present in real classrooms with real students who, each, have their own style of learning, pace of acquisition, needs and motivation. In order to become a good teacher, a person has to take all of those factors into account and figure their way of teaching each child appropriately.

4 YOUNG AND OLD LEARNERS

As already mentioned, primary education differs between countries. Therefore, it is differently formed and there is no proper way to determine the term “young learners” as well as the term “old learners”. There seems to be no definite boundary to when the child stops being a young learner. Researchers refer to young learners as “children from the first year of formal schooling (five or six years old) to eleven or twelve years of age” (Philips, 1993, p. 3). Pinter (2017) mentions that every child is unique and, within the same age range, there are significant differences between children. Moreover, most of the teachers agree that the level of the learners cannot be defined by their age, but it is their maturity that defines them. The methods that the teachers use with young, less mature learners, have to differ from the ones used with older learners. For instance, the holistic approach to learning languages is applied to young learners. The holistic theory defines learning “as the major process of human adaptation involving the whole person” (Kolb, Alice Y.; Kolb, David A., 2009).

Therefore, it is not appropriate for young learners to be obliged only to sit in their classrooms. They seek active learning. They need to participate in the process of acquisition. Before they will be able to produce and analyse language, they will be able to understand messages. For that reason they should be exposed to foreign language they are learning as much as possible. They will not be able to identify themselves as the language learners, as Pinter (2017) mentions, in contrast to older learners who are fully aware of the learning process and themselves as a part of the process. In difference to older learners, the younger learners will not have access to internet and the ability to research into an interesting topic for their project. Teachers have to provide all the materials for them and motivate them to participate. Young learners are still discovering what their learning style is. That is “a sequence of procedures for accomplishing learning” (Schmeck, 1988). Therefore, they have to be offered different methods in order to find the most suitable one. Each child has its own individual needs and it is a challenge for their teacher to provide them with suitable tasks and materials. Even though it may seem that teaching young learners is easier, in contrast to teaching old learners, due to their ability to absorb and acquire knowledge quickly, it takes more preparation, numerous activities in just one single lesson and the ability to motivate the learners who are still not aware of the language and do not feel the urge to acquire it.

5 MODERN TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS

Today’s world is often described as a “fast-changing, globally connected world” (Pinter, 2017). In such an environment, and in the boosting process of globalisation, the need for foreign language learning has increased rapidly. Therefore, foreign languages are being introduced in the classrooms all around the world. Since the world is connecting and people have to step out of their comfort zone in order to participate in the society, children are basically “forced” to know another language in order to be able to communicate with the world. Even though there is a need for more education and more knowledge, children are, in their minds, still children and want to play, explore the world around them and have fun. They are not motivated to sit in the classrooms and take in all the knowledge that is being served to them. This is where the teacher’s role becomes crucial. Teachers have to present learning in a playful, child-acceptable way. They have to be motivating in order for the student to get the

motivation to learn. They have to be well educated and have the knowledge in order to pass on their ideas. They have to plan each lesson and be well prepared, but still be flexible in cases that the lesson does not go as planned. Even when the teachers believe they are prepared for any obstacle in their classrooms, they can still be surprised. Namely, as technology and knowledge have boosted and offered different sources and different methods, as well as the possibilities to dig in certain topics deeper than ever before, new questions and problems have occurred. Teachers have to face many language obstacles in their classrooms and the need for an individualisation of the programme. Language obstacles are, today, a widely spread topic among the teachers. It seems that never before have there been as many students with an impairment that may impact their process of education. The reason could be in the fact that those children, with kind of a disorder, have been neglected and ignored through the years as a result of the ignorance. With researching deeper into various fields, one of them being language, people have become aware of the problems that may occur in the process of acquisition which can then have an effect on further education of the individual. Since the problem is now well known, the variety of solutions are offered for teachers to seek answers and apply them. Today, seemingly more than ever, has the individualisation and the uniqueness of the needs of the students become more obvious.

6 LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) defines language impairment according to Bernstein (1989) who determines it as an impairment associated with comprehension skills, acquisition and expression of spoken or written language. The Florida Department of Education defines language impairments as disorders of language that interfere with communication, adversely affect performance and/or functioning in the student's typical environment, and result in the need for exceptional student education. It is a disorder in one or more of the basic learning processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language. According to Ljubešić (1997) there is a division of language impairments, according to their causes, into four main groups. These are: impairments of psychogenic etiology, impairments of social etiology and neurogenic etiology. Impairments of psychogenic etiology are very rare and psychologically driven. Ljubešić (1997) mentions two

subdivisions under psychogenic etiology the first one being delayed language acquisition due to inadequate emotional development and state, and, the second one being a situation where a child has acquired language, but does not use it in an adequate way also due to an inadequate emotional state or kind of a mental disorder. Eisenson (1986) emphasises another contributor to development of language impairments of psychogenic etiology – the family situation. In order to have an appropriate language development a child has to be in the environment with normal parent-child relationship. A child has to be directly spoken to and have the possibility to listen to proper, grammatically correct speech directed towards another participant of a conversation. Parents should avoid using, so called, “baby talk”. Also, a child has to feel the need to express themselves through usage of concrete words and not just mimic or another way. Only in that way will the language development be accurate. Another kind of language impairments are impairments of sociological etiology which are, in contrast to language impairments of psychogenic etiology, more frequent. Ljubešić (1997), states several causes to these types of language impairments: the size of the child’s family, chronological order of the child’s birth, parents’ education, family status in society and other. Finally, there are language impairments of neurogenic etiology. Vuletić (1997), defines them as various types of dysphasia or aphasia of youth. A certain language impairment manifests in difficulties considering reading, spelling, writing, social interaction, listening comprehension or oral expression. Children with a diagnosed language impairment usually have trouble following their peers in everyday communication. It affects their vocabulary which is mostly basic and their sentences are often incomplete and grammatically incorrect. Language impaired children often have trouble getting their messages across to other peers and understanding the message coming from others (Shelat, 2018). Scientists claim that one in every twenty children has language disorder symptoms. Language skills problems usually occur before the age of four and, if the cause is unknown it is diagnosed as a developmental language disorder. Moreover, language disorders may occur in a child with possible other type of developmental issue. Those may be: autism disorder, learning disabilities or loss of hearing and aphasia which is, as National Aphasia Association defines “an impairment of language affecting the production or comprehension of speech and the ability to read or write” and it is caused by the brain injury. Aphasia is classified under as the acquired language impairment. Kologarić Belić et. al (2015) distinguish two types of language impairments. The first type is

developmental impairment which has occurred in the process of language acquisition. The second one is acquired language impairment which appeared after the mother tongue basics were acquired. Moreover, the Texas Council of Developmental Disabilities (TCDD) (2013) states five fields of language impairments, those being: phonological disorders, morphological disorders, semantic disorders, syntactic deficits and pragmatic difficulties. Phonological disorders are diagnosed to a child who cannot manage to express the sounds correctly and is making the sounds hard to be understood. An example of phonological disorder may be apraxia where a child cannot manage to plan what to say and how to say it. Morphological disorders result in child's disability to acquire nouns, verbs and adjectives. Poor vocabulary and wrong word meanings, as well as comprehension problems are results of semantic disorders. According to the TCDD: "These students will have difficulty with multiple word meanings, excessive use of nonspecific terms (e.g. thing and stuff) and indefinite references (e.g. there and that)" (TCDD, 2013). Syntactic deficits are diagnosed to students who have difficulties considering word order in sentences. TCDD (2013) states that these students will produce "less elaborate sentences with fewer cohesive conjunctions than their peers". Lastly, pragmatic difficulties are characteristic for students who have difficulties in understanding and applying language in different social contexts meaning they have problems with expressing themselves in a socially acceptable way.

6.1 SPECIFIC LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT

Specific language impairments are language disorders which affect the acquisition of language skills among children with no other developmental delays (Health, 2011). The term "specific language impairment" (SLI) has changed over time. Some of the mentioned concepts are: inadequate developed speech, immature speech, child aphasia, diaphasia and slow development of expressive speech (Kologarić Belić, L. et al., 2015). SLI³ children have postponed speech development and the deviation in language becomes more obvious right away which, as proved, affects the mastery of reading and writing skills (Conti-Ramsden, G.; Durkin, K., 2008). Moreover, one of the researches showed that children with SLI have extremely poor social skills and are dissatisfied with their relationships with their peers when compared with their

³ SLI stands for Special Language Impairment

classmates (Brinton, B. et al. , 1996). Therefore, most of the children with SLI are, later on, diagnosed with dyslexia or specific learning impairment. Tomblin et al. (1997), define two types of SLI. Firstly, they mention receptive language impairment where child's comprehension skills are below the comprehension level for their age. Children with receptive language impairment, in most of the cases, also have diagnosed the expressive language impairment which could also occur as an independent impairment among children with no comprehensive disability. One of the most frequent special language impairments is dyslexia (Kologarić Belić, L. et al., 2015). The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) (2002), defines dyslexia as “a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities.” The consequences of dyslexia are “problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge” (IDA, 2002). Children with diagnosed dyslexia should get their education in a normal schooling programme and individualisation with the help of specialists can only contribute to students' success. Another kind of SLI are speech impairment which are divided into articulation impairment, speech fluency impairment and child's speech apraxia. Moreover, children with a special language impairment often have communication and social disabilities, and, some of them, are later on diagnosed with impairment in autistic spectre. Scientists state that in the 80's of the past century, it was believed that children with diagnosed special language impairment have properly developed all other nonverbal abilities. However, recent studies show that children with SLI show reduced results in nonverbal abilities' tests (Kologarić Belić, L. et al., 2015). Therefore, more and more scientists use the term “primary language impairment” which shows that those language impairments diagnosed among children do not except lower achievements in other fields connected to language usage (Ebert, K. D.; Kohnert, K.; Windsor, J., 2009).

