

**Selected Papers
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SATISFACTION OF THE CROATIAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AND PARENTS OF THE DEAF, HARD OF HEARING AND DEAFBLIND CHILDREN IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM – QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

Due to the impossibility of establishing cooperation between the Croatian Association of Deafblind Persons Dodir and the Ministry of Science and Education during July, August and September 2018, the Dodir Association has initiated the action sending the letters to the ministry and other important actors. The letters were written by interpreters who are working or worked in kindergarten or school, parents of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children, and employees of the Dodir Association. The analysis of posted letters showed that interpreters in the educational system are most dissatisfied with regard to inadequate salary, limitation of time, insecurity of work, workplace restraint, equalization with assistants, teaching assistants or communication intermediaries, ignorance of interpreter role, insufficient number of interpreters and the lack of a formal education system. Interpreters in Dodir Association with the abovementioned problems also emphasize the lack of a legislative framework and the violation of children's rights to equal education and information. Parents express dissatisfaction with people with no proper work competencies, uncertainty of providing interpreters for the next year and denial of the right to a child's interpreter with an cochlear implant. They also assert the importance of involving organizations who are dealing with deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind people in decision-making.

Keywords: deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children, sign language interpreter, educational system

Sažetak:

Zbog nemogućnosti uspostavljanja suradnje između Hrvatskog saveza gluhoslijepih osoba Dodir i Ministarstva znanosti i obrazovanja, tijekom srpnja, kolovoza i rujna 2018. godine Savez Dodir je pokrenuo akciju slanja pisama Ministarstvu i drugim važnim akterima. Pisma su napisali prevoditelji znakovnog jezika koji rade ili su radili u odgojno – obrazovnom sustavu, roditelji gluhe, nagluhe i gluhoslijepice djece te djelatnici Saveza Dodir. Analiza poslanih pisama pokazala je kako prevoditelji u odgojno-obrazovnom sustavu najviše nezadovoljstva iskazuju u pogledu neadekvatne plaće, ograničavanje satnice, nesigurnosti radnog odnosa, ograničavanje radnog mjesta, izjednačavanje sa asistentima, pomoćnicima u nastavi ili komunikacijskim posrednicima, nepoznavanjem uloge prevoditelja, nedovoljnim brojem prevoditelja te na nepostojanje formalnog sustava obrazovanja. Prevoditelji u Savezu Dodir uz navedene probleme ističu i nepostojanje zakonodavnog okvira te kršenje prava djece na jednako obrazovanje i informaciju. Roditelji iskazuju nezadovoljstvo u pogledu osoba bez odgovarajućih kompetencija za rad, neizvjesnosti osiguravanja prevoditelja za sljedeću godinu te uskraćivanje prava na prevoditelja djetetu s umjetnom pužnicom. Također, ističu važnost uključivanja organizacija koje se bave gluhim, nagluhim i gluhoslijepim osobama u donošenje odluka.

Ključne riječi: gluha, nagluha i gluhoslijepa djeca, prevoditelj znakovnog jezika, odgojno-obrazovni sustav

1. INTRODUCTION

Disability is a permanent limitation, diminution or loss of ability (resulting from health impairment) for a physical activity or mental function appropriate to a person's age and refers to abilities in the form of complex activities and behaviors, which are generally accepted as essential parts of daily life (Zakon o Hrvatskom registru o osobama s invaliditetom, NN 64/01).

The definition of disability differs in individual systems of protection and treatment of persons with disabilities and in their emphasis on aspects of the problems that are prioritized for determining disability (Šostar, Bakula-Anđelić, Majsec-Sobota 2006).

Zakon o profesionalnoj rehabilitaciji i zapošljavanju osoba s invaliditetom (NN 39/18) in Article 3 defines a person with disability as a person with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in the interaction with various obstacles can prevent his full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Pravilnik o osnovnoškolskom i srednjoškolskom odgoju i obrazovanju učenika s teškoćama u razvoju (NN 24/15) defines students with disabilities as students whose abilities to interact with environmental factors limit its full, effective and equal participation in the educational process with others students, arising from physical, mental, intellectual, sensory and functional impairments or from a combination of several types of impairments and disorders.

Žunić (2001, according to Šostar, Bakula-Anđelić and Majsec-Sobota 2006) stated that the community's attitude towards persons with disabilities has changed throughout history, depending primarily on the degree of economic and cultural development and on a number of other circumstances.

The process of community involvement can be divided into three models: the medical model, the deficit model and the social model. We will look more closely at the social model in which, according to Mihanović (2011) a person with disabilities is an active fighter for equality. He is in partnership with allies and a fighter for creating an inclusive society. The social model distinguishes the terms "impairment" and "disability" and emphasizes that society is the cause of an individual with a physical or psychological disability becoming "disabled". That is, people with disabilities are "disabled" because of barriers that exist in society that do not take into account their needs. Within the social model, the concept of inclusion emerges, which implies respect for the diversity of each individual (Imširagić 2011) and respects the individuality of each child and places children of the same chronological age in the same environment, regardless of their developmental difficulties (Kobešćak 2000).

1.1. *Deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind persons*

The group of persons with disabilities includes, among others, deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind people. Pravilnik o sastavu i načinu rada tijela vještačenja u postupku ostvarivanja prava iz socijalne skrbi i drugih prava po posebnim propisima (NN 79/2014) Article 29, distinguishes between two categories of hearing impairment: deafness and hard of hearing. Deafness is considered hearing loss in speech frequencies (500 to 4000 Hz) greater than 93 decibels and when even with the hearing aid assistance a person cannot fully perceive voice speech. Hard of hearing is considered hearing impairment of 26 to 93 decibels in the ear with better hearing residues and when voice speech is partially or fully developed and, according to paragraph 4 of the same article, it is divided into mild, moderate and severe hearing loss.

Deafblindness is defined in the same Regulation (NN 79/2014) in Article 30 as a specific and unique double sensory impairment in combinations of intensities: practical deafblindness, deafness and hearing impairedness, blindness and hard of hearing and hard of hearing and visual impairment. Tarczay (2007) states that deafblindness, among the aforementioned combinations, can also be classified according to the causes and timing of damage. Considering the time of damage occurrence, it may be innate or acquired, and the main difference between them is the formation of a linguistic system of communication.

1.2. *Communication of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind persons*

Sign language in developed countries has the status of a recognized minority language and is equal to any other language. To better illustrate the importance and strength of sign language, in the US, American Sign Language (ASL) is the fifth language minority language in terms of the number of people it uses, right behind Spanish, Italian, German and French (Lane 1996, according to Bradarić-Jončić 2000). Sign language is recognized and acknowledged as a self-contained language system with all linguistic features. Accordingly, a new linguistic discipline has emerged - sign language linguistics - which is being studied and taught at numerous departments at various universities in the world. This would not have been possible without the recognition of sign language as an equal language in relation to other languages, which left a mark on the education policy of deaf children (Bradarić-Jončić 2000).

In the Republic of Croatia, *Zakon o hrvatskom znakovnom jeziku i ostalim sustavima komunikacije gluhih i gluhoslijepih osoba* (NN 82/15), was adopted in 2015, defining Croatian sign language in Article 5 as the original language of the Deaf and Deafblind Persons in the Republic of Croatia. It is a self-contained language system with its own grammatical rules and is completely independent of the language of the hearing persons.

The same article, paragraph 3, prescribes the manner of communication of deafblind persons. They use modification of Croatian sign language which can be in three forms depending on the impairment: tactile, close vision and visual frame.

Within the same Act (NN 82/15), other communication systems are: simultaneous sign-oral communication, manual alphabets, subtitling or typography, speech/lip reading, writing on the palm of the hand, technical aids.

Bradarić-Jončić (2000) further states that awareness of the topic and issue of sign language in the world are increasing and that recommendations for the protection and promotion of national sign languages, as well as the exercise of the deaf's right to sign language education, are also contained in several significant acts of The United Nations, UNESCO and the European Parliament which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

1.3. *Review of important documents*

Šostar, Bakula-Anđelić, Majsec-Sobota (2006) point out that changes in the social understanding of persons with disabilities are officially supported by the adoption of various international documents. The right to equality, inclusion, education, protection against discrimination are some of the many rights guaranteed through various conventions, laws, regulations at national and global level. However, when it comes to children and persons with disabilities, we place particular emphasis on the Convention on the Rights of the Children and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Convention on the Rights of the Children (1989) lays down the right to education for every child as a development right. In Article 28, the Convention emphasizes that States parties must provide compulsory and free primary education to all, encourage the development of various forms of secondary education, make higher education accessible and work to combat ignorance and illiteracy worldwide. Furthermore, Article 29 of the same Convention emphasizes that the education of the child should be directed towards promoting respect for his or her cultural identity and language.

Non-discrimination, full and effective participation and inclusion in society, respect for differences and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity, equality of opportunity and accessibility are just some of the principles laid down in the Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (NN 6/2007).

Article 2 of the same Convention (NN 6/2007) states that persons with disabilities need to be provided “reasonable accommodation” to ensure that they use all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others and Article 9 emphasizes providing assistance in the form of expert sign language interpreters to ensure that persons with disabilities participate fully in all life fields. Also important is Article 24, which stipulates that States parties should ensure the inclusiveness of the educational system and lifelong education, especially of children who are blind, deaf or deafblind in the most appropriate languages, ways and means of communication.

Zakonom o hrvatskom znakovnom jeziku i ostalim sustavima komunikacije gluhih i gluhoslijepih osoba (NN 82/15) in Article 14 stipulates the right of deaf and deafblind persons to education in the communication systems they use. They are also entitled to a form of support in the form of a “communication mediator” (sign language interpreter) and have the right to choose the communication system themselves.

In addition to the aforementioned Conventions, Bradarić-Jončić and Mohr (2010) cite several other important international documents that contain recommendations for the promotion and protection of national sign languages and the provision of deaf children to study in sign language. These are: the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994), the UN Rules on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1994) and the Council of Europe Recommendation on the Protection and Promotion of National Sign Languages (2003). The Salamanca Statement recommends the need to ensure that all deaf people have access to education in their sign languages and the UN Rules add a recommendation to allow parents to learn sign language through courses. Also, UN Rules recommend that interpreting services be provided effectively to meet day-to-day needs, participate more actively in social life and generally have better access to information, while the Council of Europe recommendation goes in the direction of recommendations to all EU Member States to work on protection and enhancing their national sign language (Bradarić-Jončić 2000).

The review of the most important documents for children and persons with disabilities reveals a continued highlighting and emphasis on respect for fundamental human rights, including the right to equal education and education in sign language. Sign language, as a recognized true and natural language, enables deaf children to have equal academic achievement over hearing peers and to better master the language of the hearing community (Bosnar and Bradarić-Jončić 2008). However, Croatia still has major problems securing this right. The first problem we will address is the use of incorrect terminology.

2. “TRANSLATOR”, “COMMUNICATION MEDIATOR” OR “INTERPRETER”

When it comes to sign language, there is still a dilemma in our area about the term of a person who supports the communication of deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind persons. Tarczay (2009) states that many official documents still use the term “translator for the deaf and deafblind persons” (example: Zakon o kaznenom postupku (NN 70/17) which refers to “sign language translation for the deaf and deafblind persons”) and explains why he is inappropriate. For deaf and deafblind persons, this term is derogatory because it puts them at a distinct disadvantage that stigmatizes them. As if they are not capable enough of independent decision making and choice and that they constantly need to be “translated” or “explained” (Tarczay 2009).

Another term already adopted by the Zakon o hrvatskom znakovnom jeziku i ostalim sustavima komunikacije gluhih i gluhoslijepih osoba u Republici Hrvatskoj (NN 82/15) and which causes great confusion, is “communication mediator”. The problem is that the term is transposed to other laws and regulations (for example, Pravilnik o pomoćnicima u nastavi i stručnim komunikacijskim posrednicima, NN 102/2018). Zakon o hrvatskom znakovnom jeziku (NN 82/15) defines a person who supports the communication of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind persons and that they must have the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities to be able to provide professional support as a mediator in communication. However, it is clear from the foregoing that communication mediation is only a role and that we cannot consider a “communication mediator” a profession because its fundamental role is interpreting, not mediation.

Many European and international organizations use the term “sign language interpreter”, which is the equivalent of the word “prevoditelj” in Croatian. Some of these organizations are the World Association of Sign language Interpreters - WASLI, the World Federation of the Deaf - WFD, the World Federation of the Deafblind - WFDB, European Forum of Sign language Interpreters – EFSLI, European Deafblind Union - EDbU, European Union of the Deaf – EUD.

Given that the term “interpreter” is used by all important organizations dealing with persons with sensory impairments, it is the only acceptable one and will be used as such in this paper.

2.1. *Croatian sign language interpreter*

The role of the sign language interpreter is to serve as a mediator in human communication (Solow 1981, according to Tarczay 2009). It should be emphasized that in the communication between the deaf / deafblind person and the other hearing person, the interpreter does not decide what should or should not be interpreted. The interpreter’s job is to interpret everything. He must not omit some elements which he does not like, which do not correspond to his personality, attitudes, etc. (Frishberg 1986, according to Tarczay 2009). Tarczay (2009) points out that an ideal interpreter should be an expert in communication - a fluent speaker of at least two languages, an expert in at least two cultures, adaptable to client needs, preferred forms of communication, environment and topics of conversation. The interpreter is professional when, in addition to the competencies already mentioned, he or she has bicultural sensitivity and a highly developed professionalism.

An interpreter for the deafblind persons needs additional competencies. In addition to transmitting information, the interpreter should also provide visual information. This requires the skills and knowledge of a deafblind culture to be able to evaluate when visual information is needed and when it is superfluous. Also, he should be skillful and resourceful in moving for two, as he is responsible for the safe and efficient movement of the deafblind person, as well as being familiar with guidance techniques and ways of providing support (Tarczay 2009).

One of the most important factors that is a predictor of being a good interpreter is respecting ethical principles (Tarczay and Pribanić 2014). Furthermore, in order to be a successful and good interpreter, lifelong language learning is required, as well as systematic training, which Tarczay (2009) agrees with and adds that interpreters need to be self-critical, analyze the quality of their work and invest in their mental and physical health which are important prerequisites for the quality of this work.

2.2. *Sign language interpreter in educational system*

As previously stated, many official documents mandate that children with disabilities have the right to equal education, inclusiveness of the educational system, provision of sign language education, the right to an interpreter during schooling, etc.

Children with sensory impairments must have equal access to information as the hearing environment (IFLA 2004, according to Bosnar and Bradarić-Jončić 2008), and the manner in which this right is exercised depends on the chosen mode of communication of the deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind child. For example, if a deaf child prefers the language of the hearing environment, he or she should be allowed to subtitle the lectures (real-time subtitling) and if he or she prefers sign language then in the form of a sign language interpreter.

An educational interpreter at a regular institution is part of a professional team. Its primary task is to transmit information that is available to hearing persons in a particular situation, that is, to enable the successful exchange of information between deaf students, teachers and other students. In doing so, it must not express its own opinion and must respect the confidentiality of information, respect the code of professional ethics (Chafin Seal 1998, according to Bosnar and Bradarić-Jončić 2008). Also, it is important the preparation of an interpreter for interpreting, which includes substantive and linguistic-terminological preparation for all interpreting situations. Mitchell (2002) agrees as well, stating that preparation is important not only because of the topic that the interpreter will interpret, but also because of the possible challenges and surprises. It is also important for interpreter to work with teachers who need to provide the interpreter with all the didactic, textual, pictorial, video materials they will use. The importance of interpreters is emphasized not only in the educational institution but also in all extracurricular activities that the child attends.

Bosnar and Bradarić-Jončić (2008) emphasize the importance of the competence of educational interpreters and state that they should have a certificate from a verified educational interpreter program and be registered in the Register of Interpreters at the local Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

3. OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this research is to describe and analyze the satisfaction of the sign language interpreters in the educational system and the satisfaction of parents of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children in the Republic of Croatia who are enrolled in regular education and use the services of the sign language interpreters.

Specific research objectives:

1. To gain insight into the job satisfaction of the sign language interpreters in the educational system.
2. To gain insight into the parents' satisfaction with the sign language interpreters who interpret their children.

Research Questions:

1. What is the satisfaction of sign language interpreters with the working conditions and employment in the educational system?
2. How satisfied are they with their status as an interpreter in an educational system?
3. How are parents satisfied with their child's achieving rights to an interpreter?
4. What is the attitude of parents towards the legislative framework?

4. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

4.1. *Participants*

The study included 34 persons, of whom 27 were women and 7 were men from the territory of the Republic of Croatia, namely from Zagreb, Split, Varaždin and Osijek. Participants in the research were interpreters from different institutions (kindergarten, school, and the Dodir Association) and parents of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children. The number of interpreters from kindergarten and school was equal, with a total of 6 interpreters for each of the aforementioned institutions, while the number of interpreters working at Dodir Association was 14.

The number of parents of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children who participated in the letter-sending action is divided by the institution their child attends. This number is the same for both institutions, there were 4 parents whose child attended kindergarten and 4 parents whose child attended school. The above data are presented in Table 1.

| Participants | Gender | | Institution | | |
|----------------------------|--------|----|--------------|--------|-------------------|
| | M | F | Kindergarten | School | Dodir Association |
| Sign language interpreters | 7 | 27 | 6 | 6 | 14 |
| Parents | | | 4 | / | |
| Total | 7 | 27 | 34 | | |

Table 1. Sample

4.2. *Procedure*

Croatian Association of Deafblind Persons Dodir since the beginning of the adoption of the Pravilnik o pomoćnicima u nastavi i stručnim komunikacijskim posrednicima (NN 102/2018) tries to contact and warn the competent Ministry of Science and Education about inconsistencies, illogicalities, potential problems and discrimination of the interpreter profession prescribed by the Regulation. However, the Ministry did not respond or in any way offered co-operation or the ability to resolve problems recognized by the Dodir Association and to use experience in the field to resolve the problems. Consequently, during July, August and September 2018, the Dodir Association launched an action to send letters to the Ministry of Science and Education and to the other important stakeholders to encourage the competent Ministry to take action and change and to make others decision makers to do the same. These letters were written by interpreters work-

ing or worked in kindergarten or school, parents of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children and employees of the Dodir Association. The letters outline their personal experiences which show difficulties and problems in practice and by analyzing and defining them, we find this a step towards preventing their future appearance.

4.3. *Data processing*

Given that we put the personal experience of interpreters and parents at the center of this research and accordingly defining the goal, a qualitative data processing approach was chosen. Milas (2005) states that qualitative methods are based on the analysis of textual material that has emerged from personal experience. Also, this approach to research provides a deeper description of the phenomena studied with richer and more personal findings. Consequently, we used an unobtrusive research method - content analysis, when collecting data and we processed the data with a qualitative analysis in which we used a thematic analysis process.

The letters were first divided into educational institutions and the Dodir Association. After that, we divided a group of letters from educational institutions into kindergartens and schools and then into letters from interpreters and parents of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children. After reading all the letters sent, we separated the categories, which we grouped together by topic.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As noted earlier, the letters were written by interpreters working or worked in kindergarten or school, parents of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children and employees of the Dodir Association. Through content analysis, we found that the topics and categories that appeared were similar. However, since these educational systems are regulated by different laws and regulations, we will present them separately in this paper. Also, we tried to present the results in as concise form as possible, so that a more detailed insight into the results of the analysis can be obtained from the author.

5.1. *Preschool educational system*

5.1.1. *Work experience of sign language interpreters in preschool educational system*

| TOPICS | CATEGORIES |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Working conditions | 1. Low salary 2. Limited hourly rate 3. Uncertainty of employment 4. Working place of interpreter |
| 2. Status of interpreter | 1. Equalization of terminology 2. Competencies of interpreter 3. Formal education of interpreter 4. Insufficient number of interpreters |

Table 2. Topic area: Working conditions and working relationships in the preschool educational system

The analysis of the letters sent showed that the interpreters employed in the preschool educational system expressed their most dissatisfaction in the field of working conditions. First of all, dissatisfaction is expressed by pay for the work done. With regard to effort, time, education and additional education, they say it is shameful that their salary is less than the average salary in Croatia: *"The salary of an interpreter is disproportionate to the effort and time spent ... I don't know how familiar you are, but for a full-time job the interpreter's salary is less than the average salary in Croatia ... It will be difficult for me to continue working as an interpreter, because with a salary of 3000 kuna, I can by no means satisfy my basic needs."*

Furthermore, the interpreter's hourly rate is determined by the child's stay in the kindergarten. However, children also have extracurricular activities in which the presence of an interpreter is necessary in order for children to participate in them equally, thereby developing psychosocial and cognitive development. Also, in order for the interpreter to be ready for work, daily preparations are needed, the importance of which is emphasized by Bosnar and Bradarić-Joncčić (2008) and Mitchell (2002), then the collection of materials and professional training, which, according to current practice, does not fit into the hourly rate: *"Without an interpreter, my client would not be able to participate in additional activities outside kindergarten such as a birthday celebration with friends, theater, sports, excursions, etc...however, the job of an interpreter involves preparing them for work without which they could not really do quality work - preparing materials, studying materials with the client to more easily follow the program, working with a kindergarten professional team or additional activities, such as those already mentioned, birthdays, trips, sports, etc."*

What worries interpreters the most is the insecurity of their employment. There is no legislative framework or financial solution for wage payments, nor is it systematically solved at the national level. Consequently, interpreters are worried every month whether they will keep the job. Also, the uncertainty of a contract of employment demotivate interpreters which go in search for safer and better paid jobs: *"... another problem that I would like to warn you about is the continuous work of the interpreters for a limited time, which is why interpreters leave as soon as they find a more secure job... often because of job insecurity, they have to give up when given a better opportunity."*

There are opinions that the interpreter should be a kindergarten employee, such as a third educator. However, this type of employment has many disadvantages. Interpreters wonder what if an interpreter is prevented from coming to work? Who will provide an interpreter and at what time? Furthermore, as a kindergarten employee, the interpreter is exclusively attached to the kindergarten. According to this principle of employment, the interpreter would not be able to attend other activities that the child has that are important for his or her overall growth and development. Another major problem would be the professional development, supervision and evaluation of the interpreters' work. There is no staff in kindergartens who have expertise in the field of Croatian sign language and interpreting. Finally, the employment of interpreters directly in kindergartens is not ideal solution by interpreters opinion and they oppose this: *"As her personal interpreter I accompany her in all her activities (all therapies, going to playrooms, parks, trips...), which I could not do as a kindergarten employee."*

The dissatisfaction of interpreters is also present in their status, that is, in equating the term "sign language interpreter" with the terms "communication mediator", "assistant" or "child's personal assistant in the classroom". They find that this degrades their job. Not only that, the equalization of terms is a direct insult to a deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind person which violates their rights guaranteed by international documents: *"...still the job of interpreter in Croatia is not recognized as a "real" job...I graduated from the Faculty of Teacher Education. I have completed four years of education as a sign language interpreter and interpreter for the deafblind persons. I also completed additional training to work as an interpreter in kindergarten. I work with native speakers of sign language...you identify us with child's personal assistant in the classroom."*

In their work, Bosnar and Bradarić-Jončić (2008) emphasize the importance of the competence of educational interpreters. However, in the Republic of Croatia there is still no formal system of education for the sign language interpreters, so in practice it happens that persons without knowledge of sign language, without appropriate competencies apply for the job, which ultimately harms the deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind child: *“There is still no formal educational system for interpreters in the Republic of Croatia, so it is often the case that the job of an interpreter is done by a person who has never had contact with sign language before.”*.

Interpreters state that the interpretation process and the job of a sign language interpreters requires certain competencies and skills, which is in line with Tarczay (2009). First of all, fluency is required in the Croatian standard (spoken) language and Croatian sign language. Then, knowing the culture of the deaf with all its specificities is required. In the case of a deafblind child, additional knowledge of providing visual information and movement support is required. All of the above requires a lot of work, learning and personal investment: *“To be an interpreter means to have expertise and competence, not only to master sign language, but also to understand the culture of the deaf and all individual and collective needs. Behind it all are years of work, learning, personal investment and development and no one can say that anyone can do this job...”*.

There is also an insufficient number of interpreters, which results in a direct violation of the deaf child’s right to support communication and the availability of equal education: *“In the kindergarten where I work are included deaf siblings of different ages. As an interpreter I should interpret to both of them, which is not physically possible because they are in different groups. Therefore, I spend more time with the younger child because it needs me more, which means that the older child is neglected and cannot adequately communicate with peers when I am not present.”*.

In conclusion, interpreters in the preschool educational system express great dissatisfaction in the field of working conditions and working relationships. Due to inadequate salary, high volume of work not included in the paid hourly rate and insecurity of work, interpreters are leaving in search of better paid jobs and better working conditions. Furthermore, due to the required competencies for work, effort, knowledge and time invested in their own education, they are dissatisfied with their status in the institution and their equivalence with communication mediators, *child’s personal assistant in the classroom* and assistants whose competencies, knowledge and education to work with this group of children with developmental disabilities are immeasurable.

5.1.2. *Parents’ experiences of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children in preschool educational system*

| TOPICS | CATEGORY |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Inclusive education | 1. A child’s right to an interpreter |
| | 2. A child’s right to communication |
| 2. Legislation | 1. Ne legislative framework |

Table 3. Thematic area: Inclusion of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children in the preschool education system

Parents emphasize the importance of interpreters and the right of children to communication support, which, among other things, is guaranteed by many conventions, laws and regulations. They emphasize that by taking away an interpreter, a child is stagnant in development and that he or she cannot be fully involved in the

activities being carried out because they do not understand anything: *“Inclusion in the regular system DOES NOT exist! At least not in our case. “.*

Parents are also concerned about the lack of a legislative framework to ensure the continued support of interpreters for their children: *“For this reason, we are extremely concerned that the issue of interpreters in kindergarten has not been systematically resolved. After two years of waiting for an interpreter (at which time much has been missed in the child’s development), we are constantly uncertain whether the program will continue and how...”.*

It is evident that parents are not satisfied with the inclusion of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children in the preschool educational system. They believe that by denying the right to an interpreter and the absence of a legal framework that would systematically resolve their employment, they directly discriminate against children’s rights.

5.2. Primary and secondary education system

5.2.1. Work experience of interpreters in primary and secondary educational systems

| TOPICS | CATEGORIES |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Working conditions | 1. Low salary 2. Limited hourly rate 3. Uncertainty of employment |
| 2. Status of interpreter | 1. Equalization of terminology 2. Interpreter’s work competencies 3. Ignorance of interpreters role |

Table 4. Thematic area: Working conditions of sign language interpreters in primary and secondary educational system

The analysis of the letters sent showed that the interpreters employed in the elementary and secondary schools have the most dissatisfaction, as well as the interpreters employed in the preschool educational system, in the field of working conditions. One interpreter points out that because of the specific contract she worked for, she did not have the right to paid vacation or paid sick leave, which is really demotivating and it is not surprising why there is a frequent change of interpreters: *“...how much I put effort and sweat for a salary that I barely survive on... a salary that is not sufficient for a normal life, with which I cannot plan life plans such as starting a family, buying a property, going on holidays and wintering make me frustrated and I believe every person who gets a job in that working place.”.*

As with interpreters in the preschool educational system, the interpreters are paid only for direct work with the student in the school. Also, students have extracurricular activities in which the support of interpreters is necessary and important for the child’s development (Mitchell 2002), but interpreters are not paid for work during such activities. Likewise, preparing interpreters for the interpreting in class is necessary for their work to be of good quality and the preparation is not included in the paid hourly rate: *“... because of the limiting number of school hours... I was only paid for work directly with the student, while all my other responsibilities (cooperation with the school’s professional service, parents, writing weekly and monthly reports, preparing students for classes) were not paid...”.*

The category of employment security also causes dissatisfaction with interpreters. Interpreters sign temporary contracts, which means that next year's employment is precarious. Interpreters are in constant fear of losing their jobs: "...at the end of each academic year I am out of job and wonder if there will be money for the next school year to continue working as an interpreter."

The dissatisfaction and feeling of lesser value of interpreter also result from the equalization of terminology, that is, the curve of using terminology related to sign language interpreters. That practice lead to the degradation of the interpreter profession: "...even after two school years I am called an assistant, not an interpreter, at the school by the professor and the professional service of the school, which is a denigration of my knowledge and effort in educating myself and work with the deafblind and deaf persons."

Continuing with the previous paragraph, another consequence of the equalization of terms is the degradation of the competencies of the interpreters. The education of interpreters is ongoing, they are trained in different fields and they need specific knowledge to work in educational institutions. Basic sign language learning is not enough. There are many skills that communication mediators, *child's personal assistants in the classroom* and assistants lack, which makes the frustration of interpreters even greater when they see that a person without all that knowledge is employed in their workplace: "... my client got an interpreter who is not a real interpreter and the school didn't check her with the excuse that they didn't know how to check the candidates - they didn't even ask. I still wonder that educational institution made such a failure!"

Finally, in addition to equalizing sign language interpreters with communication mediators, *child's personal assistants in the classroom* and assistants, as their work competencies are degraded, there is a lack of familiarity with their role. School staff are unfamiliar with the role and tasks of the interpreter, they have no knowledge of the culture of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children, they have no knowledge of ways to approach these children, to approach and how to communicate with interpreter. The class is also unfamiliar with the role and tasks of the interpreter. All of the above affects the quality of the interpreters' work and on the client: "...there were other children in the class who did not know the role of the interpreter... They asked me for help in explaining maths, asked me to ask the professors something, to give them some information about the tests, which was by no means in my job description. The professors knew nothing more than the students. I had a conversation with each one about my role..."

Interpreters in the primary and secondary educational systems also express great dissatisfaction in the field of working conditions. Insufficient salary, limitation of hourly rate and uncertainty of employment next year do not keep interpreters in the workplace for long and in no way contribute to a feeling of security. Likewise, persistent equalization with communication mediators, assistants and *child's personal assistants in the classroom* despite their different roles and the required competencies to work with and unfamiliarity with the role of the interpreters affects the quality of the interpreters' work and at the same time demotivates them. Also, from the above we can conclude that there is a need to educate teachers, school staff and school's professional service on the role and mode of work of educational interpreters. However, education should also be directed to hearing children who attend the same classroom with deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind child.

5.2.2. Experiences of parents of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children in primary and secondary education

| TOPICS | CATEGORIES |
|--|---|
| 1. The right of the child to interpreter | 1. Employment of an incompetent person to the position of interpreter 2. The uncertainty of the employment of an interpreter 3. The right of children with cochlear |
| 2. Legislation | 1. Involve important institutions in decision making |

Table 5. Thematic area: Inclusion of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children in the school educational system

Parents give examples of situations where their child has been assigned an assistant or a person who does not have the appropriate competencies to work as an interpreter. They emphasize that their child, deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind, does not need an assistant because their children are independent. They need a competent and qualified person, an interpreter, who will provide communication support to their children so that they can reach their full educational results as well as their hearing peers: *“My son is independent and does not need a child’s personal assistants in the classroom. He needs an interpreter, a person who will interpret to him all the hearing information from his surroundings.”*.

As with parents of children in the preschool educational system, here is also a fear of the coming school year, a fear that their children will not have communication support. Parents are angry and frustrated that every year they have to fight the institutions again in order for their child to exercise the right guaranteed to them by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (NN 6/2007). Also, the problem is keeping the interpreter in the same job: *“To my son, who is now a fourth-grader, three educational interpreters have changed...”*.

Likewise, the Convention does not distinguish between a deaf/hard of hearing/deafblind child without a hearing aid, with a hearing aid or with an artificial cochlear implant. Children with a cochlear implant continue to have difficulty understanding the information because “hear” is not the same as “understand”. Some children, regardless of the cochlear implant, use the sign language that is primary to them and need a sign language interpreter to understand. Everyone is guaranteed the right to an expert sign language interpreter to ensure their full participation in all areas of life, especially inclusion in the educational system and lifelong learning. Taking into consideration, it is really surprising that parents of a child with cochlear implant need to fight in order for their child to have the right to an interpreter: *“My daughter has a cochlear implant and therefore they automatically finds that her hearing has been “magical “ returned and that she does not need communication support.”*.

The last thing the parents singled out was the non-involvement of organizations of the deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind persons in the selection of interpreters and their coordination. Parents feel that such organizations are most competent to make recommendations about interpreters. Such organizations are familiar with the culture of the deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind persons and working with them can avoid unpleasant situations such as assigning an incompetent person to an interpreter for a deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind child: *“Why are decisions about our needs and the education of our children made by people who are unfa-*

miliar with our deaf community and culture? Isn't it time you finally heard about our needs and involved us in making decisions and laws that directly affect us?".

