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Psychological Bases of the Foreign-Language Education of Seniors (Not Only) with Health Disability

Marianna Müller de Morais

Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia
radka.zimanova@ukf.sk

Lucia Rapsová

Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia
radka.zimanova@ukf.sk

Radka Zimanová

Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia
radka.zimanova@ukf.sk

Abstract

According to international documents, older people have a right to carry out and fully develop their abilities, skills and competences, as well as to have a dignified place and position in the society. Seniors with a certain kind of health disability have the same right as well. Due to this reason, it is indispensable and necessary to create suitable conditions for disabled seniors and to provide them a place for their personal development and self-fulfilment oriented on their fully valuable life in spite of their health disadvantage. The foreign-language education can be considered to be one of the possibilities of the self-fulfilment of seniors (not only) with health disability. Learning of a foreign language is an immanent part of education, however, it is necessary to keep certain specific features in the foreign-language education of this target group. This subject study is aimed on the analysis of psychological bases and chosen specific features of foreign-language education of seniors (not only) with health disability. It mentions chosen psycho-didactic aspects of the education of seniors (not only) with health disability. The study is an output of the authors from solving the research project of Scientific Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Academy of Sciences n.1/0176/15 called *Paradigms in education of adults and seniors with disability in the residential care*.

Keywords

senior with health disability, foreign-language education, specific features of the education of seniors, specificities of the foreign-language education of seniors

Introduction

Nowadays, we live, though we are not aware of it, in a crucial period marked with significant demographic changes of population. When compared to the past, the living standard has been increased with a direct impact on the growing age of the population. In the past the composition of the population had a shape of a pyramid - with the growing age decreased the number of people, currently this shape has been narrowed and in the future it will probably have a form of a tree. Together with the increasing living standard, there improves also the development of the country, the average life expectancy and the number of seniors. As the number of retired people increases, the percentage of disabled and disadvantaged seniors is proportionally higher as well. Due to the consequences of their disability, these seniors are often placed in the residential institutions of social services or in other facilities for seniors.

The attitude of the current society to the old age and disabled seniors is quite negative. The old age and “illness” are generally understood as a decline of the man. In our region, there has been still preferred the stereotypical perception of older people as unproductive ones. Their experience and competences are losing their meaning, such people are not very beneficial for the society. The value system of this society, which emphasizes the keeping of all, mainly biologically conditioned competences of the young age (appearance, efficacy, performance), puts the old and disabled people in a very disadvantaged position. This tendency is also supported by the mass media which confirm in different ways the significant importance of the outer appearance, health, vividness and activity as the current norm. It means that everything what does not fit into this image, is considered to be non-beneficial. Therefore, ageing is not only an individual problem of every man, but is is a social problem as well. The society should respect, with all dignity, seniors with all their specific features which are influenced by their age and health condition and provide them such conditions for their personal development which will subsequently improve the quality of their life. In our article, we would like to emphasize the importance of the personal progress of seniors (not only) with health disability which can be achieved by means of learning foreign languages and other developing programmes carried out in the residential institutions of social services, taking into consideration all the specific features and limitations based on the age and kind of disability.

Education of seniors (not only) with health disability and its psychological bases

The psychologists say that the man is as old as old he/she thinks. The old age is mainly the function of psychical and physical condition and not only the number of

years of life. The experience confirms the opinion that to judge the quality of life only with years is the same as to judge the value of the book with the number of its pages. In other words, with the life expectancy it is not possible to measure the quality of life nor the satisfaction of the man. The man can keep the freshness of the mind and body if he/she is able and motivated to learn, to acquire new knowledge, skills, experience and to develop his/her personality and therefore it is important to provide place and possibilities in this area. Many researches confirm that the education of seniors has its importance and meaning. Every senior is able to modify, form and cultivate his/her personality and therefore he/she is able to be educated and formed. Regarding this fact, there arises a question related to the education of disabled seniors living in the residential institutions of social services or in other facilities provided for seniors. These institutions are oriented mainly on the satisfying of physiological needs, the health and nursing care and so the personality and above mentioned needs of these seniors are put aside. Every man, and also the senior with disability, is a unique, individual and original being with certain psychical needs which should be satisfied in order to achieve a better quality of life.

