

## Communication Development in Children With Special Educational Needs Through Game at Physical Education Lessons

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### Abstract

In various researches, emphasis is placed on the particular importance of the common game activity in the peer group for children's learning of verbal means of communication: The expressions, which are part of the dynamic game, signify the transition from the situative forms of communication to the non-situative ones. Complicating the content of verbal contacts is done by broadening the theme of children's expressions, related to the updating of cognitive representations, personal preferences and subjective appreciations of communicators. When the game is used in the educational process, it acquires significant psycho-pedagogical functions, ensures active participation of the pupil at the lesson, increases his / her interest for knowledge and the content of the lessons, offers the organized framework for practicing the communication. In modern society, known as the society of information and communication, it is surprising that we continue to limit the capacity of communication to certain parts of the population such as students with special educational needs. For them, communication restraints mean an obstacle to the development of their educational capacities (Fernandez, 2016). The purpose of this study derives from the complexity of activities involving interaction during Physical Education lessons. The study focuses on identifying direct or indirect forms of communication in Physical Education lessons, as well as how they are used and how they are reflected in specific moments of the lesson structure.

The main research methods include the bibliographic study, the observation method and some evaluation tests, which form the basis for the necessary documentation and understanding of the communication process in association with the physical education (game) activities.

**Keywords:** Dynamic games, physical education lessons, development, communication.

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## INTRODUCTION

The game, as a domain of cognitive-developmental activity, cannot be strictly delimited or defined univocally. Being a predominant activity kind of activity for pre-school children, the game does not lose importance even in the case of primary school aged children. Moreover, in the case of children with intellectual disabilities, the game remains the dominant occupation in the first stage of schooling, which is meant to lay the foundation for the subsequent training/education procedures. Without a well-structured ludic activity, the effort of asserting the child in school activity cannot be successful, and later - the training of communication skills in society (Scarlat & Scarlat, 2006).

Let's give a more detailed analysis of the game activity and the game itself through the multi-perspective of the given genre of occupation. Children, depending on their age, resort to various types of games. Early ages are dominated by the manipulative or engaging games, and at pre-school age, priority is given to role-plays. Also, an important place is reserved for dynamic games, for those with built-in sports / competitive games. At the same time with the advancing in age of children, their games become more complicated, and they become richer in content. Thus, by reaching the early school age, the child normally needs to know and actively use all types of play (Dragnea, 2002).

In the process of communication skills training, the game becomes very current, because during the game, the child learns about the variety of behaviour patterns offered by it, extrapolating them on their own behavioural and communication experience with the surrounding world, adults and peers. The games reflect practically all possible models of interrelation between the child and the social environment, forming lifelong skills for life (Popovici, 2000).

It is important to emphasize that the game reflects not only the external aspects of human existence but also the inner feelings, which can be both positive and negative, covering a wide spectrum of feelings - from attention, care, psychological and emotional comfort to hostility, repulsion, and brutal rejection.

For the development of communication skills, the play itself is important, except the end or denouement of the game. In fact, the game is not temporarily restricted. Children put a point on

the game when they want, without being forced to resume it next time since the previous abandonment.

The game, along with learning, communication and work, forms the basis for personality development. Each of these factors becomes primordial and dominant at a certain stage of life. If this is not the case, training problems and assimilation of new life habits occur in later stages (Serbanoiu, 2004). Thus, for children with normal developmental pathways, the play activity is dominant during the whole childhood period and only from the small school age it is gradually substituted by the learning activity. In the case of children with SEN (mental retardation) which refers to the general underdevelopment of superior psychiatric functions and, as a result the retardation in general development, the activity of gaming remains dominant and at the primary school age.

The purpose of this study derives from the complexity of activities involving interaction during Physical Education lessons. We can distinguish between various complex and specific aspects of the communication process, taking into account the specificity of each part of the physical education lesson, the way of organizing and carrying out this activity. In this context, the study focuses on identifying direct or indirect forms of communication in Physical Education lessons, as well as how they are used and how they are reflected in specific moments of the lesson structure. Through this personal interpretation, I have attempted to present a true picture of the communication process in Physical Education lessons, especially in activities that include dynamic play.

## **METHOD**

The main research methods include the bibliographic study, the observation method and some evaluation tests, which form the basis for the necessary documentation and understanding of the communication process in association with the physical education (game) activities.

