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# THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION

Educational theatre and drama



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tuka

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**Publisher:**

Društvo ustvarjalcev Taka Tuka

Ljubljana, 2020

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

# Introduction

The book in your hands was created as part of the Erasmus+ international project Let's Communicate! The main purpose of the project was to improve the competences of young people in the field of communication in English and International Sign Language, but we also focused on learning to learn and developing a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship through theatre pedagogy. The driving force behind the project is the Taka Tuka Association, which has partnered up with Teatar Tirena from Croatia and Moradokmai Theatre Community and Homeschool from Thailand.

Effective communication is crucial for good relations, for clearly expressing one's thoughts and emotions, and reacting appropriately in complex life situations. And yet, we often face great problems in this area. There are many different ways to communicate effectively, and speech or verbal communication is just one of them. Many studies underline the role of non-verbal (facial expressions, gestures, etc.) and paraverbal (volume, pauses, etc.) signals, which feature most prominently precisely in theatre. Can drama also help us in our communication at school, at home, in everyday life? Theatre pedagogy says yes.

Theatre pedagogy is a field on the intersection between drama as art and education science, offering numerous techniques, methods and approaches that can help us include, connect and empower the participants in the educational process from kindergarten to university. It is divided into three aspects of incorporating dramatic elements in the educational process: theatre literacy, theatrical production and teaching with dramatic approaches. All three aspects are presented in this publication through interviews with experts who deal with theatre pedagogy within different education-related institutions. The second part presents practical examples of workshops that use theatre pedagogy to develop knowledge and skills in different areas.

This book is aimed at everyone who would like more creative and motivationally effective approaches in their educational work that will appeal to all pupils. In the spirit of inclusive learning, the approaches of theatre pedagogy connect people, and at the same time allow every individual their own mode of expression. So, Let's communicate! To learn more about how, continue reading.

## **THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION** – Educational theatre and drama

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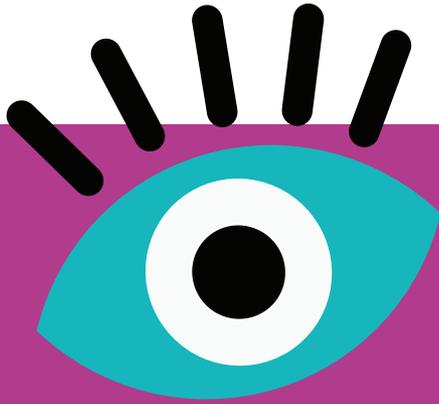
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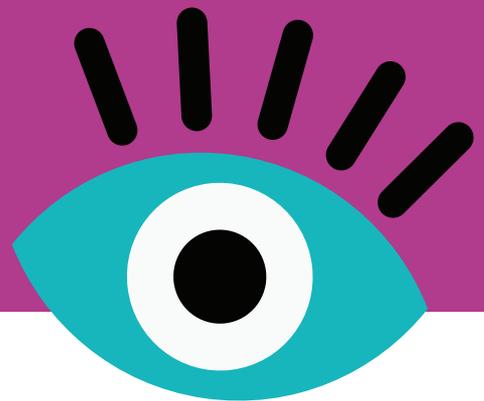
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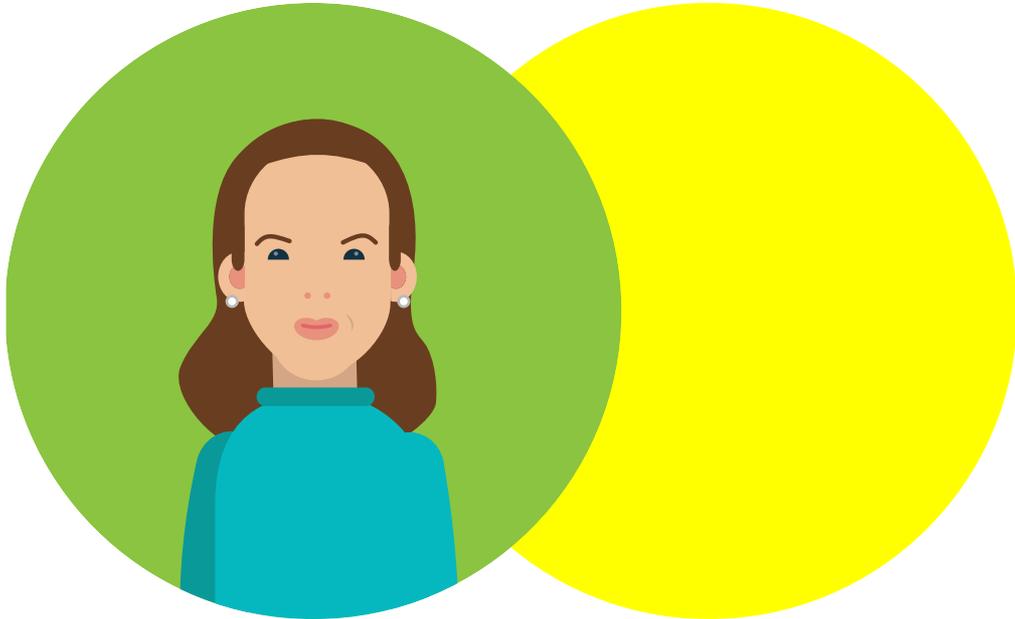
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# Irina Lešnik

University of Primorska, Faculty of Education

## Theatre pedagogy on the intersection between theatre art and education science

Irina Lešnik experienced her first close encounter with theatre during her Slovenian language studies, when she started writing theatre reviews. "That's when I first really noticed all the things hidden behind the final product that is the theatre show," she reminisces. She became so enthusiastic about theatre that she decided for dual studies with dramaturgy at the Ljubljana Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television. The ideas about the connection between the fields of teaching and theatre gained more weight when she started independent research at the Faculty of Education of the University of Primorska. The researcher highlights initial problems with inconsistent translations of terminology, and outlines as one of the key goals of her research giving the field of theatre pedagogy a place in education science in Slovenia.

### **Why has a working group for uniform terminology in the field of theatre pedagogy recently been formed and who's in it?**

Theatre pedagogy is an unclear term for many working in the field of education in Slovenia, because it describes a border area on the intersection between theatre art and education science. Thanks mainly to many Slovenian cultural and educational institutions that link theatre with the educational process, recent years have shown the need to define the field of theatre pedagogy more clearly, to determine the key starting points and use uniform terminology. That's because originally English terms are often translated differently, and this leads to confusion both among scientists as well as practicing teachers.

The Public Fund for Cultural Activities (JSKD) appointed in October last year a working group for harmonising the terminology in theatre pedagogy, consisting of representatives of the Faculties of Education of the University of Ljubljana and the University of Primorska, the National Education Institute Slovenia, The Association for the Development of Theatre in Education, the Slovenian Theatre Institute and the Taka Tuka Association. The working group is also open to possible new members, both theoreticians and practitioners.

### **So how did this working group define the field of theatre pedagogy?**

The term theatre pedagogy covers three aspects of incorporating elements from theatre into the educational process: theatre literacy, theatrical production and teaching with dramatic approaches. The first two aspects—

theatre literacy and theatrical production—are already quite well spread in our kindergartens and schools, while the third aspect—teaching with the help of dramatic approaches—has only recently started gaining more ground in Slovenia. But we must keep in mind that all three aspects are often intertwined and complement each other, since they stem from the same core—theatre.

### **What's most typical for the first aspect, theatre literacy?**

Work on improving theatre literacy is part of broader cultural and artistic education, to which the school environment contributes significantly. In the field of theatre, this is manifested in organisation of theatre visits with quality productions, which should be done as comprehensively as possible. This means that the preparation for the visit starts already in the classroom, with planned activities that acquaint children with dramatic characters, motifs, topics and so on. This makes it easier for children to recognise during a play the individual theatrical signs on stage, and their experience of the dramatic events will be more comprehensive. After seeing a play, the teacher should give children a chance to express their own experience in different creative ways to further deepen their artistic experience. The aim of theatre literacy activities is to educate autonomous viewers, who will remain theatregoers even after finishing school, because they easily understand the "language of theatre"—in a nutshell, theatre literate viewers.



**How do schools usually include in the educational process the second aspect, theatrical production, which already has a relatively rich practice in Slovenia?**

Theatrical production with children in the school environment has really become a constant here, but compared to fine arts or music, theatre is not placed on the main curriculum of primary schools. This form of activity is mostly pursued in form of extracurricular theatre clubs or theatre clubs as an elective subject. Normally, theatrical production in schools is based on a preselected text, but the text may also be produced in the creative process itself, or it can be disregarded altogether, since theatre has a number of other means of expression. There could be more of these original approaches that put the same stress on the process of making a play as on the final product—the performance. The show, which the educator gradually develops and finally stages together with the pupils, is certainly a unique experience of performing in front of an audience for children. Teachers have pointed out having trouble with time constraints, because such creative forms of work take time. It's practically impossible to expect process-focused work from a teacher if they only have a month to put their product on stage.

**And what about the third aspect, teaching with dramatic approaches, which is less known in the Slovenian education system?**

With theatre literacy and production, theatrical art is both the basis and aim of education, but when it comes to teaching with the help of dramatic approaches, the aims are set broader. That's because theatre offers interactive approaches to learning that can be used to achieve educational objectives in different subject areas. Using dramatic approaches in teaching can make it easier to discuss issues, expand and refresh knowledge in any subject, from artistic ones to sociological and natural sciences. In this sense, drama is incorporated directly into classes and doesn't require additional lessons. However, a teacher who is encountering such approaches for the first time will, of course, need some additional preparation.

**To what extent and in what ways is teaching with dramatic approaches already present in Slovenian schools?**

Methods and techniques of theatre pedagogy aren't completely new in the Slovenian educational space, but they are mostly limited to the introductory phase of a class, which is dedicated to warming up and motivating children, and they only rarely get a central place in dealing with new subject matter. They're often used in foreign language classes, where teachers follow modern principles of teaching communication, and try to recreate fictional dialogues using one of the main methods of theatre pedagogy—role play. The currently valid national curriculum for Slovenian classes, which is still the subject that is most closely linked to theatre in our school system, has a special

section for every educational period dedicated to Theatre, radio play and film (the first period also features cartoons), which among other things also points out the educational objectives in the area of theatrical activities. The role play method, which is an indispensable part of any theatre activity, even more process-oriented ones, gets mentioned only in the first educational period. Apart from that, the curriculum is focused on theatrical production and reception (the first and second aspects in the definition of theatre pedagogy).

an obligatory subject Creative movement and puppets in class. But still, fine arts and music get quite a preferential treatment over theatre also in this case. This means that interested students, teachers and educators can mostly learn about theatre-based approaches to teaching through non-formal education. The terminological consensus that is expected soon will also set the professional foundations and open possibilities for further research. But major change would only be possible with a reform of university education programmes which would give teachers more autonomy in the field of theatre pedagogy.

### **What's the actual structure of the third aspect of theatre pedagogy, which uses theatre as a means of achieving educational objectives?**

Comprehensive dramatic approaches, which are quite new in Slovenia, come as a specific combination of different methods and techniques of theatre pedagogy, encompassed in dramatic structure. English terminology distinguishes two approaches of theatre pedagogy: Theatre in Education (also TiE), and Drama in Education (also DiE). Both put in the forefront the method of process drama, which is not performed for an audience, but sees active participation of everyone present. The main difference between the two approaches is usually in the performers—while TiE is performed by specially trained theatre companies, DiE is planned and executed by a teacher together with pupils. It's not necessary, however, for teachers to take on whole dramatic pieces immediately. They can simply take part of their lesson to add individual methods (role play, teacher in a role, improvisation, presentation, etc.) or more concretely defined techniques (hot seat, living images, slow motion, etc.).



### **What are the reasons for this situation, and do you expect any changes?**

This situation is a reflection of a very gradual recognition of the third aspect of theatre pedagogy in educational science. This can even be seen in the education programmes at universities. In general, students aiming to become generalist teachers mostly get acquainted with theatre in elective subjects, only the curriculum of the Ljubljana Faculty of Education also features



**You've stressed several times that teaching with dramatic approaches can help achieve educational objectives in different subjects. Does this way of teaching have any other kind of added value?**

Today's pupil is supposed to be involved in class as a "dynamic whole of interrelated elements, where a change in one allows changes in others", in the words of the authors of the recently published monograph on experiential learning *Izkustveno učenje*, Barica Marentič Požarnik, Marjeta Šarič and Barbara Šteh. It's therefore hard to draw a line in effectively set educational activities between those that involve the head, the heart or hands, and into those that involve reason or emotions. The educational approaches, methods and techniques of theatre pedagogy are designed comprehensively, so that children don't just listen and talk about different concepts, phenomena and laws, but actually realise and express them through different dramatic means of expression, both verbal and non-verbal. This makes it easier for them to internalise what they've learnt, to establish a certain emotional relationship to it, and to commit their learning to long-term memory.

Theatre pedagogy: three aspects of incorporating theatrical elements in the educational process

<b>Theatre literacy</b>	<b>Theatrical performance</b>	<b>Teaching with approaches from theatre</b>
Culture and arts education	Preparing a theatrical event	Educational approaches, methods and techniques
Educating a viewer	Performing in front of an audience	Drama in Education, Theatre in Education
"Teaching about theatre"	"Teaching theatre"	"Teaching with theatre"



»Some experience  
a show emotionally,  
others see an  
important social  
message.«

**Sandra**

# Sandra Jenko

Slovenian Theatre Institute

## Preparing spectators for watching a play actively and critically

The Slovenian Theatre Institute serves as a hub connecting all professional theatre institutions and artists in Slovenia through educational programmes and expert trainings for children, youth and adults, while also promoting the development of culture and arts education. “We strive to raise future generations of theatregoers into active and critical audiences,” says Sandra Jenko, who is in charge of the institute’s museum educational programme.

### How does the Slovenian Theatre Institute try to bring theatre closer to young people?

Young people will only be able to recognise good theatre if they have the opportunity to see quality plays. They can only develop into critical spectators if they have the chance to learn about the language of theatre, theatre literacy, and are trained to handle more abstract and demanding performances. The Slovenian Theatre Institute sees its role particularly in spreading theatre literacy, both in terms of watching quality productions and reading plays, as well as in the area of cultural heritage. The museum presents young and adult visitors with knowledge about the history of theatre, and we also offer teachers educational programmes on spreading theatre literacy, so that they can pass on the knowledge to young people to prepare them appropriately for their theatre visit.

### To what extent has the theatre culture among young people (primary and secondary schoolers) changed or improved?

It's hard to assess how much it's improving, but I know that teachers' awareness about the importance of theatre culture is increasing, so we can hope that this is also the case with young people to which they are transferring their knowledge. Teachers are certainly more aware of the importance of quality culture and arts education, and especially the importance of theatre education and the use of theatre pedagogy, both in class as well as in preparing drama projects and plays in drama clubs. Even though some still use the classical procedures, many are already giving priority to first growing as a group, on using the principles of theatre pedagogy to establish group dynamics, where they improve theatre literacy and learn about different means of expression, vocations related to theatre, the processes involved in staging a play, the history of theatre, and different theatrical forms and genres.