6.2 LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT DIAGNOSIS

The process of diagnosing a language impairment and any other kind of impairment of a child is clearly prescribed. Ružić (2013) states that the psycho-physical state of a child needs to be followed for an entire school year. The teacher is obliged to follow the achievements of the students and observe their development during a certain period

of time in order to be able to establish that a problem may have occurred. If a teacher notices a possible impairment of a child, he/she is obliged to inform the principle, the parents and the support staff of their school. After that, the class council will conduct the procedure of determination of psycho-physical state of the child. Then, the school has to submit application to state offices of their district along with requested documentation and teacher's report. The procedure itself is conducted in order to determine the proper form of schooling for the child. The committee will then meet the parents, if necessary, ask for additional specialist tests, and, based on the given information, decide whether a child has to be offered alteration or modification in their schooling process. (Ružić, 2013)

7 BACKGROUND TO STUDY

According to Eurostat (2014) there are 5, 8 million children and teenagers up to the age of eighteen who have been diagnosed with a language impairment. The statistics have that every year between 2500 and 3000 language impaired children start their primary education. Unfortunately, it is well known that only a minor percentage of the number of the impaired children have already been diagnosed, while some of them will not get the right diagnosis throughout their entire education. Since early diagnosis is crucial in the process of helping children with an impairment, more and more researches have been focusing on raising awareness of this world problem. The parents of language impaired children are often frustrated because even the early diagnosis does not provide and ensure the appropriate solutions and methods of dealing with the issue. Ljubešić (2012) adds that neither is there a system of the early prevention or support in education for such children, nor enough information or psycho-social help which would be accessible for teachers and for parents of the children. Since teachers are the ones who will spend most of the time with the children in their early age, they should be able to recognize and react to a possible issue that they may have noticed.

7.1 RESEARCH AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The aim of this research is to raise awareness of language impairment among current and future teachers, as well as parents and other specialist services. The participants in the educational system should be educated and well prepared for situations with impaired children – not only to help the child and to be able to provide appropriate

education for them, but, even more importantly, to know how to recognize that something may not be right with the child and to know where to send them in order to get help and try to solve the issue. In her research, Sadler (2005), interviewed several teachers many of whom reported having little or no training at all on language impairment. They all claimed only to have knowledge acquired through their experience and from reading books. The teachers' confidence is, reportedly, very low when it comes to dealing with students with language disabilities, which cannot be acceptable in today's world where more and more children are deprived of the real diagnose and have various problems in their education as a result of uninformed experts and teachers. This paper should provide motivation for further research into this issue topic. The aim of the interview conducted for the purpose of this research was to answer the questions of how to engage and incorporate language impaired children in the educational process and offer examples of solutions on how to prevent elimination of impaired children from the educational system and enable them to participate in the educational process in a way they are capable of.

8 METHODOLOGY

The methodology applied in this research falls under the umbrella of qualitative methodology. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest qualitative research if the researcher wants to gain new perspectives or more in-depth information on a certain topic that may be difficult to collect in quantitative way. Qualitative research focuses on naturalistic approach to researches. It uses the natural setting and the researcher acts as the "human instrument" of data collection. The qualitative reports are descriptive and the researcher seeks to observe and interpret meanings in context (Hoepfl, 1997). Hoepfl (1997) distinguishes two forms of data collection associated with qualitative research: interview and observation. For the purpose of this research, the author conducted a semi-structured interview on one participant.

8.1 PARTICIPANTS

This research is based on one participant. The focus was on one Croatian teacher of English as a foreign language in one state primary school in Croatia. She finished her studies at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb where she took variety of useful

courses such as: Creative Teaching Activities, ELT⁴ Methodology, Teaching English to Young Learners, Content-based Language Teaching, Inclusive Pedagogy, Teaching Practice Course and many more (Bilić-Štefan, M.; Cindrić, I.; Andraka, M., 2014). These courses provided knowledge and motivation for the teacher and impacted her will and motivation for working with students who have a diagnosed language impairment. The participant has been working as an English teacher for about twelve years and has been dealing with language issues since she started working after the university. In order to share the acquired knowledge and experience with the teachers who may be in a situation with a language impaired student, the participant agreed to be a part of this research.

8.2 INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURE

For the purpose of this research, the author used a semi-structured interview which was designed particularly for this research. A semi-structured interview is a type of interview where the interviewer sets up a general structure of the interview and decides, in advance, the base questions (Drever, 1995) around which he or she will build the rest of the interview. The characteristic of a semi-structured interview is that the person conducting the interview has the freedom to change, skip, add or think of a different question on the spot which contributes to its flexibility and openness to new topics that may occur during the interview. The interview for this paper⁵ was divided into seven main parts. After the short introduction into the topic the author is interested in and presenting the aim and purpose of the research, the participant was asked various questions divided into 7 groups: General information about the participant, Modern teaching, The participant's experience with impairments, Impairment in classroom, Language impairment in general, Parents and Teacher's motivation and Suggestions for future and current teachers dealing with similar situations. The participant gave their consent for the participation by answering the first question of the interview:

Do you agree on participating in this research for the purpose of the paper titled Recognizing and Overcoming Language Impairment of Young English Learners?

⁴ ELT – English Language Teaching

⁵ The interview is in Appendix 1

During the interview, some questions were modified, several new topics arose, some questions were skipped and some were added. The interview was conducted in the school where the participant works, so many materials which are used with language impaired students could be presented and discussed thus contributing to further development of the topic. Moreover, the interview was conducted in Croatian, and was translated into English by the author of the paper for the purpose of this research

9 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

9.1 GENERAL INFORMATION

The participant has been teaching English for about twelve years. The teacher finished her education at the Faculty of Teacher Education and English in Zagreb in 2006. Before she graduated she worked as a teacher in a private foreign language school as an English teacher for three years. During her pre-service training, she worked as an assistant to a student in need in one state primary school which she will mention later on in the interview. On her final year at the university, she started working in the school she is working in today. One of the professors motivated her to accept the job even though it asked for the teachers who are willing to work with students with disabilities. Since her professor knew that she has some experience in the field of working with impaired children, she contacted her. The teacher accepted the offer and has been working in that school for the past twelve years. At first, she had a job for eight hours per day, then fifteen hours, and, finally, she got a full-time job. At that time, she says, foreign languages became compulsory from the first grade, so there was a need for more foreign language teachers in Croatian schools. In the meantime, she graduated and continued her education through seminars for the methods she needed in order to pursue in her work.

9.2 MODERN TEACHING

The questions about today's modern teaching were focused on the changes that are visible in today's classrooms. For instance: the teaching methods, children's behaviour which is said to have changed, teacher's attitude towards work and their motivation for work, their education and additional education that is being offered to them. Also, the teachers' relationship with parents and the success of their communication. The

participant expressed her opinion on the changes in the classrooms. She says that, in her opinion and experience, there has not been a major number of changes in today's situation in classrooms and the students' behaviour when compared to the situation ten years ago. When compared to the situation twenty to thirty years ago, some changes are obvious, but those could be the changes happening due to globalisation and informatization. Considering parents, she says she believes there are no major changes, except the fact that the parents are much more aware of their rights which they insist on. Unfortunately, they often forget that their rights carry also their responsibilities. When talking about the classrooms, the change is obvious considering modern technology. She mentions that the characteristic of their school is a small number of children per class so there is no need for big classrooms in size. Moreover, their school is currently working on complete informatization of the classrooms and is equipping each classroom with a computer and a smart board. Every classroom has a projector and internet, Wi-Fi access, which enables students to research and to participate in a quiz or in another activity. Considering digital platforms, the teachers in that school got the access and the licence to mozaBook⁶. In conclusion, the school is putting effort into modernising the school itself and enabling the students to get the education pursuant to modern age we are living in. Also, the school has special equipment needed for work with impaired children. In addition to that, the participant mentions that their job and the goal of the methods they are using is to *integrate as many disabled children into state schools which they are successful in*. When discussing the teacher-parent and parent-teacher relationship and communication, the participant believes it is individual and depends on the teacher and the parent themselves. Later on she will talk about communication more thoroughly, but here she mentions that communication with parents, especially parents of impaired children, has to be patient, thought through, careful and the teacher has to be able to suggest specialist team who may work with them further on. *We are trying to minimize and prevent the stress, she says, and I believe we are successful in that mission.*

⁶ mozaBook is an educational presenting programme for smart boards which offers interactive content, applications and games for skills development and contributes to lesson development. (Mozaik Education , n.d.)