Vágnerová (2000) characterizes these psychical needs more thoroughly and she includes in them: *the need of stimulation, the need of orientation and learning, the need of activity, the need of emotional certainty and safety, the need of self-fulfilment and open future*. Retired people have to cope with the fact that they will not perform their professional role anymore and they have to find another meaning of their life, different values from the performance and its social presentation. The adequate saturation of these individual psychical and social needs can significantly slow down the process of ageing or alleviate its consequences. The needs of seniors are very individual, everybody emphasizes and prefers other needs. However, all the needs form a complex which connects the physical, psychical and social unit of an older person and these are inseparable from each other. We should take into consideration the mentioned needs and they should be satisfied by education.

We agree with several authors (Jaroszewska, 2009, Határ, Jedličková, Müller de Morais, 2016) that learning of foreign languages can be considered to be one of the forms of self-fulfilment of seniors. Referring to Jaroszewska (2009), Határ (2016) describes several reasons why seniors learn a foreign language and he divides them in the following areas:

- a) *interpersonal relationships and the needs connected with them* (the need of a contact with people, the need of making friends, the need of participation in different activities where the senior feels younger, the pleasure of the possibility to speak at the forum, the possibility to exchange views among the peers, the desire to help others by learning of a foreign language, the need to be independent during the travelling abroad etc.),

- b) *fulfilling of dreams and the organization of free time* (learning of foreign languages as a way of organizing free time of seniors, the dream of knowing a foreign language which was not possible in the past, participating in a language course as a form of escaping from the loneliness and everyday problems, knowing of a foreign language as an evidence of the achieved success),
- c) *keeping and developing of cognitive abilities* (the desire to keep language skills acquired in the past, learning of a foreign language as a way of training of the memory, the effort to understand films etc.),
- d) *to develop previously acquired experience with a language* (the desire to refresh a foreign language the senior was in contact with in the past, learning of foreign languages as a family tradition etc.)
- e) *the interest in other cultures* (the pleasure of knowing other countries and nations, the possibility to participate in different cultural events which are connected with the given language, the desire to understand the lyrics of songs which are sung in a foreign language, the wish to read originals of books, etc.),
- f) *the interest in a language* (“to be fallen in love with a given foreign language, the pleasure of listening to its sound, etc.)

Based on the definition of the education of seniors by Muhlpachr (2009), we can perceive the foreign-language education of seniors as a process centred on the intentional education in the period of ageing and the functional educational impact on seniors. It is a purposeful process with its internal rules, exact specific targets, forms, methods and means which represent the tools for achieving of the determined aims.

The knowledge about the conception of education, its aims and the possible steps of achieving it represent for the participants of education a very motivating and desired reason for their own activity and participation in education.

Prusáková (2005) presents questions which have to be answered in order to make the education effective. We can also apply them to the foreign-language education of seniors: *What makes the orientation of education of seniors specific? What are the characteristic features of the educational situations of seniors like? What are the psychological and sociological aspects influencing the educational intentions?* These questions should lead to the analysing of the needs from the practice and also to the looking for possible solutions.

The phases of planning and carrying out the foreign-language education of seniors require the knowledge of the psychic of an older person. Čornaničová (2007) defines two areas of factors in the following way:

1. *From the aspect of specific features as bases of modelling the education of seniors:* it is necessary to perceive the education of seniors as a lifelong process, to take into consideration the possibilities of the given area and

subsystems of the educational system actuating there, to recognize the needs and interests of seniors and to create the educational offer based on them, the enable education to all seniors without discrimination, to provide opportunities for supporting the quality of life in the senior age by means of educational activities and to remove the traditional opinion of the society regarding the life in the senium, to support the active life of seniors and to use life experience of seniors for themselves and for the society as well.

2. *From the aspect of the proper process of education of seniors, there are frequent requirements of choosing methods, forms, means and factors for achieving the determined aim:* using of adequate forms of education of seniors, respecting of psychophysical changes in the process of ageing, individual approaching to the specific features of education of seniors, helping in better solving of personal problems by means of educational activities, to provide conditions for the creativity of seniors during the course of education, to provide not only the knowledge but also the psychical support for seniors, to support the active life of seniors with educational activities.

