



Reducing the inclination towards school absenteeism trough
extracurricular activities. Theoretical and applied studies at the level of
Bihor county

Valentin Cosmin BLÂNDUL
University of Oradea

Authors note

Abstract

During last years, running away from school, and thus school absenteeism have become phenomena that are even more present in Romanian and European education. The problem is even more serious as passing a number of 80 absences present in the roll creates the premises for school abandon. Statistic data published recently demonstrates that at the level of the European Union the two aspects mentioned above – absenteeism and school abandon-have a rate that often overcome 10-15%. The causes that lead to such numbers are diverse and include economic causes, social and cultural, psychological, pedagogical causes, etc. in Romania, and particularly in Bihor County, the numbers are similar to those in Europe and are influenced by variables like: the student's age, school level, personal type, background. Still, daily educational practice show us that in order to keep students in school, not the formal didactic activities are the most important, but mostly the extracurricular ones that respond to their needs and expectations. In our article we will analyze the inclination for school absenteeism as a risk factor in school abandon by taking into consideration the students' background and the extracurricular activities offered by the school. There will be presented statistical data offered by the School Inspectorate from Bihor County, as well as the results of a research developed in a POSDRU project by which we desire to prevent and correct school abandon by reducing the rate of school abandon. The results of this research demonstrated that by involving students in activities that will increase their interests towards non-formal education, the rate of school absenteeism decreased significantly.

Key-words: extracurricular activities, non-formal education, scholar absenteeism, scholar dropout (abandon).

Zusammenfassung

Die Flucht von der Schule und das miteingebundene Schulversäumnis sind, in den letzten Jahren, immer mehr, gegenwärtige Erscheinungen im Europäischen und Rumänischen Erziehungswesen. Das Problem ist umso bedenklicher daher dass, das Überschreiten einer Anzahl von 80, in das Klassenbuch eingetragenen Absenzen, die Voraussetzung für die Schulabtreterung darstellt. Die neulich veröffentlichten statistischen Angaben zeigen dass die zwei oben erwähnten Erscheinungen-das Schulversäumnis und die Schulabtreterung (Schulverzicht) eine Vorherrschaft darstellt die oft 10-15% überholt. Die Ursachen die zu solchen Werten führen sind verschiedenartig und beeinschließen, unter anderen, auch wirtschaftliche, sozio-kulturelle, psychologische, pädagogische u.a. In Rumänien und im besonderen im Kreis Bihor, sind diese Werte vergleichbar mit den europäischen und gleichzeitig, von veränderlichen Größen beeinflusst, wie zum Beispiel – das Alter des Schülers, das Einschulungsniveau, das Geschlecht der Person, das soziale Abstammungsmilieu, usw. Trotz allem, zeigt uns die Erfahrung im alltäglichen praktischen Unterricht, dass nicht die formalen Schultätigkeiten unbedingt wichtig sind, um die Schüler im Schulumilieu zu behalten, sondern eher die außerschulischen, extracurricularen Tätigkeiten, die ihrer Erwartungen entsprechen. Im vorliegenden Beitrag werden wir die Vorherrschaft des Schulversäumnisses als Risikofaktor im Auftreten des Schulverzichts bei den Schülern untersuchen, im Lichte deren sozialen Abstammungsmilieus und der, von der Schule vorgeschlagenen, extracurricularen Tätigkeiten. Es werden sowohl die statistischen, vom Schulinspektorat des Kreises Bihor gelieferten Angaben, als auch die Resultate einer, im Rahmen eines POSDRU Projektes entwickelten Forschung vorgestellt, durch die wir uns vorgenommen haben die Vorbeugung und Verbesserung der Schulabtreterung durch die Herabsetzung der Vorherrschaft des Schulversäumnisses innerhalb der Schulen zu verwirklichen. Die Ergebnisse dieser Forschung haben bewiesen, dass durch das Hineinziehen der Schüler in Tätigkeiten, die ihr Interesse an nonformale Erziehung steigt, die Rate des Schulversäumnisses wesentlich gesunken werden kann.

Schlüsselwörter: Extracurriculare Tätigkeiten; nonformale Erziehung; Schulversäumnis; Schulabtreterung/Schulverzicht.

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1. The problem

One of the most serious problems that European and Romanian education is confronting in recent years is the alarming increase of the rate of school absenteeism (Kempes et. al., 2005) and when their number exceeds 80 absences / student / academic year, the scholar dropout risk arises installation. A scholar absenteeism means temporary leaving of school by pupils from different reasons, like personal or family's ones. If the phenomenon is repeated, it can turn in the first instance to "scholar dropout disguise", and finally into a "total one" (Blândul et. al, 2010).

Statistical data obtained in the educational community from Bihor county are extremely interesting. The scholar dropout rate is calculated by a percentage between the number of students enrolled in full-time education and the graduates. In Bihor county, school dropout rate in 2006/2007 registered by the National Institute of Statistics and School Inspectorate shall submit the following (Table 1 and 2) (Blândul, 2012):

Table 1

Scholar Dropout Frequency from Compulsory Learning System from Bihor County according with Pupils' Gender

<i>Total Number of Pupils</i>	<i>Scholar Dropout - Boys</i>	<i>Scholar Dropout - Girls</i>
53225	190	127
	0,35%	0,23%

Tabelul 2

Scholar Dropout Frequency from Compulsory Learning System from Bihor County according with Pupils' Residence Place

<i>Total Number of Pupils</i>	<i>Scholar Dropout - Urban</i>		<i>Scholar Dropout - Rural</i>	
	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
53225	82	45	108	82
	0,15%	0,08%	0,2%	0,15%

From the data presented in the tables above, we can see that theory is confirmed by practice. Thus, an encouraging aspect is that in Bihor county scholar dropout rate is less than half a percent and is just over 1% in high school. We can note that scholar dropout rate is higher among boys than for girls,

which seems to confirm the theory about the premature assumption of responsibility for males by employing in the labor market before graduating with a degree of any forms of schooling. We cannot exclude the variant in which such persons can commit criminal acts, or to accompany the family to work abroad temporarily. The same answer we obtained in the case of backgrounds, both for boys and girls in the school dropout rate is higher in rural areas. Possible causes worth to mention family disinterest in education, lack of motivation of pupils for education, students who come from dysfunctional families or Roma' ones, entourage composed of illiterate children, struggling to fit the schedule imposed by the school, the need to obtain immediate material gains etc. .

Trying to solve this complicated problem, University of Oradea and Scholar Inspectorate from Bihor County, Romania, implemented from 1 July 2010 for 2 years a project entitled "**School, My Chance!**", co-financed by the European Social Fund by the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013. The main objective of this project is to prevent and correct early school pupils leaving in such areas where exist a major risk in this sense, by facilitating them access to quality formal education. The target group of the project is pupils who studying in inferior secondary scholar cycle in schools with classes I-VIII of Avram Iancu, Boge, Carasau, Les, and Șuncuiuș, Bihor County, Romania, their parents and teachers (Ortan et. al., 2012).

One of the main activities of the project was *Implementation of A and B Cognitive Therapy for pupils presenting high risk of early school leaving*. Thus, from the first day of the second semester of scholar year 2010 / 2011 started specific A and B Cognitive activities, after a schedule and for some specific academic disciplines selected for each school. The program ran from Monday to Thursday, after mandatory classes and academic disciplines covered were: S08 Avram Iancu - English and Mathematics; S08 Boge - Romanian and English; S08 Carasau - Romanian and Mathematics, S08 Les - Romanian and Mathematics; GRI Șuncuiuș - English and History. Overall, the activities involved students' homework for the next day, or to enhance knowledge and skills acquired in the mentioned scholar disciplines. At the beginning, middle and end of the first year of the program, students involved in the target group were evaluated using oral examination, to determine the acquisition of knowledge for each subject. Also, it was monitored the number of absences that was recorded in the scholar grade book for each student from target group, aiming to increase or decrease them, in parallel with the involvement of students in the program. Another important activity was represented by development of students' social skills, because we consider that one of the most important way to convince them to remain in school is to offer them the opportunity to exchange experience with other colleagues who have similar problems and with others as well, that can create the possibility for an effective integration of students with large number of school absences in learning environment. Concretely, this activity included sports games, drawing competition, volunteering activities, ecological ones and so on (V. Blândul et. al., 2010).

2. Lot of subjects

Lot of subjects was represented by 100 students (N = 100) with risk of early scholar leaving in 5 schools: S08 Avram Iancu and S08 Boge - with 20 students, S08 Carasau and S08 Les - 15 students and GRI Șuncuiuș - 30 students. Students, whose chronological age was between 11 and 14 years old, were 72 girls and 28 boys.

3. The methodology

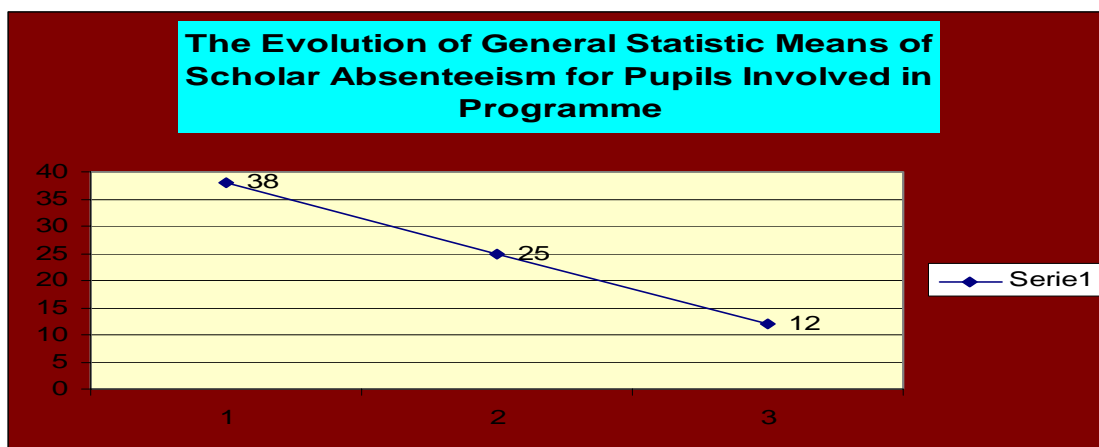
The main research methodology was represented by psycho-pedagogical experiment. So, in pre-test, we evaluated the number of pupils' school absences registered in school grade books. This stage took place at the beginning of academic year 2010 / 2011. The specific psycho-pedagogical intervention took

place during following 2 years of the project (2010-2012) and supposed the implementation of supplementary classes at any scholar disciplines like: Romanian, Mathematics, English and History. The main content of these lessons was represented by homework, solving exercises and problems, supplementary reading some books, games, competitions, documentary trips, volunteering in local community and so on. In post-test, we evaluated once again the number of pupils' school absences from grade books. The present stage took place twice, first at the end of academic years 2010 / 2011 and second one year later, at the end of the whole project. The quantitative interpretation was consisted by computing total number of school absences, maximum and minimum its values, namely correlation between these obtained values at the beginning, middle and the end of project, using Bravais-Pearson quotient.

4. The results

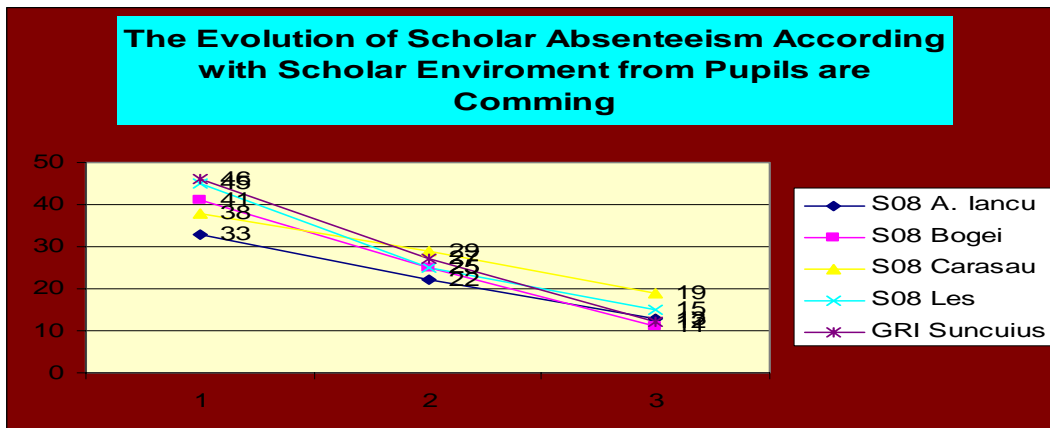
The results that we obtained are very interesting and can be present in following pictures and table.

Picture no. 1



The results are extremely interesting and prove a decreasing of pupils school absenteeism registered in scholar grade books, from viewpoint of its statistical means and its highest / lowest values (Picture no. 1). So, at the beginning of academic year 2010 / 2011, the pupils who composed our focus-group had a mean of 38,59 school absences, their highest number was 89 and lowest one – 20. At the middle of implementation period for psycho-pedagogical intervention (at the end of academic year 2010 / 2011), the statistic mean of pupils' school absenteeism was 25,65, their extremely values being 61 and 20. Finally, at the end of project, the statistical mean of pupils' scholar absenteeism decrease at 11,98, with it maximum value 41 and minimum one 10. It can be observed a significantly reducing of school absences for pupils from project focus-group, especially in the second part of the intervention. These results prove that pupils' involvement in A and B Cognitive Therapy can obtain positive academic performances, able to determine them to remain in formal educational system.

Picture no. 2



The results from each school are similar to those generally described described in the preceding paragraph (Picture no. 2). Thus, we observe the same tendency of decreasing the number of school absences registered by students in those three phases of our research. In addition, the obtained values are relatively the same for all 5 schools, the differences observed being statistically insignificant. So, at the beginning of our research, the fewest absences related to the number of students registered at S08 Avram Iancu (33.61), while that most are at GRI Șuncuiuș (45.44). In the middle of psycho-pedagogical experiment, in terms of school absenteeism, the best situation have the students from S08 Avram Iancu (22.92) and the worst - students from S08 Carasau (29,55). At the end of the experiment, students who have most corrected school absences were those from GRI Șuncuiuș (11.08) and the least - students from S08 Carasau (17,55). Moreover, in these two schools, were registered the higher, namely the smallest difference between the average school absences at the beginning and end of the experimental research. No matter of the obtained values, encouraging is that pupils’ scholar situation represented by number of absences registered in scholar grade books has improved considerably, the risk of early leaving of formal education by them being significantly reduce.

Table 3

The Statistic Correlation between Scholar Absenteeism Registered by Pupil sat the Begining, Middle and End of Research

	General Correlation	S08 Avram Iancu	S08 Bogei	S08 Cărașău	S08 Leș	GRI Șuncuiuș
r_{1-2}	0,67	0,85	0,89	0,32	0,91	0,61
P	<0,01	<0,01	<0,01	<0,1	<0,01	<0,01
R_{1-3}	0,72	0,68	0,94	0,82	0,90	0,52
p	<0,01	<0,01	<0,01	<0,01	<0,01	<0,5
r_{2-3}	0,64	0,45	0,69	0,62	0,64	0,55
p	<0,01	<0,5	<0,1	<0,01	<0,5	<0,5

Data from statistical processing of values representing by number of absences recorded by students with high risk of scholar dropout confirms specific hypothesis that these students will significantly improve their scholar situation after the implementation of A and B Cognitive Therapy Program proposed by the project. Thus, in 4 of the those 5 schools included in project, the calculated values for Bravais-Pearson correlation quotient between the beginning and end of research (r_{1-3}) are highly significant at the 0.01 significance level, while the GRI Şuncuiuş this one is 0.5. On the other hand, highly significant correlation between debut and middle of the program (r_{1-2}) is at the 0.01 significance level for all 5 schools. Statistical correlations with the lowest values recorded between the middle and the end of psycho pedagogic intervention (r_{2-3}) are at significance thresholds that vary according to the school between 0.5 and 0.1. A possible explanation for this situation could be represented by the length of the time allocated to the program and the impact it had on the students involved. Thus, it appears that effects of the program were much stronger after the first year of implementation, students with high risk of school dropout better understanding the importance of formal education and behavior in this respect. In the second year of project implementation, participating students have continued to be interested in extracurricular activities proposed to stay concern in formal education system. However, the final result shows a total change of pupils' attitude towards school, expressed by significantly reducing the number of school absences registered in scholar grade books.