## Have professional theatres also become more interested in the development of young audiences?

Yes, Slovenian professional theatres are seeing a trend of theatre artists meeting with the young visitors. For example, the Teen Club at SNG Drama in Ljubljana holds regular meetings with young visitors as part of its season-ticket programme, the SNG Nova Gorica has an Amateur Youth Stage, and there's also a youth theatre group at the Ljubljana Puppet Theatre. This way young people can learn about theatre art and engage theatrically in a professional environment and with professional artists. Other houses perform other types of meeting, like workshops for the wider public, while there are also more and more guided tours available. The response is great, young people appreciate the opportunities to learn about professional theatre, to have active contact with professional artists, and to explore theatre art with them.

Among NGOs there are also many theatre groups and culture institutions active in theatre production and exploration with young people. For instance, the Glej Theatre, KUD Ljud, the Ana Monró Theatre, the IMPRO Association and KUD Moment are also dedicated to theatre literacy and

working for and with young people, for example in the areas of original theatre production and exploring their own expression. Also important is the role of parents in recognising how crucial it is to take their child to a theatre. It's nice if they discuss with them already before the visit what they will see, what theatre means, and that they don't just give the child to someone when they enter the theatre and pick them up after the show.

## But knowledge about theatre pedagogy is still less accessible to parents.

It is harder for parents to use different methods of theatre pedagogy, and it's harder for them to take part in workshops offering such knowledge, since they are mostly aimed at teachers. Maybe in the future, theatres will also prepare such workshops and activities for parents and children, and will offer them additional activities before and after shows. Some theatre houses already have something like that, but unfortunately—and this is also the case in our museum—parents often simply bring their child and leave, although we keep stressing that the content and activities are intended for families, which means parents as well. I believe we still have a lot of work to do in this respect.





### How should teachers prepare children for a comprehensive theatre visit as part of the educational process?

A comprehensive theatre visit as part of school starts by choosing an appropriate production. It's important to bear in mind what group of pupils or students the school is taking to the theatre, although age is not always the most important factor—a show that's appropriate for nine-year-olds may, for example, also be suitable for children who are a year younger, and the other way around. Teachers need to assess well what kind of group they're taking to the theatre, how developed they are and how much experience they have. Children visiting the theatre for the first time should be taken to see a show that's not too abstract and will present theatre in a way that they find pleasing and understandable. Educators should see the show in advance, or at least study the theatre's materials appropriately. Only a well-prepared teacher can also prepare pupils and students for watching a play in theatre. When preparing the children, they shouldn't only discuss the content and talk about appropriate behaviour in theatre, but should go further and include different theatre pedagogy activities that support attention, ways of watching, and especially freedom in understanding theatrical means of expression and interpretation.

### What can be achieved with this?

This way children learn to understand that as spectators they are an active part of the show, not only passive observers. They learn to understand that they must use their imagination to supplement many things, and that only by understanding what they see they are painting a real picture of the play. They also learn that not everyone has the same impression of the play, and that everyone's free to see certain things differently than others. They must get this sense of freedom from the teacher before the visit, so that after the visit they'll be able to discuss more freely and express their different views more openly. This is what reflection is for. The theatre experience can be extended with a talk with the artists, a guided tour of the backstage, or a workshop. But I think it's not good to burden pupils too much with tasks. If we sit them down in a theatre with instructions what they should pay attention to, they might focus too much on thinking, and might not enjoy the performance as much. It's better to deal with these topics in the preparations, so that they will draw their attention subconsciously when they're watching the play. If you focus on scenography in the preparations, then pupils will talk more about stage design after the play, and if you focus on costumes, this is where the reflexion will lead you.

**Some youngsters will probably still find it uncomfortable to talk about how they experienced the play and theatre.**

Of course, children are different, and not every one of them has the courage to express their opinion, but this can be changed exactly by regularly using dramatic approaches in class. By performing different theatre pedagogy activities with pupils or students on a regular basis throughout the school year, and by training their attention, observation, evaluation of individual performances and scenes, and expressing their views, even the shy pupils will, with time, become empowered and gain more confidence in expressing their views. After watching a play, we can also encourage this by giving them a chance to use items and pictures from the play to recreate the scenes, and think about how the story could continue or take a different turn. Other fun and fear-relieving techniques may include a pupil assuming the role of an expert, for example director, and answering the questions of their classmates. Of course, a pupil can't know exactly what the director had in mind when staging the production, but the important part of this exercise is that it gives children a different perspective, a different way of thinking, and the confidence to ask more questions. If you simply ask "How did you like the play?" you won't get the right answer. But if you get them to this point in a playful manner, for example through role play, you may get to hear many interesting, new and even surprising things.

**Are there any other ways of preparing spectators for watching a play actively and critically?**

In the preparations, we need to encourage and open the topics addressed in the play, and acquaint the pupils or students with the means of expression they are about to encounter, as well as prepare them for the fact that a play sometimes doesn't follow the original text entirely. From the perspective of aesthetics, it's useful for youngsters to sometimes also encounter a play that they might not like, since this'll help them develop an aesthetic sense and value quality productions all the more. In the preparations, you can also work with photos from the actual play and talk with the pupils or students about what they expect. And after the play, they can critically reflect on how their expectations matched what they saw. If they know the text, they can also critically reflect on whether the production followed it, or took a completely different path and why.



### **At what age is a child capable of critically watching a theatre play?**

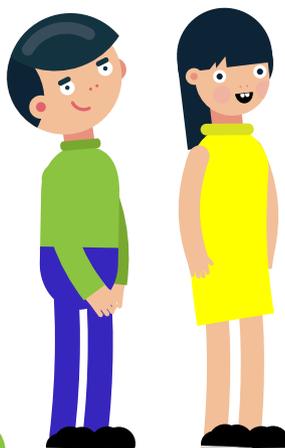
We should take them to plays already at a very early age, when they of course perceive mostly with their senses—like optical and audio stimuli. Actual critical thinking starts when they are four or five years old and they become capable of evaluating and assessing what they see. Their views can be very surprising, and you'll find that they're paying attention to incredible detail, like what kind of tattoo a hedgehog had in the play. Very young children can also already assess and argument what they liked and what they didn't. But I think that here the experience with visiting the theatre plays the most important role. Critical evaluation develops through regular and continued theatre visits.

### **Does this also relate to the development of theatre literacy and an aesthetic sense for theatre art?**

Just like any other sense, the aesthetic sense is trained by seeing different plays and finding out the difference between a high-quality and a low-quality production. By seeing more shows, a youngster will get the sense of what they like. This isn't just about theatre plays, because the aesthetic sense also refers to other areas of art, reading books, observing illustrations in picture books, watching a film in the cinema, listening to music and radio plays, seeing an exhibition in a museum or gallery. All of this encourages a child to explore different artistic forms, and this way they'll experience art as their own and as something they can identify with.

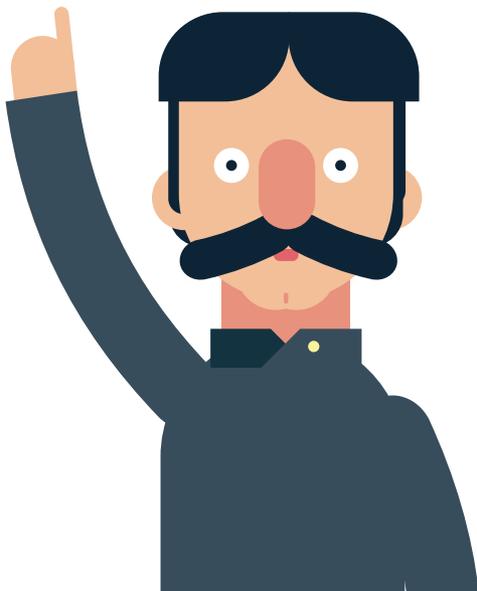
### **This can be useful in a time when children are so strongly drawn to content on smartphones and TV.**

Young people today are very susceptible to the digital culture and highly exposed to media overload. They need a stimulus-rich environment to be touched, and a theatre play may offer them "too little". But I've also been surprised when minimalist plays had a much greater impact than those with an overdose of stimuli. Precisely because children have so many stimuli in their environment, they appreciate the minimalist approach—the opposite of what they know from the digital world. They like it if a play sometimes takes a step back. In reflections you can hear that almost too much was going on on stage, or that they took abstraction a step too far, and that they'd prefer to see something more classical, less packed with everything. It's important for them to recognise as aesthetic a more refined plays, and question their idealisation of the media world. Watching a play can change their views and help them recognise new values, while activities related to theatre pedagogy encourage the awareness that many different things can be right and beautiful.



### How can theatre be used to convey a message?

Theatre has always been a medium of communicating, it's informative in its essence, and everyone can take something from it. It's important to know how to read plays and to draw your own messages from them. For some it's enough for a performance to resonate with them on an emotional level, with some revelation from the personal world, and others will recognise important social messages in plays. That's why it's important to give children some starting points before visiting the theatre, some basis on which to build. Even with adults their previous knowledge and personal life will determine how they experience a play, how it resonates with them and what messages they'll get from it. Of course, theatre always has some topical orientation too, so we can plan the choice of plays so they're related to the subject matter discussed in class. This doesn't mean you need to watch the exact same play that's analysed in class, it's enough to choose one that deals with the analysed topic, or comes from the same period, was written by the same author, or where the main character is facing a similar problem.



### And it's not necessary that it's just useful for class, since—as you said—we can take different things from it.

Yes, the value of theatre is that it always establishes some sort of contact with the visitor. But it depends on the spectator how they will read it and how it will touch them. A child who's had a similar experience in their family to what happens in the play will see the play in a completely different way than a child whose family life is different. Also very important is the atmosphere of a theatre hall, so the play should not be performed in a regular hall, a sports hall or school cafeteria, but rather in a real theatre, because the room itself inspires a certain level of respect and affects the emotional state and perceptibility of the spectator.

### Doesn't preparing pupils or students before taking them to see a play deprive them of the magic of the unknown and hard-to-understand?

We certainly shouldn't overdo it with preparations. If everything's been chewed over in advance, there won't be anything left for youngsters to work out on their own. Preparation means "opening up channels" for perception and experience, so that they come to the theatre open to different possibilities, and that they realise that it can be many things, that it's broad and diverse.

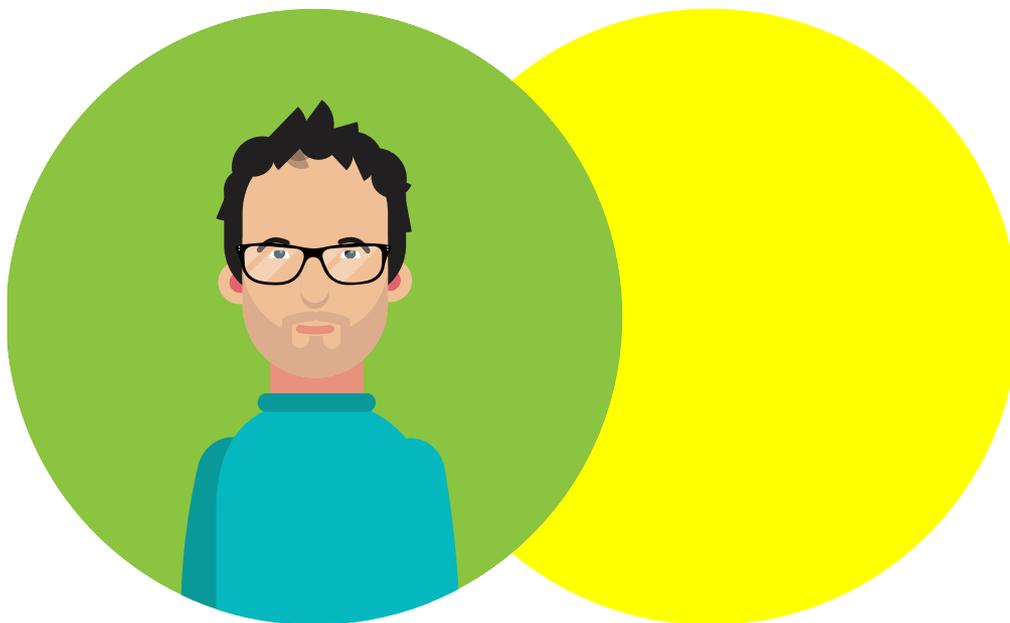
## How do we use the approaches, methods and techniques of theatre pedagogy for increasing theatre literacy and learning about the communication channels in performing arts?

All dramatic approaches used in making theatre productions can also be used to improve theatre literacy, since they help train our senses, attention, creativity and imagination. And with young spectators, we want to spur precisely the active watching, thinking and imagination. Methods and techniques from theatre pedagogy are used as a targeted tool for learning about different means of expression—either through sound, music, speech, movement, body language, or through stage and costume design—and different activities are designed to put special attention on one mean of expression or another. This trains students in communication, cooperation and maintaining attention.

## Do you believe dramatic approaches will become even more established in Slovenian schools?

I think they're already spreading pretty well, and a lot is happening in the area of theatre pedagogy. Since there are also more and more professional educational programmes, this also increases the possibility that as many teachers from different regions as possible will encounter these methods. For some they are actually already common practice, and they must only persuade their colleagues to expand their knowledge in this area. Theatre pedagogy seminars are also attended by teachers based on recommendations from their co-workers. This way the findings from theatre pedagogy are spreading, and their users are active across Slovenia.





# Matjaž Šmalc

Public Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Cultural Activities

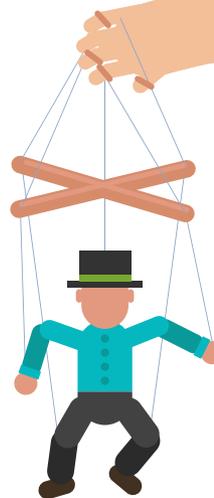
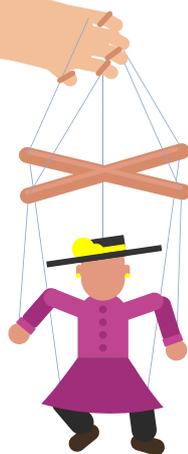
## Theatre is a controlled laboratory without consequences

The Public Fund for Cultural Activities (JSKD) promotes the development of creative potentials, and its programmes also support the development of educational programmes for children and youth, as well as their mentors. “Theatre means play to children, and children don’t play art, they play theatre,” says Matjaž Šmalc, advisor at the JSKD, who has been in charge of theatre and puppet activities for the last 15 years and has long been focusing on designing educational programmes in the field of theatre. He has also been involved in the international conferences of educational drama and theatre in Ljubljana since their very beginning.