Disabled seniors form a specific group which requires a different approach in the educational process from the other educational groups in different age categories. It is very important to be aware of the psychological aspects typical of the education and instruction of seniors. In order to make the education of this target group effective, we have to respect and accept these particularities.

In the period of the old age there occur not only many physical changes but also psychical, personal and social changes which modify the ability to learn and they influence the course of education as well. The senium is characteristic with unequal change or decline of partial abilities and general structure. Changes arising from the ageing are observed in the area of those processes which are related to the recording, storing and using of information (Vágnerová, 2000). In the following table we mention particular developmental changes and the specific features of foreign-language education of seniors based on them.

Table 1 The outline of chosen developmental changes and from them resulting specific features of the foreign-language education of seniors

DEVELOPMENTAL CHANGES	SPECIFIC FEATURES OF EDUCATION
<i>Changes of the activating level - slowing down of the psychical activity, worsened concentration of attention, bigger tiredness, prolonging of the reaction time.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slower speed of presentation - respect a longer reaction time and period of processing the information. • Provide the time for thinking about answers. • Arrange a free course of education. • Provide a smaller amount of information during certain time units.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate instructions and tasks clearly. • Use the same concepts (less synonyms). • Repeat provided information more often. • Use analogical methods - similarity. • Strengthen the knowledge by means of illustrative methods (practical exercises, demonstration, experiential methods, and tools).
<p><i>Changes in the area of orientation in the surroundings - reduction of the sensual perception, changes in vision - long-sight (hyperopia), presbyopia, reduced adaptation to darkness</i></p>	<p>By educational materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use white paper (not the blue or green paper), • Do not use glossy paper, • Use a bigger font size, • Use a black or red font on the white background, • Use a simple structure of sentences • Use bigger graphic visualizations, • Use magnifying glass, • Check the glasses. <p>Create a safe environment for education (a risk of injury).</p>
<p><i>Changes in hearing – reduction in hearing, worsened perception of high tones, sounds, fast speech and speech of more people at the same time</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use short simple sentences. • Repeat information more often. • Speak clearly and slowly. • Speak more loudly but do not shout. • Speak face to face with the senior. • Minimalize disturbing moments, remove the noise. • Check the functionality and correct setting of the hearing device. • Find out which ear is better in hearing.
<p><i>Decline of memory competences - decay and slow down of all memory processes, reduction of the ability of short-term memory</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan shorter and more frequent educational units. • Include longer breaks. • Use word and illustrative methods of education more often.
<p><i>Changes in intellectual functions and difficulties in learning - decline of intellectual abilities, bigger</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use adequate forms and methods of education of seniors (in relation to the subject matter and character of the topic, age

<p>reduction of fluid intelligence, tendency to use knowledge and ways of thinking which were acquired in the past</p>	<p>particularities and health limitations of seniors).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect the preferred style of learning of seniors. • Teach seniors “how to learn”. • Provide to seniors enough opportunities to speak in a foreign language. • Use objects, pictures or drawings as a starting point and ask seniors to tell you what they see. • Do not correct their pronunciation and grammar during their speaking because it can lead to the reduction of their motivation to speak. • Give seniors a chance to speak what they are learning about. • Be interested in their difficulties in learning, ask what is easy and what is difficult for them. • By planning the conversation topics, make use of personal needs and interests of seniors, provide seniors a possibility to show their curiosity. • Use different methods of repeating and strengthening the knowledge. • Enable them to apply the acquired knowledge and skills in particular activities. • Provide a systematic positive feedback.
<p><i>Decline of ability to coordinate different cognitive functions and to use different information in analysing of the problem - reduced possibility to use more complicated strategies, a tendency to a simplified solving of the problem</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect hierarchy of learning of seniors. • Use life experience of seniors by learning. • Support experiential learning. • Apply active and creative activity, use problem methods of learning. • Activate the attention of seniors with applying adequate initial and continuous motivating methods. • Create a logic structure of topics (concept maps, supporting points, key words, graphs, schemes). • Facilitate the process of learning of seniors

	<p>with the application of manifold mnemotechnic aids.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include as many senses as possible in the process of learning.
<p><i>Changes in will and will processes, changes of features of personality, changes in emotional experience and social relationships - slower deciding, increase of the need of safety and stability, deepening of introversion, carefulness, punctiliousness, anxiety, tendency to impatience, higher concentration on oneself and close people in one's surroundings</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide enough opportunities for seniors to know and support each other. • Support creative atmosphere in the educational group, humour, jokes, laughter. • Include social activities in the educational group, support the feeling of belonging to the group. • Use learning in teams and support small group projects. • Apply adequate strategies and methods of emotionalization. • Teach the vocabulary of feelings so that seniors can express what they feel. • Enable to seniors to plan social activities, debates, exhibitions of their own projects, trips or excursions.

