

SPEECH DEVELOPMENT IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Nina Mance*  **and Barbara Lamot**

University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer in Osijek, Faculty of Education, Osijek, Croatia

ABSTRACT

Speech development is a complex process influenced by various factors, which are very important. From birth, a child is surrounded by sounds coming from the environment, and for them to be able to produce sounds themselves, they need time and interaction with others. A child often experiences the first interaction with the parents, whose role is to provide the child with a safe and stimulating speaking environment and care for his speech development. As the child grows, they get to know other people, most often the teacher and the children in the educational groups with whom they interact. However, there are children who, despite proper cognitive development, proper hearing, and good health, show certain deviations from proper language development. It is considered that these children follow the course of regular language development, only that it develops more slowly than in children who do not belong to this group. Significant deviations from proper language development make it difficult for children to communicate already in the early years of life, which ultimately results in lower achievements in school.

It is a well-known fact that children acquire knowledge through play, which, in addition to being interesting and fun, provides great benefits. In addition to the environment, language games play an important role in developing speech and speaking skills. Playing language games affects the child's activity and speech training, especially if the child is faced with articulation or other speech disorders already at an early age. The aim of this paper is to raise awareness of the importance of language games in preschool and the child's environment for their normal and overall development. Language games can precisely enable such children to successfully solve challenges.

Key words: *speech, the role and importance of the environment, speech disorders and disabilities, language games*

* E-mail: nina.mance@gmail.com

Introduction

Speech development is a complex process influenced by various factors, which are very important. From birth, a child is surrounded by various sounds coming from the environment, and for them to be able to produce the same themselves, they need time and interaction with others. The child's first interaction is most often with the parents, whose role is to provide the child with a safe and stimulating speech environment and care for their speech development. Language and speech follow certain milestones, for example, the appearance of the first word, the use of gestures in communication, and sentence formation, but if a child develops a deviation in the acquisition of language and speech before the age of three, then we are talking about developmental language disorders.

Deviations from proper language development make it difficult for children to communicate already in the early years of life, which ultimately results in lower achievements in school, and the developmental language disorder is present throughout life.

According to Vrsaljko and Paleka (2018), by the time they start school, all grammar rules should be acquired, even the exceptions that caused problems when mastering grammar because, as research shows, at that stage, errors still sneak in when using words correctly case forms, using number and grammatical rules, therefore a legitimate reaction is necessary in order to create the prerequisites for successful mastery of the mother tongue.

Language games can be one of the most valid reactions because it is a well-known fact that children acquire knowledge through play, which, in addition to being interesting and fun, provides great benefits.

It is a well-known fact that children acquire knowledge through play, which, in addition to being interesting and fun, provides great benefits. Therefore, apart from the environment, language games play an important role in developing speech and speaking skills. Conducting language games, in preschool or at home, affects the child's activity and speech training, especially if the child is faced with articulation or other speech disorders already at the earliest age of life.

The aim of this paper is to raise awareness of the importance of language games in preschool and in the child's environment, as well as for normal and

overall development. The paper will therefore include starting points about speech in general, explain the meaning of the environment in the development of children's speech, give an overview of the most common disorders in speech and language, and emphasize the role of language games for speech development. Also, at the end, examples of language games will be provided.

Speech

Speech is the basis of any communication between two or more people. When we speak, we convey a certain message. Speech is necessary for life so that we can express wishes and needs, intentions, thoughts, feelings or simply convey certain information to the environment. Unlike adults, who receive and process information from the environment, children do not have such well-developed sensory functions that will transmit information and process the received information. In the early years of life, the child is quite limited in this area. The way, pace and direction in which this process will develop depend solely on the child's environment (Miljak, 1984).

Speech development refers to understanding the meaning of a certain word or concept and the ability to connect words and create sentences. Every child is an individual, which means that not all children develop at the same speed and in the same way. Parents play a key role in the development of a child's speech. They are the most important people in a child's life from the moment they are born. A child is a curious being who in their early years of life is just noticing various objects and beings. Over time, they become aware that each person and each object in the environment has its own name and characteristics. Since parents spend the most time with their children, the author Čudina-Obradović (2008) believes that their naming of beings and things, repetition of words and sentences, enrichment of the child's vocabulary, expansion of expressions, listening and speaking to the child have a great influence on the development of speech.