5. Discussion

A first issue that should be discussed concerns upon the socio-economic and cultural environment where are located those 5 schools included in our project. From the beginning, the target group of the project was represented by the students with difficult situation, namely a major scholar dropout risk. Therefore, these students were selected from schools in places socio-economically disadvantaged. After processing the data obtained in this study, we identified two extreme cases, it appears, which correspond to the economic and social reality from Bihor County. First is Carasau with a small population, a big ethnic diversity and a modest level of economic and cultural development. In this village there is one school where are studying children from kindergarten to secondary school cycle. In these circumstances, some local pupils are involved in different other activities than scholar one, such as household activities, field work, merchandising etc. Added to this is the low level of education for the adult population from the village and low aspirations in this sense. Thus it could be explained why at the end of the project pupils from Carasau registered the highest number of absences comparative with their peers from other schools. This means that economic and social daily needs are stronger than the effects of A and B Cognitive Therapy Program. By contrary, pupils from GI Şuncuiuş lives in a village with an acceptable socio-economic development level, fact demonstrated by the presence of superior secondary education that attracts numerous resources in the area. This interest in formal education is much higher and this is shown by the fact that pupils are more aware regarding the importance of it comparative with their colleagues that have reduced the number of school absences registered in scholar grade book.

Another important aspect concerns the content of A and B Cognitive Therapy Program proposed by the project. By its nature, the program proposed by the students performing homework for the main learning disciplines and other additional problems or for improving this theoretical knowledge acquired during the lessons (Kerbs et al., 2007). Moreover, students should be involvement in extracurricular activities with order to motivate them to learn better, or to remain in the educational system. Among these activities we can mention: sports, greening areas near schools, drawing contests or other artwork, documentation trips and visits, supporting families that are in difficult situations, celebrating personal or

community life' various events etc.. Although not solve the problems facing these students, non-formal education activities are designed to motivate them to stay in school, considering most attractive its educational offer and better understanding the importance of formal edicației for their personal and professional development. In this way, non-formal and informal education can be a vital support to the formal one, together constitute a whole with significant effects in preparing students for life (Fullerton et al., 2010).

6. Recommendation and conclusion

The complexity and multitude of causes that can generate scholar dropout risk makes difficult to precisely formulate both prediction and intervention to limit the phenomenon. However, a number of recommendations with the character of generality can be specified later being necessary more specific ones adapted for any particular case (Neamtu, 2003):

- attracting students in decisions that affect them directly;
- support the development of a real partnership teacher - pupil;
- optimization partnership school - family - community;
- providing quality educational services;
- students involvement in extracurricular activities with;
- development of thematic circles school where students can express their skills and personal interests;
- promoting inclusive education;
- support students in learning process.

In conclusion, we can say that in every school there is a group more or fewer students at risk of disengagement and dropout. The factors leading to this situation are very different and acts in strong correlation. The most important such variables are the following: aggression (physical or verbal), low level education outcomes, socio-economic status and origin, namely chronological age of students. The most effective scholar dropout prevention us represented by the intervention upon factors that can cause it, engaging the students in as many scholar and extracurricular activities, or supporting those who have learning difficulties. Otherwise, dropout effects could adversely on the individual score for life and, more generally, could have a negative impact on society as a whole.

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The Modern Educational Paradigm reflected into the Role, Function and Competencies of the Teacher-Manager

Cristian Stan, Denisa Manea*

Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, România

Authors note

Cristian Nicolae Stan is an Associate Professor at the Educational Sciences Department, Faculty of Psychology and Sciences of Education, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania (<http://dse.psiedu.ubbcluj.ro/>). His teaching and research activity covers several domains (including interdisciplinary ones), such as the theory and methodology of educational evaluation, school violence, the typology of interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution in the educational space, teacher personality and skills and the pedagogy of communication. His Ph.D. in Science Education was obtained in 2000 by presenting the thesis entitled "The assessment-self-assessment relationship in the didactic act" at the Babeş-Bolyai University.

* * Corresponding author:

E-mail address: cristiss2004@yahoo.com

Abstract

Managerial efficiency is dependent on the organizational and personal skills/abilities of strategic held by professor manager. Both as manager and partner in education, the teacher of contemporary school it is useful to held, in addition to scientific, psychosocial, educational and decizional skills, a series of general skills needed to meet a harmonious and functional manner own personality profile, classroom behavior, such as for example the self-motivation, enthusiasm, moderate directivity or orientation to anticipation.

Keywords: Professor manager, skills, directivity, managerial efficiency

Zusammenfassung

Die Managementleistung hängt von den strategischen Kompetenzen/Fähigkeiten, von der Organisierungsfähigkeit und der persönlichen Wirksamkeit des Manager-Professors ab. In seiner doppelten Eigenschaft als Manager und Ausbildungspartner sind dem Lehrer aus der gegenwärtigen Schule außer seinen wissenschaftlichen, psychosozialen, pädagogischen, entscheidenden usw. Kompetenzen auch eine Reihe von allgemeinen Fähigkeiten notwendig, die eine harmonische und funktionelle Weise der Vereinigung der eigenen Persönlichkeit, des Verhaltens in der Klasse, der Selbstmotivation, des Enthusiasmus, der gemäßigten Richtungsfähigkeit oder der Vorwegnahme bewirken.

Schlüsselworte: Professor Manager, Fähigkeiten, Richtwirkung, Managementeffizienz

Having as point of origin the consideration of the school as organization and the similitude between the institutional management and the classroom management, we, hereby, notice the high degree of solicitation of the teachers-managers due to the great number of activities they have to fulfil. This fact is highlighted by the study of the managerial skills inventory on which is based the managerial development method used within the Centre for Managerial Competencies from IESE Barcelona, which initiated the Health Conduct Programme. The specialists of this prestigious business administration school categorize the managerial skills in *strategic, organizational and personal proficiency skills*. A transposition to the educational plan of the competencies range hold by a school manager according to the hereinabove taxonomy reveals a series of skills or competencies (noticeable and measureable from the behavioural point of view, having similar features as the habits):

- *Strategic skills* facilitating the outcome of *cognitive added-value* by superior adaptation to the environment: vision, orientation towards the „client” students, decision-making, resources administration;
- *Organizational skills* supposing the facilitation of the harmonious *development* of the students both personally and socially: communication, team work, negotiation, organization, relationships;
- *Personal proficiency skills*: facilitates the self- *conduct* in an efficient manner: self-awareness, initiative, motivation, learning, self-control, self-critic, time management, optimism, creativity, integrity, administration.

The didactic role of the teacher is expressed both by the fulfilment of the status of role-model, partner,

attending, and by the fulfilment of the role of „resource-teacher” in transmitting information, in forming skills and abilities, in educating human characters. The contemporary school teacher fulfils his/hers role via creating a safe and trustworthy general environment of the classroom, represented both by the group of students and by the physical space where the instructive-educative process is deployed. The operationalization of this role is expressed via the encouragement of each student’s successes, via creating a flow of sympathy and trust between the teacher and his/hers students. To educate, from the teacher-manager’s perspective, means to deploy one’s activity based on certain moral categories, by counselling the students in view of adopting the critical attitude towards the self behaviour and outcomes, by developing their skill to establish positive interpersonal contacts following the critical analysis of their own preconceptions. To educate, together with to instruct, also means the use of efficient methods, thus facilitating the independent work skills, the development of social virtues, the consolidation of self-esteem, the identification of their own identity. The transmission by the teacher of the cognitive values precedes the transmission of the moral ones. For the purpose of self-awareness, of absorbing and self-implementing these values, the teacher-manager assists the students by underlining the importance of feelings signification, such as: the satisfaction of self-success following the cooperation, of respect for partner’s achievements, of joy to belong to a group, etc.

Whereas the role the teacher-manager holds, we shall explain the concept of *educational partner* in order to facilitate its comprehension and delimitation. Thus, we shall state that this concept refers both to the relationship the teacher has with other educational factors, especially with the parents, and the conception according to which the teacher and the students form together an educational community. In its quality as second socialization instance, after the family, the schools sustains the educative process, and the teacher, from this perspective, collaborates with all the educative factors, harmonizes the formal education with the nonformal and the informal ones. The teacher may, thus, play the role of parent’s consultant, by sharing the responsibility of child’s formation with the family. Another aspect covered by this concept is represented by the three features of the educative influence (social learning, growth of the independence to work in a methodical manner and the development of student’s inner self), which will remain arbitrary and accidental in the absence of some interdependent actions, consensual from the point of view of the pedagogical attitudes and actions. Teacher often find themselves in the difficulty to solve two apparently identical tasks: on one hand, they are responsible for the correct transmission of a certain volume of information and the appraisal of how this information is assimilated, and, on the other hand, they have the duty to develop the „critical skills” of their students, the strategy being to question some truths, to present the material as a confrontation between different thesis, thus supporting them in the formation of intellectual, applicative-practical skills, and, subsequently, in the development of future professional competencies. The role conflict resulted as result of the registered duality, respectively the transmission of speciality knowledge and the quality of educator of the teacher, reaches, sometimes, alarming levels. This is why, in the educational practice, we witness the teachers adopting one of the two attitudes: the concern to transmit the due knowledge or the preoccupation for student’s

training. Thus, Geissler synthesizes the contradictions of fulfilling the role of teacher: *the informant*- transmits and keeps his *science oblige* cold distance; *the partner* - advises, appeals, admonish, guides, suppresses; the *model* - establishes and offers moral demands; the *examiner* – thrives to be objective and impartial; *the educator* – is especially concerned by the human, the „educated”, as partner in the common relationship; *the specialist*- focused on unitary teaching and training. Following all the above exposed theories, one may conclude that the intra-roles tension may be resumed at: *partner vs. examiner; informant vs. chances distributor; model vs. specialist.*

In order to highlight the features of the teacher-student relationship from the modern educational paradigm perspective, we hereby present a selection of the new paradigm principles in relation to the classic educational paradigm:

<i>Principles of the Classic Educational Paradigm</i>	<i>Principles of the Modern Educational Paradigm</i>
<i>There is a hierarchic and authoritarian structure, where conformism is rewarded and the rebellion of different thinking is discouraged;</i>	<i>There are anti-hierarchical principles, the teachers and students see each other especially as people and less as actors;</i>
<i>The accent falls on the proficiency, on the success;</i>	<i>The accent is represented by the development of the personality of the person learning;</i>
<i>The importance is given mainly to the exterior world;</i>	<i>The promoted features are: the activation and growth of the imagination and creativity, the development of student’s inner experiences;</i>
<i>Student’s appraisal is based on strict labelling, which may determine certain forms of stigmatizations, rigid limitations within the label applied;</i>	<i>Labelling is limited to an auxiliary, descriptive role; this would not necessarily mean a fix valorisation, a decree absolute stigmatizing the biography of the person being educated;</i>
<i>The accent falls on theoretical knowledge;</i>	<i>The promoted actions are: the completion of the theoretical knowledge with the practical experiences achieved in the classroom and outside the school;</i>
<i>Learning is obtained for the present time, the informational recycling being consecutive to the scientific progress;</i>	<i>Education has a prospective feature, it is performed for the future, the informational recycling anticipating the scientific progress;</i>
<i>The informational flow is conceived as unidirectional, from teacher to students.</i>	<i>The promoted outcome is: the reciprocity of learning in the teacher-students relationship.</i>

Table1. The principles of the new educational paradigm (*adaptation after Cucos, C., 1996*)

Whereas the competencies an efficient teacher holds are concerned, we shall review the opinion of J. E. Ormrod (1998), according to whom the competencies table presents as follows: *clearly establishes the goals the students have to achieve* – this supposes that the teacher have, for example, the competency to identify the educational objectives to be achieved, by taking into account the student’s characteristics; *dully operationalizes the assumed goals*, by proposing learning tasks adapted to each goal’s specificity; *presents to the students the level of performance* they are expected to attain in performing the various proposed didactic activities; *identifies and conceives learning activities relevant* for student’s real-life events; *manifests preoccupation for ensuring a differentiated and individualized learning, creates and maintains in the classroom a safe working environment* that

favours learning intrinsic motivation; *encourages student's social interaction* in discussing and achieving various learning activities; *guides the learning activity* of the students and their behaviour during the lesson; *facilitates the cognitive processing of information* by highlighting logic connections between certain concepts, resulting in cognitive schemes or in certain operations favouring operational structures aggregation; *helps the students identifying the essential* of the learned lesson, respectively that knowledge and skills representing the ground for studying at the higher level a certain field, fact demanding from the teacher a great capacity to synthesize; *offers working tasks to the students, which are provocative, interesting and which stimulate their intellectual development*; *suggests learning activities* that demand high intellectual and high complexity activities from the students; *performs continuous and accurate appraisal of student's progress* in achieving the proposed goals.

The problematic of the proficient teacher is distinctively treated by R. Iucu (2001) who asserts that the didactic profession claims, from the person involved in instructive-formative activities, four categories of competencies: *scientific competency* (the cognitive skills necessary to process information; selected, up to date, exact scientific information; knowledge circulation skills; flexible didactic experience; the capacity to appeal to various unwavering solutions; research and experimentation specific skills; creative strategies; flexible and dynamic mental operations; knowledge transfer and implementation capacity); *psychosocial competency* (the capacity to establish without difficulty adequate interpersonal relationships with the students; the capacity to adapt to various roles; the capacity to efficiently communicate both with the group and with the students, separately; capacity to adapt the force/the authority to concrete educational circumstances (variation of freedom-authority relation, of indulgence-exigency relation depending on the specific occurrences); availability to adapt to various educational styles; enthusiasm, understanding, friendship); *managerial competency* (capacity to influence the classroom and each and every student; planning and anticipating skills; decisional skills; organization, supervision and coordination skills concerning class/student activity; correct administration of sanctions and rewards; equilibrium: authority-power-responsibility; resistance to stressful situations); *psychopedagogical competency* (capacity to determine the difficulty degree of a content; capacity to make accessible the transmitted information; empathy, capacity to understand student's internal availabilities; creativity in the instructive-formative activity; stimulative, energetic, creative attitude; pedagogical tact (conscientious, controlled organization of the specific pedagogical demarche and capacity of "on going" adaptation depending on the variables newly appeared during the instructive-formative process deployment); methodical spirit and clairvoyance in activity).

We consider that the self-motivation principle (cf. Pânișoară, O., 2009) holds an extremely important place in conserving the functionality of the competency sets hereinabove described, especially in the actual social and economical context, when motivation in choosing the didactical profession is more and more diminished view the inadequate remuneration, the degradation of the educational climate and the excessive bureaucracy in the educational field.

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EDUCATION FOR ALL - ensuring the right to individualized and accessible education

Niculae Cristea

"We believe and proclaim that every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning, [...], that education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of children's characteristics and needs"
(The Salamanca Statement, 1994)

Introductory aspects

History shows that developments in society and education are consensual, which means that substantial global and national changes utterly impose the occurrence of significant changes in the educational field as well. In depth transformations at society level and the dynamics of these transformations require the construction and reconstruction of educational paradigms, the provision of educational solutions that successfully meet the challenges of the contemporary world. Thus, educational policy directions are designed and reviewed according to imperatives, demands and challenges of the contemporary world and want to be "answers" to the major issues at a societal level.