Source: adapted according to Zanutová and col. (2015), Vágnerová (2000), Langmeier, Krejčířová (2004)

Neurological changes are related to the psychological changes in the old age as well (i.e. changes in the nervous system). It was proved that the human brain loses 10 - 15% of its weight during the normal course of ageing. It can have an impact on the activity of the psychic because the cells of the central nervous system cannot be substituted. The relation between ageing and intellectual abilities is also connected with this topic. In general, people think that ageing brings the increase of general knowledge but in a longer period because it is necessary to think about the issues. The old age brings a bigger wisdom but a smaller quick-wittedness and ingenuity (Stuart-Hamilton, 1999, in: Veteška, 2016).

Regarding the creativity, numerous statistics point out that people achieve their top in all areas of creative activity between the age of 25 - 40 and then their productivity usually decreases. However, if we look at the performance of some famous people in their old age, these statistics can be misleading in this area (e.g. Goethe finished the second part of Faust at the age of 83, Sophocles wrote his King Oedipus at the age of 80, etc.). We agree with the opinion that there is no age border limiting the human creativity. The man remains creative during all his/her life, motivation, persistence and enthusiasm are more decisive here than the age (Langmeier, Krejčířová, 1998).

We would like to emphasize here that due to the impact of ageing, the performance slows down as well (older people understand and adapt to new situations worse) but there does not have to occur the worsening of the general capacity - older people need longer time for some activities but they are able to do them (Vágnerová, 2000).

In addition to the mentioned developmental changes of older people, the ability of disabled seniors to learn is also influenced by the degree and kind of disability which must be taken into consideration in the choice of the subject matter, principles, methods, forms and strategies. In order to be able to work with disabled seniors, it is very important and necessary to have adequate theoretical knowledge and also practical experience with the particular specific expressions and features resulting from the certain kinds of disability. The knowledge of the given problematic area will enable us to choose educational principles, methods, forms and aids correctly and to apply specific educational strategies which will facilitate and make the process of education more effective, they will help us to achieve the determined educational aims and, in this way, they will increase the quality of life of disabled individuals in the retired age. We describe more detailed specific features of the education of seniors related to the particular kinds of health disability in the works by Müller de Moraes, Rapsová (2017a, b).

In order to achieve educational aims, Vašek (2003) thinks that it is important to keep the principles of work with individuals with special needs. It is necessary to respect these principles also by the subsequent application of the programme in the target group of seniors with health disability:

1. *The principle of prevention*, i.e. the type of activities which are aimed on the prevention of occurrence of defects by means of educational, therapeutic and social measures.
2. *The principle of complexity* oriented on the care for individuals with disability in all its parts and areas.
3. *The principle of uniformity* which is the basis of the coordinated care taking.
4. *The principle of dispensarization* which deals with the earliest possible controlling and observing of every individual with disability because it is substantial for the subsequent organizing of work with this individual and for achieving of the given educational-formative aims.
5. *The principle of the optimal environment*, i.e. at least the trial including of all disabled people into a higher category of educational-formative institutions in order to provide them the best impulses for their development.
6. *The principle of socialization* which is based on the orientation of the care on active and socially beneficial inclusion of all disabled individuals into social groups and into the society as well.
7. *The principle of re-education*, i.e. continuous developing of all affected, distorted or weakened organs and functions in the process of education.