In order for a child's psychological development to be orderly, the basic condition is that the child has acquired speech skills, that they use them in a proper way, and that they can transmit and receive information without difficulty. Miljak (1984) concludes that developing speech also develops some other areas that are important for the child's overall growth and development.

According to Posokhova (1999), the development of speech takes place in the pre-verbal and verbal periods.

Pre-verbal period

The period that begins with the child's birth and lasts until their first meaningful word is called the pre-verbal period. According to the authors Kuvač Kraljević and Kologranić Belić (2015), despite the inability to express their wishes and needs through speech, a newborn can produce sound. The first vocal relationship with the environment is crying. The child's speech begins to develop already in the prenatal age, because the child in the mother's womb hears and listens to her voice, to which it becomes accustomed. The fact that they were exposed to language even before birth confirms that children are ready for the development and acquisition of speech from the moment they come into the world.

In the pre-verbal period, the child sends messages to the environment in many ways. Darwin (1873, according to Kuvač Kraljević & Kologranić Belić, 2015) states that children cry to let their parents know that something is happening, that something is bothering them, that they need and expect something. After a certain time, the child can produce crying sounds in several ways, and they differ depending on the cause of their occurrence. They can convey their physiological needs: that they are hungry, thirsty and/or have physical needs, if they are in pain, if they are nervous, tired... A few weeks after birth, babies start making sounds like cooing. However, in the first month of life, the child cannot perform any movement with the organs responsible for producing speech. It is especially important to monitor whether the child reacts to sound at an early age because this shows whether the child has healthy hearing or whether there is damage, notes Miljak (1984).

A child's first sound structures are quite like words; however, they are not words, but the desire to name and call the environment, which includes objects, phenomena, and people in their life, as Miljak states in his paper (1984).

Škarić (1973, according to Miljak, 1984) children's sound production divides into five entitieslists. They are:

1. Physiological cry present in laughing, crying, moaning, and even in coughing, hiccups and sneezing.

2. Poetic expression referring to a good or bad mood. Singing and humming are mentioned in the poetic expression.
3. Play with speech organs. It involves imitating oneself and sounds from the environment.
4. Expression, that is, the expression of emotions such as anger, joy, fury, etc.
5. Phonic communication that can be observed within and outside speech. Speech expression is divided into global, linguistic, and articulated.

Verbal period

First and second years of life

The period in which the child begins to understand received spoken information and in which the production of language and the creation of the first word with meaning occurs is called the verbal period.

At the beginning of the acquisition of speech, the child uses only a few words that enable them to achieve successful communication with others. A significant role in this period is again played by parents who are able to decode the message sent by the child, as Miljak (1984) points out.

The first word appears most often between the tenth and fourteenth month of life, although there are no specific rules on when it should appear because every child develops in a different way. The first word carries with it multiple meanings and is called a holophrase. This means that the child's first spoken word, most often "mom" can send and mean several messages at the same time: pick me up, feed me, dress me, I am hungry, etc., as Kuvač Kraljević and Kologranić Balić explain in their papers (2015).

According to Kuvač and Palmović (2007), the first spoken word constitutes the beginning of the development of an active vocabulary. Barrett (1995, according to Kuvač Kraljević and Kologranić Belić, 2015) state that the period from the twelfth to the eighteenth month of life is called the period of lexical rapidity, that is, the period when the child's vocabulary begins to grow rapidly. The mentioned period is marked by the words that the child uses to name objects and beings from the environment, as well as the words that the child uses in interaction with others. The number of words thus increases from nine to fifty.

The period of bipartite statements appears not long before the second year of life. By expanding their own vocabulary, the child begins to combine words and ask many more questions than before, emphasized Čudina-Obradović (2008).

Third and fourth years of life

The third and fourth years of life are the periods in which the child is expected to have mastered the basics of the native language.

Kuvač Kraljević and Kologranić Belić (2015) point out that at that age a child becomes aware of the existence of language and its use. They slowly begin to use multi-part sentences in their speech, which are mostly grammatically verified. There is also an understanding of previously unknown concepts and the use of negation, while the questions become more extensive than before.

According to the authors Apel and Masterson (2004), the first three years of life are considered crucial for perfecting proper speech expression at a later age. According to the above, the child should perfect the speech skills that will be used throughout their life by the age of six.