The parents made it clear that they were dissatisfied with the lack of a legislative framework to ensure that their children with sensory impairments were entitled to an interpreter, including those who had an cochlear implant. They are angry and frustrated that there are situations where their children receive the support of incompetent and inadequate persons. They also consider that organizations who deal with deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind persons should be included in important decisions about their children because they have knowledge of the culture and language of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind people as well as experience working directly with that population.

5.3. *The experience of interpreters employed in the Dodir Association in relation to work in the educational system and the work of interpreters in general*

| THEMES | CATEGORIES |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. Working conditions | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Low salary 2. Hourly rate 3. Frequent interpreter changes 4. Working place of the interpreter |
| 2. Status of interpreter | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equalization of terminology 2. Interpreter's work competencies 3. Ignorance of interpreters role 4. Insufficient number of interpreters |
| 3. Education and Legislation | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Involve important institutions in decision making 2. Lack of formal interpreters education 3. No legislative framework |
| 4. Fundamental human rights | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Right to equal education 2. Right to information |

Table 6. Thematic area: Challenges in interpreters work

The analysis and review of the interpreters and parents letters in kindergartens and schools so far indicate the dissatisfaction with the amount of salary that interpreters receive. It is not surprising that the interpreters employed by the Dodir Association are also dissatisfied. They emphasize that the interpreter's salary is shameful and humiliating and that it is not sufficient for life, especially if the family needs to be met by that salary: *"It is a shame that the average salary you offer for interpreters - university graduates - is below the salary of lower-skilled employees and often those earned on the market by unskilled labor (cleaners)."*

The interpreters of the Dodir Association, as well as the educational interpreters mentioned above, point out that the preparation of interpreters is crucial for quality interpretation and that the work of interpreters should not be limited by the place of work but by the need of the client: *"The job of an educational interpreter does not start at the beginning of the class and does not end with its end. He cannot say "School is*

over, I'm going home.” No, his job starts before class, he prepares for classes on a particular day (and this requires co-operation and understanding of teachers and professors) and ends after class, interpreting when writing a homework assignment or learning new textbook material.”.

Given that the interpreters' employment has not been systematically resolved, interpreters generally sign temporary contracts. At the same time, they are in constant fear of the next year, with the fear of not keeping their jobs. This situation does not inspire security and confidence and the direct consequence is leaving into other professions, that is, to seek a more stable and better paid job: *“Professional interpreters do not want to work under these conditions and go to other professions, which really hurts us, deafblind persons.”.*

As stated above, the work of an interpreter should not be limited by the place of work but by the need of the client. When confined to a place of work, other important activities in which the presence of an interpreter is necessary would be omitted: *“In order to include deaf and deafblind children in the regular system, it is necessary to take into account the specific problems that these children face when attending kindergarten/ school and at the same time to provide full support that will not be limited solely to work within the institution (kindergarten or school).”.*

The preceding chapters outline the reasons for interpreter and parent revolutions by equating interpreters with communication mediators, child's personal assistants in the classroom or assistants. In this section, the reasons are repeated and upgraded. Interpreters believe that term equalization is not fair because of the lengthy education they undergo, thus degrading their competencies, which leads to underpaid and directly to dissatisfaction and ultimately to quitting: *“What about the assistant?! Does a deaf/deafblind child really need an assistant?! I do not think so. A deaf/deafblind child can pull out his slippers by himself, hang up his jacket, pour water, take out books, write...”.*

As in the previous paragraph, communication mediators, child's personal assistants in the classroom or assistants do not have nearly enough knowledge, experience or competence to work as interpreters. An initiative to recruit rehabilitators and speech therapists in kindergartens is present. However, in their college education there is only one course that includes sign language and depending on the direction of the faculty, it is a compulsory one year or elective course. Although there is no formal education for interpreters, there is a 4-year course with additional education for interpreting in an educational context. The interpreters' opinion is that in this course interpreters gain more knowledge and expertise than a person who has listened to one semester of sign language. The analysis also showed that the interpreter, with knowledge of Croatian sign language, should also be adaptable to the needs of the child, be patient, professional, empathetic, communicative, resourceful, confidential, ethical, concentrated and when working with a sensitive group such as children, these competencies should be raised to an even higher level: *“... I believe it is clear to you that not everyone can be an interpreter. He works with a highly sensitive group of children/people who need a patient and, above all, professional and empathetic person. Especially when it comes to educational interpreters.”.*

Furthermore, unfamiliarity with the role of the interpreter was also recognized during the content analysis of the Dodir Association employee letters. Interpreters mention that educational interpreters are required to be all that they are not - assistants, teachers, etc.: *“...schools are completely uneducated of being an educational interpreter. The interpreters are required to be assistants, to be teachers, to teach the child instead of the teacher/professor...The task of the educational interpreter is not to correct the child, hold a pen or do homework with him.”.*

Like the aforementioned educational interpreters, the Dodir Association state that there is an insufficient number of available and quality interpreters and that their lack actually undermines children's rights to

support communication, which results in lower educational outcomes than their peers: *“...because of the lack interpreters deafblind persons in educational and other institutions, but also in everyday life, most deaf-blind, deaf and hard of hearing children do not have the same educational conditions as their hearing peers, because they are not provided with quality and an expert interpreter.”*.

Interpreters agree that important issues and decisions about educational interpreters and interpreters in general, should be made by competent authorities, but in cooperation with organizations of the deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind, as they have the most experience in the field, can give the best advice or assessment, and know this specific culture: *“And all these decisions cannot be made by people who do not know the needs of the deaf and deafblind persons, but must be made together with the people who will be affected by these decisions, who are deaf and deafblind.”*.

We mentioned earlier that there is a course lasting 4 years, after which there is additional training for an educational interpreter. This course is being implemented by the Croatian Association of Deafblind Persons Dodir, which is complex and comprehensive. Although not formal, upon completion of the course, not only knowledge is gained, but also experience based on working directly with deaf and deafblind persons: *“We are aware that there is currently no formal education for sign language interpreters. Unions and associations of the deaf, hard of hearing and the deafblind persons organize sign language courses and seminars, but this education is informal and serves the interpreters more as a part of the national educational system.”*.

Another problem is the lack of a legislative framework under which all deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children would be entitled to an interpreter: *“There is no legal framework in Croatia when it comes to providing support for preschool children who are deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind and the conditions of inclusion of such children must be standardized in order for all children to have a level playing field and opportunity for inclusion.”*.

Last but not least, it concerns the exercise of fundamental human rights - the right to education and the right to information guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (NN 6/2007). In terms of the right to education, the Convention (1989) emphasizes that the education of the child should be directed towards promoting respect for his or her cultural identity and language and that States should ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities in the educational system (NN 6/2007). This can be achieved through bilingual education, which is necessary because research shows that children who have had such access to education at the end of school are achieving better results (Pribanić 2007). The analysis of the letters showed that the deaf and deafblind children are not on equal footing with their peers and that they do not have the same educational conditions: *“What is most unfortunate is that deaf and deafblind children have no equal in education...Primary language of the deaf/deafblind child is the CROATIAN SIGN LANGUAGE. There is NO education in sign language in Croatia!!! Why?”*.

In order for a child to be fully integrated, one must always have full access to information, to obtain information in an accessible way, in the form of communication that he prefers. The denial of information has a negative effect on the child's psychosocial and cognitive development: *“If children do not have an interpreter, they remain excluded, there is little or no communication with the environment. All this leads to a number of problems such as: problems in expression, a scarcer vocabulary, difficult understanding of different texts which prevents them from having a quality and equal education as other children, but also further functioning in daily life.”*.

In conclusion, these interpreters are no exception to expressing great dissatisfaction. As in the previous cases, dissatisfaction was expressed in inadequate salary, limiting the hourly rate, limiting the job of an interpreter to the institution where the child is and this leads to frequent change of interpreters and their insufficient number. Furthermore, they are dissatisfied with their equivalence with communication mediators, assistants and child's personal assistants in the classroom, their ignorance of the role and work responsibilities and the tasks of the interpreter. They also consider it of the utmost importance to involve organizations of the deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind persons in deciding important issues of interpreters in the educational system because of their extensive experience in the field and knowledge of the culture of this specific group. Finally, they emphasize the importance of the right to equal education and the right to information guaranteed by international documents to all persons.

6. CONCLUSION

Although Croatian sign language was recognized in Croatia in 2015 as the original language of the Deaf and Deafblind community as a separate language system with its own grammatical rules and as completely independent language of the hearing persons, although many European and world documents recognize the right to sign language interpreters and equal education for all, children's rights are still being violated and the interpreter profession is degrading in terms of education, salary, status, etc.

It is necessary to create the preconditions for exercising and respecting the rights of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children. We also recognize the need for urgent formation of formal education of sign language interpreters. Education of sign language interpreters needs to be equalized so that everyone is equally competent to work. With regard to the interpretation profession itself, it is important to focus on identifying and defining it in order to avoid underestimating and disrespecting sign language interpreters. Finally, the recruitment system and the method of assigning an interpreter to a deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind child needs to be regulated.

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Inclusive schooling paving the road to higher education

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to explore the relationship between inclusive and integrative learning, possible means for achieving inclusive teaching-learning environments, and factors facilitating the transition to tertiary education for deaf and hearing-impaired students. The current paper discusses issues of inclusive schooling and learning environments, based on a survey and subsequent interviews with deaf and hearing-impaired persons in Switzerland. Questions addressed are (i) the extent to which integration classes actually promote and foster inclusive education, (ii) how bimodal-bilingual communication (combined sign and spoken languages) can be carried out in educational settings and (iii) which forms of knowledge transfer, perception of subject materials, and socializing within their peer group of students are crucial to (intercultural) learning processes including deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Our project so far has gained insights in beneficiary educational paths and experiences, and barriers that may prevent the target groups' successful studies and graduation at higher education institutions. It aims at including deaf and hard-of-hearing scholars and peers, in order to detect good practice experiences and develop a model of inclusive and barrier-free education by means of appropriate communicative and teaching forms as well as technical instruments. Our project on "Access to Barrier-free education on the tertiary level for deaf and hearing-impaired individuals in Switzerland" is part of the ZHAW and Geneva University's joint project "Proposal And Implementation Of A Swiss Centre For Barrier-Free Communication".¹ It focuses on fostering cooperation on the part of all participants in the education process and on inclusive and barrier-free communication in order to create supportive environments in higher education.

Keywords: sign language; barrier-free communication; access to tertiary education; inclusive teaching; deaf and hearing-impaired persons; communicative inclusion

Sažetak

Cilj je ovog rada istražiti odnos između inkluzivnog i integrativnog učenja, mogućih načina za postizanje inkluzivnog okruženja poučavanja i učenja i čimbenika koji olakšavaju prijelaz gluhih i nagluhih učenika u tercijarno obrazovanje. Ovaj rad raspravlja pitanja inkluzivnog okruženja u školovanju i učenju na temelju ankete i naknadnih intervjuja sa gluhim osobama i osobama oštećenog sluha u Švicarskoj. Pitanja koja se postavljaju su (i) u kojoj mjeri integrirana nastava doista promiče i potiče inkluzivno obrazovanje, (ii) kako se u obrazovnim okruženjima može provoditi bimodalno-dvojezična komunikacija (kombinirani znakovni i govorni jezici) i (iii) koji su oblici prijenosa znanja, percepcije predmeta i druženja unutar skupine vršnjačke presudni za (interkulturalne) procese učenja koji uključuju gluhe i nagluhe studente. U našem je dosadašnjem projektu stečen uvid u obrazovne putove i iskustva korisnika, kao i prepreke koje

¹ We gratefully acknowledge the support received within the Swissuniversities Project *Proposal And Implementation Of A Swiss Centre For Barrier-Free Communication* (cf. <https://bfc.unige.ch/en/>) which is in progress until end of 2020. The project is a collaboration between ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences, School of Applied Linguistics, and University of Geneva, Faculty of Translation and Interpreting.

moгу spriječiti uspješan studij i diplomiranje ciljanih skupina na visokoškolskim ustanovama. Njegov je cilj uključivanje gluhih i nagluhih znanstvenika i vršnjaka, kako bi se prepoznala iskustva dobre prakse i razvio model inkluzivnog obrazovanja bez prepreka odgovarajućim pblicima komunikacije i nastave kao i tehničkim instrumentima. Naš projekt na temu »Pristup obrazovanju bez prepreka na tercijarnoj razini za gluhe osobe i osobe oštećena sluha u Švicarskoj« dio je zajedničkog projekta »Prijedlog i provedba švicarskog centra za komunikaciju bez barijera» ZHAW-a i Sveučilišta u Ženevi.² Projekt se usredotočuje na poticanje na suradnju svih sudionika u obrazovnom procesu i na inkluzivnu komunikaciju bez prepreka s ciljem stvaranja podupirajućeg okruženja u visokom obrazovanju.

Ključne riječi: znakovni jezik; komunikacija bez prepreka; pristup tercijarnom obrazovanju; inkluzivna nastava; gluhe i osobe sa oštećenjem sluha; komunikacijska inkluzija

2 Zahvaljujemo na podršci dobivenoj u okviru projekta *Prijedlog i provedba Švicarskog centra za komunikaciju bez barijera* koji financira Swissuniversities (usp. <https://bfc.unige.ch/en/>), a koji je u tijeku do kraja 2020. g. Projekt je nastao suradnjom između Sveučilišta primijenjenih znanosti ZHAW u Zürichu, Škole primijenjene lingvistike i Fakulteta za prevođenje Sveučilišta u Ženevi.

1. Background, Data and Methods

1.1 Background

Disproportionately low outcomes of higher and university education among deaf and hearing-impaired individuals can be seen as a consequence to the barriers and impediments deaf and hearing-impaired students are facing, starting in primary school and continuing up to tertiary education (cf. Hohenstein et al. 2018: 47–50; Rodriguez et al. 2018: 88–91). Several studies reveal that deaf and hearing-impaired students meet specific challenges with regard to writing and reading competences (cf. Spolsky 2014: 142; Plattner 2018). A shortage of qualified interpreters who provide interpreting at an academic level contributes to the roadblocks on their way to higher education, and has been reported from various countries (New Zealand, Australia, US, UK, cf. Powell et al. 2014), including Switzerland.

In the face of these barriers, we need to ask *how* integration classes actually promote and foster inclusive education. Is bimodal-bilingual communication (combined sign and spoken languages) when used in educational settings the preferred medium of instruction or do we rather need to develop still more combined and new forms of teaching and learning, integrating e-learning, social media, apps providing specific technical-linguistic support?

An area we know very little of up to now is the ways deaf and hard-of-hearing students pick up different forms of knowledge, how they perceive subjects and materials, and the role socializing within their peer group of students is playing in (intercultural) learning processes.

The current study is based on quantitative and qualitative analyses of (1) a Swiss-wide survey which was aimed primarily at revealing barriers or roadblocks that deaf and hearing-impaired persons encounter in their educational course up to tertiary level (Hohenstein et al. 2018: 47–50; Rodriguez et al. 2018: 88–91); and (2) six subsequent interviews with deaf and hearing-impaired persons who experience(d) tertiary education.

1.2 Data and Methods

1.2.1 Survey. A Swiss-wide survey was conducted using SurveyMonkey software. It was accessible in seven languages: German, French, Italian, English, Swiss French Sign Language, Swiss German Sign Language and Swiss Italian Sign Language (cf. Graph 1 for numbers of participants in terms of language regions). For technical reasons, those accessing the questions in one of the sign languages could reply only with the help of written regional language (i.e. either German, or French, or Italian). Answers in Sign languages were not possible. This may have prevented a certain number of deaf individuals to take part in the survey. To counter this situation, we asked participants to indicate whether they were willing to take part in a follow-up interview.

Depending on their profile, participants answered between 30 and 59 questions³ with options of closed and open ended answers which covered five topic blocks: (1) communication barriers in education and vocational training; (2) obstacles to employment; (3) communication practices at work; (4) sign language learning; (5) use of communication services, and (6) use of technical aids (Hohenstein et al. 2018: 47–50; Rodriguez et al. 2018: 88–91).

1.2.2 Participants in the survey. The survey was oriented towards two target groups: (1) deaf and hearing-impaired individuals (profile A) and (2) blind and visually impaired individuals (profile B). In order to obtain a comprehensive picture of the status quo of inclusive access to higher education in both groups, relatives, members of non-profit aid agencies, Sign language (SL) teachers, students, and interpreters were invited to participate in the survey. Profiles were accordingly classified into six profiles (A, C, E, G, H, I) relating to deaf and hearing impaired persons (A), their relatives (C), staff members of support organisations (E), Sign language interpreters (G), SL teachers (H) and SL students (I). Three profiles (B, D, F) concern blind and visually impaired persons and their relatives and support organisations. A total of N=210 complete responses were collected from all nine profiles through all language versions: 138 in German (DE), 66 in French (FR), 5 in Italian (IT) and 1 in English (EN). Graph 2 shows how the survey participants were distributed throughout the profiles.

Graph 2 illustrates that participation among both deaf and hearing-impaired persons (profile A) and their support groups (profiles C and E) was much higher than that in profiles of the target groups of blind and visually impaired persons. Since success rates of deaf and hearing-impaired students in the Swiss higher education system are still lower than those of blind and visually impaired students, these numbers of participation may reflect a heightened motivation among deaf and hearing-impaired individuals as well as their families and supporters to share experiences and be part of a movement to change and eliminate barriers.

With regard to our focus on deaf and hearing-impaired persons, the total number of respondents in Profile A (deaf and hearing impaired individuals) was 92, including 59 indicating themselves as deaf persons and 33 indicating themselves as hearing impaired persons. Their age distribution ranged from 18–65 years of age. 54 respondents were female, 35 were male and 3 persons did not disclose their gender.

Statistics were carried out by a statistics expert to control for validity of the data; the numbers of participation in terms of regional languages are reflective of the distribution of the regional populations in Switzerland.

1.2.3 Interviews. We contacted those survey respondents who indicated their willingness to participate in follow-up interviews. Until September 2019, six participants were interviewed; more interviews are to be carried out in 2020 including deaf expert advisers and hearing impaired professionals. All interviews were (and are) conducted using a semi-standardised approach and open questions eliciting narrative responses.

3 The most elaborated and longest questionnaire was profile A addressed at deaf and hearing-impaired persons.

Questions targeted language acquisition, school and university education, opinions regarding good practices in education and barriers experienced in different areas of life. All Interviews were conducted in the language requested on the part of each individual interviewee, that is either in Swiss German Sign Language (DSGS) or in spoken Standard German. We were interested in the interviewees' language biographies and topics of learning, strategies developed, preferred modes of communication, and in detecting potential pre-conditions for accessible tertiary education. Depending on the participants, the interviews lasted between 44 and 80 minutes.

1.2.4 Participants in the interviews. Interviews were carried out in March and April 2019 with six female respondents aged 26 (1 person), 32 (2 persons), 35 (1 person), 38 (1 person) and 65 (1 person). Four interviewees identified themselves to be deaf and two as hard of hearing. For a comprehensive overview, please consult Table 1.

Hearing aids and Sign language use. Three persons are Cochlea implant (CI) users, one of them uses a hearing aid and CI; one person uses a hearing aid and had for a short time used a CI. Two persons do not use any hearing aids. In the interviews, sign language is preferred and used by three interviewees who explicitly identified themselves as “deaf”. Three interviewees preferred to use spoken language in the interviews, but mixed in Sign language in different forms as well. They made use of diverse, hybrid forms of Sign language and spoken language – a practice which may be termed as ‘code-switching’, ‘code-mixing’ or ‘translanguaging’ from different linguistic viewpoints. Two of them consider themselves to be “hearing-impaired and deaf”, one sees herself as “deaf”, and all three are using a CI and/or hearing aids.

Schooling at Primary level. Four interviewees attended orally oriented regular primary schools, that is so-called integration classes. Two persons (I2, I5) attended a specialised school for deaf children where Swiss German Sign language (DSGS) and Signed German (i.e. words are signed employing German Syntax and Grammar) were used. This means that two of six interviewees experienced Sign language as a language of education early in life, and were supported in learning German at primary school by means of Signed German.

Education at Secondary level and gymnasium. One interviewee (I1) changed from regular school into a special needs school for deaf students at 15 years of age; she graduated there and went abroad to graduate with a foreign high school degree in a specialised Sign language-based gymnasium where she also acquired a second Sign language. Two interviewees (I2, I5) changed from a primary school for deaf students into an orally oriented regular secondary school. Five of six interviewees attended secondary school or gymnasium in orally oriented ‘integration classes’ until their ‘matura’ or high school graduation.

Tertiary education. All interviewees went on to study at a university. Three completed their Bachelor studies, although one does not hold a BA degree because a mandatory internship was not possible; one is currently finishing her MA degree work; one interviewee (I2) has gained a university degree equivalent to a

master's degree before the Bologna reforms. One person is in the middle of her BA studies and one is about to complete her BA studies.

All six interviewees in our study passed successfully through the Swiss education system into tertiary level. To a larger part, they were educated in integration classes; they did so carrying various residual hearing abilities and hearing status as well as different status allocated to Sign language within their education. A question arising from this picture is: To what extent do integration classes support development towards higher education for deaf and hearing-impaired students? How does SL support in integration classes work? Which aspects are likely to be building blocks for inclusive higher education? And even though these six interviewees are examples of success, it should be noted that all of them had or have to struggle at times and succeeded against the odds.

2. Specific questions

Various questions arise from the data presented. In the first place, our data show that a relatively high proportion of all survey respondents who identified themselves as “deaf” or “hard of hearing” or “hearing-impaired” have reached tertiary education (39%, N=92). For the German part of Switzerland the number is still higher with a total of 41% of respondents participating in tertiary education (N=75; cf. Hohenstein et al. 2018, Rodríguez Vázquez et al. 2018). According to national statistical figures from the Federal Bureau of Statistics for 2015 (BfS 2017), this corresponds roughly to the value of the Swiss population average (40%) and exceeds numbers for tertiary education regarding persons with a disability in Switzerland (30%). Accordingly, we might ask: Is there no problem at all in access to tertiary and higher education, and consequently no problem in the education of deaf and hearing-impaired persons? This conclusion would be premature, since the participants in our study are not a representative group of deaf and hearing impaired persons in Switzerland.

With our survey, we reached particularly well those in the deaf and hearing-impaired communities who are well-educated and who are organised and involved in (self-help) associations. There are no reliable figures on the actual figures for educational qualifications, training and higher education of deaf and hearing impaired persons in Switzerland, not even on the part of the Federal Bureau of Statistics.

We must therefore make use of qualitative analyses in order to identify the educational pathways and their ruptures and in order to understand the obstacles on the way to tertiary education for deaf and hearing impaired persons in Switzerland. From this perspective, the question arises as to *how inclusive* integration classes really are. We do not equate ‘inclusive’ with ‘integration (in regular) classes’. From our perspective, inclusion requires the active participation of everyone in a joint process of designing learning and teaching. This claim underlines the importance of investigating how education in regular classes and schools contributes to the educational success of hearing impaired and deaf students.

To date, there are no studies on inclusive learning in Switzerland. The guiding question of this paper is whether and how education in integration classes promotes the quality of education for deaf and hearing-impaired persons and their professional path. The goal of this paper is to explore the relationship between inclusive and integrative learning, possible means for achieving inclusive teaching-learning environments, and factors facilitating the transition to tertiary education for deaf and hearing-impaired students.

2.1 To which extent do integration classes promote and foster inclusive education?

2.1.1 Integration classes. Most deaf and hearing-impaired persons in Switzerland attended or do attend regular, orally-oriented schools. This means they are integrated in regular classes, or so-called ‘integration classes’, where diversity is a pronounced feature and encompasses students with various (social and linguistic) backgrounds and different impairments, not only deaf or hearing-impaired students. The level of (non-) inclusion of deaf and hearing-impaired persons in integrative schooling is reflected in the survey responses to the questions regarding obstacles experienced on primary, secondary and tertiary level. Starting with primary school, the problems run through all school levels up to tertiary level (for an overview on responses regarding secondary and tertiary levels cf. Graphs 3 and 4; multiple answers were possible and an option for free comments was given).

Regarding secondary school experiences, 57 (from N=92) deaf and hearing-impaired respondents indicated that “inadequate school programs” were an obstacle; 45 rated “non-inclusive schooling”⁴, 43 “not enough interpreters” as hurdles encountered in integrative secondary schools (for an overview on the data cf. Graph 3). 37 respondents gave “other reasons” as well and commented individually on e.g. a lack of family support, unawareness on the part of school staff and teachers of deafness and hearing-impairments, inappropriate SL translation, and mobbing by peers. Eight respondents mentioned in individual comments that there was no adequate early intervention tackling language acquisition.

With regard to tertiary education, 45 (from N=92) respondents marked “inadequate school programs” an obstacle, but a lack of interpreters (“not enough interpreters”= 43 ratings) is more pronounced at this level than “non-inclusive schooling” (rated 38 times). 36 respondents gave individual comments on “other reasons”. There, serious problems are seen in a lack of hearing aid technologies in auditoriums and related know-how on the part of teachers/professors (FM systems with directional microphones, ring loops/ induction cable and room acoustics). The human factor also is a key issue: The fact that educators do not pay enough attention to pronounce clearly, speak Standard German, or make eye contact and that often there is a problem in large classes and lecture halls to detect speaking classmates or fellow students in time is named by hearing impaired and deaf students as making it difficult to follow lessons. Several times, they mention discussions and group sessions as particularly challenging for them.

4 This answer option in the French version, in comparison to German, Italian and English versions (“non-inclusive schooling”) is formulated as “cadre d’apprentissage pas accessible à tous” which means “learning framework not accessible to all”.

2.1.2 Language Issues. The largest difference between deaf and hearing-impaired students exists in their linguistic diversity. While students with residual hearing ability may succeed with a combination of hearing aids and lip reading, deaf students relying on Sign language as a primary medium of instruction may prefer SL interpreting. Instructions regarding the implementation of inclusion in educational settings do not always provide for SL in the class room. The practice of lip reading and applying acoustical aids in class rooms are major suggestions for school staff. Accordingly, many comments in our survey centre on a lack of Sign language provision throughout all educational levels, be it by the means of Sign language instruction, SL video explanations, interpreting or tutoring in Sign language. Both the survey and interview respondents indicated that barriers begin on the preschool level when a support with language development was not appropriate or missed at all. For those using Sign language as their primary medium of communication, the lack of interpreters, and difficulties during tertiary education to receive funding for interpreting from the disability insurance, are posing problems cited over and over again in both data sets. Controversy exists between deaf and hard of hearing persons about whether the standard language should be learned first as a grammatical basis or whether spoken and sign language should be acquired simultaneously. In the comments and interviews, it is repeatedly discussed that in current practice neither German nor sign language can be acquired correctly, because their grammar is not taught separately in class. This is reflected as well in the uneven distribution of SL language use, lip reading and/ or spoken language accompanied by gestures and signs among the survey respondents (cf. Graph 4). It is palpable also in the hybrid practices between SL and spoken language in three of six interviews.

Speech-to-text interpreting is rarely mentioned in both the survey comments and the interviews, compared to the other supporting techniques. One respondent explains that it requires a high level of competence in the spoken and written standard language which is not easily achieved. In several commentaries, the standards held by specialised schools for the deaf are criticised as too low. Interviewees and respondents who reached tertiary education maintain that a linguistic competence adequate for studying at tertiary level can be reached only with massive support by one's family, tutoring and high personal commitment.

Lip reading is still the most common form of communication in integrative classes. It is unfortunately overlooked that a large part of the information is lost in lip reading (up to 70%), and according to the survey and interview responds, lip reading causes fatigue and psychological stress. This burden is mentioned several times as a reason why deaf and hearing-impaired individuals are demotivated or frustrated about (continuing) their education. In the interviews we conducted it became clear that even those interviewees who grew up orally educated and use spoken language as a primary medium, show a need to express themselves with Sign language and incorporate signing again and again into their spoken utterances or complement spoken utterances by signed expressions.

2.1.3 Bilingual-bimodal education. One aspect of inclusive education opportunities for deaf and hearing-impaired persons is highlighted in a call for a policy of *bilingual-bimodal education*, i.e. education in a dual communication mode using both the *spoken and sign languages of Switzerland* spoken in their respective regions, put forward by the Swiss Federation of the Deaf SGB-FSS (cf. SGB-FSS 2018 a, b, c). The SGB-FSS' bilingual-bimodal policy covers early intervention, compulsory school and vocational training

and it underlines the necessity to provide both Sign language and spoken/written language training throughout primary and secondary education.

In individual comments in the survey, over and over again with regard to all levels of schooling, a lack of Sign language and dominance of spoken language is criticised, and an appropriate language support using a bimodal-bilingual communication is demanded (using SL and spoken language). All interviewees consider this to be missing in school education. Only one deaf interviewee who grew up in a deaf family with sign language reports that she acquired a language basis which enabled her to follow the learning content in a primary school oriented for deaf and hearing-impaired persons. Several respondents highlight their experience of 'lagging behind' because of inadequate bimodal-bilingual language support throughout all their school time.

Survey participants also reported on teachers using Sign language alongside and at the same time as spoken language, and pointed out that this is insufficient and unhelpful for students in order to acquire Sign language: Expressions of Sign language are used following the grammar of spoken language (German, French, Italian) in grammatically incorrect forms; also, in particular Swiss German Sign language employs many mouth images and facial expressions that are distinctive elements of vocabulary items which cannot be expressed when mixing it with spoken language. Thus, these forms used in schools by non-deaf teachers do not represent bimodal-bilingual communication.

2.2 How can bimodal-bilingual/dual communication be carried out in settings of tertiary education?

2.2.1 Pathways to inclusion in tertiary education. At postsecondary level, 'inclusive' settings are the norm, meaning that as a public policy no special education classes for deaf and hearing-impaired students at tertiary level are envisaged, while teachers and curricula are expected to develop and employ inclusive didactics (cf. Swissuniversities 2019). Up to date, 'inclusive' often means an integration into regular forms of teaching under agreement of specific, mostly individually adapted compensations for deaf and hearing-impaired (as well as blind and visually impaired) students. Sign language interpretation in classes and additional tutoring or coaching for deaf and hearing-impaired students may be part of the compensation, while implementing a bimodal-bilingual policy in university teaching is not yet a practiced form of inclusion.

The open answers in our survey afforded an opportunity for respondents to elaborate on forms of learning and teaching experienced as more or less supporting and positive. Forms described as supportive of tertiary education were:

- SL interpreting, speech-to-text interpreting, support by transcribers, real time captioner;
- Infrastructures and technical support: Sound-absorbing elements, induction lines and FM systems with several microphones in lecture rooms;
- Awareness of teachers, lecturers, educators, clear pronunciation, eye contact;

- Tutoring and coaching;
- Subtitles to video materials
- Visual presentation of material, with captions
- Small classes.

The interviewees mentioned similar and some more aspects of inclusive learning experiences:

- A strong presence of the teacher with clear articulation, notes on the blackboard, many visual elements;
- Small groups, a reference person in the class;
- Getting handouts sent in advance or afterwards to clarify the meaning of new words.
- Strong support from an audiopedagogical service, especially in text comprehension and written expression;
- Great support from parents, e.g. in the preparation of lectures;
- Proofreading service for final theses.

Many of these aspects are beneficial not only to deaf and hearing-impaired students, but also to hearing students. They may be building blocks for inclusive didactics.

2.2.2 Inclusive didactics. What does *inclusive didactics* mean in terms of university teaching including deaf and hearing-impaired students? Some interview participants considered inclusion as conducting communication in the same language, which should be used by all participants in the education discourse. From that perspective they were skeptical about the idea of full inclusion. Comments wishing that more educators were able to use SL were also somewhat in contradiction to those who reported that non-deaf teachers are using SL inappropriately. According to some teachers' responses they would be willing to sign but have no possibility to learn SL. Given the responses cited above, a feasible way to inclusive didactics at tertiary level could evolve around small groups participating in reciprocal learning and teaching, including SL learning, coaching, visualising, supported by various forms of interpreting. Interestingly, nobody mentioned elearning and virtual learning environments.

2.3 Forms of knowledge transfer, perception of subject materials, and socializing within their peer group of students

2.3.1 Knowledge transfer and perception of subject materials. According to a study carried out in the German speaking part of Switzerland, most deaf or hearing-impaired students who learn in regular classes have problems with reading and writing competences (Plattner 2018: 6). These students use lip reading, since a majority of school teachers have no SL competences or do not provide the subject material in an appropriate communicative mode (i.e. visually, with subtitles etc.). One respondent recalled experiencing a cognitive

overload when she tried to record all information visually and write it down at the same time. In turn, another one was gratified he had someone transcribing for him the lectures. One respondent described how it was impossible to know after a day of lectures which content belonged to which lecturer because all the lectures were translated into SL by the same interpreter. Another one recounted how his effort to memorise was thwarted by maintaining concentration over a whole day of studies and his hearing colleagues had managed to remember more at the end of the day. Teaching forms like exercising speech and listening comprehension skills in foreign language learning as well as singing lessons experienced by deaf or hearing-impaired respondents were considered to be unreasonable and time-wasting. Educators may not be aware of these difficulties at all.

