

POEMS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISORDERS IN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

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Reciting poems and listening to them is one of the treatment methods in therapy of children and adolescents with speech disorders. The author presents different possibilities of employing poetry in diagnosis and speech therapy. She also points to the most crucial, with regard to speech therapy, criteria by which poems should be chosen for treatment of children.

Key words: treatment method, rhythm, speech therapy, game. **Summary**

Reciting poems and listening to them is one of the treatment methods in therapy of children and adolescents with speech disorders. The author presents different possibilities of employing poetry in diagnosis and speech therapy. She also points to the most crucial, with regard to speech therapy, criteria by which poems should be chosen for treatment of children.

Introduction

An important way of employing literary works in rhyme¹ as well as para-literary² works is the treatment of children with developmental disorders and in particular with disorders in language development. Poetry attains here sense of attractiveness and its features - such as rhyme, recurrence of certain elements, refrain, dynamics and magical atmosphere - become a stimulus that activates with different intensity numerous spheres involved in language development. It is the more important in case of those children who have been diagnosed at birth as potentially liable to such disorders.

Significant features of children's poetry by such authors as J. Tuwim, J. Brzechwa, M. Konopnicka, K. Czukowski give advantage to the speech therapist who can stimulate language development in children with speech disorders. Poetry has been present in speech therapy for a long time, however it is the last years that it has been employed in now in areas unknown thus far [7, 2].

It is interesting therefore to identify, on the one hand, those features of a poem that render it an important means in stimulating language development, and, on the other hand, to describe areas in which poems can be used by speech therapist in treatment of

¹ I assume here a position, that a poem is "a short poetical work in which words are selected for their rhythmical or rhyming value and are composed in verses" [14].

² Para-literary works are various rhyming games and counting-out rhymes created by children themselves [5].

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children with disorders in language development. The encounter of child and poetry brings about a new quality in language acquisition due to the distinctness of poetical works in rhyme when compared to ordinary language. It is this asymmetry between poetry and ordinary language that intensifies the influence of a poem, at the same time as rhyme, refrain and the magical atmosphere of a short poetical work entice the child by involving it into repetition of verses ornamented with special stylistic and rhyming devices.

The paideial rule of M. Ostasz

The concept of poetry as a text affecting child's psyche in a particular way can be found in the newest literary research relevant to M. Ostasz's paideial rule [12]. It is worth recalling at this point that according to R. Caillois, a researcher of culture, paideia is an educational play consisting of: agon, alea, mimicry and ilinx [3]. The word *paideia* originates from Greek *pais* meaning a "child". *Paideia* pertain thus to child and childhood, but also - what is stressed by M. Ostasz - to children's poetry as well as poetry created by children such as rhyming games and counting-out rhymes.

M. Ostasz develops the concept of *paideia* by creating of it her own genuine instrument for analysis of children's poetry and for distinguishing its significant features. She point out that such features of poetry as inspiration to impersonate a role, magical vision of the world, recurrence of certain elements and existence of contrasts, create the most substantial value of poems for children. She calls the set of such features the "paideial rule" [12, p. 31-38]. If a poem contains at least one of these elements, it becomes a form of language affecting a child in a particular way.

Speech therapy as theoretical and practical science

In order to present the possibilities of making use of poems in treatment of children with developmental speech disorders I suggest to begin with the presentation of the significance of speech therapy and the stages of its conduct. Speech therapy as a theoretical and concomitantly a practical science is concerned with speech disorders affecting as well children as adults. Particular interest of speech therapists focuses in the last years on children in their first and second year of life who have been diagnosed as liable to distortions in their psycho-motoric development with special regard to speech faculty. The limited scope of this paper makes it impossible to present a broader account of possibilities to stimulate the language development on early stages and to correct disorders occurring with regard to different functions.