Importance of the environment in the development of a child's speech

Role of the family

Any contact with the child will in some way be positive or negative, affect their physical, psychomotor, cognitive or speech development. The mother is the one who meets the needs of the child from birth and is most often responsible for interpreting the child's signals. Decoding the signals sent by the child will later result in the development of special communication between mother and child. Immediately after birth, parents establish a relationship with their child that is different from their relationship with others. Addressing the child is gentle, important words are often stressed and the child's name is constantly repeated so that the child becomes aware of it as soon as possible. In addition to speaking, it is also important for the mother and the child to look at each other along with head, body and facial expressions. A newborn baby does not understand the words directed at them, but it is really important to speak to the child. According to Miljak (1984), the mother can perform various actions that, depending on the situation, will have a different effect on the child and the child's reactions. This

means that, for example, when the mother approaches the child while talking to them and laughing at the same time, the child, given that he cannot react with speech, will react with body movements or crying. If it is excited, the same activity of the mother directed at the child can result in laughter and vocalization of the child. Although such interactions resemble communication, the fact the mother is still the person who initiates the interaction in their relationship, and the child is only able to react. When interacting with their child, parents will, or at least should, adapt their behaviour to the child's capabilities and capacity to receive and process information. Movements that parents perform in interaction with their child at an early age are slow and mostly repetitive.

The child will express his needs and mood by crying. As they grow, they discover their body and become aware of their ability to act on objects and people. It is also important to be aware of the meaning of the child's cooing, which marks the beginning of speech. Between the sixth and ninth months of life, the child slowly begins to develop memory. They can detect some changes. In order to develop even more, hide-and-seek games are useful, with which, when looking for a toy, the child can be asked questions and at the same time encouraged to think. At that age, the child still cannot speak, but can clearly understand most words and react to them. With the first reactions and visible understanding of words, games with sounds and reading the first picture books can be performed. The child can point and turn the pages, and the parents and/or other family members can name the objects and beings in the pictures. At the age of nine months, it is useful to play hide and seek games, but now using words related to the position and location of the hidden object so that the child begins to notice and learn the meaning of words such as *up-down*, *blow-above*, *front-behind*. Also, a child can learn concepts related to body parts through play, with various stimulating questions from an adult. From nine months to the first year of life, flipping through picture books with a child is different than at an earlier age. The child is able to flip through the picture book on their own, point to certain creatures and objects in the pictures with their finger, and they will answer the questions asked, if not with the smallest possible answer, then certainly with their finger and thereby let it be known that they understand the question that they were asked.

Stories play a big role in the development of a child's life. They can be read or simply talked about without the help of illustrations. Children enjoy

listening to stories, enrich their vocabulary, focus on them and listen actively. In their works, the authors Čudina-Obradović (2008) and Posokhova (2010) mentioned that, due to the rapid decline in concentration, it is necessary to use stories with children at that age that do not last long and in which the same words or phrases are often repeated, with little actions and characters.

The author Miljak, in her paper from 1984, pointed to the achievement of the required conditions for the development of a child's speech and learning, thanks to appropriate and well-organized interaction between parents and children.

The role of the pre-school teacher

A child is faced with the speech of an adult every day, but this is not enough for their speech to develop. Miljak (1984) believes that speech must be addressed exclusively to the child in order to develop attention and be interested in active listening. Along with parents and close family members, pre-school teachers spend most of their time with children. Therefore, the teacher's role is to tell the child as much as possible and at the same time take care that the child understands each of the messages, and to simplify the unclear ones. The preschool teacher can encourage speech in the child by playing joint games in which the child will also actively participate, such as the aforementioned game of hide and seek.

According to Miljak (1984), the achievement of desired communication between the child and preschool teacher implies the existence of:

- good social and emotional connections;
- familiar situations to the child from which communication arises;
- appropriate behaviour and activity of pre-school teachers;
- joint activities of pre-school teachers and children;
- syntax of events from the child's environment.

A pre-school teacher's everyday habit is repeatedly asking questions, and, in addition, motivating children to answer those questions, to communicate and think. If they know the children long enough, they are able to decode the meaning of the children's speech. It is expected that it will encourage communication through play, while supplementing and enriching the child's vocabulary. In order for the child to start expressing themselves verbally and with time less non-verbally, the teacher should gradually ignore non-verbal requests

and accept the verbal ones. It is also important to establish communication on a certain topic, solely based on the child's interests, and to encourage the child to express themselves independently, not to reveal answers for them, but to ask and expect from the child a complete answer and independent thinking, emphasizes Miljak (1984) again.