In view of the students' abilities and needs, learning in separate classes was reported as preferable and fostering the learning progress, depending on the subject. Several respondents expressed appreciation for additional tutorials they received as part of their compensation for disadvantages.

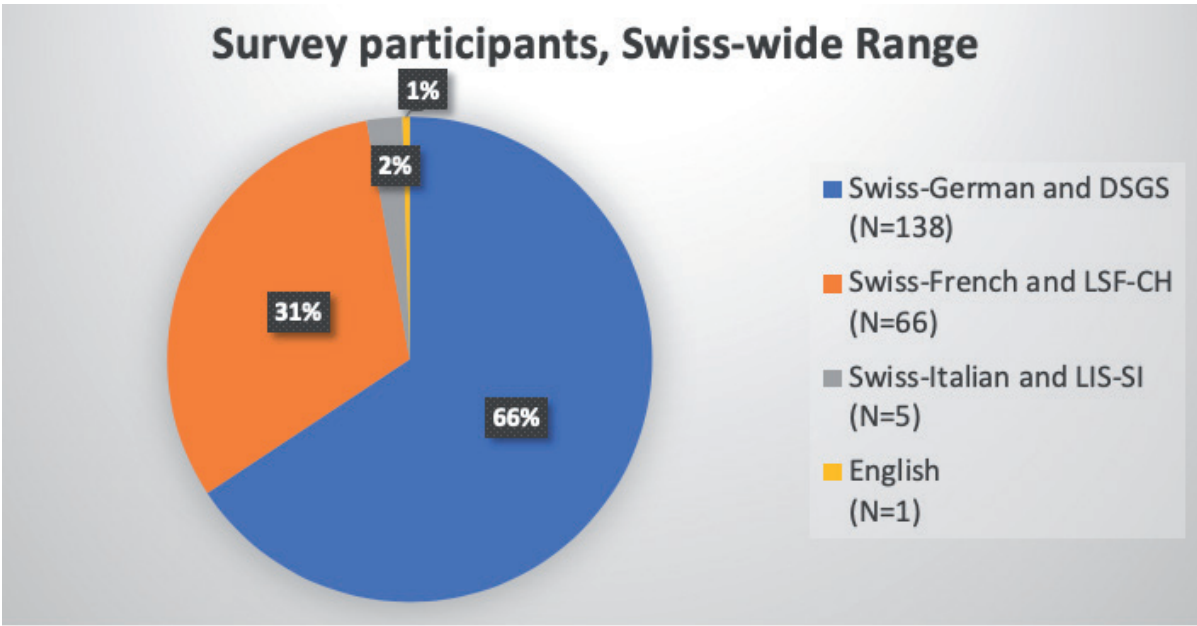
2.3.2 Class composition and socialising with peers. The interviewees were asked to choose one of three options of class composition which they would prefer as optimal for them: (1) class with hearing peers; (2) class consisting of 50% hearing and 50% deaf or hearing-impaired peers; (3) class with deaf and hearing-impaired peers. The answer of all interviewees was option 2: a class with 50% hearing and 50% deaf or hearing-impaired peers. They explained their choice that as deaf or hearing-impaired students they would not feel alone with their struggles and would be able to explicate their learning needs. In accordance with that statement, in the survey several comments were made that respondents had felt isolated or experienced mobbing in classes where they were the only deaf or hearing-impaired student. Socialising with peers was reported as more difficult from secondary school onwards, when activities are based more and more on language and discursive skills. Positive social experiences were reported regarding specific activities or lessons like Sport that fostered the interaction between hearing and deaf or hearing-impaired students.

3. Discussion and Conclusion

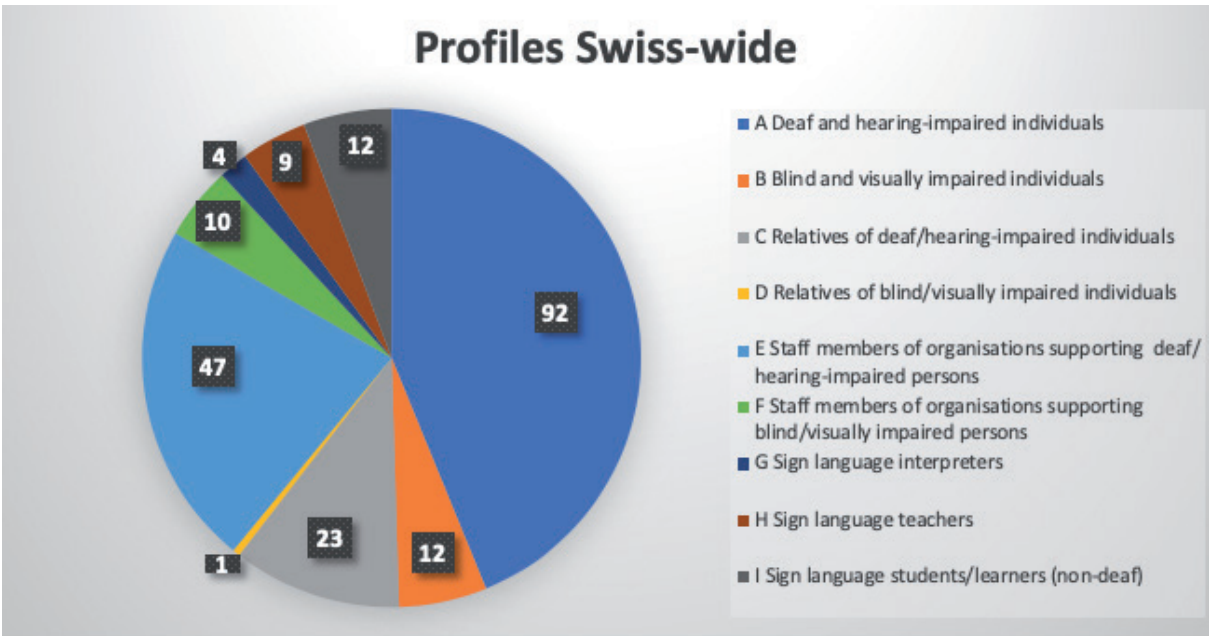
Integration in regular classes presents its specific challenges, as has been noted before (Powell et al. 2014). Since a lack of language support affects the development of vocabulary, reading and writing competences, it puts deaf and hearing-impaired students at a disadvantage compared to their hearing peers. In primary and secondary education the problems and obstacles were reported to be similar. These obstacles also affect access to tertiary education. Of the Swiss-German respondents (N=75), around 65% (49 persons) blame inadequate forms of teaching at secondary level for the poor transition rates at tertiary level. In alignment with current demands for more inclusive education, tertiary education, in particular access to academia, continues to be a field where much remains to be done (cf. Napier and Leeson 2016). Knowledge transfer and the perception of subject materials, as well as socializing within a peer group of students are crucial to (intercultural) learning processes including deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

According to the survey and interview results, chances for the tertiary education are determined (1) firstly in the preschool period while getting (or not getting) support for the language development (bimodal-bilingual communicative mode) as well as (2) by providing appropriate communication modes and suitable education settings on all school levels. These premises increase the chances for deaf and hearing-impaired persons to achieve a high school degree or matura. In view of the abilities and needs of the students, class division for such subjects like (Foreign) Languages should foster the education quality. Uniting for specific lessons or activities like Sport can contribute to a better inclusion of the deaf or hearing-impaired students with their hearing peers. The question remains, whether (full) inclusive learning needs to rely on all participants (students and teachers) using the same language and communicative mode in the learning process. Practices of intercultural learning and ‘translanguaging’ breaking the dominance of the oral approach could make perception of subjects and learning materials more accessible. Based on preliminary results we conclude that inclusive schooling is not yet paving the road to higher education for deaf and hearing-impaired students in Switzerland.

5. Graphs, Figures and Tables



Graph 1: Numbers of Survey Participants per Language/ Language regions

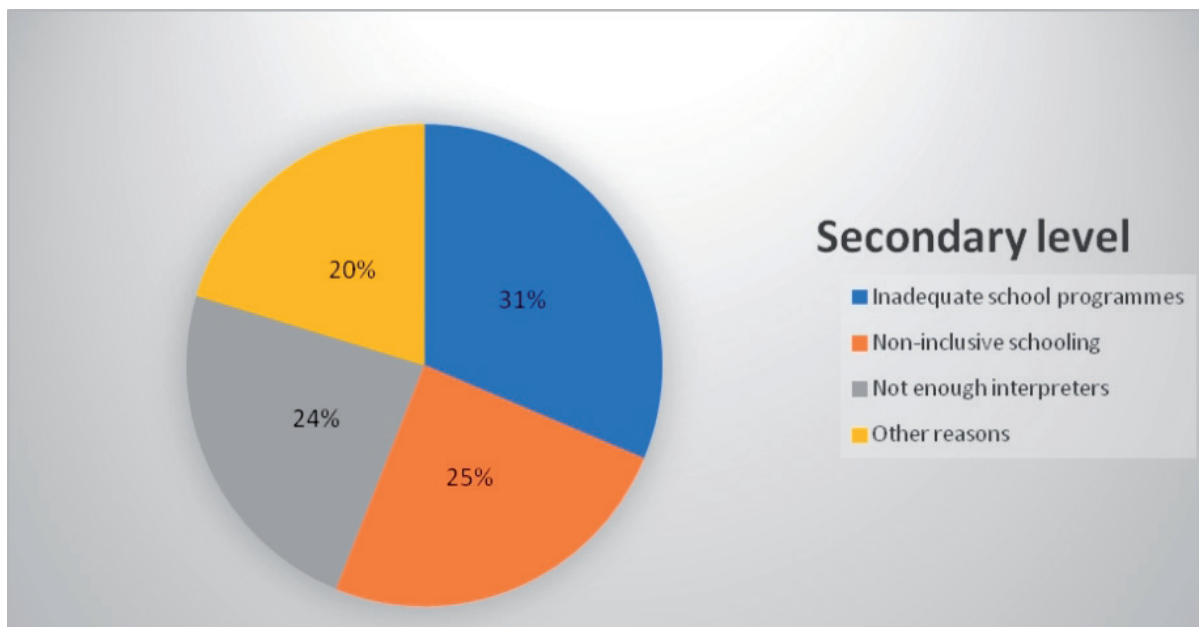


Graph 2: Profiles and Distribution of Survey Participants

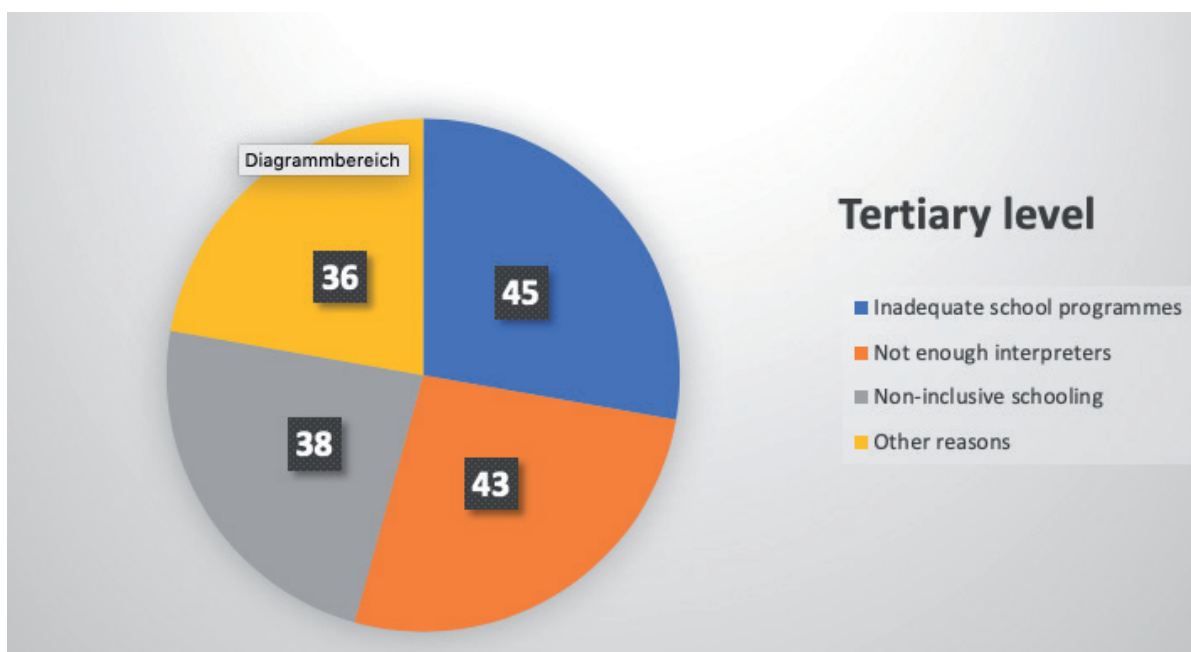
Table 1: Interview Participants

| Interview participant | Age | Gender | Hearing status | Deaf parents | Hearing aids | Language used in interview | School education | University degrees |
|-----------------------|-----|--------|---|--------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|---|---|
| I1 | 32 | F | deaf from birth | — | CI | SL | Primary/ part of Secondary school in integration classes; Matura and High school diploma in SL classes | BA studies completed, no diploma due to lack of internship opportunities; 'Expert in Sign language' Certificate from Swiss University (class of deaf and hearing-impaired students, course language SL) |
| I2 | 65 | F | hearing-impaired and deaf both | — | CI | signed German; spoken German | Primary school in special needs class for deaf/hearing-impaired children; Secondary school in integration classes | Lic. rer. pol. from University (equivalent of M.A. of Economics today), after vocational training |
| I3 | 26 | F | hearing-impaired | — | CI, hearing aid | signed German; spoken German | Primary and Secondary school in integration classes | Currently BA studies at a University of Applied Sciences, after vocational training |
| I4 | 38 | F | deaf from birth; categorised as hearing-impaired from a medical perspective | — | — | SL | Primary and Secondary school in integration classes | BA accomplished from Gallaudet University; 'Expert in Sign language' Certificate from Swiss University (class of deaf and hearing-impaired students, course language SL) |
| I5 | 32 | F | deaf from birth | X | — | SL | Primary school in special needs class for deaf/hearing-impaired children; Secondary school in integration classes | Currently BA studies at a University of Applied Sciences, after vocational training |
| I6 | 35 | F | deaf from birth on one side, residual hearing on second ear, deafened later in life | — | hearing aids; CI for a short time | signed German; spoken German | Primary and Secondary school in integration classes | BA accomplished, currently finishing an MA degree |

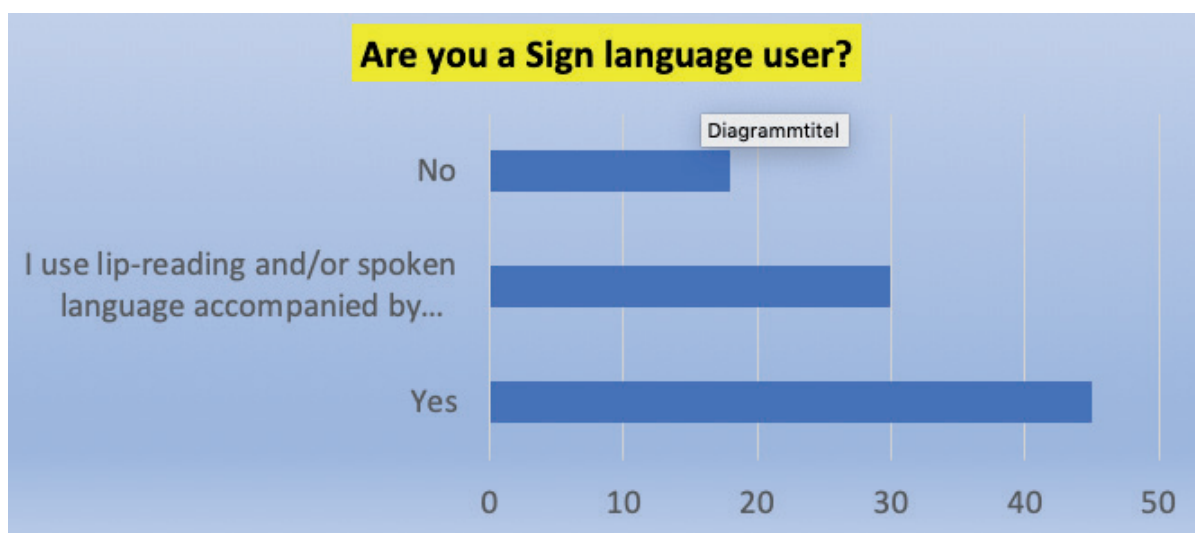
Table 1: Interview Participants



Graph 3, Secondary level: Which communication barriers do you see for deaf/hearing impaired persons in the Swiss secondary school system (e.g. Sek A, B, C, vocational school, grammar school)? Please comment. (N=92, multiple answers were possible).



Graph 4, Tertiary level: Which communication barriers do you see for deaf/hearing impaired persons in the Swiss school system at tertiary level (e.g. university, university of applied sciences)? Please comment. (N=92, multiple answers were possible).



Graph 5: Are you a Sign language user?

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Supporting Parents in Social Interactive Play with their Deafblind Child

A quantitative Study about Needs and Resources of Parents
and of Early Intervention Services

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Abstract

Whenever the quality of social interactive play between parents and their child is reduced by the influences of deafblindness, the child's development is at risk. Thus support of early interaction is one of the most important contents in early intervention with families of deafblind children. But there is not much scientific research or literature about how to do that. In addition, early education experts in Switzerland are rarely trained on matters of deafblind education. For those reasons Jette Hunsperger-Ehrlich did her master's thesis project at the University of Applied Sciences in Special Needs Education in Zürich (www.hfh.ch) around the following questions: Which needs and resources do parents of deafblind children have regarding the support of social interactive play? And what can early intervention services offer them?

A quantitative survey of 12 parents and 27 experts on early intervention showed, that an individualised, family-focused approach as well as the spread of knowledge about deafblindness is needed in Switzerland. In addition, the need of scientific research in deafblind education became clear again (Hunsperger 2019).

Key words: early intervention, social interaction, support of parents, spread of expert knowledge on deafblindness

Sažetak

Kad god se kvaliteta društvene interaktivne igre između roditelja i djeteta smanji uslijed gluhošlijepoće djeteta, njegov je razvoj u opasnosti. Stoga je podrška ranoj interakciji jedan od najvažnijih sadržaja u ranoj intervenciji s obiteljima gluhošlijepih djece. No nema mnogo znanstvenih istraživanja ili literature o tome kako to izvesti. Pored toga, stručnjaci za rano obrazovanje u Švicarskoj rijetko su educirani u pitanjima obrazovanja gluhošlijepih. Iz tih je razloga, Jette Hunsperger-Ehrlich svoj magistarski rad na Sveučilištu primijenjenih znanosti u obrazovanju s posebnim potrebama u Zürichu (www.hfh.ch) temeljila na sljedećim pitanjima: Koje potrebe i resurse stoje na raspolaganju roditeljima gluhošlijepih djece u vezi s podrškom društvenoj interaktivnoj igri? I što im usluge rane intervencije mogu ponuditi?

Kvantitativno istraživanje 12 roditelja i 27 stručnjaka o ranoj intervenciji pokazalo je da je u Švicarskoj potreban individualiziran pristup usredotočen na obitelj, kao i širenje znanja o gluhošlijepoći. Uz to je ponovno postala jasna potreba za znanstvenim istraživanjima o obrazovanju gluhošlijepih osoba (Hunsperger 2019).

Ključne riječi: rana intervencija, socijalna interakcija, podrška roditelja, širenje stručnih znanja o gluhošlijepoći

About families of deafblind children

When a child is born with deafblindness or acquires it in its first years of life, it will be impaired in using its distance senses – may be strongly, may be slightly, may be very different in hearing and seeing. Anyways there is no chance to fully compensate one sense with another. The “symphony” of all senses playing together is getting disturbed. The senses for proximity are getting more important. Especially interaction and communication are influenced by that. Unusual strategies are required (Nafstad & Rødbroe 2018; Tanne 2011). Often deafblind children do have additional cognitive, movement or perception impairments which can increase difficulties within social interaction (Lang, Keesen & Sarimski 2015a, 2015b).

In early time parents are faced with those challenges when they try to play first bodily, funny games including tickling, mimetics, singing and presenting ritualized gestures: social interactive play.

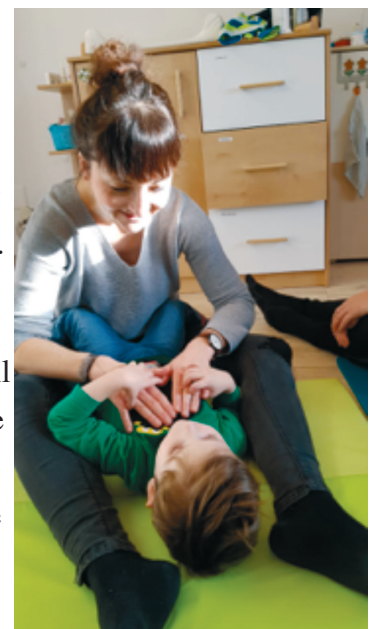
A common example for social interactive play:

*Itsy bitsy spider climbed up the water spout
Down came the rain and washed the spider out
Out came the sun and dried up all the rain
And itsy bitsy spider climbed up the spout again.*

Sometimes deafblind children behave more passively, are concentrated on themselves or on objects and seem to be not interested in social contact. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish and to interpret their non-verbal signals, their focus of attention, their needs and interests. These characteristics can irritate parents in their intuitive parental competencies in such a way, that parent-child-interaction is getting disturbed heavily (Nafstad & Rødbroe 2018; Rødbroe & Janssen 2014; Sarimski 1993; Sarimski 2009).

To make things worse, families of deafblind children experience a high level of stress in an emotional, organizational, social, cognitive and financial way. All kinds of pressure normally contribute to the quality of social interaction (Becker & Skusa 2014; Bertram 2004; Eckert 2012; Sarimski, Hintermair & Lang 2013).

Social interactive play lays cornerstones for communication development as well as for perception, social-emotional and cognitive development. So it is definitive influencing infant development (Sarimski 1993; Sarimski 2009; Sarimski, Hintermair & Lang, 2013). Infants are at risk, if social interactive play does not take place, occurs only very reduced or is combined with feelings of frustration.



Social interactive play is a central element in every family with toddlers. It is a form to play without toys but in a dialogical way between “you” and “me”. The game is structured by traditional and cultural shaped rhymes or songs which include ritualized movement, gestures, text and touch. Famous examples are “Itsy bitsy spider” or “Head, shoulders, knees and toes”. But it is just as well to create improvised, bodily based games by responding to utterances and movements of the child. Social interactive play leads to early dialogues between parents and child and supports the development of communicative dialogues (Nafstad & Rødbroe 2018; Papoušek 2001).

Early intervention in families of children with deafblindness

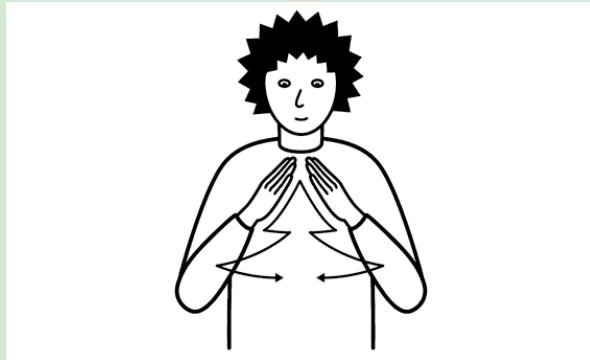
Apparently supporting parents in social interactive play is one of the most important manners in early intervention in families of children with deafblindness.

In the year 2013 M. Baur (2015) estimated the prevalence of deafblind children and youngsters in Switzerland up to 165 (not including the estimated number of unreported cases). However there is only one center of competence specialized on deafblind education, called Tanne, Swiss Foundation for People with Deafblindness (see www.tanne.ch). Tanne took care of only 19 children and youngsters in 2013. Until today the number of deafblind children in the specialized early intervention service is single-digit. Concerned families are predominantly supported by regional early intervention services without specialised knowledge about deafblindness. Most of them are either specialised on hearing or on seeing problems.

In addition, there is not much literature about support of parents of deafblind children. Normally video analysis guidelines aim to consultancy of experts. It must be doubted that those are totally accomplishable in contact to parents.

That is why the following research questions have been asked for this master’s thesis project:

1. Which needs and resources do parents of deafblind children have regarding the support of social interactive play?
2. What can early intervention services offer them? Which difficulties do occur within the support? How does expert knowledge on deafblind education influence the support?



Tanne, the Swiss Foundation for People with Deafblindness in Zürich is the centre of competence for toddlers, children, youngsters and adults with deafblindness or similar forms of multiple disabilities in Switzerland. The focus is on education of perception and communication skills. In addition, it created and distributes “PORTA”, a collection of signs for facilitated communication with persons with multiple disabilities.

www.tanne.ch

The Survey

In order to find answers to those questions an online questionnaire was sent to experts on early intervention all over the German speaking parts of Switzerland and to some early intervention services in Germany which are specialised on deafblindness. The experts were asked to answer the questionnaire if they ever have been working with a family of a deafblind child. In addition, those experts were requested to forward another questionnaire to parents of deafblind children they know.

Thereupon data of 27 experts and 12 parents could have been collected. While the number of 27 experts can be interpreted as representative for Switzerland, the results based on answers of 12 parents are not significant and therefore less meaningful.

During the evaluation of the results the experts were classified into two groups. The first group was built by 11 experts working at an early education service specialized on deafblindness. The experts in this group were working with 4,73 deafblind children at an average at the time of the survey and have been working with amongst 11 to more than 50 deafblind children before in total. The second group was built by the 16 left experts working at an early intervention service without any focus or with the focus on either seeing or hearing problems. Those experts were working with 1,06 deafblind children at the time of the survey and have been working with amongst 1 to 10 deafblind children before.

Results

Parents as well as experts confirm the assumption that the support of interaction and communication is extraordinary relevant. However, all other areas of development are valued as just as important.

The parents seem to not have lots of problems in interaction with their children (see diagram 1). Anyway 50% of the parents say, it would be very difficult to play with their child. The difficult part can be identified most likely within the concrete arrangement of social interactive play.

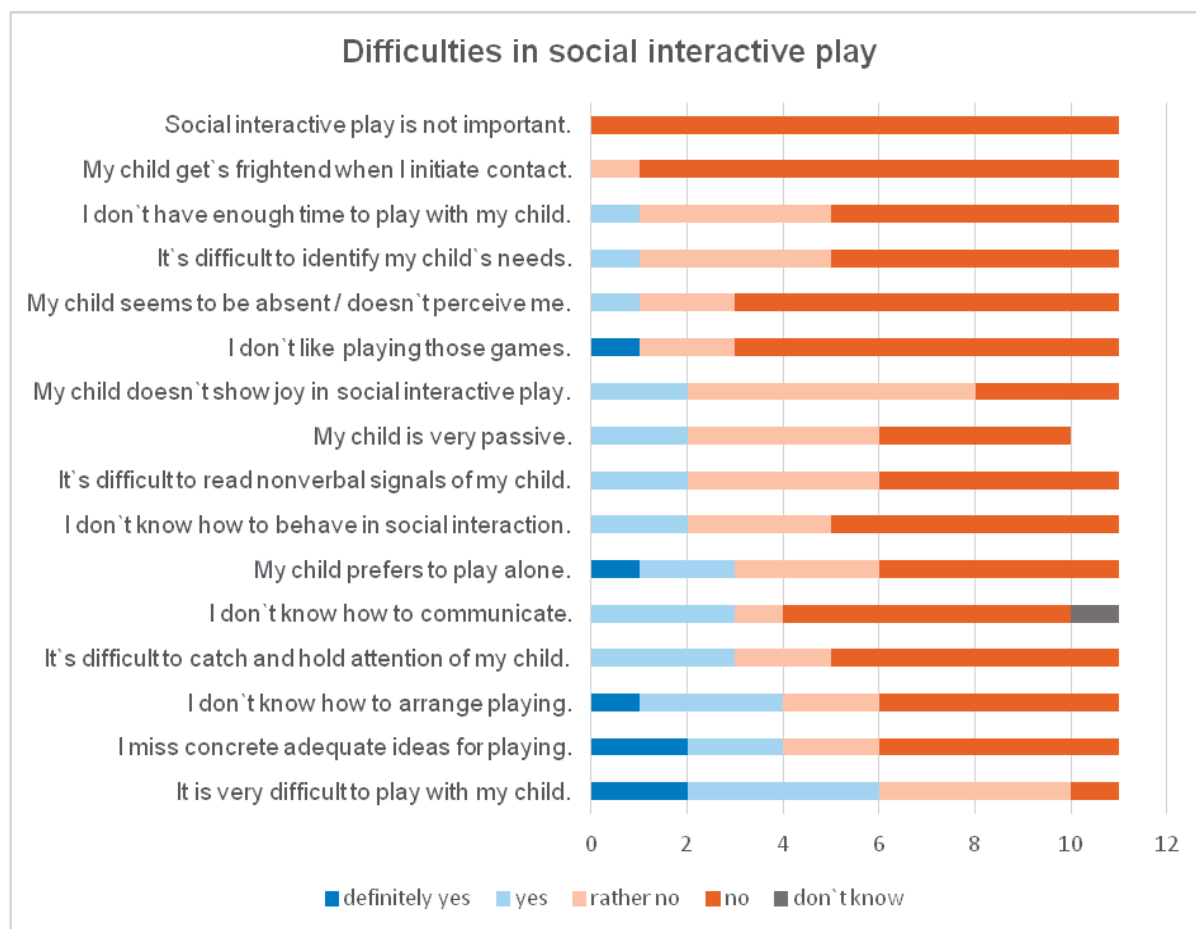


Diagram 1: Difficulties of parents in social interactive play with their deafblind child

The parents rate a lot of different forms of support by the early intervention services as helpful. In doing so those forms of support which do not take place at the family's home and mean to organize another appointment are not desired very much. Parents want to participate in support of social interactive play actively but also appreciate the early intervention lesson as time for relief. Most of the families are supported by many different experts like physical therapists, speech therapists, one early intervention expert on seeing and one expert on hearing problems.

Diagram 2 shows that the offered support basically correlate with the needs of parents. Thus the first group of experts, specialized on deafblindness, matches their needs even better.

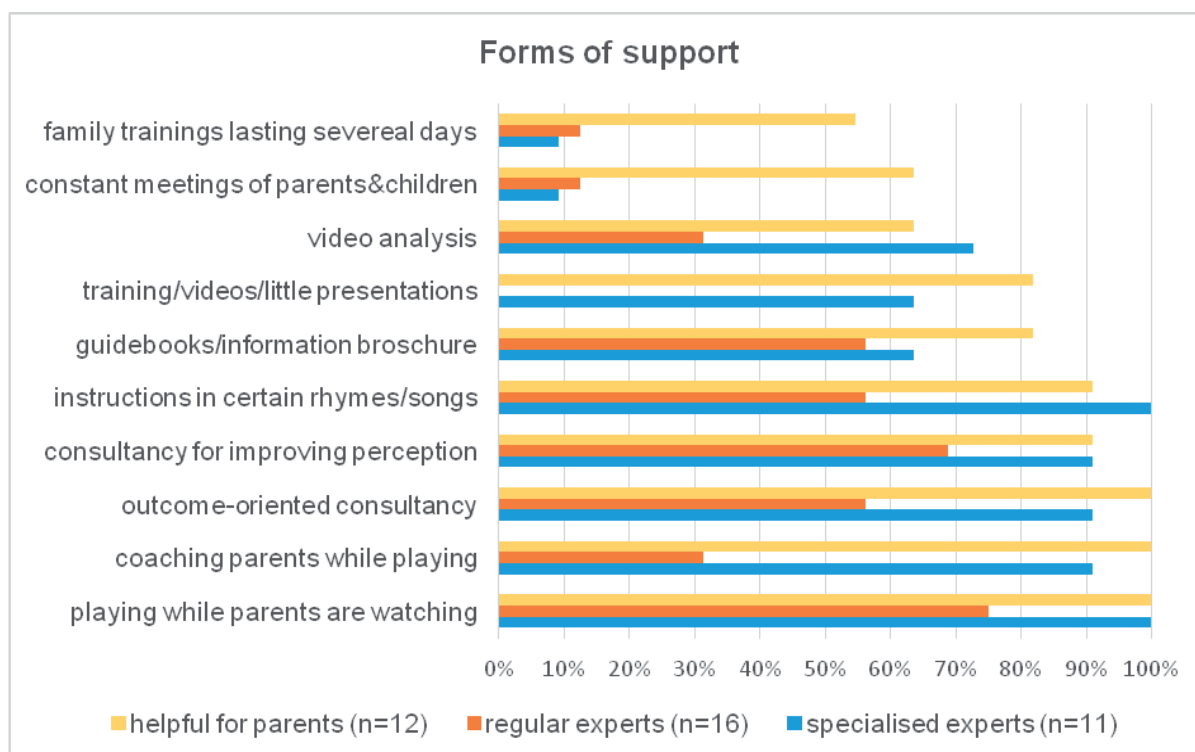


Diagram 2: Offered forms of support of social interactive play and the needs of parents

The answers of the experts show that they profit first and foremost from methods, tools and theories out of the deafblind education field. However, the experts without a focus on deafblindness don't have the knowledge about those. They find it difficult to support parents in social interactive play without enough expertise about deafblindness. They miss appropriate ideas and song texts for the play as well as specified programmes for this kind of support. They also have suspension to observe, film and analyse parental behaviour. Experts specialised on deafblindness designated the long distances from the service department to the family's homes as a big difficulty.