'Education for all' represents a new direction in the world educational policies, launched in 1990 at Jomtien, Thailand. The motto was adopted in 1994 at Salamanca, where "education for all" was defined as "access to quality education for all children". The phrase refers to providing opportunities for all children to participate in education, irrespective of how different they may be and how much they deviate from social norms.

The same declaration asserts the uniqueness of every child's educational profile, based on their own characteristics and needs, which should be personalised and contextualised. All education systems should reconsider their resources so as to create conditions for all children, regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic abilities, to educate and to develop common learning environments.

The right to education of every individual was proclaimed in 1948, by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and has become a topic of discussion in the field of educational sciences, sociology, philosophy, etc.

In the "Dictionary of Pedagogy" (1979), 'the right to education' is defined as a context which presupposes the existence of "possibilities and conditions capable of ensuring the agreement between the innate potential and the system of educational influences in the personality formation process at different stages of development."

Ensuring equal opportunities to education as presented in specialist literature

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American pedagogy specialist J.S. Bruner (1970a, 1970b) admits the idea of “seeding” an inclination towards learning in the individual by means of exercises and views the development of individual action as depending directly on educational factors. He argues that school, the educational process can lead to the child's intellectual development, thanks to stimulating opportunities, useful for making progress in their development. In other words, the training process generates and moulds development.

Going beyond the declarative stage which supports the idea that intelligence and cognitive processes can be learnt, Bruner believes that one should not wait passively for a certain knowledge assimilation capacity to develop and that the educational process can actively influence and precipitate this time to come if appropriate conditions are ensured and appropriate methods are used. Thus, we cannot limit ourselves to the child's interests and capacities as these can and must be created and stimulated. “[A]nyone can learn anything at any age, provided that the content should be presented in an accessible manner” says Bruner (1970b). Therefore, the school is somehow ‘forced’ to create appropriate conditions to enable each student to develop in an optimal manner - an optimistic view on accessibility, which requires trust and respect for student's individuality. It is essential that every system of knowledge and skills should be prepared thoroughly by anticipating it in earlier stages, using adequate methods and techniques to ensure success.

Referring to successful educational processes, Bertrand Schwartz (1976) states that their offering equal access to education is not promoting the principles of equality, i.e. “identical treatment for all in the name of equality” but, on the contrary, it means “giving everyone access to a suitable form of education both in terms of rhythm and methods”, adapted to match their own personality as well as their psychological characteristics and resources.

Referring to the principles of the new paradigm in education, Bruno Wurtz (1992) formulates the principle of egalitarianism, flexibility and age integration, referring to the fact that progress in the field of learning rhythm may be different due to interindividual differences.

Highlighting the pedagogical foundations of Romanian educational reform, Professor Sorin Cristea mentions one of its principles, namely the principle of equalisation of opportunities in education, which aims at creating appropriate psycho-pedagogical conditions necessary for bringing forward every individual's potential. In achieving these goals, all those directly involved in the educational act have a very special mission.

Similar concepts are present in R.H. Dave's works as well (1991). He pleads for individualizing the educational process so that “everyone can obtain - through all forms of education - the highest possible level of self-achievement”. These principles of education for everyone are operational if the internal resources of the educational system are relied upon, if we count on the thorough use of the educational reform mechanisms. Equal chances of success in education, along with creating necessary conditions to achieve this goal were and still are a problem throughout history. Schools should integrate all children in the educational process irrespective of their intellectual potential, their social and family backgrounds.

Nowadays, many countries agree that education is crucial for progress to take place. Designing the entire educational system should start from the premise that each individual can be educated, can be helped to move from one developmental stage to another, especially since the educational

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influences refer to the "zone of proximal development", according to L.S. Vygotski (1978). He put forward the idea that a child's mental development is realized starting from society-related aspects and ending with the individual ones: a task carried out by two people becomes an organizing principle for each individual as the intersychic action becomes intrapsychic action. During interactions and joint activities the superior mental functions of the child occur and develop. Hence, these common functions become individualized. From this point of view, he regards the joint activity as an internal mechanism and a necessary step in the individual and argues that the source of mental development lies in the internal contradictions which occur as a result of external requirements. Devising the necessary means for overcoming and solving these contradictions lies primarily in education. On the one hand, education provides content to be learnt, and on the other hand it is concerned with how it is desirable that they be assimilated, with the training and personal development processes. Education holds great relevance in forming and shaping human personality provided that it is carried out skilfully, with professionalism and responsibly thereby becoming an art in itself. Therefore, the educator's mission is of utmost importance in the teaching processes, which involves making contents accessible to everyone.

Principle-related issues concerning equal rights to education in Romania

Every individual's right to education should be acknowledged by society, and if the existing education system does not meet the needs of all people, special education should be considered, i.e. education for children with special educational needs. It's about teaching children who have difficulty or are unable to adapt to the educational and societal requirements. However, now the trend is to strive to prepare all children in regular school systems. But if this is not possible, the quality of special education must be closely linked to regular schooling and observe the same quality standards.

Education is teleological in nature as it presupposes intentional actions purposefully oriented towards explicit final aims with educational activities conducted in accordance with certain rules and regulations, known as didactic principles. In recent years, with the eve of modern didactics, these principles were redefined from a multidimensional perspective: axiological, pedagogical, psychological, sociological, highlighting the theoretical, conceptual and pragmatic implications (M. Ionescu, M. Bocoş, ed., 2009).

Interindividual diversity is complex, and the need to take this into account is expressed in the principle of accessibility and individualisation, which means that the organisation and carrying out of the educational process should be realized according to students' background peculiarities (age, sex, previous training, physical and mental potential, and so on). Making knowledge accessible is the responsibility of decisional agents, i.e. those who are in charge with designing the curriculum and syllabus. But of utmost importance is the teacher's ability to render knowledge accessible in designing educator teaching sequences

Currently, in the context of the ongoing educational reforms in our country, a new education framework plan is used. This has been progressively introduced as follows: between 1998-1999 for grades I-V, between 1999 and 2000 for grades V-IX, and between 2000 and 2001 for high school. The Framework Plan is the basis of the new National Curriculum, which focuses on the use of learning objectives, learning contents, teaching, learning and assessment methods in a

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partially controlled manner by using the national curriculum, which consists of two segments - core and school-based curriculum.

At the basis of the new educational framework plan is a system of general principles, which aim at facilitating the emergence of a new curricular culture:

- The principle of equal rights to education - refers to the right of each individual to common education, conducted under compulsory education by completing the core curriculum.
- The principle of decongestion - recommends selecting and simplifying curriculum content as well as avoiding information overload.
- The principle of a decentralized and flexible curriculum - refers to combining core curriculum with the school curriculum.
- The principle of selection and cultural hierarchy - has led to the integration of disciplines in a system, to their interconnection and the emergence of the concept 'curricular area'.

Curricular areas subsume many disciplines that provide multi- and / or inter-disciplinary perspectives on various study areas. The traditional view which involved that the subject areas should include monodisciplinary subjects was dropped. They are scientifically selected on the basis of epistemological and pedagogical criteria. During compulsory schooling and high school, curriculum areas remain unchanged in terms of name, but they tend to vary quantitatively from one form to another.

The National Curriculum from our country includes the following curriculum cycles: basic acquisitions cycle (kindergarten – 2nd grade), the cycle of development (3rd grade – 6st grade), the cycle of observation and orientation (6th grade a - 9th grade), deepening cycle (10th grade-11th grade), specialisation cycle (12th grade).

- The coherence principle, which is to ensure the stability between curricular and disciplinary areas of study, horizontally and vertically.
- The social connection principle - emphasizes the need to provide correspondence between educational institutions and social requirements, optimal connections and collaborations between educational institutions and the community.
- The principle of achieving compatibility with European standards in education.

Some principles which can assure the development of an academic community based on observing the equal opportunities to education were introduced in the fundamental law of national education (Article 202) which led to legislative benefits in Romania.

a) the principle of non-discrimination - whereby all students receive equal treatment from the institution of higher education; any direct or indirect discrimination against students is prohibited;

b) the principle of counselling and free complementary services in public high education - expressed through: counselling and informing students by teachers outside the classroom, seminar or laboratories, vocational guidance counselling, psychological counselling, access to main specialty books and scientific publications, access to personal data on the school situation;

c) the principle of participation to decision taking - according to which decisions within institutions of high education are taken with the participation of students;

d) the principle of freedom of expression - according to which students are entitled to express freely their academic opinions, within the educational institution they study;

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e) the principle of transparency and access to information - according to which students are entitled to free access to information concerning their own learning and academic life of the community they belong to, in accordance with the law.

Conclusion

The whole school activity is focused on building and shaping the character of the student, in accordance with the social requirements of modern times, the main purpose being students' social integration. If in designing the content and forms of this activity, the psychological characteristic of the child were not paid attention to, this would endanger the achievement of the proposed objective, the affirmation of the child as an individual able to develop.

New trends in the development and modernisation of education are necessary in order to develop curriculum resources for insuring the inclusion of children with special educational needs in the educational system. In particular, there is a need to develop appropriate methodologies for adapting the national curriculum to the special needs and potential of children, in order to reduce the rate of school failure and early school leaving and to support them in their learning and provide differentiated and individualized educational pathways.

Adapting the curriculum to the learning abilities of all children is a challenge for the modern school, along with the challenge assumed for drafting the support curriculum (continuous teacher training, refresher courses, methodological guidelines, best practice models). Schools must identify, recognise and respond to the diverse needs of students, by harmonising individual learning strategies with methods and teaching instruments in order to ensure quality education for all, including children with learning disabilities, emotional problems, adaptation and integration problems, as well as for those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

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Corresponding author:

E-mail address: niculae.cristea@medu.edu.ro



The impact of memory development in middle-childhood on learning a foreign language

Dacian Dorin Dolean

Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca Romania

Authors note

Dacian Dorin Dolean, PhD Student in Psychology at Babes Bolyai University
darisclub@gmail.com

Abstract

In the past years most urban schools from Romania faced an increased demand from parents for foreign language education courses taught in kindergarten and early elementary school. This article addresses children's readiness for formal language education from a psychological perspective by reviewing the major developmental milestones that influence memory performance during middle childhood and their impact on learning a foreign language at this age. The article also emphasizes on how those psychological mechanisms impact the curricular process, and offers suggestions for language teachers about what type of activities they should consider planning for early elementary school children.

Keywords: memory; development; middle childhood; foreign language learning; milestones.

Zusammenfassung

In den letzten Jahren haben die meisten städtischen Schulen aus Rumänien mit einer erhöhten Nachfrage von Eltern für Fremdsprachkursen unterrichtet im Kindergarten und Grundschulen konfrontiert. Dieser Artikel befasst sich mit der Bereitschaft der Kinder zur formalen Sprachausbildung aus psychologischer Sicht durch die Überprüfung der wichtigsten Meilensteine der Entwicklung, die Gedächtnisleistung während der mittleren Kindheit beeinflussen und ihre Auswirkungen auf das Erlernen einer Fremdsprache in diesem Alter. Der Artikel betont auch, wie die psychologischen Mechanismen den curricularen Prozess beeinflussen und bietet Anregungen für Sprachlehrer, welche Art von Tätigkeiten sie während der Planung für die Grundschul Kinder betrachten sollten.

Schlüsselworte: Gedächtnis; Entwicklung; mittlere Kindheit; Fremdsprachenunterricht; Meilensteine

The impact of memory development in middle-childhood on learning a foreign language

1. Introduction

The process of second language acquisition and specifically the strategies used in learning a foreign language in the classroom has been a subject widely studied in the past decades. The increased need of learning a second language especially among European nations (Special Eurobarometer 243, 2006) and the continually proven advantages of bilingualism (Barac & Bialystok, 2012) started to put a strong emphasis on foreign language education. In Romania, recent years have seen a surge in parents' demands for school authorities to offer foreign language learning programs to children earlier than 3rd grade, which is the mandatory threshold for foreign language education (see also Dolean, forthcoming).

But, how efficiently can children in their early school years learn a foreign language in a classroom setting? Does their cognitive ability allow them to process the information necessary to master a foreign language in schools at an early age? Is it justifiable for school administrators to consider emphasizing on foreign language programs in order to meet parents' expectations?

Providing accurate and well documented answers to those questions would imply a multidisciplinary analysis of second language education in the classroom phenomenon. However, in order to address some of the questions, we need to understand the underlying psychological mechanisms that influence the efficiency of learning a foreign language. That would help educators and education policy makers adjust their strategies in order to provide the most appropriate educational programs to school-age children. That's why, this paper aims to address children's readiness to receive formal instruction in a foreign language by highlighting the features of one of the cognitive components of child development responsible for academic success in foreign language classrooms: memory in middle-childhood and its impact on second language learning.

2. Memory development during middle childhood

One of the major milestones that influences the memory development during middle childhood is the increased length of **attention span**, children developing the ability to focus their attention for a longer time than they used to in kindergarten. The attention span improvements come together with significant

gains in **inhibitory control**, children being able now to resist interference of less relevant information which help them focus better on the necessary one (Maguire, White, and Brier, 2011). Consequently, children at this age are doing a significantly better job in encoding the information they encounter. For instance, if a classroom foreign language teacher would use a series of pictures to associate with their translation in a foreign language, the length of such an activity would be significantly greater after the age of 7, because children's attention span would be larger, while the activity would be more efficient because children would not let themselves being distracted from other stimuli (e.g. one of their peers moving out of the seat, or the sensation of thirst).

Another factor that influences the memory of children in their early school years is overcoming the limitations of preschoolers' **metacognitive abilities**. During kindergarten, children often express confusion about mental states such as „forget” and „know”, they are not able to understand that mental inferences can be a source of knowledge, or that mental activity does not stop when people stop doing a physical activity (Berk, 2001, p.232). After the age of 6-7 the development of metacognitive abilities helps children do a better job in „thinking about their thinking” abilities, and see their mind as an active agent, able to select and transform the information. This development helps school age children process the information not only automatically, like they did until then (with little or no effort), but they also start to experience effortful encoding as well (Myers, 1989, p.259). One of the indicators of effortful information processing is the occurrence of rehearsal, or conscious repetition, which children do it more frequently at this age because they are aware that this strategy helps them remember better the information. Thus, unlike kindergarten students, children in their early school years start to be able to indicate their foreign language skills by answering teacher's questions regarding what they've learned last time in class, or the translation of certain concepts from their native language to the foreign language. This indicates that kindergarten foreign language teachers should plan activities that would rely almost exclusively on automatic memory, while language teachers who teach primary school students can introduce progressively activities that involve effortful processing as well.

The development of attention span, together with the inhibitory control processes, as well as the developmental of metacognitive abilities lead to a significant increase in **working memory capacity** during middle childhood, which was found responsible for academic performance in school (Baddeley, 1986). Camos and Barrouillet (2011) found that age 7 is a threshold for cognitive load of information processing in young children. The study indicates that at this age children start to show significant gains

compared with younger children, suggesting that they start to use some mechanisms to maintain verbal information. The authors also found in the same study that starting with age 6 there is an increased ability of cognitive monitoring during the information processing periods. Thus, children at this age start playing an active role in information processing, by reactivating older pieces of information they considered useful which in turn helps them store the information more efficiently. That means, foreign language teachers can expect children's performance not to be dependent mostly on the amount of time children are exposed to the language, but also on other factors (e.g. motivation) that would determine students to reactivate the information on their own.