## How did the understanding of the concept of children’s theatre start changing?

The approach to creating children’s theatre had been practically the same as with theatre for adults for a long time. Somehow the perception was that children’s theatre is a “regular” theatre, just that the actors are a little younger. They tried to work with children using the same methods as with adults, from readings to the performance on stage. One of the problems was that mentors of children’s theatre groups didn’t (and still don’t) have the appropriate education: mentors with theatrical education lack the education for teaching, while educators (most children’s theatre production is prepared in kindergartens and primary schools where mentors are teachers) lack the theatrical education. At the 2nd International Conference of Educational Drama and Theatre in 2010, we compared the programmes of the faculties of education in Slovenia and saw that there are hardly any classes—mandatory and elective—dealing with theatre pedagogy. At that time, we found the most of this as part of the preschool education course at the University of Ljubljana, where students would get up to 120 hours of classes on theatre, elective subjects included. That’s in four years. Which, of course, is still absolutely too little for leading a theatre group.

So, I started designing programmes at the JSKD and introducing approaches that would allow teachers to get practical knowledge of theatre. Already after the first conference of educational drama and theatre of 2009, we started introducing the findings from practice into education and practical work with children. We started working intensively with theatre mentors to enable them the education they couldn’t get as part of their studies, mostly through different seminars and practical workshops. You could say that our review events are also some special kind of education. Mentors apply with around 400 productions for the annual Review of Children’s Theatre and Puppet Theatre Groups. First, all the shows are performed on the local level, then they progress to the regional and in the end to the national level. After each local and regional festival, our advisors speak with the mentors, who get access to professionals this way, and they advise them what else to improve in their play. By analysing their performances, this talk turns into a practical mini seminar. Since there’s no university course of theatre pedagogy, this is how we try to overcome this deficit.

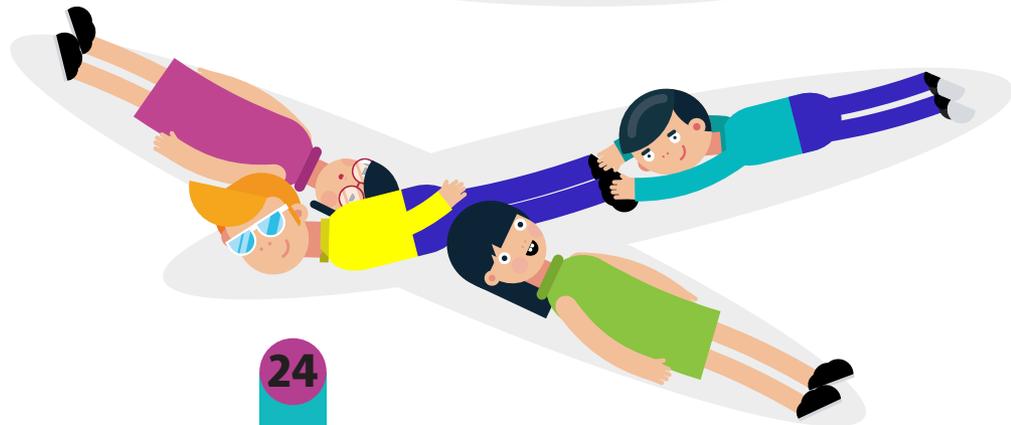


### How should different approaches, methods and techniques of theatre pedagogy be introduced in the process of creating a children’s theatre production?

The essence of a theatre play is to relive a particular personal experience; you don’t play a role, you live it. Children in their earliest age don’t experience theatre as art but as play. Using different methods of theatre pedagogy, they can process different materials through play—that is the relations, positions and situations that they’ll use in the play. When they encounter the same situations in the performance, they’re ready for them; they already have these emotional states in their emotional memory, so they can act them out on stage in a more convincing way.

Different approaches, methods and techniques of theatre pedagogy therefore serve as part of role research. This way we avoid what I think is the most horrible question: “What did the author want to say by this?” Of course no one knows this, and at the end of the day it’s completely irrelevant. With such role research, children internalise the emotions, and take the situations and attitudes as their own. Then this terrible sentence gets a whole new meaning: children become the play’s co-authors (even if they’re making it based on an existing dramatic text), and they know very well what they as co-authors wanted to say.

Mentors often say they don’t have enough time when preparing a play to use such methods, which at first glance really aren’t directly related to the final product. But they fail to grasp that well-planned play with children is practically role research, which makes it a good investment. We can use half of study time to “play” with the young actors. They often don’t even know why they’re doing this, but when the mentor finally puts the text on the table, they see that they’ve actually been working on this play for months—that in all the activities they already analysed and solved all the conflicts and problems in the selected dramatic text.



### **In what more concrete sense is using dramatic approaches a good investment?**

Children are usually afraid of texts, and mentors aren't aware enough that we don't act a text, that it's just a tool, a story framework, in which we're looking for emotions, attitudes, that which is the essence of theatre. We must experience these emotions and attitudes through theatre pedagogy, and in this sense theatre is education, learning for life.

In theatre we don't teach children only the laws of the stage, overcoming stage fright and articulation in speech and body language. Rather than that, we set up a space where they can test different behavioural states and emotions, from extreme anger to joy; they can be victims, bullies, princes, bandits—all this in a controlled environment and under the watchful eye of the mentor. This makes them a bit better prepared for the moment when they have to not only play all these parts, but live them in real life. We give children important values and starting points for contemplation.



This allows the teacher to see more easily how a child thinks and what are their views on a certain issue, which may be different from the mentor's and especially from what the mentor thinks is the child's view. Only when the teacher realises that they don't understand how children think, can they start working with them. Children can show very vividly what they feel, and through play and acting the teacher can see their real attitudes.

### **How do you foster creativity in social interactions through theatre activity?**

Theatre is by definition interactive. A strong personal interdependence develops in it. It's like group sport, where it's impossible to function without 100 per cent trust. It's not just about trusting the other actor to do something that was agreed—if they don't, it'll seem like their co-actor was the one to make a mistake. Absolute mutual trust is also important so that everyone can express their views and opinions without the risk of being judged or feeling unaccepted. Theatre is a platform where it's easiest to explore things that are sometimes on the border, emotions, fears and joys. When children realise this, they must know they'll be safe in this microcosm, their core group. If they don't feel safe in the group, they won't feel safe in front of an audience either.

Unconditional trust also changes understanding, increases empathy and prejudice somehow disappears. The bonds between group members become very strong, especially while studying the play, when emotions are high. A girl who didn't dare open her mouth can make an excellent Pippi Longstocking, because she gets a chance and she knows she'll be protected, accepted and safe no

matter what. Children get their voice, the right to express their opinion. And this confidence, this increased self-esteem, is always also reflected in real life.

### **How do children face their problems and prejudice through acting?**

Children from a problematic environment, foreigners, children with physical or psychological issues realise that everyone is the same on stage, on stage you can't see who's rich and who's poor. A child gets an opportunity to work out their problem. The confrontation of all participants offers an opportunity for solving problems in a constructive way. A violent child, for example, gets to play a bully—at first, they may feel great about it, but then they experience directly what this actually means—or they get the role of a victim and experience the other side. Theatre is a controlled laboratory without consequences. On stage, you can be a lover, rapist, you can fight, bite, growl, you can laugh—all of this without being judged afterwards. You can explore emotions, attitudes, and come to certain conclusions, because you see the consequences without having to answer for them, or you realise what they'd be if you had to take responsibility for them. It's about understanding. On stage, you also get to see everything from another perspective, one that was unclear to you before. Not because you're bad in your heart, but because you didn't even think about it.

### **You said children aren't even aware when different dramatic approaches, methods and techniques are used, and they consider everything to be play. But when do they start distinguishing play, theatre and real life?**

The youngest children simply play theatre. Here there's no contemplation what they want to say (but this doesn't mean they can't evaluate the experience afterwards), they simply take theatre as role play, as they play it for instance in the yard—in our time, this was cowboys and Indians, or cops and robbers.

Children in the second three years of primary school are already as diverse as the weather—some still play with toys, while others are already in love. Of course, they know what they're doing is theatre, but the question is whether they also understand what theatre is. That's why it makes no sense to explain the complicated concept of theatre in this period, although they're starting to want more than just mere play. They still want to have fun, but they're also becoming aware of a certain responsibility.

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### **How is it possible to develop rational argumentation through the process of theatrical production?**

Every theatrical performance must have a message. It can be more or less clear, this depends on what kind of show we're preparing and who's preparing it. I believe that not all the viewers will get the message as the artist conceived it, but those staging it still have to know exactly what they want to say. Even in Theatre of the Absurd, the artist must know why they've created something and what they wanted to say. And children too must know why they do the things they do on stage. When they start thinking about the topic under the right guidance of the mentor, for example when preparing the play I, Batman, it'll no longer be black and white. They won't say anymore: "He's a bad guy because he's blackmailing." Instead, they'll ask why he's doing it, what's wrong with him that he's blackmailing, and where it started. And they'll explore all this through play. They'll reach certain revelations that might offer a solution for prevention. Punishing bad things is not the solution, it's preventing them.

### **Based on your insight into the work of children's theatre groups, which are the most popular topics among children?**

Over the last fifteen years, we've been trying to introduce topics in children's theatre groups that would draw from children themselves, so we strongly support original projects. I believe that children need to put on shows that speak about their generation. We've come pretty far in convincing mentors that there's no topic they should be afraid of, and all of a sudden we got plays that speak about parents getting divorced,

about someone not doing well in school, about bullying, but of course also about first love, friendship and so on. Of course, children always like to put on easier topics, even crime stories, but it's important that they don't have any prejudice with regard to the choice of topic, and above all that they're not afraid of them. Only this way can we get plays that are truly theirs—because children speak about their own experiences and problems, this'll make them all the more honest, and consequently the children will also feel better in them.



**Probably they also like them more because they feel closer to “their” topics than those of a different author, possibly a famous playwright from a different era.**

Yes, I still think the most genius play I’ve ever seen was made by a group of fourth or fifth graders under the mentorship of actress and excellent drama teacher Draga Potočnjak. They created a show of dramatised poetry, where the children drew from themselves and expressed their emotions through the typical topics from the world of a nine-year-old: bad marks, first love, parents fighting ... a whole spectrum spoke from within them. They acted from within themselves, although they didn’t necessarily play themselves.

If children are into superheroes, let them play superheroes. The trouble with original texts is that they’re not as good from the dramaturgical perspective, because children don’t know the trade. But if they play Superman instead of Ivan Cankar’s (TN: esteemed Slovenian author and playwright) characters, it may be easier for them to act out the same stories, the same problems and situations, because they won’t be burdened by the awe of the author, in this case Cankar. It’s the same with older actors—if I don’t tell them the name of the author, their acting will be much more relaxed than if I do tell them. If I say it’s Cankar, they’ll forget about their true feelings and attitudes, and only think about what they heard about it in school. Of course children need to feel the text is close to them. It should deal with their world and the present day in a language that they speak. Such texts and topics will be easy for them to play.

If I look at the repertoire, it seems to me we’ve achieved something in the last 15 years, also by starting to intentionally look for texts that

are appropriate for children to perform. We’ve published around fifty quality texts for children’s theatre groups. Another important achievement is that professional writers of texts for children started to realise that their text can be better if they test it with children before publishing. For example, Gregor Grešak and Ana Porenta found the ideas and motifs for all their texts at theatre practice with children. Together they selected topics that the children found interesting. Based on this, they wrote a text and first gave it to the children to tear it apart, and then rewrote the final version. These texts can also speak about sensitive subjects, but children will take them as their own, because they’re written from their perspective and above all in their language.

**How can you support and improve communication strategies with dramatic approaches?**

In theatre, communication takes place on several levels. Theatre requires articulating thoughts and it’s a matter of response—an actor responds to something that someone else said or did, to a situation, a feeling. This means that actors must start reading their fellow actors if they want to respond and say something themselves. This way, theatre acting establishes communication among children, even if they’re different from each other.

Sooner or later we come to a situation where young actors don’t know each other, some are from year 5 class A, others from year 6 class B, they may know each other vaguely but aren’t really friends, but when making a theatre production, they must start communicating. Communication will be completely different before studying a play and after it, because children get to know each other on a very personal level during the

process of making a play. The more actors get to know each other, the better they understand and accept each other's problems.

The second line of communication is between actors and the audience. There's always a special bond between them—the spectator trusts the actor, and allows them to guide them through the show and present them their world. The status of the group's members also changes outside the show. In their schools and in small towns, they may even become somewhat of a celebrity, everyone is extremely proud of them and they somehow bind the whole community together.

### **What about the relationship between pupil actors and teacher mentors?**

The understanding and trust between them usually increase greatly. Normally the mentors (teachers) of theatre groups are very popular in their schools because they have a good, genuine and honest relationship with the pupils. The cooperation between a teacher and a pupil in creating a theatre production also affects their relationship in the classroom, since it becomes more respectful and understanding. At Gimnazija Poljane (TN: secondary school in Ljubljana) they often put on productions that involve both teachers and students. The teacher and the student become co-actors and are equals on stage. One of the teachers once told me this experience changed their relationships substantially: for example, the students no longer tried to skip his classes, if they weren't ready they said so and didn't make excuses like supposed illnesses, and no longer came to his classes unprepared altogether. They didn't want to betray him as a fiend, they wanted to make a bigger effort for their co-actor teacher. At the

same time, he started coming to these classes 120% prepared, as if he wanted to make an extra effort for his fellow actors too. Even the students who had no direct experience with the teacher on stage started seeing him in a different way, because he came down to their level—he became one of them. On stage he showed that he too was vulnerable, that he too had problems and was solving them in a similar way as the students. There's no hierarchy in theatre. Of course the mentor is in charge, but there's no hierarchy among actors. With a shared theatrical experience, the relationship between teacher and student gets purified, there's less pretence and awe. Theatre is honest by definition, and when I speak to people who took part in school theatre groups, they normally remember their mentors as very positive people with whom they could talk on a personal level. This means a lot to young people. When growing up, children feel a strong need to be accepted in adult company, to be equal. For teachers to not be patronising. It's a paradox that sometimes we can be very patronising exactly by trying not to be patronising. But a good mentor knows how to overcome this. By being on the same level as pupils or students, they won't lose their respect. When they accept them as equals (and that's necessary in theatre) and show them respect, children will respect them all the more. And exactly respect and equality are the foundations of all theatrical activities.





»Theatre pedagogy offers educators a wide array of techniques they can use to take children into the world of knowledge and understanding, and at the same time develop competences that will be important in their future life.«

**Valentina**

»Working with teachers and pupils for 20 years, I see that theatre pedagogy offers effective tools, which many teachers still don't know well enough and many are even suspicious of.«

**Veronika**



## Veronika Gaber Korbar, Valentina Korbar

Taka Tuka Association

### Using drama approaches in teaching is an investment in the future

The Taka Tuka Association regularly organises international conferences, teacher working groups, seminars and trainings to foster the development of theatre pedagogy in Slovenia. "By using dramatic approaches, the teacher can connect the whole class and actively engage children in the learning process, as well as enable every pupil to progress," say Veronika Gaber Korbar and Valentina Korbar, the driving forces of the 8th International Conference of Educational Drama and Theatre, which took place in November 2019 in Ljubljana.