Both at home and in preschool institutions, children have the opportunity to communicate with the help of various activities. Dramatization games, reading picture books, telling stories, singing, and role-playing various occupations are just some of the activities that require more speaking.

Of course, they do not have to result in a better quality of the child's speech, especially if the children were not exposed to such activities until then and their speech abilities did not have the opportunity to develop.

Petrović-Sočo (1997) emphasizes that in these situations, the preschool teacher must, in addition to encouraging and motivating children to cooperate and accept their answers regardless of the quality of their ability to express themselves, and also use gestures to let children know that they have freedom of expression.

Interaction with peers and older children

While they are surrounded by their families, people who have been with them from an early age, children have a special place in play and communication. All attention is focused on them, every toy is intended for them. When a child transfers to preschool everything changes. Each child is equally important and each child is given special attention, but the attention and care of the pre-school teacher are not focused on just one child. In addition to changing conditions, the amount of speech addressed to the child also changes. According to Miljak (1984), this increases interaction with peers and older children and also changes the child's lifestyle.

Younger children will communicate mostly non-verbally, while slightly older children will use a few words in speech and direct them to other children. Most often, child-to-child communication occurs during play. At that moment, children interact, demand mutual attention, emit vocal expressions and many other things. Social development is especially important for communication between children, which will facilitate the child's path to communication with others. Already at an early age, children differ in their abilities in different areas, including the area of speech. This will depend on the child's abilities and progress in

general, and on the environment from which the child comes. The advantage of child-child communication is that some younger children can improve their speech development in, for example, interaction with older children. By listening to the speech of the older child, the younger child acquires the word, and there is a high probability that they will start using the word daily, in the correct way. Older children in preschool can tell stories to younger children, read picture books, and help them dress.

According to Miljak (1984), children at the age of three find the company of their peers more easily and form groups with the aim of playing together, which means that younger children are more inclined to change groups more quickly, depending on their interests and current moods.

Children's independent and burden-free communication with both children and adults with whom they may or may not have common interests is a process that is not achieved all at once, not even in a specific situation, or age. This requires only time, and the beginning of communication begins with the formation of groups, which will result in children getting to know each other with the support of educators and other important adults in the child's life. Zimmernan (1989) and Boekaerts and Cascallar (2006) share the opinion that the interaction a child achieves with their peers and preschool teachers is especially important for overall development.

Speech and language disabilities and disorders

Language disorders

Late language development

Just like children who master speech skills at the age expected for language acquisition, there are also those children who, despite proper cognitive development, proper hearing, and good health, show certain deviations. Roth and Worthington (2005, according to Kologranić Belić et al., 2015), believe that these children follow the course of regular language development in their development, only that it takes place at a much slower pace than in children who do not belong to that group. While with children with regular language development words would appear around their first year of life, when it comes to children with delayed language development, words would appear from six

months to one year later. Accordingly, significant deviations are visible that make it difficult for children to communicate already in the early years of life, which will result in lower achievements in school. Ellis and Thal (2008, according to Kologranić Belić et al., 2015) state some of the characteristics of late language development:

- production of vowel errors and atypical errors;
- delay in the babbling phase and the appearance of the first word;
- lack of interest in symbolic play;
- the phonological system is limited;
- syllabic structures are limited or much simpler;
- at an early age, they produce gestures more often than with children with regular language;
- they demonstrate a delay in acquiring grammar after the second year of life.

Language disabilities

As already stated in the previous chapter, children whose language development is delayed start speaking later, and the deviations in their expression are more and more apparent. Language disabilities, in addition to affecting the quality of communication, that is, the mutual processing of information, also affect the child's social skills.

According to the authors Kologranić Belić et al. (2015), children with an observed language disability after the age of three show the following:

- they have difficulty acquiring unfamiliar words,
- the formation of two-term and multi-term expressions is delayed,
- the phonological system is slowed down,
- knowledge of the basics of the mother tongue comes later,
- pronunciation mistakes,
- lack of communication, and if present, it is too simple.

There are two types of language disabilities: receptive and expressive language disabilities. Receptive refers to understanding that is below the level expected for the child's chronological age. Tomblin et al. (1997, according to Kologranić Belić et al., 2015), state that in addition to this disability, children also have features of expressive language disabilities. Expressive language disabilities refer to language production that is incomplete given the child's age and expectations.