Both groups of experts got a notion that parents often value other topics and problems as more relevant than the support of social interactive play and that parents often do not want to or are not able to participate actively (see diagram 3).

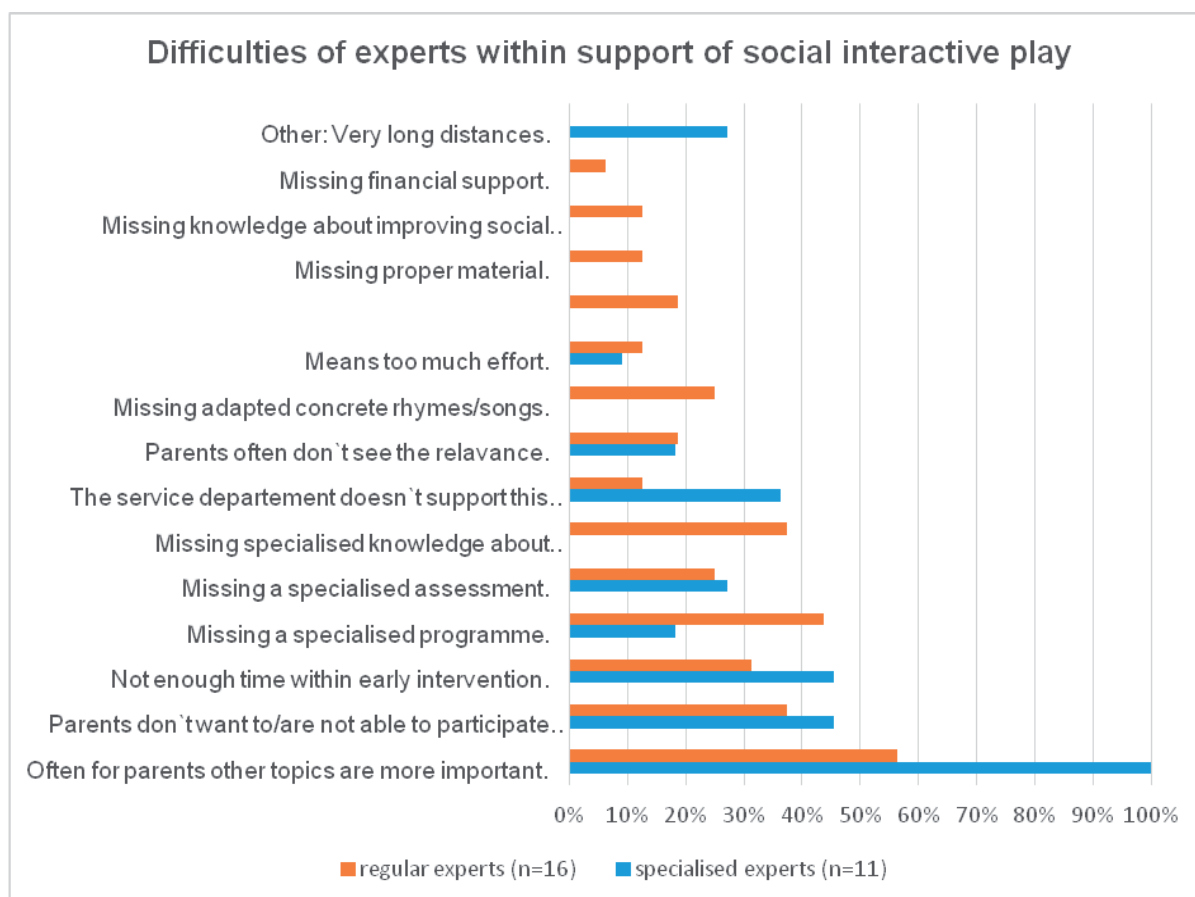


Diagram 3: Difficulties of early intervention experts within the support of parents in social interactive play

Conclusion

Although the very small group of parents in this survey named only few difficulties within social interactive play and value almost all areas of development as very relevant, it can be determined that parents of deaf-blind children want to get supported in social interactive play and appreciate the experienced support. As always in special education contexts it seems to be essential to assess the individual needs of a family again and again and to adapt the kind of support to them. There is never a programme which suits all. Often this means to find exactly the right mixture of active participation and relief of parents. A comprehensive family assessment could be helpful for that. Also a reduction of the number of different involved experts to at least one specialist on deafblindness could be assistant for relief of parents.

The deafblind education expertise must be spread out to all the early intervention services in Switzerland in order to be able to support the families as well in an appropriate competent way as regional. It is clear that the field of deafblind education must be implemented in special education qualifications at schools and universities. In addition, it is the task of the specialised services to share their knowledge with some of the other experts, to consult and train them and to make people sensitive for the existence of deafblindness. Also national exchange could be helpful. Tanne, the Swiss Foundation for People with Deafblindness, already offers trainings, consultancy and cooperation with special education services all over Switzerland.

Of course the state of research in the deafblind field is not enough yet. Thanks to the Rijksuniversiteit of Groningen in the Netherlands and the Heidelberg University of Education in Germany we already have some research. But for example we still need a study about the prevalence of deafblindness in Switzerland, in order to ask for the needed resources to reach all of the children with deafblindness with competent support.

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Abstract

The term “inclusion” refers to the incorporation of a child with disabilities’ and acceptance by its peers and educators. UNESCO defines inclusion as accommodating all children to their educational surroundings, regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions. Every child has the right to education, access to information, and communication; so does a deaf child. The case of deaf children poses a risk of a deaf child becoming segregated in the process of joining a regular educational system. This is due to the child possibly being unable to equally communicate and/or participate in social activities, which can lead to the child feeling isolated. It is not possible to achieve a high-quality elementary, secondary and tertiary education without a high-quality pre-school one. Therefore, the process of inclusion encompasses all phases of a child’s education.

This work will present each step towards inclusion of a deaf child into the regular programme of “Gajnice” kindergarten, with an accent on preconditioning the inclusion, i.e., with the accent on the activities that take place before the child enters kindergarten. These activities range from the very first meeting of an expert team with the mother and the child during entry interview, through the preparation of all the participants of the educational process, to monitoring the child’s adaptation to kindergarten environment. During an initial meeting with the mother and the child, basic information on the child has been collected (peculiarities of child’s development, disabilities and specific needs) and the base for further cooperation with the parent has been established. After that, efforts were undertaken to secure a professional and well-educated interpreter of sign language; finally, this was solved by educating one of the pre-school teachers in Croatian sign language. Furthermore, cooperation with professionals in the field of inclusion of deaf children has been achieved and the members of kindergarten’s expert team, as well as pre-school teachers were skilled in working with deaf children. In addition, the mother was introduced to pre-school teacher and they arranged preparations. Honest and open communication was established between mother and pre-school teacher. Moreover, she was introduced to other parents of children from the same kindergarten group. Other parents were prepared for inclusion of a deaf child in the group by stressing them the advantages

of such an inclusion. Other children from the group were prepared for the inclusion by encouraging their sensibility for acceptance of differences, their empathy, their prosocial behaviour, their interest in alternative communication (learning signs, learning to introduce themselves by dactylology...) and by acquainting them with the culture of deaf persons. Deaf child was prepared for adaptation to kindergarten environment by visiting the kindergarten (getting to know kindergarten surroundings, children and pre-school- teacher), by communicating with its mother and by being shown photos of children's daily routine in the kindergarten (during the meals, playing, putting the toys in place...).

In the end, the course of adaptation of the deaf child to kindergarten environment will be presented.

Keywords: inclusion, deaf child, kindergarten, early and pre-school education

Sažetak

Izraz »inkluzija« odnosi se na uključivanje djeteta s invaliditetom u redovno obrazovanje i na prihvaćanje djeteta po svojim vršnjacima i odgajateljima. UNESCO definira inkluziju kao uključivanje sve djece u njihovo obrazovno okruženje, bez obzira na njihove fizičke, intelektualne, emocionalne, socijalne, jezične ili druge prilike. Svako dijete, pa tako i ono gluho, ima pravo na obrazovanje, pristup informacijama i komunikaciju. Slučaj gluhog djeteta predstavlja rizik da se ono u procesu uključivanja u redovni obrazovni sustav izdvoji. Uzrok je tome što dijete možda ne može ravnopravno komunicirati i/ili sudjelovati u društvenim aktivnostima, što može dovesti do toga da se dijete osjeća izoliranim. Nije moguće postići kvalitetno osnovno, srednje i tercijarno obrazovanje bez kvalitetnog predškolskog odgoja. Stoga proces inkluzije obuhvaća sve faze djetetovog odgoja i obrazovanja.

Ovaj će rad predstaviti svaki pojedini korak pri uključivanju gluhog djeteta u redovni program dječjeg vrtića »Gajnice«, s naglaskom na stvaranje preduvjeta inkluzije, tj. s naglaskom na aktivnosti koje se odvijaju prije nego što dijete pođe u vrtić. Te se aktivnosti kreću od prvog sastanka stručnog tima s majkom i djetetom tijekom razgovora za prijam kroz pripremu svih sudionika odgojno-obrazovnog procesa do praćenja djetetove prilagodbe okruženju vrtića. Tijekom početnog se sastanka s majkom i djetetom prikupljaju osnovni podaci o djetetu (osobitosti djetetova razvoja, invaliditet i posebne potrebe) te se uspostavlja osnova za daljnju suradnju s roditeljem. Nakon toga su poduzeti napor da se osigura profesionalni i dobro obrazovani prevoditelj znakovnog jezika; to je naposljetku riješeno tako što je jedna od odgajateljica naučila hrvatski znakovni jezik. Nadalje je ostvarena suradnja sa stručnjacima na polju inkluzije gluhe djece, a članovi su stručnog tima vrtića, kao i odgajateljice stekli vještine u radu s gluhom djecom. Pored toga se majka upoznala s odgajateljicom te su one dogovorile pripreme aktivnosti. Uspostavljena je iskrena i otvorena komunikacija između majke i odgajateljice. Štoviše, majka se upoznala s roditeljima druge djece iz iste vrtićke skupine. Ostali su roditelji bili pripremljeni za inkluziju gluhog djeteta u skupinu uz naglaske im prednosti takvog uključivanja. Ostala su djeca iz grupe pripremljena za inkluziju poticanjem njihova senzibiliteta za prihvaćanje različitosti, empatiju, prosocijalno ponašanje, zanimanje za alternativnu komunikaciju (učenje znakova, učenje predstavljanja sebe ručnom abecedom...) i upoznavanje s kulturom gluhih osoba. Gluho je dijete bilo pripremljeno za prilagodbu okruženja posjetom vrtiću (upoznavanje okoline vrtića, djece i odgajateljice), komunikacijom s majkom i gledanjem fotografija svakodnevnice rutine u vrtiću (za vrijeme obroka, igre, pospremanje igračaka na mjesto...). Na kraju ćemo predstaviti tijek prilagodbe gluhog djeteta okruženju vrtića.

Ključne riječi: inkluzija, gluho dijete, vrtić, rani i predškolski odgoj

Introduction

The term “inclusion” refers to the incorporation of a child with disabilities’ and acceptance by its peers and educators. UNESCO defines inclusion as accommodating all children to their educational surroundings, regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions. An inclusive model of education embraces a social model of disability that encompasses the rights of all children to be educated together and is supported both ethically and morally. Many countries at the World Conference on Special Needs Education held in Salamanca, Spain (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization 1994), signed the statement, which outlined that inclusive education is for all children, including children with special educational needs and/or disabilities in regular schools. Every child has the right to education, access to information, and communication; so does a deaf child.

The importance of early inclusion for deaf children

Differences between intellectual potentials of deaf children and their academic achievements are the result of their difficulty in receiving the information during the educational process (Tatković, Muradbegović & Crnčić – Brajković 2010). Scientific research has shown that deafness itself does not have a negative effect on the child’s social, emotional and cognitive abilities, but poor exposure to interaction and communication can cause problems in all areas of development. In light of these facts, one can see the importance of early inclusion of the deaf child in a systematically organized education system for raising the child and stimulating its socialization. Therefore, it is important to include deaf children into a preschool institution with other children so that they can successfully overcome difficulties in learning spoken and sign language (Ivasović 2007).

Early and pre-school age is the time when the abilities are most intensely developed and the foundations of emotional development and social identity are laid down, so it is critical for the development of a child’s personality. A holistic approach in raising children of early and preschool age should be an educational principle for securing the rights of all children. From the neuroscientific point of view, today we know that early childhood is the period of greatest sensitivity. For that reason, a stimulating environment for deaf children should be considered within the context of adopting a personalized approach to each child and parent, including multidisciplinary support (Ivasović 2007).

Recent research and experience prioritizes a new model of pedagogical-educational integration (bilingual – educational training) for the deaf over the traditional approach (Neal Mahshie 2007).

This will prepare deaf children for total inclusion in the wider society, increase their self-awareness and self-confidence, and simplify their inclusion in the working process later in the future (Tatković, Muradbegović & Crnčić-Brajković, 2010).

Challenges in inclusion of deaf children

The case of deaf children poses a risk of a deaf child becoming segregated in the process of joining a regular educational system. This is due to the child possibly being unable to equally communicate and/or participate in social activities, which can lead to the child feeling isolated. The literature concerned with inclusive education has emphasized that benefits of inclusive education for deaf children are: social interaction and contact with children with normal hearing, naturalistic access to typical linguistic and behavioral models of hearing peers, and children's social acceptance by hearing peers (Eriks-Brophy et al. 2012, according to Xie, Potmešil & Peters 2014). Nevertheless, others state that children who are deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) have many barriers to communicating, initiating and/or entering into social groups, and maintaining interactions with hearing peers, even though today they are more likely to be identified in early life (Xie, Potmešil & Peters, 2014). The successful development of deaf children depends on their ability to share experiences with hearing peers and others around them. Therefore, the social and affective outcomes for children who are D/HH in inclusive preschool education need attention.

One study compared the initiation and response skills of children with severe to profound hearing loss with those of children with typical hearing during group play in integrated preschool programs (DeLuzio & Girolametto 2011). Two groups of 12 children were matched on a number of variables and assessed for intelligence, language, speech, and social development. Outcome measures included number and type of initiation strategies, number of responses, and length of interactions. Despite poorer speech, language, and social development, there were no significant differences in initiation and response skills measured between children with severe to profound hearing loss and their matched peers. However, playmates initiated interactions less often with the children with severe to profound hearing loss and ignored their initiations more often than those of other children. Authors conclude that preschool children with severe to profound hearing loss were excluded from interactions by their playmates.

Having age-appropriate language skills did not ensure successful peer interactions (DeLuzio & Girolametto 2011). A potential explanation for this findings may be that the children with normal hearing don't have sufficient social skills (i.e., the visual communication skills such as gestures) to interact appropriately with children who are D/HH (Keating & Mirus 2003; according to Xie, Potmešil & Peters 2014). The findings from the analysis suggest that children with normal hearing need to be encouraged to interact with children who are D/HH in regular schools. When students'/future preschool teachers' were asked to rank by importance the factors influencing pedagogical work of preschool teachers in relation to the integration of a deaf child in a group within a preschool institution, about two thirds of respondents/students, more precisely 71%, ranked preparation of other children for the integration of the deaf child as the most important factor (Tatković, Muradbegović & Crnčić-Brajković 2010).

We consider this also necessary in the preschool system in terms of preparing children with normal hearing for the arrival of a deaf child.

Furthermore, in order to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing children are effectively included in early childhood and preschool programs, their language and overall development must be continuously monitored and evidenced-based developmentally appropriate practices must be used. A literature review on interactions with peers (Xie, Potmešil & Peters 2014) also suggests that peer-mediated interventions and cooperative learning methods have a place in good inclusive practice regarding deaf children. Also, important variables for successful inclusion are teacher's beliefs and behaviors in building a warm and inclusive climate for children who are D/HH.

We already mentioned the results of the research in Croatia where opinion poll was conducted on students'/ future preschool teachers' concerning their perception of the status of deaf persons in society and the integration of deaf children in regular preschool institutions on deliberate sample (Tatković, Muradbegović & Crnčić-Brajković 2010). In that study authors also found that 63% of respondents think that the most important factor for successful integration is securing cooperation with experts, members of the team which is providing support for the deaf child. Therefore, professionals must strive to work together to support all involved in inclusive practice.

In preparing each step towards inclusion of a deaf child into the regular program of "Gajnice" kindergarten we followed all of the above guidelines.

For every child, there is an official procedure before admission in kindergarten. During this procedure members of the kindergarten expert team (psychologist, educational rehabilitator, pedagogue and nurse) meet parents and children for an initial interview during which they assess the individual development needs of every child in order to provide adequate education programs. There is an official questionnaire to collect essential information about the child (information about family, medical history, needs and habits of child, like eating, sleeping etc., difficulties in development, previous treatment, motor and sensory development, communication and speech-linguistic development, social and emotional development, cognitive development and features of the child's game). Furthermore, members of the expert team can observe a child's communication and behavior during the interview. In addition, medical documentation is collected. It is very important to achieve good communication with parents because it is the basis for future cooperation. That is especially important with parents of children with disabilities.

The deaf child came with her mother to the interview with members of the kindergarten's expert team. At that time, the deaf child was 5 years and 2 months old and under multidisciplinary monitoring in "Clinic for children's diseases Zagreb". She has multiple malformations (spina bifida, ear malformations, cleft palate, facial dysmorphism) and difficulties in development. For her condition, the artificial cochlear installation and after that verbotonal rehabilitation were planned. Only recently after more medical examinations, they discovered that she has aplasia of both ears and therefore artificial cochlear installation was not possible. Till that moment, she was not included in the education of sign language. She was communicating with gestures, mimics, showing objects and reading from lips. Medical documentation shows progress in the child's development in all areas except expressive language. During the interview, she was easily interacting with

members of the expert team by using nonverbal communication. She was interested in different activities and games which were offered to her. Her behavior and features of play gave the impression of cognitive functioning in accordance with age. In communication with her mother, she was using a few signs which they created at home, which are not part standard sign language. Till that moment, the child has never been included in kindergarten or even separated from the mother. The members of the expert team proposed that the child should be included in kindergarten with a sign language interpreter. In the next steps, the proposal was approved by the City Office for Education Zagreb but unfortunately, at that time there was no available sign language interpreter. Considering that the deaf child still did not start learning sign language, the second-best option was to include her with preschool teacher-assistant who will learn sign language together with the deaf child. The advantage of including a preschool teacher is that she has professional knowledge on how to encourage social interaction among children of early and preschool age. In the end, the deaf child was included in a shortened regular program in a group of overall 27 children age between 3 and 7 with help of preschool teacher-assistant who is attending the course of sign language together with the deaf child and her mother.

The kindergarten's psychologist has contacted organizations which work in the field of deaf people issues (Croatian Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Croatian Association of Deafblind Persons DO-DIR). In cooperation with them, she was advised by experts in the field for the education of deaf children. From the literature overview, she prepared a presentation for her colleagues and preschool teachers of the kindergarten about the inclusion of a deaf child in kindergarten. In individual consultations with preschool teachers, specific steps towards the preparation of optimal conditions for inclusion of the deaf child were defined.

Preparing the deaf child and her mother for the inclusion in kindergarten

The mother and her deaf child were introduced to the preschool teacher before inclusion. The preschool teacher greeted them with a warm welcome. This first meeting was very important as the basis of a good relationship and future cooperation. It was also very important for the preschool teacher to collect more information about the deaf child (for example, which are the most important signs that child use at home). For the deaf child was also very important to get familiar with the kindergarten area. The preschool teacher prepared pictures of the children from the group in daily routine in the kindergarten (during the meals, playing, putting the toys in place...). The mother was preparing the deaf child by showing these pictures and explaining to the child what she will do in the kindergarten.

Preparing other children in the educational group

For every child, it is very important how is he accepted in a group of his peers. During the period of three weeks preschool teachers implemented in their program different activities to prepare other children of the educational group for the arrival of the deaf child. Firstly, they talked with children about differenc-

es they noticed among themselves (color of their eyes, their skin, hair, gender, clothes, different language, height, abilities - some of them can run fast, some can draw nice, etc.). Afterward, they were drawing their differences. Moreover, preschool teachers were reading to them different picture books about differences between people and animals and how is every one unique and valuable. For example, they were reading a well-known picture book called *Elmer* (McKee 1996). Elmer is an unusual colorful elephant who is trying to blend in among other elephants. Only after he has shown all his colors he realizes that he is accepted, loved and honored just as he is. Titles of other picture books were “It is great to be different” (Miklaužić & Ostović 2003), “Figaro, the cat that snored” (Baronian 2011) and “The colors of the rainbow” (Moore-Mallions 2005). The children liked these books and they were gladly participating in conversations about books afterward. Furthermore, the preschool teachers showed children pictures of different people and they asked them what differences they notice. Among them, there were also pictures of people with different disabilities. The preschool teacher talked with the children about how they can help people with disabilities. During these conversations, the children showed great empathy towards people with different disabilities. They also talked about people with hearing disabilities, how they can communicate with them and about the culture of deaf people. In addition, they showed them how they can use sign alphabet for “writing” their names and few basic signs. The children were very interested in sign alphabet and some of them learned very quickly how to “write” their name. Some of the children were using sign alphabet later while playing with friends and at home with parents. The preschool teachers placed a big poster with sign alphabet on the wall and they also presented to the children didactical games for learning sign alphabet (cards with sign alphabet on one side and letters on the other side, and memory cards with sign alphabet). In the end, the preschool teacher talked with the children about the deaf child that will soon come to the group and how they can communicate with her and help her to feel welcome in the group. The children were very curious and excited about the arrival of the deaf child.

Preparing parents of other children in the educational group

Before the arrival of the deaf child in the educational group, preschool teachers organized parents meeting. The mother of the deaf child presented her self and told them a few basic information about her child during that meeting. The preschool teacher presented all the activities which they are implementing in their work with children in the educational group as part of the preparations for inclusion of the deaf child. She also suggested how can parents help during the process of preparation (for example, by showing interest in the process of learning basic sign language and by talking positively about the deaf child in the group with their children). The kindergarten psychologist emphasized all the advantages of inclusion of the deaf child (benefits for their children from learning sign language and from developing a sensibility for accepting a person with disabilities). Other parents showed interest in sign language and asked for advice about how they can help their’s children to learn basics sign language. They were also very supportive of the mother of the deaf child. The psychologist prepared for them materials with the sign language alphabet.

Process of the deaf child's adjustment to the kindergarten

During the process of adjustment, the preschool teacher-assistant established a warm and gentle approach towards the deaf child. She was encouraging other children to include her in their play. She was trying to interpret what the deaf child wants and to mediate between her and other children and to help her to achieve her intentions. For the preschool teacher-assistant, it was very important that the deaf child feels welcomed and secured. Throughout different activities, the preschool teacher-assistant tried to encourage children to be more sensitive and to accept the deaf child. The deaf child soon established a good relationship with her preschool teacher-assistant. The deaf child was often near her preschool teacher-assistant showing her what she is doing. The preschool teacher-assistant implemented different activities to connect the deaf child with the group. For example, the game "magical mirror" in which children imitate moves and gestures from one another like a mirror. Moreover, the preschool teacher-assistant has set pictures in different parts of the room as an explanation of what the children can do and how many of them can play in that part of the room at the same time as a visual support. In addition, she has set pictures to show the daily routine of the group.

The other children were very excited about their new friend in the first few days. Many of them wanted to play with her and they were even arguing who will play with her first. They were also very sensitive and they were communicating with gestures and mimics with her.

The deaf child did not show any signs of anxiety during separation from her mother. She was very joyful and exploring all the parts of the room. She was interested in different activities, especially playing different musical instruments and dancing, clay-modulating, playing the symbolical game in a restaurant and playing with dolls. She liked to be included in group activities and respect the rules of the group. She is communicating with other children by using gestures and mimics. Sometimes other children could not understand her intentions and then she was a little bit frustrated. She was taking care of herself and she was independent (eating, self-hygiene, dressing up).

Conclusions

Our practice shows that for successful adjustment and afterward inclusion, it is important to take into account every participant of the process. Kindergarten Gajnice had positive experience in inclusion that involve preparing all members of the process: deaf child, and mother, preschool teachers, other children, their parents, professional team of kind, and experts in the field. It is recommended that in preparing and during the process of inclusive education one takes into account the importance of communication abilities and social skills of children who are deaf, responses of children with normal hearing, and the effect of stimulating environment. Quality inclusion of a deaf child in regular kindergarten encourages other children to embrace diversity it allows the deaf child to develop social skills and communication skills by interacting with peers.

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Experiences Of Sign Language Interpreters Who Interpret For Deaf And Deafblind Children in Primary And Secondary School

Petra Kuzele

Abstract

Sign language interpreters in schools are communicational professionals and they are crucial for equalizing opportunity for deaf and deaf-blind children. The aim of this study was to gain insight into the experiences of sign language interpreters who work in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia. The participants of this qualitative survey were sign language interpreters who worked or are currently working in primary and secondary school. Data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews.

The results of this research have shown that sign language interpreters are not satisfied with their salary and instability of their employment, however they emphasise personal job satisfaction. The survey also showed that the inclusion of sign language interpreters achieves inclusion of deaf and deaf-blind children. Also, these children are gaining better educational achievements. Sign language interpreters emphasise the hope that in the future the public will be informed about the existence of translators in educational system and that their status in society will improve.

Keywords: sign language interpreters, deaf and deaf-blind children, inclusion, equalizing opportunity

Sažetak

Prevoditelji u nastavi su komunikacijski profesionalci i ključna poveznica u izjednačavanju mogućnosti za gluha i gluhoslijepu djecu. Cilj ovog istraživanja bio je dobiti uvid u iskustva prevoditelja u nastavi koji prevode gluhoj i gluhoslijepoj djeci u osnovnim i srednjim školama u Republici Hrvatskoj. Sudionici ovog istraživanja su bili prevoditelji znakovnog jezika koji prevode ili su prevodili djeci u osnovnim i srednjim školama, a podaci su prikupljeni provođenjem polustrukturiranih intervjua.

Rezultati ovog istraživanja su pokazali kako prevoditelji u nastavi nisu zadovoljni obilježjima svog posla, odnosno svojom plaćom i nestabilnošću svog zaposlenja, međutim oni izražavaju osobno zadovoljstvo zbog bavljenja ovim poslom. Istraživanje je također pokazalo da se uključivanjem prevoditelja u nastavi postiže inkluzija gluhe i gluhoslijepo djece te kako ta djeca postižu bolja obrazovna postignuća. Prevoditelji u nastavi ističu nadu da će se u budućnosti javnost informirati o postojanju prevoditelja u nastavi te kako će se njihov status u društvu poboljšati.

Ključne riječi: prevoditelj u nastavi, gluha i gluhoslijepa djeca, inkluzija, izjednačavanje mogućnosti

1. INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of this paper we have one question: Who are sign language interpreters and what is their role? Salow (1981, according to Pribanić 2007) states that the purpose of interpreters is that they are communication mediators between deaf and hearing people. Pribanić (2007) states that interpreters are communication professionals who are trained to become translators, and they translate from one language to another. Sign language interpreters in schools are educated interpreters who provide translation services in education. In addition to the conventional tasks that interpreters have, which is translation, sign language interpreters who work in schools should also possess the specific skills necessary to work in education (Chafin Seal 2014). Educated sign language interpreters should equalize all information they hear in Croatian with what they translate into sign language, so that a deaf or deaf-blind student receives the full and same information as hearing children do. Research conducted with sign language interpreters in South Africa has shown that there are no barriers to including deaf children in regular classes because their cognitive abilities are the same as hearing children (Glasner & Pletzen 2012). By introducing sign language interpreters into regular schools, the Republic of Croatia moved closer to bilingual education for deaf children. For most deaf children, sign language is their mother tongue and the language they first learn, so it is important for them to be able to follow classes in sign language as well. In regular schools, this is only possible if the child has an interpreter. The Deaf Blind Union „*Dodir*“ has made a project to include two female students in regular classes. In conclusion, the support of sign language interpreter was really important. Results showed positive effect on the educational success of deaf students, on creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom and on their psychosocial development (Tarczay & Salaj 2010). There is not much literature available on experiences of sign language interpreters for deaf and deaf-blind children and we think it is important to find out what are their experiences.

2. THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research is to gain insight into the experiences of sign language interpreters who work in schools with deaf and deaf-blind children in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia.

According to the aim of this study, five research questions were defined:

1. What are the characteristics of their job?
2. What are the positive aspects of their job?
3. What are issues that sign language interpreters face in schools?
4. From the perspective of a sign language interpreters, what is their professional status in schools?
5. From their point of view, what needs to change in schools in order to make their job easier?

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Choosing a qualitative approach in research

Qualitative research is a form of research in which researchers collect and interpret data, and researchers are as well as research participants part of the research process. They focus on experiences and how individuals and groups of people shape and make sense of their experiences (Corbin and Strauss 2014). Qualitative research is often used when a topic or area is under-researched. We also use qualitative research to gain a holistic insight into the problem that we study. Considering all we have decided that qualitative research is appropriate for our research.

3.2. Participants

3.2. Research participants

In order to reach the participants, we initially contacted the Croatian Association of Deaf-Blind People *Dodir*. *Dodir* is a national, non-governmental and non-profit organization founded to facilitate the dignity and equal coexistence of the deaf and deaf-blind people in the community. We contacted them via e-mail and sent them a letter of invitation explaining the purpose of the research. We asked them for permission to forward the contacts of the sign language interpreters who would like to participate in the research. They responded positively and invited us for an informative interview.

A sample of this research is intentional. The intentional sample belongs to non-probabilistic samples (Milas 2005). Only people who agreed to forward their contact to us participated in this study. Not all people whose contacts we received participated in the survey. Three people refused to participate in the study and two who wished to participate in the research were prevented from conducting the research.

The research was conducted with 8 sign language interpreters who work with deaf and deaf-blind children in primary and secondary schools.

The population sample is homogeneous by sex and heterogeneous by other sociodemographic characteristics.

3.3. Conducting research

Interview is the most widely used method of data collection in qualitative research in the social field and

the results obtained by this method often form the basis for further research (Edwards & Holland 2013). An interview is a conversation that is usually conducted between two people in which one asks questions and the other answers them without interruption (Jamshed 2014).

The type of interview we used in this research is a semi-structured interview. During the interview, we may receive some information that we would not be able to obtain if we chose another research method. By interviewing, we can find out some information like for example, color of the voice, facial expression, pauses in speech that may be useful for research (Jamshed 2014).

Due to all of the above, we decided to have a semi-structured face-to-face and one-on-one interview so that participants would relax as much as possible and have time to answer any question in peace. One interview was conducted via Skype. The topics were previously defined. The interview was structured in such a way that in the introductory part, sociodemographic questions were asked concerning the participants themselves, then questions were asked regarding their way of learning sign language. The centerpiece included questions about their job in schools, and the interview ended with an open-ended question to give participants the opportunity to tell us anything they did not during the interview but they think it is relevant for our topic. Interviews were recorded by mobile phone and the average interview time was 60 minutes. Later, the transcripts were transcribed with minimal language editing.

3.4. Ethical aspects

We originally sent a letter of invitation to the Croatian Association of Deaf-Blind People, Dodir. In that invitation letter, we briefly explained the purpose and topic of the research. We guaranteed confidentiality, anonymized data, and emphasized the voluntariness of participating in research, in other words, respecting the principle of participant autonomy, wellbeing and non-harm (Beauchamp and Childress 2001; Smith 2005; Hewitt 2007; according to Čorkalo and Biruski 2013). To ensure voluntary participation in the study, all participants were required to sign informed consent. Informed consent is an ethical requirement for research. It informs potential research participants about the research and its right to withdraw from the research at any time (Miller et al. 2008).