**How would you evaluate the main findings of this year’s 8th International Conference of Educational Drama and Theatre entitled “The Power of Communication”, which you held in November in Ljubljana?**

**Valentina** The community of teachers using dramatic approaches in class has started expanding. Through the conference, they connect, inspire and encourage each other in the use of techniques and methods of theatre pedagogy. Teachers see the conference as an opportunity for relaxed and creative education that offers both theoretical and practical, useful knowledge.

**How much are teachers and educators in Slovenia aware of the opportunities offered by theatre pedagogy?**

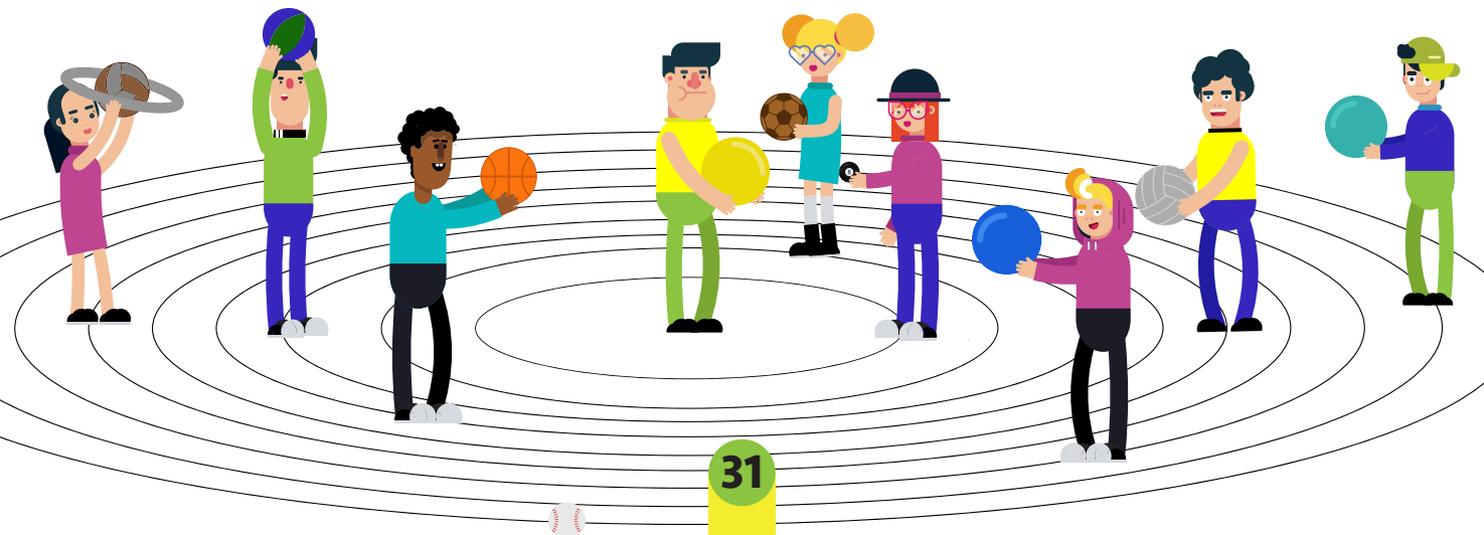
**Veronika** First, I must point out that theatre pedagogy is divided into three aspects: theatre literacy, theatrical production and teaching with dramatic approaches. The first two aspects are already quite well spread and established in Slovenia, while teaching with dramatic

approaches—which is used to achieve both educational as well as creative objectives—is still searching for its place here. In this type of teaching, the methods and techniques that are derived from theatre are important especially for the work of the educator using them to teach, and the most important aspect is active engagement of children in the learning. This means the artistic part is not in the forefront, and theatre is mainly a tool for the educational work and learning.

I wish more teachers and headmasters knew the great practical value of dramatic approaches for a quality learning process.

**For inclusive education too?**

**Veronika** Especially for that. Experience shows that it improves inclusive learning in inclusive classes. Through cooperative work in the classroom, which is a key element of all dramatic approaches, children learn to understand differences and accept diversity. And acknowledging differences and diversity is crucial for good and tolerant coexistence in a class and in the society in general.

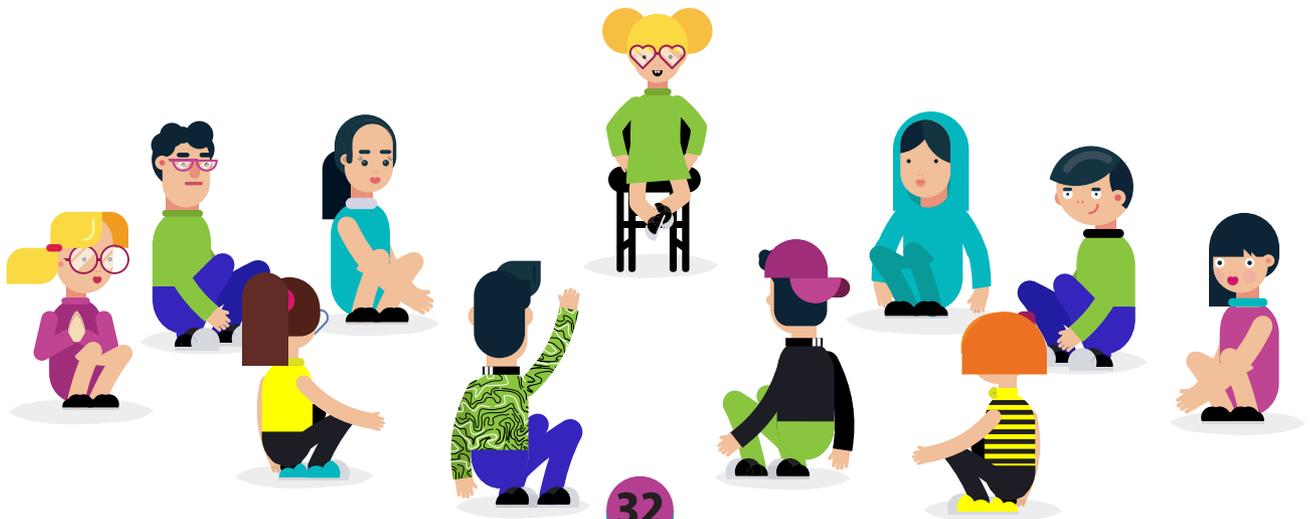


**Valentina** Inclusive learning concerns everyone in a society—to me this means that every child in every class feels included, and that the person leading the educational process creates an environment where every pupil is accepted. Dramatic approaches allow the teacher to recognise pupils’ understanding more easily, because active participation steers them towards thinking about and questioning the subject matter. This gives the teacher better insight into how much their pupils know and into their capabilities. They can recognise their strong and weak points, and adapt the dynamics of the educational process accordingly. The classical way of teaching a class only uses one way, and in it the good are always good and the bad are always bad. These relations are set up and every pupil gets a certain label. Using dramatic approaches in the classroom changes this. For example, some pupils may not be good at motoric activities, but they’re very good at speaking, and this can be brought out using different techniques from theatre pedagogy. This way every pupil can get a chance to be good at something. Maybe the speaking skills of a pupil are poorer, but they can express well in writing. The missing piece and the fateful message

techniques will certainly be more interesting for this pupil and their results will be better. With the choice of technique, the teacher can allow all pupils to make progress and also recognise their weaker and stronger sides.

**How can the techniques, methods and comprehensive teaching approaches of theatre pedagogy improve the educational process itself and the presentation of subject matter?**

**Valentina** When using educational drama approaches in class, the teacher no longer plays an all-knowing role while ignorant others wait to be enlightened. Instead, the teacher only leads the process based on questioning and also rewarding experience that the children already have. The teacher helps them think about new things, and at the same time takes mistakes as opportunities and starting points for learning. Together with pupils, the teacher also explores the emotional sides, understanding different perspectives, assuming different roles, and awareness that a particular situation can be viewed in as many different ways as there are people.



**Veronika** Take the hot seat, for example, one of the techniques of theatre pedagogy: the person in the hot seat can be the teacher or a pupil. Let's take a look at a concrete example: The teacher takes the seat as France Prešeren (TN: one of the most important Slovenian poets), and the pupils sit around asking questions that the teacher answers. Establishing dialogue also raises interest among pupils. If you simply explain about Prešeren and present facts about his life, pupils are certain to remember less, they'll be less involved in the educational process and consequently less creative. But children can also be put into a role—let's say, that of journalists posing questions to Prešeren. Assuming a role provides a certain safety, and it'll be easier to engage in the learning activity even for those who are maybe a bit shy. This way you establish a different relationship, because pupils aren't passive but actively co-create the educational process. They also learn the skills of communicating and cooperating with their peers. Let me give another example from biology: The teacher writes down different parts of the human body on pieces of paper, and distributes them to all the pupils in the class. All those with organs that are part of the digestive system are asked to come to the "stage". They must then arrange themselves in the correct order from the mouth to the rectum, and each of them represents their chosen part of the digestive tract. Together they illustrate the functioning of the entire digestive system. In the end, they let an apple through the tract—represented by one of the pupils or the teacher. During the process, the other children use their voices to illustrate the course of digestion. This way we include all the children in the class in the educational process—even if someone doesn't know the subject matter or how to perform the given task, they'll take the

right place with the help of their classmates. Their ignorance isn't highlighted, and through play and performing the process they learn (also physically) where their place is, and it's easier for them to picture and remember it, especially if the activity is followed by reflection in form of drawing or writing things down in a notebook.

### **So, can dramatic approaches also help improve pupils' weak areas?**

**Valentina** With the classical lesson structure, teachers often can't even recognise their pupils' weak areas, whereas by using dramatic approaches, through exercise and teacher responses, everyone can be actively engaged in the educational process. Many activities are performed in groups, which also brings mutual learning. For example, we were building a city with children, and one of them couldn't even imagine how their city should look like. His group had another pupil with loads of ideas, and by observing the creative classmate the one without ideas also managed to create something himself. By changing the dynamics and relationships, the teacher allows a creative and effective mode of learning to start, and at the same time they start receiving valuable feedback.

**Veronika** It's essential that pupils recognise their own capabilities, since the better they know themselves and their capabilities, the better the decisions they'll make on their educational and professional path. It's important for the teacher to help pupils improve their weak points, and especially to lead them to understanding what they can do and how they function. In a particular area where a pupil is better than others, they will probably feel more confident, and the improved self-esteem will also make it easier to overcome more difficult challenges.

## How important is it to ensure a safe learning environment?

**Veronika** Group work encourages and motivates cooperation. It's very important that every pupil feels accepted in the group and can work well with others, and this creates a safe learning environment for all of them. Before we start introducing dramatic approaches in the classroom, it's advisable to discuss with the pupils the rules of working in groups. Teaching with dramatic approaches connects children and allows them to try out different roles, to explore who they are, to express in different ways and thereby develop their social awareness.

## What about children who still don't like this?

**Veronika** In my experience, children who didn't want to engage at first started cooperating in smaller groups after a few classes. Of course, some children don't like to be exposed, and you have to let them watch the activities from the side, because they can learn a lot already by watching a creative learning process.

**Valentina** It's important for the teacher never to force any pupil into anything. The array of techniques is so vast that every child will surely feel good in at least one of them. I have to stress that this isn't so much about acting and performing, not so much about theatre, as it's about using educational drama techniques for the purpose of active learning, which feels closest to human nature because it draws from what a person already knows and then starts connecting and upgrading it. In the beginning, when you start introducing dramatic approaches, some pupils may find it hard, but eventually they also start participating. Of course, there's always

a way for the teacher to talk to such pupils and find out what makes them feel uncomfortable. But by establishing a community in class, pupils always connect, and at the same time dramatic approaches allow for individuality. For those who don't like group work, there are also a lot of techniques where they can work individually.

## Are there any other possibilities where teachers can get education on using dramatic approaches in teaching?

**Valentina** The Taka Tuka Association has a working group of teachers, led by Katarina Picelj and Veronika Gaber Korbar. They first presented the methods and techniques of theatre pedagogy to the group, and then the teachers adapted them to the educational objectives and used them in class. This has brought concrete examples of using dramatic approaches in class and daily preparation notes for presenting, dealing with and repeating the subject matter of different school subjects.

**Veronika** We're thinking about recording examples of such classes and publishing the videos on our website. For example, a lesson about space where pupils illustrate with their bodies the positions of the planets, their rotation around the Sun, maybe the difference between the geocentric and heliocentric model of the solar system.

## Wouldn't preselected and predetermined drama education techniques for certain subject matter—like Prešeren in the hot seat—limit the creativity in the use of these approaches?

**Valentina** The dynamics are different every

time, because it's always a different teacher with different pupils. But it is true that simply replicating a form hinders creativity. We just need to help teachers to draw from the curriculum and lesson preparations, and not as much from textbooks, as they mostly do now. That's why we first need to make sure teachers are well prepared for using educational drama approaches. Pre-prepared teaching plans with added methods of theatre pedagogy enable this, and then teachers can start using their own sense and experimenting. When working with teachers, we keep stressing that this is above all a source of inspiration, and that concrete examples are only encouragement for teachers to come up with something on their own, something different and creative.

**Veronika** We encourage teachers to prepare their lesson plans for the same topic with different methods and techniques of theatre pedagogy. We plan to publish a set of different ideas and solutions on our website. This way teachers will see that through the lens of theatre pedagogy, for example, a lesson on Prešeren can be prepared in many different ways.