Like other disabilities that may arise, it is important to detect and prevent language disabilities early. In the beginning, disabilities can indicate various causes; the child is pampered so they will not speak nicely, they are still small and will learn, and so on. However, ignoring early indicators of language disabilities can ultimately leave a big mark. According to Kologranić Belić et al. (2015), concerns about the child's speech progress appear most often already when the child starts school, when the deviations in the understanding of school content are visible, but by then it is already too late.

Speech disorders

Speech disorders are becoming more and more common today. There are many of them, and only some of them are articulation disorders and children's speech apraxia, which appear already at an early age.

Articulation disorders

Articulation disorders are disorders in the pronunciation of sounds.

„When a child is expected to pronounce a certain sound correctly, and they do not do so, it goes beyond the framework of developmental errors and represents an articulation disability“ (Kologranić Belić et al., 2015, 70).

In children with the mentioned disorder, there is an inaudible realization of a certain sound, which we call omission. The child pronounces a particular sound incorrectly, and this is called distortion. And the third, but no less important concept of substitution – refers to the replacement of one sound with another, according to Kologranić Belić et al. (2015).

Farago et al. (1988, according to Kologranić Belić et al., 2015), divided into sigmatism (inability and/or difficulty to pronounce the sounds *s, z, c, š, ž, č, ć, dž, đ*), lambdacism, which includes difficulties in pronouncing the sound *l*, and rhotacism, which refers to difficulties in the pronunciation of the sound *r*.

Articulation disorders are divided into organic and functional (Posokhova, 2005 according to Kologranić Belić et al., 2015). The organic ones are caused by changes in the speech organs, such as irregularities in the teeth and/or bite and similar phenomena, while functional ones refer to insufficient dexterity of the speech organs.

Phonological disorders are often closely related to articulation disorders, and it is important to emphasize that there is a significant difference between them. Articulation disorders refer to the inability to produce sound due to motor skills, while

phonological disorders refer to difficulties on a mental level, point out (Bauman-Waengler, 2000; Blaži and Arapović, 2003 according to Kologranić Belić et al., 2015.).

Speech apraxia

Valleman (2003, according to Kologranić Belić et al., 2015), states that children's praxis is the ability to create movements to perform a desired action or movement. Therefore, children's apraxia would mean the inability to create the desired movements and actions.

Children's speech apraxia is a motor speech disorder that includes difficulties in pronouncing sounds, words and syllables. These difficulties are not due to muscle weakness or paralysis. The child mostly knows what they want to say, but simply cannot pronounce it (ASHA, 2007, according to Kologranić Belić et al., 2015).

ASHA (2007, according to Kologranić Belić et al., 2015) lists the characteristics that indicate apraxia of speech, namely:

- cooing does not appear in a newborn;
- the first word does not appear at the expected time;
- they avoid more difficult words, and use simpler words to them, with difficulty in combining words;
- they understand more than they can say;
- they have difficulty imitating speech.

In addition to the above-mentioned, it is believed that speech apraxia can also affect motor skills and coordination.

Children's apraxia of speech appears in one to two per thousand children, and together with other difficulties, it forms a group of disabilities that we call specific learning difficulties, according to Kologranić Belić et al. (2015).

Autism spectrum disorder

As already mentioned in the earlier chapters, and already generally known, communication is necessary for life and for transmitting and/or receiving information. However, there are children whose right to communication is limited or disabled for health reasons. Kologranić Belić et al. (2015) define an autism spectrum disorder as a difficulty in communication and interaction with others with repetitive patterns of behaviour and/or interests. Already in the first year of life, changes can be observed in children that point to a disorder on the autism spectrum. They behave unusually, make different movements, speak unintelligibly, and what they say does not make

sense, and they have very slow reactions to stimuli and the environment. In addition, they avoid close contact with people, avoid eye contact, and do not show enough emotions and interest. All these factors usually affect whether they will be accepted and whether they will achieve and build friendships or not. Their communication is significantly difficult for all the reasons already mentioned.

Language games

Game characteristics

„Play is a natural human activity. Playing with language, which is one of the basic ways of communication, and then of conveying ideas, feelings and desires, not just information, is also a natural human activity.“ (Peti-Stantić & Velički, 2008, 5)

Play is often considered an activity aimed at entertainment. However, this is not always the case. From the perspective of a child who has a desire to play, the goal and result may be fun, but there is much more behind it. In spontaneous play, children not only have fun, but also learn to walk, speak, explore, reflect, create experiences, and develop skills in all areas of development, as pointed out by Peti-Stantić and Velički (2008).