It is assumed that through a set of dynamic games specially tailored for the investigated subjects, it is possible to delimit the acquisitions and deficiencies in the field of communication development in students with special educational needs (mental retardation). It is assumed that the

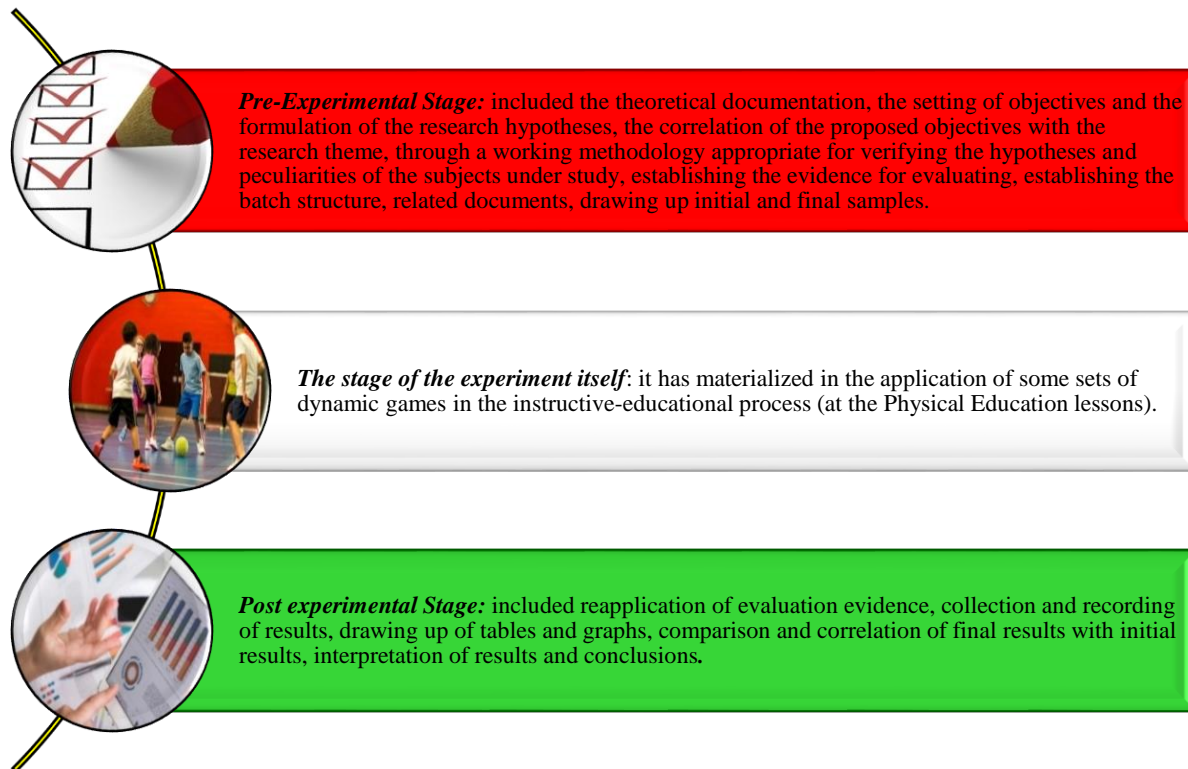
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development and application of an adequate set of dynamic games within the physical education lessons of pupils with special educational needs (mental retardation) will increase the vocabulary and verbal communication performance in this category of subjects.

This study, based on a specific case study of a pupil population segment with special educational needs (mental retardation), aims to determine the influence of dynamic play as part of the Physical Education lesson in developing communication skills at pupils with special educational needs, identifying progress in developing conduct in the sphere of communication.

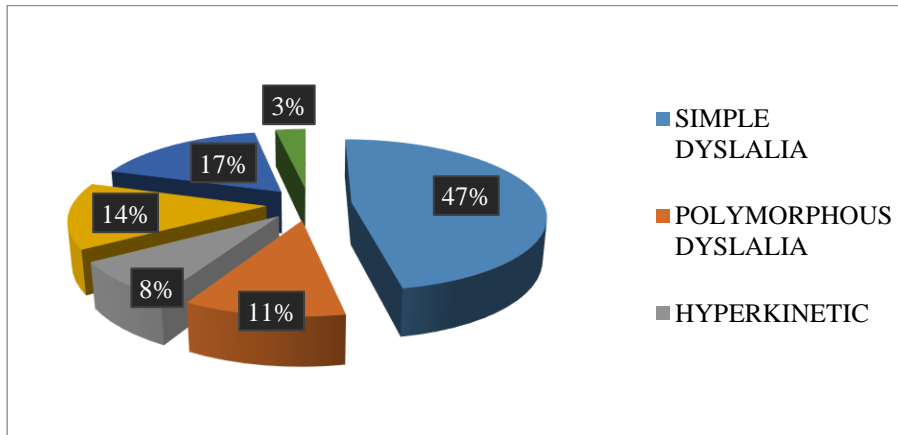
The research (understanding-ameliorative type) was held over two months, from January to March 2019 and included the following steps:



In order to achieve the goal of our research, we have started from associating mental deficiency with other deficiencies, as these particularities have a direct impact on student participation in Physical Education lessons and the communication process with classmates.