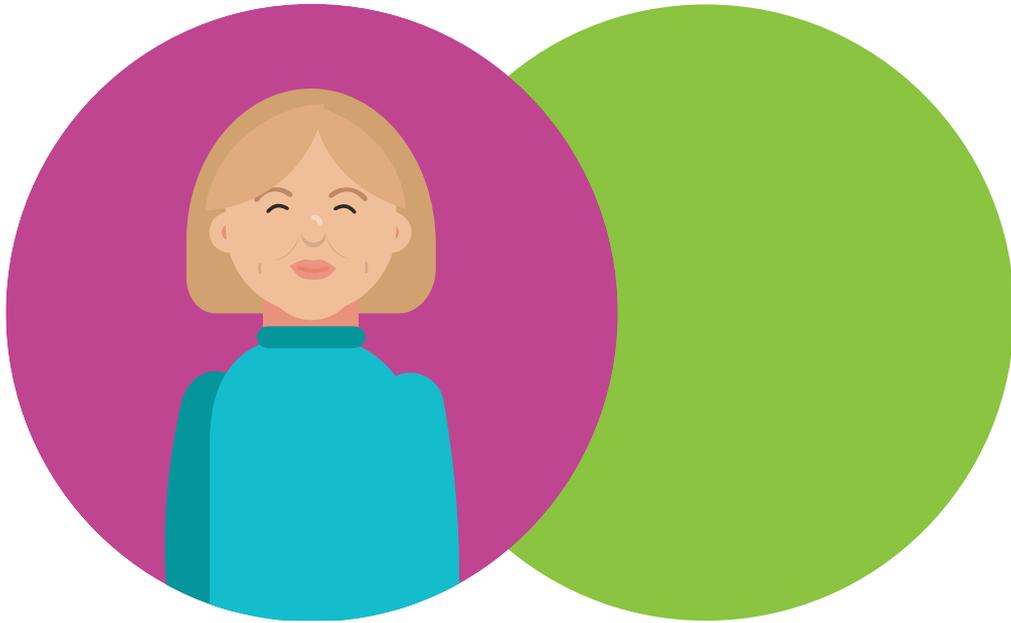
**What does all this mean for teachers? First, they have to learn dramatic approaches, advocate them in their school, and then they have to make a lot more additional preparations for the lesson itself and pay more attention to each and every pupil. How then should they effectively introduce dramatic approaches in class?**

**Veronika** Teachers don't really have to advocate these approaches in particular, since they are autonomous and can do their classes as they believe is best, as long as they meet the

objectives set in the curriculum. But experience shows that they should be introduced gradually, for example one technique for ten to fifteen minutes per period, so that children slowly get used to active participation. It's best if teachers start with the educational drama techniques they are comfortable with and with content that will engage pupils. It's easier if pupils already know something about the subject matter, which they then repeat and upgrade using educational drama techniques. It probably won't be all smooth sailing the first time around, but we do learn most from mistakes and experience helps us fully develop our capabilities. After gaining some practical experience, it's important to talk about the activities we've performed with other teachers who also use dramatic approaches.

**Valentina** Teachers must be aware that using dramatic approaches in teaching is an investment in the future, similar to leading a healthy lifestyle. At first, they'll need a bit more energy, and much more preparation. But when they internalise this, they'll also get much more from pupils. With dramatic approaches, their work will be more effective, because these approaches set up a two-way learning process, and let the teacher get to know their pupils, while they become some sort of allies in this process.





# Marjeta Štampek

Ljubljana School for the Deaf

## Teaching with approaches from theatre in a class of deaf children

“For children, the use of dramatic approaches in class is play, but for me it’s learning, most often in both directions,” says Marjeta Štampek, deaf educator and speech and language therapist, who works as a teacher at the Ljubljana School for the Deaf and has taught every subject except physics and chemistry in her 30 years of service but is mostly a generalist teacher for deaf and hard-of-hearing children. She first encountered theatre pedagogy through Veronika Gaber Korbar of the Taka Tuka Association. “She did miracles with our children at celebrations. The performances were completely different from your typical school performance adapted to special needs children. They showed us that with good guidance children could show much more than was expected of them.” This positive experience encouraged her to explore the endless opportunities offered by theatre pedagogy.

### Why do you choose to incorporate drama approaches in classes for the deaf and hard-of-hearing?

Deaf children who come to us mostly haven't developed any language to a sufficient level to be able to learn in the way the hearing do. An exception are deaf children of deaf parents, who have learnt the sign language and can start learning Slovenian in written form, which is the teaching language in all classes. Of course, this means that we once again need methods that are vivid enough for pupils to understand the content even if they don't know a word or two. Children with lower levels of hearing difficulty have mostly learnt the Slovenian language, but with certain shortcomings, which sometimes makes it hard for them to understand texts. To communicate with their peers, they need at least the basic knowledge of sign language, which they learn in all other school subjects. This means the teacher has no other choice but to be creative, selective in the choice of information for the children to master, and creative in presenting content to allow pupils to gain the knowledge required by the curriculum. By using approaches from theatre, children actually demonstrate their understanding and knowledge, and use it in made-up learning situations. This way I can see how well children understood the subject matter, and not only whether they've memorised the words from a book. Ever since I had the chance to learn about educational drama, I can't even imagine any more how I could teach deaf and hard-of-hearing children without dramatic approaches.

### Which of the three aspects of theatre pedagogy (theatre literacy, theatrical production and teaching with dramatic approaches) is the most appropriate for working with deaf and hard-of-hearing children and offers the most possibilities for creativity?

All three are appropriate for deaf and hard-of-hearing children, because they are based on experiential learning. Which aspect the teacher will choose depends on the objective they're pursuing. If the teacher wants to prepare children for a theatre visit, they'll include theatre literacy in their work, and if they want to prepare a performance with them, they'll choose theatrical production.

I use teaching with dramatic approaches in all subjects. This makes it easier to understand how Hansel and Gretel felt when they heard their parents talk about leaving them in the forest, we take a look at which plants and animals we can see in the forest, we learn empathy, trust and cooperation, we add and subtract line segments and much more.



**In your experience, how much do dramatic approaches turn pupils into more active and engaged participants in the learning process, and how evident is their (learning) progress?**

Recently, many children have attention difficulties. If we take into consideration the findings of neurologists that first graders can stay focused on a teacher explaining for 15 minutes, after which they need an activity for the new information to sink in, we should allow them to spend this time in line with our goals and their needs. In this part of the lesson, the teacher can use dramatic approaches to lead the children through a creative learning process, so that they repeat, deepen and expand what they've learnt, and the teacher sees whether they understood it correctly. In these activities there are no wrong answers, so children are especially happy about them. Not only do I try to avoid frontal teaching, where children's thoughts can be somewhere else altogether, but I also want them to be active co-creators in the learning process. And dramatic approaches allow just that. Apart from their active participation, they also remember better and for the long term. But above all, it's important that even children who have communication difficulties and can't express verbally for one reason or another can show understanding and knowledge. The source of these difficulties can be deafness, but also different levels of speech and language impairments, like apraxia of speech.

**Can you give a few concrete examples of using theatre pedagogy techniques in a class of deaf and hard-of-hearing children?**

Concrete things are quite easy to present to deaf people, but it gets complicated because they lack

the conceptual vocabulary for abstract concepts. In this sense the concept of metamorphosis (of frogs for example) can easiest be explained using the method of living images. We indicate the edge of the pond on the ground, and pupils replicate a frogspawn in the pond (eggs covered with garden fabric to protect them from drying). The next image is eggs hatching into tadpoles, with tails and gills, swimming around the pond. The last image represents adult frogs, which no longer have tails and gills, but have grown front and hind legs, and they jump around merrily on land. The living images technique makes it perfectly clear what amphibian metamorphosis means even to the pupils who couldn't muster an answer in a written test and with a normal frontal explanation. If we have enough time, we can link biology class with art class and make a miniature pond or waterlilies from paper, or something like that. This will also help develop children's aesthetic sense.

Children also like the hot seat technique, which can be used to repeat subject matter or as an addition to making posters for a grade. One of the pupils or the teacher assumes a particular role, and the others ask questions. The roles can be very diverse, the only limit is the teacher's imagination, and of course the capabilities and experience of the children: for example, Julius Caesar, a child in Sparta, an archaeologist in Egypt, a slave in Rome, an advocate at a witch trial, and so on.

For instance, for repeating knowledge about soil fertility in science class, we can use the tunnel technique: Pupils stand in two rows, forming a tunnel. One of the pupils presents a problem. For example: "Nothing but weeds grows in my garden." As the pupil moves through the tunnel, each of the peers tries to give advice on how to solve the problem.

### **Can pupils gain any other knowledge and skills through the use of dramatic approaches, apart from achieving the learning objectives?**

Learning objectives are only part of the school educational process. We sometimes aren't aware of this enough, and we fill the children's heads with information that they can't use later in real life. Educational drama allows pupils to test different roles they have or will find themselves in through own experience in a safe environment of dramatic fiction. They can express their fears and problems, which they work out in a role of someone else and look at from different perspectives. This way they teach each other about the consequences of different actions, develop values, solve personal issues and ease their emotions, and all of this helps them in their personal development and in how they experience themselves.

One of the important questions that my pupils asked themselves was that of identity. It takes a teenager a lot of courage to say they don't feel good in their body, because unfortunately the surroundings aren't as tolerant as we'd wish them to believe. The pupils decided to show their problem their way, so they turned Shakespeare's famous drama into Romeo and Julian. They showed how they thought the story could go today, even though we're all assuring them we're accepting children the way they are. Their story showed me that they feel differently about this issue.

### **Do children's views often come as a surprise?**

With this type of work, yes. What stuck in my memory the most was discussing Cinderella with fifth graders. Cinderella sat sad and dirty by the fireplace in the basement. I asked the class what she was thinking about. They told me she was waiting for her father to take her back to the main quarters and punish her stepmother and her daughters for treating her so badly in her home.

I listened to Cinderella as a child, and later read and told it countless times, but only when I used dramatic approaches with children did they open my eyes to this possibility. Of course I embraced this topic, and gave priority to the needs of the pupils, who have all sorts of different experiences of family life.

We continued with role play: the father and stepmother were called to talk to social services. An extraordinary experience!

### **How does the use of theatre pedagogy affect pupils who are otherwise held back in their class?**

Pupils who otherwise don't wish to stand out like to enter roles in a safe environment created by the teacher, and they start wishing to participate in the acting. They wish to add their contribution to the atmosphere, to test their views, but above all to be part of the group. And this is one of the aims of education, which luckily isn't just about memorising data, which can be found using any smartphone today. Usually the pupils who have trouble with the classical learning and presenting of subject matter excel in different roles on our "stage", since this is a way for them to show their other talents.

### **How does the use of approaches from theatre affect the general atmosphere in the classroom?**

As I said, we create the atmosphere together with the children. I'm happy the children feel accepted and heard. I sometimes here: "Isn't it a pity that holidays are about to start? And they're so long!"

### **How is it possible to use theatre pedagogy in the classroom to connect the deaf and hard-of-hearing pupils with the hearing ones?**

I used to teach the subject Communication in secondary school. The students in one of the classes had different problems, half of them were deaf. In our first class, I asked them to introduce each other, but they didn't even know their classmates' names because they'd hang out based on the language they used. Eventually we came up with a plan for finding common interest and connecting all students in achieving common goals without using the Slovenian or sign language and based on educational drama techniques. The students tried to present their ideas to each other through pantomime, by sculpting, with living images and similar techniques that don't require spoken or sign language. The students got acquainted, and saw there was a way for them to cooperate and not be divided into "us and them". In the beginning, the topics were lighter, but eventually we also started dealing with more demanding ones, which they themselves pointed out.

### **How can using theatrical elements in the educational process help in overcoming prejudice that the deaf have towards the hearing (and the hearing towards the deaf)?**

It seems to me more and more that the word prejudice doesn't describe well enough the real situation in the relationship between the hearing and the deaf. Taking it from myself, if I find myself in a large international crowd where I don't know all the people, I prefer to talk and socialise with those I know or those I can communicate with in the languages that I know. If someone doesn't speak a language I could understand, we probably won't share a genuine connection even if the person is worthy of every respect. What I want to say is that I think the main problem lies in not knowing and not understanding the language of the other. And this, as I've mentioned, can be overcome by avoiding languages altogether and choosing to communicate with those elements of educational drama that don't require talking. This became especially evident to me when I had the opportunity to hold a workshop in China.



**Deaf and hard-of-hearing pupils are better at non-verbal communication. How can this advantage be used in the framework of dramatic approaches for communication among themselves and with the hearing?**

Deafness means the deaf have trouble communicating, especially verbally, that's why their way of communicating is based on understanding and expressing through non-verbal communication. In everyday communication, they use sign language, which along with all the defined signs also includes facial expressions, body language and movement. The deaf are real pros at pantomime. The hearing don't follow body language as closely or even ignore it, although it's a very important element of communication. That's why the deaf have a great advantage in this area, and the teacher can use this very well to build the self-esteem of the deaf, which is otherwise often quite low. The hearing are usually in a hurry all the time, not noticing the little details and inattentive to the reactions of the people around, which alienates us.

This is not how it goes with the deaf, so this is an area where the hearing can learn from them. When we use educational drama techniques, like pantomime or living images for communication in a mixed group of hearing and deaf pupils, the result in such groups is much more elaborate than in only hearing groups.

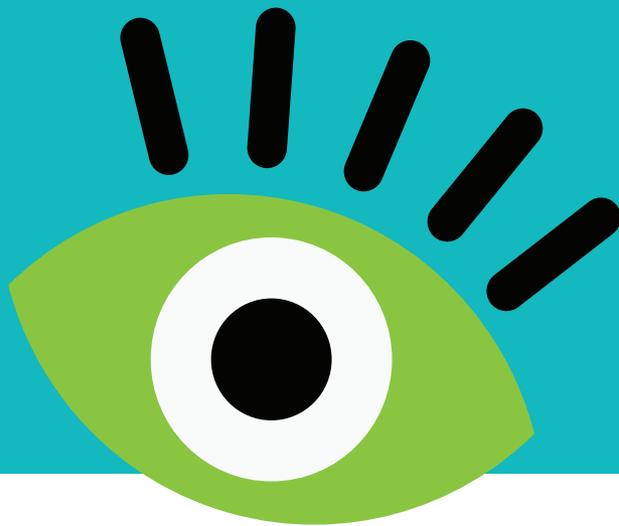
**How can theatre pedagogy be used to present to and teach the hearing (the Slovenian) sign language, and why could this be useful?**

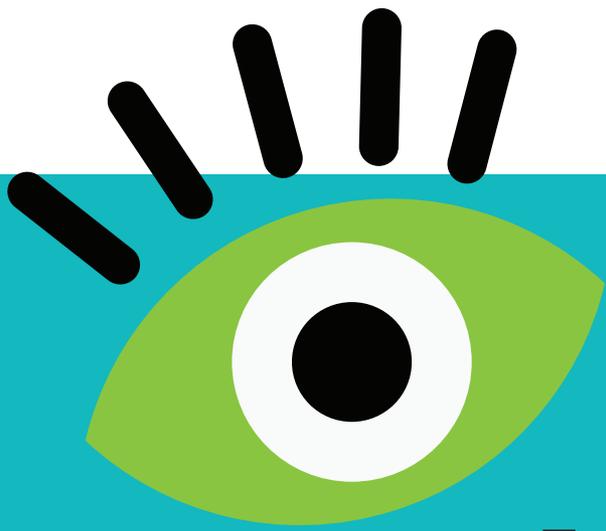
Knowing any language is useful in itself, because we never know where life leads us. Imagine how limited we'd be if we didn't know at least a little English! And we're not English. And if we want to talk to the deaf, we just need to learn their language. They're learning Slovenian too, but they have limitations they didn't choose themselves. And since we live together, it's right that we understand each other.

We can teach many things using dramatic approaches, a language or the content of any school subject. With a bit of imagination, the teacher can even make the multiplication table fun. Because sign language is a language of movement and therefore somewhat similar to theatre acting, anyone with a bit of passion for this can learn it, and they don't really need a talent for languages at all.

So if I wanted to take a hearing group into the world of sign language, I'd do it through a story. When we choose an objective, the methods and techniques of theatre pedagogy seem to be offered on a plate, so we choose and use them depending on the participants, their experience, age and needs.