Every game, even a spontaneous one, has certain rules that must be respected. In the game, trust and respect among the participants are also important. Adults should encourage children during the game that there is always the possibility of either winning or losing and that everyone can make mistakes. In this way, children are made to know that whatever they do, they will not do it the wrong way. They free themselves in communication and enter the game with confidence. In the moments when adults cannot join the game for a certain reason, Peti-Stantić and Velički (2008) agree that their role is to be an observer who will control and direct the course of the game.

The role of language games

„Language play can be defined most simply and accurately as a space in which adults and children free themselves in their own language, in which they genuinely enjoy it by intuitively mastering the rules and acquiring the ability to act in accordance with the rules or (consciously) breaking them. While playing, children, like adults, only much more intuitively, constantly walk between two linguistic worlds,

one regular and common and the other distant, irregular, and characterized by peculiarities“ (Peti-Stantić & Velički, 2008, 7).

Language games, as well as other games, are played according to pre-set rules. The use of language in the game results in creativity and freedom of speech, and subsequently in the development of speech, the expansion of children’s vocabulary and the development of auditory attention.

Concentration on sounds from the environment is necessary for life because with its help we listen and understand what we hear. As the child grows, they acquire certain elements of their mother tongue, so they spontaneously begin to understand phonemic sounds and notice the differences in words such as “bike” and “hike”.

In her work, the author Ilona Posokhova (2010) lists the games intended for the development of listening and speaking, the development of auditory attention, phonemic hearing, and phonological awareness.

Language games for the development of speaking

According to Posokhova (2010), there are several types of games that are used in the development of a child’s speech, namely:

Games for expanding vocabulary.

1. Words - enemies

The rock is hard, and the pillow is...

The sky is up, and the ground is...

The salt is salty, and the sugar is...

In the game, a person pronounces a sentence that the child completes, and it refers to the pairing of opposite concepts. The game is intended for children older than the age of three.

2. Colourful game

The game takes place in a way that the person says one colour, and the child then comes up with as many objects of that colour as possible. Several people can participate in the game, and it is intended for children aged three to four.

Examples:

Red: tomato, apple, blood...

White: snow, milk...

Blue: sky, sea...

Yellow: sun, chicken...

3. Say the right word.

The person utters incomplete sentences. The child's task is to complete the sentence with a verb. In order for the child to adopt the rules of the game as easily as possible, it is necessary to state a few sentences before the very beginning of the game.

Examples:

A rabbit jumps and a fish swims.

We boil eggs and roast meat.

We are awake during the day, and at night...

4. Listen and discover the unusual

During this game, a person utters sentences with unusual, twisted, or incorrect content. The child listens to the sentence, notices the unusual content and tries to pronounce it correctly.

The dog meows.

The cat barks.

The foot is on the sock.

5. I say it silently, you say it loudly.

The purpose of this language game is to practice correct articulation. A person silently pronounces the words, and the child guesses which word it is. When the child recognizes a word, they pronounce it loudly and clearly (according to their own abilities).

Games for the development of meaningful speech

1. Make a sentence.

The person starts the sentence and the child completes it. It is necessary to say a few sentences before the game starts so that it is as clear as possible to the child what they have to do.

Examples:

The children are going to school.

The gardener is watering the flowers in the garden.

The dog is chasing...

2. Because...

The person says the first part of the sentence, and the child then produces an ending that must be logical. The goal of the game is to complete the sentence with the conjunction "because."

Examples:

It is hot outside because...

I wear sunglasses in the summer because...

There are no apples left on the branches because...

Games for the development of auditory attention

1. Where did it ring?

The child is sitting with their eyes closed. A person can pick up a rattle or some other object that makes a specific sound. The child's task is to guess from which direction the sound is coming and show it with their hand. The game is intended for children aged two to four.

2. Guess who rang?

All the players are sitting in a circle while there is one child in the middle of the circle with eyes closed. The players pass an object that makes a sound or, for example, one of the players claps their hands. The child then opens their eyes and guesses which player made the sound. The game is intended for children aged two to four.

3. What is edible?

The person says words that sound remarkably similar but are not the same. The child's task is to recognize and repeat the word denoting something edible. The game is intended for children aged three to four.

Examples:

Shake-cake-break

Heat-meat-beat

4. Quiet-loud movement

A person can hit an object or clap his hands in several ways: softly, loudly, and very loudly. Children can be arranged in a line so that they move following the volume of the applause: softly – walking on their toes, loudly – walking with full feet and very loudly – running. Children who make mistakes go to the last position. The game is intended for children aged two to four.