The memory development in middle childhood is also strongly dependent on children's ability to organize information. One example of such ability is the **categorization**. Lewandowsky (2011) indicated there is a strong relation between the working memory capacity and the categorization ability, in the sense that the more people are able to organize items into categories, the higher the working memory is. Starting around age 7, children enter in an intellectual development phase which Piaget referred to as the concrete operational stage. One of the characteristics of cognitive abilities in this stage is that children become less egocentric, which makes them able to focus on multiple aspects of a problem. They can now group items into manageable pieces of information, which consequently expands their working memory ability. For instance, during middle childhood children can understand that in English most words that indicate things and end with „s”, mean multiple items (e.g. tables, cups). Foreign language teachers can now expect children learn some basic grammar rules; however, the development of this cognitive ability is only in its beginning stages, and an abundance of grammar rules might be overwhelming for children in their early school years.

Another ability to organize information developed during middle-childhood is the **efficient use of memorizing strategies**, like mnemonics. Children at this age start to be able to organize information in units that make sense. Thus, the strategy used in kindergarten to remember new words by frequently rehearsing the items that need to be learned (e.g. the English word „balloon”) can be now replaced progressively with items' association with a familiar word (e.g. the character „Baloo”, from „Jungle Book”). Even though during the first years of middle childhood children could use help from an adult to efficiently organize the information, this ability becomes autonomous, children being able to elaborate strategies by themselves in order to increase memory performance (Berk, 2001, p.295), and around age 8 they start to demonstrate consistently the ability to use strategies spontaneously and independently, like

grouping items based on specific criteria (Schwenk, Bjorklund and Schneider, 2009).

The frequent use of mnemonic strategies is not just a consequence of memory development, but is also a **cause of memory improvement** during middle childhood. Brehmer, Li, Muller, von Oertz and Lindenberger (2007) showed on a study conducted on a sample of subjects whose age ranged from 9 to 78, and who participated in several memory training sessions, that children's memory not only benefited the most after the sessions, but also children's performance became better than the one of the adults'. The results suggest that using mnemonic strategies help improve memory performance and have the most impact during middle childhood. However, working memory strategy training itself does not necessarily improve academic performance as measured by academic tests (St Clair-Thompson, Stevens, Hunt & Bolder, 2013), that's why teachers should focus on using those mnemonics in their lessons, rather than spending time on developing memory strategies training sessions.

A particular aspect in cognitive development of memory in middle childhood concerns the strategies used to remember **visual information**. We already know that among the earliest memories which develop at about the age of 4 or 5, are mental pictures (Myers, 1989, p. 262), which indicates that visual imagery plays an important role in encoding efficiently. We also know that visual items produce strong memories (e.g. Shepard, 1967, Standing, 1973). However, Sanefuji et al (2011) showed that the phonologic strategies develop only around age 7, and the association of visual and phonological items are most efficient during middle childhood. At this age starts the development of another major component of cognitive ability, namely **language awareness** (Berk, 2001, p.304). Children are now able to think about learning a different language, and that using visual strategies makes them more proficient in foreign language learning. Therefore, language teachers should consider starting to use more visual stimuli in their lessons after the age 6-7, as a way to explicitly teach children new concepts in a foreign language, as well as imagery based mnemonics.

3. Conclusion

The present article aimed to briefly highlight the most important milestones in memory development during middle-childhood that influence learning a foreign language in the classroom. The paper put an emphasis on what foreign language teachers need to know in order to understand some of the psychological mechanisms that influence the process of language learning and develop the lesson plans based on children's developmental abilities.

The review emphasized on the fact that the development of attention span as well as inhibitory control helps early elementary school children to focus longer on foreign language lessons, and ignore the unimportant stimuli that would interfere with the learning process. This developed ability, together with improvements in metacognitive abilities, help children increase their working memory capacity. Another major developmental feature of this age is the ability to organize information into units that make sense. Children can now group items by categories and use mnemonic strategies to improve their retention of new information. Those developmental characteristics suggest that around the age of 6-7, children become ready to receive formal foreign language instruction. However, most of their cognitive abilities are still in their early stages of development, which indicate that language teachers should consider introducing formal language instruction gradually, while organizing activities specific to pre-school children that still rely on automatic information processing (implicit language learning) and frequent rehearsals (like songs and nursery rhymes). One particular feature of language learning in the classroom in early school years is represented by the powerful impact that visual images have on retention. Studies indicate that starting with age of 7, teachers can use efficiently visual based mnemonic strategies to enhance association of phonological and visual items, and to facilitate encoding of new concepts in a foreign language.

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Practices of inclusive education

Adriana Denisa MANEA

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Authors note

Abstract

Inclusive education is a strategic approach designated to facilitate successful learning for all children. Inclusive practices confirm that all children can learn and that they all need some form of support for learning. The stated goal of the inclusive school is to identify and minimize the barriers of learning. Inclusion is a dynamic process that is constantly developing, according to the contextual needs and culture of the reference group, while being part of a strategic system of promotion and construction of inclusive societies.

Keywords: inclusive education, integration, inclusion, barriers, special needs and disabilities

Zusammenfassung

Inklusive Bildung ist ein strategischer Ansatz bezeichnet für erfolgreiches Lernen für alle Kinder zu erleichtern. Inclusive Praktiken bestätigen, dass alle Kinder lernen können und dass alle irgendeine Form von Unterstützung für das Lernen benötigen. Das erklärte Ziel der inklusiven Schule ist Hindernisse für das Lernen zu identifizieren und zu minimieren. Inklusion bedeutet ein dynamischer Prozess, der ständig weiterentwickelt wird, gemäß den kontextuellen und objektiven Bedürfnissen und entsprechend der Kultur der Bezugsgruppe. Inklusion ist, gleichzeitig, Teil eines strategischen System der Förderung und der Aufbau einer integrativen Gesellschaft.

Schlüsselworte: inklusive Bildung, Integration, Inklusion, Hindernisse, besondere Bedürfnisse und Behinderungen

Practices of inclusive education

With reference to educational practice which is in special education, integrated and inclusive, we identify relationships of subordination, or their subsequent organization, represented by Figure 1, where the segment of special education is for children / students with disabilities, to whom it provides specialized services in segregated schools with specialized personnel trained in the field. We mention in this context the functioning of centers of excellence for gifted children. Integrated education is represented by the institutional area in which pupils with SEN (special educational needs) were integrated into general education by providing them with the resource teacher, teacher support / rejuvenation, speech therapist, psychologist, individualized specialist services and inclusive education is represented by the entire spectrum of schools able to provide quality educational services for all students, including all students with disabilities as well as the gifted ones.

Table 1. Structure and interdependencies in special, inclusive and integrated education

<i>Inclusive education</i>		
Special education	<i>Integrated education</i>	General education
	General education + special education	

It is necessary in the implementation of inclusive practices for the teacher to have detailed knowledge on how to achieve the evaluative and diagnostic process of each student, assuming a projective scenario based on identified needs and sufficient determination to implement it, thus responding to school diversity. The set of rules to be met by teachers and that implicitly generate inclusive practices under UNESCO Guidelines, 2002 are: inclusion of all children, communication, classroom organization, lesson planning, individual plans, individual support, usage of additional means of support, behavioral (control) management, teamwork.

1. The value of inclusive education for every student is that he/she can work together with other children, and thus be included. As long as experience has shown that students with SEN can be isolated even when they are integrated into the class / middle school, teachers have a duty to support the explanations for differences and diversity between individuals with arguments, to remove some of the negative attitudes towards others, to generate collaboration and teamwork development, to highlight the potential intellectual and vocational skills of each of the students.

2. Another issue raised regarding the nine rules set out above is that of communication. Knowing the importance of communication in teaching, the teacher will ensure that it is conducted within optimal learning parameters of learning, both vertically

(teacher-student) and horizontally (student-student). At the same time, access to communication methods will be of a verbal, para verbal and nonverbal nature, promoting both written and verbal communication. The conditions for effective teaching communication will be followed carefully by each teacher:

- the manifestation of a positive attitude towards the act of communication by valuing the interlocutor or his speech, high self-esteem and sense of competence in the field, tempering egocentric tendencies;

- support to help anchor verbal and / or nonverbal communication, encouraging unrestrained, spontaneous, free expression;
- addressing a supportive attitude marked by trust and equality, sincerity and honesty, the openness to a partner, the partner's response to the message, recognition of their thoughts and feelings, of a positive, unconditional interest;
- generating an empathic attitude, securing, managing interaction and acceptance of each other's presence;
- responsible, expressive commitment both in a verbal and emotional plan for the transmission of message, and an increase in the effectiveness of communication;
- the ability and agility in influencing and directing communication to achieve the goals set;
- flexibility and credibility in dealing with a theme (speed and fluency in speech, rich communicational repertoire, adaptability and reliability in playing your part, etc.);

3. *Organizing the classroom*, the environment in which learning can positively or negatively influence the process within each student. Therefore, both the formal and non-formal frames of education will be carefully selected, organized and used by the teacher, focusing on the correlation between goals, the organization of the work (individual, frontal, group), curriculum content, addressed teaching strategies (teaching methodology, educational resources) and system evaluation. And last but not least, the relationship of dependency with the organization of the class, emphasizing the positive effect that aesthetic education has, simultaneously involving visual, auditory, olfactory and kinesthetic analyzers in knowledge, in the act of learning.

4. *Designing lessons* will be consistent with the individual and group learning needs of the students. The focus will be on determining the active-participative attitudes of students, namely the individual contribution of each student in their own learning process and its assessment. Using concrete material with translation towards the abstract, highlighting key words and concepts required to develop cognitive organizers, summarization and subsequent analogies, developing and solving worksheets, learning tasks that are elements related to successful teaching design.

5. *Individual plans* emphasize the importance given by the teacher to individual specifics, age and intellectual peculiarities of each student. Individual plans also emphasize and build a pupil's skills in various curricular areas. Identification of the potential intellect of each student generates access to the right resources, implementing strategies stipulated in the individualized service plan that will lead to achieving academic performance or the best possible result. The evaluative process (formative and summative evaluation, self-evaluation) allows reconsideration of strategies, rebalancing teams of trainers and expectations.

6. *Individual support* is claimed by the desideratum of the inclusive school, "a school for all and everyone." The arrangements for individual support are multiple, accessing one or the other depends on problems posed by each trainee. Specialist teachers, the supporting teacher or the itinerant teacher are resource people who can successfully provide individual learning support. The support from the perspective of organizing individual learning may be granted by a guardian (fellow student who provides support and assistance after completing their tasks for pupils with special educational), volunteer (people outside the school, with trainer skills, members of different organizations) or a group of students working in collaboration through cooperative learning activities.

7. The means of support are represented by the equipment, technical means that facilitate inclusion and ensure participation in learning activities. The same range of support facilities and learning materials are the means of education that are present in schools, including both conventional teaching materials, technical equipment, class furniture, means of travel as well as means for communication and various objects and toys.

8. Behavioral management covers such interventions that are focused on undesirable conduct during the activities. Functional analysis of any behavior will help determine the causes of the undesirable behavior, its maintenance factors and the consequences of the behavior in question. For the intervention we will consider using an effective punishment and reward system customized for each subject and the type of behavior shown. At the same time, knowing the role of the teacher in the shaping and formation of behavior by using "the word", admonition shall respect the following conditions:

- clear expression, safe and uncompromising, through the distinction between the desirable and undesirable behavior and at the same time, firm and warm, in terms that leave no room for interpretation;
- focus on the problem, in the sense of direct admonition to the student's behavior and not towards his person, other students, teachers and the relationship between him and the class;
- self control of the voice, of the tone used in admonition to avoid possible violent threats and control techniques, knowing that this will cause, with a very high probability, negative ripple effect (anger, resentment, restlessness, restlessness, anxiety) or may even generate undesirable behaviors in students that had not developed such behaviors before;
- argumentation will be minimal, neutral and expressed in positive terms, meaning that the orders given must not be associated with the personal mood of the teacher, and the wording will be positive without prohibitions and bookmarks while avoiding that an order be doubled by the presentation of the reasoning that has imposed it, as this will also suggest reasons that may cause the order to not be complied;

9. Teamwork involves joint ownership of responsibilities and decisions in relation to the issue of a student or another. The team of trainers is called to serve as a gear interconnected to the reactions of the child with special educational needs. Strategic targets are oriented according to priorities and internal succession that involves solving each of them. At the same time, we specify that both the composition of the group of trainers (teachers, specialist teachers, support teachers, parents, social workers, doctors, etc..) as well as the content of the intervention are different from one case to another, which determines mutual and permanent consultation at team level, mutual support, responsible commitment to the task and last but not least, self-determination in producing positive results recognized at group level and not viewed as singularities that are a part of it.

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The adaptation and individualization of intervention programs in the case of children with autism

Anca-Maria Mărginean

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Authors note

anca.marginean@ubbcluj.ro

Abstract

“This child, neither blind, nor deaf, will not answer you, he does not understand your language, your facial expression, your gestures, the messages you transmit. You will not meet his gaze. He might be restless, he might be rocking his body. You will be disappointed and he does not care. He simply refuses to answer you. He is not ignoring you. He is an autistic child.” (Societe Quebecoise de L'autisme). This quote describes autism with the use of several key words, even though it remains a mystery to this day. Although there is a great variety of studies focused on autism in the specialized literature (characteristics of the autistic behavior, causes, therapeutic methods etc.) some aspects still remain unsolved.

The majority of autistic people require special care throughout their lives, which led to the elaboration of educational intervention programs, adapted and personalized according to the characteristics and the level of development of each individual, programs which include both the intervention in different areas of development (language, communication, personal autonomy, cognitive skills), as well as the involvement of the children's parents and families.

Keywords: autism, assessment, individualized intervention plan, methods of intervention, personalization, specific activities

Zusammenfassung

Dieses Kind, weder blind noch taub, reagiert nicht, er versteht nicht, Eure Sprache, Mimik, Ihre Gestik, Eure Mitteilungen zu Ihn. Ihr müsset nicht seinen Anblick treffen . Er kann seine Lage rühren, er kann schwingen. Sie werden enttäuscht sein und Ihm wird das nichts ausmachen. Er weigert sich nicht zu antworten. Er ignoriert euch nicht. Er ist ein autistisches Kind. "(Societe de L'Quebecoise Autisme).

Diese Zitat von ein paar Stichworte beschreiben Autismus, dem heute noch ein Rätsel bleibt. Obwohl in die Literatur einen große Vielfalt an Studien die Fragen über Autismus stellt vorhanden ist, (autistische Verhalten Merkmalen, Ursachen, Möglichkeiten Therapeutische usw.), noch bleiben einige Sachen fraglich. Die meisten Menschen mit Autismus bedürfen einer besonderen Pflege des gesamten Lebens, das das führte zu der Entwicklung der pädagogischen Intervention Programme, zugeschnitten und angepasst, abhängig von den Eigenschaften und dem Entwicklungsstand jedes einzelnen, die sowohl Intervention in verschiedenen Bereichen der Entwicklung (Sprache und Kommunikation, Autonomie persönliche, kognitive Fähigkeiten, etc..) als auch die Einbeziehung der Eltern, Familien von Kindern diagnostiziert mit Autismus

Schlüsselworte: Autismus, Einschätzung, individualisierte Intervention Plan, - Interventions methoden, Personalisierung, spezifische Aktivität.

The adaptation and individualization of intervention programs in the case of children with autism

1. General aspects

Autism is currently described as a pervasive development disorder, the affected persons showing deficits in social interactions (the use of nonverbal behavior in communication, social/emotional reciprocity), verbal and nonverbal communication and a limited and stereotyped range of interests and activities (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

In the case of the diagnosis manuals, DSM-IV-TR and ICD-10, we can talk about an agreement on the manifestations of this disorder: impaired communication skills and social interactions as well as repetitive and stereotypical behaviors.

Regarding the inability of autistic people to socially interact within normal limits, we can speak about the difficulties children face in establishing relations with other people (Baron-Cohen, 2005; Secară 2006, 2007; Pawletco, 2002; Pawletko și Rocissano, 2000), the lack of skills in understanding and expressing nonverbal communication, such as: eye contact, facial gestures, body posture, gestures (Muraru-Cernomazu, 2005; Stone, 2004).