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## **THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION** – Educational theatre and drama

## INTRODUCTION

This section can be useful for everyone—from those who are new to theatre pedagogy to those of you who already use it in your work. We have compiled five workshops that cover all three aspects of theatre pedagogy. Our main aim was to show how you can use dramatic approaches to develop different areas, and how activities can be adapted to specific objectives. Of course, nothing is strictly prescribed in theatre pedagogy, so you can adapt the workshops presented here as you see fit for your practice—you can add or omit things, apply them to different areas and so on.

All of you who were drawn by the content of this book will probably agree that practice is highly important for successful teaching and use of different teaching approaches. This also applies in theatre pedagogy. The workshops presented in this section can only come close to personal experience, since only by directly participating in dramatic activities can you really get to know the myriad options theatre pedagogy offers, bond with the rest of the group, and feel the real power of cooperation that is typical of collective drama. So, you only need a bit of courage to dare bring new knowledge further—to your class or among your co-workers. We wish you many creative moments with theatre pedagogy!



Sandra Jenko

## THE LANGUAGES OF THEATRE

*A theatrical performance is a work of art by different creators, who together combine different types of artistic expression. Performative means of expression form a system of dramatic signals, which can be divided into the acoustic (speech, sound, singing, music, etc.) and visual, those linked to the actor (movement, body language, makeup, costumes, etc.) or the stage (stage design, props, lighting, etc.). This system of signals could be called the languages of theatre. The ability to read and understand the languages of theatre is a precondition for actively and critically experiencing a theatrical performance. This is why it is important for children and youth to learn about the means of expression in drama, and to prepare them for a visit to the theatre. We can do so by using different methods and techniques of theatre pedagogy.*

**Learning objectives:**

- Children train active watching and observation.
- Children develop creativity, imagination, precision and focus.
- Children develop a sensibility for different means of expression in drama.
- Children create, read and understand theatrical signals.
- Children communicate verbally, acoustically and nonverbally.
- Children express critically and accept different opinions.

**Teaching methods:**

- Role-play
- Simulation
- Visualisation
- Improvisation
- Presentation
- Working with texts
- Working with visual aids
- Using objects in dramatic context

**Form of teaching:**

- Group work

**Teaching tools:**

- Simple objects (e.g. wooden spoon, cardboard tube, cloth, small ball)
- Costume sketches/pictures  
(possible source: digital exhibitions of the Slovenian Theatre Institute)
- Scene sketches/pictures  
(possible source: digital exhibitions of the Slovenian Theatre Institute)

## **Mirror: observation, precision, body warm-up**

The class is divided into pairs and they stand opposite each other. When one person in the pair moves, the other one acts as a mirror. Movements, gestures and facial expressions need to be slow and visible, since the purpose of this exercise is for the two to be as synchronised as possible. Ideally, an outside observer cannot see who is leading and who is imitating. When the pair moves synchronously, they should switch the roles of leader and imitator (mirror) as unnoticeably as possible.

The teacher can also perform a similar exercise with the entire group. The entire class stand in a circle. One of the children is the leader and makes up movements and gestures that all the others imitate.

Possible variations:

- *The teacher provides a context as guidance: e.g. in front of the mirror in the morning, working in the garden, in a painter's studio, a musical orchestra, in the changing room, playing a comedy.*
- *One of the children leaves the room. The rest of the class pick a leader and a tactic so that the classmate outside will not guess who is leading the movements when they return into the classroom. When the classmate returns to the classroom, they have three guesses at who is the leader.*



## ***Choir: harmonious group work and vocal warm-up***

The teacher divides the class into two groups standing opposite each other. A conductor is selected in each group, and they also stand opposite each other, each facing their group. The first conductor's role is to produce rhythmical sounds, which the choir repeats (e.g. Taka Taka–Taka Taka). The second conductor and their choir respond to the sounds they hear (e.g. Tuka Tuka–Tuka Tuka). In this manner, the choirs exchange sounds, which may also be concrete words or sentences. In the best case, they establish dialogue in the sense of action–reaction and without any pauses. The choirs try to create and maintain a certain rhythm, and group dynamics are established among the children.

Variation:

- *Support the rhythmical sounds with appropriate rhythmical movement.*

The teacher discusses with the children the importance of harmonious group work and cooperation among everyone working on a theatrical performance, and also steers the conversation to the active role of the spectator, who must watch closely what is happening on stage.



## ***Detectives: observation, attention and memory***

Three pupils stand before the rest of the class and each assumes a position to make a living image. The audience takes a good look at them, paying attention to every detail, after which they close their eyes. The teacher then changes three to five details in the living image (e.g. pulls up a sleeve, switches shoes, changes the position of someone's hand). Once the changes are made, the teacher tells the class to open their eyes. The pupils then try to find all the changes.

The exercise is a playful way of encouraging observation, attention and memory.

## Living images: observation and reading signals

All the pupils sit on one side of the classroom to leave room on the other side for a stage for making living images. The first pupil takes the stage and strikes a pose. The rest of the class observe, and the next pupil to get an idea how to upgrade the image goes to the stage and assumes their position. This continues until you get a living image with 5–6 characters. The pupils on stage stand still in their chosen poses, while the teacher leads a discussion with the rest of the class, using questions such as:

- *What do you see?*
- *Who do you see?*
- *What are the relationships between them?*
- *Where are they?*
- *What is happening?*
- *What are they doing?*
- *How do they feel?*
- *What do you think the characters would say in this moment?*
- *What do you think will happen the next moment?*

The pupils read from the poses and analyse the scene, and there are no right or wrong answers as they do so. They collect their impressions and comment on the opinions of others, and in so doing so learn how differently we can read and interpret the same signals.

The exercise encourages awareness of the role of an active and critical spectator, whose imagination supplements what they see and connects the signals into a whole that makes sense to them.



## ***Magic item: pantomime, imagination and props***

The teacher presents a simple item (e.g. cardboard tube, wooden spoon) that can change into anything they think of in a game of pantomime. Children take turns to show what the item turns into by using it, for example, as binoculars, a tennis racket, sabre, conductor's baton or oar. When they run out of ideas, move on to another item with a different shape (e.g. piece of cloth, small ball, book, banana).

This simple exercise in imagination increases awareness of the different interpretations the same signal can have, and encourages creativity and imagination through a game of pantomime. Furthermore, it opens up the possibility to discuss the use of props in a play.



## ***Scene sketches: visual images and storytelling***

The teacher distributes different sketches of scenes, which the children look at closely. As they describe the scenes, the teacher guides them with the following questions:

- *What do you see?*
- *Where is the scene happening?*
- *When is the scene happening?*
- *Who could be in this scene?*
- *What is the atmosphere in the room?*

Taking one scene sketch, the teacher encourages the class to tell a story based only on that single visual information and their imagination. After telling a story together, the teacher asks the class how they would know where the scene was taking place if the stage were empty. This is a cue for an activity where pupils act out different places.

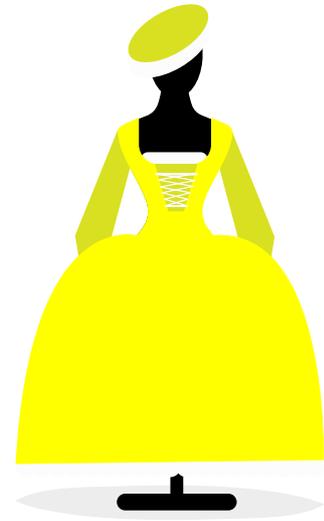
The teacher divides the class into groups of five or six. Each group chooses a location and prepares a short scene where the performing pupils can use speech but cannot explicitly say where they are.

Once the scenes are prepared, the groups act them out. The aim of this activity is not (only) guessing the place. That is why we do not interrupt or stop the scenes, but rather watch them until the end, and then discuss with the class what they have just seen. Once again, they are invited to explain how they understood the signals. At the same time, the actors from the scenes also realise that the spectators may interpret or experience their message differently from how they imagined it. Pupils learn to express themselves and accept different views and criticism.

## ***Costume sketches: visual images and character analysis***

In the next exercise, pictures are once again used, this time to explore the meaning of costume design and actors' appearance. Pupils take a look at costume sketches, and tell who they see and what they are like. They can bring some of the characters in the pictures to life with speech and acting. Together with the children, we try to establish the relationships between the characters based on the costume sketches—for this we need pictures from the same production.

This leads us to the topic of status, which is not only related to social class or economic standing, but is also expressed in the dominance or subjection of different characters in a scene. During a play, the status relations between characters can shift several times, and they do not always match the characters' class or position.



## ***Status: improvisation, relationships, reading and interpreting signals***

The teacher asks five pupils to come to the stage. They draw pieces of paper with numbers from one to five, where one means the lowest and five the highest status. They do not show their numbers to each other. The teacher and the rest of the class choose a situation for the five actors, for example a marketplace. They enter the improvised scene in random order, and each tries to act out the status they drew as clearly as they can. After a while, or when the scene comes to a sensible close, the performance stops and the audience analyses the status relations. In the end, the actors are asked their opinion and the assigned ranking.

It often turns out that exaggeration sends the clearest messages. But it can also quite easily lead to misjudgements, because everyone can interpret the characteristics of a particular status in a different way.

As with any other activity, practice makes perfect, and in time pupils hone their sense of expression and reading signals, as well as their skill of presenting and substantiating their opinion, which also makes them better as active and critical spectators.

## ***Reflection***

The teacher concludes the workshop with a discussion about the play the class is about to see. The title of the play can already serve as a basis for finding associations and expectations, but we can also use photos and other materials. The pupils write their associations and expectations on the board or a poster. They possibly touch on all the artistic means of expression they encountered in the workshop (story, characters, costumes, stage design, emotions, atmosphere, etc.). This way they also repeat what they have learnt. The teacher saves their collected thoughts for a discussion after seeing the play.



Valentina Korbar

## FROM EVENT TO FILM

*How do we get an idea for a theatrical performance that we will create together with a school group without a pre-existing text?*

*When producing a school play, the teacher should draw from the pupils. Using methods and techniques of theatre pedagogy, they should guide them through the creative process in which they explore and analyse different situations, relations, attitudes and emotions. This way they create content together, which the teacher then incorporates in the production in a sensible way. This makes sure that the children feel part of the whole process and connect to the message of the play on a deeper level.*

**Learning objectives:**

- Children develop the ability to communicate messages through facial expressions, gestures, movement and speech.
- Children develop their abilities in two-way communication.
- Children learn about the main film genres.

**Teaching methods:**

- Working with visual aids
- Presentation

**Forms of teaching:**

- Individual work
- Group work

**Teaching tools:**

- Emotion cards from the game Let's talk or cards with different emoticons
- Film genre descriptions on pieces of paper (1 paper = 1 genre)
- 3 worksheets with an outline of a person

## Emotions machine: warm-up activity

The teacher sets an empty space in the classroom where the group will create their emotions machine. The teacher and the group stand on the other side of the room. The teacher picks an emotion, and the children move one by one to the place where the machine is being built. Each group member thinks of a repetitive motion and sound they imagine under the selected emotion.

- *It is important that the group members connect and the movements are coordinated/ synchronised.*

When all the group members are included, they have completed their emotion machine with their repetitive movements and sounds.

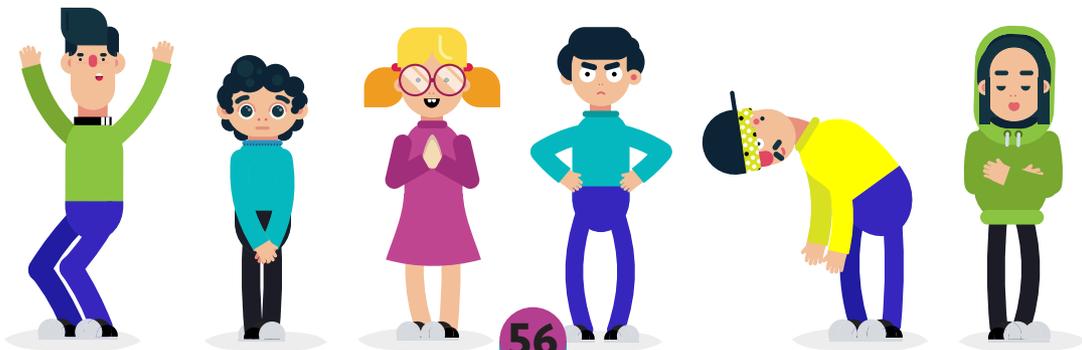
You can upgrade the machine:

- *The machine works faster and faster.*
- *The machine works in slow motion.*
- *Change emotions.*



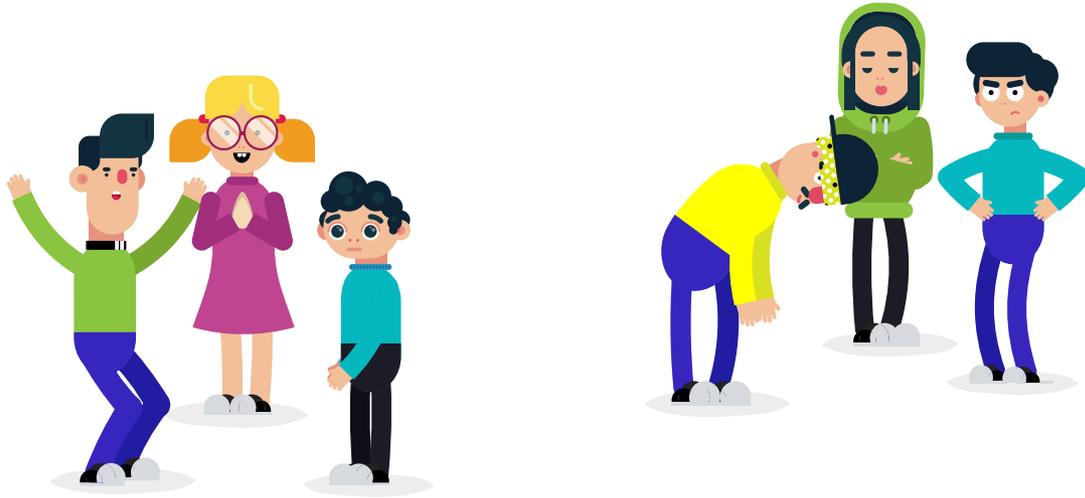
## Creating an event with living images

The teacher distributes emotion cards (or cards with emoticons). Each group member finds a spot in the classroom and thinks how they will present the assigned emotion. On the teacher's sign, all of them pose as statues.



The teacher looks at the statues and connects them in a sensible way to make three living images.

- *The children must remember their position and pose in the living image, because the others (from the other two images) will analyse them.*



The group analyse each individual living image. When the first image is presented, the teacher asks the others:

- *What do you see?*
- *Where are these characters?*
- *Who is the main character?*
- *Which emotion dominates in this situation?*
- *What do you think happened?*

They repeat the same process with living images two and three.

