



ADAPTATION OF TEXTS FOR USE AT HOME WITH PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN WITH AUDITORY DISABILITIES

V. Katsarska*, D. Georgieva

Trakia University, Stara Zagora

ABSTRACT

Deafness influences the development of the child. This is especially so with children with severe pre-linguistic deafness. As a result of that, the study of the rules of the verbal language and the development of the speech takes more time and is more specific in comparison to normal children. These and other important consequences often lead to difficulties with reading. The overcoming of these difficulties with integrating into the school environment depends on a number of factors. In particular, the deaf child can be facilitated with adaptation of the texts if that is necessary. This can be done at home with the competent help of the parents.

Key words: children with hearing disorders, the effects of deafness, integrated education, difficulties in understanding the reading, text, text adaptation

The word “adapt” (from German *Adaptieren*, French *adapter*, Latin *Adapto*), generally, means adapting, adjusting (1).

The need to adapt the texts to the needs of children with hearing disorders has been repeatedly quoted in the literature on auditory-speech rehabilitation, but the problem is considered in another context - primarily for the purposes of differential training in the special schools and the use of specially designed textbooks and respectively – texts for students with hearing problems. This is the reason why there is a constant mention of restricted use of words with abstract meaning which the students have not mastered yet.

Nowadays, the integrated education of children with hearing disorders is getting wider and in relation to this is the new alternative – the widely used textbooks and additional materials, intended for mainstream schools and seriously hindering the education of such students. Thus, the question for adapting some of the texts, when necessary, becomes topical again. The changed conditions presuppose its study in the context of the new alternative – integrative education and not treat it

*Correspondence to: *Veneta Katsarska, tutor at Trakia University, the city of Stara Zagora*
E-mail: veneta_ik@abv.bg

predominantly with the difficulties of the pointed group of children when studying the lexical rules and respectively – the understanding of words with more abstract meaning.

Starting from this position, the following purpose is set: to justify the need to adapt in domestic conditions of some of the texts intended for use in the curriculums for reading for integration in the mainstream schools of children with hearing problems from the primary school and the means of its implementation.

First of all, it should be made clear that the necessity for adapting of texts is not compulsory for teaching of children or the reading of texts in home conditions. In this respect, as we have already underlined several times, that must happen only when necessary.

This necessity has been found more and more frequently in the following cases:

- Serious consequences with severe forms of hearing disorders.

The consequences from the loss of the hearing ability may be seen from a different aspect. The most significant may be called the ones that come as a consequence of inborn hearing loss or one that has come in the period before the forming of speech.

The hearing field is narrowed. Its frames are defined by the boundaries of the received sounds with a definite strength and frequencies. The capacity for perception of sounds has been decreased (the natural and the domestic ones) and the linguistic sounds. They are often confused. The person with severe hearing disorders may find it hard to distinguish between additional disturbing noises. As an important consequence, we may also point the disturbed ability to localize the direction from which the sound comes. The ability to define the size of the source of the sound, its direction of movement or static position has also been disturbed. Severe degrees of the inborn auditory loss also influence the creation of auditory thoughts.

Hearing loss also affects visual observation. The last could be quite restricted with severe hearing loss. Research has long been given reason to reject as unjustified the view that the compensation of hearing with visual perception is automatic, i.e., that deaf children without special training are more observant than their hearing peers (2, 3, 4). Serious hearing loss which has taken place in an early period of development may influence the motor area, the vibro-tactile sensitivity, the imagination, the memory, the thinking, the language and speech development, the motivation, the child's ability to integrate information received by different sensory channels (2, 3).

The most important consequence of the hearing disorder is most commonly the underdevelopment or lack of speech (1, 5). Having in mind the huge importance of the verbal languages and their individual expression in speech for the purposes of communication, we owe the necessary attention to this tremendous aftereffect of the hearing disorder. The utilization of the verbal linguistic systems is closely dependent on the hearing condition, on the auditory capacity.

By impairing the use of language rules (phonological, lexical, semantic, morphological and syntactic) the utilization of the rules of pragmatics is not affected to such a great extent and consequently speech development is slowed down, children with severe deafness find serious difficulties in working with verbal symbols and this, in particular, has an impact on reading and accordingly - understanding the meaning.

- Delayed diagnosis. The detection of deafness and late setting appropriate to the needs of the child's hearing aid which, unfortunately, is still observed, affects the overall development of the child. Often, the sensitive periods are missed not only for development of speech but also for the auditory development function.

- Belatedness of the auditory and speech rehabilitation. This is not always connected directly to the delayed diagnosis and the detection of deafness aid. There are cases when this has been done but the parents, for various reasons, have not been active enough in placing their deaf child in the early forms for auditory and speech rehabilitation. We should also mention the sometimes insignificant quality for different reasons (insufficient competency of some members of the team working with the child, missing of classes, not using of the hearing aid, etc.)