## FINDINGS

Further, according to the results obtained at the evaluation grids, we have the graphic representation through several diagrams: Chart with distribution on deficiencies associated with mental deficiency.



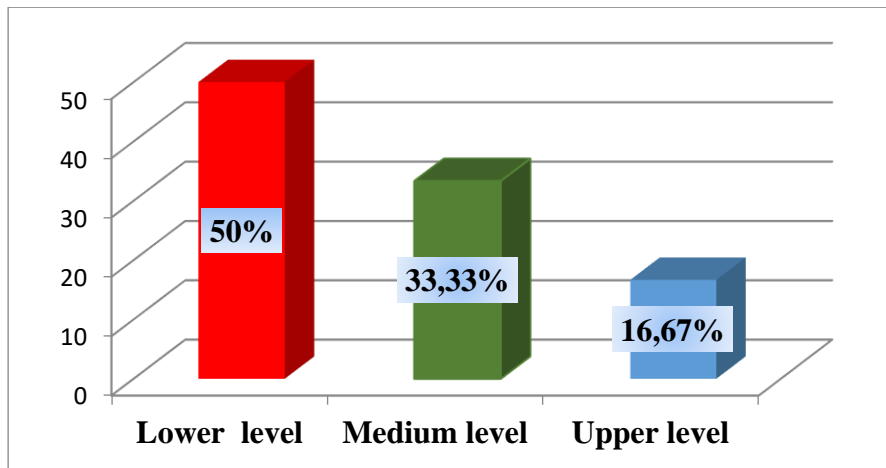
**Figure. 1** Chart with distribution on deficiencies associated with mental deficiency

The game activity has a positive impact on the welding of the children's group, the personal training of the skills of autonomy, socialization, appreciation of their own effort and the effort of the others (Cristea, 2008). Taking into account the particularities of the play activity mentioned above, it will be started the development and correction of the communication skills planning. The recreational-developmental game, based on play and unfolded directly in the game, can be achieved without age, social or physical restrictions, hence its importance for affirming the personality of the child. According to their form, the games are divided into collective and individual. Practically, these forms alternate and complement each other, since each has its own impact on the development of communication skills (Popovici, 2000).

In the case of primary-school pupils with intellectual disabilities, the play activity requires a separate approach, as it is distinguished by some relevant peculiarities. We will mention that mental retardation is a persistent disorder of the person in the cognitive sphere, which arises as a result of organic diseases in the cerebral cortex. As a result, there is a slowdown in the pace of evolution of all mental functions (Racu & Racu, 2013).

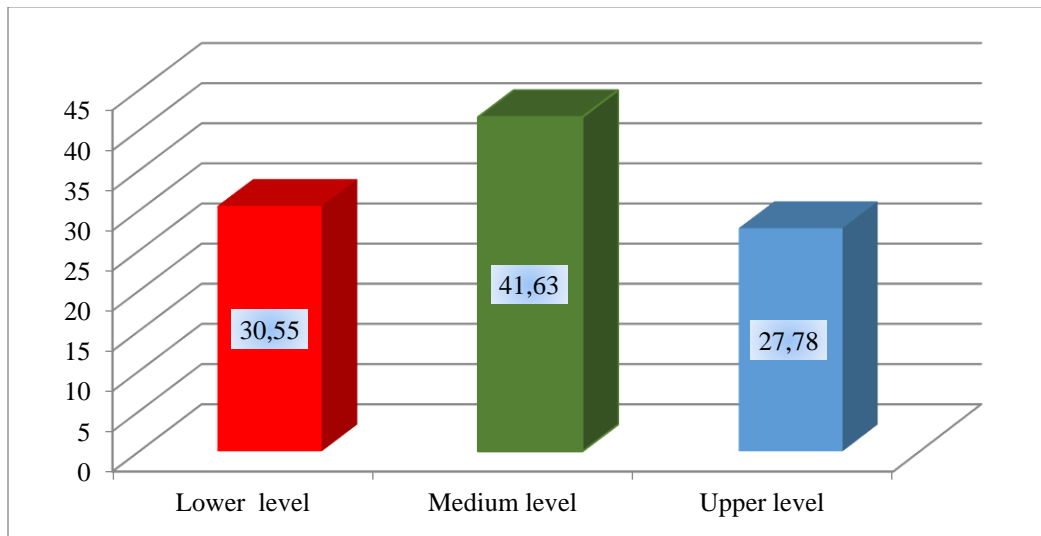
For mentally retarded children, play is characterized by the lack of concrete objectives, well-defined content, complex subject lines that reflect real life. During the pre-school age, the playful actions of children with intellectual disabilities are often monotonous, content-free, stereotyped. It