*The three groups think of one event each, taking into consideration the place, main character and the dominant emotion as determined by the others.*

- *The event should be important enough to be interesting for the media and the general public.*

The groups act out their events.

- *The others watch the performances of their peers closely because they will use what they see later on.*

## **TV news report**

The children return to their groups. Each group receives a worksheet with an outline of a person. They name the main character of their event, and write down inside the outline how the character felt in the presented event.

The teacher explains that the events were so interesting that different media outlets decided to report on them. Each group gets to prepare a television news report:

- *Group 1 reports on the event of group 2.*
- *Group 2 reports on the event of group 3.*
- *Group 3 reports on the event of group 1.*

The groups act out the news reports on the assigned events.

The children return to their groups, and each group writes down to the left of the outline of their character how the person felt watching the news report on the event.



## **O dogodku posnamejo film**

After ten years, films are made based on all three events. The groups' task is to act out the film in the genre described on the piece of paper they draw. Each group prepares a film:

- *Group 1 about the event of group 3.*
- *Group 2 about the event of group 1.*
- *Group 3 about the event of group 2.*

The groups act out their films about the assigned events in the genre they picked.

The children return to their groups, and each group writes down to the right of the outline of their character how the person felt watching the film.

## Reflection

Everyone sits in a circle with the teacher, and they discuss the creative process.

A few sample questions to get the debate going:

- *How did the event change?*
- *How did the character experience the event, the news report and the film?*
- *Which of the activities was the biggest challenge for you?*
- *What did you learn from the creative process?*





*Katarina Picelj*

## IN THE WORLD OF STORIES

*The teacher can use dramatic approaches in the classroom so that pupils can understand the analysed literary texts better, evaluate them more critically and experience them more profoundly. The workshop offers a series of activities, through which pupils learn to recognise the storyline, shape their opinions on the actions of the literary characters, recognise their traits, as well as observe and compare their different perspectives.*

**Learning objectives:**

- Children learn about different literary texts.
- Children develop their ability to experience, understand and evaluate literary texts.
- Children place the events from the same text in the correct temporal order.
- Children observe and compare the different perspectives of literary characters.

**Teaching methods:**

- Role play
- Working with texts
- Presentation

**Forms of teaching:**

- Individual work
- Group work

**Teaching tools:**

- Papers with literary titles the pupils know
- One outline of a person for each group

## ***The atoms game: warm-up activity***

Pupils walk around the classroom, but careful to remain at roughly the same distance from each other and to move with the same speed. The teacher claps and says a number between two and nine, determining the size of groups the pupils must form. Make sure to pick a number that will not leave any of the pupils alone.

When the groups are formed, the teacher tells them what to represent with their bodies (e.g. tree, house, washing machine, dragon). As each group poses, the rest of the class take a look at the statues and discuss them.

The last presentation should include 4–5 pupils, who continue to work in this group.

## ***Stories in three living images***

Each group picks a piece of paper with a literary title the pupils know.

The groups discuss the content of the selected text: the characters, general characteristics, most notable events, etc.

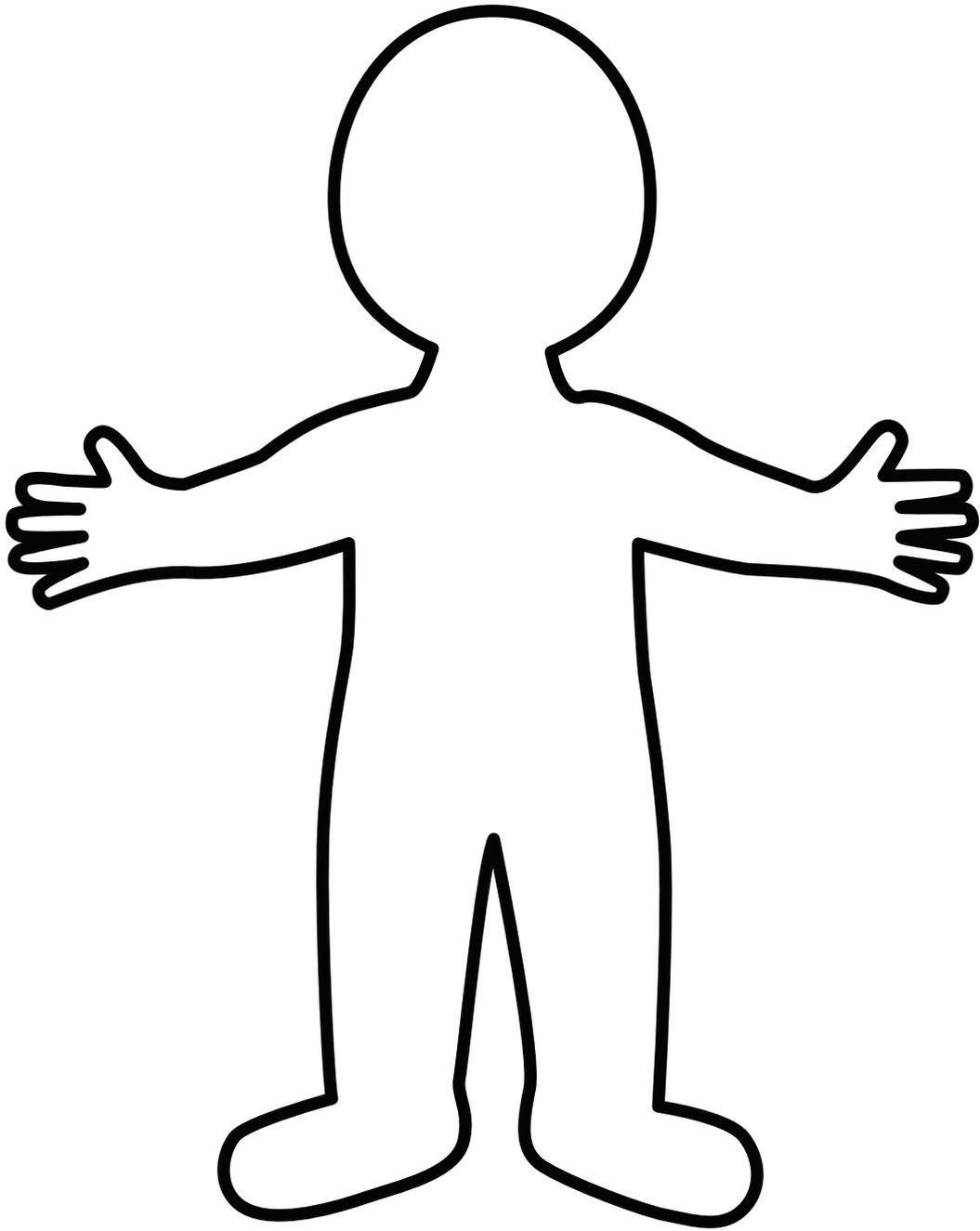
After the discussion, the groups prepare three living images each, depicting the introduction, body and ending of the literary work.

Each group presents their work in three images, assuming the first at the teacher's first clap (or other signal), the second one at the second clap, and the last one at the third signal. The rest of the class observe the living images closely.

The teacher leads a conversation in which pupils describe what they saw. It is important for the teacher to pose the questions as openly as possible.

Sample questions:

- *What are the relationships between the characters?*
- *Where are they?*
- *What are they doing?*
- *Which literary work do you think this is?*

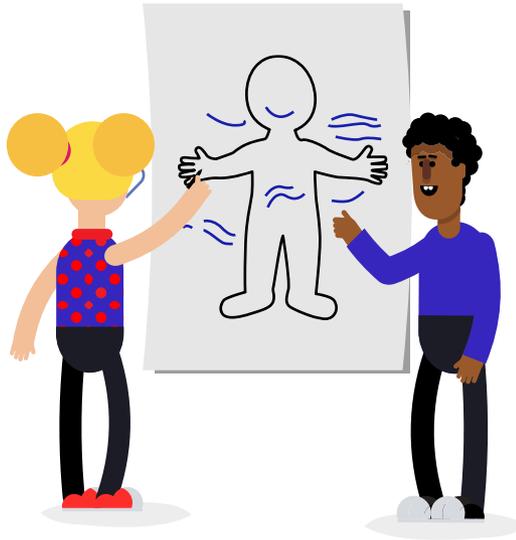


[www.takatuka.net](http://www.takatuka.net)

## ***Outline of selected characters***

Each group receives a sheet of paper with an outline of a person. Alternatively, they can draw one themselves. The selected character does not necessarily need to be a person, it can be an animal, object, etc.

The groups discuss and pick a character from an assigned literary work that they find the most interesting or important, and they provide the reasons why. Outside the outline, they write down the external features of the character (appearance, behaviour, friends, family, hobbies), and inside they write how the character feels and their internal features (thoughts, desires, emotions, values, personality traits). This way they create an outline of the literary character that is as comprehensive as possible.



## ***Characters come alive on the hot seat***

Within the groups, the pupils decide who will play the selected character and answer questions on the hot seat.

The pupil playing the character takes the hot seat, and the others from the group sit or stand around the character. We should also place the poster with the outline of the represented character somewhere everyone can see it.

The pupils from other groups pose questions to the one in the hot seat, who assumes the character and speaks in the first person. If in doubt, they may consult the peers from their group (before answering).

## ***The perspective of a selected character***

In groups or individually, the pupils write the story of the analysed literary work from the perspective of the character they presented in the hot seat.

They then share their stories with the rest of the class.



## ***Refleksija***

Cue for discussion:

How did the opinion of the pupils about the analysed literary works change with the activities?



*Veronika Gaber Korbar*

## THE PERIODIC TABLE

*Russian scientist Dmitri Ivanovich Mendeleev was a dedicated chemistry teacher. He wrote down each element and its properties on a card, and then arranged them according to their atomic mass and their chemical and physical characteristics. He discovered certain patterns, and based on these patterns he arranged in 1869 the 63 elements known to date into a table now known as the periodic table of elements.*

**Learning objectives:**

- Children learn how the periodic table was developed.
- Children learn the symbols, names and atomic number of certain elements.
- Children develop their skills in using data from the periodic table.

**Teaching methods:**

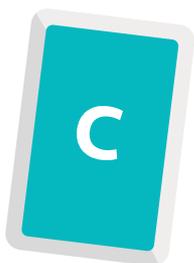
- Teacher in a role
- Working with texts
- Presentation

**Forms of teaching:**

- Individual work
- Group work

**Teaching tools:**

- Cardboard cards (element symbol on the front and its properties on the back)
- Learning sheets (characteristics of the periodic table)



## Elements present themselves

The class sit in a circle. The teacher hands out the element cards. Each pupil gets to present their element by stating its name, the symbol used for this element and two facts related to it. Then they continue with the classmate sitting to their right.

Examples:

- *My element is oxygen. Its symbol is O. Oxygen is a very reactive non-metal. All living beings use it for cellular respiration.*
- *My element is sodium. The symbol for sodium is Na. Sodium is a soft metal. High concentrations of it can be found in the sea.*



## Change chairs if ...

Pupils keep the same cards or swap them. They remain in their chairs. The teacher gives the instructions:

- *Change chairs if your element is a metal.*

All pupils whose element is a metal change places. The game goes on with the next statement.

- *Change chairs if ...*
  - *... you have an element of the first period.*
  - *... you have an element of group VI.*
  - *... you have an element with four valence electrons or outer shell electrons.*
  - *... you have an element with a mass number less than 40.*

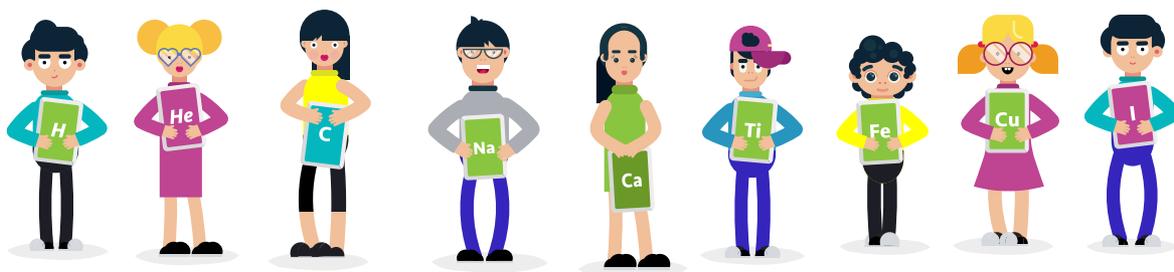
## Line up according to ...

Pupils keep the same cards of swap them. They walk around the classroom freely.

The teacher gives them the following instructions:

- *Line up according to the atomic mass of your element, from the lowest to the highest atomic mass.*
- *Line up according to the mass number of your element, from the lowest to the highest mass number.*

After each line-up, they discuss what atomic mass or the mass number mean for the behaviour or properties of elements.



## Living images

Pupils keep the same cards of swap them. They continue walking around the classroom. The teacher gives the following instructions:

- *Form groups according to your group on the periodic table: alkali metals, alkaline earth elements, transition elements, halogens and noble gasses.*

Pupils stay in these groups and continue with the next activity.

The teacher hands out learning sheets. Each group receives a sheet with the properties of their group. They read the sheets and agree how to present the properties of their group in a living image. When all the groups are ready, the first group make their living image, while the rest of the class sit and comment what they see. The teacher guides the conversation by posing questions as openly as possible:

- *What do you see?*
- *What do your classmates want to say?*
- *What are the properties of the elements in this group?*
- *What practical value can you recognise for the elements in this group?*

Only once the rest of the class have finished analysing and commenting the living image, the teacher asks the group presenting it to explain what they actually wanted to say with their living image.

Alternatively, the living image can be interactive, so when the teacher touches a pupil they explain what they represent and what their pose in the living image means.

The groups then take turns until all of them have made their presentations.

## ***The teacher as Dmitri Mendeleev***

The teacher puts on a coat, showing that they are now in the role of Dmitri Ivanovich Mendeleev. The pupils take their seats in a semi-circle and the teacher sits in the middle. The “famous chemist” addresses the children and invites them to ask questions. The teacher answers the pupils’ questions and includes information that is important in the new subject matter.



## **Reflection**

Write down two new things that you have learnt today.

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Are there any parts that you still do not fully understand?

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*Veronika Gaber Korbar*

## GETTING TO KNOW THE DEAF

*The performance of a deaf child in school is largely in the hands of the teacher. Effective inclusion relates not only to the educational achievement of the deaf pupil, but also to their social inclusion in their class. It is important for teachers and peers to learn about the world of the deaf and sign language, as well as accept their culture. Only then will the contact with those who are different and the meeting of different cultures enrich the work in the class.*

**Learning objectives:**

- Children learn the one-handed manual alphabet and a few sign language gestures.
- Children discover and learn the rules of communicating with the deaf.
- Children develop non-verbal communication skills.