9.3 EXPERIENCE WITH IMPAIRMENTS

The participant's first encounter with language impairment, and impairment in general, was in her third year of pre-service training. She says she found an add where parents were looking for an assistant and help for working with their daughter who had some disabilities. The participant mentions, also, that during her education, she did not have a view into what working with an impaired child may be like and what are some concrete steps that should be undertaken. The first experience was shocking for her. The student had facial features of Down syndrome, but it was never diagnosed. The student's diagnosis was lowered mental capabilities and ADD⁷ which were manifested in her easy distraction, hyperactivity, difficulties in participation in school lessons and impulsivity (WebMD, n.d.). She attended regular school where, as the participant mentioned, she had to be assisted from the beginning. *The parents insisted that she gets the normal programme in school even though the recommendation was to go to a specialised school.* The participant describes the student as *aggressive with lowered mental abilities and hyperactive.* Moreover, she mentions that the student was prescribed medicine after a year. However, the medicine did not help. The participant says the student was always tired after the medicine and then, after she would get some rest and the medicine would relent for a bit, she would again become aggressive and hyperactive. She says, dealing with any kind of impairment can be very difficult for everybody, especially for the teachers. From her own experience, the participant recalls how she had a difficult time when she first started encountering children with diagnosed disabilities. She approached the situations very emotionally. Eventually, as she says, she learned that having a hard time will not solve any problem.

Those children need to receive all the love you can give to them. Sometimes the "human" part is more important than the "educational" part. If you manage to be human, the education will be successful as well. Children should be spared. We cannot expect from them to achieve the goals we have set for them. You have to observe their impairment, see the child as a person, not just as your student, and change your aspect on the teaching.

⁷ ADD stands for Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder which affects children and teens and can continue into adulthood (WebMD, n.d.)

9.4 LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT

Considering language impairment that the participant has experienced during her work experience, she mentions she encountered almost every language impairment there is. She encountered phonological disorders, morphological and semantic disorders, syntactic deficits and pragmatic difficulties. She states that each of these impairments has an impact on the learning process later on. For that reason, the most important step in dealing with language impairment, is having an educated team who is willing to explore the methods and solutions in working with language impaired students and providing the most suitable materials which will enable appropriate education and simplify their educational process. The participant collaborated with several teachers and professors and they created a handbook which describes the material preparation for language impaired students in details and is available for every teacher, specialist or parent who wants to learn and find a solution for their child's diagnose. The participant states *whoever is motivated and wants to learn, will certainly find a way to do it.*

9.5 LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT IN CLASSROOMS

Considering the language impairment in classrooms, the participant claims that the problem is in the system. She says that the problem lays in the fact that there is a minimum, or no collaboration at all, between teachers and the support services. Support services should, as she mentions, *be there to provide support and help for the teachers.* What many teachers do not know is that there are mobile teams in institutions who organize seminars, lectures, educations and various forms of help and support. *The answer to easy situations and dealing with impairment in your classroom lays in the collaboration with support services.* Unfortunately, the teacher says, in many schools not even the appropriate support service is provided, so teachers are not informed about what they could do or whom they could contact regarding their problem. It is then all left to the teachers themselves and their motivation and will to look into the system and research what could be done in specific situations.

When it comes to assessment, if the teacher knows how to assess the students in a formative manner, and that is among their everyday activities, then there is no need for specialized grading methods for language impaired students. The participant

mentions that the old methods of opening the class register and calling out the student's name and asking them to read and translate a certain text, without any further and deeper contemplation, are not acceptable in today's classrooms. Those methods cannot provide the correct insight into child's abilities and cannot grade them. The participant claims that the language impairment are so diverse, that children with a diagnosis may be brilliant in, for instance, English, but have numerous problems when it comes to their mother tongue, in this case – Croatian. Through generations of the students she has had, she says, she encountered numerous students who spoke English as if it were their mother tongue and they could not explain how they can have such ability when they have major problems in acquisition and reproduction of their actual mother tongue. Moreover, there were children who would never be able to acquire writing skill of a foreign language, but have no problems in reading that language. In that case, the participant suggests:

Teachers have to be cooperative in those cases. For instance, those students should be offered to connect the picture with the word itself or, if they are working on the reading comprehension and they have to put the missing words in a certain text, those missing words should be offered for a child to choose from. Also, the assessment criteria must be clear. For instance, if you are evaluating the child's knowledge of the words, you are not evaluating their spelling. Therefore, if the word you are looking for is "father" and the child wrote "fadr", that is not a mistake. That means they know the word "father", they just have a problem spelling it.

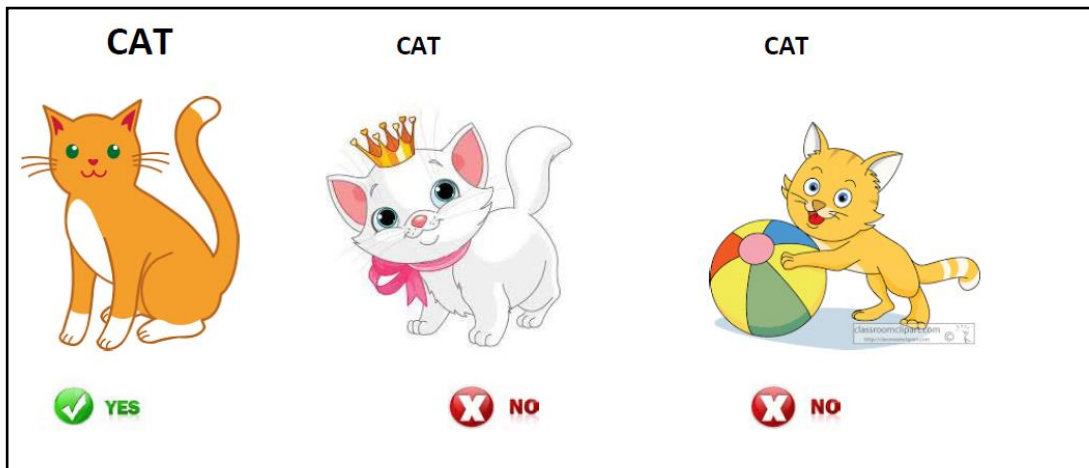
She mentions that the new curricular reform which is currently in the process of appliance in Croatia is trying to implement that system of evaluation in schools. Also, the book of Regulations on assessment (Ministarstvo znanosti, 2015) is, as the participant says, very useful, concrete with clear expectations and outcomes. There is an aspect of the Regulations book which determines the steps for assessment of language impaired students. It clearly defines that, as the participant already mentioned, that students should be evaluated and assessed during their everyday activities and the teacher should follow their development through certain period of time. If necessary, the disabled student should receive an individualized programme in the classroom in order to be able to follow the set materials. The teachers must be properly educated and have the knowledge of adjusting and adapting the materials depending on the child's diagnosis.

9.6 MATERIALS FOR LANGUAGE IMPAIRED STUDENTS

When speaking about language materials that would be suitable for the language impaired students, the participant suggested professor Milković's handbook which provides steps for creating worksheets for teaching English as a foreign language to language impaired students and Education and Teacher Training Agency's handbook on similar topic (Ajduković, et al., 2017). Authors' aims for these handbooks were to try to draw the inclusive lessons closer to the teachers, especially the ones who are dealing with kind of language impairment in their classrooms and does not seem to know how to handle it and how to provide the most suitable education and methods for the child. Here are some of the adjustments suitable for children with language impairment:

9.6.1 GRAPHICAL ADJUSTMENT

Considering graphical adjustment, it would be preferred to avoid white paper for children with dyslexia and dysgraphia. Font of the letters is preferably 14 or higher, margins should be wide and spacing 1, 5 or 2. Important words and key words in a task should be bolded, in colour, circled or highlighted. If there is a lot of text, it should be clearly divided into paragraphs. Teachers preparing the materials should pay attention to short and clear sentences and leave enough space on the paper for students' answers. Also, students with language impairments prefer pictures, symbols, icons and widgets which visually present content. Colour coding should be used in sentence formation where each part of speech should be in another colour and with suitable questions for that part of speech in the same colour. That would make it easier for the student to understand parts of speech and use them in a sentence. Moreover, the usage of pictures is preferable, but pictures should be realistic and without many details as shown in the Picture 1.



Picture 1 An example of an appropriate flashcard for language impaired children. The picture shows the appropriate usage of letter font and clear illustrations of a certain word (Milković, p. 11).

If a teacher wants to teach the word “cat”, they want to make it clear for the student – the letters need to be bolded and in font 16 or 18, the picture should be realistic and without further details so the child can focus on what is important. Moreover, teachers should avoid giving tasks in which a child has to untangle the letters in order to find a word and it would be preferable to use the same symbols for frequent activities for example for creating correct sentences. (Picture 2)



Picture 2 An example of a poster which should be present in the classroom as a reminder on how to correctly form a sentence (Ajduković, et al., 2017, p. 9).


9.6.2 TEACHER'S ADJUSTMENT

According to Education and Teacher Training Agency's handbook (2017) the teacher needs to provide a safe and secure environment for the student where they will become emotionally stable and ready to learn and cooperate. The teacher has to be consistent in their work and empathic. They must use clear and short sentences and be faced towards the student when speaking. They need to respect the rhythm, tempo, intonation, pauses, mimic, gestures and body language in order to get the students' attention. Since students have different learning styles, the teacher should present the same material in various ways stimulating different senses. Also, it is preferred to go from synthesis to analysis, from concrete to abstract, from easier to harder material and to respect the gradual principles the entire time. The language impaired students should be seated close to the teacher and the board. Before starting the lesson, the teacher should check whether the student is ready for the activities. It would also be appropriate to offer board plan to children with difficulties so they do not have to do it on their own, but they have to finish it by connecting the dots, add the missing words (which are offered on the sheet) and colouring. The texts should be short, simple, and concise. Moreover, for reading tasks, the students can use the, so called, "reading window" (Picture 3) which makes it easier for them to focus and isolate the sentence they are reading and not to get distracted by other text.