8. *The principle of compensation* or developing and practice of substitutional activities where the re-education of the original function is not possible to a desired extent.
9. *The principle of rehabilitation*, i.e. the continuous multilateral influence on the personality of a disabled individual with the aim of his/her adaptation to live a relatively fulfilling life

Vašek (2011) adds other important rules to these generally valid principles:

1. *The principle of compensation* aimed on the usage and development of the compensation mechanisms of a disabled individual.
2. *The principle of orto-functionalization* centred on the creation and development of the correct functions of a disabled individual.
3. *The principle of hyper-emotionalization* aimed on the strengthening of “personal feelings” and emotional life of a disabled individual.
4. *The principle of de-tensionalization* which is based on the releasing of tensions, states of tension of a disabled individual.
5. *The principle of substitutionalization* aimed on the substitution of distorted sensory channels with others.
6. *The principle of synergitization* centred on the connection of impulses and reactions into higher units in order to have a bigger impact.
7. *The principle of creativization aimed on the supporting of creative thinking and creative activity.*

The effectiveness and success of educational-rehabilitative programmes influence more the psychosocial components than the existing disabilities or illnesses. In this target group, there is often present the apathy, resignation as well as decrease of performance conditioned by the organic changes of the brain which reduce and complicate the effectiveness of the educational-rehabilitative actuation. However, it is possible to overcome them. We can achieve it by means of determining of small and easily accessible aims what represents the basis of these activities by seniors with disability. The partial results form the most important motivation in the area of education, activation and rehabilitation of seniors (Vítková, 2006).

Chosen psycho-didactic aspects of the foreign-language education of seniors (not only) with disability

Though there are used teaching methods with the same name in the foreign-language education of adults and seniors as in the education of children and teenagers, they have different contents, application and usage when working with every target group depending on the age. There enter many variables besides the age and disability into the process of the foreign-language education of disabled seniors which influence not only its course but also the quality of the proper results of education (Határ, 2016).

Older students have a wide range of physical and psychic problems which can have an impact on their learning activity. They can be related to the general psychic and physical condition of a senior, his/her health condition as well as to the current life situation of a senior, his/her preferred strategy of copying with his/her own old age, motivation or the fear of failure, mistakes and feeling of being ridiculized by the others, etc. The teacher of a foreign language should identify these obstacles of effective learning of seniors and he/she should take adequate measures in the educational group in order to remove or alleviate them (Határ, Jedličková, Müller de Morais, 2017). Based on the theoretical and practical knowledge of the current problem area, it is significant to strengthen and support positive experience of seniors with learning a foreign language.

Anxiety is one of the cognitive factors that can have a negative influence on the process of the foreign-language education (more in detail: Král'ová, Škorvagová, Tirpáková & Markechová, 2017). It is possible to eliminate this anxiety with suitable cognitive and behavioral techniques. Similarly, we recommend to eliminate those barriers in learning a foreign language which are related to their previous experience and they are connected mainly with negative feelings.

Referring to Homolová (2007), Határ (2016) describes several specific features of the foreign-language education of seniors. We choose some of them here:

1. A senior starts his/her foreign language education with his/her own *inner motivation* and his/her own *learning style*.
2. A senior has a *more responsible attitude* to the given learning tasks.
3. A senior frequently enters into the foreign-language education with certain *hindrances to accept knowledge in a new way* (they can be related to certain stereotypes, habits, expectations and also to his/her previous experience). It imposes higher requirements on the choice of suitable teaching methods, organizational forms or didactic aims.
4. An important role in the process of the foreign-language education of seniors is played by the *age of a teacher* of a foreign language because it can influence the character of the reciprocal communication and the willingness of seniors to express their own opinion.
5. It is important to know and respect the fact whether the senior is a *communicative type of a learner* (active in spoken communication, he/she easily understands auditive recordings, he/she has a dominant auditive memory, a wide range of spoken production, there is a stereotype in answers, repeating and slow solving of analytical tasks in language materials) or the senior is a *non-communicative type of a learner* (not active in spoken communication, he/she has problems in understanding auditive recordings, the visual memory is more dominant, there is a smaller range of spoken production, variety of answers, little repetition and fast solving of analytical tasks in language materials)

Besides the above mentioned typology (a communicative and non-communicative type of a learner) we recommend to know and respect the learning style of a senior as a participant of a foreign-language education which expresses *“a set of methods in learning which are preferred by an individual in a certain period. This set is developed from the congenital basis but it is being changed and improved during the course of life.”* (Turek, 2010, p. 83-103). One part of this learning style is formed also by cognitive processes which represent its congenital basis. The learning style helps to the learner to achieve required results in learning of a certain type of a topic in a certain educational situation but it can also decrease his/her success in learning another type of a topic in a different educational situation where another learning style would be much more helpful. A learner is not usually aware of his/her learning style and he/she does not analyze it systematically. However, it is possible to get aware of one's own learning style and to change it when it is desired (Turek, 2010, p. 83-103). The teacher of a foreign language can help to a learning senior to achieve this aim within the foreign-language education.