**Teaching methods:**

- Improvisation
- Role play
- Simulation
- Working with visual aids

**Forms of teaching:**

- Individual work
- Group work

**Teaching tools:**

- Handouts with the one-handed manual alphabet
- Paper tape
- Poster
- Markers
- 3 x 12 balloons
- 3 x 4 A4 sheets of paper
- Tape
- Active noise-cancelling headphones
- The book Spoznajmo gluhe (Meet the Deaf—for teacher preparation)

## One-handed manual alphabet

The teacher hands out the sheets with the one-handed manual alphabet, and explains that this alphabet is part of sign language. It is used for:

- *naming things and concepts that have no sign or gesture,*
- *spelling names, cities and different expressions.*

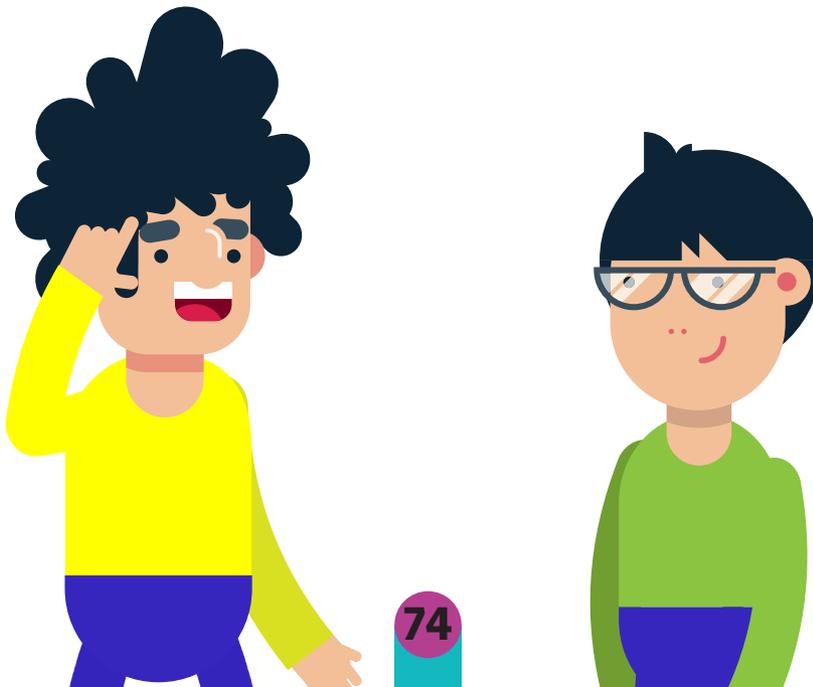
The teacher demonstrates how to fingerspell each letter, and pupils repeat. They can test the knowledge with the teacher fingerspelling a letter, and the pupils show the letter in pairs with their bodies—living images.

## Personal name sign

Pupils stand in a circle. The teacher tells a few facts about personal name signs of deaf people.

- *Almost every deaf person has a special sign for their name. This is called a personal name sign. Deaf people use them so they don't have to spell their full name every time. Personal name signs usually reflect a characteristic feature of the person. They are less commonly used for people with short names, like Tim or Jon, which are easy to spell quickly. Deaf people decide on the personal name sign based on a personal feature (e.g. fat, thin, curly, short), a hobby (e.g. tennis, volleyball), job position (e.g. boss, cook).*

Each pupil tells their name, tries to fingerspell it and then think of a sign or gesture that would represent one of their traits. They proceed with the classmate to the right until the entire class has done this.



## Sign language

The teacher shows the signs for the following words: tree, house, aeroplane, car, etc. Then they proceed with a definition of sign language.

- *Sign language is a mother tongue to the deaf, and is based on the use of hands gestures, facial expressions, lip movement and body language. Every sign has a meaning and is made with a precisely defined finger and hand gesture.*

Pupils walk around the classroom. The teacher calls a number between 3 and 8 (make sure the number of pupils in the class is dividable by this number), and the class quickly form groups of this size with the nearest classmates at that moment. The teacher does one of the signs shown before the activity, and the groups form living images demonstrating the meaning of the sign.



## What more do we want to know?

The pupils have learnt a few facts about deafness, got acquainted with the one-handed alphabet and signs, and experienced how deaf people determine their personal name sign. This activity is used to test what they have learnt or may have known before, what they think now, and what more they would like to know. Together with the class, fill out the table below. You can draw the table on the board or a poster.

What do we know?	What do we think?	What more do we want to know?

Write down what the pupils say in the appropriate column. You can add to the table as the workshop progresses, and you can incorporate it in the learning process.

## ***Inclusion of the deaf in team work***

Divide the class into four groups by birthdate. Those whose birthday is in the summer form the first group, autumn children the second, and so on. In each group, one of the children gets active noise-cancelling headphones, so they cannot hear anyone in the group. Three groups each get 12 balloons, 4 sheets of paper and tape, and an assignment to build a tower in ten minutes. The fourth group observes the process, and gives the groups scores based on the following elements:



- *team work,*
- *height,*
- *stability,*
- *precision,*
- *creative solutions,*
- *appearance.*

When the ten minutes are over, the towers are put on an exhibition. While the other pupils share their experience in the groups, the jury gives its evaluations.

The pupils talk within their groups how the work went, what they did to include the classmate with headphones, what problems they faced in doing this, how the one with the headphones felt and how the others felt, etc.

After discussing this within the groups, they also share their experience between the groups. Based on these discussions, the jury re-evaluates its scores, declares the winning group and provides the justification for their selection.

## Communicating with the deaf

In the last exercise, some of the pupils got to experience how it is to hear nothing. This experience will make it easier for them to list what they must pay attention to when communicating with the deaf. First, the pupils discuss in their group the rules of communicating with the deaf and write down at least five such rules.

The teacher then gathers the entire class, and tells them they will be set in imaginary situations that they will try to play as realistically as they can. The teacher then asks for two volunteers. One of them will play a deaf person, so they get headphones and they are not allowed to use speech.

Example: At the dentist's

### Situation 1

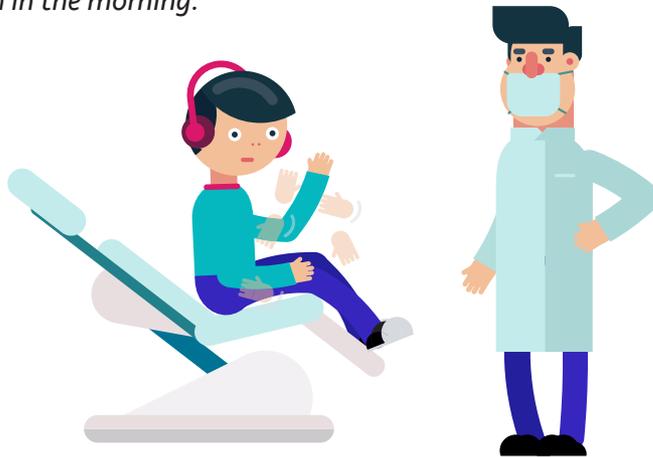
One pupil plays the dentist and the other is a deaf patient.

- *You are relaxed. You've been to the dentist many times, and you're not afraid. You have no serious problems, and you only came in for a regular check-up and plaque removal.*

### Situation 2

One pupil plays the dentist and the other is a deaf patient.

- *You are very uncomfortable. You haven't been to the dentist for years. You expect you have several holes that will need drilling. At the moment, your teeth don't hurt, but your gums bleed when you brush your teeth in the morning.*



After the role play, the pupils return to their groups and add to their rules for communicating with the deaf. When all the groups have finished, the entire class make a poster together, presenting their 10 rules for communicating with the deaf.

# How to communicate with the deaf?

Do not yell.

The deaf person should be facing us.

Only one person is speaking at a time.

Do not cover your face and mouth.

Repeat if necessary.

Speak at a slightly slower pace than usual.

Be mindful of eye contact.

Use short and simple sentence structures.

Do not skip from one topic to another.

Avoid positioning yourself in front of a light source.



## Reflection

The teacher marks three fields on the floor:

- *I agree.*
- *I don't agree.*
- *I don't know.*

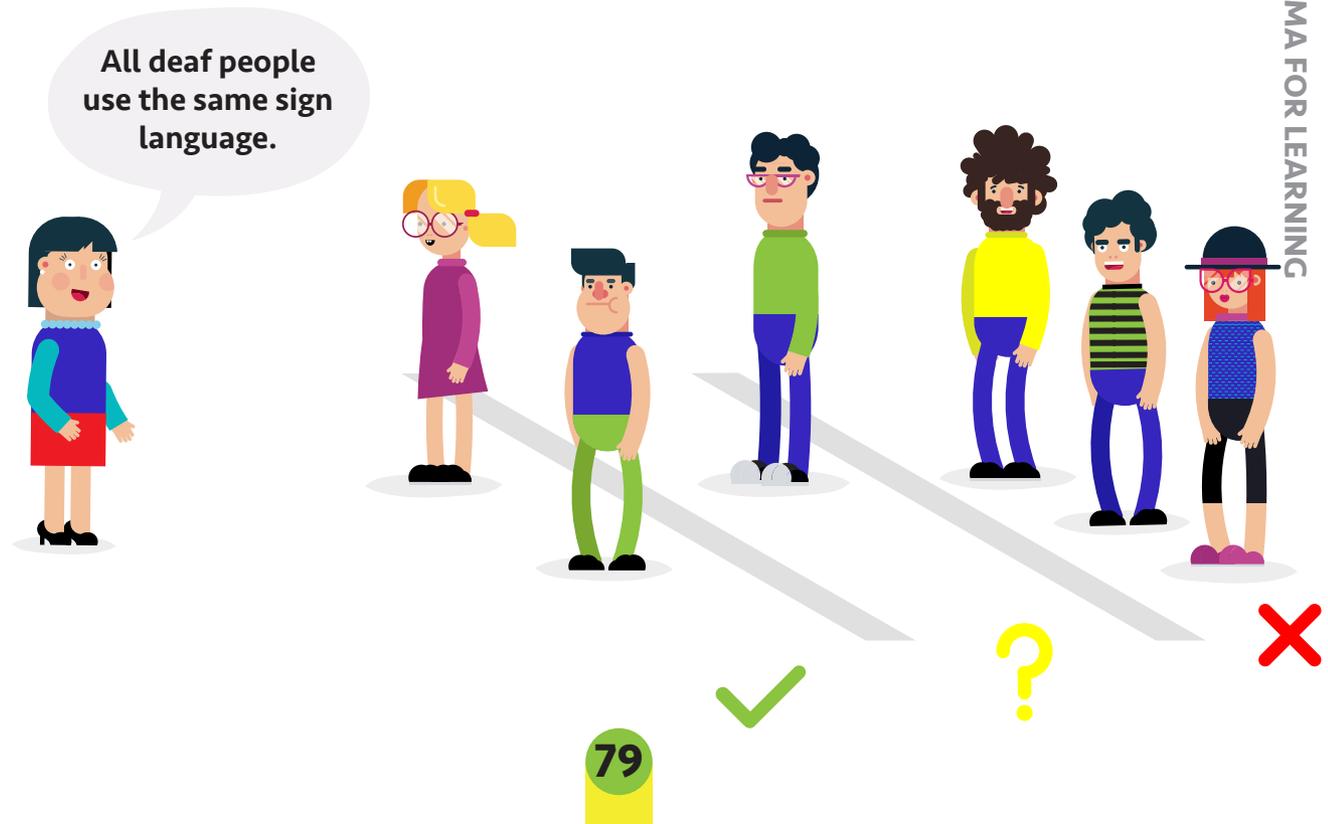
The teacher tells a statement, and the pupils stand in the fields according to their opinion with regard to the statement.

Sample statements:

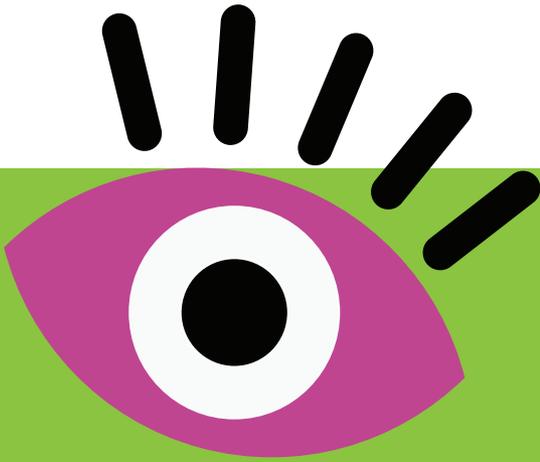
- *All deaf people use the same sign language.*
- *The deaf have no sense of rhythm.*
- *When we speak to the deaf, we must speak very loudly.*

The teacher adds other statements that relate to the questions the pupils mentioned in the "What more do we want to know?" column.

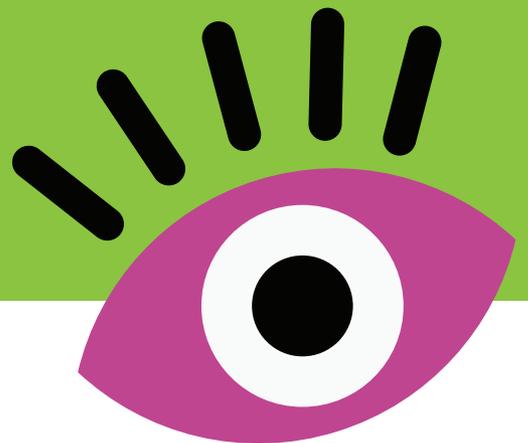
The teacher asks some of the pupils to say why they picked a particular field.







**DIDA  
CTIC  
BOARD  
GAMES**



# LET'S TALK

The didactic board game Let's Talk puts the learners in the centre of learning, as it encourages them to pose questions that are important to them in a particular topic. Assuming an active role in the learning process fosters the development of complex mental processes in an individual.

The choice of topic determines the purpose and course of the game. It can be used for group members to get to know each other, for socialising, bonding, repetition and improving the learning, as well as brainstorming, planning or reflection.

The game is designed with the cards serving learners as cues for asking different questions through associations on a chosen topic. Searching for answers to the questions encourages the learners to think outside the box, using their existing experience and knowledge.

The game boosts curiosity, deep thinking and learning, and offers fun for all generations. It is available in two difficulty levels and in two languages: Let's Talk 1st level and Let's Talk 2nd level (and in Slovenian: Dej povej 1. stopnja and Dej povej 2. stopnja).

- **Getting to know each other, socialising, bonding**
- **Repetition and improving the learning**
- **Brainstorming**
- **Reflection**





## EMOTION WHEEL

The didactic board game Emotion Wheel reveals and teaches different ways for recognising, listening to and expressing one's emotions and emotional states. Through fun tasks, the players develop cooperation skills and ability to recognise their emotions, as well as put themselves in others' shoes. They read and express themselves through facial expressions and body language. This relatively simple game also has broader practical value, and its open design leaves many opportunities for using it to go further. The tasks are presented in four languages, which means it can also be used as a fun way to learn Slovenian, English, Thai or Chinese.

- **Emotional literacy**
- **Social skills**
- **Verbal and non-verbal expression**

**Everyone smiles in  
the same language.**