Autistic children also mistakenly “decode” social and emotional signals (Secară 2006, 2007) and do not generally use language in order to convey emotions or they use language only in a small degree, lacking the emotional tone (Mirenda, 2001; Mureșan, 2004; Baron-Cohen, 2005; Fritt, 1989).

Language disorders are a good indicator of the presence of autism (Juhel, 1997). Some autistic children will never use language. In other children it can develop normally for a period of time and then the development stops. Other children start to speak only later, around the age of five (Secară, 2006, 2007; Mirenda, 2001). In most cases the abnormality of language consists in the lack of the social dimension of language skills (Preda, 2005; Secară, 2006, 2007; Stone, 2004). Some rudimentary or echolalic forms of the language can be identified, reinforced by deficits on the grammatical and syntactic level, as well as on the pragmatic and prosodic level (does not adjust the intonation and tone of voice with what he wants to convey, may have a melodic intonation, the voice is monotonous, flat). The person uses mechanical language (“tape recorder”) in the same way he heard it, uses reverse pronouns (talks about himself using the pronouns “you” or “he”). The person often uses their own language, making up their own expressions, using neologisms or adult language (Fritt, 1989; Secară, 2006, 2007; Muraru-Cernomazu, 2005; Pawletko și Roissano, 2000).

Their great reluctance in the face of change and innovation, their inflexibility, lead to the development of a rigid behavior in autistic children, which includes multiple non-functional actions that once embedded in the children’s daily routine are strictly followed to the letter, being invested with the meaning of true rituals (Gense și Gense, 2005; Muraru-Cernomazu 2005; Secară 2006, 2007; Juhel, 1997; Stone, 2004).

The range of behavioral stereotypes also includes some aberrant motor behavior. It comprises various motor mannerisms, strange repetitive movements (very visible or subtle) among which the fluttering of hands and fingers in the visual field, the repeated bowing of the head or of the whole body (eg. rocking back and forth or a rotation movement around the body’s own axis), walking on tip-toe or

walking back and forth, “freezing” in a certain position.

Dysfunctions in social interaction, communication, imaginative capacity (Preda, 2005; Secara, 2007; Stone, 2004; Fritt, 1989) and in the level of mimicry which is present in the case of autistic children require special and individualized approaches. The sooner the intervention and recovery are done the better the chances of a significant improvement.

Due to the particular development of children with disorders from the autistic spectrum, some educational intervention programs should be individualized, and the methodology should be adapted to each child. All the elements of the intervention plan, such as conducting activities/exercises, dividing them into simple sequences, the appropriate selection of reinforcements (rewards), the prompts, the teaching materials, they all need to be adapted to each individual child, based on both their level of development and the specific characteristics.

2. Example – Educational intervention plan

I. Personal information

Name and surname: P.A.

Sex: female

Date of birth: 06.10.2008

Medical diagnosis: infantile autism, mild mental retardation

II. The development of the intervention program

I. Initial assessment

The following tools were used during the initial assessment: the Protage Early Intervention Program, the Rimland E2 Diagnostic Questionnaire, the Schopler Infantile Autism Rating Scale.

According to the Protage Program the results were the following :

1. Socializing: in 80% of the cases she looks at the person who calls her name, she enjoys the presence of family members, people she knows, the presence of other children, she easily accepts her parents leaving (sometimes she asks about them after their departure), she initiates interactions, takes other people by the hand; in most cases she greets people when asked to, displays affection towards people close to her and a great joy towards other children her age (she strokes their faces or kisses them).
2. Language: language is developed below her age (the receptive language being more developed than the expressive one), she associates words with gestures to express her wishes (asks for an object just by naming it and pointing to it), says 2-3 verbal directives which imply a single action, she calls the other family members by name, she forms 2 word sentences on demand (“climb the stairs”); she shows forms of echolalia and verbal stereotypes (repeats nonsense syllables “mai”, “tai”, “ui” etc.)
3. Personal autonomy: shows some self-helping skills such as: she drinks water from a cup with handles and soft drinking adaptor, she eats with her hands the food that has been cut into small pieces, after eating she cleans her mouth with a napkin if asked to; she has not acquired the skill

of washing her hands (she just holds her hands under the stream of water), she extends her arms and legs when she is being dressed, she uses diapers, she resists when she is being bathed or has her hair cut.

4. Cognitive: she imitates simple gestures when asked by an adult, she sorts 2 colors on request, she doodles, colors without taking into account the borders of the shape, inserts different shapes in their support, completes a plate with shapes containing 6 different pieces (fish, hen, dog, cat, cow, bird), finds a book that is described to her, upon request, points to different parts of the body, she recognizes herself in photos.
5. Motor development: she shows difficulties with balance, she walks in a particular way, she does not run, she has difficulties and displays anxiety when going over obstacles (no matter how small), goes up and down the stairs without alternating her legs, with someone's help (by taking the hand of an adult), she does not jump, she claps her hands, can use a pencil, inserts medium size objects in their support, underdeveloped digital grip, she lines up big beads (4-5cm in diameter), she plays with dough (can make small balls). A. also shows motor stereotypes like: spinning objects, the rocking of the body back and forth, when sitting, on a musical or rhythmic background, waving her fingers in front of her eyes, stomping her feet, opening and closing wardrobe doors or drawers, shaking showcases, moving curtains.
6. Interests: she shows a very strong interest in loud sounds (made by various electronic toys or by A. herself by banging on different objects), she listens to music (she hums some songs during daily activities) and she shows a great interest in the computer (PC) – she performs various tasks with its help, she plays on the PC assisted by an adult and uses the PC to listen to music.

In the initial assessment we also used behavioral questionnaire items from the Rimland E2 diagnosis questionnaire (including the additional questions) according to which the following was determined:

Item 19: The child imitates other persons (she waves “bye-bye”)

Item 20: She has a remarkable memory for some words from poems, TV advertisements, numbers

Item 23: She sometimes holds her hands in a strange position.

Item 24: She focuses for a long time on some rhythmic activities or on a rocking movement.

Item 25: She does not give the impression that she doesn't acknowledge the presence of other people.

Item 26: She does not manifest the craving for food or for sucking on objects.

Item 27: She does not have unusual eating habits: refusing to drink from transparent containers, eating only warm or cold dishes, or only one or two types of food.

Item 28: “Closed in a shell” or lost, meditative, difficult to approach do not describe the child.

Item 29: The child is affectionate, clinging to the adults she knows.

Item 30: She does not hit her head voluntarily.

Item 31: Physical coordination below average (when walking, running, rocking, climbing)

Item 32: She sometimes spins around the axis of her body.

Item 33: She is clumsy in executing delicate gestures with her fingers, when playing with small

objects.

Item 34: She likes to spin objects such as lids or coins (for a long time).

Item 35: She shows exceptional memory abilities

Item 36: She rarely/never jumps for joy.

Item 37: She does not line up objects in organized rows insisting that they are not to be disturbed.

Item 38: She constantly uses her hands.

Item 39: She does not show any interest in musical CDs.

Item 40: She is fascinated by some mechanisms and/or house appliances (the microwave oven).

Item 41: She is sometimes disturbed when interrupted from her activities,.

Item 42: She easily accepts to wear new clothes and shoes.

Item 43: The fact that some things are not “as usual” does not especially disturb her.

Item 44: She does not have complicated rituals.

Item 45: She is not disturbed when some things that she is used to are changed or moved.

Item 46: She does not have a tendency to voluntarily destroy objects.

Item 47: She is a compliant child.

Item 48: She is hyperactive, in continuous movement, she easily moves from one thing to the next.

Item 49: She expresses her need for affection normally.

Item 50: She is non-responsive to criticism and very affectionate.

Item 51: It is possible to draw her attention to an object located farther away or through a window.

Item 53: She changes the direction of her gaze when addressed.

Item 54: She sometimes uses the hand of an adult to do something

Item 56: She is scared of some animals, or sounds.

Item 57: She does not involve herself in situations which may lead to her falling or getting hurt (running, climbing).

Item 58: She does not create problems related to violence against herself or other people.

Item 63: Her communication skills (answering to questions, telling a story) are directly proportional to the number of words she knows.

Item 65: The child does not talk about herself.

Item 66: She repeats exactly the words or phrases she hears (without any connection to context).

Item 67: The child can answer a simple question: “What is your name?”

Item 68; She is capable of understanding (she can answer and do what is asked of her)

Item 69: She understands what she is saying.

Item 70: She does not use the word “yes”.

Item 71: In order to give a positive answer to a question she uses the word “hai” (come).

Item 72: In order to ask for something she sometimes uses the same sentence as the one used to suggest that.

Item 73: She does not use the word “I”.

Item 74: She shows her refuse by ignoring the request.

Item 75: She sometimes uses a word or an idea in order to express a different idea.

Item 99: She gets stuck on an idea or fixated on an object

Item 101: She adopts strange positions.

Item 104: She is extremely sensitive to smells.

Item 108: She memorizes words that are useless to her.

According to the Schopler Infantile Autism Rating Scale the following results were recorded:

1. Relationship with humans: she is willing to interact with others, especially children her age, she initiates interactions (taking the other person's hand), when called by name or called to attention she makes eye contact; she shows affection towards people close to her and children her age and she likes to receive affection; she is involved in activities with other children and sometimes it requires several attempts to get her engaged in a task; she manifests anxiety and ignorance when criticized or punished.
2. Imitation (verbal and motor): verbal imitation (simple words, sentences, poems) is well developed, it takes place immediately; motor imitation (playing with small objects, drawing graphic symbols) occurs after several demonstrations.
3. Appropriate or inappropriate emotional reaction: she shows emotion and affection towards her loved ones and sometimes towards strangers; when fatigued or in physical pain she manifests small anger fits (she clenches her teeth, is tense and sometimes cries hysterically).
4. Using her body: she shows a slight clumsiness in tasks, poor oculomotor and body coordination, she walks slightly on tip-toe and in a strange way, she sometimes adopts an odd body posture; she rocks her body when sitting down and shows stereotypical movement (waving her hands in front of her eyes).
5. Using objects: she shows a repetitive interest in round objects (spinning them), curtains, drawers, showcases, cabinet doors; she prefers noisy toys that have different mechanisms, she plays only in the presence of an adult or with an adult or with children the same age as her; when the adult does not intervene the child's play consists in stereotypical behavior (spinning objects, shaking showcases, moving the drapes, opening/closing drawers etc.).
6. Adaptation to change: she does not show abnormal reactions (increase irritability or severe resistance) when moving from one object to another, when changing tools during the same activity or when changing her routine.
7. Visual responses: she makes eye contact when her name is called or when she is addressed (in a structured environment), she sometimes stares at a certain point for a couple of seconds or blinks very often (for a short time).

8. Response to sound: she prefers high intensity sounds (stereotype – she turns on various toys) and she focuses her attention on sounds that can barely be heard, she prefers musical activities, she likes listening to music, she startles when she hears unexpected sounds such as: a car engine starts, the ambulance or police car siren.
9. Reaction to smell, taste, pain: she is hypersensitive to certain strong smells (perfume, food etc.) which make her nauseous; she sometimes sniffs different objects, persons she comes into contact with, she has a normal reaction to pain.
10. Fear, anxiousness: she shows anxiety when an adult stops her stereotypical behaviors and sometimes when the adult does not satisfy her wishes such as opening the cabinet doors or turning on noisy toys.
11. Verbal communication: she presents forms of echolalia (she repeats various phrases or sentences that she heard and that do not necessarily have a logical connection with the current context) and she shows verbal stereotypes (she says syllables without any logic or meaning) ; she responds with a single word or by pointing to the answer (in the case of objects around her); she repeats sounds and words when asked to; she uses a language more appropriate for younger children, with the use of some particular words (she calls an object by a different name than normal).
12. Non-verbal communication: she sometimes uses an adult's hand to carry out a certain behavior or just to point to an object or an activity; she points only to the object involved in a particular activity (for example she points to the potty when she wants to convey the fact that she needs to go to the toilet) or she goes and picks up a certain object and brings it to the adult, meaning that she wants to play with him or that she wants to eat a certain kind of food (for example she goes to the fridge, takes a yoghurt and brings it to the adult, wishing to convey that she wants to eat yoghurt).
13. Level of activity: she especially gets involved in activities that she prefers; sometimes, mostly when she is tired, she manifests passivity towards activities, whether they are some of her favorite ones or not.
14. Level and consistency of intellectual functions: there are cases when she can make small associations, based on her mechanical memory, which is very well developed.
15. Overall impression: she shows the characteristics of an autistic child.

1. General and specific objectives:

Based on the results of the initial assessment and on the fact that A. attends kindergarten (being required to use the toilet at the same time with other children, dressing and undressing around them and sometimes eating together with her group mates) it has been considered necessary that the intervention program have the following objectives:

➤ The development of psychomotor abilities

1. development of digital grip
2. improving hand-eye coordination
3. improving hands coordination
4. developing hand grip strength
5. adjusting equilibrium and movement rhythm
6. developing the necessary skills for self-help

➤ Development of personal autonomy

1. developing skills for dressing and undressing
2. the recognition, name and use of cutlery
3. developing the necessary skills for washing her hands

4. recognition and use of the potty
5. improving the identification and correct naming of body parts
 - **Development of communication and language**
 1. expanding her vocabulary
 2. improving the initiation of communication/interaction
 3. to answer questions in sentences made up of two words
 - **Eliminating stereotypes**
 1. identification and elimination of the trigger
 2. reducing the manifestation of the stereotypes behavior
 3. decreasing the intensity of the stereotyped behavior
 4. replacing the stereotyped behavior with an appropriate behavior (focusing her attention and getting her involved in an enjoyable activity)

2. Performed activities

The intervention program started in 2006 and it lasted for two years. During this program different daily individual activities were conducted (1-1 per day), with the exception of days in which health problems did not allow her to engage in activities.

a) The development of psychomotor abilities

Coloring activities

Initially the coloring was done within the contours made of play dough in order to give the child a little help to be aware of the limits of the space that needed coloring. Then she started coloring large size shapes, their size being reduced gradually during the activities. As teaching methods we used explanation, practice, demonstration and especially modeling. Prompts were also used (verbal in most cases) and as a reward we used objects that the child favors, objects that she had no access to outside the activities (eg. a play phone with different tunes, different color beads). While an improvement in learning the behavior was noticed, the reward was given to her after an increased number of behaviors were performed correctly.

Pasting activities:

During these activities we used crepe paper of different colors. Before the pieces of paper were pasted to a white sheet of paper (with different shapes drawn on it) A. and the intervener crumpled them between their fingers. As methods we used demonstration, practice, explanation and verbal cues (“crumple”, “paste”, “press” – the crepe paper on the white sheet) and tactile cues. During this activity the social reward from the therapist was sufficient, because the activity in itself was a well appreciated reward for A.

Activities involving the sewing of different object shapes

With the help of a thick cord which was thinner at the ends, A. was supposed to “sew” different object shapes: a car, a ship, a bus, a plane. These shapes were made out of wood and fitted with holes along the edges. At first, A. with the help of the intervener (modeling) drove the cord through these holes. Then the intervener was only holding the shape and A. was doing the activity alone. During the activities we used verbal cues (“insert”, “pull out”), the social reward (“Bravo”, “Excellent” etc.) and the material reward (after she finished sewing the whole shape A. was allowed to play with it for one minute).

Activities involving the handling/use of clamps

During these activities we used different color plastic clamps and a round plastic bowl. With the help of verbal cues (“hold”, “put down”), of modeling and spatial cues (the bowl was turned with the empty side towards A.) she learned how to handle the clamps and to place them on the edges of the bowl.