Speech, as a typically human activity is defined in various ways. In view of the topic of this article two definitions, however, seem to be particularly important. The first one, whose author is L. Kaczmarek, defines speech as "an act in the process of communication with words. In this act the speaking person (called *sender*) conveys an information, and the interlocutor (called *recipient*) receives it. Both processes, i.e. conveying of the information and its reception, are possible only because the sender and recipient know, i.e. have command of the same - lets say Polish - language" [10, p. 22]. Such a concept presents language in its social and individual aspect.

Z. Grabias, on the other hand, defines speech focusing on its sociolinguistic aspect: speech is "a set of actions accomplished by the means of the human tongue in order to get to know the reality and convey its interpretation to other participants of the social life" [8, p. 8]. It is important to note, that this characterization emphasizes the indispensability of speech in the process of experiencing the reality and participating in the social life. One can say that this account of language and its role in the social life corresponds with the understanding of language within the cognitive linguistics which assumes that language is a means of experiencing the world and getting insight into it. The following reflection seems thus obvious: distortions in language acquisition can cause difficulties in experiencing the world and in the social life. Our practical knowledge about the consequences of speech disorders for both of these crucial aspects of the human life confirms the above-presented description [4, 9, 11, 6, 13].

Accepting the standpoint of S. Grabias we can say, that speech disorders can be caused by following factors: lack of perception skills, lack or impairment of articulatory skills (while the language competence is present) or disintegration of the communication system [8]. Depending on the particular cause the character of speech disorders can exhibit different symptoms which determine the implementation of the prospect therapeutic devices. For instance, in case of a deaf child it is necessary to work on its communication and cultural competence, whereas the improvement of performance is secondary. On the other hand, in case of children born with distortions of the facial part of the skull, it is particularly important to improve the articulation, though the improvement of general communication skills, regardless of articulatory defects, is also important.

The treatment of a child with disorders in speech development requires specific procedures. According to S. Grabias it implies three steps comprising: depiction of symptoms (*description*), explanation of causes of the distortions (*explication*), prognosis and establishing of remedy programs (*application*) [8]. In other words, speech therapists make a diagnosis at first, i.e. they examine speech articulation, explain the causes of the particular speech impairment, and subsequently prepare and apply the therapy. In case of newborn children and toddlers a speech therapy examination is primarily concerned with the development of biological functions prior to speech (such as intake of food, breathing, reflexes), along with the assessment of the development of psycho-motoric functions and with the language development corresponding to the developmental timetable appointed to the particular ability.

Poems in speech therapy

Identification of stages for an adequate speech therapy procedure brings about a natural premise for indication of how literary or para-literary works can be used in treatment of persons with disorders in language development. By the way of a necessary introduction into problems concerning this question it is advisable to recall the concept of children's games. Building up on the theory of J. Cieslikowski [5] M. Ostasz provides an outline for a nonverbal communication game between an adult and a child and presents different variants of bodily games with a small child. By naming and fictionalizing of persons and phenomena these games are transformed into the "child's body language" [12, p. 20]. The games are modified according to the age and the cognitive, emotional and social development. They are transformed, among others, into games with instruments and into role-play games in which the child illustrates a literary work in an active motoric and verbal way [6, 1].

The use of poems and para-literary works in speech therapy (many of the points catalogued underneath pertain to treatment of infants and postinfants) can adopt different forms: from listening to poems to independent recitation and analysis of them. The most important forms of treatment can be listed as follows:

- association of words with different gestures directed at the child's body: touching, stroking, subtle pressing, conveying of vibrations, imitating a crayfish, massaging, patting, titillation, pinching;
- correlation of words (especially of rhyme) and handlings with the child's body by changing the body position: lifting, rocking, stretching, rhythmical swinging, swaying on feet, heaving and letting down, carrying in the arms and dancing, "riding on a horse", "descending in an elevator", "flying an airplane", "marry-go-round";
- connecting words with body movements; raising the torso to the vertical position and subsequent sinking; moving a hand, a leg, a finger, the head;
- connecting words with independent movements of the child's body or a part of the body: independent hand, leg and head movements, running etc.;
- child's active verbal participation in reciting of a poem: from finishing saying the words or syllables to independent recitation of fragments or of an entire poem with concomitant use of para-theatrical techniques;
- active listening to a poem and subsequent speaking about it: from determining of its most important heroes and its characteristics to the analysis of metaphors and other stylistic devices contained in it;
- independent creation of different rhyming games and counting-out rhymes, as well as writing poems.