There exist several typologies of a learning style, e.g. the classification of learning styles *according to the dominance of the cerebral hemispheres*: the right hemisphere is connected with the divergent, artistic learning style and the left hemisphere is specific for the rational, scientific learning style (Kohoutek 2006), *according to the attitude to learning*: superficial and deeper learning style (Marton, Säljö, 1976), *according to the sensual preferences (VARK)*: visual, auditive, verbal, kinesthetic learning style (Fleming, 2001), *according to the theory of experiential learning (ELT - Experiential Learning Theory) Kolba* (1984): an activist (a specific experience), a reflector (reflexive observation), a theoretician (abstract conceptualization) and a pragmatic (active experimenting), *according to the dominant types of intelligence by Gardner* (1983): linguistic, logical - mathematical, visual, physical - kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, natural learning style, etc. These learning styles are more closely described in works by Mareš (1998), Petlák (2012), Rovňanová (2015), Sarmány Schuller (1998), Škoda, Doulík (2011), Turek (2004, 2010), etc. Turek (2004) says that individuals should use in learning mainly those learning methods which are compatible with their learning styles. Referring to Fleming (2001) he emphasizes the fact that a learner will not achieve such learning results he/she is able to achieve if he/she does not learn mainly in such a learning style which is natural for him/her (and therefore it is preferred). Based also on the application of Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1999) in learning, Turek (2004) mentions that individuals learn in the most effective way if they use in learning such learning methods and teachers in teaching such teaching methods which are typical of those kinds of intelligence that are dominant by these learning individuals and therefore they are better developed than the others. For example, a learner with a dominant spatial (visual) intelligence can better understand the Civil War in Spain when studying the

painting Guernica by Picasso than by reading books about this war (Gardner, 1989, in: Turek, 2004).

The learning activity of an individual can change also during the course of a day. Hubáč (1983, in: Škorvagová, 2017a), referring to the curve of the physiological performance created under the influence of the 24-hour rhythm, mentions two maximal levels of performance: between 8 - 11 o'clock am and between 7 - 9 o'clock pm. There are periods of the minimal performance between 2 - 4 o'clock in the afternoon and between 1 - 4 o'clock at night. Kassay (1986, in: Škorvagová, 2016) describes the biophysiological profile of a day by means of a general daily performance curve which is similar to the letter M. The curve achieves its peak in the morning between 10.30 - 11.30 am. In the afternoon the performance is significantly decreased under the influence of reduced amount of blood going to cerebral tissues. The biggest decrease of performance can be seen between 2.30 - 3.30 pm. Then the curve rises again and it reaches its peak between 4.30 - 5.30 pm. The curve has the similar course also in the evening: first it decreases but after two hours it starts to rise again.

Knowing the biorhythms, the teacher of a foreign language can apply this obtained knowledge in the education with the aim to optimize the process of learning of seniors (not only) with disability. It is important to participate in the organization of the educational process in an optimal way and to prevent the early tiredness of learners and, at the same time, to prolong their learning performance.

When educating seniors, it is also necessary to take into consideration that together with ageing there increases the biological and psychic burdening of the body. In order to keep and regenerate the learning performance of seniors (not only) with disability we recommend to have more frequent breaks during the lesson. In this way we can achieve the recovery of the original state of performance of the learners. Too long and uninterrupted learning has an impact on the reduction of quality of the learning performance. Therefore the duration of the learning activity should not last longer than 20 - 30 minutes. After the learning activity we recommend to have a 5- or 10- minute break and then continue in learning. After one-hour-long learning activity it is suitable to make a longer break when it is possible to alleviate the burden and tiredness (see also: Škorvagová, 2017b).