Activities involving building a tower

Different color wooden cubes were used, with a diameter of 4 cm. Initially we used behavior modeling. The therapist was sitting behind the child, with her hands over the hands of the child and thus the action of putting one cube over another was carried out. When the progress of the child was noticed, the total prompt (modeling) was diminished. The activities had a gradually increased complexity level, evolving from easy to difficult: from 2 to 10 cubes. At the end of the activities the cubes were tumbled down (initially by the therapist, and then by the child). When the cubes fell on the surface of the table they made a loud noise, which was in itself a reward for A.

Climbing up and down the stairs:

Before the activities that taught her how to climb up and down the stairs, A. performed exercises that involved a small stool, the height of a step. A., supported by the therapist’s hands, would climb on the stool (facing the therapist), turn around (the therapist turning also according to the child’s preferences, to the left or to the right), and then she would climb down from the stool. In accomplishing these tasks the verbal cues were of great help (“climb up”, “turn around”, “climb down”) as well as the social reward (eg. “bravo”, “very good”, “excellent”, “applause”)

Jumping up and down

Both modeling and verbal rewards were used during the activities that tried to teach the child to jump up and down. The child was taken into her arms by the intervener and they would jump together.

b) Development of personal autonomy

By acquiring certain behaviors, mainly: using a spoon in the context of eating, using a mug with one handle, taking off her jacket once it was unzipped, opening the velcro sneakers and using a potty, we aimed for the development of personal autonomy and self-help skills, which is an important part of the intervention.

Using a spoon and mug

Because the child preferred yoghurt, teaching her how to use a teaspoon was done starting from there. The child was taught how to use a teaspoon when eating yoghurt. This was achieved with the use of tactile and verbal prompts (“grab the teaspoon”, “raise the teaspoon”, “put the teaspoon in your mouth” etc.). Verbal reward was also used, which was of real help in the case of this particular child. Once the individual use of the teaspoon by the child was introduced, the other members of the family did the same, they offered the child the teaspoon together with the yoghurt. This behavior spread to other dishes which needed the use of a teaspoon/spoon.

Once the mug with one handle was introduced, no other type of container was offered to the child both during the activities and outside them.

Washing her hands

In order for her to acquire the habit of washing her hands we used the sequence analysis strategy, teaching this skill in steps: turning on the water, wetting her hands, soaping the hands, rinsing her hands, turning off the water and drying her hands. The social reward was the one most commonly used.

Taking off the jacket and opening velcro

Both taking off a jacket once it was unzipped and opening the velcro from the sneakers were taught in the context of undressing and changing shoes before entering the classroom in kindergarten. Initially we used behavior modeling, verbal prompts and the reward was meeting her group mates (she was not allowed in the classroom before performing the two behaviors). This behavior extended and when she got home from kindergarten she had to take off her jacket and shoes before sitting at the table and eating yoghurt (in this context the yoghurt was the reward).

Using the potty

In order to learn to use the potty the child was initially asked very frequently if she needs to go to the toilet and she was sat on the potty several times a day, even when she didn't really need to go. After several months, the child was only asked frequently if she needs to use the toilet. When she said she needed to go the child was sat on the potty, and while she was sitting there (only for urinating) she was offered some of her favorite objects so she could play with them for 30-60 seconds.

Mirror exercises

These exercises were conducted to identify the correct name of her own body parts. In the first part of the exercise the intervener would sit behind A., both facing the mirror. By behavior modeling the intervener would take A.'s hand and touch a part of the body, at the same time naming it. In the second part of the exercise the intervener would ask: "Where is the foot?" and A. had to point to it. Social reward and verbal prompts were used.

c) Development of communication and language

Learning new words

Activities were conducted which focused on teaching her new words. The child was shown images of different objects (everyday objects: toothbrush, a glass, a bed, a chair, a jacket, gloves etc.) while the therapist would name them each. In the next phase of the activity the child was shown the images and she would be asked "What is this?" and we would wait for the child's answer. Verbal cues were used: the first syllable of the word she had to name, as well as material and social rewards.

Game activities

Ball games were carried out ("Turn ball turn"), simple musical activities and combined with motor activities ("The fingers song")

d) Reducing the stereotypes

The strategy used in order to achieve this was based on adjusting the environment. When possible the triggers for motor stereotypes were eliminated from A.'s environment, for example round objects were taken away, the drapes were pulled to one side, the doors of the cabinets and cupboards were locked. When A. started rocking she was verbally warned to stop the behavior and her attention was drawn to another activity. In order to reduce verbal stereotypes we used the sign of locking the lips and the verbal warning "Shhhhhhhh".

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The characteristics and typology of learning disabilities

Anca-Maria Mărginean, Simona Ilişiu

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Authors note

Abstract

At the age of six, children start their education by attending elementary school and it is during this period that they acquire the tools of knowledge: reading, writing and elementary mathematics, which represent the basis for the intellectual development of each child. It is noticeable that some students learn more easily, while others have specific ways of learning, with an oscillating development. The latter are children with learning disabilities, the ones that need support for learning and development, offered by their teacher working together as a team with their support teacher, the school counselor, and the speech therapist in order to provide the necessary support required by the specific needs of the child.

All children with learning disabilities perform poorly in school and are considered special cases by teachers, so helping them develop becomes a challenge. Thus, the problems each student faces should be known, as well as the causes and the proper methods for efficient intervention in order to integrate the student in school and society. These "different children" should not be labeled and marginalized, because their learning disabilities are their way of processing information.

The integration of children with learning disabilities and their success in life depends on the manner in which they have been understood and supported. They need specialized intervention, based on individualized educational plans, depending on the particular psychological strengths and difficulties envisaged, which may also contain a specialized intervention program focused on areas of development, in order to improve the deficient skills and form new abilities, necessary for developing skills and capabilities as close as possible to those required by the curriculum.

Keywords: learning difficulties, integrative approach, non- academic difficulties, academic difficulties, learning disabilities, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, specialized intervention plan.

Zusammenfassung

Kinder im Alter von 6 Jahren, beginnen mit dem Grundschulbildung, Zeit der Erwerb von Wissen, Lesen, Schreiben und mathematische Kenntnisse sowie die Allgemein Wissens, die auf die intellektuelle Entwicklung jeden Kindes basiert. Es wird angemerkt, dass einige Schüler leichter lernen, während andere spezifische Formen des Lernens mit oszillierten Entwicklungen haben. Diese Letztere sind Kinder mit Lernschwierigkeiten, die Unterstützung brauchen zum Lernen und zum Entwicklung, Unterstützung durch den Lehrer in der Klasse der zusammen arbeitet mit dem Berater sowie mit dem Schule Logopädin, den Schüler dann Spezifische Bedürfnisse zum erfüllen.

Alle Kinder mit Lernbehinderungen sind schlecht in der Schule und sind ein besonderer Fall für Lehrer, stellen eine Herausforderung dar, damit sie wachsen. Die Probleme, die durch jeden Schüler konfrontiert sollen bekannt sein, sowie die Ursachen sowie die wirksame Intervention um die Integration in die Schule und Gesellschaft zu erfolgen. Diese "andere Kinder" sollte nicht markiert sein, und marginalisiert, weil die Lernschwierigkeiten ist deren Art, Informationen zu verarbeiten.

Integration von Kindern mit Lernschwierigkeiten und deren Erfolg im Leben hängt von dem wie sie verstanden und unterstützt sind. Sie müssen spezielle Maßnahmen auf der Grundlage von individuelle Bildungspläne auf psychologische Besonderheiten, sowie auf Stärken und Schwierigkeiten des Kindes, die möglicherweise ein spezielles Interventionsprogramm der sich auf Verschiede Entwicklungsdomäne, um die Qualifikationsdefizite und Fähigkeiten, die für die Bildung zu verbessern die zum Entwicklung von Fähigkeiten und Fertigkeiten dienen und so nah wie möglich and die Lehrplan sind.

Schlüsselworte: Lernbehinderungen, integrativen Ansatz, nicht akademischen Schwierigkeiten, schulischen Schwierigkeiten, Lernbehinderungen, Legasthenie, dysgraphia, Dyskalkulie, spezialisierte Intervention Programm.

The characteristics and typology of learning disabilities

I. Introduction

Once they reach the age of six or seven, all children must and are required to attend school. They start elementary school, when the acquisition of the instruments of knowledge takes place, reading, writing and elementary mathematics, which represent the bases for the intellectual development of each child.

The development of each child is a complex process, with different characteristics during school years. From experience, it appears that some students learn more easily than others, and some students have specific ways of learning with an oscillating development, with learning difficulties or even learning disorders. The latter are children with learning disabilities, those who need individual support for learning and development, offered by specialists such as the support teacher, school counselor, speech therapist, who make up an intervention team together with their classroom teachers in order to provide the child the support required by his or her specific needs.

All children with learning disabilities have low scores in school and are considered special cases by teachers, helping them develop becoming a challenge. Thus, the problems each student faces should be known, as well as the causes and the proper methods for efficient intervention in order to integrate the student in school and society. These "different children" must not be regarded in a negative light in class, must not be labeled or marginalized, because their learning disability represents their way of processing information and the degree to which their abilities are affected in different areas of development. Practice has proven that the integration of children with learning disabilities and their success in life depends on the manner in which they have been understood and supported. They need specialized intervention, based on individualized educational plans, depending on the particular psychological strengths and difficulties envisaged. The individualized educational plan may contain an intervention program specialized on areas of development, which offers the possibility of intervening in the learning process, with the use of specific instruments, in order to improve the deficient skills and form the abilities necessary for developing skills and capabilities as close as possible to those required by the curriculum.

The term "learning disabilities" was first used by Samuel A. Kirk in 1963. He uses the following definition: "A learning disability refers to a delay, a disorder, or slowed development on the emotional or behavioral level. But it is not the result of mental retardation, sensory deficiencies or cultural and educational factors". (apud. D.Ungureanu, 1998, p.22).

In time, definitions have varied and in 1994 the National Committee regarding learning disabilities suggested the following definition: „LD – is an umbrella concept that encompasses a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by serious difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening skills, speaking, writing, reading, reasoning and mathematical skills. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be determined by minimal disturbances in the functioning of the brain. Problems in the field of behavioral self-regulation, perception, and social interaction can coexist with LD, but do not constitute learning disabilities in themselves."

It is also specified that "LD is diagnosed when the individual's performance in standardized tests including reading, mathematics or written expression is substantially below the age level, education level

and intelligence level. Learning problems significantly interfere with academic achievement or daily activities involving reading, writing or mathematical skills. A variety of statistical approaches are employed in order to establish a significant discrepancy. "Substantially up" is quantified as a discrepancy greater than two standard deviations between performance and IQ. A smaller discrepancy between performance and IQ (eg between 1 to 2 standard deviations) is used mainly in cases where an individual's IQ test performance could be compromised by a disorder associated with the cognitive processes, or a comorbid medical condition or because of the cultural and ethnic background of the individual. Learning disorders may occur while associated with sensory deficits. Learning disorders may persist into adulthood. "

Most learning disabilities do not have obvious causes; the explanations are often different and confusing, because there are a number of factors, each with its own specifics and importance. Thus, researchers have taken into consideration possible causes and presumed causes for the occurrence of LD (D. Ungureanu, 1998, p.51). Possible causes include: biological and physiological causes, psychological causes, environmental causes, and unknown causes. Biological and physiological causes are multiple, including: premature births (approximately 7-8 children born prematurely presented LD) difficult births with prolonged labor, incidents, morphological or structural underdevelopment (rickets, general physical debility), metabolic problems, calcium, magnesium, vitamin deficiency, deficiency or surplus of energy burning, prolonged hormonal problems; minimal sensory thresholds (visual and acoustic), minimum normal, placed on the edge of normality, chronic or contagious diseases which involve a long absence from school; diseases affecting the neural paths chemistry; bio-pedagogical dischronologies in the functioning of the human body during the learning process, functional dissymmetry designated by phrases like "minimal brain damage" or "minimal brain dysfunction", the overworking of the "limbic brain" during the activity of the central nervous system. Psychological causes for learning disabilities are: the intellectual level situated in the lower limits, child affective disorders inducing reactions of opposition, resignation, denial, isolation, mild emotional imbalances; discrete, hidden or barely noticeable problems of perception (perceptual contrast, precarious shape consistency or quantity conservation, a slight simplicity of the body scheme); a partial general mental immaturity (a trend extended by infantilism) sensitive motivational deficiencies ("motivational anorexia") slow and uneven pace of psychological development through syncopated stage development manifested by extensions or compressions on some stages relative to Piaget's constructivism; excessive shyness; school phobia, lexophobia, grafophobia; loss of the sense of reality by the child; chronic inferiority complexes. Environmental causes are divided into four subcategories: school related causes, family related causes, social causes and relational causes. School related causes that may arise in learning disabilities may be: the oversize of content and the poor organization of educational content, the fast pace, an influence on the optimal communication between students and teachers by overloading classes, frequent change of teachers and school unit, inadequate or improper teacher training, extended school stress, school failure, lack of specialists in school counseling, speech therapy, school integration / inclusion activity (itinerant teacher). Family reasons are: family disinterest for school work, emotional problems in the family, poor financial conditions and low socio-cultural level, extreme overprotection or extreme exigency, the lack of a program regarding the learning and living arrangements of children, socio-cultural snobbery, dysfunctional families, reconstituted families, over-complex families or parents working abroad (children with one or both parents working abroad, who are raised by their grandparents or left in the care of a legal guardian), tense family environment, physical or verbal abuse, alcoholism, religious differences or imposition of absurd "religious" practices, negative role-models from their parents, brothers or relatives, prolonged family stress, child exploitation through labor, excessive punishment, intra-family disputes, mental shock. The underlying social causes of learning difficulties can be: irregular school attendance due to specific

conditions of the house location or excessive distances to school, relocation, international migration (different language, culture), neighborhoods with high social risk (antisocial behavior, juvenile delinquency, drugs), superficial or absence of social support for families with socio-economic difficulties. Relational causes are drawn from the social causes and refer to two difficulties related to the person: the first are communication difficulties: undeveloped / poor language, disorganized speech due to lack of stimulation, impaired articulation, rhythm, fluency or voice, non-social behavior, introverted behavior, finalist distortion of communication: chronic lying, while the others are related to group integration difficulties, such as: rejection by group members, marginalization, isolation, indiscriminate retaliation against members of the group. Unknown causes are called "Undiagnosed" and include some cases of mild or borderline deficiency, in which case it is difficult to establish a well-defined syndrome.

II. The characteristics and typology of learning disabilities

Learning disabilities that may be encountered in school are varied and manifest themselves differently for every child. They are preceded and associated with: deficits in linguistic and visual processing, attention, memory, or their combined deficits. The description of behavioral characteristics found in LD is based on clinical observations and empirical findings. The functional areas in which difficulties may arise are: motor development, visual perception, auditory perception, language, intellectual development (cognitive and metacognitive skills), social and personal factors.

Motor development refers to motor coordination, with its two categories: global and fine-motor skills. Global motor skills problems are manifested by general incoordination, but they lead to fewer consequences at school. Children with global motor skills problems have the following characteristics: disorderly or unusual walk, unstable equilibrium, excessive rigidity, deficient / inadequate posture, lack of flexibility and range of movement.

Fine motor skills problems in LD cases are rather rare, considering the fact that they are related to lack of attention and detail mental processing. The characteristics that may appear in this case are: problems when writing in capital letters, italics and / or in graphic space, difficulties when cutting papers or coloring, confusion in executing an unknown series of precise movements, lack of bilateral coordination, difficulties related to the spatial awareness, the perception of objects, the difference between left and right, difficulty in telling time, difficulty in adapting to change.