Picture 3 The usage of the "reading window" (Ajduković, et al., 2017, p. 17).

When the teacher wants to examine the language impaired student's knowledge, they have to accommodate the test tasks according to student's needs. As already mentioned, the students with any kind of language impairment prefer visual content and tasks where they do not need to know the word, but they need to recognize it and use it in a sentence, i.e., the word is offered to them as shown in the Picture 4. In this way, they will not be anxious and they will be confident of their knowledge which is crucial for their results.

1.	<p>Write three animals for each category.</p> <p>Pets: Farm animals: Wild animals:</p>	<p>Put these animals in the correct group.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"> <p>a dog a hare a cat a cow a tiger a pig</p> </div> <p>Pets: Farm animals: Wild animals:</p>
2.	<p>Circle the correct answer.</p> <p>A monkey A parrot likes bananas. A hare</p>	<p>Look at the picture and circle the correct answer.</p>  <p>A monkey A parrot likes bananas. A hare</p>

Picture 4 An example of how to modify test questions for language impaired students (Ajduković, et al., 2017, p. 25).

The students feel comfortable and motivated for work if they know the routine. For that reason, the teacher should set some ground rules and then discuss them with students and ask for their contribution in forming the rules. They should work together on setting the class routine. The students will respect the routine and feel more comfortable especially in transitional grades and in situations where a student needs to face some changes. It will be less stressful for them to accommodate to certain changes if, at least, they are familiar with some routines. It is important for them to have, at least, something they can hold on to.

9.7 PARENTS

When talking about the communication with the parents of language impaired students, the participant emphasizes one word – *patience*. She says, the parents will never be fully prepared for their child’s diagnose. Their child will never be disabled for them. The population of the impaired children is, as the participant mentions, extremely vulnerable. Their “attack” that the teachers may suffer is their defence mechanism. The teachers should listen to them and be extremely tolerant to all of their reactions. If the parent is involved and puts in their effort every day at home and works with their child, and then the child does not manage to achieve the goals that the parent has set for them, that leads to frustration. Unfortunately, our society is still oriented towards numerological grading system and only grades 4 and 5 are accepted as “good grades”. *A grade is not the only measure for child’s abilities, intelligence or knowledge. It is just a reflection of their current state.* The participant mentions a few cases where the child had the knowledge that deserved the highest grade, but, in that moment, they did not know how to communicate through their thoughts. She adds, *the problem may lay in a teacher. The teacher may have a wrong approach to a child in that moment. They may not offer a child to express their acquired knowledge.* What is most important is that a child is not being judged based on their numerological grade. The teachers should be able to assess child’s knowledge through activities that will not put the pressure on the child and stress them. They have to be confident, relaxed and ready to share their knowledge. The teachers should not cause and boost the stress.

9.8 TEACHERS’ MOTIVATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TEACHERS

When asked about her advice from her current perspective on the teaching profession and motivation for that job, the participant says that, in the beginning of her career, twelve years ago, she definitely had more faith in the system. She mentions that most of the teachers leave their faculty with the idea of changing the world. With the idea that all students will be hard-working, capable to follow everything they present and willing to cooperate. That is, as she says, *the hardest thing a young teacher will have to face. The fact that not all students are nice and that not all students will love you. And they do not have to.* She says, the solution to this “problem” is only to demand respect. The students do not have to love you. They do not have to love your subject.

But, you have to respect them and they have to respect you. *The children need have the clear boundaries set. They understand the boundaries. That is the solution to all potential discipline problems.* The participant stresses that the teachers often boost the importance of their subject and completely omit the most important part and the central part of the educational process -the child. There will always be students who will request more effort to be motivated and will not show interest, but even those students must be respected and their opinion has to be taken into account. *Most of the teachers are, when entering the classroom, put in front of a dilemma: whether to be a mother, a father or a friend to their students. Neither of those. You are their teacher. However, that does not mean that we cannot provide care, love and attention. The boundaries must be clear. The student has to know who is a teacher, who is a parent and who is their friend.* Moreover, the participant adds another thing she has learnt during her work experience – the teachers are allowed to make mistakes. The important thing is that they are able to admit the mistake and motivate their students to correct them, cooperate and learn together. Seeing that the teacher also makes mistakes could be, as she mentions, that crucial step which will motivate the child for your subject. She says she would never change her career path. Each experience led to another and put her where she is today. She emphasizes: *The children are, currently, the biggest motivation for the teachers.* As for the future teachers, she advises:

The first thing a future teacher has to know is what they want from themselves and then what they could offer to their students and what they want from them. Our expectations, as teachers, often do not match the real situation in classrooms. A good teacher has to set their own goals first and, most importantly, not to expect from children to be like them. There are many animated illustrations on the internet which show a teacher praising their students for their work while, at the same time, cutting and forming their brains and thoughts the same as his/her own. That cannot function properly. In the moment when a young teacher realises they cannot model children as they want to and make them all the same, life and job will become easier. Another thing is – a teacher has to do their job with love. If you do something you do not love, better do not do it. And, finally, you do not have to do everything by the textbook. The textbook is not what is important. The child is. The child and what we have to offer. If we, as teachers, make a topic interesting for us, the children will, for sure, find it interesting as well.

CONCLUSION

In this graduation thesis the author described the process of recognizing language impairments and methods of overcoming language impairment of young English learners. The main idea of this paper was to raise awareness of language impairments that could appear in classrooms and how to integrate and help language impaired students to fit in among their peers and to be properly taught and assessed through their education. Language impairments are, generally, a mainstream topic especially among young, unexperienced teachers. The aim of this research was to stress the reality in the classrooms and to raise awareness of the common situation that awaits for the teachers in practice.

Language impairments may affect students' comprehension skills, expression of written and spoken language and their acquisition skills. Thus, the language impaired students may have problems with learning and various difficulties during their education. Researchers agree that teachers should gain more insight in what could be done and which steps to undertake in order to simplify and appropriately educate and lead language impaired students to language acquisition.

The research conducted for the purpose of this paper confirmed that children with diagnosed language impairment must not be excluded from regular classrooms and their peers. There are various sources which offer solutions and suggestions on how to integrate language impaired students in the lessons. They should be approached individually and offered different methods and styles of learning. Moreover, they should be provided with adjusted materials based on their impairment. Their abilities should be assessed in a formative, less stressful manner, and their progress should be observed through a certain period of time.

In these modern times, when technology is widely spread everywhere, there are no excuses, obstacles or barriers for the teachers to seek and apply new methods of teaching. The conclusion of this paper is that, not many teachers are informed enough on which sources they may use and contact in order to help their students. That is where teachers' motivation must step in. Teachers have to be aware that their education is not finished when they exit college. They should be reminded of a lifelong learning process and should continuously follow the changes in the system, as well as the changes among their students. Teachers should be able to accommodate to various

situations that may occur, be educated and substantiated enough to know which methods to use and how to offer their students the best education they can get. Their obligation is to be informed on which professional help they can get and what their duties are when it comes to dealing with language impairment in classrooms.

This topic is still to be researched into. This paper may offer a brief view into what is offered for teachers who need to explore deeper into subject of matter and find the most suitable solution. All students are individuals and there is no unique method for dealing with impairments. Therefore, each case will seek for another solution. That is the characteristic of teachers' job. They will continuously learn and transfer their knowledge to other generations and, hopefully, help students' in need so that, when they grow up, they do not despise their education, but they can look back and be satisfied with their educational achievements.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Name: _____

- Do you agree on participating in this research for the purpose of the paper titled Recognizing and Overcoming Language Impairment of Young English Learners?

- **GENERAL INFORMATION**
 1. Briefly describe your education and your working experience. (How many years of experience do you have as a teacher? What was your first teaching job? Have you worked in different institutions? What was your “teaching – path”? Where do you currently work? For how long?)

- **MODERN TEACHING**
 2. How would you describe 21st century classrooms and children? Can you compare modern and traditional classrooms? (Child behavior, teachers’ and parents’ attitude, teaching methods, results, communication with parents, parents’ attitude towards the teachers, teachers’ “modern” education, classrooms’ design, “problems” that occur in classrooms)

- **EXPERIENCE WITH IMPAIRMENTS**
 3. What was your first or one of your first encounters with any kind of language impairment of young English learners? How many years of experience have you had in that moment? Where were you working at the time? How old was the child? Was the student a good student or have they had some difficulties in school, as well? What was the parents’ indication that something might be problematic? What was your indication that something might be problematic?

 4. What was the child’s diagnosis?

 5. Which steps did you undertake in order to help your student?

6. Were you successful? How did it make you feel?
7. Did your result motivate you to look for more information on this subject? If yes, what sources did you consult? Did you get any motivation or support from your employer?
8. What can you say about your collaboration with other teachers? Did you ever collaborate in order to help and make it easier for children with language impairment to follow the school program? Were the teachers willing to cooperate? Which steps did you undertake? What were your results?
9. What is your current perspective on such difficulties in classrooms compared to your first impression? Have you observed an increase of students with different language impairment in classrooms?

- **IMPAIRMENT IN CLASSROOMS**

10. Is there any advice you could offer to the teachers dealing with language impairment in their classrooms? Which steps would you undertake if you were in their classroom? Which methods would you use in order to help the impaired child/children?
11. Could you offer any advice on how to grade students with any kind of language impairment? Should there be any differences when it comes to grading them compared to grading the students with no impairment? Which grading system would you use?