is not clear the end goal of the activity, and the constitutive elements and movements performed by the children are mechanical. Sometimes children associate in groups of 2 or 3, but not for long because they take each other toys, causing conflicts. After the child with intellect deficiency is enrolled in school, gambling continues to keep on top of its concerns. As a certain life experience has accumulated, the child can already perform some objective practical actions.



**Figure 2.**Chart with the distribution of results for the evaluation grid - field: Communication and Language (adapted) - initial testing

During the game, children learn to communicate with each other, to give up, when required by the concrete situation, to their own wishes to respect the interests of the game partners. Also, the game contributes to the correction of deviant behaviours and this because it requires the observance of certain rules, instructions, interrelation rules. As a result, the child learns to communicate differently with peers and adults, establish relationships with the next person, the group he / she is involved with, the extended team, and ultimately the social environment as a whole (Dragnea, 2002).



**Figure 3.** Chart with the distribution of results for the evaluation grid - field: Communication and Language (adapted) - final test

In order to do create an indicative chart, it was calculated the distribution of the results in the two tests (Synthetic chart with the distribution of the results at the Evaluation scale - field: communication and language (adapted) - initial testing (series 1) / final testing (series 2). From the resulting graph we can see an increase in the weight of the final level of the final test compared to the upper level of the initial testing (if at the beginning it was 16.67%, the final evaluation was 27.78%). Comparing the data obtained from the initial and final tests, it is noted that there is a difference of 11.11% between the results obtained, the increase being recorded in the final testing. This score indicates an increase in the performance of pupils with special educational needs (mental retardation) in terms of functional vocabulary development, as well as their ability to understand and respond appropriately to the message received. Because they possess a poor, underdeveloped imagination, it is very difficult for children with mental retardation to engage in games with elements of imagination and invention. These children can only play with real objects. In addition, the game does not take more than a few minutes because it gets tired and deconcentrates quickly. Often, the rules of the game need to be repeated several times, the participants hardly understanding the essence of the game (Radu, 2000). Broadly speaking, the further schooling of these children will be based on age, character and depth of the deficiency, as well as the time of recovery. In this sense, it is particularly important to take into account the proximity development area, which researcher Vygotsky (1983) wrote: "The proximal development area is determined by the fact that a child cannot fulfil a task by himself, but he does

so with adult help. The area of actual development demonstrates the state of the child's cognitive sphere at the given stage of life, that is, what the child can perform without help from outside "(p. 135).

## **DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS**

The results of the final tests revealed a significant increase in pupils' performance in terms of vocabulary and the amount of information they are using; a functional vocabulary development, as well as the development of information transfer capacity from similar situations. At the same time, the final results show an increase in the ability to correctly receive the verbal message, the ability to understand the meaning of some given words, and an adequate response to the message received. If the event is not adapted for students who need special support, participation restriction may occur (Coates & Vickerman 2010).

The Teachers should not only look at what they should do but how they will perform according to the intended learning outcome. However, a long-term plan with standards tailored to students who need special support is required. But, teachers need guidance, training and support on how to transform curriculum intentions into meaningful learning experiences for students who need special support. Therefore, given the potential positive effects of physical activity, exercise self-efficacy levels and academic achievements of LD (Learning Disabilities) students may be supportable with increased duration of the game and physical activities lesson. It can be asserted that game and physical activities lessons are an effective tool for children with learning disabilities to increase their self-efficacy and academic success (Demirci & Demirci 2018).

When the game is used in the educational process, it acquires significant psycho-pedagogical functions, ensures active participation of the pupil at the lesson, increases his / her interest for knowledge and the content of the lessons, offers the organized framework for practicing the communication in pairs, in small groups, with respect to the requirements of good communication. The game can be used as an attractive technique for exploring, practicing, and enhancing the content of any lesson that aims to develop communication to pupils with special educational needs, and for its success, the teacher must be mindful of respecting the methodical steps and individual peculiarities of students.



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