Visual perception presents disorders in three areas: the first one regards visual discrimination difficulties in distinguishing between pairs of letters b-d, m-n, p-b or words such as no-on, etc.; the second area regards visual sequencing with the inability to remember the order of letters in a word, manifested through letter reversals or mirror writing (dog-god, bat-tab, etc..) and the third one refers to visual memory with reading difficulties, difficulties in learning the spelling of words, difficulties in vocabulary development and in learning mathematics.

Auditory perception, just as visual perception, presents difficulties in three areas related to discrimination, order and memory. Thus, for auditory discrimination there are: difficulties in distinguishing words in spoken language (mispronunciation), auditory sequencing: metalinguistic skills are not developed (the ability to link the sounds of a word) and auditory memory: difficulties in understanding language and reproducing what he heard.

Language forms the basis of school education. The assimilation and use of language is a process of elaborating hypothesis, a process during which the student appeals to previous experience and indications from the semantic, syntactic, morphological, phonological and nonverbal context. Children with learning disabilities have difficulties in acquiring written language and / or spoken language. The

interaction between meaning (the semantic component), form (phonology, morphology, syntax) and language use (contextual functions) provide the nature of the difficulties and how they influence the learning process. In spoken language, the student has the following problems: the transition from syntagmatic to paradigmatic is performed later than the age of 7-8 years old, believes that the pronoun and noun in the same sentence always relate to the same person, has a poorly developed vocabulary, words association is done mainly based on his own experience, low flexibility in choosing his words, misinterprets information, confuses the order of events, confuses details with important facts, can hardly remember the main ideas, interprets the language too literally, does not answer to the point, does not understand humor, misunderstands metaphors and figures of speech (undeveloped meta-language), has a limited expressive language, does not indicate the tenses or the plural, uses grammar in a wrong way, talks too much or too little, changes the subject very often, does not provide sufficient information and does not care if the other person understands the message, does not know how to retell a story or he constructs the narrative in a wrong way. Furthermore, in reading or writing, the student has the following difficulties: creates wrong connections between spoken language and the written word, the automatisms for decoding isolated words are not developed, does not master the technique for splitting words into syllables, understands only a few vocabulary words, does not use context to understand the significance of a word that he does not know, read without intonation, does not continue communication after a pause because he does not know what to say next, has difficulties with the correspondence between pronoun misspells sounds, writes unevenly (font size in words is uneven) , the layout of the text or a poem is deficient, makes spelling mistakes, verb conjugation is omitted or used incorrectly, writes incomplete or incorrect sentences, lays down disorganized ideas when writing a story, does not check his work, uses the wrong punctuation, does not address the key issues.

Cognitive and metacognitive skills in children with learning disabilities are characterized by the following: they address issues impulsively, because they cannot organize the problems, they are content with identifying objects without establishing relationships between them, they are content with approximations, because they don't have a developed need for accuracy, they are "passive learners" and do not actively participate in learning, because they have low motivation, they have a low self-efficacy and high expectations of failure (Wong, 1996), they cannot coordinate the work strategy with task requirements (Lerner, 1989), they are not capable of monitoring performance and self-monitoring themselves (Obrzut & Hynd, 1991), they tend to accept things as they are, without regard to logic, they do not develop or mobilize cognitive strategies for learning, metacognitive abilities operate at very low levels, they show ineffective learning patterns (Ariel, 1992), they have difficulty in accessing, organizing and coordinating multiple mental activities, they are not aware of the usefulness of planning strategies, self-assessment and self-regulation, they have reduced ability to switch strategies between them, even if they know what strategies should be used, they cannot get over the details to discover the essential attributes of a problem, they cannot generalize learned strategies (Ariel, 1992, Wong, 1996).

Social aspects give the following characteristics for children with learning disabilities: they perceive themselves as less able than their peers, teachers assess them as students with poor social skills (Olsen, Wong & Marx, 1983 in Ariel, 1992), they make internal associations in the case of failure ("I do not know ", " I am not able ") and external associations in the case of success (" I was lucky "), they have maladaptive association patterns (Chapman, 1985 in Ariel, 1992), they have trouble interpreting non-verbal messages; they find it hard to take on different roles, they are excluded from the class group and have difficulties in establishing relationships with peers, they are unable to "walk in someone else's shoes" (communication is egocentric).

A child with LD does not have all the disabilities from the affected functional areas, but can only

present some disabilities from only one, two or more areas, depending on the type and severity of LD. They also have strengths and skills which should be encouraged and recognized, therefore it is not sufficient to diagnose and label the disabilities, but they must also be offered specialized help.

Learning disabilities include a large number and variety of problems from several areas of development. In recent years it has been found that the number of children experiencing learning disabilities is increasing. Thus, learning disabilities have become a phenomenon known in almost every class, considered by some authors to be due to the restrictive environmental conditions that negatively affect learning and development.

Learning disabilities have been approached from many perspectives, but in time there have been three main directions:

- the first direction is concerned with the recognition of the difficulties specific to school activity encountered by some children in the act of teaching and learning; it is considered that the fault lies with the children because they are lazy or uninterested in learning; these children need additional support from teachers (teacher, support teacher) to adapt to school life;

- The second direction is concerned with the recognition of a category of problems / disabilities which do not fit into known categories, in addition to acknowledged deficiencies (mental, sensory, language-related, communication-related, psychomotor) certain disabilities are identified, which refer to the process of learning (specific learning disabilities); these disabilities are related to the learning process in its basic components and psychosocial dimensions; children need support from teachers (teacher, support teacher, psychologist / school counselor);

- The third direction, the curricular perspective, is a reconstruction of the field of concepts and practices (methods of intervention) which address the situations proposed in special education; by approaching LD as a non-category field, recognition, assessment and specific intervention are achieved regarding learning issues, while emphasizing the uniqueness of each individual and the fact that difficulties may arise for any child; effective learning becomes the aim of the school activity, accepted methods are interactive and the shortcomings of the child are understood as disabilities, different ways to tackle the learning experience.

A new perspective in approaching learning disabilities is the integrative approach, which offers multiple solutions and is based on a few basic thesis: the relationship between uniqueness and diversity in the learning process, valuing student uniqueness as a model for learning and development, understanding differences between individuals in learning as a source of support, not as a barrier, understanding that there are different paces of development, accepting the personal learning and experiencing style, the role of situational context in learning and development, the importance of early intervention in preventing and solving learning problems. The main idea of this approach is education for all children.

There were no precise criteria which could be used in order to establish the types of learning disabilities, but a variety of criteria, due to the confusion in the field and the complexity of the different points of view. The identification of some forms of learning disabilities is needed to provide a clearer view of the modes of assessment and intervention for effective school integration of pupils with learning disabilities. There are numerous classifications that are acknowledged and accepted. One of these classifications is the one established by Wong (1996), which divides the LD into two categories:

1. **non-academic difficulties:** visual-motor problems: fine, gross perceptual problems: visual, auditory, phonological processing problems, language problems, memory problems: short-term and long-term memory; long term memory and the semantic level
2. **academic difficulties:** reading, arithmetic / mathematics, writing: mechanical coordination, composition, spelling.

The following classification shows the magnitude and globalization of the vast phenomenon of learning disabilities and it is made by D. Ungureanu (1998, p.53-54 0.60 to 64). According to this classification, learning disabilities fall into the following two categories, each of them with their subtypes:

1. **induced learning difficulties** - caused by the individual himself or by the surrounding environment
 - a) Intrinsic: Action-procedural: passive reception, lack of learning techniques; organizational: non sequencing of the learning process, interferences in learning, subjective self-assessment; attitudinal: indifference, disinterest, negativism; valued: insecurity related to previous experience, gaps in prior learning; occasional: incidents, diseases, ailments.
 - b) Extrinsic: the poor quality of instruction (teaching), the lack of a proper working and living program, the cultural and material level as well as family environment, family interest in school education, family collaboration with the school.

2. proper learning disabilities - consequences of intrinsic disabilities:

- a) according to the degree of coverage: general and specific
- b) according to the social environment: academic (school) and socio-professional
- c) according to their nature: sequencing, cerebral-functional dissymmetry, un-adaptive (lack of attitude towards school environment), deficiencies in communication language (speaking, writing, reading), deficiencies in arithmetic operations
- d) according to objectification: verbal and nonverbal
- e) according to practicality: development, storage, use, combination, value, loan
- f) according to information processing: input (perceptual - visual, auditory, temporal rhythmic), attention, through non-differentiating
- g) according to integration: motor expression (fine, general) output / expression (oral language, written language, reading), remembering (memory) of short / long term, mathematical skills (calculation, reasoning, problem solving), sequencing, organization, abstraction.

Taking into account the following: integration in school activities, the possibilities of approaching curricular areas and the manner in which the students can solve the tasks, according to the Code of Good Practices for teachers in the UK, LD are split into four categories:

1. specific learning difficulties or learning disabilities
2. mild learning disabilities
3. severe learning disabilities
4. severe and multiple learning disabilities

1. Specific learning difficulties or learning disabilities are a new kind of disability, which affects the learning process in general and it is identified by the way of delivering, processing and

expressing information (E. Vrașmaș, 2007, p.61). The difficulties faced by students with learning disabilities are: difficulties in spoken language, written language and numeracy – the students have difficulty in learning to read, spell, use numbers; their performance is below what they can do in other areas, difficulties with short-term memory, difficulties with organizational skills, orientation and coordination of space, time and information.

Among the specific learning disabilities are: dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia.

Reading (lexia) and writing (graphia) are closely related processes. Lexia cannot be learned spontaneously, but it requires organization and support. Once acquired, the reading can facilitate writing. In everyday life we read of 8-10 times more than we write. Reading involves perceptual-motor and cognitive processes (specific processing of information, memory). Dyslexia refers instead to difficulties in recognizing and understanding written texts. It causes difficulties in learning how to read, write and separate words into syllables, phonological difficulties, it affects short-term memory, mathematical skills, classification and organization, as well as concentration abilities.

Dyslexia appears due to difficulties in processing information based on language. It can affect people with different intellectual levels and from all socio-economic strata. Its detection occurs around the age of 6/7 years old when children begin to have trouble retaining and recognizing letters in hand writing and in printed words and then attached to each other in words. The symptoms of dyslexia are:

- Errors in the auditory differentiation of sounds: confusion between voiced and voiceless consonants, between sounds with close points of articulation, between consonants of the same kind or of a different nature,
- Errors in the visual differentiation of letters: reversal of letters, syllables, monosyllabic words,
- Difficulties in the analysis and synthesis of words: deformation of words by reversal, omission, substitution of letters, syllables, words,
- Reading is realized with long, senseless pauses, or by guessing

The difficulties faced by children with dyslexia range from simple forms to severe problems in the learning process, but they may have some visual and spatial skills, etc., which help them develop their talents in various fields.

Writing is a form of language, through which communication is achieved with the help of a writing tool and which helps to express one's personality. It is a cross-functional relation of three levels: motor-kinesthetic, perceptual and representation and their relationship with the affective-motivational system. The difficulties that arise in written language are learning disabilities.

Dysgraphia is a difficulty in the area of learning and performing the writing process, in spite of a proper training and education, at an age which is adequate for such achievements.

The area in which writing learning disabilities manifest themselves is very complex and diverse, the following symptoms may occur in different forms and intensities, listed according to the order of their appearance during schooling (I. Mititiuc, 1996):

- Difficulties in shaping letters: reversals and deformations of letter elements, rotating, stretching, crowding graphemes,
- Difficulties in linking sounds with graphic symbols: phonetic analysis and synthesis is deficient, the link between phoneme and grapheme is difficult to achieve,

- Omission of letters, graphic elements, syllables, word endings, diphthongs, consonant groups, whole words,
- Substitution of letters, syllables, words, due to the similarities in terms of optical, acoustic, kinesthetic, phonetic features
- Additions of letters, syllables, words,
- Merging and compression of words
- Slow rhythm in copying or writing,
- Failure to apply grammar rules.

Experts point out that pure dyslexia or dysgraphia does not exist, they are combined, the result being the dyslexo-dysgraphia disability.

Dyscalculia

Difficulties related to learning mathematics are defined as "significant difficulties in learning and developing skills in the broad field of mathematical performance with its many sectors, issues and circumstances" (D. Ungureanu, 1998).

Disabilities that occur in this category are:

- proper mathematical disabilities, which are part of the field of mathematics: algorithmic difficulties, problems with sequencing, calculus and reasoning,
- non-mathematic disabilities that are part of other areas: linguistic disabilities on a mathematical level (in understanding and using the expressive language of mathematical terms, comprehension and naming of mathematical operations); perceptual disabilities on a mathematical level (in recognizing and reading numerical symbols, or brackets, etc.). disabilities regarding mathematical "focus" in copying the exact transcription of all figures, signs, brackets, and so on, in the implementation of geometric figures, in placing units in the correct columns, in solving math addition problems.

The term dyscalculia is used for mathematical learning disabilities and it is referred to as a partial disability in learning mathematics. This occurs at the beginning of school age (6/7), it is amplified by the fourth grade and becomes chronic in middle school. Dyscalculia symptoms are: problems of spatial orientation and alignment of numbers in columns, left-right orientation issues and problems with sequencing, specific difficulties with mathematical concepts from mathematical problems, difficulty in operating with abstract concepts of time and direction, poor skills of mental calculation (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division), mistakes in writing, reading and saying numbers (additions / substitutions, transpositions, omissions and reversals of numbers), inability to understand and remember mathematical concepts, rules, order of operations, poor long-term memory regarding mathematical concepts, poor memory regarding the emplacement and organization of things, difficulties with sports coordination.

During mathematical activities, the child almost always senses when he is wrong, he "knows", in most cases when he does not know the answer and this awareness leads to a phenomenon called math anxiety, a phenomenon that can be extended to other disciplines that have basic mathematical skills (physics, chemistry, geography, etc.). This syndrome becomes chronic and worsens over time.

Due to various problems that may occur during the whole learning process, learning disabilities can sometimes be seen as a lack of maturity or motivation and as behavior problems. However, they can

be identified, when the difficulties are typical to the learning process and refer to the manner in which to approach learning through perception, motor coordination, spatial and temporal orientation, language and communication.

Identification of learning disabilities is realized through: the discrepancy between different areas of speech and expression, the exclusion of other forms of disabilities and complex causes that determine the permanence of this type of learning and through the uniqueness of each student.

2. Mild learning disabilities:

Students with mild learning disabilities achieve average performance levels, significantly below the expected levels, in most areas of the curriculum, even with appropriate interventions. Children have a much greater difficulty than their peers in acquiring the skills of writing, reading and calculus as well as in understanding basic concepts. They can also face slowness in speech and language use, low self-esteem, poor focus abilities and underdeveloped social skills.

3. Severe learning disabilities

Students with severe learning disabilities are characterized by severe cognitive or intellectual problems, which affect their ability to face the school curriculum unaided. The difficulties that arise are: difficulty in movement and coordination, communication and perception difficulties, difficulties in acquiring skills that will enable them to help themselves, requiring the teaching of techniques of for acquiring these skills, as well as independence and social skills. Also, some children may use signs and symbols in communication, but most of them are able to sustain a simple conversation. These children need help in all areas of the curriculum.

4. Severe and multiple learning disabilities

Students with severe and multiple learning disabilities show severe learning difficulties along with other disabilities: physical, sensory problems and / or serious medical problems. They need a lot of help from adults, both for their learning needs and for their care. Their communication is made through gestures, symbols, indication of the eyes or a very simple language.

In recent years, a growing number of students with learning disabilities have been recorded, both in our country and abroad. These students can be found in every school, and they need to learn and develop their abilities, their skills and competencies required by school activities. In practice, the support teacher, classroom teachers and other professionals who work with students apply intervention programs based on acquisitions prescribed in the school syllabus. The fast pace at which the curriculum is being studied leads to the use of intervention programs based on the students' strengths, however, if basic skills have not been sufficiently developed or the degree to which they have been affected is greater than expected, then the application of well-structured intervention programs focusing on fields of development, containing sets of exercises for each line of development leads to the recovery of skills, to the development of skills for the development of abilities similar to those specified in the curriculum. Specialized well-structured intervention programs offer the opportunity to practice learning skills and to support the development of each child, based on the most efficient operational tools. Therefore, improving and developing at first the basic skills in the areas of development represents a milestone in educational achievement.