3.5. Ethical dilemmas

The first ethical dilemma was how to ensure the anonymization of data. Since the research participants are sign language interpreter who work in school and there are only about twenty of them in Croatia, we could not guarantee them complete anonymization. We introduced the participants to this fact.

The second ethical dilemma concerns the multiple roles of researchers. Researcher also works as a sign language interpreter in school so her professional and research role conflicted. In research that involves an

intense relationship with participants such as in an interview, there is often an exchange of experiences, emotions and conditions that are unplanned and beyond the intent of the research goal (Smythe and Murray 2000, according to Čorkalo Biruški 2013). It was important that the researcher was aware of that.

4. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

After the research we did thematic analysis so that we can find out what are their experiences. Based on the data analysis, five topics were identified on the first research question and that is What are the characteristics of their job?; five topics were identified.

Salary dissatisfaction

The participants in the survey mostly expressed their dissatisfaction with their salary. All eight participants find that they are underpaid for the job they do.

Unpaid overtime

Participants express that they work a couple of hours overtime each week and are not paid or paid back through their days off. They should write a weekly report every week and prepare daily for classes. Although they emphasize that no one is forcing them to do so, they still feel that they are expected to come ready for classes, keep in touch with parents, and report them on everything.

Insufficiently educated sign language interpreters

Some participants believe that insufficiently educated interpreters are being hired. When describing the participants, we saw that most of them had completed only a basic course that lasts two years. After completing 4 semesters out of the existing 8, they got a job as a sign language interpreter. In other words, of the eight research participants, only one participant had all eight semesters completed.

Working without a break

Working without a break is the third topic that emerged from the first research question. Participants working with young children (grades 1-4) express that they do not have a break and that they also work during a school break because they help the child socialize and communicate with other children. Participants working with children in upper elementary or high school grades do not express this characteristic.

Employment instability

Profession of a sign language interpreter is still not regulated. First, it is not fully regulated by law, although it is partially regulated by the Rulebook on teaching assistants and professional communication mediators. Some interpreters in schools work through associations and some through city projects. Regardless of that they all work on a Contract of Work stating that they are employed only for the duration of the school year.

Second research question was „What are the positive aspects of their job?“ seven topics were identified.

Visible progress

Visible progress is the first topic we have come up with in data analysis. Sign language interpreters express that they feel happy and fulfilled when they see that their efforts have paid off and that the child that they work with has made some progress. All sign language interpreters who started working with a child who did not have an interpreter by then, expressed that progress was great. They were comparing this to the first and second semesters.

Job satisfaction

All eight participants said they were satisfied with their job as a sign language interpreter at the school. They express that they love their job and that it makes them happy and fulfilled regardless of some difficulties that they come across every day.

Satisfaction with working hours

Some participants said that they are satisfied with part-time job. That leaves them enough time for their duties and preparation for classes. Some participants work part-time at an association and part-time at school, otherwise they would not be able to work as sign language interpreter because they would be paid part-time and would not be able to support themselves.

Feeling happy about being able to work with children

Some participants said that they feel happy that they could work with children. Two participants have a Masters in Primary Education said they love working with children and that integrates two professions that they love, working with a children and working as a sign language interpreter.

Integration of deaf and deaf-blind children

Sign language interpreters note that with their arrival, children become more integrated into their class and other children no longer ignore them because they know that there is an interpreter and that they can communicate with one another. They express that the children did not know before how to approach the deaf or deaf-blind child because they were afraid that he/she would not understand them. When they see their child integrated into the class they think about that as a success.

Acceptance by teachers

Although not everyone has the experience of being accepted by professors, a part of the interpreters said that teachers accept them as equal and ask them for their opinion about a child. Part of the interpreters express that they cooperate with teachers. They are pleased to see that professors accept and value their position.

The third research question was By analyzing the data, a number of topics were identified on the third research question: What are issues that sign language interpreters face in schools?

Inadequately paid work

The first topic that answers the third research question is the opinion of sign language interpreters that they are inadequately paid for what they do. Sign language interpreters believe that the effort and education they have should be more appropriately paid. Although sign language is recognized as a language in Croatia, they still do not treat it in the same way as other foreign languages.

Lack of control

Some sign language interpreters believe that they should have had a “test lesson” by the headmaster or other professional. They believe this would help the principal and other school staff see what their job is and in what the child they work with needs support.

Insufficiently developed vocabulary

The underdevelopment of vocabulary is one of seven topics we have received in response to the third research question. All interviewees said that it was difficult to translate at the same time as a teacher speak because they often found a word that their child did not know. Because of this, they often stop and explain the word to the deaf or deaf-blind child while the professors continue to teach.

Educational neglect of deaf and deaf-blind children

Poor user knowledge is a topic that builds on the previous topic, which is the underdevelopment of vocabulary. Users have a lot of “holes” in knowledge and interpreters need to help deaf and deaf-blind child to make up for the missing knowledge.

The difficulties of translation

Interpreters say it's hard to translate everything sometimes. Croatian Sign Language and Croatian have different grammar. Also, the Croatian sign language does not have a sign for every word that exists in the Croatian language. That is why translating can often be challenging. Although we must emphasize that all the information that we hear but can be adapted to the grammar and vocabulary of the Croatian sign language can be transmitted in the Croatian sign language, this way nothing crucial will be lost through translation.

Also, successful translation often depends on the speaker who interpreters translate. If the speaker speaks quickly or unspokenly and quietly, the interpreters lose a lot of translation and fail to translate everything accurately. Such translation problems were expressed by the research participants.

Inability to translate some subjects

As logic itself dictates, some subjects are difficult if not impossible to translate into sign language. This brings us to the sixth topic of the third research question, which is the inability to translate specific subjects. Music is difficult to translate because music is an art and that is difficult to explain in words. For this reason, interpreters cannot translate an entire class of music, especially they cannot translate when listening to music examples. Participants express that they try to bring music closer to their users by various techniques (drawing, describing, pounding the pace on the table).

English and other languages are difficult to translate and the success of the translation often depends on the knowledge of the translator. In other words, if the translator does not speak English, it is difficult to expect that he or she will be able to translate the conversation into English if the professor does not translate everything s/he says. It is also the essence of learning a foreign language to learn another language. If the whole English language lesson is translated into Croatian sign language then the purpose of the course is not achieved.

Not knowing what is the job of a sign language interpreter

One of the difficulties for sign language interpreters is the general need to understand what the job of a interpreter is. Often professors expect from interpreters to do things that are not in their job description (for

example, to maintain order and peace while the professor is away in the classroom, to print something for the professor etc).

The interpreters take the role of a teacher

One of the difficulties is that interpreters are expected to explain curriculum to the children as if they were professors. The job of the sign language interpreter is only to translate to the child what the professor is saying and not to explain curriculum instead of the professor.

Impossibility to maintain professional boundaries

Interpreters say that they often cross the border and connect with the child emotionally. Because they are so involved in the child's life, often the children begin to view them as friends and the child's family as family members. This is where the interpreter needs to stay in his professional role as much as possible, because he is still a professional.

Based on the data analysis on the fourth research question „From the perspective of a sign language interpreters, what is their professional status in schools?“ and three topics were identified.

Public awareness about the existence of sign language interpreters

Society is generally not informed that there is a profession of sign language interpreter. Usually deaf and deaf-blind children have no other intellectual disabilities. They are in no way different from other children of orderly sensomotor development. They only need help with communication. Sign language interpreters are just their ears and everything else they are capable of doing.

Using the wrong terminology

Considering that some professors do not know that there exists a profession of a sign language interpreter is no wonder that the participants say that they use the wrong terminology when speaking, so they call them an assistant or a teacher instead of a interpreters. Each participant stated that it was sometimes called incorrectly. More than the wrong terminology, they are disturbed by the fact that professors and other school staff and society in general do not see the difference between assistants and sogn language interpreter. Sign language interpreter should be a person who knows sign language, while assistants in most cases do not need any additional knowledge to be assistants.

Not accepting sign language interpreters as part of the school's work collective

Sign language interpreters are not school staff, so some of the participants emphasize that they are bothered by the feeling that professors do not view them as equal and do not treat them as colleagues.

The fifth research question was : „From their point of view, what needs to change in schools in order to make their job easier?“ And based on data analysis, six topics were identified.

Provide education for teachers

They all agreed that it would help them educate teacher about what a sign language interpreter's job is and how to work with a deaf child. It often happens that teachers are unprepared to work with a deaf student in the classroom and do not know how to behave when there is a sign language interpreter along with that deaf student.

Provide additional training for sign language interpreters

Sign language interpreters emphasize that they need additional education, so this has emerged as one of the topics that answers the fifth research question. Sign language interpreters say that a basic 2-year course did not prepare them sufficiently for translation at school. They say that volunteering and communication with the deaf and the deaf-blind people have helped them more. One of the things they hope to change is that they will have the opportunity to improve themselves. Although they say that they always show them all the signs in the association in which they work and that they have the support of the association, they also organize sign language learning workshops once a week, but they still want to improve themselves as interpreters.

Encourage connecting of a sign language interpreters

Research participants say that when dealing with problems as a form of support, it would be good for interpreters to connect and share their experiences. They find it easiest to understand someone doing their job. They also claim that it is easier for them to open up to another translator because the Translator Code restricts them from speaking about their users. They believe that they mutually can give and receive from a interpreter the best advice.

Supervision

In addition to the previous topic, the topic of supervision has emerged in data analysis. Translators believe it

would be helpful for them to be directed by a supervisor. They would not want a supervisor to be someone who sets themselves up to be above them. They would like someone to listen and direct them and help them solve problems they have with users.

Additional teaching aids

Participants who have children with visual and hearing impairment say that it might be helpful for them to have some additional materials to help them with their work. Participants sometimes spend their resources (time and money) so they create their own materials to work with customers.

Regulation of a sign language interpreters working status

As a final topic, the analysis of the fifth research question is the desire of translators to become permanent employees of the school. Work is currently underway to adopt the proposal. Translators would like to have a more secure job and the right to be employed throughout the year. If that proposal is adopted, they hope it will increase their pay.

4. DISCUSSION

Educated sign language interpreters and the services they provide are a new phenomenon in the educational environment. An educated sign language interpreter in schools must have the skills to work in educational institutions (Chafin Seal 2014).

The sign language interpreter is a key link in equalizing opportunities for the deaf and the deaf-blind children. They are communication professionals, bilingual and bi-cultural mediators who need to be experts in at least two languages and need to know at least two cultures. Sign language interpreters need to translate everything they hear, and if they translate to deaf-blind people, they have to translate everything that they hear and see. Translation is not easy. In order for a person to be a good interpreter, they need to be versatile and need a high level of concentration in order to be good at their job (Tarczay 2006).

Job satisfaction is the attitude of the individual towards the job he is doing and the overall work situation (Šverko 1991, according to Proroković and Miliša 2009).

In the 1990s, current research into the working values of the inhabitants of transition countries was ongoing. The results show that work values have changed and that people attach more importance to good earnings and job security (Maslić-Seršić et al. 2005, according to Proroković and Miliša 2009). This research has shown that interpreters are unhappy with their salary and that they feel they are underpaid for the work they

do. More and more users want professional interpreter with excellent sign language knowledge and an ethical approach. In order to achieve this, interpreters need to be educated and then appropriately paid to stay in the profession (Tarczay and Pribanić 2014). Tarczay and Pribanić (2014), in their paper, suggest that the system of payment for sign language interpreters' services is regulated at the national level and that their salary is a reflection of the respect for the profession of sign language interpreters on the one hand, and of the deaf people who are entitled to quality translators.

In their research, Proroković and Miliša (2009) obtained the results according to which the employed persons most rated the importance of decent personal income and job security. According to the Rulebook on teaching assistants and professional communication mediators Art. 7 states that translators in teaching are employed for a fixed period of time, up to the end of the academic year (Ordinance on teaching assistants and professional communication intermediaries, OG, 68/2018 Art. 7, para. 3). After the end of the academic year, interpreters are dismissed and then re-employed with the start of the new academic year, so it is no surprise that they express concerns about job instability.

Due to the characteristics of interpreters work in Croatia (low salaries, unpaid overtime, job instability), it happens that under-educated interpreters are hired because quality translators quit and take up another job. In schools throughout the United States during the 1980s and early 1990s, the involvement of educated sign language interpreters began before their professional training was required. Consequently, their effectiveness was less than effectiveness of educated translators in some other languages (Chafin Seal 2014). We could say that this happened in Croatia as well, because there is no school for sign language interpreter but only a course.

The existence of under-qualified interpreters is a reflection of the lack of control and insight into the quality of the interpreters' work (Tarczay and Pribanić 2014). Course in Dodir lasts 4 years, or 8 semesters, but most of our research participants have only completed the basic course for two years. This research also showed that the interpreters themselves felt that it would be desirable to have more control from school. Their suggestion was that they have a trial clock to observe their work. In their opinion, this would be a positive thing, as it would allow professors and principals to see what is the job of a interpreter and in what all deaf children need support. It may be difficult to see it all in one hour, but if there is open communication between all the actors involved then progress can be made.

Sign language interpreters are one of the most successful models of communication support aimed at ensuring positive learning outcomes for deaf and deaf-blind children (Tarczay and Salaj 2010). The lack of education of sign language interpreters, this research has shown that interpreters see the progress that has been made in their work. We will give one example of good practice that is consistent with the results of this research. Educated translators began to be used in Croatia fifteen years ago, and at that time the Croatian Association of Deaf-Blind People, Dodir, began a project of integrating two female students into mainstream schools. The project was successfully completed in 2006/2007. years. This has shown that the support of interpreters has had a positive effect on the educational achievement of deaf students, on creating a positive at-

mosphere and on their psychosocial development. As far as educational success is concerned, there has been great progress in knowledge, especially in the Croatian language (Tarczay and Salaj 2010). This research did not go so thoroughly as to examine the positive outcomes, but according to the subjective assessment of the respondents the progress is significant and the children have achieved better educational attainment since they have sign language interpreter.

Another problem that this research has raised is the difficulty in translating and the inability to translate certain subjects. The examples cited by the participants concerned musical, physical and foreign languages. If the sign language interpreter does not know a foreign language, it will be very difficult to translate since translation involves a very good knowledge of at least three languages (Croatian, Croatian sign language, English, Latin, etc.).

Research has shown that interpreters often take on the role of a teacher, because it happens that teachers do not know exactly what the role of a interpreter is, and so interpreters are expected to do their part of a job. Sometimes interpreters have a dual role, so they take on the role of teacher and further clarify the material for their student. Interpreters are never hired to act as a teacher's assistant, and it is important for the teacher to retain the role of primary authority (Wilcox et al. 1990, according to Pribanić 2007).

This research has shown that deaf and deaf-blind children have underdeveloped vocabulary and that there is educational neglect of users. Namely, the language is most easily adopted through an auditory pathway in early childhood, while deaf children adopt it through visual means, which makes it difficult to adopt. Deaf children often have less developed vocabulary than their hearing peers, are disgrammatical, do not know sufficiently the case morphology, have problems in the syntax and use of verb tenses (Avelini 2006; Jelić 2001; Kobašlić 2006; Margetić 2007; Pribanić 2001; Radić 2006; according to Pribanić 2007). A study that examined the understanding and production of passive sentences in deaf children between the ages of 9 and 18 found that more than half of the respondents understood those sentences, but less than 50% of them knew how to construct those sentences accurately. Research participants showed low scores in sentences in which the shopkeeper was omitted, slightly higher scores in non-verbal sentences, and highest scores in non-verbal passives (Power and Quigley 1973, according to Pribanić 2007). A study by Pribanic (2007) showed that for deaf children the main problem is not deafness or communication. The main problem is literacy, reading comprehension and writing skills, linguistic competence and the related level of education (Pribanić 2007). Also, research has shown that deaf children of deaf parents who have a sign language adopted as a first language show better developed, psycho-social skills and reading and writing skills in a second, dominant language. Also, their academic achievement is higher (Tarczay 2006). Denmark and Sweden introduced bilingual education for deaf children in the 1980s as they came to the realization that full participation in society could be ensured through multilingualism and excellent education through two accessible languages, sign language and good literacy in the majority language (Mahshie 2007).

Bilingual education has not been introduced in Croatia, but it is working to integrate hearing impaired children into regular classes. Educational integration of hearing impaired children in Croatia began in 1980

when the Education and Primary Education Act was passed. This law made it possible to create legal pre-conditions for integration (Radovančić 1994). This research has shown that interpreters believe that because of the communication support they receive, students are able to integrate into their classroom and school. Research on the impact of deaf children's integration on academic achievement shows that hearing impaired children achieve better educational outcomes and higher levels of language competence than regular peers in specialized schools (Kobašlić and Pribanić 2009). We mentioned earlier two female students who were integrated into high schools. Jurlic (2013) wrote a paper detailing the interaction of one of these two female students. In her paper, she describes the positive aspects of integration over the past four years, such as: developing solidarity with students and developing awareness of diversity, acquiring new knowledge primarily of sign language, new experiences for teachers, and introducing alternative ways of monitoring and assessment (Jurlić 2013). The integration of deaf and deaf-blind children has achieved good results, and for this reason it needs to be supported and worked on to be even more successful.

In the integration of deaf children, besides sign language interpreters, the educational staff of the school also contribute. For interpreters, the relationship with professors and the acceptance by professors is important. A study conducted by Bosnar and Bradarić-Jončić (2008) examined the views of educational staff on the integration of deaf and hard of hearing children, sign language, and educated translators in mainstream educational institutions. The study involved 449 educational staff up to 25 years of service. The study found that educators have a positive attitude towards the integration of deaf and hard of hearing children. They are not considered less intelligent or cognitively subordinate to hearing students. Educators encourage the development of sign language and find it useful for deaf and hard of hearing children. As this research has shown, teachers are not taught how to work with deaf children, or what adjustments are needed. 40% of teachers said they would be prepared to attend a one-year specialist study related to the education and rehabilitation of deaf and hard of hearing students. This research also confirms the result obtained in this research and that it is necessary to work on education of teachers in order to be in opportunities to work well with deaf, hard of hearing and deaf children. The inclusion of educated translators was not seen by educational staff as something that would raise the quality of education of deaf and hard of hearing students. This research has yielded conflicting results. On the one hand, part of the participants expressed that teachers accept them and see their importance, and on the other hand, part of the participants said that they felt that teachers did not accept them and did not look at them as part of a working collective.

The study, entitled "Assumptions for the professionalization of sign language translators for the deaf and deaf-blind," examines the attitudes of deaf, deaf and deaf-blind people towards sign language translators, or their language competences, ethics and linguistic competences. In Croatia, sign language interpreters are called also expert communication brokers and translators. There is no unanimous opinion and attitude on how to call them. Research has shown that deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind people prefer the term sign language interpreter (Tarczay 2010). This research has shown that sign language interpreters are often called teaching assistants. The reason may also lie in the fact that the public is not informed about the existence of sign language interpreters in school, so they are ignorantly called teaching assistants. The participants of this research express their hope that in the future the situation will improve and that the public will be acquainted with the profession of a interpreter in teaching and that their status will be regulated.

As something that could help them in the future, interpreters, besides educating the teachers we have already written about, translators emphasize supervision. Supervision is a form of support for professionals working in the field of education. Supervision protects mental health, enhances professional competences and improves the quality of service provided to users (Kusturin 2007). Supervision can be done individually or in a group. Supervision is conducted by a supervisor who is not a member of the organization where the experts work or is not competent in the field. Supervision helps professionals receive support and relief, critically consider their actions, and thus improve their competence and maintain mental health despite stress at work (Kusturin 2007). In addition to supervision, participants point out that it would help them to connect more with each other because they find it easier to share experiences with people doing the same job. They think that talking to “colleagues” would help them because they may have experienced some similar experiences as them and can give them advice.

What this research has shown and what we have decided to put to the end of the debate about the research results is the result and something that each interpreter who took part in the research pointed out, that he likes to do his job and that he feels personal satisfaction with the job of the sign language interpreter in school.

5. CONCLUSION

This research wanted to gain insight into the sign language interpreters' experiences to deaf and deaf-blind children in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia. Sign language interpreters are communication professionals and they are an important link for equalizing opportunities for deaf and deaf-blind people. Although their perspective is often overlooked, it is certainly important. Researches shown that the involvement of a sign language interpreter is necessary and can be a predictor of successful children's education. This research has shown that with the arrival of sign language interpreter, deaf children achieve better educational achievement and become better integrated into the school community. We think this is a significant result because it shows that sign language interpreters in school are important to deaf and deaf-blind children. With the support of sign language interpreter, children achieve better results that they would probably not be able to achieve if they did not have a interpreter in classes because they would not be able to follow the classes themselves.

The school should work to prepare teachers for working with deaf and deaf-blind children, as teachers play an important role in the successful education of children. This research has shown that not only the public is not informed about what a sign language interpreter's job is, but professors are often not informed about what their job is. This sometimes leads to expecting interpreters to do their part of the work, for example, to explain teaching content. That is not the job of a sign language interpreter. The job of a sign language interpreter is to translate everything he hears. Participants in our research pointed out that it would help them to educate and prepare teachers to work with deaf children who have an interpreter with them.

The results of the research showed that most sign language interpreters completed only the basic sign language course that lasts 2 years, while the entire course for the interpreter lasts 4 years. Some of the participants stated that they were considered to be insufficiently educated for the job of sign language interpreter in school. In the literature, or in other studies, we have seen that the situation is not better in the rest of the world. Numerous studies have shown that the education of sign language translators is often deficient. The education of sign language interpreter needs to be addressed, as deaf and deaf-blind children need well-educated interpreters to be able to participate in classes equally..

The research showed that sign language interpreters are underpaid for the work they do. This result matches the results of other studies. One of the prerequisites to ensure that sign language interpreters remain in school is higher earnings. In addition to higher earnings, sign language interpreters emphasize that they would like their work to be more stable in the future so that they are employed throughout the year and not just during the school year. In the current situation, sign language interpreters are employed from the beginning of the school year, and after the end of the same school year they are fired and re-employed at the beginning of the new school year.

We believe that in the future the public will become more informed about existence of a sign language interpreters and their importance in the education of deaf and deafblind children, and we hope that they will work to regulate, or improve, the status of sign language interpreters in society.

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Darja Pajk, OTs

European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH)

Abstract

EFHOH is a non-profit European non-governmental organisation consisting of national associations of/for people with hearing loss formed in 1992. Its focus is on the European Union, the Members of the European Parliament and other European Institutions. Our priorities include: Implementing the European Accessibility Act (EAA) in the EU; Improving access to hearing aids, cochlear implants, assistive listening devices (ALDs), communication support; and implementing the UN CRPD in all the member states of the European Union.

In our presentation, we will focus on Article 24 and explore how conventions manifest into practice, what kind of experiences have Hard of Hearing people had in some European countries regarding educational processes.

Article 24 grants access for HoH people to participate in the education process on an equal basis with others. Not only in the general school systems, but also in every educational system later in life. The question follows:

Why is Article 24 not respected although it has been adopted?

Another question that arises is: Do people with a hearing loss or parents of children with a hearing loss or people who work with them, truly understand the problems and know about the different possibilities that exist? In addition, are they even able to utilize all the new possibilities? Are they able to learn about all of them? Are they able to constantly monitor the new technological developments and learn the new skills that are needed to use them?

When we think about Article 24 and the various possibilities, it is also necessary to understand the impact of hearing loss on the lives of HoH people and their reactions to their hearing loss in different situations in everyday life. We need to realise that hearing loss does not only mean you are unable to hear but that it is often accompanied by more problems, especially in the beginning.

Moreover, it is essential that the HoH community asks themselves who they are, what do they want in their lives and what are they prepared to do?

It is crucial to understand one's own limits and accept them.

The term "QoL" is used to evaluate the general well-being of individuals. A considerable agreement exists regarding the evaluation of QoL as multidimensional: physical well-being, material well-being, social well-being, and emotional well-being. It has been documented by several authors that hearing loss is an increasingly important public health problem that has been linked to a reduced QoL as it can impair the exchange of information thus significantly impacting daily life.

Key words: *hard of hearing, hearing loss, Article 24, education, possibilities*

Sažetak

EFHOH je europska neprofitna nevladina organizacija koja se sastoji od nacionalnih udruga osoba oštećenog sluha odnosno za osobe oštećenog sluha, osnovany 1992. godine. Fokus joj je na Europskoj uniji, članovima Parlamenta EU i drugih institucija EU. Naši su prioriteti: provedba Europskog akta o pristupačnosti (EAA) u EU-u; povećanje pristupačnosti slušnih pomagala, kohlearnih implantata, pomoćnih uređaja za slušanje (ALD), komunikacijske podrške; i provođenje Deklaracije UN-a o osobama s invaliditetom u svim državama članicama Europske unije.

U našem izlaganju usredotočit ćemo se na članak 24 i istražiti ćemo kako se konvencije manifestiraju u praksi, kakva su iskustva osoba oštećenog sluha u nekim europskim zemljama u pogledu obrazovnih procesa.

Članak 24 priznaje pristupačnost osobama s invaliditetom u sudjelovanju u obrazovnom procesu ravnopravno s drugima. Ne samo općenito u sustavu školstva, već i u svakom obrazovnom sustavu kasnije u životu. Slijedi pitanje:

Zašto se članak 24 ne poštuje iako je usvojen?

Drugo pitanje koje se nameće jest: Razumiju li ljudi s oštećenjem sluha ili roditelji djece s oštećenjem sluha ili ljudi koji rade s njima uistinu probleme i znaju li za različite postojeće mogućnosti? Jesu li, osim toga, uopće u mogućnosti iskoristiti sve te nove mogućnosti? Jesu li sposobni naučiti o svima njima? Jesu li sposobni neprestano pratiti novi tehnološki razvoj i naučiti nove vještine koje su potrebne da bi ih se koristilo?

Kada razmišljamo o članku 24. i raznim mogućnostima, nužno je razumjeti i utjecaj gubitka sluha na život osoba oštećena sluha i njihove reakcije na gubitak sluha u različitim situacijama u svakodnevnom životu. Moramo shvatiti da gubitak sluha ne znači samo da niste u stanju čuti, već da ga često prati više drugih problema, posebno u početku.

Nadalje, ključno je da se zajednica osoba oštećenog sluha zapita tko su, što žele u svojim životima i što su spremni učiniti?

Ključno je razumjeti vlastite granice i prihvatiti ih.

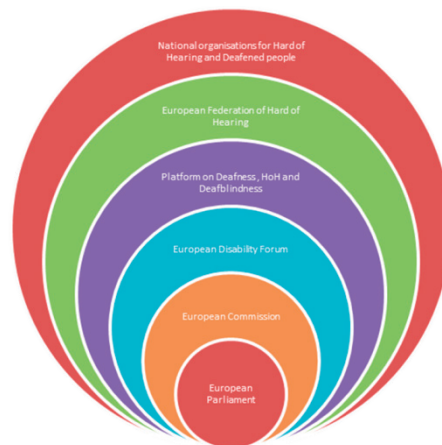
Izraz "kvaliteta života" (QoL) koristi se za procjenu opće dobrobiti pojedinaca. Postoji značajno slaganje u vezi vrednovanja kvalitete života kao višedimenzionalne: fizičko blagostanje, materijalno blagostanje, socijalno blagostanje i emocionalno blagostanje. Nekoliko je autora dokazalo da je gubitak sluha sve važniji javnozdravstveni problem koji je povezan sa smanjenom kvalitetom života jer može narušiti razmjenu informacija i značajno utjecati na svakodnevni život.

Ključne riječi: naglušost, gubitak sluha, članak 24, obrazovanje, mogućnosti

EFHOH – the view on CRPD in practice

EFHOH was formed in 1993 by HoH and Deafened people to better advocate for an accessible Europe and influence legislation. It is now a strong non-profit organisation comprising national associations of/for people with a hearing loss and their most important aim is to ensure that decisions at the European level concerning persons with hearing loss are taken with and by Hard of Hearing people. This is reflected in the motto: “Nothing about us without us”.

We can also see EFHOH as a bridge between the political bodies of the European Parliament and the Hard of Hearing associations in 23 European countries that advocate together to remove barriers and create a more inclusive and accessible Europe.



The aim of EFHOH is a Europe where Hard of Hearing People can live without barriers and have an equal opportunity to participate on all levels of European society.

With close cooperation on different levels, there are possibilities to exchange practices and experiences. EFHOH works to connect countries to different possibilities around Europe and drafted important documents to benefit HoH people such as a call for the European governments to guarantee access to quality hearing technologies. This is access to opportunity. Access to all quality hearing technologies also means teaching and learning how to use different technologies.

EFHOH also cooperates with the European Disability Forum (EDF) and other partners to raise awareness and support the needs of Hard of Hearing people. Cooperation with Hearing Aid Professionals and Hearing Instrument Manufacturers, The WHO and other expert groups such as the ITU means an important impact on the quality of life for the Hard of Hearing in Europe.

One of the important tasks is to draw attention to the implementation of the UN CRPD, which provides a high level of awareness, but the question has been raised: how do individual states actually understand equality between people and what they are able to do? The 28 Member States of the European Union (EU)

have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). Even though many countries ratified UN CRPD, there are unfortunately so many stories of concern and the enduring frustration of the many millions of Europeans who continue to be unjustly excluded from society and the legal systems that are supposed to protect them. In the survey made by EFHOH in 2016, 72.22% of those surveyed said that they felt their rights were only partially met by their country as some members didn't know services such as STT or loops existed. But in many countries, they are not available.

The EU acceded to the UN CRPD in December of 2010. By concluding the UN Convention, the EU is committed to ensuring and promoting the full realisation of all human rights for all persons with disabilities through the adoption of new legislation, policies, programmes and the review of existing measures. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognises the right to an inclusive education for all persons with disabilities which means education without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity. State parties need to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning.

EFHOH is keen to work together with organisations across the EU in order to guarantee fundamental human rights and involvement in the legislation that seeks to protect the disabled and Hard of Hearing people.

Although EFHOH is an organisation that pivots to adults, it knows the impact of a good school system on the development and lifelong quality of life of an individual. The experiences of members who have been involved in the different educational systems across Europe show that despite all the information, there is still a lot of unknown areas concerning hearing loss.

In the last few decades, more and more effort has been put into strengthening the inclusion of children with a disability in mainstream schools. A shift in perception is taking place, where it is accepted that not only the hearing loss itself is holding a child back, but an insufficient environment as well. It is on us to create such an environment that every child can reach its full potential. New technical developments, as well as research support, expedite this process. However, funding is essential and cannot be ignored in order to see this development continue. The rapid change and improvement of technology have many advantages; however, also tracking change and managing technology in the classroom presents a challenge for those who support the child (Geers et al. 1995; Archbold et al. 2008b) during his or her educational process.

On the other hand, the specific needs of different disabilities must be known. It must also be understood that it is extremely difficult for disabled children to accept other disabilities and that there is an unrealistic expectation that children will be tolerant and understandable towards each other. Unfortunately, multiple diagnoses are common and they may also be difficult to identify. Many children who are congenitally deaf and hard of hearing face additional challenges related to one or more neurodevelopmental or related disabilities. (Roush, Holcomb, Roush, & Escobar 2004; Wiley 2012; Wilson & Roush 2012). It is necessary for children with such complex problems to have special educational systems that can offer support, but on the other hand, children who have only the diagnosis of hearing loss can be very successful in mainstream schools. So

we need a very inclusive society, this we can achieve through continuous education, awareness, and legislation such as the CRPD, the Accessibility Act, and other similar legislation. Raising awareness is precisely where organisations of people with disabilities play an important role.

The online survey “Educational Services for Deaf Children in Europe”, is divided into 20 countries and includes 231 participants with different levels of hearing loss and the different technologies they use. The full range of hearing loss was represented with 154 (65%) described as having a profound hearing loss and 160 (68%) using at least one cochlear implant. Children were educated in a variety of provision, with 68% receiving their education in mainstream schools. 155 (65%) of children were described as using only Spoken language in education, 64 (27%) using Spoken language with Sign, and 18 (8%) using only Sign language.

43% of respondents reported that their child did not receive specialist support from a Teacher of the deaf and 37% did not receive Speech and Language therapy. Over one third of respondents were not happy with the level of support their child received in education.