The importance of fine motor skills for speech

Like adults, for certain reasons, children use their hands to communicate with others. They connect sensory skills and movement. From an early age, a child gets to know the world through touch. Velički and Katarinčić (2011) believe that the child, although they do not yet speak, know a lot about the environment thanks to their tactile senses.

In order for the child's speech development to progress, it is important to carry out games and/or fine motor exercises. For such exercises, we can use a finger, several fingers or the whole hand.

Finger games were mentioned by Osmanova (2010) in her paper, and some of them are:

1. Kokica pije vodu
*Prste naprijed stavi,
Kokicu napravi.
Gore-dolje kljunić smije
Da polako vodu pije.*

The game is played by children imitating the beak. They do it by bringing all the fingers together and making the movements from the wrist. The person says the words which the child then follows with movements. The game is intended for children at the age of two.

2. Little House
*Prstiće smo spojili,
Dlanove razdvojili.
Kućica sad ima nov,
Od ručica mojih krov.*

This game is played by children listening to the person speaking and they try to pronounce the words together. During this time, while speaking, the child joins the tips of their fingers to make the shape of a roof with their hand.

3. This little finger
*This one fell into the water,
this one gave him his hand,
this one gave him food,
this one gave him a drink,
and this one tickled him.*

During this game, we rub and twist one finger at a time, starting with the thumb.

4. I am a dwarf.
I am a dwarf and I live in a cap, (We form a cap with our hands above our heads.)
I think about this and that, what could I do (we put our palms on our faces and move our heads left-right.)
I could... hide. (We cover our face with our hands.)

(In the last verse, children choose what they could do, e.g. clap, send kisses, wash their faces...)

5. Catch the word.

A person pronounces a series of words and the child should clap their hands when the person says a word that is different from other words.

Examples:

Hand, hand, hand, foot, hand

Ear, ear, ear, nose, ear

Rain, rain, rain, sun, rain

Summer, winter, summer, summer

Conclusion

Language is a basic means of communication and should be developed from an early age in the most correct way possible so that there are no consequences at a later age, namely disabilities and disorders of language and speech. In addition to the consequences that may arise, there is also the fear of not being socialized, which is increasingly present due to the excessive use of social networks, which ultimately results in weak or minimal communication with others. Nowadays, people are constantly in a rush, exposed to various forms of stress, work, home, family – a lot of obligations. For the above reasons, children are often in front of TV screens, mobile phones, and computers. At every opportunity, they rely on their friends, the so-called “media”, and they lack real experiences, feedback – this is good and/or this is bad. From the first signs of speech, the child needs to be listened to, encouraged and motivated. A significant role in the development of speech and prevention of possible consequences is played by the environment, which is the child’s first stimulus, help in the world that they are just discovering. Speech can be encouraged in various ways, as already pointed out in the paper: by telling stories, flipping through picture books together, spontaneous and/or deliberate conversation, singing and the like. The advantage of language games is that they do not determine either place or time. Children can enjoy playing language games however it suits them and in whatever circumstances they find themselves – on the playground, at home, on the grass, while bathing, dressing, lying down, travelling... it is important to be the child’s partner in play and learning, as well as an observer in the same. It is also important to know how to provide high-quality language content that the child will manipulate, test their

own abilities, and gain new knowledge and fully acquire it. A child primarily learns through play, be it consciously or unconsciously, and connecting language and play means success: speech development and expansion of vocabulary and the ability to communicate with others in everyday situations. Therefore, language games are a quality and unforgettable experience for every child – language games that, with a little expertise, turn learning into fun and entertainment.

RAZVOJ GOVORA KOD DECE PREDŠKOLSKOG UZRASTA

APSTRAKT

Razvoj govora je veoma važan i kompleksan proces koji je pod uticajem različitih faktora. Od rođenja dete je okruženo zvukovima iz okruženja. Da bi dete moglo da progovori, neophodno je vreme i interakcija sa drugima. Dete najčešće iskusi prve interakcije sa roditeljima, čija je uloga da obezbede detetu sigurno i stimulativno okruženje koje podstiče govor i da se brinu o razvoju govora kod deteta. Kako dete raste upoznaje druge ljude, najčešće vaspitače i decu u obrazovnim grupama u koje je uključeno. Međutim, postoje deca koja dobro čuju, imaju očekivani kognitivni razvoj i dobrog su zdravlja, ali ipak pokazuju određene devijacije u odnosu na pravilan razvoj govora. Smatra se da ova deca prate regularan razvoj govora, samo što se taj razvoj odvija sporije. Značajne devijacije u odnosu na očekivan razvoja govora otežavaju komunikaciju već od prvih godina života, što može da uzrokuje niža postignuća u školi.