A specialized intervention program can be divided into the following five areas of cognitive functioning: attention / executive functions, language, sensory-motor functions, visual and space processing, and memory and learning. This program contains five sets of exercises from the five fields,

which lead to the improved performance of skills in the areas of development, at the same time, restructuring each student’s beliefs about their performance.

A sample of a form with such exercises is presented below:

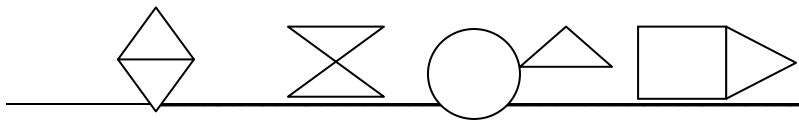
Exercise form on five areas of development

1. Circle the letters “p” and “b” from the following string of letters:
 s p c b d c p b d d t c p p m a b b b p z f p e b p o m c p p d b d b p h r p
 s b l b s p a p b t b f p f e p b a p b d r p k b l c p p s a b r p t b b p e t p s
 b d g k p z h p e b b b s p a p e f b b t o g b l m s n p a r p b t i u p r p s b
 c d b o p p r t b a i p f b p c p b e t f p h b s b o m p f b s p r d p b d r b e
 p s u g h d p b m f g p b s l c i p f b e
2. Pay attention and do what I say!
 a) "Show me the personal pronoun in the first person, plural, which is written on the blackboard, then clap your hands four times".
 b) "Tell me how much is 7x9, but first go and sit in the first desk from the third row."
 c) "Open your notebook, write the date and tell me your mother’s name".
3. Listen to the following article, and then retell it.

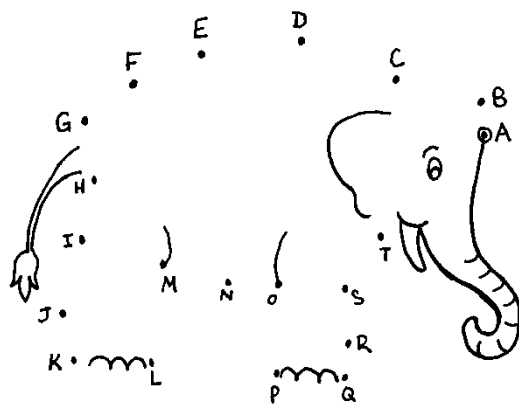
"A ferocious predator, the only medium sized feline found in the fauna of our country, the lynx is one of the most interesting representatives of his family. He got his name ("the one who laughs") because of the impression on his face. Due to his whiskers, this skilled hunter seems to be permanently smiling, as if he were arrogant and sarcastic."

("The Carpathian Lynx" – Media Kinder Magazine)

4. Copy the following geometrical shapes under the line:



5. Draw lines between the letters, in alphabetical order, starting with the letter “A”



III. Conclusions

The application of the structured program, as part of the personalized intervention plan may increase performance for skills such as: focusing attention, processing and responding quickly to verbal instructions, copying bi-dimensional geometric shapes, to retell a story and for fine motor and accurate eye-hand coordination, basic skills included in the five areas of cognitive functioning. These programs help to develop skills and competencies through positive intervention in the case of students in need, but they also help remedy the problems encountered in the classroom.

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Pedagogical Objectives Of Teaching Intercultural Communication Competence

Mihaela Pricope

The Polytechnic University of Bucharest, Romania

Authors note

Professor Assistant, scientific interest in teaching methodology and intercultural communication

monica.pricope@yahoo.com

Abstract

In the contemporary educational system we can remark a change of paradigm towards active learning and competence-based education. However, we should not understand that this is a radical change and that education has abandoned teaching knowledge in favour of competences. This is impossible, since competences include knowledge in their structure, and teaching has different functions, among which one remains that of transmitting knowledge. The cultural diversity found at educational level is an extraordinary source of progress and innovation regarding the teaching methodology and the academic communication. This diversity should be valued and used as a resource, so that academic results could appear and, along with them, the student's/teacher's satisfaction.

This article explores the foreign students' perceptions regarding what makes effective communication in an intercultural academic environment. The findings show differences according to the culture of origin, which lead us to the conclusion that intercultural communication competence could be built in a multicultural classroom by setting specific objectives related to comparing cultures and raising students' awareness about the importance of differences as enriching experience.

Keywords: teaching objectives, intercultural communication, foreign students

Zusammenfassung

Man bemerkt in dem zeitgenössischen Erziehungssystem eine Paradigmaveränderung zum Aktivlernen und Konzentrierung auf Kompetenzen. Man soll trotzdem nicht verstehen, dass es um eine radikale Veränderung geht und der Unterricht die Kenntnisseauslieferung zugunsten von den Kompetenzen verlassen hat. Das ist unmöglich, da die Kompetenzen Kenntnis in ihre Struktur beinhalten, und Unterrichten verschiedene Funktionen, darunter auch der Kenntnissevermittlung hat. Was die didaktische Methodologie und die pädagogische Kommunikation und Relation anbetrifft, ist die kulturelle Verschiedenheit in der erzieherischen Umgebung eine außerordentliche Fortschritt- und Innovationsquelle. Das sollte dementsprechend verwertet werden, so dass die akademischen Ergebnissen und zur gleichen Zeit die Studenten- und Professorenzufriedenstellung auftauchen.

Dieser Artikel untersucht die Wahrnehmungen der Auslandsstudenten betreffend die wirksame Kommunikation in einer interkulturellen akademischen Umgebung. Die Forschungsergebnisse stellen die Verschiedenheiten im Zusammenhang mit der originellen Kultur dar. Daraus ergibt sich die Schlussfolgerung, dass für die Bildung einer interkulturellen Kommunikationskompetenz in einer Klasse mit kulturellen Verschiedenheiten musste man solche Ziele festsetzen werden, die das Vergleichen verschiedener Kulturen und die Studentenbewusstsein betreffend der Bedeutung der kulturellen Verschiedenheiten als erhebende Erfahrung hinweisen.

Schlüsselworte: pädagogische Ziele, interkulturelle Kommunikation, Auslandsstudenten

Pedagogical Objectives of Teaching Intercultural Communication Competence

1. Introduction

The introduction of the intercultural element in training could be noticed especially in informal and non-formal educational settings. Still, on the one hand, the simple interaction between international students in the campus or at school does not implicitly lead to acquiring and developing intercultural communication competence. On the other hand, this competence cannot be taught in a formal educational setting without the direct contact/interaction with the otherness.

Effective communication is always dependent on context and, since culture is part of the context, communication is rarely separate from the cultural element. Thus, we agree that learning a foreign language cannot be separate from learning the target culture. It is important that international students should become aware of their own culture and of the other cultures as well; otherwise, the messages in the foreign language shall be interpreted according to their own cultural framework and this fact could lead to misinterpretations and ineffective communication.

The concept of *intercultural communication competence*, present in the works of the Council of Europe, is largely used in teaching modern languages, especially the international ones. The author Michael Byram (1997), designs a structural model of this competence, made of five cultural elements - „savoirs” - and three linguistic ones. The five cultural „savoirs” refer to: attitudes (curiosity, openness, trust in one’s own culture), knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating (skills of interpreting a document/event from another culture, of explaining it and relating it to other documents/events from one’s own culture), skills of discovering and interacting (ability to acquire new knowledge regarding a foreign culture and to operate with them), cultural critical awareness (ability to evaluate critically, and based on explicit criteria one’s own culture and other cultures).

We believe that the development of the intercultural communication competence of foreign students leads to the improvement of the communication with the teacher and with the intercultural group of students, to an increased capacity of communicating in the target language and to better adaptation to new cultures, by coping with culture shock.

There are various theoretical models of intercultural communication competence in the literature – linear, dynamic, structural, adaptational, psychological or holistic. We believe that due to the complexity of this competence which can be developed during the whole life, by formal, non-formal and informal education in a complementary way, it can only be view but holistically. That is why, when we talked about the intercultural speakers’ competences, we opted for a holistic view which comprises linguistic, cultural, psycho-attitudinal elements, based on the theoretical models of M. Byram, W. Gudykunst, K. Deardoff, but also on the concepts of „intermediary space”/„the third space”/„intercultural space” (Kramsch 1993, Clanet, 1990), or „ cultural implicit” (Clanet, 1990, Colles 1998, Louis, 2009, Zarate 2003).

In Romania, the field of intercultural education/communication was researched by authors, for example: Constantin Cucuș, Teodor Cozma, Anca Nedelcu, Liviu Antonesei, Simona Butnaru, Călin Rus. They approach intercultural education as a strategy at the level of different educational dimensions, for example, the curriculum, the values promoted by education, the educational climate and the teacher-student relation, the teaching objectives and the methodology. The recent works of the Council of Europe, which dedicated numerous pages to teaching and assessing intercultural competence see it as an integral part of the study of modern languages, since dealing with otherness is one of the most important teaching objectives in this field.

2. Research methodology

The aim of our research is to adapt the teaching curricula of foreign languages including Romanian for foreigners to learners' needs and interests by finding out the foreign students' perceptions regarding the factors which promote effective intercultural communication in an academic environment according to their culture of origin.

Thus, the teacher could prioritize a set of teaching objectives which better reflects the students' views and perceptions. Our research hypothesis is the following:

Hypothesis : The students' culture of origin, that is the Western (Europe and America) and the Non-Western (the rest of the respondents' cultures of origin) influences their choices regarding various factors which promote effective intercultural communication.

Our research population consists of foreign students enrolled at Romanian universities in different study programmes (Bachelor, Master, PhD) who attend a preparatory year to learn the Romanian language. The study program of the preparatory year is regulated by the Romanian Law and it stipulates that the students must attend an intensive language and culture course which should teach them the language from a communicative perspective, including specialized vocabulary and should familiarize them with the Romanian culture and civilization.

In order to maximize learning the target language and the culture at the same time and to facilitate cultural and social adaptation during this course, we propose an intercultural approach to teaching and learning a foreign language, which is briefly defined as a focus on teaching communication skills in an intercultural environment. This involves immersion in the everyday culture and exposure to authentic teaching materials and experience.

The research population was established starting from a list of homogeneous groups - foreign students enrolled in the preparatory year and Romanian language teachers - and the qualitative selection was made so that it could cover several research variables, required for further interpretation of the research data: sex, age, culture of origin, language spoken and age for students and intercultural experiences.

The criteria for inclusion in the study were:

- foreign students who study Romanian as a foreign language
- willingness to participate in the study

3. Findings

As we mentioned above, we are interested in finding out the foreign students' perceptions regarding the factors which promote effective intercultural communication in an academic environment and to see if there are any differences according to their culture of origin.

The respondents' views regarding the following factors which promote effective communication in an academic environment differ significantly from a statistical point of view according to their cultural origin:

- to be able to understand my interlocutor's messages from his/her own cultural frame of reference (f)
- to be able to reflect critically on my own experience with persons of different cultural backgrounds (i)
- to be open to other cultures and tolerant before diversity (n)
- to be sincere in communication (p)
- to be fair with my interlocutor (r)

In order to measure how the students' culture of origin may influence their perceptions regarding the factors which promote effective intercultural academic communication we calculated the Pearson coefficients, as it results from the table below:

Table 1. Pearson values. Correlations cultural origin – factors which promote intercultural communication

		Orig_stud
Q3_f	Pearson Correlation	0,147*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,043
	N	190
Q3_i	Pearson Correlation	-0,011
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,877
	N	189
Q3_n	Pearson Correlation	0,054
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,459
	N	189
Q3_p	Pearson Correlation	0,216**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,003
	N	189

Q3_r	Pearson Correlation	0,210**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,004
	N	189

The table above presents the existing intermediate level correlations between the items f, p, r from the list above and the cultural origin of the foreign students. It's interesting how the more importance is attached to the factors which promote effective intercultural communication: "to be sincere in communication" and „to be fair with my interlocutor" the farther to the West is the foreign students' cultural origin. Thus, the importance given to sincerity and fairness is more significant for the non-Western respondents than for the Western ones. Furthermore, a Pearson coefficient of 0.14 in the case of the item „f" leads us to believe that the importance given to the capacity to understand my interlocutor's messages from his/her own cultural frame of reference is a more important factor for non-Westerners. In this situation, we would have expected a reverse situation because multiculturalism appeared in the Western societies and is still on the wave.

In order to analyse more clearly how the cultural origin influences various factors which promote effective intercultural communication according to the respondents' views, we ordered the averaged we obtained for each item on groups of respondents coming from different cultural backgrounds.

Table 2. Factors which promote effective intercultural communication according to the cultural origin

Origin	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Europe	To know one or more international languages	To be friendly	To be positive, flexible and open to other cultures
North America	To be positive, flexible and open to other cultures	To know one or more international languages	To be able to manage stress, frustration, change and ambiguous situations
The Near East	To have knowledge about my own culture	To be friendly	To know one or more international languages
The Far East	To have knowledge about my own culture	To be positive, flexible and open to other cultures	To speak my interlocutor's language To be able to understand my interlocutor's messages from his/her own cultural frame of reference To be friendly
Africa	To be positive, flexible and open to	To know one or more international	To be able to understand my interlocutor's

	other cultures. To have high self-esteem To be friendly	languages	messages from his/her own cultural frame of reference
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As we can notice in the table above, the European respondents favoured firstly speaking more foreign languages, which is in line with the plurilingualism policies promoted by The Council of Europe and the European Commission. The respondents who come from North America choose the items “positive attitudes ...” and the Far – Eastern respondents value, in the first place the item „knowledge about their own culture”. The African respondents give importance to three items, which are: „positive attitude”, „increased self-esteem” and the personality trait of being friendly. Only the respondents who come from North America choose as their first three choices the “ability to deal with stress and ambiguous situations”. In general, almost all the respondents selected as their first choices the importance of “speaking more international languages” and „positive attitudes before cultural diversity”.

The research hypothesis can be verified by the Pearson correlational analysis, which showed that the students’ culture of origin, that is the Western (Europe and America) and the Non-Western (the rest of the cultures of origin) influences their choices regarding various factors which promote effective intercultural communication. Thus, the more important the factors “ability to understand my interlocutor’s message from his/her cultural frame of reference”, “to be sincere in communication”, “to be fair with my interlocutor” are, the farther from the West the students’ cultural origin is.

4. Conclusions

In teaching intercultural competence it is very important to set effective objectives which could help students’ build positive attitudes before cultural diversity. Therefore, we recommend to raise students’ awareness by introducing both elements regarding their own cultures and the target culture(s). Activities which allow the comparison between cultures, or invite to reflection on cultural incidents may lead to understanding one’s own reactions and interpretations and the other people’s cultural frames of reference. Since our respondents’ interest was also in personality traits or human values, we believe that the awareness should also be directed towards the existence of different meanings and degrees of importance of various values such as empathy, sincerity, fairness, honesty, respect, truth etc., which may contribute to the overall understanding of the causes of ineffective communication and difficulties of cultural adaptation.

Communication should not be perceived as a simple issue related to speaking a language; it inevitably means interaction in a given socio-cultural context, and the language is part of it. Effective communication does not mean to apply a set of rules. On the contrary, it is a process of negotiation and interpretation of meanings. That is why, conflicts and misunderstandings are always a part of it and should not be avoided, but effectively dealt with. In this respect, the intercultural approach to teaching foreign languages also has a very significant behavioural component, which involves a constant adjustment of one’s own views, interpretations and attitudes.

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