- The use or non-use on the part of the adults of specific aids of communication and education. A great part of the children with hearing disorders (about 90% in the opinion of most authors) come from families of hearing parents and the last do not use gesture language and dactylic speech and this in some cases slows down the study of linguistic rules and influences the speech development. The last disturbs the reading of non-adapted texts.

- The negative influence of some social factors. Apart from the ones we have already mentioned, we can also add some others which also have a great importance. These could be: the social environment of the family of the child, family and social deprivation of the child, lack of enough contacts of the child with siblings for various reasons. R. Kail (6) has underlined many times the positive influence of the variety of different micro environments and their connection to the total development of every child.

- The individual characteristics of the child. This factor is underlined by all authors and not taking it into consideration leads to formalizing of all the activities, forms, approaches and methods of work with children.

- Other reasons. This group also presents a great variety. Here we can place the lack of or the incapability of working with children with hearing disorders, some insufficiency of resources of different character and in separate cases – of some low- or high – technological means.

- Complexity and irrelevance (significance for the child itself) of some texts in the programmes.

Putting this factor further down the list by no means comes to say that it is less important or even neglected. On the contrary – it is quite important to us and we want to pay special attention to it.

Today science describes reading as a complex psychological and physiological process in which both the speech-producing and the auditory-oral analyzer take part. It is well known that reading with hearing children is based on the well-developed spoken speech. With children with hearing disorders the spoken speech is not well-developed at the moment of starting the forming of the reading skills. This circumstance also calls for a higher preciseness in terms of evaluating the complexity of the texts.

The texts differ in volume, topics, difficulty, denseness and distribution of key words.

The reading of texts which are irrelevant to the child, including the children with hearing disorders, is denied by both theoreticians and practitioners dealing with psychology, pedagogy, speech therapists, etc. It is well-known that each task which is not correlated with the interests of the child may lower his or her motivation (with the deaf, the lack of or the insufficient resilient hearing ability considerably influence the motivation!) and lower the activity on their part.

Some of the texts lead the little children into a less familiar environment. There are words the meaning of which should be understood in advance, so that the children can grasp the content. Often, there are words which are not familiar to the contemporary children or which refer to a time when their use was quite common. Some texts are hard to be realized by the children with hearing disorders because of the situations which are too complicated or unfamiliar and this prevents the enhancement of the motivation to read.

When there is insufficient motivation, the effectiveness of reading, the cognitive grasp of what has been perceived and, moreover – the desire to put to practice later the knowledge of the child itself will be considerably influenced by the child in a negative way.

The review of the readings from the point of view of their relevance gives ground to conclude that there are quite a few texts in the textbooks from the second to the fourth grade which cannot be characterized with a high

degree of importance for the life of the pre-school children with hearing disorders. It may be presumed that this is also the case for the hearing children but as they are not subject of discussion here we will restrict our judgments only to the group in concern.

The relevance of the texts is also connected to their topicality. In accordance to the fast development of society, the lexical system of the language is refilled mainly through the penetration of words from foreign languages and the attaining of new meanings. This presents another difficulty to the children with hearing disorders. Studying of and using other oral languages is rare with such children. The gesture language and dactylic speech could be of invaluable assistance, unfortunately, primary teachers often cannot use them.

Psychology has proven that little children prefer human faces and moving people and objects to all other objects. Long readings, presenting descriptions (Beech forest – 7), as our conversations and observations showed, did not interest the children very much. The otherwise highly artistic description of the Beech forest lacks in dynamism, it is full of expressions like: “magic evening fire in the fireplace”, “symmetric dry leaves”, “fields...treacherously infested with nettles”, “friendly and well-to-do home”, etc.

In many cases the change of the verb tenses in the text, the different forms of the auxiliary verb “to be”, the present and past participles cause difficulties.

The purpose to maintain the highest possible speech and cognitive activity is sometimes hard to achieve also because of the complexity and the irrelevance of the separate texts.

It is also desirable that these texts satisfy the need of communication and interaction, as well as stimulate through the content the self study and the adequate use of the received knowledge.

There are quite a few examples of readings whose content does not meet these needs and for various reasons the children’s activity is not stimulated.

The complexity of the texts, which has already been mentioned, is among the important factors which in some cases pre-condition the adaptation of the texts. Some of them are complicated to understand in their total

content, as well as in their different parts. As evidence of that we can give the following examples:

Reader for the first class (7):

“The sun shone up and warmed up the earth in honor of its coming (about the coming of the month of April – remark of the authors)...”