These results are relevant to the information needed to adapt the space and educate people who have a good knowledge of the technology and can understand the need for a good technical adaptation of the space. It is clear that deaf (or HoH) children are increasingly being educated in mainstream schools (Geers, Tobey, Moog, & Brenner 2008; Uziel et al. 2007a). Given the continued development of technology, the trend is likely to continue for deaf and hard of hearing children attending primary schools where there is no specialist offered (Antia, Jones, Reed, & Kreimeyer 2009). But from practice, there is information that teachers in local schools do not have enough knowledge on different the didactics and use of different methods in ordinary teaching, which means that HoH pupils are left behind if they do not have specific help from professionals or very good support at home.

The results of the survey show us also that it is necessary to understand that there is a need to improve accessibility by promoting the understanding of technological accessibility and its use. However, with the involvement of children and later adults, despite hearing loss, in educational processes, a high level of awareness, understanding, and acceptance of adjustment needs is required. Unfortunately, accessibility is often disregarded and that leads to the isolation of individuals.

But how do people describe their view on education?

“I am very happy that I was mainstreamed (placed in a general education classroom with able-bodied students). I was able to excel in classes that offered adequate support, understanding, and accommodations such as captioning on videos and written exams.” (Bong 2019)

“From Danish interviews, we know how much it means to meet others with HL and to be able to identify with others who are ,like yourself“” (Poulsen 2019)

The differences are also between education for children at the beginning of school tend to have more professional support than later in life, and adults who are usually without it. But this extra support is often not professional but just somebody extra hired in. (Poulsen 2019)

In addition, it should be understood that the educational process of later life as a high school, college or lifelong learning poses additional challenges for the Hard of Hearing increasingly complex language and concepts, poor sound conditions, greater diversity of teachers and increased use of teamwork (RNID 2008; Wheeler et al. 2009).

“What I see in Denmark is, that the HoH pupil/student keeps meeting new and not professional teaching staff when moving to a new level in education.” (Poulsen 2019)

“During my school years, there was no accessibility in Poland except the ability to sit near a teacher and ask him to repeat. My classmates were also very helpful with the notes.” (Best 2019)

“Experiences were from teachers in that refused to accommodate me and would say “I’m not treating you any differently than the other students.” This meant that access to information or the ability to participate was made much more difficult or denied.” (Bong 2019)

“When we talk about education, the family in Netherlands can decide if their child shall go to special education, but they also have the possibility that the Hard-of-Hearing child can participate in regular education, but with technical support, a hearing system or an extra teacher or speech-to-text support in the class. This is in education, but it’s the same at work. Hard-of-Hearing people have the same possibilities in the labour market. They can do all the jobs that they like to do sometimes with speech-to-text support.” (Bobeldijk 2019)

“In Denmark, it is not possible to have STT in ordinary school.” (Poulsen 2019)

However, this is a never-ending process and ongoing work is needed to raise awareness of the need for environmental adaptation in order to ensure that persons with disabilities are included in the environment in the most equitable way.

The European Accessibility Act is a landmark agreement reached after a decade-long campaigning by the European Disability Movement.

The Act is a significant step in the journey of making the EU fully accessible for persons with disabilities. But there is again the question if countries in Europe respect it and also if people know about it.

“But there are also European countries where there are not so many speech-to-text reporters. Lots of countries don’t know about the possibilities related to respeaking and velotype. Most Hard of Hearing people like to speak and don’t like to use sign language, but they need some extra support and that can be speech-to-text. For us, it’s important that there are more speech-to-text reporters so that more Hard of Hearing people can use it in education or at work, etc. (Bobeldijk 2019)

“It is not just a question about more STTreporters. It is also a question about a higher quality of STT.” (Poulsen 2019)

Nowadays, there is a lot of opportunities for electronical adjustment, especially for people with hearing loss, these are high-tech technical aids that require a degree of understanding of the performance of the connectivity. For good technical aids, without the proper knowledge, it is of no use. However, it should also be kept in mind that employees who are involved in the adaptation of the environment must understand and follow the warnings of users, but unfortunately, this is too often ignored. It is also necessary to understand, that constantly monitoring technological possibilities and learning new skills are in fact impossible. This is a very good point! Maybe good to explain more... such as: if we have to concentrate on learning new technologies all the time, this takes effort from the actual learning process in our education.

At the same time, users need constant support and possibilities to educate themselves about new and current offerings. But again, this takes time which is not always easy. It is often forgotten that people with disabilities need much more energy than people with no special needs to participate with ease in everyday life and that in most cases they do not have better opportunities than others. In any case, the limitations that they face also affect the psychological aspects concerning the acceptance of their life. And often there is insufficient psychological support and monitoring. Because again, it is necessary to understand whether the staff working with the disabled population are truly empathetic and actually understand the problem or just feel that they understand.

“Going to school with hearing loss can be tough. From listening fatigue to keeping track of listening technology, to dealing with less-than-ideal classroom settings, hearing loss can present several barriers to education” (Doty 2019).

“I only discovered accessibility later in lifelong education when I trained as a tutor. With a small class of 10 students, patient tutor and FM system which made sure I never missed a word from my tutor and colleagues. Access to captioning has definitely given me a boost of confidence to participate in important meetings and to achieve full potential during training I had. I have taken part in training where remote captioning was available as well as speech to text reporter supporting me directly in the room, without it I would find it very tiring to participate.” (Best 2019)

“I hate using the phone. I can hear good but still requires captions. When I first got hired, my employer was happy to help me install my CaptionCall at my desk. I told them it would be helpful for me to be productive.

This made my job easier. All it takes is to explain what's available.” (social media)

“In Sweden, we have a great team named Municipal Act that says that those who have a disability have the right to participate as everyone else on their terms. I can tell them that I want to have hearing loops in all rooms as I stay or I want to have sign language interpreters. It depends entirely on what I feel most comfortable in.” (Draklander 2018)

“Whilst my new employers were happy to organise any support I needed, neither of us knew what was available in the highly sensitive environment I was now working in. We tried notetakers, volunteer scribes, on-site palantypists, and even frantically scribbling on post-it notes. After six months, I was introduced to Lipspeaker UK and found that lipspeaking works best for me.” (Wight 2019)

“I am now using these hearing aids via Bluetooth with my mobile phone to stream phone calls. I also have the ability to use my hearing aids to link to the TV so it can pick up the audio output and stream straight into my hearing aids! This enables me to get better enjoyment via the surfink application. I can also connect to my tablet to play music through my hearing aids without having to put headphones on. And of course, I am able to enjoy a better television experience without annoying my wife by having it too loud!” (Clive 2018)

“Assistive Listening Systems — not working I always approach the technicians asking them if they can help me. I always try not to put it as a complaint. But it often happens, that a technician will tell me, it works perfectly. Maybe could be my HA empty battery or my HAs are not working properly, (as if I do not know the differences in the different sounds when something is not right) and if I persist that something is not working, I can get the answer that the technician does not have the time to do it or it is not his job. But such a technician decides on behalf of me that he has the right to decide if I should have access to participation. He obviously thinks he has the right to discriminate against me. Within the profession of audiology, we must expect fully qualified technicians and also that they respect UN CRPD (and know about UN CRPD).” (Poulsen 2019)

“MyLink/Roger pen users out there? I'm having some technical issues here. I'm trying to set my MyLink up, and every time I connect it to the Roger Pen, it connects for about 5-10 seconds. Then it beeps 3 times, the Roger Pen LED flashes red, and it disconnects. I have no idea if the issue is the roger pen or the mylink. Both have been charged.” (social media)

“Can anyone tell me if it's possible to use my iPhone as a TTY device? I want to be able to see captions on my phone when I call my doctor's office. Do I have to buy a separate TTY device to do that?” (social media)

It is also necessary to understand the impact of hearing loss on the lives of HoH people and their reactions to their hearing loss and different situations in everyday life. We need to realise that hearing loss does not only

mean you are not able to hear, but it is also often accompanied by more problems, especially at the beginning.

However, one thing is accessibility at a broader level, another and also very important is realistically accepting the state of the options that an individual has at her/his disposal. Often, expectations are too high, and the consequences of that are reflected in the emotional level and, consequently, the need for psychological help for the individual or his micro-environment.

“When I’m in a meeting with more than 20 people I have always a speech-to-text reporter, or interpreter, with me. Here in The Netherlands, it’s easy to do that because there is a local large group of well educated speech-to-text reporters. But the main important thing is that you can participate in society on all levels.” (Bobeldijk 2019)

“I went to a great conference today. It was riveting and I was hooked on pretty much every word. And then I got home and collapsed on the sofa. I’m not just tired, I’m shattered. I’ve had to turn my ears off to rest in silence and my eyes are burning...When I was younger, I was a little embarrassed to be so tired all the time. I would force myself to go out and be busy...all I wanted to do was crawl under the sofa and nap...” (Noon 2013)

“I got molds yesterday. Now I just feel like my ears are plugged and can’t hear anything. The only way I have been able to hear with them is if someone is standing behind me facing the microphone. I tried changing settings like listening straight ahead and all-around mode but neither worked better...any suggestions? I have low tone loss”. (social media)

“I work in an office and there are typically four of us with our own desks. The space is quite large and noisy. Today I was on the phone with a gentleman trying to listen to him to get information -... talking quite loud to my rightthe music was playing loudly with speakers above my head while our dispatcher was trying, 4 times, to get my attention He was very angry after the call and couldn’t believe I didn’t hear him calling me with all of the surrounding noise! I just felt as if I am a failure because with all that noise I couldn’t hear him and it made realize that my hearing is a problem. I could just cry and don’t want to work there anymore.” (social media)

“I had always wanted to become a vet, from the age of five, because I love animals. However, the environment I lived in made me insecure. There was nobody but me who believed I could make my dream come true. No, because these studies require high-level, professional communication, which I was short of, and no because there was the question: how will this man use a stethoscope? I asked a professor at the veterinary university about my plan and his answer was that it was out of the question, as this profession was too dangerous for me.

Everyone wanted to dissuade me from my plans, yet I handed in my application. And though I was not accepted first, the following year, having already two language exam passes, I finally succeeded.” (Mikesy 2018)

“My son is 12. He has profound hearing loss in both ears. A cochlear in one and aid in the other. He is usually such a positive happy go lucky kid. Recently he’s been diagnosed with depression. He’s been angry frustrated lashing out hitting things hurting himself disrespectful to teachers refuses to do work and shuts down at times completely. He has never had these issues. The doctor thinks it’s because he is starting to feel extremely isolated. He has no friends at school but he’s friendly with everyone. It’s hard for him to do more than one on one conversations bc of his hearing loss.” (social media HLC)

“I was diagnosed at age 12. I was home from school for 2-3 months left completely deaf due to a virus. It was very difficult going back to school. I hated school because of the isolation I felt. Kids can be very cruel at that age and beyond. My mom was not comforting to me.” (social media HLC)

“At work, I can really struggle in some meetings. I need to sit in the right place to catch all the conversation. Larger meetings and training are another challenge. Another difficulty arises when speakers do not use the microphones provided. Also, many conference venues have a hearing loop – this transmits sound directly into certain types of hearing aid. If the microphones provided are not used, the benefit of the loop is lost.” (Walsh 2019)

“I need communication access for my work so I can communicate with other staff members and my employer. If I plan to be promoted and have a career, I don’t want to be sitting in a corner, I want to be an assertive adult and be included.” (social media HLC)

“I had a tutor who put my FM microphone inside his suit and I could hear fabric friction instead of his speech. Another time I arrived to find there is absolutely no access available to a conference, luckily there was a live translation at the event and all delegates were given headphones, I could swap those for my trusted audio cable and participate in this way. I have attended training where only available access was via sign language interpreter despite asking for speech to text, there was no hearing loop either. Other times where there is no access provision I try to sit close to the speaker when it is possible. In a situation like this, I felt completely excluded and immediately complained. Over the years, I learned to be prepared for most eventualities. I always carried with me my personal neck loop and now with a CI my own audio cable. This is my trusted back up for any eventualities however I do not think this is how it should be.” (Best 2019)

“Lots of people call it the Joke Centre and I can see why. They couldn’t meet any access needs at all. I would ask to have meetings in a private room because I need to be in a quiet room and I would turn up and they said no room available... My problem is background noise stops me from hearing the person in front of me, so they start yelling... Their general knowledge about sensory loss was really poor.” (AOL 2015)

It is very relevant to talk about the quality of lives. It is known that the evaluation of QoL is multidimensional: physical well-being, material well-being, social well-being, and emotional well-being. According to a survey made by EFHOH in 2016 among its members, Hard of Hearing people perceive a high degree of misunderstanding in all areas of life.

The consequences of fatigue are not only subjective and physiologic.

Hornsby (2013) showed a connection between concentration, word recognition, word recall, and cognitive processing speed in adults with hearing loss. Evidence of increased listening effort and fatigue was observed. Word recognition ability, as expected, was poorer when listening unaided. In this, more challenging listening condition word recall was also poorer and visual real times were slower— consistent with an increase in listening effort compared with the aided condition fatigue can be identified through casual observation of behavior.

“ I am not going to lie; it is hard to live with someone who has a hearing problem. You cannot just scream something but you have to walk to the person and talk to them in a way that he or she will understand. You have to repeat things many times, depending on the environment you are surrounded by and the situation. Honestly, sometimes you are just tired of repeating and you do not feel like using pantomime to explain something and from my experiences, this is where Hard of Hearing hurt the most – lack of energy or will to explain something to them. Before that, we had been isolated from the world of deafness.” (Tomašič 2014)

The research shows that partners and families find it difficult to understand the nature of hearing loss. Additionally, different factors, such as tiredness and background noise, will have an impact on this. Moreover, families may not realise how tiring it is for someone with hearing loss to focus for long periods of time. There may be scope for organisations to provide advice and resources for families in order to help them understand how it feels for someone to have hearing loss and, specifically, why they may not be able to hear in some situations while they can in others. (Echalie 2009).

“The next person you should likely speak to is someone in the administration. I usually talk to an assistant principal, who often supervises teachers. Alternatively, you could speak to the diagnostician, the person who is in charge of disability services on campus, or even your school counselor. Think carefully about what’s best for your education. The first step you take should always be self-advocacy. Voice your needs yourself, and your teacher will be more likely to respond in a positive manner. You should be as polite as possible without being shy or indecisive. Be assertive and tell your teacher or instructor why your needs are important. Give them detailed instructions as to how to meet them.” (Doty 2018)

“Though my friends and family generally went out of their way to be kind and tolerant of my near deafness, I could not abide with their continued charity. I could not risk another, however infrequent, surreptitious

eye roll or sigh. So I withdrew. I just stopped showing up. The social withdrawal was an anathema to my soul and mind since all my life I had enjoyed nothing more than high-energy, rapid-fire conversations on topics silly to profound. Old friendships and professional relationships dried up and blew away. And it was impossible to make new friends or deal with the random, incidental exchange of everyday life. I was dying.” (cochlearimplantlife)

“I was at work today on a field trip with 4 kindergarten classes. An educator was apparently attempting to talk with me, but was on my deaf side. I’ve been implanted on the other side but I’m still not understanding language. The educator was upset I didn’t respond to her. When I explained I’m deaf and didn’t hear her she told me I don’t look deaf. I said yes I do ...that perplexing WTF face is what deaf people look like. What does a deaf person look like?” (ciexperiences)

“When I gave birth in 1984 and immediately after the anesthetics knew I had lost some hearing, I was told that was not the case. Instead, they diagnosed me with psychosis related to having just become a mother. After the hospital I went straight to ENT and had my HL verified. But I felt I was diagnosed with something else because they did not know enough about this.” (anonymous friend — personal)

“Of course with HL I Can get things wrong — misunderstand. But it often happens to me, when I discuss with colleagues, who said this and that and what was decided, that I get the look and remark: ‘ oh.. of course you must have missed that information and got it wrong’. However, I really do double check on information related work and quite often I am also right. It means I am not equal in these situations and from one episode to the next there is a general expectation that most likely I am the one having not understood correctly. When you have a disability like HL, there is prejudice and people think they know your stories better than you — even when it comes to developing HL and/or need of accessibility. This has to do with view on humanity. And maybe not everybody can overcome to be inclusive towards others.”(anonymous friend — personal)

One thing is to talk about it, the other to write, and something completely different to take note of and understand. We need to be aware that even if we are healthy today, we can be in a place tomorrow when we need a good law about equality and a lot of empathy.

Therefore, it must be understood that not all deaf(ened) people use sign language and not all blind do braille. In the age of technology, many other gadgets are available to allow us to watch and listen, and in the educational process and later in life, individuals must be given the opportunity to choose.

Understanding disabilities such as deafness, blindness, deafblindness as a complex experience and constant attention to the environment is essential in all processes of inclusion and regulating the environment, both physically and psychologically. When people are able to achieve this, we will be able to talk about the quality of life. You may simply ask yourselves if you can really imagine what it is like to live with sensory

impairments. Once we can imagine that, we will have no problem making the appropriate adjustments.

It is also important to have a lot of support in community, especially in family. There are many communities where we can chat and share our own experiences, where we can find very useful information and supporting each other. And because of our real life experiences we can see that we still have a lot of work with warnings and educating people around us.

Thanks to Aida, Lidia, Marcel and Bryan and others from different communities in social media who shared their experience with me.

My own experience of living with hearing loss shows me how much power and energy it takes to get involved in life and work about the same as the rest. However, obstacles do arise at every turn. And all these obstacles must be accepted and lived with, which is certainly not easy.

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Prerequisites for the Development of Successful Inclusion of Deaf Pupils in Regular Classes

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Abstract

Inclusive education for deaf students raises many questions, such as how to establish the best communication, what methodical tasks to prepare, how to prepare for the lesson, etc. The topic of inclusive education is common in the controversies of many educators, methodologists, professors, teachers and students themselves, and refers to the inclusion of children with special needs in development in the regular educational system. In this paper, the basic research question is the analysis of the possibility of inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students. The inclusion of students with special needs in regular education mainly depends on the attitude and readiness of the teacher. Numerous studies have been conducted on teachers' attitudes, and the biggest problem that teachers cite is unpreparedness or insufficient education and that they do not feel competent enough for this type of teaching (Šokčić Mihić, Vlah & Šokić 2018). However, every teacher should strive for their improvement, not only during their education, but throughout their lives. The inclusion of deaf students requires a good command of the sign language and the assignment of a sign language interpreter so that the student can follow the class just like any other student in the class. Some other factors such as the etiology of hearing impairment, the degree of impairment, (non)existence of additional impairment, the age at which hearing impairment occurred, whether parents are deaf or not, whether they have accepted the child's impairment, what are their expectations, how the wider environment relates to the child etc. are also important for the development of deaf and hard of hearing students. Different workshops are organized to raise awareness of people and to familiarize themselves with the culture of the deaf (Hajsig & Rakočević Uvodić 2017). Regardless of the possible difficulties and (un)willingness of the teacher, inclusive teaching enriches all the students present in the class because "different" people teach us the most important life lessons that we can only learn if we give them the opportunity to change us by their presence (Jurlić 2013). It should be emphasized that hearing impairment does not affect the intellectual, social or emotional development of the child. For inclusion to be fully successful, not only on paper but also in practice, it is necessary to create an environment that is ready for all the upcoming challenges that work and the integra-

tion of students with special needs brings to their daily work and classroom routine (Ainscow & Sandhill 2010). It is also important to emphasize the importance of early intervention, which, with modern technologies, achieves greater effectiveness of children's communication in formal education and communication (McLean et al. 2018). The methodology of this paper is a qualitative approach and consists of reviewing and analyzing relevant literature on the necessary factors that teachers and school professional services need to know in order to be able to successfully prepare everyone involved in the inclusive inclusion process. The tendency is to create a positive classroom environment in which all participants in the teaching process will participate equally and further enhance their education in an inclusive environment (Goldstein & Eklund 2015). Effective and appropriate early intervention and accepting impairment are the basis for the development of the child's personality and effective cognitive development, for which the (school) environment is ready for successful and complete inclusion.

Key words: acceptance, inclusion challenges, sign language, students with special needs.

Preduvjeti za razvoj uspješne inkluzije gluhih učenika u redovne razrede

Sažetak

Inkluzivno obrazovanje gluhih učenika otvara niz pitanja, primjerice na koji način uspostaviti najbolju komunikaciju, koje metodičke zadatke pripremiti, na koji način se pripremiti za sat i sl. Tema inkluzivnoga obrazovanja česta je u polemikama brojnih pedagoga, metodičara, profesora, nastavnika, učitelja, ali i samih učenika, a odnosi se na uključivanje djece s posebnim potrebama u razvoju u redovan odgojno-obrazovni sustav. U ovome radu temeljno je istraživačko pitanje analize mogućnosti inkluzije gluhih i nagluhih učenika. O uključivanju učenika s posebnim potrebama u redovno obrazovanje ponajviše ovisi stav i spremnost učitelja. O stavovima učitelja provedena su brojna istraživanja, kao najveći problem, učitelji navode nespremnost, odnosno nedovoljnu educiranost i ne osjećaju se dovoljno kompetentni za takvu vrstu nastave (Šokčić Mihić, Vlah & Šokić 2018). Međutim, svaki bi učitelj trebao težiti svom usavršavanju, ne samo za vrijeme vlastitoga školovanja, nego cijeloga života. Inkluzija gluhih učenika zahtijeva dobro poznavanje znakovnoga jezika te uključivanje tumača za znakovni jezik, kako bi učenik mogao pratiti nastavu kao i svi ostali učenici u razredu. Za razvoj gluhih i nagluhih učenika važni su i neki drugi faktori kao što su etiologija oštećenja sluha, stupanj oštećenja, (ne)postojanje dodatnih oštećenja, dob u kojoj je došlo do oštećenja sluha, o tome jesu li i roditelji gluhi ili nisu, jesu li prihvatili djetetovo oštećenje, kakva su njihova očekivanja, kako se šira okolina odnosi prema djetetu i dr. Kako bi se podigla svijest ljudi i kako bi se ljudi upoznali s kulturom gluhih osoba organiziraju se različite radionice (Hajsig & Rakočević Uvodić 2017). Bez obzira na moguće poteškoće i (ne)spremnost učitelja, inkluzivna nastava obogaćuje sve prisutne osobe u razredu jer nas „drugačije“ osobe poučavaju najvažnijim životnim lekcijama, koje možemo naučiti samo ukoliko im pružimo priliku da nas njihova prisutnost mijenja (Jurlić 2013). Kako bi inkluzija bila u potpunosti uspješna, ne samo na papiru već i u praksi, potrebno je stvoriti okolinu koja je spremna na sve nadolazeće izazove koje rad i uklapanje učenika s posebnim potrebama donosi u svakodnevni rad i razrednu rutinu (Ainscow & Sandhill 2010). Također je potrebno naglasiti važnost rane intervencije kojom se, uz suvremene tehnologije, postiže veća učinkovitost komunikacije djece u formalnome obrazovanju i komunikaciji (McLean i sur.

2018). Metodologija je ovoga rada kvalitativnoga pristupa te se sastoji od pregleda i analiza relevantne literature o potrebnim čimbenicima koje nastavnici i školske stručne službe trebaju poznavati kako bi mogli ostvariti uspješnu pripremu svih uključenih u proces inkluzivnoga uključivanja. Tendencija je stvoriti pozitivno razredno ozračje u kojemu će svi sudionici nastavnoga procesa ravnopravno sudjelovati i dodatno oplemeniti svoje obrazovanje u inkluzivnoj sredini (Goldstein i Eklund 2015). Efikasna i primjerena rana intervencija te prihvatanje oštećenja osnova su za razvoj osobnosti djeteta i učinkovit kognitivni razvoj, za što je važan čimbenik i (školska) okolina spremna za uspješnu i potpuni inkluziju.

Ključne riječi: izazovi inkluzije, prihvatanje, učenici s posebnim potrebama, znakovni jezik.

Introduction

Teacher's views are fundamental to inclusive education because they choose to include children with special needs in the educational process. Students with hearing impairment will be discussed in this section. The arrival of a deaf child in class brings with it many questions and is often a great challenge for teachers, so many questions are asked, such as communicating with the child appropriately, what types of tasks to offer.

Hearing loss is a partial or complete inability to hear. Hearing impairments occur prenatally (during pregnancy), perinatal (during childbirth) or postnatal (after birth). As much as 60% of hearing impairment occurs in the prenatal period, 10% in the perinatal period and 30% in the postnatal period. The most common post-natal causes are meningitis, middle ear inflammation, noise exposure, traumatic head injuries ect. (Bradarić-Jončić & Mohr 2010). The most common prenatal causes are maternal rubella during pregnancy, infection and viral disease in pregnancy, Rh factor incompatibility, preterm birth ... (Krzrnarić, Horak & Jovičić 2008). Depending on the degree of hearing impairment, persons are divided into hearing impaired, deaf, and cochlear (Information Manual). Hearing loss is further subdivided into more severe, moderate and minor and indeterminate or unspecified hearing impairment (Krzrnarić, Horak & Jovičić 2008). In addition to classic hearing aids, cochlear implants are increasingly used. This hearing aid has replaced the function of a damaged cochlea in the world for 30 years. The best progress in communication is achieved by children who have received an implant by the age of five. All hearing-impaired children and deaf children are considered to be similar, however their progress depends on the etiology of the hearing impairment, the degree of impairment, (no) additional impairment, the age at which the hearing impairment occurred, and whether the parents are deaf whether or not they have accepted the child's impairment, which their expectations are, how the wider environment relates to the child. Hearing impairment does not affect intellectual, social or emotional development, but the inability to communicate can cause interference in all of these areas. It is important to understand how a child adopts a language - listening to other children adopt a speech, but when it comes to a deaf child, that is, a child who does not hear, that language needs to be sign language and will thus be spontaneously adopted by that child. The speech of hearing-impaired students before language acquisition is more difficult to understand than the speech of hearing-impaired hearing learners. When it comes to the intellectual development of hearing-impaired people, numerous studies have shown that deaf children of deaf parents are more intellectually advanced and have better social skills than others. In the population, 4-10% are deaf children from deaf parents. These results are evidence that an important way of communicating appropriately from an early age is to raise awareness of all people who come in contact with such persons. However, it should be borne in mind that deaf people are no different from others (Ivasović 2007).

School implications for hear damaged pupil

Hearing damage can occur in the outer, inner, middle ear, the hearing center in the brain or the auditory nerve. Hearing impairment is most commonly detected between the second and third years of life, when speech does not develop properly (Krzrnarić, Horak & Jovičić 2008). Recreational noise to which younger people are exposed, along with workplace noise, is one of the reasons for the increasing number of people

with acquired hearing impairment. For this reason, it is important to carry out preventive activities to inform young people to prevent hearing impairment as much as possible. Young people are indifferent to the problem of hearing impairment, and one of the worst consequences is social isolation. Loud events are an integral part of young people's lives and are essential for socialization (Gusić et al. 2017).

As mentioned above, teacher's attitudes toward inclusion of deaf children in the regular program are paramount. Numerous studies have been conducted on teachers attitudes towards inclusive education, and this topic has been specifically studied over the last few decades. One study found that teachers attitudes were neutral or even unfavorable (De Boer, Pilj & Minnaert 2011). Tomić, Šehović and Hrvanović (2007; according to Skočić Mihić, Vlah & Šokić 2018) researched in the area of neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina and found that the attitudes of classroom teachers varied from favorable to unfavorable. Most teachers think that students with hearing impairments should be educated in special classes, and only about ten percent believe that everyone should be educated in regular classes. However, it is important to mention that half of the teachers think that students with hearing impairments are happier in special classes, and only 27% say that they have taught such students and most of them think that communication has been difficult. Older Croatian research shows the negative attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education when it comes to deaf students. One such study was conducted by Radovančić (1985), but the study also included rehabilitators, who have only slightly more positive views on it. However, numerous studies have shown that not all teachers have such (negative attitudes). Dulčić and Bakota (2008) state that teachers attitudes towards students with hearing impairment are very favorable, but they have negative attitudes towards the realization of educational inclusion in practice. Bosnar (2004; Bosnar & Bradić-Jončić 2008) proves that teachers show a neutral attitude towards inclusion interpreters in the work of institutions, and the authors believe that this is due to insufficient professional development and inexperience in work. Kolarić Piplica (2014) researches educators, who show very positive attitudes.

Issues

In addition to research a showing that the attitudes of teachers are quite different, teachers emphasize the need for educational and rehabilitation support and additional education to facilitate the implementation of inclusive education themselves (Kiš-Glavaš 1999). The problems that teachers encounter in preparing and holding classes are rarely taken into account, as is their professional readiness, that is, most teachers state that they are not ready to work with children with disabilities. However, many teachers, although they should not have one, have different stereotypes about it and behave accordingly in the classroom (more negatively related to students with disabilities) (Leutar & Frantal 2006). Regarding professional readiness, every teacher should strive for training and lifelong education. Inclusive teaching requires different preparation of the lesson, greater readiness, organization and coping. In addition to teachers, inclusive education is influenced by many other factors such as the number of students in the classroom, teaching assistants, material resources, school equipment, professional support... (Ivančić 2012). Teachers who have a deaf child or a child with disabilities (no matter which) need professional cooperation and systematic support, addressing spatial barriers, teaching aids needed, implementation and preparation that need to be properly evaluated, a more flexible curriculum... (Krnjačec-Mlinarić, Žic-Ralić & Lisak 2016). Regardless of all the problems,

the teacher should be willing to learn what he did not know before then, to reinforce what he is not sure about, while keeping in mind that children are different in any way, except that they educate and educate themselves at school, raise them and the teacher and his classmates as well as the whole school. The presence of a deaf child in the class can raise many questions, but in the end, there is no obstacle that a willing teacher cannot overcome.

Most deaf children have difficulty learning Croatian. Their vocabulary is more modest, they have insufficient knowledge of case morphology, have difficulty in using verb tenses, with syntax and are disgrammatical. In people with severe hearing impairment, the hearing aid cannot fully transmit information, so they also use vision. For young hearing children, the first word in the sentence is the doer, while for deaf children, due to insufficient language experience, this way of processing the sentence is delayed for a much longer time. Hearing children will understand the correct use of a passive sentence until school, while deaf children will misuse a passive sentence by the age of 14. Children's lexical knowledge also plays a large role in reading comprehension. A large number of hard of hearing and deaf children have difficulty reading with comprehension. To understand, it is necessary to conclude while reading to understand what is not written in the text (Hrastinski, Pribanić & Degač 2014). The basic problem of a deaf person is not communication, but literacy, writing skills and reading comprehension. A large number of deaf people are satisfied with a lower level of education and their literacy level remains low. Also, whether parents are deaf or don't depend on whether the child is learning sign or spoken language as their first language. The better level of linguistic competence is affected by early diagnosis and early onset of continuing rehabilitation, higher parental education and higher socioeconomic status, motivation to communicate, "gifted speech skills", ongoing support from counselors, early hearing aid, implantation of an artificial cochlea, and good use of residual hearing (Pribanić 2007). Hearing impairment affects not only communication, speech and writing, but also the motor development of children. Deaf and hard of hearing students often have problems with balance and coordination, movement speed and reaction time, and catching the ball. Nevertheless, such children can, with training in appropriate conditions, achieve an approximate level of motor efficiency as well as hearing children (Vuljanić, Pavin Ivanec & Petrinović 2015).

Sign language in regular school

Sign language consists of hand and body movements, hand alphabet and signs, facial expressions, has its syntax and grammar independent of spoken language. Every sign language is different like every spoken language. Croatian sign language has regional differences, but in most signs, it is the same throughout Croatia (Krznarić, Horak & Jovičić 2008).

Deaf persons receive speech predominantly by sight or lip-reading, and deaf persons dominate by hearing. Vision plays a greater role as hearing impairment is more severe. Reading from the lips is difficult if more people are involved in the conversation, when it comes to unknown content or when something cannot be understood out of context. It is advisable to speak with people with hearing impairments more slowly with breaks, not to be more than 1.5 meters away, and not to stand in the light (Bradarić-Jončić & Mohr 2010).

Bilingual schools for the deaf appeared 30 years ago in the world where sign language is seen as the first language and the language of the hearing environment as a foreign language. In such schools, teachers speak both languages. The majority of deaf children are educated in the so-called oral schools.

People who do not hear or hear less must have the same access to information as people who hear. For deaf students, this means that there should be a sign language interpreter in the class. The introduction of sign language interpreters means a major change in teaching for all subjects of the teaching process, however, a collaboration between interpreters, teachers and students can be very beneficial for all of them. In addition to sign language, the manual alphabet (one-handed and two-handed) is also used. It is used when the phonological structure of words is essential. There are also two types of sign language, showing characters without speaking and showing characters with speaking. Croatian Sign Language is a language with all the constituents and features of a language, it can be communicated without using spoken language and is independent of spoken language. Sign and spoken language are processed in the same area in the left hemisphere of the brain. Sign language is useful for the overall development of a child (Bradarić-Jončić & Mohr 2010). The sign language interpreter is a member of the expert team, participates in all school and extracurricular activities, but does not answer instead of students and does not participate in determining disciplinary measures. Its task is to convey to the deaf student all information that is available to other students and to establish communication between the deaf student, teacher and other students. He conveys all information exactly as he has received it, therefore he respects the code of professional ethics (Chafin Seal 1998). This method of teaching has shown positive results, both for the academic skills of deaf students, and for the quality and quantity of social interactions with hearing peers (Kreimeyer et al. 1999).

The inclusive education of deaf and hard of hearing students also recommend and advise the Council of Europe on the protection and promotion of national sign languages, demanding that sign language be regarded as a minority language, that teachers be trained in sign language, and that the importance of educating the deaf in sign language should be given to informing the deaf on their rights and opportunities to use sign language, to use new technologies and to provide access to these technologies for the deaf, to introduce sign language as an optional subject in secondary schools with the status of foreign languages, to provide financial support for the publishing of sign language learning literature and to provide the rights of parents of deaf children (Bosnar & Bradarić-Jončić 2008). However, for inclusive teaching to be as successful as possible, in addition to introducing an interpreter, it is desirable that at least in some activities, deaf and hard of hearing children participate together, and present and deaf adults with deaf and hard of hearing children, the teacher should cooperate well with sign language interpreter and similar (Luetke-Stahlman & Hayes 1994). The positive sides of integration for all students are developing an awareness of diversity, developing solidarity, adopting sign language, but also a new experience for both students and teachers (Jurlić 2013).

Workshops

The workshops have an interactive character and encourage creativity, relaxation, a sense of belonging to the children who participate in them. Various workshops are organized in terms of age, theme, goal to be

achieved, and are based on experiential learning, which is achieved through play, simulation and action. Participation in workshops encourages interaction and communication in a group of peers, and participants in that group often have something in common. To realize the workshop, a secured space, which is adequately equipped, should be no more than fifteen members, the duration of the workshop should not be more than ninety minutes, and it is recommended that two presenters be present (Đug et al. 2015). Participation of children with special needs in workshops fosters a desire for progress, meeting other people with similar needs, children often receive encouragement, motivation, gain confidence, communicate with other people, and often participants are introduced to differences and learn how to behave according to diversity... As mentioned above, the workshops are organized according to some common characteristics, so there are different workshops for both deaf and hard of hearing children and young people. An example of a workshop for deaf and hard of hearing children is the Croatian Sign Language for 3D Printing Workshop. As it was decided in July 2015 that children with disabilities should be included in regular education, this workshop aimed to highlight and draw attention to the communication needs of deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind people, as well as to encourage tolerance and acceptance of diversity. Sign language workshops were conducted by the Medioteka librarian Maela Rakočević Uvodić, a sign language translator for the deaf and deaf-blind together with an external associate, a deaf young man, Sabahudin Jusić - Buda. The workshop could be divided into four thematic units; at the very beginning, children were told what it's like to lose hearing, to grow up in silence, how to be different from others, how important it is to be able to communicate with a deaf person and the fact that deaf people are the same as those who hear, to live and work, make their dreams come true... Afterward, the children became acquainted with how deaf people communicate and learned the two-handed alphabet. They were introduced to the basics of sign language and communicated with Buda. In early March 2017, as part of the proofreading process, students participated in a sign language workshop that included a screening of the play in sign language.¹

Gabriela Flac and Josipa Kodrić, together with their teacher, Marija Križić, organized a workshop on Croatian sign language. The workshop was held on the occasion of International Week of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, aimed at children and adults. The goal of this workshop was to introduce others to the minority language - sign language. The participants successfully learned and applied the basic concepts of Croatian sign language.²

The "Croatia for Children" Foundation co-financed the "Small Works for Big Change" project, a project realized through workshops with children and young people of the deaf and hard of hearing. It took place in the city of Zagreb. Through three workshops, it seeks to develop tolerance, encourage non-violent conflict resolution and raise the quality of deaf and hard of hearing. There were twenty participants from six to twenty years old. Chess workshops were organized during which children and young people participated in tournaments; sign language workshops, where they were introduced to professional literature, as well as workshops on tolerance, accepting diversity, equalizing opportunities, non-violent conflict resolution, CAP seminar: improving communication and social skills, drawing pictures, posters.³

1 Retrieved from: <https://www.hkdrustvo.hr/hkdnovosti/clanak/1405>

2 Retrieved from: <https://epodravina.hr/dodite-na-radionicu-hrvatskog-znakovnog-jezika-za-odrasle-i-djecu/>

3 Retrieved from: <http://maladjela.com/o-projektu/>

Achieving integration

The goal of integration is for students with disabilities to be educated outside a special educational institution. Inclusion is a goal to be pursued. It implies the complete, not just academic, involvement of the individual in the regular education system and the respect for diversity. Unlike integration, inclusion refers to the acceptance of students with disabilities, both deaf and hard of hearing students can benefit from inclusion. Integration in the Republic of Croatia is regulated by the Education Act in 1980. Inclusion in the Republic of Croatia has only been mentioned in the last ten years. Inclusion continues to be a major challenge for deaf and hard of hearing students, their peers and school staff due to lack of experience and preparedness. Teachers are insufficiently educated for inclusive practice and lack of professional support is ubiquitous (Kozjak Mikic, Šaban & Ivasović 2017).

Studies about understanding the text read were better achieved by students with hearing impairments in mainstream schools than by students with hearing impairments in special schools. In mainstream schools, the learning environment is stimulating, students gain more knowledge of the world, and student expectations are higher. In special schools, shorter texts are read and this affects the slow(er) progress of students (Pribanić 2007; Hrastinski, Pribanić & Degač 2014).

According to the Rulebook on Primary and Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities (2015), suitable programs for the education of pupils are a regular program with individualized procedures, a regular program with content adjustment and individualized procedures, a special program with individualized procedures and special programs for acquiring competences in everyday activities of life and work with individualized procedures. Individualized procedures and content adjustments can be for all subjects, several or for one, and these documents are produced by teachers in collaboration with the school's professional associates. A special program with individualized procedures is carried out by an educational rehabilitator and a teacher. Students with disabilities may also be included in the program of educational and rehabilitation procedures, the program of extended professional procedure and the rehabilitation program. The school support service for students with disabilities is a professional team consisting of: educational rehabilitator, speech therapist, social pedagogue, psychologist, educator and teacher trained to work with students with disabilities. Other experts can join the team as needed. According to the list of types of impairments in the Regulations, hearing impairments belong to another group. They are divided into deafness and hearing loss. Deafness is a hearing loss of 93 decibels in speech frequencies, and hearing loss is a dry hearing loss of 26 to 93 decibels in the ear with better hearing debris. If it is asymmetric hearing loss or deafness in one ear and hearing loss in the other, then this is classified as more severe impairment. A maximum of 3 students with disabilities may enroll in the regular class, and at that time the class may not exceed 25 students.

Classroom work directions

When it comes to concrete classroom work, there are many things teachers need to do and combine to make

the work and inclusion of the deaf and hearing impaired students complete and successful. Williams & Finnegan (2003) state that when working with such students it is necessary that the teacher is always turned (face to face) towards the student he is addressing. In doing so, it is important to use the shortest possible sentences with the increased use of non-verbal communication. The teacher should develop an environment where students with hearing impairments will successfully communicate with them and other classmates. Byrnes et al. (2002) state the importance of curriculum adaptation. When designing the curriculum, it is important to take into account the individual needs of hearing impaired students, and involve specialized professionals in this planning. In addition to the classroom curriculum, it is important to create a school climate that will contribute to fuller integration. Ainscow & Sandhill (2010) call such a climate an inclusive culture and describe what it takes to develop it. To begin with, a system of values and respect for diversity should be developed among school staff, resulting in a greater commitment from the entire collective to the goal of giving everyone equal opportunities. It is also important to involve the local community, founders and parents so they can work together to solve problems. An inclusive culture develops from each teacher personally, starting from their understanding and respect (of need) for diversity, so such teachers will resort to different methods of work, such as constructivism and the involvement of professionals. The authors also state that inclusive culture can (and should) be encouraged by local and national strategies, by supporting and encouraging the development of inclusive values.

Experiences from the United Kingdom

In the UK, hearing-impaired students in mainstream school have the support of specialist teachers to work with deaf students, who with other professionals identify the needs of that student, not just the level and nature of the impairment. This process involves considering the learner's language abilities and the level of communication support he or she needs to be fully involved in all classroom situations and interactions (Salter, Swanwick & Pearson 2017). Some schools exclude foreign languages from the curriculum for hearing impaired students, while others replace them with a specific program of support in working in other areas (Mole, McColl & Vale 2005).

Maltby (2000: 88) presents a speech perception test called *Maltby Speech Perception Test* determined by analyzing the pros and cons of previously used tests (Merklein 1981; Erber 1982; according to Maltby 2000). It has different levels of use and fills in the gaps that remained after previous tests. The first is to find out what speech characteristics a child can perceive and distinguish, with only audio used at this level. The second level is to discover the extent to which a child with complete hearing loss develops their ability to understand and differentiate speech. The third level is to observe changes in speech perception and the ability to differentiate in children with complete hearing loss. The fourth level is to assist in the development of hearing aid evaluation in order to achieve maximum effectiveness in achieving the goal of having children with complete hearing loss speech cues.

Australia has a common practice of integrating hearing impaired students into mainstream schools. During work, such classes are attended by a visiting expert (teacher) working with deaf students, called *Visiting Teacher of the Deaf*. This creates an environment in which hearing impaired students are provided with equal learning with their peers, and the teacher, in conjunction with the visiting teacher, enables them to jointly plan and work so that such students contribute to the class and participate in all activities in the same way as other students (Antia 1999; Hyde & Power 2004).

Possibilities

When working with children with permanent hearing loss, early intervention is important and should be performed within the first 6 months of the child's chronological age. Research shows that early detection and early treatment, with the use of modern technologies, achieves greater communication effectiveness for children in formal education and communication, where children reach a level of communication more appropriate to their age (Cole & Flexer 2010; Nelson, Bradham & Huston 2011; Kasai et al. 2012; Ching 2015; McLean et al. 2018).

Some of the major missing factors for the development of quality programs for deaf students are the lack of systematic and quality teacher education programs; insufficient number of specially educated teachers, lack of equipment needed for work and insufficient financial resources to develop the required models (El-Zraigar & Smadi 2012; Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz 2013). Bedoin (2011) explains model which consists of total communication approach that consists of several different communication concepts, or a combination of them. This approach combines speech, lip reading, writing, and multiple types of sign language; taking into account the individual needs of students. Students with disabilities are often excluded from the real education system and are not given the opportunity to fully realize it, and the worst aspect of this fact is that it has become global (Mittler 2005). In order to reduce the global share of such cases, it is necessary to start with changes in the teacher education itself. Research (Winter 2006; Forlin et al. 2007; Miller 2008; Forlin & Chambers 2011) shows that in order to improve teachers' access to inclusive education, their ability to work with students with disabilities must be improved. In this way, teachers will have better understanding of the needs of such students and thus, with a greater understanding of the needs, will have a more positive attitude towards them. Mather, Goldstein & Eklund (2015) point out that for a successful learning process, it is necessary to provide the learner with a stimulating environment that will give them the attention they need, encourage healthy emotional development, and create a positive image of themselves and (in) school.

Perceptions of teachers, students and parents

Teachers' attitudes towards diversity between students and respect for individual needs are crucial for successful inclusion. Attitude influences teachers' behavior and teaching, which directly results from the dynamics of classroom work, both for teachers and students (Vaughn, Klingner & Hughes 2000; Cook 2002).

Stoler (1992) conducts research with teachers to examine the level of perception towards inclusive education. He has obtained interesting results according to which teachers with higher levels of education have shown more negative attitudes towards inclusive education than those with lower levels. Differences were also seen in the experience and attendance of different courses for working with children with special needs, where teachers with more experience and courses expectedly showed a more positive attitude towards inclusion. Cook (2002) conducts a survey where attitudes toward the types of student difficulties are observed. The results show that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion vary with the degree of difficulty a student has.

Marschark et al. (2012) investigate the perception of students with hearing impairments and parents with no hearing impairments and parents with hearing impairments in the context of their social and emotional state and school achievement. The initial assumption is that, due to communication difficulties, children with disabilities and parents without impairments will experience greater differences in perception. Students with hearing impairments were also expected to have more negative attitudes toward social relationships than their peers without hearing impairment. The results show a great discrepancy between the parents' assessments and the students' actual social status, where the parents greatly overestimate it. Parents and other students find students with hearing impairments weaker in reading and social relationships. Parents and their children also differ greatly in their attitudes toward school functioning. Interesting results refute the initial hypothesis that communication difficulties between parents and pupils with hearing impairments will affect differences in perception, and it is concluded that parents and pupils differ in perceptions of school functions in each case. Mather, Goldstein & Eklund (2015) presents a Building Blocks of Learning (BBL) model that helps teachers and parents identify problems while working with students with disabilities. This model provides insight into the student's emotional state and daily behavior. The BBL model has the appearance of a pyramid with a base and three groups of blocks that give you complete insight. The base looks at the students' environment, which includes family, class and past experiences. The first group of blocks consists of observing the student's self-regulation, behavior, emotions and resilience. The second block looks at how a student processes information and at what level his or her skills and abilities are. The last group are students' verbal, non-verbal and executive functions. With these four core sets, comprehensive insight into the students' skills, abilities, knowledge, opportunities and needs is made and this information is also available to parents and teachers.

Environmental attitudes are extremely important for the inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing students in mainstream schools. The negative attitude of the environment is one of the risk factors for the emotional development of deaf and deaf students. Attitude can also be affected by the lack of contact that contributes to stereotypes and prejudices. If previous contact with a deaf or hard of hearing person was positive, then an attitude towards such persons would be positive. Studies have shown that contact with people with disabilities is important for the development of a tolerant attitude (Kozjak Mikić, Šaban & Ivasović 2017; Dimoski, Eminović, Stojković & Stanimirović 2013). Positive attitude is also influenced by self-esteem and the perception of a behavior that is acceptable to the group to which it belongs or wants to belong. The attitude of peers in the classroom who have hard of hearing or deaf students is influenced by the level of encouragement of friendship by parents, gender, developmental level of students with disabilities, previous experiences, etc. According to the research, more favorable attitudes are given to students in schools outside the city

center and students of subject teaching. The attitude of students can be influenced by direct experience with children with disabilities and information through books, workshops, guided discussions, presentation of work and success of young deaf and hard of hearing people, etc. (Kozjak Mikić, Šaban & Ivasović 2017).

Professional communication intermediaries

According to the Rulebook on teaching assistants and professional communication mediators (2018), providing such support is one form of adaptation to suit the needs of students to enable them to participate in the educational process as much as other students. This seeks to prevent discrimination against students due to disabilities. A professional communication facilitator provides communication support for deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind students in a way that the student prefers. These can be custom Croatian sign language (tactile, located, guided), Croatian sign language or other communication systems (simultaneous sign-to-speech communication, subtitling or typing, speech reading from the face and lips, manual alphabets, palm writing and the use of technical aids). It mediates communication between students and the environment in teaching, extracurricular and extracurricular activities. The expert communication mediator follows the instructions of the teachers, expert associates and expert team and works according to the developed work program. There may be one professional communication mediator in one class unit, except when there may be two schools due to organizational capabilities. Students who are educated at home, in a healthcare facility or in distance education are eligible for a professional mediator. The professional communication mediator must have completed at least four years of secondary education, completed training and acquired partial qualifications. His job is to provide communication support in the kind of communication system the student prefers. He explains and translates certain terms as instructed by the teacher, assists the student in using textbooks and work materials. It encourages the student to express himself or herself in the way he or she prefers, to collaborate with other students, and to print the text of the lecturer on the computer. He can help deaf students to move and must keep a log of the work he performs.

Conclusion

In the Republic of Croatia Report on Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Croatia (2019) there are a total of 13,133 hearing impaired people. Under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), the state is obliged to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities and to ensure equality before the law. States that have signed the Convention, including Croatia, have an obligation to facilitate the learning of sign language and to promote the linguistic identity of the Deaf community. The signatory countries have undertaken to provide education for the deaf and deaf-blind in the most appropriate language and communication for each individual and to provide an enabling environment for successful development.

Effective and appropriate early communication in sign or spoken language and acceptance of one's own child and its impairment are the basis for the development of the child's personality and effective cognitive development. People with hearing impairment need the support of family, friends, business colleagues,

neighbors, society and professionals. They have greater family support than the support of friends (Lovretić et al. 2016). Children with hearing impairment should be encouraged to play sports in order to maximize their motor development. They need to be taught about the dangers of exposure to noise, the early signs of hearing impairment, the consequences, ways of prevention and dangerous levels of noise.

Contact with people with hearing impairments is important in order to create the right attitudes and to learn appropriate social reactions. Unknown things and situations at pupils creates resistance and distrust, so it is important to make contact with deaf or hard of hearing people as early as possible in life. Teachers colleges need more courses on inclusive education, but they also need the opportunity to develop specific teacher competencies to work with students with hearing impairments.

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I Want to Hear Us Playing Too
Sign Language Interpreting in Preschool —
a Priority of Inclusive Education for
Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind Children

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Abstract:

This paper is part of the innovative pilot project “Interpreter in Kindergarten” initiated and implemented by the Croatian Association of Deafblind Persons Dodir in Kindergarten Mali princ (Little Prince; September, 2014 — June, 2018), a significant contribution to the field of pre-school education for deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children. An insight shall be gained into the role of the kindergarten interpreter, the most important of which is to enable a child with deafness or deafblindness to have equal access to information and communication, thus facilitating the development and acquisition of the necessary linguistic knowledge and competences in a preschool environment. The idea of introducing a kindergarten interpreter came as a response to the needs of a deaf girl whose parents wanted to enrol her in a regular kindergarten at the age of three. Through a case study, we wanted to present targeted professional aspects of the work as well as the empirical experiences of the kindergarten interpreter. Elements of the work of interpreters in kindergarten will be considered and analyzed through personal stories that clearly and dynamically describe the interaction between the interpreter and the child in different communication situations:

- (1) The initial meeting between the interpreter and the child — who is being evaluated by whom?*
- (2) Inclusive adjustment — the interpreter and the child together in the child’s kindergarten group;*
- (3) Individualised preparatory activities — acquisition of language and communication skills;*
- (4) Interpreting kindergarten activities;*
- (5) Interpreting extracurricular activities.*

The purpose of this paper is to gather professional and empirical knowledge and to analyze the difficulties and the specific communication needs of a deaf child both in kindergarten and during extracurricular activities. The paper provides guidelines, but also specific examples of how communication situations in a preschool setting can be redesigned by implementing the kindergarten interpreter model for all hearing-impaired children (deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind,), thus making communication and access to information appropriate for the needs of each individual, guided by the individual needs of early language acquisition (sign and/or spoken language), enabling the child to develop language competences normally, as well as a first-rate readiness for school.

Key words: kindergarten interpreter, deaf child, communication needs, sign language.

Sažetak:

Ovaj je rad dio inovativnog pilot projekta »Prevoditelj u vrtiću« koji je inicirao i proveo Hrvatski savez gluhoslijepih osoba Dodir u dječjem vrtiću Mali princ (rujan 2014. — lipanj 2018.), a kojim se daje značajan doprinos na području predškolskog odgoja i obrazovanja za gluhu, nagluhu i gluhoslijepu djecu. Ovim će se radom dobiti uvid u ulogu prevoditelja u vrtiću, od kojih je najvažnija djetetu s gluhoćom ili gluhosljepoćom omogućiti jednak pristup informacijama i komunikaciji, te na taj način olakšati razvoj i stjecanje potrebitih jezičnih znanja i kompetencija u predškolskom okruženju. Ideja o uvođenju prevoditelja u vrtiću nastala je kao odgovor na potrebe gluhe djevojčice koju su roditelji s nepune tri godine željeli upisati u redovni vrtić. Ciljano smo, kroz studiju slučaja, željeli prikazati stručne aspekte rada, ali i empirijske doživljaje prevoditelja u vrtiću. Razmatrat će se i analizirati elementi rada prevoditelja u vrtiću kroz osobne priče koje jasno i dinamično opisuju interakciju prevoditelja i djeteta u različitim komunikacijskim situacijama:

- (1) Inicijalni susret prevoditelja i djeteta — tko tu koga procjenjuje?
- (2) Inkluzivna prilagodba — prevoditelj i dijete zajedno u vrtićkoj skupini;
- (3) Pripremne individualizirane aktivnosti — stjecanje jezičnih i komunikativnih vještina;
- (4) Prevođenje vrtićkih aktivnosti;
- (5) Prevođenje izvanvrtićkih aktivnosti.

Svrha je ovog rada prikupiti stručna i empirijska znanja te analizirati teškoće kao i specifične komunikacijske potrebe gluhog djeteta u vrtićkim i izvanvrtićkim aktivnostima. Rad donosi smjernice, ali i konkretne primjere kako se komunikacijske situacije u predškolskom okruženju mogu redizajnirati implementiranjem modela prevoditelja u vrtiću za svu djecu s oštećenjem sluha (gluhu, nagluhu i gluhoslijepu) te na taj način komunikaciju i pristup informacijama prilagoditi potrebama svakog pojedinog djeteta vodeći se individualnim potrebama ranog usvajanja jezika (znakovnog i/ili govornog) omogućujući djetetu normalno razvijanje jezične kompetencije, a i kvalitetnu pripremljenost za školu.

Ključne riječi: prevoditelj u vrtiću, gluho dijete, komunikacijske potrebe, znakovni jezik.

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1. Introduction — Are We Really Lost in Interpretation?

“No hearing community would tolerate their children being educated solely by those who cannot communicate with or understand their children. Yet Deaf children with normal cognitive ability are expected to function in just this environment.”

Mark Wheatley, European Union of the Deaf
(Zagreb, 2017)

Sign language interpreting in the educational system is not a novelty; it is systematically implemented in many countries, e.g. in USA by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),

From 1995 to 2013, *Dodir* Association successfully introduced, and also implemented, the first interpreters at university, secondary and elementary schools. The results are evident in the fact that children and young people who have used interpreters today have successful lives, jobs and careers.

“Including deaf children and students in society means that an interpreter is needed for every deaf student in the classroom. Deaf pupils and students are usually scattered across the country and typically do not live close to each other. Thus, when they attend a school in the vicinity of their home, they will usually be the only deaf student in the classroom or even in the school (Brennan, 2003; Richardson et al, 2010).” (de Wit 2017: 113)

The introduction of interpreting in schools required enormous efforts in every single case in order to ensure constant interpreting through the whole education process for children whose parents requested interpreters for their deaf and deafblind children. It's a noteworthy fact that all requests for interpreters began with deaf parents themselves who wanted the best for their children.

Providing interpreters is a demanding job that involves a four-year interpreter education, finding a suitable interpreter, providing an appropriate environment within the education system (educating teaching staff, etc.), finding financial resources, etc. However, one of the biggest challenges in interpreting in schools was the children's unpreparedness for school. Some children had no sufficient knowledge while other did not have developed language and communication skills. There were also children who neither used Croatian Sign Language (CSL) nor did they speak Croatian (for more information on interpreting in educational settings s. Schick, Williams K & Kupermintz 2006 ; Krampač-Grljušić & Marinić 2007; Bouillet 2010; Duva 2012; Heyerick & Vermeerbergen 2012; Fond ujedinjenih naroda za djecu 2013; Ivasović 2014; Callis 2015; Hrvatski savez gluhooslijepih osoba *Dodir* 2016).

All these facts indicate that it is necessary to start with an inclusive environment for deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children in kindergarten.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the first request to provide an interpreter in kindergarten for a deaf girl was at her deaf father's initiative. The parents of the girl (a deaf father who uses CSL and a hearing mother who attended a CSL course) wanted to enrol their almost three years old deaf girl in a regular kindergarten, taking care to provide her with a high quality communication environment. The way to meet the needs of the deaf girl was to provide her with an interpreter in kindergarten. With many years of experience in organising

and providing interpreting in educational institutions (primary and secondary schools and university), as well as the knowledge gained through the education of interpreters, it was not unusual for *Dodir* Association to accept a new challenge — interpreting in kindergarten.

As early as in the spring of 2014, the Croatian Association of Deafblind Persons *Dodir* started to prepare the ground for the project, which was not at all simple nor easy. That same year the Mayor of the City of Zagreb, Mr. Milan Bandić, approved the City's financial support for the initiation and implementation of the innovative pilot project "Interpreter in Kindergarten" at the kindergarten *Mali princ* (Little Prince) from September, 2014 until June, 2018.

Accomplishments and results were already visible during the project's implementation, which enabled the introduction of interpreting in other kindergartens not only in Zagreb but also in other cities, a significant contribution in the field of pre-school education for deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children.

The manual "I Want to Hear Us Playing Too" was created with the aim of transferring the experiences and examples of good practice from the above-mentioned project to everyone who works or will work with deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children. For the purposes of the 3rd International Scientific Conference "The Results of (Un)Supporting Environment", a session entitled "Interpreting in Kindergarten — a Priority of Inclusive Education for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind Children" was selected.

As the session title makes it clear, this paper will provide insight into the role of interpreters in kindergarten as well as empirical experiences of interpreters in kindergarten through personal stories that clearly and dynamically describe the interaction between the interpreter and the child in different communication situations:

- (1) The Initial Meeting between the Interpreter and the Child — Who Is Being Evaluated by Whom?
- (2) Inclusive Adjustment — the Interpreter and the Child Together in the Child's Kindergarten Group
- (3) Individualised Preparatory Activities — Acquisition of Language and Communication Skills
- (4) Interpreting Kindergarten Activities
- (5) Interpreting Extracurricular Activities

Dodir Association's point from its very beginning was, and still is, that every deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind person has the right to use, but also to have access to their own language from an early age, especially in the educational system. Education as a fundamental right is mentioned not only in *Preamble* of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (United Nations CRPD) that was ratified by the EU as a whole in January, 2011, but also in the Article 24 dedicated to education (United Nations 1989; United Nations 2016).

By being denied a sign language interpreter, and thus equal access to information and communication, deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children are divested of the development of their full intellectual potential, thus impeding the development and acquisition of their necessary linguistic knowledge and competences in the preschool environment (United Nations 2016; Hänel-Faulhaber 2017: 135; EIPA Diagnostic Center).

"About 80% of deaf children in developing countries start primary school with little or no language - so having some kind of preschool support to help them learn language is critical." (Watt 2018)

"The research so far emphasises that early exposure to a sign language provides access to abstract linguistic structure that also has the potential to provide benefits for later language learning, as early sign language input can bootstrap literacy and spoken language skills, which holds for Deaf children as well as hearing

children as well as children with CIs (Davidson et al., 2013; Hänel-Faulhaber, 2014).” (Hänel-Faulhaber 2017: 133)

As we continue to deny the deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children’s right to high quality access to language and communication, we wonder whether we are truly lost in interpreting.

2. Deaf Child and Interpreter — Challenges of Inclusion in Kindergarten

The inclusion of a deaf child is not total if a good access to information, communication and social interactions is not provided for the child, and the key role in this is the kindergarten interpreter's. In this chapter we will describe the needs of a deaf child but also get to know Izzy, and define what a kindergarten interpreter is, as well as what his/her role and tasks are.

2.1. Deaf Child

Every child is unique, but we give little or no importance to the access to information and communication of children with hearing impairments (deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind children). Each deaf child has a different degree of hearing impairment, a different family background, a different hearing aid, a different approach to language and information, but also a different way of communicating.

The period until the age of seven is crucial for the normal language-cognitive development of every child. This means that the child should master his/her native language completely by the age of five. By acquiring at least one language the preconditions are created for exercising the right to an education and to achieving success (Pribanić 2001: 288; Napoli et al. 2015: 171).

During this period, deaf children, just like their hearing peers, show equally astonishing interest in language absorption if they have an adequate and natural environment or appropriate support in communication. If a child is unable to acquire his/her natural language throughout this critical age (the native tongue of deaf and deaf-blind children who have a deaf parent is sign language), his/her success during the subsequent acquisition of a native tongue as well as another language (for example, spoken Croatian) will be considerably weaker. Competences developed in the child's first language clearly contribute to his/her ability to learn other languages.

Problems arise when deaf or hearing parents do not know or do not sufficiently use sign language thus not allowing their child to develop the language — sign language — in the most natural way for him/her. Often a lot of time is wasted in that critical period of language formation. For many hearing parents, from the moment of the first diagnosis related to the hearing impairment, after the initial shock and disbelief, a vicious cycle begins from not accepting a new situation, sometimes closing their eyes and ignoring it. In addition, the parents are often left to their own, without the support of family, friends, and the system while in search of a “magic wand” that will make their child hearing.

Often the priority of hearing parents is to medically eliminate deafness rather than focusing on language acquisition, in order to make language development a priority!

Since this paper aims to present a successful model of introducing a kindergarten interpreter, and in order to be able to make the interaction that took place during the implementation of the project more easily to understand, we will refer here specifically to this deaf girl and get to know her. Her name is Izzy. She was born with normal hearing and her hearing impairment was diagnosed at seven months. Since then, family members have begun to communicate with her in sign language. Already at the age of 13 months, she has mastered the two-hand alphabet (video available at <https://youtu.be/MJu87FWGBBQ>).

Her father, grandmother, and great aunt are CSL native speakers, while her mother and older sister had enrolled into the course of CSL. Izzy started using a hearing aid about five years later. She had access to both CSL as well as spoken Croatian since she knew all the letters of the alphabet when 13 months old, so it was easier to spell words that she could not lip-read well and it also made it easier to correct misspelled words in both finger-spelling and write. She used sign language in her communication, but she gradually started expressing herself in spoken Croatian as well.

2.2. Interpreter in Kindergarten

An interpreter is a person whose primary function is to facilitate the communication between the deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind person and his/her environment through interpreting. In addition to fluency and good competence in the two languages used in the interpreting process, the interpreter must also master the cultural aspects of both sign language and spoken language. His/her task is to equalise the source language (the language from which it is interpreted) and the target language (the language into which it is interpreted). In addition to all of the above, a deafblind interpreter should also be familiar with all communication methods used by the deafblind (tactile sign language, located sign language, sign language from proximity, palm writing, Braille alphabet, etc.), as well as with the skills and knowledge to describe the environment and to guide a deafblind person (Tarczay 2009).

A kindergarten interpreter is defined as a professionally educated person who is basically a sign language interpreter with additional and specific knowledge and competences for interpreting in the educational process, that is, working with preschool children. The word “kindergarten” added to the word “interpreter” defines his/her role and tasks, which are different from the usual sign language interpreter’s job (EIPA Diagnostic Center; Teruggi 2003).

The kindergarten interpreter plays a key role in the high quality inclusion of deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children into regular kindergartens, and his/her most important role is to enable equal access to information and communication, thus facilitating the development and acquisition of the necessary language skills and competences in the preschool environment.

The task of a kindergarten interpreter is to interpret everything that happens in the kindergarten group (stories, songs, recited poems, etc.) and thus to enable effective and successful communication between deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children and their hearing peers, kindergarten teachers and other professional staff. When interpreting to a deafblind child, the kindergarten interpreter must also convey visual information (describing the environment in which they are) and support the independent and safe movement of the child.

Depending on the child’s specific needs, the interpreting is made into Croatian Sign Language (and from Croatian Sign Language) or using the communication system preferred by the deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind child. According to Chafin Seal (2014), the interpreter is therefore an important link that facilitates the kindergarten teacher’s communication and directs him/her towards understanding the child’s language and encouraging its development.

The job of a kindergarten interpreter is more demanding and more extensive than the usual sign language interpreting jobs, primarily because it is about interpreting to a growing and developing child. Vocabulary

and “signabulary” change almost every day. The attention span of a three-year old and of a five-year old is not the same.

The interpreter has only one child during his/her stay in kindergarten, and is with the child all the time, interpreting all activities to him/her. While interpreting various activities, and in order to achieve effective communication, efforts should be made for the interpreter to interpret at the child’s eye level, which means that he/she should sit on the floor, kneel, squat, etc. During the reading of a story or conversation, the interpreter must position him/herself near the kindergarten teacher so that the child has both the kindergarten teacher and the interpreter in his/her field of vision. The interpreter also encourages the child to communicate with his/her peers.

The interpreter is part of the kindergarten team and needs to establish good cooperation with the kindergarten teachers, with expert associates, and with the parents.

The interpreter’s duty towards the parent organisation does not cease with obtaining the job. He/she must constantly improve and keep up-to-date with the latest developments in the field of kindergarten interpreting.

As the deaf child, just like his hearing peers, needs to participate in various sports and other activities (celebrating a child’s birthday, etc.) outside the kindergarten itself, the interpreter also needs to ensure interpreting during those extra-curricular activities (National Deaf Center 2018; LC Interpreting Services 2015).

Meet Morena, the first kindergarten interpreter.

Morena (1990) holds a master’s degree in primary education. She was attending a sign language course organised by the Croatian Association of Deafblind Persons *Dodir* at the same time while studying at the Faculty of Teacher Education. The love of sign language and children prompted her to volunteer at the *Dodir* Association. After graduation, she completed a sign language interpreting course, an interpreting course for the deafblind, and additional education for a kindergarten interpreter. In 2014, at the age of 24, she has been employed by the *Dodir* Association as the first sign language interpreter in a regular kindergarten in Croatia. For about four years, she has been interpreting everyday kindergarten activities, songs, games and stories, as well as birthdays and theatrical presentations to Izzy. She has organised and conducted various educational workshops for deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children and their hearing friends. She collaborated with the Ethnographic and Natural History Museum, which opened their doors to the youngest members of the *Dodir* Association. She ran the “Little Sign Language School” for elementary school children and participated in the project “I Want to Hear Us Playing Too”.

3. Interpreting in Kindergarten — Priority of Inclusive Education for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind Children

3.1. The Initial Meeting between the Interpreter and the Child — Who Is Being Evaluated by Whom?

For every child, as well as its parents, the first day in kindergarten presents a major change in their lives. It is especially difficult for a child with deafness because in kindergarten (in a regular education system) he/she will not only find him/herself in a completely new and unfamiliar environment, but will also face completely new language and social communication demands and challenges.

There are numerous instructions on how to prepare your child for kindergarten, while there is little or even nothing written on how to prepare a child with deafness to overcome all the demands and challenges in communication. Particular attention should be paid to the good preparation of the parents of a child with deafness. The parents' task of explaining to the child in an "understandable way" in advance the situations he/she will encounter is not easy at all. This can be a huge challenge for hearing parents of a deaf child who do not know sign language. In the case in question, both one of the parents as well as the deaf girl are native speakers of sign language, which made the preparation of the child for kindergarten easier.

When the child as well as the parents are well prepared and well informed, it is also necessary to ensure a good and appropriate sign language interpreter.

The first meeting of the deaf child with and an interpreter must be organised, depending on the possibilities, one to three months before their first day in kindergarten. Certainly, this should be organised in an environment where the child feels comfortable and safe. Most often the best place is the child's own home or the playground where he/she most often plays.

After the initial introduction, if the child has accepted the interpreter, it is important that they continuously spend some time together. This allows them to get to know each other better and to develop communication with each other. The child has the opportunity to become accustomed to a new person in his/her life, which allows her to be better prepared for future challenges. If a child with deafness is not well prepared before his/her first day in kindergarten, there may be many problems. Being unprepared can lead to difficult communication in the kindergarten group, withdrawal leading to isolation and an inability to develop linguistic and social skills.

We must not forget the importance of preparedness of the selected sign language interpreter either. The interpreter prepares in advance for the meeting with the parents and the child in his/her parent organisation. The support of the parent organisation is crucial for a successful and efficient implementation of the provision of high quality interpreting services in kindergarten.

1st Story: Trampoline

Izzy's parents wanted to enrol her in a regular kindergarten. In order to enable her to be fully integrated in the hearing environment, they sent a request to my parent organisation, looking for a suitable interpreter. Given my profession (teacher) and knowledge of sign language and my love for children, I was asked whether I would like to be a kindergarten interpreter, which I gladly accepted.

Izzy was almost three years old when we first met. Our first meeting was in June, 2014, three months before

our first day in kindergarten. We were introduced to each other in an environment where she felt comfortable and safe, in her backyard.

At first, I tried to get her attention with various stories in sign language, but she didn't pay attention to me. She got busy with various outdoor activities and kept me at some distance.

I noticed that she loves to be on the move and I suggested that we jump on her trampoline together. At that moment she smiled at me and let me know that she liked the idea.

It seemed to me that it was her who did the "initial assessment" and gave me the green light.

This was followed by a further interview with her parents. What was most important to them was that Izzy accepted and understood me. After that initial meeting, until her departure for the holidays, we had preparatory activities once a week to be as prepared as possible for new challenges.

With her return from vacation and with the first day in kindergarten approaching, our activities were almost on a daily basis. Every day we had some new action — we went for walks, to the playground, inventing different games or reading different picture books. We were developing mutual communication and at the same time expanded both the "signabulary" and the vocabulary.

During that time, I underwent additional counselling and training sessions with native sign language speakers at my parent organisation. It was important for me to prepare well so that I could interpret and convey all the information to Izzy in a way clear and understandable for her.

Since our first meeting, a sense of excitement and curiosity about what the new challenges will bring us was not leaving me. All my attention was focused on her in order to enable her for the best possible inclusion with her hearing peers.

3.2. Inclusive Adjustment — the Interpreter and the Child Together in the Child's Kindergarten Group

The adaptation period for the deaf child, its parents, kindergarten teachers, peer group, interpreters and other kindergarten staff begins with the child's first day in kindergarten. This is an extremely big change in the life of a deaf child because it is not only her first separation from its family, its first time in a new area and environment, with new people, new routines and new friends, but it's also about adapting and accepting specific linguistic and communication aspects and a certain pattern of behaviour which are peculiar to the Deaf community.

Let's remind ourselves that sign language is recognised as the language of a cultural minority — the Deaf community and as such is equal to other spoken languages.

Because of this specificity related to language and communication, inclusive adaptation required a comprehensive preparation and education of kindergarten staff, as well as of the parents of peers from the deaf child's group. Kindergarten teachers from the deaf child's group took a sign language course.

The initial joint going to kindergarten required a lot of patience and perseverance to successfully complete the adaptation process. The deaf child needs more time to understand and accept new rules, e.g. the kindergarten teacher are the ones setting the rules, the interpreter is not a playmate but helping the child to

communicate with other children, etc. As the child would grow and develop so he/she, as well as his/her entire peer group, will gradually become aware of the role and task of the kindergarten interpreter.

Inclusive adaptation also includes small but significant things without which it wouldn't be complete, such as giving a sign language name to the kindergarten teachers and to each child within the group (the first letter of its name, some sign about its physical feature, characteristic, hobby or other attribute specific for that person/child).

For the most part, kindergarten activities are aimed at children with normal hearing, which is why a deaf child feels lost in its group. It is possible for her to feel insecure about how to approach others. Most children spontaneously access all physical forms of activity, such as running, jumping, climbing, exercising, etc. In situations where a kindergarten teacher tells stories or teaches kindergarten rhymes to the children, a deaf child cannot keep its concentration and decides to "escape" and create his/her own activities (runs all around, takes certain toys etc.).

The deaf child becomes more interested in his/her environment if he/she sees that he/she is accepted and that his/her kindergarten teacher and peers are trying to establish communication in sign language with him/her. It doesn't matter if initially it's just a sign or two... because every signing significantly encourages the child to engage in activities.

If the deaf child's specific needs in accessing information, communication and social inclusion are accepted and understood, as well as if creative ways are found to conduct regular kindergarten activities by bringing a story or a song closer to the deaf child, and a sign language story and song to his/her hearing peers, then we can speak of full inclusion.

2nd Story: Tom and Jerry

Honestly, when I think about the beginning of going to kindergarten together, I have to admit, it was very difficult for both of us.

Izzy loved dynamic activities where she could move around a lot. She was skilfully avoiding activities consisting of listening to children's songs or stories and conversation. Izzy would start running and then I had to do it as well. That running and chasing was just like Tom's and Jerry's. I would run after her to convey information to her, and she would always dexterously dodge me, hiding under the table or running to the opposite corner of the room.

All these situations were new to her, and her reactions were quite natural. She has not yet reached the age of three and although she has used CSL in communication, she has not yet been accustomed to follow an interpreter for an extended period of time, which would be tedious for an adult deaf person as well. There was nothing else for me to do but accept the role of Tom the cat, while she clearly enjoyed being Jerry the mouse.

It took a lot of patience and perseverance and running and chasing for Izzy to gradually fit in. This was also the result of everyday individualised preparatory activities. With the persistent support and cooperation of the kindergarten teachers who prepared and gave me a programme of activities in advance, I was able to prepare myself and Izzy well. As a result, Izzy's "signabulary" and vocabulary quickly adapted to the kindergarten setting, and with that her confidence and attention grew. She began to feel more and more secure and had no need to run and hide, and she realised that my interpreting only made it easier for her to communicate with her peers and participate in common activities.

Simple children's songs and stories along with imaginative short theatrical plays prompted her to engage in a talk that the kindergarten teacher used to have with the children. Sometimes Izzy "taught" me some new signs or created some herself.

The kindergarten teachers encouraged Izzy to teach the children the two-handed alphabet as well as some story-related signs which only contributed to the overall situation.

Eventually, Tom and Jerry remained on the movie screen, and Izzy and I became a successful team that managed to overcome all communication challenges in kindergarten.

3.3. Individualised Preparatory Activities — Acquisition of Language and Communication Skills

Regular kindergarten programmes are full of activities that include a variety of rhymes, recitals and stories. At the very beginning, the deaf child together with its interpreter has considerable difficulty in tracking all that linguistic imagination.

It is not easy for the interpreter to interpret all this auditory diversity to the child without adequate preparation. The interpreter should be given the opportunity to prepare well for his/her role. The best way for it is to get a list of planned activities in advance collaborating with kindergarten teachers. In this way he/she will be able to prepare adequately. Likewise, the interpreter prepares for and guides the deaf child through the events, activities, and stories they will encounter that day in advance. The individualised preparatory activities thus designed make it easier for the interpreter to interpret and for the child to more easily follow and understand the interpreting.

Moreover, because of the nature of the situation, a deaf child is hardly equal with its peers at the level of linguistic and communication skills and competences. As in our country the right of every deaf child to use sign language is still neglected, we began devising support for learning spoken Croatian as a foreign language on a daily basis.

In order to successfully ensure an inclusive environment, several necessary prerequisites had to be provided to carry out individualised preparatory activities: space, time, consistency in carrying out the activities, interesting content and playing as an activity.

Providing a space or corner where both the interpreter and the child would prepare every day in peace before joining the kindergarten. It is desirable that the space used is always the same and that it is free from disruptive factors so that the child can participate freely in the activities prepared for him by the interpreter. Due to overcrowded kindergartens and lack of space, this can sometimes be a problem. But with good will and agreement, the problem can be solved. Office space is exceptionally provided.

Determining the time needed for carrying out the activities is very important. As a rule, the activities last from half an hour to a maximum of forty-five minutes, depending on the concentration of the child. The optimal time for preparatory activities is upon arrival at the kindergarten, and certainly before joining the kindergarten group.

Consistency in carrying out activities. Children need constant involvement in order to acquire work habits in the first place, so individual activities should be carried out on a daily and continuous basis.

Ensure that an interesting content is offered to the child. It must be interactive, diverse and tailored to the child's age. When designing activities and preparing didactic materials, one should also consider what the child is interested in and include that as part of the plan. If something specifically related to the child is included in individual activities, the child will focus its attention and will be happy to participate in them.

Always only playing — learning through play, especially using the Montessori Method (always pointing and touching first, explaining later). This will really capture the child's attention and motivate her to be involved.

3rd Story: Miffy

When we started our preparatory individualised activities, I initially got angry glances from Izzy when we went to a separate room, and our activities were relatively short at the time.

Izzy always thought of ways to avoid tasks and games (she had to go to the toilet, she had to see who came into the group... or she would just run away — Jerry). There have also been situations when she would signal my with a sign everyone understood, putting her forefinger in front of her mouth to be silent.

I used different ways to get her attention. After a while, I discovered the missing link — rabbits. Rabbit were her favourite animals, and she loved everything related to them. By using its character in our individualised activities, Izzy began to embrace them and engage in them gladly.

Firstly, I introduced the “Miffy” picture books by the famous Dutch author Dick Bruna. His picture books cover a variety of topics and are interesting, but short and simple. Maybe it was because at the age of seven months (when she was diagnosed with severe hearing impairment) she watched cartoons with the same character at home and was receiving her first sign instructions in sync. (Miffy has a balloon, a blue balloon, a yellow balloon, etc.). There is not a lot of dialogue in the Miffy cartoons, everything is understandable from the characters' movements. For the same reason, she also loved cartoons like “Masha and the Bear” and “Pat & Mat” and “Mister Bean”.

The rabbit character has opened us the door in our daily preparations that have changed over time and were becoming more and more complex and diverse. I started using different educational materials and games, and Izzy became more and more cooperative. I took the Montessori approach when working with her, always giving her a specific object before explaining. I let her manipulate the object on her own and only when she looked at me inquiringly began to explain. She always followed me closely.

The main objective of our activities was to prepare both of us for the educational activities she would encounter during the day in the kindergarten group.

Given that she was aware of the situations she would encounter in advance, she confidently began to be involved with them during their implementation in the kindergarten group.

3.4. Interpreting Kindergarten Activities

The second chapter described the role as well as the task of the interpreter, and here we will focus on the interpreting of kindergarten activities only. It's not the same to interpret for an adult and for a child. When an interpreter interprets to an adult user, his/her main task is to interpret (transfer accurate and complete

information).

When interpreting for a child it is not easy to interpret rhymes and stories with a lot of dynamics. How to accurately and completely convey the contents of stories, rhymes, plays, dialogues from cartoons, etc? How to interpret the entire content in order for it to be completely meaningful and understandable to the child?

However, interpreting is not the biggest challenge for a kindergarten interpreter. Sometimes it is necessary to choose the appropriate method of interpreting, whether to use simultaneous or consecutive interpreting in certain situations.

Choosing a posture for interpreting is a completely different story from the one when interpreting to an adult. Due to the principle of interpretation that communication takes place at eye level means that most of the time the interpreter spends, on the floor kneeling or squatting while interpreting (unless he/she is chasing his/her user).

In addition, the interpreter often finds him/herself in difficult situations when a kindergarten teacher or a child asks him/her to do something while he/she cannot neglect his/her main role, which is exclusively interpreting. A sign language interpreter is not synonymous with a helper or an assistant. The interpreter often has to take a clear stance. It should be clear to the deaf child that the interpreter is not a playmate or a great friend but an interpreter. It should be made clear to the peer group that he/she is not a kindergarten assistant teacher, and the kindergarten teachers should bear in mind that the interpreter is not a third kindergarten teacher. Rules must be clearly set, and in a kindergarten group they are made by the kindergarten teachers while the interpreter only interpreters them. Both the deaf child and his/her peer group become gradually aware that the interpreter is a communication link — this encourages and develops direct communication and increases the deaf child's self-confidence to address the environment independently and vice versa.

4th Story: Sign Me Love

My main and primary task was to interpret, and as any good interpreter I tried to interpret everything. I simultaneously interpreted to Izzy into sign language the children's conversations, the teacher's instructions, songs, stories and all other auditory information on a daily basis. Izzy realised that she was in fact becoming more and more acquainted with new words and signs every day, which enabled her to better communicate with her peers.

I also interpreted spontaneous situations such as why a child was crying or laughing, what was it about the kindergarten teacher was talking with a group of children... all the incidental information. In this way, it was enabled that Izzy be informed and equal with her peers.

Many often asked me if my constant presence was separating Izzy from her friends. Children do not complicate matters and it was actually quite logical and normal for them that the two of us come as a pair. When one of us came to the kindergarten before the other, there were always questions where the other half was. Most of them thought for a while that we actually lived together. My presence has been shown to increase her social inclusion and interaction with her peer group, as well as her acceptance of the group.

At first, when talking to Izzy, children always started their sentences by saying "Tell her that..." Over time, as they were exposed to sign language on a daily basis, they began to use it independently. First there was one sign, then another. After a while, they would come up with a simple sentence, and when they got stuck they would ask me to show the appropriate sign ("How do I tell her...?"). These were wonderful moments of

sign bonding. Sign language as a link broke down all communication prejudices.

This was especially pronounced when first little loves began to emerge, her friends realising the advantage of sign language. There were times when their game was too quiet for me, but when I looked at them a little better, I would see that they actually have serious conversations about their little loves, only in sign language. The logic is clear, you only use sign language, and no one can hear your secret. By that time, her girl peers had developed excellent communication with her using sign language independently and they didn't need someone to interpret their little secrets.

Her kindergarten group became a bilingual one in which sign language and Croatian spoken language were interwoven every day.

As Izzy grew older and more confident, we spontaneously developed an agreement that I would not follow her constantly, but that I would always be around, far enough for her to slowly develop communication with her friends. In those moments, I would sit near their corner where they were playing and preparing work materials while secretly watching them. When they got stuck in the communication, I would jump in, or Izzy would order me like a real boss "Moena, come!" She used both speech and sign language in communication and struggled to lip-read. If a child would make a mistake, she would correct it. There have also been situations when I was confused myself and used the wrong sign. She would understand what I wanted to sign from the context, but would also warn me about a sign I had misused.

When interpreting common activities, I would always stand near the kindergarten teacher so that Izzy would always have both of us in her field of view.

Over time, I learned to "read" her facial expression and see if she was following the interpretation, looking through me or not understanding, but refusing to say so. If I wasn't sure if my interpretation was reaching her, I would ask her a question about the situation being interpreted. With her increasing confidence, she began to stop me on her own if she did not understand me or if some new words appeared that were not clear to her.

3.5. Interpreting Extracurricular Activities

There is no complete inclusion of a deaf child if interpreting is limited to kindergarten activities only. Like any other child, he/she wants to be involved in other activities that take place outside the kindergarten and its environment. One of the most common extracurricular activities is going to children's birthdays. There are also going to excursions, to swimming and skating schools (which took place as part of the kindergarten programme), to theatre plays...

Each situation posed a particular challenge for both the interpreter and the child. It was necessary to agree on how to interpret e.g. during skating if the interpreter does not know how to skate. Where will the strategic position of the interpreter be? There was also a need to agree on some signs in some of competition games. Sometimes a whole sign system had to be devised to gain time.

Thanks to the presence of an interpreter, the deaf child was involved in all activities just like his/her hearing peers and had the opportunity to learn many new things and get acquainted with new situations.

When a child enters a pre-school group, it should be taken into account that a full day at kindergarten is not

sufficient to prepare the child for school. For a normal psychically and physically balanced development of the child, given the specific needs posed by language and communication it was necessary to enable the child to gain additional knowledge and experience outside the kindergarten. Thus, in agreement with the parents, in accordance with the appropriate events, visits to museums, children's theatres and workshops were organised once a week that enabled her to see and get to know certain things and situations on the spot.

5th Story: Little Big Teachers

In addition to kindergarten, I also interpreted for Izzy in extracurricular activities.

The most common extracurricular activities were children's birthday parties. Considering the number of birthday parties we attended, her peers noticed that I had to introduce myself and explain to the animators who I was and what my role was so that the children eventually assumed this responsibility and educated everybody about sign language and deafness.

There was an interesting situation at a child's birthday party where an animator called the children to gather so that they could all be photographed together for a souvenir. Children would be children, they were all over the playroom and so was Izzy. The animator called each one of them by name. When she called out her name, the children warned her "No, she's deaf, she can't hear. Here's her interpreter." The animator answered that she would talk louder, but the children warned her again "No, she's deaf. You must use sign language because she will not understand this way." Former students became teachers.

4. Conclusion

The implementation and completion of the project “Interpreter in Kindergarten” in the kindergarten *Mali princ* (Little Prince) provided specific guidelines, i.e. examples of how communication situations in preschool environment can be redesigned by implementing a kindergarten interpreter model for all hearing impaired children (deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children). By introducing an interpreter into kindergarten, the way of communication and access to information adapts to the needs of each individual child, taking into account, of course, the individual needs of early (sign and/or spoken) language acquisition. This allows the child to develop language competences normally, as well as a good preparatory level for school.

The first introduction of an interpreter into a kindergarten enabled a deaf girl to be included equally in the educational process, the equalisation of opportunities, a better preparation for school and, ultimately, achieving better educational results at a later age (Slettebak & Ytterhus 2015; de Wit 2017: 121).

“As a result of the increased inclusion of deaf persons in mainstream education, the demand for sign language interpreters in education has increased dramatically over the years (Antia, et al., 2007; Marschark, et al., 2005)” (de Wit 2017: 118)

During her kindergarten residency, the girl attained excellence in social interactions. She has made numerous friends, and birthday invitations continue to come, even though they do not share the same school bench now. She was actively involved in joint plays and various performances.

In addition to a developed social interaction, the girl possesses a balanced linguistic-cognitive development. The girl is equally good at using Croatian Sign Language and spoken Croatian (speaking, reading and writing). Knowledge of the acquired language also makes it easier for her to learn English.

The girl has developed communication skills. She engages in conversations, asks questions, interrupts the interlocutor if she doesn't understand something, explains, but also makes different jokes.

Thanks to her kindergarten interpreter, the girl had access to all the information and was able to participate equally in all activities as well as her hearing peers, both in kindergarten and extracurricular activities. Test results showed that the girl belongs to the group of gifted children. All of the above led to ensuring a high quality preparation for school.

Successful results are evident not only with the girl in question but with her peer group too. The children were learning about empathy and accepting diversity from a young age. Through play, they spontaneously learned a new language, Croatian Sign Language. Some children, as well as some of the kindergarten teachers, used sign language in direct communication with her.

If we accept that sign language is recognised and equal to other spoken languages and that every deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind child is entitled to his/her mother tongue — Croatian Sign Language — only then can we provide the child with a fully inclusive environment from preschool age.

This project has made a significant contribution to the field of preschool education for deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children, not only in Zagreb, but throughout Croatia.

Finally, we can conclude that it is possible to have a KINDERGARTEN FOR ALL!

5. Literature

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Abstract

Qualified and trained sign language interpreters in education are essential for children who are deaf⁴. In order to be educated adequately in a regular school setting a deaf child needs access. This access to education can be provided in various ways. This article will provide a brief insight into the current situation in Europe and the possibilities and limitations of a sign language interpreting services in the classroom.

Key words: sign language interpreter, education, access, quality of interpreting services

Sažetak

Kvalificirani i educirani prevoditelji znakovnog jezika u obrazovanju su od ključne važnosti za gluha djecu⁵. Kako bi u redovnom školovanju primilo odgovarajuće obrazovanje gluho dijete treba pristup. Taj se pristup obrazovanju može pružiti na različite načine. Ovaj će članak pružiti kratak uvid u trenutnu situaciju u Europi i u mogućnosti i ograničenja usluga prevođenja znakovnog jezika u učionici.

Ključne riječi: prevoditelj znakovnog jezika, obrazovanje, pristup, kvaliteta usluga prevođenja

4 Deaf person in this article refers to persons who are deaf, deafblind and/or hard of hearing.

5 U ovom se članku izraz gluha osoba odnosi na gluhe, gluhoslijepe i nagluhe osobe.

Historically children who were deaf or hard of hearing were placed in specialized schools. The schools were often boarding schools and the children went only home for a few weeks a year (Tijsseling 2014; Woll & Adam 2012). A considerable amount of time in the deaf schools was spent on speech therapy instead of on learning as in regular schools. Times have changed, deaf schools are closing and in many European countries deaf pupils are increasingly placed in regular schools (Krausneker, Becker, Audeoud, & Tarcsova 2017; Murray, Meulder, & Maire 2018). This change occurred due to new conventions, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), but also due to the improvement of technical hearing aids, such as cochlear implants (CI) (De Meulder & Haualand 2019; Holmström & Schönström 2017; Murray, Meulder, et al. 2018; Murray, Snoddon, De Meulder, & Underwood 2018; Reuter 2017) and the often uncritically proposed and largely accepted solution at the institutional level to lack of access seems to be increasing the number of interpreters. Using documented examples from education and health care settings, we raise concerns that arise when SLIS become a prerequisite for public service provision. In doing so, we problematize SLIS as replacing or concealing the need for language-concordant education and public services. We argue that like any social institution, SLIS should be studied and analyzed critically. This includes more scrutiny about how different kinds of “accesses” can be implemented without SLIS, and more awareness of the contextual languaging choices deaf people make beyond the use of interpreters.”,”URL”:"http://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/tis.18008.dem",,"DOI”:"10.1075/tis.18008.dem",,"ISSN”:"1932-2798, 1876-2700",,"title-short”:"Sign language interpreting services",,"journalAbbreviation”:"TIS",,"language”:"en",,"author”:[{"family”:"De Meulder",,"given”:"Maartje"}, {"family”:"Haualand",,"given”:"Hilde"}],,"issued”:{“date-parts”:[["2019",9,6]]},,"accessed”:{“date-parts”:[["2019",10,28]]}}, {"id”:801,”uris”:[“http://zotero.org/users/5923596/items/NGVG8Z53”],,”uri”:[“http://zotero.org/users/5923596/items/NGVG8Z53”],,”itemData”:{“id”:801,”type”:"article-journal",,”title”:"Resources for deaf and hard-of-hearing students in mainstream schools in Sweden. A survey",,”container-title”:"Deafness & Education International",,”page”:"29-39",,”volume”:"19",,”issue”:"1",,”source”:"Taylor and Francis+NEJM",,”abstract”:"Although once placed solely in deaf schools, a growing number of deaf students in Sweden are now enrolling in mainstream schools. In order to maintain a functional educational environment for these students, municipalities are required to provide a variety of supporting resources, e.g. technological equipment and specialized personnel. However, the functions of these resources and how these relate to deaf students’ learning is currently unknown. Thus, the present study examines public school resources, including the function of a profession called a hörselpedagog (HP, a kind of pedagogue that is responsible for hard-of-hearing students.

The UNCRPD article 9.2(e) states the right to professional sign language interpreters:

Provide forms of live assistance and intermediaries, including guides, readers and professional sign language interpreters, to facilitate accessibility to buildings and other facilities open to the public.

The right to education is also mentioned in article 24 of the CRPD, specifically the right to inclusive education. The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) has protested against this as inclusive education is not necessarily the best option for deaf students (Murray, Meulder, et al. 2018). Therefore, the WFD calls for more research into best practices to ensure sign language environments for deaf children in different educational environments (Murray, Meulder, et al. 2018).

Many children in western countries with hearing loss are receiving a cochlear implant (CI) at a very young age. Parents of deaf children are often unaware of sign language as a natural language for their deaf child and may be advised by medical professionals to not use sign language in combination with a CI as this might hinder the learning of spoken language (O'Neill 2017). At the same time, the Deaf community has been lobbying for deaf children to use the form of communication that suits them best be it sign or spoken language, or a mix of both (Humphries et al. 2014). This article, however, focuses on the provision of sign language interpreting services.

As a result of technological advances it is assumed that these children can attend education like any other child (De Meulder & Hualand 2019) and the often uncritically proposed and largely accepted solution at the institutional level to lack of access seems to be increasing the number of interpreters. Using documented examples from education and health care settings, we raise concerns that arise when SLIS become a prerequisite for public service provision. In doing so, we problematize SLIS as replacing or concealing the need for language-concordant education and public services. We argue that like any social institution, SLIS should be studied and analyzed critically. This includes more scrutiny about how different kinds of “accesses” can be implemented without SLIS, and more awareness of the contextual languaging choices deaf people make beyond the use of interpreters.”,”URL”:<http://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/tis.18008.dem>,”DOI”:[10.1075/tis.18008.dem](https://doi.org/10.1075/tis.18008.dem),”ISSN”:[1932-2798](https://www.issn.org/1932-2798), 1876-2700”,”title-short”:[Sign language interpreting services](https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/tis.18008.dem),”journalAbbreviation”:[TIS](https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/tis.18008.dem),”language”:[en](https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/tis.18008.dem),”author”:[{“family”:[De Meulder](https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/tis.18008.dem),”given”:[Maartje](https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/tis.18008.dem)},{“family”:[Hualand](https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/tis.18008.dem),”given”:[Hilde](https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/tis.18008.dem)}],”issued”:{“date-parts”:[[\[“2019”,9,6\]](https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/tis.18008.dem)]},”accessed”:{“date-parts”:[[\[“2019”,10,28\]](https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/tis.18008.dem)]}},”schema”:<https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json>”} . Deaf children are most often placed in regular classrooms. Some countries allow for the pupil to have a sign language interpreter in the classroom, but this is highly dependent on the country and the laws and regulations in place (de Wit 2017). An educational setting can be a challenging place to be in; there are many interactions and interventions either individually, in pairs or in larger groups. The pupil who is deaf will need to be very focused on the communication before even understanding what is being said. This process takes a lot of energy and is exhausting. Having a sign language interpreter in the classroom will ensure that more information gets across, which will be less fatiguing for the pupil to receive the information.

Importantly, when a pupil has an interpreter in the classroom, one must be aware that information goes indirectly, namely through the interpreter. This has great consequences for the pupil. The pupil must look at the interpreter to receive the information and also understand the interpretation produced by the interpreter (Marschark, Sapere, Convertino, & Seewagen 2005; Schick 2004). It is important to realize that the pupil will only be able to focus on one thing at a time. The moment the pupil watches the interpretation he or she will not have any direct contact with the teacher or students and might miss out on any other visual information presented (De Meulder & Hualand 2019; de Wit 2017) and the often uncritically proposed and largely accepted solution at the institutional level to lack of access seems to be increasing the number of interpreters. Using documented examples from education and health care settings, we raise concerns that arise when SLIS become a prerequisite for public service provision. In doing so, we problematize SLIS as replacing or concealing the need for language-concordant education and public services. We argue that like any social

institution, SLIS should be studied and analyzed critically. This includes more scrutiny about how different kinds of “accesses” can be implemented without SLIS, and more awareness of the contextual languaging choices deaf people make beyond the use of interpreters.”,”URL”:"http://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/tis.18008.dem",,"DOI”:"10.1075/tis.18008.dem",,"ISSN”:"1932-2798, 1876-2700",,"title-short”:"Sign language interpreting services",,"journalAbbreviation”:"TIS",,"language”:"en",,"author":[{"family”:"De Meulder",,"given”:"Maartje"},{"family”:"Haualand",,"given”:"Hilde"}],,"issued”:{“date-parts”:[["2019",9,6]]},,"accessed”:{“date-parts”:[["2019",10,28]]}},{"id”:"794",,"uris":["http://zotero.org/users/5923596/items/PQ3DLR6K"],,"uri":["http://zotero.org/users/5923596/items/PQ3DLR6K"],,"item-Data”:{“id”:"794",,"type”:"chapter",,"title”:"Sign language interpreter use in inclusive education",,"container-title”:"UNCRPD Implementation in Europe - A Deaf Perspective. Article 24: Education",,"collection-title”:"An EUD series",,"publisher”:"European Union of the Deaf",,"publisher-place”:"Brussels",,"page”:"112-129",,"event-place”:"Brussels",,"author":[{"family”:"Wit",,"given”:"Maya",,"dropping-particle”:"de"}],,"editor":[{"family”:"Reuter",,"given”:"Katja"}],,"issued”:{“date-parts”:[["2017"]]}},,"schema”:"https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"} .

The sign language interpreter cannot just be anyone. The interpreter must be educated and qualified as an interpreter. The interpreter should not be an assistant, but a college or university trained professional. As mentioned before, the pupil relies on the interpretation, that means that the interpreter has a great responsibility to ensure communication is interpreted correctly so the pupil is receiving all education through the interpreter (Schick, 2005). To interpret adequately the interpreter must be knowledgeable on the topic. This means that the interpreter must inform her or himself, prepare, and seek clarification if needed.

For the pupil, having an interpreter in the classroom is often the first encounter with a sign language interpreter for a longer period of time (de Wit 2011). Deaf pupils often do not know what the role of the interpreter is and will need to be informed what the interpreter’s responsibilities are and what can be asked of the interpreter. The interpreter in the classroom requires different skills and strategies (Marschark, Sapere, Convertino, Seewagen, & Maltzen 2004). The interpreter is not there to help but to provide an interpretation. The educational responsibility lies with the teacher, who may also lack experience in working with an interpreter. It is essential that all parties involved acknowledge their roles and inform each other of their expectations. This will assist in laying the foundation for a more successful interpretation in the classroom.

Even given the limitations to having an interpreter in the classroom it is often the only way a deaf child can gain functional access to education. Each child has the right to an education, regardless of their abilities, therefore access to education must be provided, also if this means providing a pupil with extensive sign language interpreting services in the classroom. Education is essential for the future of the child and national governments must ensure that this foundation is provided to each child. As a consequence, when an interpreter is needed the school and the government must take on the responsibility and assist in providing the interpreting services. There are many different systems across Europe, for a comprehensive overview please see De Wit (2017). To ensure the quality of services, the interpreter must be trained, qualified and properly remunerated. Such interpreting services will give deaf children access to education, will increase educational achievement and will contribute to the well-being and quality of life of the deaf pupil (Hintermair 2008; de Wit 2011).

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