- **LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT (GENERAL)**

12. After some years of experience in your profession, which language impairments have you become familiar with? Which of them have you encountered so far?
13. What is the process of diagnosing a language impairment? How long does it usually last?

- **PARENTS**

14. How would you describe your communication and relationship with parents of students with language impairment? (What is their usual initial reaction? What is your

approach/strategy? What advice do you offer? Do they accept it? What is your relationship with them after the “therapy”? Do you make a plan of action?)

- **TEACHER’S MOTIVATION AND SUGGESTIONS**

15. How did practice and experience help you as a teacher in dealing with such situations?
Can you compare your younger self to the professional you are today? What resources have you relied on?
16. What is your constant motivation for doing your job?
17. What can you say about your expectation of the teaching profession at the beginning of your career and now, with the experience you have? Has anything changed? Would you change anything in your teaching path?
18. Do you have any advice for future teachers – what to expect and how to behave in unexpected difficult situations that may occur?

APPENDIX 2

- Pristajete li na sudjelovanje u istraživanju u svrhu pisanja diplomskoga rada na temu „*Recognizing and Overcoming Language Impairment of Young English Learners?*“

Pristajem.

- **OPĆENITE INFORMACIJE O ISPITANIKU (GENERAL INFORMATION)**

1. Možete li kratko opisati svoje obrazovanje i iskustvo u radu? (Koliko godina iskustva imate kao učiteljica engleskog jezika? Gdje ste najprije počeli raditi kao učiteljica engleskog jezika? Jeste li radili u više različitih institucija i koje su to? Možete li opisati svoj „put“ kao učiteljice? Gdje trenutno radite i koliko ste dugo ovdje?)

Pa, 2006. godine sam završila Učiteljski studij i engleski jezik na Učiteljskom fakultetu u Zagrebu i prvi posao mi je bio u ovoj školi gdje radim i danas. Evo, i prije nego što sam diplomirala, zvala me profesorica N. s fakulteta da me pita radim li negdje, jer u jednoj državnoj školi traže nekoga na 8 sati tjedno za profesora engleskog jezika..Tražili su osobu koja ima iskustva u radu s djecom s poteškoćama. Profesorica je naime znala, ja sam već na fakultetu radila s jednom djevojčicom s teškoćama kao njezin asistent. Tako sam prve godine radila 8 sati tjedno, zatim 15 sati tjedno i treću godinu sam dobila posao za stalno. To je zapravo bilo, ono kako je krenuo onaj sustav da je od prve godine obavezan strani jazik i tako je zapravo došlo do povećanja potrebe za profesorima stranog jezika. Tako sam ja, evo, ovdje već 12 godina. U međuvremenu sam i diplomirala i dalje se educirala na seminarima za metode koje su mi potrebne za kvalitetan rad. Paralelno sa školom, tri godine sam radila u jednoj školi stranih jezika, također kao nastavnica engleskog jezika.

- **POUČAVANJE U 21. STOLJEĆU (MODERN TEACHING)**

2. Kako biste opisali učionicu 21. stoljeća, tj. općenito modern učionice? Što možete reći o djeci u 21. stoljeću? Možete li usporediti današnji i nekadašnji način rada? Što možete reći o ponašanju djece danas, stavovima učitelja i modernih roditelja, metodama poučavanja, rezultatima novih metoda,

komunikaciji s roditeljima i njihovim stavovima prema učiteljima, modernom obrazovanju učitelja, uređenju učionica i problemima u učionici 21. stoljeća? *Mislim da nema nekih velikih promjena, osim što su roditelji osvješteniji o svojim pravima i na tim pravima inzistiraju. Obaveze se nekako zaboravljaju na žalost. Što se tiče učionica, moja učionica je recimo jedna od većih u ovoj školi. Kod nas je, recimo, posebno to što su razredi mali, pa zapravo nije ni potreba za imati pretjerano velike učionice. Radi se na kompletnoj informatizaciji učionica, evo, ja konkretno očekujem uskoro pametnu ploču u svojoj učionici. Znači ova učionica će biti dobro opremljena i radi studenata i puno gostiju koji dolaze iz raznih institucija zbog nekih metoda koje koristimo. Sve učionice nam imaju projektore i imamo školske laptope koje možemo koristiti. Imamo internet, wifi u školi tako da djeca mogu koristiti i spojiti se na nastavi ako treba odigrati neki kviz ili nešto. U informatičkoj učionici je također pametna ploča. Učitelji su dobili što se tiče digitalnih platformi pristup Mosa Book-u.. Znači tko je htio, mogao je dobiti licencu za Mosa Book. Tu škola jako radi na tome. Osim toga, imamo posebnu opremu koja nam je potrebna za rad s djecom s teškoćama koja se upisuju u našu školu. Također mogu reći da je naša zadaća i cilj metoda koje radimo, integrirati što više djece s teškoćama u redovne škole, u čemu smo uspješni. Što se tiče odnosa učitelja i roditelja, mislim da se u zadnjih 10ak godina nije nešto pretjerano promijenilo. Promijenilo se recimo u odnosu na prije 20-30 godina. Što se tiče roditelja danas, ima roditelja s kojima se divno surađuje, to je uvijek tako. S onima koji su problematičniji, s njima treba biti pažljiviji, strpljiviji, uputiti ih na stručnu službu koja im može pomoći. Pokušavamo im pomoći pravilnom komunikacijom, radionicama koje su osmišljene za roditelje i djecu. Pokušavamo svesti neki stres u komunikaciji na minimum. Uvijek se mogu dogoditi neki problemi, ali to pokušamo riješiti na način da, kao što sam ranije spomenula, uputimo roditelje ili na razgovor sa stručnom službom ili s voditeljicom, pa pokušamo riješiti probleme tim putem.*

- **ISKUSTVO S TEŠKOĆAMA (EXPERIENCE WITH IMPAIRMENTS)**
3. Kada ste se prvi puta susreli s nekom vrstom jezičnih teškoća kod učenika engleskog jezika? Koliko ste tada imali godina iskustva u poslu? Gdje ste u tom trenutku radili? Koliko je dijete bilo staro? Je li učenik bio uspješan u školi

ili su se primjećivale teškoće u drugim predmetima? Koji je pokazatelj bio presudan da roditelji shvate da nešto nije u redu? Koji je bio pokazatelj vama da bi nešto moglo biti nepravilno?

Prvi susret mi je bio na fakultetu na 3. godini kada su roditelji jedne djevojčice stavili oglas na ploču da traže pomoć za učenje za svoje dijete. O poteškoćama smo na fakultetu čuli praktički ništa. Nisam bila upućena ni u što. Zapravo mi je bio šok jer je djevojčica imala recimo lice specifično za Downov sindrom. Na kraju nikada nije zapravo bio dijagnosticiran Downov sindrom. Bile su joj dijagnosticirane snižene mentalne sposobnosti i hiperaktivnost odnosno ADHD. Dijete je krenulo u integraciju u redovnu osnovnu školu gdje se zapravo s njom moralo sve učiti od samoga početka. Jedna matična škola u koju je trebala ići ju je zapravo odbila. Tada je išla u prvi razred, s time da je bila odgoda, dakle imala je 8 godina. Roditelji su inzistirali da dijete obavezno ide u državnu školu po normalnom programu. Preporuka je bila da ide u specijaliziranu školu, ali roditelji su odbili i inzistirali na integraciji. Moram reći da je zapravo bilo vrlo teško. Morali smo surađivati i raditi svi zajedno – roditelji, učiteljica, ja... Djevojčica je bila jako agresivna i u konačnici je, nakon godinu dana dobila terapiju lijekovima. Imala je svakakvih tekoća – govorno-jezičnih, lice specifično za Downov sindrom, snižene kognitivne sposobnosti, izrazitu hiperaktivnost i agresivnost. S njom je trebalo često mijenjati aktivnosti jer bi joj aktivnost dosadila nakon 2-3 minute, pa bi postajala agresivna i počinjala udarati, škarama mahati okolo, gurati mene i drugu djecu. Kada su uveli terapiju lijekovima, ne mogu reći da je zapravo bilo nešto bolje, jer su ju lijekovi zapravo uspavali. Ona bi na početku nastave odspavala 45 minuta, onda bi radila 45 minuta i onda bi zapravo popustili lijekovi pa bi krenula ponovno ta njezina gresija. S njom sam, dakle, radila 2 godine prije nego što sam diplomirala. Pitali ste je li me to pokolebalo? Pa, moram reći da sam dosta tvrdoglava i često idem glavom kroz zid. Nikada neću zaboraviti riječi profesora D. koji mi je rekao da nisam normalna što me interesira rad s djecom s teškoćama i ispitivao me zašto bi si to netko radio, a ja sam bila tvrdoglava i išla probati. Prvih pet godina suočavanje s djecom s teškoćama bilo mi je izrazito teško. Plakala sam nakon sjednica, nakon što su izneseni detalji o pojedinom djetetu i problemima. Nije mi bilo jasno zašto se to dešava, a onda shvatite da od plakanja nema nikakve koristi. Da toj djeci

treba pružiti svu ljubav koju mi u tom trenutku možemo pružiti. Da je nekad onaj „ljudski dio“ važniji nego obrazovni dio. I da će taj obrazovni dio doći, ako taj ljudski bude dobro odrađen. Da se silom i vikanjem i frustracijom koja se prenosi na njih, jer ne mogu napraviti ono što smo mi zacrtali da naprave, neće ništa postići. Mnoga djeca putuju do nas i tu su dugo i dok dođu doma, nemaju više snage za toliki rad. Djecu treba poštediti. Ne možemo očekivati rezultate koje smo mi zacrtali. Nerealno je za očekivati. Kada se sagleda njihova teškoća, kada se vidi dijete kao osoba, a ne kao učenik, onda je to drugačiji aspekt gledanja na nastavu.