Opšte je poznato da deca uče kroz igru koja, pored toga što sadrži element zabave, pruža i mnoge benefite za dete. Pored okruženja, govorne igre imaju značajnu ulogu u razvoju govora i veština govora. Igranje govornih igara utiče na detetovu aktivnost i treniranje govora, posebno ukoliko je dete suočeno sa problemima artikulacije govora ili drugih govornih teškoća u ranom uzrastu. Cilj ovog rada jeste da se podigne svest o važnosti implementacije govornih igara u predškolskim ustanovama i u dečije okruženje za njihov normalan razvoj. Govorne igre mogu da omogućе deci sa govornim poteškoćama da uspešno prevazilaze potencijalne izazove.

Ključne reči: *govor, okruženje za učenje, govorni poremećaji, govorne igre.*

References

Apel, K. & Masterson, J.J. (2004). *Jezik i govor od rođenja do 6. godine – Od glasanja do početne pismenosti – potpuni vodič za roditelje i odgojitelje* [Language and Speech from Birth to the Age of 6 - From Voicing to Early

- Literacy - The Complete Guide for Parents and Educators]. Ostvarenje d.o.o.
- Boekaerts, M. and Cascallar, E. (2006) How Far Have We Moved Toward the Integration of Theory and Practice in Self-Regulation? *Educational Psychology Review*, 18 (3), 199–210.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1007/s10648-006-9013-4>
- Čudina – Obradović, M. (2008). *Igrom do čitanja. Igre i aktivnosti za razvijanje vještina čitanja* [Through play to reading. Games and activities to develop reading skills]. Školska knjiga.
- Kologranić Belić L., Matić, A., Olujić, M. i Srebačić, I. (2015). Jezični, govorni i komunikacijski poremećaji djece predškolske i školske dobi [Language, speech and communication disorders of children of preschool and school age]. U: J. Kuvač Kraljević (Ur.), *Priručnik za prepoznavanje i obrazovanje djece s jezičnim teškoćama* (str. 64-77). Edukacijsko-rehabilitacijski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu.
- Kuvač Kraljević, J. & Kologranić Belić L. (2015). Rani jezični razvoj [Early language development]. U: J. Kuvač Kraljević (Ur.), *Priručnik za prepoznavanje i obrazovanje djece s jezičnim teškoćama* (str. 24-34). Edukacijsko-rehabilitacijski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu.
- Kuvač, J. & Palmović, M. (2007). *Metodologija istraživanja dječjeg jezika* [Methodology of children's language research]. Naklada Slap.
- Miljak, A. (1984). *Uloga komunikacije u razvoju govora djece predškolske dobi* [The role of communication in the speech development of preschool children]. Školske novine.
- Osmanova, G. (2010). *Sto pedeset igara prstićima* [One hundred and fifty games using fingers]. Planet Zoe d.o.o.
- Peti-Stantić, A. & Velički, V. (2008). *Jezične igre za velike i male* [Language games for young and old]. Alfa d.d.
- Petrović-Sočo, B. (1997). *Dijete, odgajatelj i slikovnica: akcijsko istraživanje* [The child, the educator and the picture book: action research]. Alineja d.d.
- Posokhova, I. (1999). *Razvoj govora i prevencija govornih poremećaja u djece* [Speech development and prevention of speech disorders in children]. Ostvarenje d.o.o.
- Posokhova, I. (2010). *Dvjesto logopedskih igara* [Two hundred speech therapy games]. Planet Zoe d.o.o.

- Velički, V. & Katarinčić, I. (2011). *Stihovi u pokretu* [Verses in motion]. Alfa d.o.o.
- Vrsaljko, S. & Paleka, P. (2018). Pregled ranoga govorno-jezičnoga razvoja [Overview of early speech - language development]. *Magistra ladertina*, 13(1), 139-159. <https://doi.org/10.15291/magistra.2824>
- Zimmerman, B.J. (1989). A social cognitive view of self-regulated academic learning. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81(3), 329-339. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-0663.81.3.329>