Reader for the second class (8):

“They (the trees – remark of the authors) fell down shrieking onto the snow, the valleys echoed their shrieks and I felt shivers on my body by the shouts of the whole wood, shaking by my fathers’ axe.”

Reader for the third class (9):

“On top of this, the streams are making furrows in that wood which seemed to be celebrating something and their water seems to you to be nourishing because of the many elements intertwined into its flavor.”

Reader for the fourth class (10):

“It was dedicated (“Little Night Music” – remark of the authors) to the anniversary of the wedding of the composer with Constance, and on the evening of the 4th of August 1787, during the reception, the musicians hired by Mozart performed it for the first time under his conduction in the yard of the house where, among the guests, were the famous musicians Salieri and Heiden.”

To the difficulties of the children with hearing disorders, caused by the complexity of the reading comprehension texts, due to slow development of the action, accompanied by the specifics of mastering the lexical, semantic, morphological and syntactic rules, in such cases we should also add the serious difficulties at finding the causative, the space and the time relations.

The necessity to adapt some of the texts for children with severe forms of pre-lingual deafness could be discussed in more detail but from what we have already said it can be claimed that it does exist.

The editing of the text is a hard and responsible activity. As it takes a lot of time, in practice it is not done completely by the resource teachers, the speech therapists or rehabilitators. These specialists work with children from different classes and have limited time to do this work. It is our opinion that parents of good educational status, responsible and well-motivated to work for the education and the hearing rehabilitation of their integrated children in the mainstream

schools, with the help of the specialists can solve the problem at home and also, using their experience, help children with hearing disorders from other families.

In practice, many parents adapt texts. Unfortunately, practice often shows that parents basically try to shorten the volume of the texts. The complexity of the texts, on the one hand, and their misunderstanding, on the other, are the main reasons for such adaptation, taking form in the shortening of the length. Such quantitative approach does not make the text easier to understand and interpret.

In this respect, we find it necessary to express the following:

Adapting of texts, with the lack of means for issuing special materials for children with pre-linguistic deafness and modern low or highly technological equipment, will be necessary.

It is advisory that the adaptation is preceded by the study of the individual peculiarities of the child for which it is done.

Before performing the adaptation, the parents need to get familiar with the need and ways of doing so.

Adapting is not a process in which the text is changed to an extent when it completely loses its artistic value and becomes a chain of simple sentences.

Apart from its relevance and satisfactory artistic value, the text for little groups of deaf children has to meet their needs to get familiar with the complex social and natural world and come to love it

The logical sequence of what is going on has to be preserved.

When possible and depending on the needs of the child, it may be helped when finding the causative, space and time connections and relations.

The limitation against a big number of unfamiliar words would better be combined with the preservation of ones that are key to the understanding of the total content of the text.

Some texts, with exceptionally complex syntactic structures can be simplified, in case the child has not mastered yet the complicated grammar rules.

If possible, the parts of the text which arouse positive emotions should be preserved, as well as those that can be easily illustrated or explained with other means (demonstration of actions, watching films, etc.)

In conclusion, adaptation is a complex activity. It requires the necessary competency and because of that the parents should be encouraged and aided by the specialists. It can be successfully performed in condition that through the adapted content the child remains in the "zone of close development", as described by L.S.Vigotski (11). In practice, this means that it is neither simple, nor too complex. A child with a severe pre-linguistic deafness will not only be able to understand such a text but it will also enhance the development in the child of a stable reader's interest and would speed up his or her whole development.

REFERENCES

1. Dictionary of the foreign words in the Bulgarian language. BAS, S. 1982

- KATSARSKA V., et al.*
2. Karagyozov, Iv., V. Katsarska. Resource /special/ pedagogy. Part one. V.T., 2008
 3. Under the edition of E.G.Rechitskaya. Surdopedagogy., M.2004
 4. Popzlateva, Ts. Psychology of the development with auditory-speech pathology. S., 1999
 5. Slavin, R. Pedagogical psychology, Science and Art. S., 2004
 6. Kail, R. Secrets of the psychology of the child. 3rd international edition. Sanct Peterburg, 2002
 7. Tsanev, Iv. Iv., G. Iv.Georgiev, Vl.St. Popov..Reader for the first class.Publishing house Prosveta, S., 2008
 8. Popov, Vl.St., Iv.Ts.Ivanov. Reader for the second class.Publishing house Prosveta, S., 2004
 9. Tankova, R.D., Ts.L.Dulev.. Reader for the third class.Publishing house Prosveta, S., 2009
 10. Tankova, R.D., Ts.L.Dulev.. Reader for the fourth class.Publishing house Prosveta, S., 2008
 11. Vigotski, L.S. Thinking and Speech. Science and Art. 1983