4. Koliko je zapravo dobro da se inzistira na integraciji djece s teškoćama?

Djeci je to svakako korisno iz socijalnog aspekta. Ovisi o mnogo faktora. Primjerice, koliko je djece u razredu itd. Tu je potrebna velika podrška škole. Za dijete definitivno je dobro da bude okruženo drugom djecom, ako ga djeca prihvaćaju. Ova djevojčica je imala jako veliku sreću što je ušla u razred gdje su djeca bila toliko beskrajno strpljiva, toliko beskrajno empatična. Očekivati od djeteta u 1. razredu da neće reagirati ako ga drugo dijete tuče, psuje, gađa sa stvarima i pokušava povrijediti... To je vrlo rijetko. I iznenadilo me da su roditelji bili izrazito tolerantni, fleksibilni i zapravo je to bilo okruženje koje je bilo idealno. To ne bi vjerojatno funkcioniralo da je djevojčica došla nekoj drugoj učiteljici, u neku drugu školu. Ona bi sigurno bila prebačena u drugi razred ili čak drugu školu te bi vjerojatno došlo do rješenja da mora ići u specijaliziranu školu. Ovako je djevojčica završila 8. razred. Naravno, bilo je velikih problema, ali su apsolutno svi bili ustrajni. Nije pala nijedan razred, išla je po prilagođenom programu. U trenucima kada je ona mogla funkcionirati, ona je jako lijepo radila. Tu je odlično bilo što je imala asistenta. Ja sam mogla s njom izaći van iz učionice, prošetati, otići na toalet. Otići do dvorane gdje se mogla malo povaljati po spužvi što je njoj trebalo i onda bi se vratili u razred i nastavili raditi. Onda bi ona tako, jedan na jedan, napravila sve što se od nje očekivalo. Ona je normalno pisala zadaću, naravno, smanjenu, ali ju je pisala. E sada, što bi bilo da nije bilo asistenta kojeg su roditelji, naravno, plaćali još u to vrijeme, jer je tek par godina kasnije krenuo sustav za asistente... Što se tiče stručnosti asistenata u nastavi, istina je to što ste spomenuli, velik broj djece dobije dijagnozu kada je njihova stvarna

dijagnoza da su zapravo kod kuće „pedagoški zapušteni“. To je stručni termin. Najveći problem sustava je što još uvijek nije izašao pravilnik asistenata u nastavi. Tada bi se moralo propisati što sve asistent treba raditi, što treba znati. Ali nestručnosti ima u svakoj profesiji. Ima i učitelja koji su u potpunosti pogriješili put, a opet ima divnih ljudi koji su nadareni i u sebi nose to za djecu, a nisu u struci učitelja. Zato ne bih sudila tko može raditi kao asistent djetetu s teškoćama. Asistenti u nastavi prolaze određenu obuku, međutim, mislim da je to nedovoljno. Mi smo u školi imali jednu generaciju koja je, po mom mišljenju dobila kvalitetnu obuku. Došli su kod nas gdje smo ih upoznali sa svim teškoćama, metodama rada i načinima motivacije. Potrebno je, ja bih rekla, dva mjeseca sjediti na obuci da biste bili adekvatno obučeni.

5. Na koji ste vi način pomogli djevojčici s kojom ste radili? Koje su bile vaše metode, vaši koraci u radu? Je li vas rezultat motivirao i potaknuo da dublje istražite taj problem? Ako da, koje ste izvore konzultirali? Jeste li imali poticaj od strane nadređenih?

Pa najprije sam se zapravo dokopala knjižnice i proučila sve što sam uspjela pronaći. U principu kako uopće raditi s djecom s teškoćama. Dalje su bili pokušaji i promašaji, uspjesi i neuspjesi. I, kroz ovih 12 godina u poslu, shvatila sam da nema univerzalnog recepta za svako dijete. Svako je dijete individua za sebe i ono što mi je, recimo, funkcioniralo s jednim djetetom savršeno, s drugim mi se pokazalo kao totalni promašaj. Nejoj djeci treba davati male korake za rad, pa između tih koraka pauzu, neki bi se, za vrijeme tih pauza, dekoncentrirali i ne bi se više mogli vratiti zadatku. Njima je, primjerice, odgovaralo raditi 45 min, sat vremena u komadu, ali da onda imaju dužu pauzu u cijelom tom radu. Znači sve ovisi o djetetu i kako dijete funkcionira. Ista stvar je recimo kad se radi prilagodba nastavnih materijala. Neće svako dijete s jezičnim teškoćama dobiti isti nastavni listić. Može se napraviti primjerice univerzalni font koji će odgovarati maksimalnom broju djece, To je obično Arial jer odgovara recimo i disleksiji i disgrafiji i velikom broju ostalih govorno-jezičnih teškoća. Ali, isto tako zadaci ne mogu biti jednaki. Onda je uvijek lakše složiti zadatke u listiću složiti od najlakšeg prema najtežem i svakom djetetu reći koje će zadatke on riješiti, a koje ne. Dakle, stupnjevito. Ista stvar je recimo, treba u nastavi koristiti što više grafičkih

načina i materijala. Treba predstaviti što više načina učenja. Osim što su prisutne teškoće još i na drugačiji način uče. Znači neki će si uzeti taktilne vježbe, neki će tihe, neki glasne. Treba ih dakle izmjenjivati tijekom sata, kako bi si dijete izabralo što mu najviše odgovara. Nekome će neka vježba biti preglasna, nekome pretiha, ali bitno je osigurati im baš onu koja im odgovara barem u nekom dijelu sata. Djeci s teškoćama je uvijek dobro u naprijed reći što će se raditi i koliko će dugo trajati te što će se dogoditi nakon toga kako bi znali očekivati. To im ulijeva sigurnost.

Što se tiče rezultata s djevojčicom s kojom sam radila, bilo je velikih pomaka. Dijete s teškoćama koje je u stanju samostalno na kraju 1. razreda odraditi cijelu zadaću. To je definitivno pomak. Naravno da je to izrazito motivirajuće. Što se izvora tiče, osim knjiga, postoji veliki broj online edukacija koje obično organiziraju britanska i američka sveučilišta. To su masovne edukacije – webinar i tečajevi kompletni gdje se kroz module rješavaju problemski zadaci, tu se izmjenjuju iskustva s učiteljima iz cijeloga svijeta i na kraju se napravi projekt ili lesson plan kao rezultat tečaja. Traju obično 2-3 ili čak 6 tjedana. To je dostupno svima, besplatno je. Neki čak nude i certifikat nakon toga. Čak je i facebook jako koristan, jer svako malo saznate za neku edukaciju koja je korisna. Ja sam voditelj županijskog stručnog vijeća, pa smo prije 2 godine pokrenuli projekt gdje smo organizirali radionice za učitelje „Izrada nastavnih materijala za djecu s teškoćama“ i iz tog je projekta nastao i priručnik koji je online dostupan gdje su detaljno obrađeni postupci i izrada materijala, testova i igre za djecu s teškoćama. Napisan je vrlo jednostavnim jezikom i dostupan roditeljima, učiteljima, stručnim suradnicima kojima će služiti. Na kraju je i popis literature koja je korisna i popis stranica za e-learning. Javno je dostupan na internetu i svi materijali su također dostupni koji su napravljeni tijekom tih radionica, te učitelji mogu koristiti sve te materijale koji su tematski obrađeni. Tematsko planiranje s djecom s teškoćama je vrlo logično. Djeci s teškoćama puno je lakše tematski obraditi gradivo, pa bi bila idealna suradnja učitelja iz više predmeta.

6. Što možete reći o suradnji s ostalim učiteljima? Jeste li surađivali kako biste pomogli i olakšali učeniku s jezičnim teškoćama kako bi jednostavnije pratio

školski program? Jesu li učitelji bili voljni surađivati? Koje ste korake poduzeli? Kakvi su bili rezultati?