Hereunder I present different possibilities to use poetry in diagnosis and speech therapy.

I stage: description of the speech

Main goal: description of speech within the framework of speaking and understanding, especially taking into account such features as: phonological and phonetic system, morphological and syntactical system, melody, stress, rhyme, pace and fluency of speaking, voice properties.

Forms of employing poetry and para-literary works:

- instruction to recite a poem known to the child from the nursery or elementary school (assessment of articulation, fluency and speaking pace)
- listening by a child to a poem recitation (assessment of comprehension of the poem)

II stage: working out the therapy program and implementing the therapy

Main goal: working out the therapy by taking into account the assessment of the diagnosis results based on the etiology; implementation of the speech therapy within the framework of speaking and understanding.

Forms of employing poetry and para-literary works:

Games with infants and postinfants:

- separation of speech sounds from other sounds reaching an infant: the speech therapist recites a short poem to the child while changing the melody, voice volume, breaking unexpectedly up; s/he recites the poem from different distances showing the face or hiding it behind a black sheet of paper;
- verbo-bodily games: recitation of a poem together with different handlings on the child's body; the speech therapist can use a logopaedic massage together with the recitation;
- verbo-gestural games: the speech therapist imitates gestures of a poem's hero or phenomena described in the poem such as wind blowing, washing of a leg and the like, and the child imitates them afterwards accompanied by an adult;
- verbo-motoric games: the speech therapist recites a poem while changing the position of the child's body; a special kind of such games is a connection of words with music and dancing;
- verbal games with objects: the child listens to short poems (spoken or chanted using well-known melodies or created ones) matched to an adequate toy; the speech therapist always recites the same poem corresponding to the same toy;
- verbal games with dummies: the speech therapist recites a poem using dummies who "tell" short poems or fragments of them;
- verbal games presenting problems: recitation of a poem combined with a concomitant omitting of the last word with a rhymed syllable in order to stimulate the child to finish saying the missing word (the child should hear the poem many times before this game);
- listening to and understanding of short poems matched with a particular toy; the speech therapist recites a poem and the child's task is to indicate which toy matches the poem (the child should hear the poem many times and see the toy at the same time);
- games with a different grade of intensity stimulating a child to independent articulation of singular syllables or words of a poem recited by an adult; the child finishes saying last syllables of last words in a verse.

Games for children under the third year

- games as above, but with greater child's activity increased gradually;
- reciting of a poem together with the speech therapist;
- independent imitating of movements and gestures symbolizing the conduct of the heroes or phenomena depicted in the poem, such as wind blowing, washing of a leg etc.;
- independent verbal, rhythmical and motoric games (reflecting the rhyme of the poem by means of body movements and gestures): marching, clapping, striking the thighs in accordance to the rhyme;
- para-theatrical games employing poems in which the heroes' dialog is exposed; the child impersonates a hero's role by making gestures and/or telling the poem;
- consolidating of the articulation of exercised speech sounds by learning short poems by heart;
- training of speech fluency of stammering children and adolescents (while reciting a poem stammering persons speak fluently);
- listening to a poem followed by commenting on it as an exercise of correct phonetic, morphological and syntactical speaking;
- understanding of various stylistic devices (e.g. metaphor) encountered in the poem, what is especially important in cases of deaf children and those with aphasia;
- listening to a poem together with music attuned to it as a form of relaxation;
- painting, drawing and the like just after the poem has been recited as a form of gaining tranquility and calmness (especially important in cases of stammering children);
- listening to a poem as an exercise to concentrate attention. Treatment of adolescents and adults
- training of voice emission, elocution and pace of speaking in cases of those persons who use language professionally (actors, teachers, journalists);
- training of speech fluency in cases of stammering persons and those with accelerated speech pace;
- training for articulatory efficiency;
- training for understanding of various stylistic devices (e.g. metaphor) appearing in a poem in cases of adolescents and deaf adults, as well as treatment of persons with aphasia (the loss of language as a result of defects in certain brain structures);
- encouraging stammering or deaf adolescents and adults to write poems if only they exhibit interest in such form of expression; writing poems can be a means to work out own problems or difficult emotions.