Respecting the specific features of the foreign-language education in the target group of seniors (not only) with disability, knowing their level of motivation and interests, their individually preferred learning styles, biorhythms and other individual differences influences the interaction between the teacher of a foreign language and the learner. At the same time, this knowledge significantly helps to the teacher to create positive learning atmosphere, to improve the communication and to achieve the set educational aims in an effective way.

Among other variables which can influence the quality of the learning activity of seniors with disability belong also the individual approach to the process of learning

from the point of view of satisfying their personal needs, the level of interest in what they learn, the specific features of this knowing activity, the specificities of the will acting, the impact of the social environment, the readiness to learn, the health condition, the specific situation connected with the given type and degree of disability, etc.

The teacher of the foreign language is supposed to be sensitive, empathic, tactful and tolerant to his/her target group. At the same time, he/she should try to have a positive and balanced attitude to the seniors requiring special care and he /she should be willing to help them to achieve their personal aims and solve their problems and difficulties in learning.

Conclusion

The world is getting older very fast. In proportion to the total number of the world population, the number of people older than 60 will increase from 11% in the year 2006 to 22% until the year 2050. In that time, in the world population there will be more seniors than children for the first time in the history of mankind. The ageing of population and its social consequences significantly strengthen the current importance of the topic of ageing of the society as well as individual ageing (WHO, 2007, in: Veteška, 2016). The prolonging of years of healthy and active lifestyle and keeping of functional ability and capacity during all the life (i.e. also for people of very old age) leads to successful ageing (Dienstbier, 2009, in: Veteška, 2016). It can be achieved by providing general information (together with prevention) and systematic education of adults (including the education of seniors to healthy ageing) (Veteška, 2016).

There are fulfilled two basic aims in the process of education - the social aim oriented on the development of human sources and the individual aim focused on the development of the personality of the individual, his/her ability to adapt himself/herself to the changing life conditions (Porubská, Határ, 2009).

The basis of all educational activities for seniors is the fact that the individual is able to learn and be creative also in the period of ageing and the old age when learning has its specific features which are necessary to be kept because they are decisive regarding the effectiveness of education. In the senior age, there are not important the improvement of qualification and increase of social safety but preparation for ageing. We agree with the opinion that the preparation of seniors for the old age and their knowledge about the healthy way of life, could significantly influence the quality of their life in higher age in the future. Veteška (2016) mentions that there are organized courses of preparation for the ageing (e.g. in the USA since 1949, the first course in England was organized one year later). The main aim of these courses is to increase the quality of life of an individual and to contribute to the intergenerational cohesion. The educational activities help to ensure a successful transition and adaptation within later developmental stages and they contribute to maintain and improve the health.

Educational activities in the senior age provide the feeling of dignity, they contribute to the satisfaction and fulfilment of psychical and social needs, to the integration of the individual to the society, they help with easier coping with new tasks and activities and, first of all, they provide a better quality of life. In the educational process, seniors receive new pieces of information which subsequently enable them to be more balanced psychically because they get an overview about their everyday life and a possibility of choice to arrange their own satisfying old age. The educational activities in the post-productive age contribute not only to the autonomy, dignity and life self-realization, but they are significant also for the improving and keeping of the health (Veteška, 2016).

The results of several researches (Hrapková, 2011) confirm that older people who continue with their education and have a new life programme at their disposal, feel better and more vital physically and psychically. They suffer from less depressions and they find a new meaning and dimensions of their life.

Határ (2014) says that many older disabled people, who need help and care of other people due to their disability, often resign to find a new perspective of their lives. It is still the fact that psychical, social and biological factors influence the quality of life of every individual in the senior age. Therefore it is important to provide such conditions to seniors so that they can live the autumn of their life actively.

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Contacts

Müller de Morais Marianna doc. PaedDr. PhD.
Department of Education
Faculty of Education
Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra
Dražovská 4, 949 01 Nitra
Slovakia
mmdmorais@ukf.sk

Rapsová Lucia, Mgr.
Faculty of Education
Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra
Dražovská 4, 949 01 Nitra
Slovakia
lucia.rapsova@ukf.sk

Radka Zimanová, Mgr.
Faculty of Education
Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra
Dražovská 4, 949 01 Nitra
Slovakia
radka.zimanova@ukf.sk