Suradnja učitelja u radu s djecom s teškoćama je izrazito bitna. Dijete s teškoćama ne smije se poučavati nešto što je njima apstraktno. Treba krenuti od onoga što je njima blisko, od onoga što se nalazi u njihovom neposrednom okružju. Djeca s teškoćama imaju jako malo životnog iskustva, većina barem njim, pogotovo djeca koja su u specijaliziranim školama. Djeca s jezičnim teškoćama najčešće imaju jako mali spektar stvari koje ih interesiraju. Ne zanima ih čitanje što automatski sužava njihovo iskustvo i teme o kojima bi se moglo raspravljati. Dakle, treba krenuti od onoga što im je blisko i onda to polako širiti. Njihov vokabular je sužen. Oni nemaju u vokabularu osnovne riječi. Ništa ne možemo pretpostavljati. Najčešće ne mogu stvoriti kontekst oko riječi koje čuju i tu nastaje problem. Spoznaje se moraju koncentrično širiti i tu dolazi do povezivanja predmeta, a ne može se predmetno povezivati, ako nije tematski povezano. Što se tiče volje učitelja za suradnju, poanta HNOSA je bila da se zapravo sve povezuje. I u to vrijeme je to bilo vrlo napredno, revolucionarno, svi su to radili. Sada imam dojam da se sve razvodnilo. Nisam sigurna kako je to u redovnim školama, aktivno, kod nas se jako radi na tome. Mislim da nije da se izgubilo to povezivanje koliko se interes više prebacio na neke druge projekte primjerice Erasmus. Zapravo, učitelji koji žele na taj način raditi, uvijek pronaći način. Ne možemo generalizirati. Neki učitelji žele raditi i surađivati, neki žele samostalno odraditi što imaju. To je isključivo stvar svakoga ponaosob. Evo, spomenula sam facebook. Mnogo učitelja bez problema dijeli materijale s ostalim učiteljima koji bi im mogli poslužiti. Također postoji udruga ZVONO. Oni organiziraju webinare i tečajeve i imaju stranicu na koju učitelji stavljaju na dnevnoj bazi svoje nastavne listiće i materijale. Dakle, samo treba doći do takvih stvari.

- **IMPAIRMENT IN CLASSROOMS**

7. Imate li kakav savjet koji biste ponudili učiteljima koji se suočavaju s jezičnim teškoćama u svojim učionicama? Koje biste korake preporučili? Koje biste metode izanbrali za pomoć djeci s jezičnim teškoćama?

Svakako treba ostvariti bolju suradnju, nego što sam dobila dojam na terenu, sa stručnom službom. Dakle, stručna služba je tu da bude učitelju podrška i potpora. Ono što, na žalost, učitelji ne znaju, je da postoje mobilni timovi u institucijama koji organiziraju edukacije za upravo situacije suočavanja teškoća u razredima. Dolaze u škole i organiziraju predavanja, različite oblike podrške i pomoći. Osnovno što se mora, dakle, dogoditi je suradnja sa stručnom službom. Na žalost, to je također jedan od problema sustava. Najčešće ni stručna služba po školama nije osigurana, pa učitelji misle da nemaju podršku. Stvar je ponovno do učitelja i koliko je spreman istraživati i raspitati se. Postoje učitelji definitivno koji žele pružiti podršku i dijele nesebično svoja znanja.

8. Imate li kakav savjet o tome kako ocjenjivati učenike s jezičnim teškoćama? Bi li trebalp raditi razliku u ocjenjivanju njih i učenika bez teškoća? Koji biste sistem ocjenjivanje koristili?

Ako učitelj ocjenjuje onako kako bi se zapravo trebalo ocjenjivati, a to je u sklopu redovnih aktivnosti, onda izdvajanja nema. Zastarjele metode otvaranja dnevnika i čitanja i prijevoda teksta te davanja ocjene, nisu metode koje bi se danas trebale koristiti. Znači, govorno jezične teškoće su toliko raznolike da djeca koja imaju neku takvu dijagnozu mogu biti, primjerice, briljantni u engleskom jeziku, a loši u hrvatskom. Kroz generaciju obično imam dvoje, troje djece kojima je engleski kao materinji jezik. Ne znamo na koji način. Ta djeca budu, dakle, savršeno pismena na stranom jeziku, dok na hrvatskom ne. Postoje, s druge strane, djeca koja nikada neće savladati strani jezik pisanje. Čitanje će još donekle usvojiti, ali pisanje nikako. U tom slučaju se djeci izlazi u susret da spajaju slikovni predložak sa riječi ili se radi čitanje s razumijevanjem, pa ponuditi riječi koje treba ubaciti primjerice u tekst. Ili, na primjer, ne ocjenjivati spelling, ako provjeravate kako je dijete usvojilo pisanje. Ako je dijete napisalo „fadr“ a ne father, a vi znate da je to „father“, to uzmete za točan odgovor. K tome nekako ide i kurikularna reforma. Dakle, ako se ocjenjuje poznavanje riječi, onda se ne ocjenjuje spelling. Kriteriji moraju jasno biti zadani što se u tom trenutku ocjenjuje. Pravilnik za ocjenjivanje je zapravo vrlo koristan. Postoji dio baš za ocjenjivanje djece s teškoćama gdje piše da se ne smije ocjenjivati djetetova teškoća, znači da se

pogreške koje proizlaze iz djetetove teškoće ne smiju ocjenjivati. U to ulazi onda recimo taj spelling. Djecu se tako može ispitati više usmeno, neće se tražiti pisanje nego spajanje riječi i prepoznavanje itd. Tu je pravilnik definitivno jasan i učitelji su tu sigurni. Dijete se, dakle, ne treba izdvajati. Promatra ga se, dakle, kroz svakodnevne aktivnosti. Učitelj bilježi napredak djeteta i onda, kroz te bilješke, može dati ocjenu. Naravno, kriteriji opet moraju biti jasno zadani i svaki učitelj i roditelj ih moraju znati. Dakle, kada ja djecu recimo ocjenjujem, radimo govorne vježbe što je primarno u učenju stranog jezika, jer nam je prioritet komunikacija, upozorim nekoga da proradi nešto određeno i pripazi i onda na idućem satu kažem što je popravio, na čemu treba dodatno poraditi... To je zapravo najvažnije. Dati djetetu feedback, odnosno povratnu informaciju. I tako ga pratim kroz tjedan, dva, mjesec i na kraju mu dam ocjenu. Kažem mu: „Ostvario si to to to i to, nisi ostvario to i to.“ Što se tiče opisnih ocjena, dapače, vrlo su korisne i pozitivne i poželjne, ali ipak dijete treba dobiti i brojčanu ocjenu, odnosno povratnu informaciju u obliku brojčane ocjene. Često se na terenu susrećem s komentarima da roditelje nije niti briga za sve što učitelj piše u rubriku gdje opisuje ocjenu. Tu treba raditi na razini škole, podići razinu svijesti o važnosti brojčanih odnosno opisnih ocjena. U pravilniku jasno stoji da je ocjena iz bilježaka jednako važna kao i ocjena u rubrici. Sve u svemu formativno vrednovanje je jako dobar oblik ocjenjivanja. Za to je potrebno jako puno vremena i jako puno pripreme u startu. Jednom kada se razradi sustav tog formativnog vrednovanja, sve će biti lakše. Vidjet ćete, djeca će se sama početi korigirati, međusobno će si početi davati realne ocjene i vrednovati sami sebe. Tu će oni preuzeti veliki dio ocjenjivanja. Samo treba biti otvoren tom formativnom vrednovanju. Trenutno to je veliki bauk, vani je to nešto sasvim normalno s obzirom da ne postoje ni klasična testiranja kakva mi imamo, nego imaju završne ispite, a između toga je sve formativno vrednovanje raznih aktivnosti. Definitivno je, što se tiče djece s teškoćama, formativno vrednovanje vrlo važno.

- **LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT (GENERAL)**

9. Nakon godina iskustva u svojoj profesiji, s kojim ste se jezičnim teškoćama susreli? Koje ste jezične teškoće upoznali?

Susrela sam se sa gotovo svim jezičnim teškoćama tijekom godina rada. Dakle, i sa fonološkim teškoćama gdje dijete ne izgovara i ne razumije glasove ispravno, s morfološkim teškoćama gdje dijete ima problem s razumijevanjem vrsta riječi. Zatim sintaktičkim, semantičkim i pragmatičkim. Svaka od tih teškoća kasnije ima velik utjecaj na djetetove sposobnosti u učenju i manifestira se kroz lošije rezultate nego oni djece bez jezičnih teškoća. Rekla bih da su ipak najčešće jezične teškoće disleksija i disgrafija. Tijekom godina iskustva i suradnje s ostalim profesorima i učiteljima, odlučili smo napraviti priručnik za pomoć djeci s jezičnim teškoćama u nastavi. Priručnik je javno dostupan na internetu, te se svi učitelji mogu poslužiti. Vrlo je koristan, jer je opisana detaljna priprema materijala za učenike s jezičnim teškoćama. Učenici s jezičnim teškoćama ne smiju biti „izbačeni“ s nastave. Dapače, treba ih uključiti što više je moguće, naravno, na njima najprihvatljiviji način koji mogu pratiti.

10. Koji je trenutno proces dijagnosticiranja jezičnih teškoća kod djeteta? Koliko dugo traje?

Što se tiče procesa dijagnosticiranja jezičnih teškoća kod učenika, ali i drugih mogućih teškoća, poslat ću vam pravilnik gdje je sve propisano. Procedura traje oko godinu dana, jer je toliko potrebno pratiti učenika da bi se konačno utvrdile i potvrdile pretpostavke da bi nešto moglo biti u krivu.

- **RODITELJI (PARENTS)**

11. Kako biste opisali svoju komunikaciju i odnos s roditeljima učenika s jezičnim teškoćama? (Kakva je najčešće njihova reakcija na početku? Koji je vaš pristup/metoda razvoja odnosa s njima? Kakav im savjet udijelite? Prihvaćaju li vaše savjete i prijedloge? Kakav je vaš odnos s roditeljima nakon „terapije“? Imate li plan u takvim situacijama?)