Criteria for choosing poetry and literary works for therapeutic purposes

The efficiency of speech therapy depends on many factors, among others on the choice of methods and means used in it. It is advisable, therefore, to indicate the most important criteria for assessment of poems that can be employed in a speech therapy.

M. Ostasz writes about the evaluation of poems: "A good poem is characterized by a typical and complete *paideia*, and that means that all types of *paideia* appear in it. There is a place for encouragement, for repeating a favorite activity, and finally for competition and contest in a particular activity. Such poems teach, entertain, encourage, do not bore, fascinate: they are intelligible because of the *paideia* they contain" [12, p. 114]. Do these criteria for assessment of children's poetry identified by the author correlate with those used in diagnosis and speech therapy?

My experience shows that the choice of a poem for therapeutic purposes depends on the goal one intends to attain. Taking into consideration different reasons for choosing a literary work as a means for therapy enhancement, one can indicate some most important features.

In treatment of small children, especially at an early stage of the therapy, the poem should be short (or one should present only a part of it), it should depict events familiar to children and relate about persons, animals and phenomena known to the child. It should also be rhythmical and exhibit a clear rhyme and refrain with onomatopoeic syllables. It should stimulate the child to imitate its action using the body, gesture or speech. In a therapy concerned with articulatory problems, on the other hand, it is important that a poem contains a number of speech sounds to be practiced, what is, in contrast, less important in treatment of stammering persons or those with accelerated speech pace. It is also essential that a poem contains magical and humorous elements fascinating both for children and adults. These features correlate to a great extent with those identified by M. Ostasz. At this point literary analysis encounters practical experience. Such an encounter can be fruitful and complementary.

At the end it is noteworthy to remark that the use of poetry in speech therapy, although it is already a reality, has not been examined in a scientific way. This study, stressing educational values of children's poetry, can be thus seen as a reconnaissance of problems concerning the use of poems for therapy of children with speech disorders.

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ВІРШІ ДЛЯ ДІТЕЙ З ОСОБЛИВИМИ ПОТРЕБАМИ ЯК ЗАСІБ РОЗВИТКУ МОВЛЕННЯ

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Декламування та прослуховування віршів - це один із методів лікування, який використовують в терапії дітей та підлітків з вадами мовленнєвого апарату. Автор презентує різні варіанти можливого застосування поетичних творів для діагностики та терапії навичок мовленнєвого процесу. Також підкреслено важливість певних критеріїв для обрання поетичних творів, які можна використати як засіб лікування. *Ключові слова*: метод лікування, ритм, мовленнєва терапія, гра.

СТИХОТВОРЕННЯ ДЛЯ ДЕТЕЙ С ОСОБЕННЫМИ ПОТРЕБНОСТЯМИ КАК СРЕДСТВО РАЗВИТИЯ ЯЗЫКА

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Декламация и прослушивание стихотворений - это один из методов лечения, который используется в терапии детей и подростков с проблемами речевого аппарата. Автор представляет разные варианты возможного использования поэтических произведений для диагностики и терапии навыков языкового процесса. Также подчеркивается важность определенных критериев выбора поэтических произведений, которые можно использовать как средство лечения.

Ключевые слова: метод лечения, ритм, речевая терапия, игра.