Treba biti vrlo strpljiv. Roditelj nikada nije dovoljno „pripremljen“ na dijagnozu svoga djeteta. Roditelju je uvijek dijete najbolje. Populacija roditelja djece s teškoćama je izrazito ranjiva i tu treba, koliko god se na prvu naljutimo, imati strpljenja. Njihov „napad“ je vrsta obrambenog mehanizma. Treba ih saslušati, biti izrazito tolerantan prema svim njihovim reakcijama. To je, jednostavno, njihov način komunikacije. Ne znaju drugačije. Ako roditelj ulaže enormno puno vremena kod kuće, a dijete ne ostvaruje rezultate koje roditelj želi, stvara se ta frustracija kod roditelja. Stvara se frustracija kod nas. Na žalost, samo društvo je takvo da su dobre ocjene samo 4 ili 5, inače društvo osuđuje, a dijete nije krivo. Ocjena nije i ne smije biti mjerilo djetetove inteligencije. Niti je mjerilo djetetove sposobnosti, nego je to mjerilo trenutnog djetetovog stanja. Možda dijete zna za 5, ali, u tom trenutku, to svoje znanje nije znalo prenijeti. Možda mi učitelji na krivi način, u tom trenutku, pristupamo djetetu i nismo mu dali da da sve od sebe. Ja često znam reći da zaborave na lošu ocjenu, da nije bitno, da ju ne gledam. Obično su to ocjene iz pisanih testova koje su definitivno puno lošije od usmenih. Usmeno odgovaranje definitivno nešto što je njima puno lakše i dobivaju više feedbacka – feedback moje ekspresije, imaju sigurnost jer znaju da ću im ja pomoći nekom gestikulacijom ili podpitanjem, npr. I go to school yesterday da ću im pokazati rukom u natrag, znanči nije sada, nego prije itd. Znači ipak dobiva sigurnost. Dakle, to nije znak da dijete ne zna. Ako si dijete napravi samokorekciju, znači da je dijete savladalo, ali se, zbog teškoća, u tom trenutku ne mogu sinapse povezati i ne može pokazati svoje potpuno znanje. Usmeno je, zato, puno lakše i diže im samopouzdanje. Tu moramo mi učitelji paziti da to usmeno ne bude stresno. Znači, nema dizanja i „Ti ćeš sad odgovarati!“ To je izrazito stresno za dijete. To dijete treba promatrati u redovnim situacijama i ispitivati kroz igru. Primjerice, Present Perfect, koji je djeci jako nejasan i ne mogu ga nikako usvojiti jer ne povezuju s hrvatskim jezikom. Radila sam s njima Kolo sreće gdje su imali primjere rečenica s njima bliskim situacijama ili šokantnim nekim situacijama koje će zapamtiti. Dakle, uvježbavali smo najprije usmeno, dakle kroz neki dril. Kad su 500 puta ponovili nešto, to im ulijeva samopouzdanje. Dakle postaviti pitanje i dati pozitivan i negativan odgovor. Njima je to bilo vrlo zabavno, jer su imali ponuđenu strukturu. Automatski su imali sigurnost i ulijevalo im je samopouzdanje da se uspiju sjetiti odgovora. Sve što se radi

ima neku svrhu rehabilitacijsku i jezičnu i emocionalnu. Izvlačili su izraz i trebali su postaviti pitanje, prijatelj je odgovarao na pitanje i tako su išli u krug. Međusobno su se morali slušati, a ujedno im je pitanje prijatelja dalo primjerice odgovor na to koji je nepravilni glagol. To je poanta ispitivanja. Da dijete ima samopouzdanja i da opušteno da odgovor. Kroz nestresne situacije su dobili bolje ocjene. Bili su motivirani. Stvar je i tehnologije. Tehnologija je super, ali treba ju dozirati.

- **MOTIVACIJA I SAVJETI (TEACHER'S MOTIVATION AND SUGGESTIONS)**

12. Kako su vam praksa i iskustvo pomogli kao učitelju u suočavanju i prihvaćanju problematičnih situacija? Možete li usporediti svoju mlađu verziju sa verzijom učiteljice koja ste danas? Na koje ste se izvore oslanjali tijekom svoje karijere? *Prije 12 godina sam definitivno imala više vjere u sustav. To je ono što nas najviše, ja bih rekla, koči. Nadam se da će se to mijenjati. Mislim da svi izađemo s fakulteta s idejom da ćemo mijenjati svijet, da će nam svi učenici biti divni i krasni i s time se zapravo najteže suočiti. Da nisu svi učenici divni i krasni, da vas neće svi učenici voljeti i ne trebaju vas voljeti. Ono što treba sagraditi između učitelja i učenika je onaj most poštovanja. Ne moraš voljeti engleski, ja to poštujem, al poštuju i ti mene. Djeci kada se postave jasne granice, onda oni to razumiju. I tu se smanjuju svi disciplinski problemi, zapravo. Kada ti učeniku pokažeš da ti poštuješ njegov interes. Nismo svi za engleski, nismo svi za povijest, geografiju. Nije svačiji predmet najvažniji. Mi često mislimo da je engleski ili neki drugi naš predmet najvažniji na svijetu. Ne, nije. Najvažnije je dijete. Treba slušati to dijete, u konačnici ćemo ga kad tad zainteresirati za neki aspekt našeg predmeta. Djeca se danas jako izruguju. Treba djetetu dati pouzdanje da oni to mogu. Postoje djeca, naravno, koja nikada neće biti nikako motivirana, ali ni od takve se djece ne može odustati. Treba im dati poštovanje i zahtijevati poštovanje. Na kraju ćemo to dobiti, samo treba biti ustrajan. Kada izađemo s fakulteta često mislimo da možemo djeci biti mame, tate, prijatelji. Ne možemo. Mi smo djeci učitelji. Ali, to ne znači da im ne možemo dati puno pažnje, ljubavi, brige... Ali mora se znati tko je učitelj, tko roditelj i tko je prijatelj u razredu. Izlazimo s time „što će biti ako*

pogriješim“. Ništa. Treba priznati djeci pogrešku. Treba ih učiti da uvijek treba učiti i nikada stati. Iz pogreške uvijek izvući nešto. Motivirati ih da zajedno istražimo. Možda će neko dijete koje je lošije od ostalih primjetiti pogrešku, treba ga pohvaliti, to može biti onaj preokret. Preokret koji će ga motivirati da krene naprijed.

13. Što možete reći o svojim očekivanjima na početku svoje karijere i sada, s godinama i iskustvom koje imate? Je li se išta promijenilo? Biste li išta promijenili na svome putu kao učiteljica?

Nisam očekivala ništa. Evo, meni se poklopilo. Ja sam jedan rijetki slučaj gdje sam se zaposlila prije završetka fakulteta. Riskirala sam. Život me nekako vodio. Roditelji mi nisu htjeli da idem na učiteljski. Htjeli su da imam „sigurnu karijeru“. Ali, ja i dalje mislim da nisam pogriješila. Koliko god nekada budem frustrirana i poslom i sustavom, onda dođem u razred i gledam učenike koji me gledaju onako željni znanja. Djeca su trenutno, na žalost, jedina motivacija za učitelje.

14. Imate li kakav savjet za buduće učitelje? Primjerice, što mogu očekivati i kako se ponijeti u neočekivanim teškim situacijama koje bi se mogle javiti u poslu? *Prvo moraju razmisliti što zapravo žele od samih sebe, a onda neka razmisle što mogu dati djeci i što žele od djece. Često se naša očekivanja od djece ne podudaraju sa realnim stanjem u razredu. Kvalitetan učitelj mora najprije sebe posložiti kao osobu i zacrtati si svoje ciljeve i ne očekivati od djece da će biti kao oni. Ima po internetu puno tih slika, stripova gdje učitelj hvali djecu kao njihov rad, ali ujedno oblikuje sve u balončić misli kao što je njegov. Znači, to ne funkcionira. U trenutku kad mladi učitelj shvati da ne može oblikovati djecu na način kakav je on, onda će biti puno lakše. Druga stvar je, učitelj mora raditi s ljubavlju. Ako radi nešto što ne voli, bolje nek to ne radi. Treće, ne treba se uvijek držati strogo knjige. Nije knjiga ta koja je učitelju bitna. Bitan je najstavniji plan i program. Često se učitelji znaju zbuniti u početničkim godinama – Nisam obradio cijeli udžbenik, a toliko sam se trudio, a djeca ništa ne znaju... Nije stvar u tome. Treba se uzeti nastavni plan i program i vidjeti što djeca stvarno trebaju naučiti i onda, oko tih stvari, treba formirati nastavne materijale. Bit će im lakše u životu. Nema frustracija. Nije bitna knjiga. Bitno*

je što pružamo djetetu. Kroz različite materijale treba djetetu približiti sadržaj. Isplanirati priču oko teme. Ako je nama nešto zanimljivo, onda će i djeci biti zanimljivo.

IZJAVA O SAMOSTALNOJ IZRADI RADA

Izjavljujem da sam ja, Lucija Maltar, studentica integriranog preddiplomskog i diplomskog sveučilišnog studija primarnog obrazovanja s engleskim jezikom na Učiteljskom fakultetu Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, samostalno provela aktivnosti istraživanja, istraživanja literature te samostalno napisala diplomski rad na temu: **RECOGNIZING AND OVERCOMING LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT OF YOUNG ENGLISH LEARNERS.**

Zagreb, srpanj 2019.

Lucija Maltar

Potpis studenta: _____

Učiteljski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu