

**GIMNAZIJA CELJE – CENTER**

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**COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

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## SPREMNA BESEDA

V sodobnem izobraževalnem okolju, ki je vse bolj globalno povezano, je obvladovanje strokovnega jezika v tujih jezikih ključnega pomena za razvoj poklicnih in osebnostnih kompetenc dijakov. Prevod strokovnega besedila iz slovenščine v angleščino, ki ga imate pred seboj, predstavlja več kot le jezikovno prenovo – je natančno premišljeno in pozorno zasnovano orodje, ki dijakom omogoča poglobljeno razumevanje strokovne terminologije, s katero so se v času izobraževanja že srečali, pedagoških konceptov in profesionalnih praks, ki so jih spoznavali skozi vsa štiri leta in ki jih bodo srečevali pri svojem praktičnem izobraževanju v tujini. Besedilo tako smiselno zaokrožuje pridobljeno strokovno znanje in smiselno povezuje jezikovne kompetence.

Kot profesorica angleščine in pedagogike v programu Predšolska vzgoja sem pri svojem delu vedno usmerjena k temu, da dijakom zagotovim ne le znanje, temveč tudi samozavest in sposobnost samostojnega soočanja z izzivi mednarodnega strokovnega okolja. V tem kontekstu prevod strokovnega besedila dijakom omogoča, da se že v domačem izobraževalnem prostoru srečajo s strokovnimi pojmi v angleškem jeziku, jih razumejo in uporabijo v praktičnih situacijah. To je posebej pomembno za dijake, ki se udeležujejo programov Erasmus+, v katerih aktivno sodelujem tudi sama kot spremljevalka, ali drugih mednarodnih mobilnosti (ki se jih prav tako redno udeležujem), kjer bodo morali samostojno sodelovati v pedagoških aktivnostih, se sporazumevati s strokovnjaki in z vrstniki v tujem jeziku ter razumeti in izvajati strokovna navodila.

Prevod omogoča dijakom razvoj celovite strokovne pismenosti, ki presega zgolj jezikovne veščine. Dijaki se učijo kritičnega razmišljanja, primerjanja pedagoških praks, analize različnih metod dela in prilagajanja svojega pedagoškega pristopa glede na specifične kulturne in jezikovne okoliščine. Ob tem gradijo samozavest pri uporabi strokovnega jezika in se pripravljajo na odgovorno in kompetentno delo v mednarodnem strokovnem okolju, istočasno pa utrjujejo in v praksi uporabljajo usvojeno znanje – v tujem jeziku.

Kot učiteljica imam priložnost spremljati, kako dijaki obravnavajo prevod kot podporno orodje za razumevanje strokovnih vsebin, razvijajo sposobnost refleksije in primerjave praks ter se pripravijo na svoje prve strokovno-poklicne izkušnje v mednarodnem okolju. Prevod tako zapolni morebitno vrzel med nacionalnimi pedagoškimi standardi in globalnimi strokovnimi praksami, hkrati pa omogoča dijakom, da se samozavestno vključujejo v mednarodno izobraževalno skupnost, razvijajo svojo profesionalno identiteto in se pripravljajo na izzive prihodnjega poklica.

Prepričana sem, da bo strokovni prevod gradiva dijakom omogočil ne le boljše razumevanje strokovne terminologije, temveč tudi širši vpogled v mednarodne pedagoške prakse, razumevanje geografsko in sociološko-kulturno pogojenih razlik, spodbujal razvoj samostojnosti, kritičnega mišljenja, ne nazadnje tudi radovednost in vedoželjnost, pa tudi razvoj sposobnosti aktivnega sodelovanja ter prispeval k njihovemu celostnemu profesionalnemu in osebnostnemu razvoju.

Gradivo bo morda koristilo tudi učiteljem tujih jezikov, ker so teme, ki jih obravnava, kljub temu tudi dovolj splošne, da bi v njih lahko prepoznali uporabnost in jih uporabili kot podporo pri sicer obravnavanih temah.

Urška Petrič Les, prof.  
avtorica strokovnega prevoda

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# 1. INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION SKILLS

## In this chapter you will learn:

- what social skills are and how to develop them,
- what communication skills are,
- the importance of communication,
- what communication is and how it takes place,
- different types of communication,
- the linear, interactive, and transactional models of communication, and
- communication barriers that must be overcome for better understanding of messages.

You are about to read a textbook on communication skills. In it, we will explore various aspects of communication, which will become of key importance for your work in kindergarten. We will learn how to communicate effectively in different situations, whether in conversations with children in kindergarten, cooperation with parents, or the exchange of opinions with colleagues. To make learning more practical and easier to understand, we will use examples from the everyday lives of two families who will accompany us throughout the entire textbook. You will meet the Horvat and Thompson families, whose stories and situations will help illustrate different aspects of communication.

The first family you will meet is the Slovenian Horvat family. The parents, Maja and Tomaž, have two small children: two-year-old Lana and five-year-old Rok. Maja is a graphic designer and works in a small company where she designs promotional materials for various clients. Her work requires a great deal of creativity and precision, and is often time-consuming, as she sometimes has to finish projects at home as well. Nevertheless, she tries to spend as much time as possible with her family, as it is important to her to be present in her children's lives. Tomaž is a civil engineer who supervises construction projects and ensures high-quality execution. His work requires attention to detail and flexibility, as projects often change. Despite his demanding job, he strives to spend as much time as possible with his family and to bring relaxation and humour into the home in order to ease everyday stress. Rok is a lively, curious, and active child who quickly makes contact with others, although he sometimes has difficulty following instructions. His younger sister Lana is cheerful and full of energy, but also often stubborn.

The second family comes from Australia – the Thompson family. David, an Australian and an experienced robotics and automation engineer, has recently been given an opportunity to work in Slovenia at a leading company for industrial robots. He moved to Slovenia with his family. His wife Emily is an artist who creates contemporary abstract art. They have two preschool children: four-year-old daughter Lily and five-year-old son Jack. The Thompson family brings a rich Australian cultural heritage to Slovenia. The children, Lily and Jack, speak English and have already learned some basic Slovenian at home. In Australia, they celebrated

numerous cultural events such as Australia Day and the Aboriginal Art Festival, which they now wish to share with their new friends in Slovenia. Emily enjoys preparing traditional Australian dishes such as lamingtons and pavlova, which they sometimes bring to kindergarten so that other children can try them as well. The Thompson family belongs to the Protestant faith. Lily and Jack already participated in religious services and children's religious activities in Australia, and in Slovenia the family occasionally attends a Protestant church.

These two families will help us explore communication-related topics through various examples. Their stories will highlight everyday challenges and successes in communication, which we encounter both at home and in kindergarten. Through examples, we will more easily understand theoretical concepts and connect them with real-life situations. Let the Horvat and Thompson families guide you on the path to better understanding and using communication skills, which are the foundation for successful work in preschool education. Let's begin!

Mother and Lana are getting ready to visit Grandma. The mother wants Lana to put on shoes, so she says: "Put on your shoes, we're going to Grandma's." Lana puts on slippers, because she thinks slippers are shoes. When the mother notices that Lana is wearing slippers, she gets angry because Lana did not follow the instructions. Lana is confused because she thought she had put on the right shoes.

**Reflect:** *What happened between the mother and Lana? Why did a misunderstanding occur between them? How could the situation be improved? How could the mother act next time to prevent the misunderstanding?*

When we are children, we often unintentionally misunderstand our parents because we perceive situations differently. Such **misunderstandings** are **an excellent opportunity for developing communication skills**. Adults can learn how to give children more precise and more specific instructions adapted to their developmental stage. Children, on the other hand, can learn how to check whether they have understood the instructions correctly.

#### **Interesting fact:**

**80% of problems in interpersonal communication are actually misunderstandings.**

## **1.1 WHAT ARE SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Social skills include the ability to interact successfully with others. This includes cooperation and teamwork, conflict resolution, empathy and adapting to different social situations and types of people. In kindergarten, children develop these skills through play and everyday interactions with each other, as well as in interaction with their teachers. An important part of

social skills development is the promotion of empathy, which is achieved through guided activities where children reflect on the feelings of others. Educators play a key role in modelling positive social behaviours, while also providing children with opportunities for experiential learning, such as group games.

Communication skills are a subset of social skills and are specifically linked to the ability to communicate information effectively. [Communication skills are a set of abilities that enable an individual to effectively exchange information, thoughts, feelings and ideas with other people.](#) These are skills used in speaking, listening, writing and non-verbal communication. Well-developed communication skills enable people to express themselves more clearly, to better understand their peers and to create positive relationships. Communication skills include:

- **verbal communication:** Using spoken or written language to express thoughts, ideas and feelings.
- **non-verbal communication:** Using body language, facial expressions, movements, body posture and other non-verbal signs to convey messages.
- **conflict resolution:** resolving conflicts in a constructive way, which includes finding joint solutions and maintaining positive relationships.
- **listening:** actively listening and understanding what others are saying, which includes giving feedback and asking questions for clarification.
- **clarity and conciseness:** The ability to express oneself clearly and precisely to avoid misunderstandings.

Communication skills are a key part of social skills, as effective communication enables better social interactions. For instance, good verbal and non-verbal communication contributes to better cooperation, which is an important social skill.

## 1.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

Before children learn to speak and manage words, they use non-verbal communication, which is important in human communication and is mostly innate. These two forms of communication are closely linked and complement each other. Rowland, in his communication matrix, highlights four reasons for communicating where a child with the help of a situation:

1. refuses things he/she does not want,
2. gets things he/she wants,
3. engages in social interactions and
4. provides or seeks information.

Communication in the pre-school years is crucial for child development at many levels, as it is during this period that children actively develop their speech, social and communication skills.

In the area of [speech and language](#), children are rapidly expanding their vocabulary, learning new words and new meanings. At two years old, Lana is using words such as mum, dad, yes and no most often, while Rok, at five, is already forming complete clauses and sentences. As they develop during this period, they increasingly understand grammatical structure and sentence formation, and are learning to express thoughts, needs and feelings.

In the area of [social development](#), they learn social norms, what is acceptable in society and how to behave appropriately in different situations. For example, Lana and Rok are reminded by their mother to say thank you for the chocolate they get from a visiting aunt. Communicating with other children helps them to learn to make friends, play cooperatively and share. For example, mum encourages Rok to offer sweets he brought into the yard to friends. They also learn to negotiate, Rok agrees with a friend to lend him his toy. Alongside all this, he learns about the most important skill, which is conflict resolution. For example, Lana and Rok both want to have the chocolate that their mother brought, but they agree to share the chocolate.

In the area of [cognitive development](#), imagination and creativity are developed during this period through storytelling and the creation of new situations through play. Play also enables the development of the ability to analyse different situations and solve problems. It is a period of learning and exploration, and communication fosters imagination and the desire to learn. Children always ask new questions, exploring concepts and acquiring new knowledge.

In the area of [emotional development](#), they learn to recognise and express their own emotions, to name them and to control them. By listening to and understanding the feelings of others, they develop the ability to empathise and sympathise. Successful communication and positive interactions strengthen children's self-esteem.

### **1.3 THE BASICS OF COMMUNICATION**

In its most basic sense, communication means the exchange of information. We communicate in order to understand each other, to cooperate through the exchange of ideas, knowledge, feelings and experiences. The pre-school teacher tells or shows the child what objects he or she can and cannot play with. The child cries to communicate that something has upset him/her or made him/her sad. The mother explains to the child how to change into a short T-shirt for sports lessons in kindergarten.

The word communication comes from the Latin verb "communicare" and means to consult or discuss something, to ask for advice. [Communication is a system of information exchange between a sender and a receiver.](#) Communication can be done well or badly. It depends on our communication skills. It helps the effectiveness of communication if we are already educated about the process, and communication skills can be improved through training.



## COMMUNICATION

### VERBAL

### NON-VERBAL

#### PARALINGUISTICS

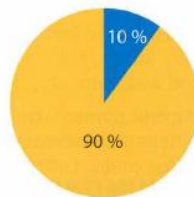
#### APPEARANCE

#### BODY LANGUAGE

Communication can be verbal or non-verbal. **Verbal communication** refers to all aspects of speech that are communicated either orally or in written form. **Non-verbal communication** involves the whole body language and is more about what we do when we communicate than what we say. In other words, we can say that non-verbal communication includes everything that accompanies communication other than the spoken or written words. For an easier understanding, we divide the signs of non-verbal communication into three categories: paralinguistics, body language and appearance. **Paralinguistics** covers the speed, volume and emphasis we make when communicating. These include tone of voice and pitch. Pauses tell us a lot, but sometimes there are different speech disorders, such as stuttering. **Body language** includes facial expressions, movements, body posture, body space and proximity and touch. **Appearance** is an important part of non-verbal communication, as people express their identity through make-up, hairstyles, jewellery, make-up and scent (e.g. perfume). Clothes and accessories can convey important messages such as professionalism and relaxation. Scents such as perfume also play a role in forming impressions, as they can trigger certain emotions. These aspects are often used to convey social belonging or professional role.

Verbal communication: 10 %

Non-verbal communication: 90 %



### Interesting fact:

**Communication also takes place in inanimate nature. Animals use voice or vocal communication to react to a situation or to manipulate the behaviour of others. Coal tits communicate with each other in a complex language about how safe or threatened they feel from predators. But not only among themselves, they also use sounds to communicate with other bird species.**

**Communication is the process of exchanging information between at least two people.**

- **Communication between colleagues:** often involves a combination of verbal and non-verbal communication for effective information sharing and collaboration.
- **Adult-child communication:** it is very important to use a friendly tone of voice and positive non-verbal communication to foster trust and comprehension.
- **Communication with parents:** includes understanding and empathy, where active listening is important, and appropriate non-verbal feedback.
- **Communication from child to child:** includes playful elements and often more non-verbal signs such as laughter, movements and mimicry.

The child is an active, competent and equal participant in the communication process. He or she has the right to be heard, to participate and to decide in his or her own development and learning. Quality communication involves constantly checking what of our messages is received, how it is understood and to what extent it may be distorted. This ensures an effective and clear exchange of information and builds strong interpersonal relationships.

## 1.4 COMMUNICATION MODELS

Communication is a complex process, as it is sometimes difficult to determine where or with whom the process started and ended. To better understand the process, visualising the communication process through a communication model can simplify the process.

We will look at three models of communication: linear, interactional and transactional.

All models include [seven key elements of communication](#):

1. there can be several [participants](#) in the process, but at least two, a [sender](#) and a [receiver](#),
2. the message is made up of [symbols](#), which can be verbal (when greeting a friend with a "Good morning!") or non-verbal (when waving to a friend),
3. [encoding](#) is the process of turning a thought into a message,
4. [decoding](#) is the reverse process of encoding, it is the reception and interpretation of a message,
5. a [channel](#) is the means where communication takes place (e.g. a social network),
6. [feedback](#) is the response of the receiver to the sender (one can comment on a forum post, reply to a message), and
7. [noise](#) is any element that interferes with the communication between the sender and the receiver.

### Linear model

The [linear model](#) describes communication as a [one-way process](#), where the sender encodes his/her message and sends it to the receiver, who decodes it. This model emphasises the role of the sender and his/her message, while the role of the receiver is seen as an end point rather than as part of the subsequent communication. In the absence of a feedback element in the model, we can only infer whether or not the recipient has successfully received the message. The linear model is an earlier model of communication, influenced mainly by the technology of the time (radio, telegraph, TV). Think of how you can listen to a message from a radio studio in your car. The sender's message is transmitted to the radio tower by electromagnetic waves, and reaches your ears via an antenna and speakers (the channel). The sender on the radio does not know whether you have received the message or not, but if all the equipment is working, he or she can assume that you have received the message. The sender plays a major role and must ensure that the message is successfully received and understood.

When communication is one-way, we cannot talk about real communication, but about messaging, because we are not communicating, we are sending a message. An example is listening to the news on TV or a sticky note with a message on the fridge left by your mother.

### Interactive model

The **interactive model** describes communication as a **two-way process**. In this case, both the sender and the receiver continuously encode and decode information. This model includes an element of feedback. Here, the sender and the receiver continuously exchange roles in order for the communication to continue. It is now common in modern communication via social networks, e-mail and Internet. This model also focuses less on the message and more on the interaction between the sender and the receiver. Humans are not computers, our communication is not just about receiving and sending messages.

### Transactional model

The **transactional model** describes communication as a **two-way, interactive process within the social and cultural environment in which we live and within the context of human relationships**. In this model, we communicate not only to exchange messages, but to create relationships, form cross-cultural alliances, shape our self-image and engage in dialogue with others to create community. It is a process in which the sender and the receiver create a reality within a society, a relationship and a culture. In short, we are not communicating about our reality, we are creating reality through communication. This model differs from other models. In this model, senders and receivers are referred to collectively as **communicators**, who send and receive a message at the same time. Thus, on a first date, we verbally communicate our interests and hobbies to our crush and the crush responds with body language. We don't wait until we stop speaking before we can start decoding our crush's non-verbal communication. This is an important addition to the model, which shows how we are able to adjust our message in the middle of sending a message according to the message we are receiving from the other person at the same time. The **context** in which the communication takes place also plays an important role in this model.

**Social context** refers to the rules and unspoken norms that guide communication. In the process of socialisation, we learn the rules and norms for communication, depending on the society in which we live. Some of these rules are, for example, “Don't lie”, “Don't interrupt others when they are talking” and “Say hello to people who greet you”.

The **relational context** refers to the relationship we had with that person before the communication. We communicate differently with a person we have just met than with a friend we have known for a long time. Establishing a relationship at the beginning is more subject to rules and norms, but once we have established a personal context, social norms can be adapted and even broken. When we have just met our neighbours, we follow the rules of courtesy and may even spend a whole day cleaning up before their visit. When they arrive,

we give them our full attention and care. Once we have developed a friendship with our neighbours, we may not even think about cleaning more or preparing in any other way for their visit.

**Cultural context** includes different aspects of identity, such as gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, social class and ability. Whether we are aware of it or not, these aspects influence our communication. People who have a cultural identity that has been historically denigrated, discriminated against and persecuted are often unaware of how their cultural identity affects their communication with others. However, people with a dominant, majority cultural identity are often unaware of how this affects their communication.

## 1.5 COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

### Communication noise

**Barriers to communication are called communication noise. It is any disturbance that can affect the success of the communication process.** When we talk about communication noise, interference can occur at different parts of the communication process - at the sender of the message, at the receiver of the message, as well as in the communication channel or the communication path. Different types of noise can have a significant impact on how effectively and clearly a message is conveyed and understood.

#### Noise at the sender

Sender interference can be caused by a variety of factors, such as:

- **quiet speech:** If the person speaks too quietly, it is difficult for the receiver to understand the message. For example, an educator who speaks too softly may cause children to miss instructions and become confused.
- **poorly worded message:** If a message is poorly structured or unclear, the recipient may misinterpret its intentions. If someone emails unclear instructions, the recipient may not know what to do.
- **not knowing the recipient:** If the sender does not know the recipient's background or position, the message may sound inappropriate or incoherent. For example, a pre-school educator who uses technical language without taking into account the background of the parents at the meeting may cause confusion.

#### Noise at the recipient

Recipient interference may be related to:

- **an overly emotional reaction:** If the recipient is highly emotional, this can affect their ability to interpret the message. For example, a person who is upset about a personal problem may misinterpret constructive criticism as an attack.
- **an overwhelming message:** When the message is too long or very complex, it is easy for the recipient to lose the focus and not concentrate on the key information. For example, a long monologue by an educator in a meeting with parents without a summary can make parents miss the point of the message.
- **an unskilled listener:** If the recipient does not have enough active listening time, he or she may misinterpret the message or miss out on important information. For example, a child who is not listening attentively may miss the instructions for a task.
- **attitudes and values:** If the recipient has strongly opposing attitudes or values, this may affect the interpretation of the message. For example, a person with a clinging political conviction may understand political statements in a completely different way than they were meant.

### Noise in the communication channel

Noise in the communication channel includes factors that affect the transmission of a message:

- **noise:** External noise can interfere with the reception of a message. For example, if there is a discussion in a noisy playroom, it may be difficult to hear what the teacher is saying.
- **poor printing:** If the text in a magazine is poorly printed or illegible, this can also make it difficult to read. Blurred print in a magazine can make reading difficult or even impossible.
- **information is distorted or delayed:** If information passes through several intermediaries, distortion or delay may occur. For example, a pre-school teacher decides to change the timetable for outdoor play. She sends a notification of the change to the group leader. The group leader verbally sends the notification to the assistant teacher, who in turn sends it to the teachers. As the message passes through more people, the information may change.

Understanding and recognising all types of meaning can help us to improve communication and reduce the potential difficulties and confusion that can arise in different communication situations.

### What I have learned:

- Communication is the exchange of information between a sender and a receiver.
- Communication skills are important for the effective transmission of information and are part of social skills.
- In the pre-school period, communication is crucial for the development of speech, social skills and cognitive abilities.
- There is verbal and non-verbal communication.

- Models of communication depict the communication process as a one-way (linear model), two-way (interactive model) or two-way interactive (transactional model).
- All models include seven key elements: participants, symbols, encoding, decoding, channel, feedback and noise.
- Communication noise is the interference that occurs at the sender, the receiver or in the communication channel.

### Acquire and integrate knowledge: from revision to understanding

1. Define communication skills.
2. Name the two main forms of communication.
3. Describe active listening.
4. Name the model of communication that emphasises one-way exchange of messages without feedback.
5. How could a pre-school educator improve his/her communication with children to reduce confusion when giving instructions?
6. How could the child use non-verbal communication to engage more effectively in social interactions with other children in play?
7. How could a pre-school teacher use different communication models to inform parents about changes in the timetable?
8. How could a child use communication skills to resolve a conflict with other children in order to find a common solution?
9. Analyse how the sender's noise would influence communication in a situation where the pre-school teacher is unclear about the instructions for a task. How could this be reflected in the receiver and what consequences could it have?
10. How could pre-school educators using different communication tools improve communication with different groups (children, parents, colleagues)? Use the example of a teacher who has to communicate changes in the programme to different target groups.
11. Analyse how the communication between two people would change if one of them changed his/her emotional state (e.g. a person who was calm before becomes very upset). How would this affect the communication process and possible solutions?

## 2. VERBAL COMMUNICATION

### In this chapter you will learn:

- the role of language in working with children,
- the characteristics of different types of verbal communication (face-to-face, telephone and written messages), including digital communication,
- how to compose an effective personal, telephone or written message to parents and colleagues,
- how to communicate in Slovene, both in the standard and in the formal spoken language,
- how to produce clear and unambiguous verbal messages,
- how to identify and correct communication breakdowns in a specific situation,
- how to use “I” messages and different listening techniques, and
- the importance and use of feedback in effective communication.

Pre-school teacher Mateja drafted a notice in the standard Slovenian for the parents and posted it on the notice board in the kindergarten:

#### Notice for parents

Dear Parents,

we would like to invite you to attend the parents' meeting, which will take place on Monday, September 6, 2024, at 5 p.m. in the Elf playroom, which your child attends.

We will discuss an important topic related to the beginning of the new kindergarten year. We will also present the annual work plan for the group and introduce some new developments.

We will be happy to answer any general questions concerning the entire group. Questions about your child will be addressed during individual consultations, which will take place after the general part of the meeting.

Your presence is very important, as together we will be able to ensure a pleasant and stimulating environment for your children.

Please, confirm your attendance by August 28, 2024, via email.

We look forward to your visit and cooperation.

Teacher:

*Mateja Novak*

Teacher Assistant:

*Magda Kos*

Principal:

*Marija Krajnc*

01/234 56 78

happy.bunny@kindergartens.com

**Reflection:** Do you find the notice clear and understandable? Which information is particularly useful, and which could be added or explained better? How does Mateja emphasise the importance of the parents' meeting in the notice? Do you think this message is effectively communicated to the parents, and why?

## **2.1 USE OF LANGUAGE WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN**

During the preschool period of development, language use is crucial for children's cognitive and social development, where Piaget's theory of cognitive development plays an important role. According to Piaget, children in preschool go through a pre-operational stage, which lasts from around two to seven years of age. During this stage, children develop the ability to think symbolically and begin to use words and pictures to represent objects and events.

Language becomes more complex during this period. Children begin to form sentences and use sentences to express their thoughts and feelings. Communication with other children and peers is crucial for the development of these language skills. Talking to children a lot, reading stories and encouraging them to use language through play helps to enrich their vocabulary and improves their language skills.

Children in the pre-operational stage often express their thoughts in a very concrete way, as they cannot yet understand abstract concepts. A child understands illness in a very concrete way, as lying in bed, or as something they can perceive with their senses. Adults, on the other hand, think about illness abstractly, as a weakening of the immune system. It is important that adults understand the difference in thinking and adjust their language, using simple and concrete expressions that are understandable to children.

During this period, play has a major role in language development. Through symbolic play, such as role-playing or using toys to represent different objects, children develop their symbolic thinking skills. For example, when playing shop or family, they use language to describe roles and actions, which stimulates their linguistic creativity and expressive capacity.

It is also important that children are given opportunities to interact with their peers during this period. Taking part in group games, talking to other children and taking part in activities that require group work help children to develop social skills and cooperative abilities. Through these interactions, children learn to express their thoughts, listen to others and understand different perspectives.

In general, language use in the pre-school period is closely linked to children's cognitive development. By adapting language to the child's developmental level adults can effectively support their linguistic and cognitive progress.



## 2.2 TYPES OF LANGUAGE AND THEIR USE IN KINDERGARTEN WORK

A literary language is a standardised form of language used in formal and informal situations, both in written and spoken form. It is divided into the standard and the formal spoken language. As pre-school educators, we need to use both types of formal language.

The standard literary language strictly follows the orthographic and spelling rules set out in the grammar, spelling book and dictionary. It is used primarily in written form in public and classroom texts and public appearances. It is learnt at school, as it is not used at home or in conversations with friends. Its purpose is to connect Slovenians who speak different dialects and provincial colloquial languages. It is important for the pre-school educator to use the standard literary language in official written notices, reports, meetings and other formal situations. This means that he or she strictly follows the rules of spelling and orthography. This ensures clear and precise communication and maintains a professional attitude.

<b>New message</b>
Od: <a href="mailto:mateja.novak@kindergartens.com">mateja.novak@kindergartens.com</a>
To: <a href="mailto:parents@gmail.com">parents@gmail.com</a>
Subject: Notice for parents
<p>Dear Parents,</p> <p>we would like to invite you to attend the parents' meeting, which will take place on Monday, September 6, 2024, at 5 p.m. in the Elf playroom, which your child attends.</p> <p>We will discuss an important topic related to the beginning of the new kindergarten year. We will also present the annual work plan for the group and introduce some new developments.</p> <p>We will be happy to answer any general questions concerning the entire group. Questions about your child will be addressed during individual consultations, which will take place after the general part of the meeting.</p> <p>Your presence is very important, as together we will be able to ensure a pleasant and stimulating environment for your children.</p> <p>Please, confirm your attendance by August 28, 2024, via email.</p> <p>We look forward to your visit and cooperation.</p> <p>Pre-school teacher: <i>Mateja Novak</i></p> <p>Teacher Assistant: <i>Magda Kos</i></p>

Example of the use of standard literary language in an e-message to parents

Colloquial literary language is used mainly in spoken form. In everyday conversations with parents, during informal meetings and when solving minor problems, colloquial literary language is used. This type of language allows for more relaxed and accessible

communication, closer to everyday speech. The use of spoken language helps to build trust and better understanding with parents. Although less used in written form, it is still part of the literary language. Its role is to maintain a relaxed and natural communication that is closer to everyday speech, while following the basic rules of standard literary language.

Parent: "Good afternoon, Mateja! How did our Rok do in kindergarten today?"
Teacher Mateja: "Good afternoon! Rok was very active today. He participated very well in all the activities."
Parent: "That's great! Was there anything special we should know?"
Teacher Mateja: "Yes, he was a bit sleepy this morning, but he cheered up quickly. He also ate well at lunch."
StdFS: "Thank you for the information. Is there anything we should pay attention to at home?"
Teacher Mateja: "No, nothing special. Just make sure he gets enough sleep because he seems to be a bit tired today."
Parent: "Of course, we'll take care of it. Thank you, Mateja!"
Mateja: "No worries, have a nice day!"
Parent: "Same to you, bye!"

Example of the use of colloquial literary language in a conversation with parents

## 2.3 PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND COMMUNICATION

Professional ethics in communication with the parents in the kindergarten ensure a positive and supportive environment for the children. Educators must respect children's privacy, which includes protecting their personal information and ensuring that the information they provide to parents is clear and understandable. Objectivity and impartiality are essential when reporting on children's progress and behaviour, as information must be free from bias and personal feelings. In addition, it is essential that educators show empathy and respect for parents' opinions and concerns, even if they disagree with them. When disagreements arise, it is important to remain calm and professional and to seek constructive solutions that will benefit the children. In this way, educators contribute to building trust between the kindergarten and the family, which is crucial for children's well-being and development.

## 2.4 TYPES OF VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Different types of communication play an important role in our everyday life. Each type of communication has its own advantages and disadvantages, which one should know in order to communicate effectively. The types of verbal communication are divided according to the communication channel. Due to technological development, more channels are available. Advances in technology also change the way we communicate, as communication is much faster, we are closer to remote places, and it also allows us to connect to inaccessible places. We can communicate:

- in person,
- in writing,
- by phone and
- digitally.

## Face-to-face communication

People spend a lot of time surrounded by others and form a variety of relationships with them. Face-to-face communication is the closest type of communication. It could be said to be the ideal type of communication, which technology aims to replicate as closely as possible. Face-to-face communication is primarily about face-to-face conversation. In personal communication, we are mainly dealing with **direct conversation between people**. A preschool teacher spends most of her time in direct contact and conversation with children, other teachers, and parents. This type of communication gives us the most information because, **in the same moment, we can share and interpret not only the verbal message but also pay attention to signs of non-verbal communication**. For successful personal communication, it is good to follow a few principles:

- **Show respect in conversation.** Everyone has the right to their own opinion. Instead of immediately judging someone with “No, that’s not true!”, we can say, “I see the situation differently.”
- **Describe your feelings.** In conversation, the other person may trigger emotions in us, and we can express them. “I feel uncomfortable when you talk about me in the third person. I have the feeling that you are ignoring me. Please tell me your opinion directly.”
- **Listen** to the other person without prejudice, judgment, or insults.
- Avoid attacks and **invite the other person into the conversation**. If we communicate through accusations, blame, and threats, we provoke a defensive reaction in the other person. Instead of accusing someone with “You are incapable of doing the task,” we can ask, “What made you decide to complete the task in this way?”

## Written communication

As educators, we use written communication in several ways. We write official notices, such as thank-you messages, invitations, and apologies, as well as letters that are often related to announcements of changes and other important information. An official letter is written on an A4 sheet and sent by post or personally delivered to the recipient in an envelope.

A **thank-you letter** is a written message in which the educator expresses gratitude to parents for their support. This may include a letter of thanks for help in organising events, donations, volunteer work, or other forms of assistance that have benefited the children and the kindergarten.

An **apology** is a written message in which the educator expresses regret for any mistakes, inconveniences, or irregularities that occurred in connection with the child or the kindergarten. The letter explains the reasons for the improper action.

An **invitation** is a written message in which the educator invites parents to attend a specific event at the kindergarten. The invitation includes the date, time, and place of the event, as well as any additional information, such as the agenda.

In addition to official letters, we also prepare **reports** that provide parents with information about the child's progress, achievements, and recommendations for further work at home. We publish **newsletters**, which include information about activities in the kindergarten and upcoming events. On the **notice board**, we post announcements, activity plans, news about special events, and other relevant information for parents.

Written messages allow us to express our thoughts precisely and to keep a record for later use. A drawback is that misunderstandings can occur due to a lack of context or non-verbal cues. In written communication, we use standard literary (formal) language.

Kindergarten The Happy Bunny Sunny Street, 1 1234 Playful Hill	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2024
David and Emily Thompson Garden Street, 7 5678 Meadows	
Dear Parents,	
We would like to inform you that due to renovation work at The Happy Bunny Kindergarten, the kindergarten will be closed from 1 to 15 August 2024. During this period, we will provide substitute childcare at our branch unit, Happy Fox.	
For additional information, please contact our office (01/234-5678, veseli.zajcek@vrtci.si).	
Teacher: <i>Mateja Novak</i>	Principal: <i>Marija Krajnc</i>
01/234 56 78 happy.bunny@kindergartens.com	

Example of an official letter in the standard literary language

## Digital communication

Over the last decade, especially after the covid-19 pandemic and the closure of schools, digital communication has expanded significantly. This shift to digital channels has affected all aspects of our communication, including connecting with parents and monitoring children's progress. It is important that all written communication is done in the standard literary language to ensure professionalism and clarity in the transmission of information.

### E-mail and online communication with parents

Email has become the dominant channel for exchanging information with parents quickly and efficiently. In the kindergarten, we use it to send notifications about upcoming events, changes to timetables, special projects and children's progress. For example, if we are organising an excursion, we send out information about the date, time and necessary equipment. In addition, e-mail allows parents' questions to be addressed in a timely manner and provides quick feedback.

### Use of digital tools for educators

Digital tools make it much easier to organise and monitor progress. We have a variety of apps and applications to help us plan activities, monitor progress and communicate with parents. These allow educators to easily record children's progress, plan activities and communicate with parents, all from their phones. With this tool, all relevant information and notifications can be accessed, which helps to organise and work more efficiently. Parents can keep up-to-date with what is happening in the kindergarten, receive notifications and see photos and reports on their children's progress, which increases transparency and integration between the kindergarten and the family.

### Social networks and communication in pre-school education

Social networks have become an important part of our communication with families. We use them to share pictures and stories of events in the kindergarten, to inform about special occasions, celebrations or projects in the kindergarten. For instance, we can share photos from art workshops, giving parents a glimpse into the daily life of their child in the nursery. However, when using social media, we must be careful to protect the **privacy of children** and parents, and make sure that all publications comply with the kindergarten's internal regulations, the legislation (GDPR EU General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act 1 and 2) and the expectations of the families. Clear communication and respect for privacy are key to maintaining trust and a professional relationship.

### Telephone communication

Telephone communication allows us to exchange information quickly and easily from a distance. When it comes to communicating with parents in kindergarten, we use the phone especially when it is necessary to quickly communicate important information, for example if a child falls ill or something unexpected happens. In these cases, it is important to communicate clearly and accurately, because parents need accurate and timely information to be able to take appropriate action. When speaking to colleagues on the phone, it is essential that communication is effective and professional. Talking on the phone allows us to quickly resolve problems, share ideas or agree on tasks.

We need to pay attention to the paralinguistic part of communication, i.e. to the speed and conciseness of speaking, to the accents we make when communicating and, last but not least, to the tone and pitch of the voice. Since the telephone does not allow the transmission of non-verbal signals, we must also pay more attention to being clear and respectful in our words. We have to make sure that our language is colloquial literary, as this contributes to a clearer and more professional transmission of messages.

Mateja: "Good afternoon, Mrs Horvat. This is Mateja Novak, Lana's kindergarten teacher."  
Mrs Horvat: "Good afternoon, Mrs Mateja. Is there something wrong?"  
Mateja: "I am sorry to inform you that your daughter Lana has a fever. We have taken her temperature and it is currently 38.5 degrees."  
Mrs Horvat: "Hm, that's not good. What have you done so far?"  
Mateja: "We immediately got her comfortable and offered her enough fluids. Then I called you so that you can decide how to proceed."  
Mrs Horvat: "Thank you for informing us. What do you advise us to do?"  
Mateja: "I suggest you come and get Lana and take her to the doctor to find out the cause of her fever. Until you come back, we will continue to monitor her condition and provide her with additional comfort in our care."  
Mrs Horvat: "I see. We will organise a visit to the doctor right away. We apologise for not noticing any signs of fever at home."  
Mateja: "No problem, I understand. The most important thing is that Lana recovers as soon as possible."  
Mrs Horvat: "Thank you for your quick action and care. I will be there to pick Lana up as soon as possible."  
Mateja: "No worries. Thank you for responding. I hope Lana will be better soon. See you soon." ' '  
Mrs Horvat: "See you later. Thank you again."  
Mateja: "Take care. Goodbye."

Example of a telephone conversation in the colloquial literary language

## 2.5 CLEAR AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Communication is effective when the receiver understands the sender's message as the sender has formulated it. Its effectiveness is limited by obstacles in the communication process that can distort the message. Communication barriers can occur at the sender, in the communication path and at the receiver. For more information on barriers, see section 1.5 Communication barriers.

**To send** a message **effectively**, we need to **create a clear and specific message**. Instead of the generic "Put the toys away," we can say "I would like you to put the blocks back in the box that is here". The message needs to be **tailored to the recipient**, as communication with parents is different from communication with children. We need to be careful to **balance verbal and non-verbal messages**. Inconsistency with children leads to confusion and mistrust. If the teacher wants the children to calm down and get ready for rest, she will need to use a friendly tone, relaxed facial expressions and a calm posture to back up her/his words. At the end of the message always check the **understanding**. We ask for feedback on whether

our message has been understood correctly. After giving instructions on how to use the art materials, the teacher can ask the children "What are we going to do with the brushes?" This is to check that the children have understood the instructions.

In **effective message reception**, it is important to **listen actively and avoid interrupting** the speaker. We may think we have understood a message, but it may turn out that we are mistaken. We can **check the accuracy of our understanding** by rephrasing the message in our own words, which is called **paraphrasing**. The speaker can then correct our understanding more easily, and we can adjust our comprehension based on the feedback. Negotiation between the interlocutors continues until they reach agreement on the meaning of the message, and the receiver understands it as the sender intended.

To make listening as effective as possible, we should try to avoid:

1. **Rehearsing our response while the other person is speaking:** If we are thinking about what we want to say, we may miss important information that affects our response. For example, if a teacher praises Lana too quickly before she finishes her story, she may miss essential details. If Lana says, "Today at home I made..." and the teacher interrupts with, "Ah, so you were creating something again, right?", the teacher does not allow Lana to finish her thoughts, which may discourage her from further expression.
2. **Prejudice against a person or idea:** Listening with preconceived notions can make us cling to our beliefs and avoid accepting other viewpoints, which limits our ability to listen actively. For instance, if parents have prejudices against children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, they may not be willing to listen to the teacher's explanation that such children often need extra support and understanding. Such prejudice can prevent parents from accepting recommendations for additional help that could benefit the children.
3. **Aggressive listening:** Some listeners pay attention to the speaker only to criticize their ideas, personality, or other characteristics. This habit can lead to frustration and tension. For example, if Rok tells teacher Mateja that other children took his toys, and she interrupts with, "Rok, you need to learn to share and be kind," instead of listening fully, she misses understanding his emotions. Rok may feel misunderstood, and the teacher loses the opportunity for a deeper conversation.
4. **Fake listening:** This occurs when we pretend to pay attention while our mind is elsewhere. External signs, such as nodding and maintaining eye contact, are important—but only if sincere. For example, if Rok tells the teacher he built a large house out of blocks and the teacher nods and says, "Great, well done," while looking at the clock and thinking about the next activity, it only gives the impression of listening. Rok may quickly sense that he is not truly noticed, which can affect his self-esteem.

## Types of messages

For effective communication, it is very important that the messages we send are clear and respectful. Four types of messages can be distinguished: I-messages, you-messages, we-messages, and impersonal messages.

### I-messages

I-messages are a form of respectful communication. We express ourselves in the first person singular, thereby taking responsibility for the message. With *I-messages*, we communicate our own experiences, thoughts, feelings, desires, and observations. This emphasizes that it is a subjective opinion and allows room for other opinions and ideas. *I-messages* enable the educator to have a genuine conversation and personal contact with the child. For example, teacher Mateja addresses Rok:

*"I am angry because I see that you didn't put away the toys as we agreed. I want you to follow the instructions and put the toys in the box."*

Mateja expresses her feelings and wishes in a way that does not directly blame Rok but focuses on her own emotions and the situation. Instead of accusing him or using a blaming statement, as would happen in a *you-message* ("You didn't put away the toys!"), she uses an *I-message* to communicate how she feels ("I am angry") and what she expects ("I want you to follow the instructions").

### You-messages

With *you-messages*, responsibility for the message is shifted onto the listener ("You make me angry when you don't listen to me"). *You-messages* often create a sense of guilt in others. They are common in blaming, criticizing, attacking, or insulting. They tend to contain demands, criticisms, warnings, orders, or prohibitions. *You-messages* create distance between the sender and the receiver, and they may provoke defensive behaviour or bad feelings in the listener. An educator using *you-messages* emphasizes their own knowledge and experience and the right to point out the child's mistakes or inexperience. This type of communication hinders the connection with the child and a positive interpersonal relationship. For example, teacher Mateja scolds Rok:

*"Rok, why did you take the toy from Lana? That's not nice because Lana needs that toy."*

Mateja uses a blaming tone and emphasizes what Rok did wrong ("Why did you take the toy from Lana?"). In this case, Mateja does not express her feelings but blames Rok for his behavior, creating pressure rather than encouraging reflection or problem-solving.

### We-messages

*We-messages* shift responsibility to the group, reducing the role of individual responsibility. For example:

*"We need to solve this problem."*



With *we-messages*, we express a problem that is not just individual but concerns the whole group. This communicates that everyone is involved in the situation and responsible for resolving it. Emotional distance within the group decreases, people feel more connected, and responsibility is shared. When an educator uses *we-messages*, they are neither direct nor indirect in their instructions, so children may sometimes follow them and sometimes not. For example, teacher Mateja encourages the children:

*"Come on, children, we need to put the toys away."*

Mateja uses the first person plural, including herself in the task with the children. Instead of only telling the children to tidy up, she encourages joint participation, fostering a sense of teamwork. This approach helps build a feeling of belonging and shared responsibility, as no one is singled out; everyone is part of the solution. Such communication encourages children to cooperate while reducing the feeling of coercion, as it avoids direct commands.

### Impersonal messages

With *impersonal messages*, we remove our own responsibility from the message. We express generally known facts in the form of phrases, quotes, or statistical data. These messages are vague, non-binding, and therefore often ineffective. Communication between adults and children becomes generalized, unclear, and indefinite. For example, teacher Mateja addresses the teacher assistant and says:

*"The conflict over toys between Sara and Lana should be resolved. There should be more toys in the playroom."*

The message is not directed at any specific person and does not indicate who should carry out the action. Instead of clearly stating who should resolve the conflict or provide more toys, Mateja uses an impersonal tone: "should be resolved" and "there should be more toys." This creates the impression that the task is general and not assigned to a specific person. *Impersonal messages* often reduce the sense of responsibility, as it is unclear who is accountable for carrying out the task.

<b>I-messages:</b> "I want you to follow the instructions."	<b>You-messages:</b> "You are not following the instructions; you must fix this."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- take responsibility for the message</li> <li>- express our own experiences, thoughts, feelings, desires, and observations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- shift responsibility onto the listener</li> <li>- often involve demands, criticisms, warnings, orders, or prohibitions</li> </ul>
<b>We-messages:</b> "Let's all follow the instructions together."	<b>Impersonal messages:</b> "The instructions must be followed."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- shift responsibility to the group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- take no personal responsibility for the message</li> <li>- communication is generalized, unclear, and indefinite</li> <li>- message is neither direct nor indirect, so children may follow it sometimes and ignore it at other times</li> </ul>

Comparison of different types of messages

## Listening techniques for educators

Listening starts before verbal and non-verbal communication. It is a learned process of receiving, interpreting, evaluating, retrieving and responding to verbal or non-verbal messages. The first stage in the listening process is **reception**. If hearing is what we usually associate with listening, vision is also very important. Information from the visual domain reveals the non-verbal communication that completes the message. The second stage in the listening process is the **interpretation** of the message, when we attach meaning to the received message by relating the information to each other and taking into account the context of the situation and the relationship with the interlocutor. We **evaluate / assess** the message as good or bad, true or false, desirable or undesirable, with the help of critical thinking. The next stage is **recall**, when the message is stored in memory so that it can be responded to. The **reply** is the last stage in the listening process, which involves sending a verbal or non-verbal response that reflects the understanding or misunderstanding of the message received. Along the way, we may encounter barriers that limit our ability to listen and understand and lead to ineffective communication. So the good news is that listening is a skill - that is, we can learn to listen effectively. Through a variety of listening techniques, we can help children feel heard, understood and respected.

### LISTENING TECHNIQUES

Active listening	Paraphrasing	Use of open questions	Mirroring emotions
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#### Active listening

Lana comes to her teacher Mateja and says: "Today I drew a big picture." Teacher Mateja responds by active listening, "Really? What picture did you draw?" and bends down to Lana to be at her height, showing that she is genuinely interested in her answer. Then she adds, "I can see you're proud of it!"

Active listening is a communication skill in which the listener consciously and attentively follows the other person's message and tries to understand not only the content of what is being said, but also the emotions and the intent of the message. It involves paying attention to verbal and non-verbal communication and continuously checking comprehension with feedback, questions and summarising what is important. The aim is to achieve deeper understanding and empathy and to improve the quality of communication and relationships. It enables the educator to better understand the children's needs, feelings and experiences, leading to more effective communication and a deeper connection with the children. It is important to focus attention on the content of the message and the emotions expressed through body language. This shows understanding and attempts to mimic the emotions we perceive in the interlocutor. For example, when the interlocutor smiles and postures, we smile and straighten up ourselves.

**Elements of active listening**, which allow us to better place ourselves in the role of the interlocutor and recognise their perspective on the situation are:

1. **To hear the full meaning of the message.** Every message has a content and an emotion or attitude behind the content. To understand the full meaning of a message, you need to take both into account - what someone is saying and how they feel about it.
2. **Respond to your interlocutor's emotions.** Sometimes the emotion that the interlocutor wants to convey is more important than the content itself, so responding to the emotion revealed in the message is also more important. To respond properly, it is necessary to ask: what are they trying to tell me, how are they describing the situation, what is the meaning of the situation for them?
3. **To recognise both verbal and non-verbal signs in communication.** We need to understand that words do not tell us everything. Most of the message is conveyed through non-verbal communication cues.

## Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing means to transform, summarise and express the message received in our own words. This gives the interlocutor more space to express him- or herself and shows our interest in them, while at the same time encouraging them to communicate further and removing barriers to communication caused by misunderstandings. At the beginning of the summary in your own words, you can use a response like "You sound upset about it." or "You sound like you didn't like what I said." We can also use clarifying questions such as "If I understand correctly, do you mean that?" or "Do you mean that you don't want this?". Paraphrasing in the form of questions encourages further conversation. At the end of the message, the phrase "Did I say that right?" can be added, or "Did you mean it like that?". Teacher Mateja could paraphrase Lana's message "I made a big picture today and I am very proud of it." as "So you drew a big picture that you are very proud of. What did you draw on it?" Mateja repeats the basic idea of Lana's message in a slightly different form and in her own words. She demonstrates her understanding of Lana's sense of pride in the picture and encourages further discussion about what is drawn in the picture. Paraphrasing allows checking the understanding of the message and encourages further communication. We paraphrase after the listener has already formulated his or her message, because in otherwise we can be perceived as someone who is not listening. Paraphrasing is also useful in digital communication, where it is easy to misinterpret the message, as the communication is framed in words.

## Use of open questions

Open questions are those that cannot be answered with a simple **yes** or **no**. These are questions that encourage free speaking. We can prompt the interlocutor with **WH-questions**:

- What did you mean by that?

- How did it make you feel?
- Where did it all happen?
- When was the last time you felt like you did in this situation?

The open questions technique in kindergarten encourages children to express their thoughts and feelings in more detail.

Teacher Mateja can encourage Lana to talk with open-ended questions, such as "What did you draw in the picture? Tell me more about it."

### Mirroring emotions

The easiest way to imagine mirroring is to think of someone yawning. What happens when we imagine this? The chances are that we, too, start to yawn.

Mirroring is, at its core, imitation. We can imitate the speech patterns, the non-verbal communication, the vocabulary, the tone of voice and even the emotions of other people we come into contact with. Through mirroring, we communicate to our interlocutor, without words, that we are alike and that this makes us feel comfortable in their company. This allows us to relate more easily to others because we feel accepted and similar. Through mirroring, we create empathetic relationships and encourage pro-social behaviour. Others are more willing to help us if they feel like us, and vice versa - we are also more likely to help a person we feel similar to.

### Glossary

**Prosocial behaviour includes all activities that are valued positively by society. This includes empathy, altruism, solidarity, and cooperation. Empathy is the ability to understand and share another person's feelings, while altruism is selfless action for the benefit of others without expecting anything in return.**

Mirroring is an unconscious behaviour, which means we are rarely aware of it as it happens. However, it indicates that an interpersonal connection is forming between the interlocutors, leading to trust. When someone is sad, their posture is often slouched. In an attempt to comfort them, we unconsciously slouch our own posture, lower our voice, and slow down our movements, thereby showing compassion and empathy. The words and facial expressions of the interlocutor help us quickly recognize their emotions and respond as appropriately as possible. We mirror both pleasant emotions, such as joy, and unpleasant emotions, such as fear. We need to be particularly careful with unpleasant emotions, as they can remain with us after the conversation, weigh on us, and lead to difficulties with emotional self-regulation.

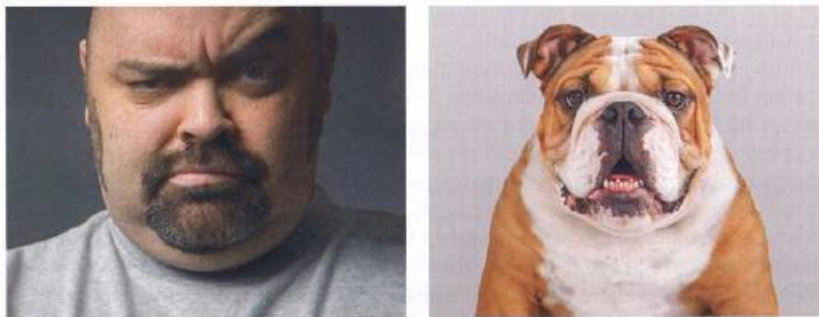
## Glossary

**Emotional self-regulation is the ability to manage and adjust one's own emotional responses in a way that is appropriate for the situation.**

Although mirroring is an unconscious process, with training and self-awareness we can learn to recognize it and use it intentionally to establish a connection with conversational partners. In psychotherapy, mirroring is used as a technique to help the interlocutor gain insight into their own thoughts and emotional experiences.

## Interesting fact:

**Even when choosing pets, we tend to prefer those that are somehow more similar to us or those that seem to reflect our relationships.**



We often choose pets based on how similar they are to us.

## Communication styles

An individual's communication style also contributes to effective, authentic, and open communication. **Communication style is a consistent way of interacting with others. It reflects how we express our thoughts, feelings, and ideas in communication with others. It includes various aspects, such as speech patterns, tone of voice, choice of words, and non-verbal communication.**

<b>ASSERTIVE</b>	socially encouraging, emotionally expressive, balanced tone of voice, relaxed, natural movements, achieves the goal without harming others
<b>AGGRESSIVE</b>	hostile, intimidating, dominance in posture, dominant gestures, loud
<b>PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE</b>	passively aggressive, sarcastic, sullen, ironic, a sweet and innocent personality
<b>SUBMISSIVE</b>	apologetic, avoids expressing opinions, avoids confrontation and eye contact, soft/quiet voice
<b>MANIPULATIVE</b>	cunning, patronizing, sullen, indirect

The most effective communication style that contributes to clear and efficient communication is the **assertive style**. In this style, we actively stand up for our basic rights without threatening the rights of others. It is expressed in situations where we need to share our feelings, ask for what we want, or refuse something we do not want. An assertive person shows the same respect for their own needs as for the needs of others. This helps develop self-respect and a sense of self-worth. We are aware of our emotions and needs and express them in a simple and direct way that does not threaten others. Respect and consideration for others are present, so they do not feel uncomfortable or guilty; instead, they respect us for our honesty and directness. An example of an assertive response would be Rok's reply in a situation where Tim does not let him build a tower with blocks because he keeps taking the blocks. Rok could say: "Tim, I would like to build a tower with these blocks. I need these blocks now. You can use the other blocks I have, or let me use these until I finish. Then you can take them if you want." His response is simple and clear, clearly expressing Rok's needs while offering Tim a fair option to play, without being inappropriate or offensive.

If a child grows up in a family where they must be perfect and constantly please their parents, they may develop into a person who is accommodating to everyone except themselves. Such a child often does things they do not want to do and gain no personal satisfaction from, simply to please others. The child may develop a **submissive style**, where they yield to the desires of others while neglecting their own rights and needs. A submissive person does not express their wishes or emotions, so others do not know them. Rok would behave submissively if he did not express his desire, quietly finished the game, or used blocks he did not like.

The **aggressive style** allows a person to assert their rights and fight to fulfil their desires, but often at the expense of others. This type of communication is commanding, harsh, and sometimes hostile, creating conflicts and enemies. Others respond defensively, either withdrawing or fighting, rather than cooperating. Because of its forceful nature, aggressive behaviour is sometimes short-term effective, as the person gets what they want, but it leaves damaged relationships behind. Rok would behave aggressively if he angrily grabbed the blocks from Tim, threw them on the floor, and shouted at him not to take his blocks.

The **passive-aggressive style** is shown when a person expresses anger and aggressive feelings indirectly, through passive resistance, instead of confronting the problem openly. This approach is rarely effective because it does not clearly communicate what the person wants. It provokes anger, confusion, and resentment in others. Rok might take the blocks from Tim while sighing loudly and visibly turning away to show his dissatisfaction. If the teacher asked what was wrong, he might respond: *"Oh, nothing special. If Tim wants these blocks, I'll just play with the others. No problem."* This behaviour shows a passive-aggressive style because Rok does not directly express his feelings or concerns, but instead uses indirect tactics such as sighing, turning away, and misleading responses, which can cause confusion and frustration in others.

The **manipulative style** involves trying to achieve one's goals by eliciting guilt or sympathy in others. A person may play the victim to get others to take care of them instead of taking responsibility for meeting their own needs. This often leads to mistrust and poor relationships, as people eventually realize they have been deceived. Rok could say to Tim: *"If you give me these blocks back, I'll give you a special block that you can use in your game. If you don't, you'll have to play alone because no one will want to play with you."* This is manipulative because Rok attempts to influence Tim's decision through a combination of threat and reward, aiming to achieve his goal - getting the blocks.

### Expanding knowledge: Learning assertiveness

Assertiveness is a skill and can be learned by children, educators and parents who set an example for their children. Six different areas need to be developed:

1. Developing a non-verbal assertive communication style: look the interlocutor in the eye, keep your body posture open, assume a confident body posture and straighten up, stay calm.
2. Recognise and be willing to assert your basic human rights: be aware that you have rights just like everyone else.
3. Awareness of your own feelings, needs and desires: ask yourself what you feel and what you want or do not want.
4. Testing assertive responses: it often helps if we first formulate our assertive response to a difficult situation on paper or share our response with someone in a safe environment.
5. Immediate assertiveness: assess your rights, set a time to talk that works for both of you, explain to your interlocutor the implications of the problem for you, express your feelings, express your wishes and explain to your interlocutor the benefits of cooperation.
6. Rejecting requests: often a "no" or "no, thank you" will suffice. Sometimes it is necessary to repeat this word twice. It is a good idea to explain to the interlocutor why you have refused the request.

When you see this behaviour in a child, you should support it with encouragement, praise or explanation so that they will be able to use it in a peer group in the future.

### What I have learned:

- In the preschool period, the use of language is crucial for a child's cognitive and social development.
- Educators must be objective and impartial when reporting on children, show empathy toward parents, and resolve disagreements calmly and professionally.
- Personal communication involves direct conversation between people. Through personal communication, we receive the most information, as we can

simultaneously share and interpret both verbal and non-verbal messages from the sender.

- Written communication in kindergartens, such as notices, reports, and invitations, is conducted in a formal language that ensures professionalism and clarity.
- Standard conversational language is used for more relaxed and accessible communication with parents, which contributes to better understanding and trust.
- Communication is effective when the receiver understands the sender's message as it was intended.
- Clear communication can be achieved by using I-messages, as they allow us to express our needs, feelings, and thoughts most easily.
- Listening techniques that can be used for more effective communication include active listening, paraphrasing, using open-ended questions, and emotional mirroring.
- The most effective communication style that contributes to clear and efficient communication is the assertive communication style.

### Acquire and integrate knowledge: from revision to understanding

1. Name the cognitive development stage according to Piaget that covers the preschool period.
2. In what ways can language development of preschool children be encouraged through play?
3. Define personal communication.
4. Give an example of a personal conversation with a parent who comes to pick up their child from kindergarten.
5. Prepare a clear and unambiguous message to be communicated via the notice board and e-mail, using appropriate computer technology.
6. How can educators in kindergarten use an app to monitor children's progress?
7. How can interaction with peers influence the social and language development of preschool children?
8. Describe how educators can combine the use of different language types (standard literary language and colloquial literary language) to achieve the best results in communication with parents and children.
9. Following the structure below, create an I-message when someone interrupts a conversation between you and the teacher assistant:  
Structure of an I-message: "When [description of behaviour], I feel [description of emotion] because [description of behaviour]."
10. How would you encourage a child to use I-messages?
  - a) During the morning activity in the classroom, teacher Mateja decides to explain instructions for a new creative activity where the children will make autumn decorations from paper. The classroom is noisy because some children are still playing with toys in the background, while others are talking among themselves.



Teacher Mateja starts speaking, standing by the table, and talks quickly because she is in a hurry. While explaining the instructions, some children loudly ask what they have to do, and others are distracted by their conversations. Teacher Mateja notices that most children are not following the instructions and has to repeat herself several times. The atmosphere becomes chaotic, as no one knows exactly what to do. Some children start making mistakes, while others haven't even started.

- a) What communication disturbances can you identify in this situation?
- b) How would you improve the effectiveness of communication in this situation?

12. Explain why it is important to check for understanding of a message, and give an example of how to do it.

### 3. NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

In this chapter you will learn:

- the importance of non-verbal communication in establishing a relationship with a pre-school child,
- the importance of touching, fist bumping, stroking and appropriate tone of voice,
- how to recognise a child's non-verbal cues,
- how to respond to a child's expression of needs and
- the importance of non-verbal expression in the preschool child.

Lana arrives at kindergarten in the morning quietly, with a worried expression on her face. The teacher immediately notices her emotional state and gently bends down to her, establishing soft eye contact and opening her arms for a hug. Lana steps toward the teacher without saying a word and hugs her, which gives her a sense of security. After a few moments, Lana feels more relaxed and then begins to participate in the morning activity.

**Reflect:** How did the teacher recognize Lana's emotional state without using words? Which forms of non-verbal communication did the teacher use to calm Lana? What is the importance of non-verbal communication in teaching and in establishing a sense of security for children in kindergarten? How might the situation have developed differently if the teacher had relied solely on verbal communication?

#### 3. 1 THE IMPORTANCE OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN A CHILD

Non-verbal communication includes everything that accompanies communication except spoken or written words. While words are primarily used to convey information, non-verbal communication helps establish interpersonal relationships. Words and gestures usually occur together, so a well-trained person can often anticipate the accompanying gesture just by listening to the voice. Although verbal and non-verbal communication are described as two separate forms, we must recognize that they are connected and both are part of the same communication system. Preschool children are still developing the ability to recognize and interpret messages through both verbal and non-verbal channels. Non-verbal communication plays a crucial role in building relationships with preschool children, as they rely heavily on non-verbal cues in interactions.

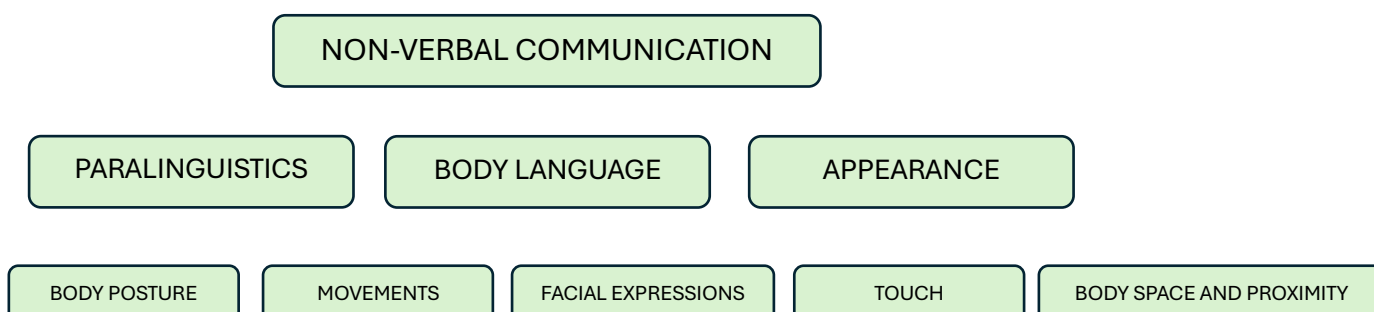
When establishing contact, the teacher establishes **trust and a sense of security** with the child through an open posture, a calm and encouraging voice, eye contact and calm movements. Pre-school children are not yet adept at **expressing their** feelings in words. If a child is afraid, he or she may hold on to another person and hide. The teacher can recognise

this emotion and reassure the child. In addition to words, the teacher uses non-verbal communication to encourage the child to regulate his/her emotions. She can reassure the child by using an appropriate tone of voice, if the child is shaking, she can take the child by the hand, she can make eye contact by squatting down to the child and they are on the same level. Touching, holding, caressing and an appropriate tone of voice are important for establishing a sense of security, trust and emotional connection between children and kindergarten teachers. Physical contact, such as hugging or holding, makes children feel safe and loved. Young children often seek the closeness of adults as this helps them to regulate their emotions. For example, if a child is upset or frightened, they can be gently holding them can calm them down. Gentle stroking on the back or arm helps the children to relax and creates a feeling of comfort and attention. This is particularly important during periods when the child is feeling insecure or adjusting to a new environment. An appropriate tone of voice tells children that they are in a safe environment. For example, a soothing tone of voice when reading a story or at times when a child needs comfort can influence a child's mood and help them to better understand their feelings. This kind of non-judgmental communication in kindergarten boosts the child's self-confidence and reduces stress.

In addition to all these advantages of non-verbal communication, the teacher also acts as a role model for the children, as they learn to recognise non-verbal signs by observing them, and at the same time they learn appropriate behaviour. In this way, they develop **social skills - skills that enable them to interact effectively and appropriately with other people**. For preschool children, developed social skills are key to establishing and maintaining positive interpersonal relationships, helping children to be more confident and socially engaged, helping children to deal effectively with problems and conflicts, and leading to better emotional health and well-being.

### 3.2 SIGNS OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

For better understanding, the signs of non-verbal communication are divided into three categories: body language, paralinguistics and outward appearance.



#### Body language

Body language reveals emotions and thoughts, as it is the outward expression of a person's emotional state. Every movement a person makes can tell us something about the emotion

he or she is experiencing at that moment. Body language includes facial expressions, movements, body posture, body space and proximity and touch.

### Facial expressions

Our face is the most expressive part of our body. If we think of a photograph of a face, we can read the message on the face just from capturing the moment. Facial expressions of basic emotions (joy, fear, sadness, anger) are innate and universal, which means that they occur in all people and are expressed in the same way everywhere in the world.

**Grief** is the emotion we feel when we lose something that is important to us, such as a loved one. The facial expressions that convey grief are seen in the downturned corners of the mouth, the lips may tremble, the eyes may be closed and the gaze may be downward.

**Fear** is an emotion we experience when we feel threatened or when something important to us is threatened. At the same time, we experience that danger is greater than our capacity. It can be recognised by the facial expression, which is seen in an open mouth and tense or bulging eyes, the eyebrows are raised, aligned, and pressed tightly together; in the middle of the forehead, distinct horizontal lines may appear.

**Anger** is an emotion that we experience when something or someone is preventing us from achieving our goals. It can be recognised by bulging eyes, lowered and pinched eyebrows, the mouth may be straight and pressed together or open as when shouting, the nostrils may be flared.

**Joy** is an emotion experienced when a desire is fulfilled or a goal is achieved. Facial expressions that convey joy are seen in the upturned corners of the lips and eyes, the lines around the eyes and the outer corners of the lips. The cheeks are raised in a smile.

A special place among facial expressions is occupied by the **smile**, which indicates that facial expressions are not only related to emotions, but also to interpersonal relationships. Most of our smiles are not directed at ourselves, but at other people around us. A genuine smile is different from a made-up smile. A smile without real emotion involves only the lips, whereas a smile that is genuine also involves the muscles around the eyes contracting.

### Movements

Quick movements can express inner relaxation, lightness, liveliness and inspiration, for example when a child in kindergarten runs towards his friends in quick steps to join in a game. At the same time, fast movements can also express determination, for example when a child quickly grabs a ball to throw it at a basket. Sometimes, however, quick movements can give an unpleasant impression, as they can convey restlessness or nervousness, for example when a child moves his hands quickly and nervously while looking for a lost object. Slow movements may indicate seriousness and calmness, for example when a child slowly and

skimpily stacks blocks to build a tower, which shows thoroughness and concentration. Sometimes slow movements can also convey laziness or indecision, for example when a child chooses a toy slowly and hesitantly, which can give the impression that he or she is unsure about the game or is having difficulty making a decision. Movements are used to emphasise what is being said and also to express unspoken feelings.

### Body posture

Body posture can reveal a lot about how a person feels and how they feel about a subject or an interlocutor. For example, a slouched posture with drooping shoulders often indicates discomfort, sadness or frustration. On the other hand, the fact that a child is lying on a table or supporting his/her head with his/her hand may indicate a feeling of boredom or lack of interest in the topic.

### Body space and proximity

When we feel attached to someone, we say that we are “close” to that person, and when we lose our connection with someone, we say that we have “distanced ourselves” from them. We all have our own personal space, which changes depending on the situation and our relationship with the person we are communicating with. The distances between speakers may vary somewhat depending on the culture, but the relationship between different types of personal spaces remains roughly the same. Children typically master spatial boundaries by the age of 12.

**The intimate space** (15-45 cm) is the closest area around us, where we only allow those with whom we are emotionally close, such as friends, partners and close relatives, to enter. The confidential area, which measures up to 15 cm, is even narrower and is only used for very personal physical contact.

**Personal space** (0.5-1.5 m) is the distance we maintain with acquaintances, colleagues and people with whom we have regular but not particularly intimate contact. This distance allows for comfortable interaction without too much shrinking of personal space.

**Social space** (1.5-3.5 m) is the distance we maintain with strangers or people we do not know well, such as postmen or plumbers. This space allows us to respect our personal space when we meet people in everyday situations.

**Public space** (more than 3.5 m) is a wider distance that we use when addressing large groups of people in public. This space provides comfort and allows communication to be established with a wide audience without personal proximity.



public space   social space   personal space   intimate space

## Touch

Touch is important for the physical and mental well-being of the child, for creating a close and trusting interpersonal relationship between parent and child. From a biological point of view, touch is the basis for a sense of emotional security, care and communication. As a means of communication in stressful situations, it can develop in the child a sense of security, trust, belonging and support. Touch can influence good interpersonal relationships and positive behaviour. Appropriate touch in the early development of a child influences the development of positive emotions in both the child and the educator.

## Paralinguistics

Paralinguistics involves the way we speak and the voice. It includes changing the pitch, volume and colour of the voice, the hurriedness and rhythm of speaking, and it also includes crying, laughing, sighing and whistling. Such elements make the message more interesting.

The pitch of the voice helps to shape the meaning of the message and to control the direction and intensity of the message. Even pupils can perceive a sentence that has a higher pitch of voice than the message. As we grow up, we learn to adjust the pitch of our voice: higher when greeting and lower when saying goodbye. Children are only able to detect sarcasm later, as it differs from a non-sarcastic sentence only in pitch and tone.

We adjust the volume of our voice to the situation; the louder we are, the more intense the message will be — but not necessarily. Even if we lower our voice and align it with our facial expression and body posture, the message can still be just as intense.

In the educational process, the speed and rhythm of speech are also important, as they must not be too fast so that children can follow the instructions and the group does not become confused. The educator's speech should be friendly, emotionally warm, engaging, and not loud or arrogant.

## External Appearance

External appearance is an important element of nonverbal communication, as it can reveal a great deal about a person and their emotional state. Our clothing, hairstyles, and personal hygiene create a first impression and express our personal characteristics and emotions.

Formal clothing can indicate seriousness, while casual clothing conveys friendliness. The colours of our clothes influence how emotions are perceived. Bright colours often express joy, while dark colours may suggest seriousness. Hairstyle also affects how others see us. A carefully maintained hairstyle gives the impression that we are organized, while an unkempt hairstyle may signal neglect. Personal hygiene and attention to appearance show how we see ourselves and how others perceive us. Neglecting hygiene can affect how people judge us. All these characteristics help us understand how a person feels and behaves in different situations.

An educator in kindergarten should be appropriately groomed and dressed in a way that reflects professionalism, while also being comfortable and approachable. It is important that clothing allows for movement and is suitable for working with children, which requires activity, flexibility, and sometimes work on the floor. Clothes should be clean, neat, and appropriate for the season, but not too formal, as the educator should appear friendly and accessible.

### **Tips for Appropriate Appearance of a Preschool Teacher**

**1. Clothing:**

Preschool teachers usually wear kindergarten smocks with a sewn-on children's motif over their own clothes. Their personal clothing should be comfortable, relaxed, and allow freedom of movement, while still appearing professional. For example, trousers or a skirt paired with a polo shirt or blouse. Clothing that is too casual, such as tracksuits, is not appropriate.

**2. Colours:**

Light and pleasant colours help create a positive atmosphere for children. Teachers should avoid very dark colours, as these may appear too serious or create a sense of distance.

**3. Footwear:** Comfortable, closed shoes that allow safe movement and interaction with children, as work often requires activities such as walking, sitting on the floor or kneeling.

**4. Hairstyle:** Neat and simple hairstyle that keeps hair out of the way when working with children. In the case of longer hair, it may be pinned up so that it does not interfere with movement or play.

**5. Personal hygiene:** The teacher should always be fresh and well-groomed, as he/she is a role model for the children. This includes clean hands, neat nails and a pleasant and not overpowering smell.

**6. Accessories:** Excessive or distracting accessories that could interfere with the work or be dangerous for the children should be avoided.

<b>Blouse</b> Choose a button-down blouse or a T-shirt.	<b>Sleeveless T-shirt</b> Avoid tight-fitting tank tops with thin straps, stretchy or too tight blouses and graphic print shirts.
<b>Jacket or cardigan</b> The jacket and cardigan emphasise personality and add colour.	<b>Stained or frayed jeans</b> Jeans should not be torn or holey and the edges of the trouser legs should not be frayed.
<b>Trousers</b> Trousers, dark jeans and skirts are appropriate.	<b>Flip-flops</b> Forget about flip-flops and worn-out sneakers.
<b>Ballerinas</b> They go with everything, although fashion sneakers or sandals are fine too.	

### 3.3 CHILDREN'S ARTWORK AND CREATIONS

Lana expresses herself mainly through drawing and plasticine design. When she draws, she often uses large circles and lines drawn with vibrant colours such as red, blue and yellow. These drawings express her joy and energy. Lana also loves to create with soft plasticine. Her products are simple, often forming balls or small figures which she then presses together. Through these activities she expresses her curiosity and explorative nature. Rok expresses himself in different ways. His drawings are already more complex and often include family members, the house and trees. He uses a variety of colours and often draws smiling faces, indicating his happiness and contentment at home. He also likes to create in clay. His products, such as small cars and animals, are precise and show his advanced motor skills. In addition, Rok likes to sing and dance. His singing is loud and cheerful, and he often sings songs he hears in kindergarten, which shows that he is happy and sociable. Dancing is an opportunity for him to express his energy and creativity, and his pibs are relaxed and in tune with the music.

Children's artwork and physical expressions, such as singing or dancing, are important ways of non-verbal communication through which we can try to understand emotionally, cognitive and social state of children.

#### Children's drawing

Children's drawings are very interesting because they express, in a unique way, what is happening in a child's inner world. When children are happy and feel safe and loved, their drawings are often full of bright, lively colours. For example, a five-year-old boy drew his father with very big eyes and a smile, adding: "My daddy is always happy."

However, if some children's drawings are dominated by dark colours, this may indicate that the child is currently feeling worried, sad, or uncertain. Dark colours can be a way for children



to express emotions or concerns they may not yet fully understand or be able to put into words. Although dark colours are not necessarily a sign of problems, it is always helpful for adults to pay attention to changes in a child's drawings and to talk with them in order to better understand what lies behind their artistic expressions.



Drawings can also tell us a lot about a child's self-image. If a child draws themselves as a small or unclear figure, this may indicate low self-esteem. On the other hand, large and detailed drawings can reflect high self-confidence. Drawings also reveal how a child perceives the world around them. For example, a drawing of a house may show how the child views their home and surroundings. Children often exaggerate windows, doors, or the sun to highlight what is important to them. Common themes in drawings can reflect a child's interests, concerns, or significant events in their life.

Preschool children often draw their family, which reflects their perception of family relationships. For instance, a six-year-old boy drew his jealous brother in the first position, while he placed himself small at the bottom of the page. Children at this age often draw what they know about people without worrying about realistic details. Understanding children's drawings requires careful observation and discussion with the child to correctly interpret the symbolism and emotions they express.

Children's drawings are also often used as a diagnostic tool, as they can reveal important information about a child's emotional state. Drawing is frequently an easier and more natural way for children to express themselves than speaking. Through drawing, children often communicate feelings, thoughts, and concerns that they may find difficult to express with words.

## Glossary

**A diagnostic tool in the context of children's drawings is a method used to assess a child's emotional and psychological state. Through expert analysis of the drawings, we can discover how the child feels, thinks and experiences the world around him or her, helping us to understand any problems or concerns that are otherwise difficult to put into words.**

## Clay and plasticine products

In addition to drawings, plasticine or clay products can reveal a child's emotions, intellect and developmental abilities. If the products are smooth and harmonic, this may indicate positive emotions, while rough and messy products may indicate frustration or restlessness. The theme and shape of the products can tell us what the child is feeling at the moment, and cognitive and motor skills can be assessed by the intricacy and precision of the design.

## Singing

Singing is another important way of expressing emotions. The tone, tempo and volume of singing can indicate a child's mood. A happy and lively song may indicate joy, while a slow and languid song may indicate sadness or anxiety. In addition, the lyrics of the songs that children sing often reveal their thoughts and feelings. Singing in a group can show us a child's desire for social connection and interaction with peers.

## Dancing

Dancing allows children to express their emotions through movement. Relaxation and freedom in movement can indicate joy and confidence, while inhibited and rigid movements can indicate restraint or distress. Through dance, children can express their creativity and imagination, and dance skills give us insight into a child's physical coordination, balance and physical development.

Creative activities such as drawing, plasticine or clay moulding, singing and dancing are also important for children because they allow them to express their identity and self-image. The choice of colours, shapes and themes can tell us how children see themselves and how they want others to see them. In addition, creative activities are often a way for children to cope with stress or to process traumatic experiences. The products and activities they choose may contain symbolic elements that reflect their inner conflicts and feelings. It is important to approach the interpretation of children's products and activities with sensitivity and an understanding of the whole context of the child's life. The analysis of these expressions should be complemented by talking to the child and observing his/her behaviour in different situations. This will help us to better understand and support the child's developmental path.

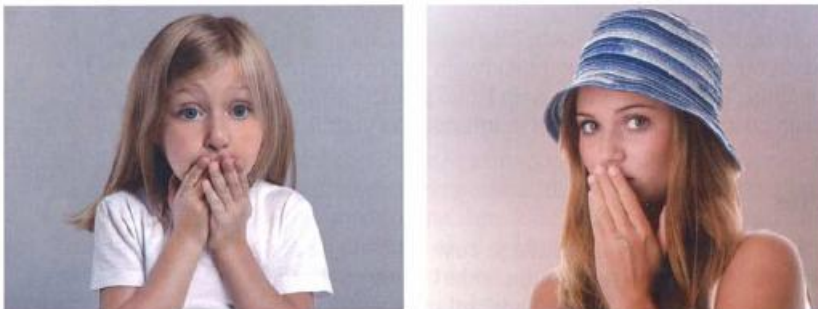


### 3.4 IDENTIFYING LIES

Children's expressions are easier to recognize than those of adults due to lower facial muscle tone. As people age, their reaction speed decreases, and some movements become less obvious. When a five-year-old child lies, they will most likely cover their mouth immediately with one or both hands. This movement immediately alerts parents to the lie. We can observe that this gesture persists throughout life. A teenager does something similar to a five-year-old, but instead of clearly covering their mouth, they lightly touch their lips. Adults also receive a brain signal to cover their mouth to hide a lie, but at the last moment, they withdraw their hand from the face and briefly touch their nose. With age, our movements become more controlled, subtle, and less obvious, which is why children's gestures are easier to read than those of adults.

Children begin telling their first untruths early, during the development of imagination. In the preschool period, the concept of truth and falsehood develops rapidly, and with age, children learn to maintain a lie during a conversation or to conceal it. Children most often lie to cover up mistakes.

In preschool children, lies can be recognized by gestures such as lowering the head and letting the corners of the mouth droop. Slightly older children can better conceal their lies. Signs include restlessness, shaking the head, shifting weight from one foot to the other, or twisting their hands.



Body language development in child and teenager lying

A school-age child is already more accustomed to concealing the truth, so they are aware that their body language needs to be hidden. Lies in these children can be recognized by a calm posture, a blank facial expression, and an expressionless tone of voice, which are all intended to conceal deception. Alternatively, the child may exaggerate the opposite emotion to the one they truly feel, while using short sentences, stuttering, and pausing between individual words.

#### Interesting fact:

**Some research even claims that a child's nose fills up with blood when he or she lies, so watch out for redness on the nose or the urge to scratch the nose. But maybe there is a grain of truth in the story of the Pinocchio.**

When a child lies, it is important to recognize the lie as quickly as possible and confront them about it. When the child admits a mistake, show that you are pleased that they were able to take responsibility and be honest. Adult acknowledgment is a key motivator. If a child receives a negative reaction when admitting the truth, they will feel bad for being honest. However, if they are met with a smile and a hug—even if they know that their lie will inevitably lead to consequences—they will learn an important lesson: honesty is rewarded. In kindergarten, we can read stories with children, such as *Pinocchio* and *The Emperor's New Clothes*, which explore the theme of lying and its consequences. These stories help encourage discussion about the importance of honesty and how lying can affect relationships and trust.

When trying to recognize lies, we cannot rely on a single gesture, such as touching the mouth. Just like words, gestures require contextual understanding. For example, the word "Frank" can mean either a personal trait or a person's name. Similarly, gestures must be interpreted in context, taking into account the individual's usual behaviour. For some people, touching their mouth may be habitual and not indicate a lie. Therefore, when identifying lies, it is important to observe the full range of nonverbal cues and analyse them in connection with verbal communication, as well as the individual's habits and personality.

### 3.5 TASKS OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Non-verbal communication has three main functions. The first is to **express thoughts and feelings**. This means that the same verbal message can change its meaning completely depending on posture, eye contact, facial expressions and tone of voice. For example, if we say "Great, well, you see" three times with different facial expressions and postures, we are conveying a different message each time, even though we are using the same words.

The second task is to **emphasise what is being said**. Non-verbal cues such as movements, facial expressions or tone of voice can be used to further reinforce the meaning of words. When we say "I said, "No!" and fixing our gaze while keeping a serious expression, these words have a more assertive ring. Non-verbal communication also helps us to **clarify and illustrate what is being said**, for example by pointing to the object being talked about when giving instructions for a game, or by clapping at the end of a game to make it clear to the children that the activity has ended. We also **correct our words** when we use gestures to replace missing or incorrect expressions and express emotions, such as a child raising his hand to his mouth in surprise.

The third task is **regulating mutual interaction in conversation**. Nonverbal cues often determine the flow and rhythm of communication. When a conversation is coming to an end, we can stand up, offer a handshake, or shrug our shoulders, signalling that the meeting is over. This is much more polite than directly saying that we are bored or need to leave.

### 3.6 COMPARISON OF VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

The differences between verbal and non-verbal communication are important for understanding interpersonal communication. When we speak, we use only one channel - words that can be spoken one after the other at a given moment. One word follows another, which limits us to one stream of communication. In non-verbal communication, however, messages are transmitted through several channels simultaneously. During a conversation, facial expressions, movements, body posture and tone of voice are all simultaneously manipulated, allowing the interlocutor to receive several signals at once. This makes non-verbal communication much more multifaceted. Non-verbal communication is also continuous and takes place simultaneously with the sending and receiving of messages. When we speak or listen, we are already observing the other person's response and checking their non-verbal response, which guides us in further communication. In verbal communication, we have clearly defined roles - whether we are speaking or listening. In addition, verbal communication requires conscious thought about what we want to say, whereas non-verbal communication is often spontaneous and unconscious. It is these uncontrolled messages that often reveal the serious feelings and thoughts of the interlocutor, as they betray feelings that would not be so easily expressed in words.

#### Expanding knowledge: Non-verbal signs of abused children

Kindergarten teachers need to be alert to a variety of non-verbal signs that may indicate that a child may be physically abused. These signs may be subtle. They may vary from child to child. Some common signs of non-verbal communication that may indicate physical abuse are:

1. **Avoiding physical contact:** The child may react strongly to touch, for example twitching or withdrawing, even if the touch is gentle or intended to comfort. Children who have been abused may avoid eye contact with adults, especially those in authority, which may be a sign of fear or shame.
2. **Unusual fearfulness:** the child may show fear of adults, especially if they are associated with abuse, or express anxiety in environments that remind him/her of violent situations. The child becomes unusually quiet or withdraws from peers, avoiding social interaction and play.
3. **Constant attention:** The child may be overly attentive or tense, as if expecting something bad to happen. He may react strongly to sudden movements or loud noises.
4. **Posture and movement:** Children who have been physically abused may move rigidly, as if to protect certain parts of their body from being touched. If the abuse has caused physical injuries, the child may have difficulty moving or show signs of pain during physical activities.
5. **Unexplained injuries or common illnesses:** When asked about bruises, cuts or other injuries, the child may avoid answering or give inconsistent accounts. A child who

frequently complains about physical problems or frequently visits the medical profession may be seeking help in a non-verbal way.

6. **Regressive behaviour:** In the event of severe stress or trauma, a child may revert to behaviours he has outgrown, for example sucking his thumb or wetting the bed again. The child may become unusually attached to the caregiver, which may be a sign of seeking safety and comfort.
7. **Numb facial expressions:** Abused children may show little emotion, perhaps as a coping mechanism to avoid showing vulnerability. The child may appear frightened, worried or depressed, even in situations where other children are enjoying themselves.
8. **Hesitancy to change clothes for activities:** If a child has bruises on their body, they may avoid changing clothes to take part in activities where more skin would be visible, such as swimming.
9. **Aggression or defiant behaviour:** some abused children may express their distress through angry or defiant behaviour, because they have no better way to cope with their emotions. The child may show a tendency to harm himself or others as a way of expressing inner pain.
10. **Fear of going home:** The child may show restraint or anxiety at the end of the kindergarten day, especially if the abuse is happening at home. He or she may express a wish to stay longer in the kindergarten.

Kindergarten educators are often in a unique position to notice changes in a child's behaviour or physical condition, so their observations are key to identifying abuse more quickly. It is important that they observe these signs with a sense of concern, and always confirm them by careful analysis and consideration of the whole context. It is not possible to conclude for certain that abuse has taken place on the basis of just one sign of non-verbal communication, so they need to be careful, and they should consult experts if they suspect abuse.

### What I have learned:

- Non-verbal communication includes everything that accompanies communication other than the spoken or written words.
- Through non-verbal communication, the kindergarten teacher helps to establish trust and a sense of security in the child, influences the child's emotion regulation and develops social skills that are important for facilitating interpersonal integration.
- There are three forms of non-verbal communication: body language, paralinguistics and external appearance.
- When recognising non-verbal speech, we should not limit ourselves to a single movement and consider it in isolation and independently of circumstances or other movements. If a child scratches his nose, it may be a sign of lying, or his nose may

hurt or itch, or maybe he smells something. Therefore, we cannot be absolutely certain about the message based on non-verbal speech.

### Acquire and integrate knowledge: from revision to understanding

1. What signs of non-verbal communication do you notice most often in children?
2. What non-verbal signs indicate that a child needs help or attention?
3. How can the educator respond appropriately to the child's non-verbal communication?
4. Role-play: divide into pairs: one is the child, the other is the educator. "The child" expresses his/her needs through non-verbal signs (worried face, crying, moving away, hugging). "The educator" must respond appropriately, without using words (with calm proximity, a smile, and gentle touch). After each role-play, analyse how you identified the child's need and what was the impact of their non-verbal response.
5. What emotions do children often express through the vibrant colours in their drawings?
6. Imagine you have a child who regularly draws pictures with dark colours and often adds very unusual shapes and patterns to the pictures. How would you interpret these drawings and what would you need to do to better understand the child's emotional state?
7. How could the use of different creative activities (drawing, clay, singing, dancing) together contribute to a holistic understanding of the child's emotional and social state? Justify your answer by taking into account the specific cases of each country.
8. What are the non-verbal signs of children whose need for security is not being met?

## 4. ETIQUETTE

In this chapter you will learn:

- what is etiquette,
- basic rules of etiquette when communicating with parents and colleagues, and
- how to apply etiquette in an appropriate way in a group of children.

When Lana's parents first come to see teacher Mateja for a chat, she greets them with a smile and a very friendly hello: "Good afternoon, welcome. I am Mateja Novak, the kindergarten teacher." The parents introduce themselves and shake hands. Mateja says: "How nice of you to come to the talk. I look forward to talking about your Lana today." She makes a good first impression by being neat, punctual and ready. The room is clean and welcoming. Mateja actively listens, emphasises the positive aspects of Lana's development and speaks respectfully about her progress. At the end, she summarises the main points, thanks for the visit and offers further communication: "Thank you very much for coming. If you have any further questions, feel free to contact me. Have a nice day." The parents say thank you and goodbye, and Mateja, smiling, escorts them to the exit.

**Consider:** How did Mateja behave in relation to Lana's parents? What impression did she leave on them? Could she have done anything else to improve the initial communication?

### 4.1 WHAT IS ETIQUETTE

Etiquette is a set of rules designed to help people establish and maintain orderly and respectful relationships with one another. It comes from the French words *bon ton*, which mean "good tone." It includes various aspects such as introductions, handshakes, communication, and behaviour in different situations. Although etiquette rules may seem complicated, they are actually very simple and help us to be kind and respectful toward others.

#### Kindergarten teacher and child

In relation to children, etiquette is manifested in encouraging their development and in fostering positive interactions with them. The educator must create an environment where children can develop safely in all areas - cognitive, emotional, social and motor. This involves using a variety of pedagogical approaches and adapting the activities to the developmental stage of the children, while encouraging their curiosity and creativity. A positive attitude



means being kind, patient and respectful, using praise to build confidence and actively listening to children. Children need clear boundaries and rules for safe development, and the educator must take into account their individual characteristics and ensure that these boundaries are set without violating their dignity and self-esteem.

### Kindergarten teacher and parents

In the relationship with parents, etiquette is important in communicating information clearly and respectfully, and in being cooperative. The teacher should provide parents with clear information about the children's progress, problems and daily activities in the kindergarten. This information should be communicated in a coherent and professional manner, which helps to build trust. The teacher should be open to working with parents, to face educational and developmental challenges together. It is important that the teacher listens to parents' concerns, is available to talk and offers support to parents.

### Kindergarten teacher and colleagues

A good relationship between teachers and colleagues in kindergarten is very important for a successful work and a pleasant working environment. Teachers need to be actively involved, which means attending meetings, sharing information and coordinating activities. It is important that communication is open and honest and that everyone contributes to common goals. Mutual support and cooperation are key; educators should recognise each other's efforts, offer help and respect different pedagogical approaches. When conflicts arise, educators should resolve problems constructively and professionally, seeking joint solutions and taking into account the views of others, always with the welfare of the children and the work environment in mind. Read more about working with colleagues in section 6.3 Teamwork.

## 4.3 BASIC RULES OF ETIQUETTE

### How do we present ourselves properly?

- 1. State your name:** When introducing yourself, clearly and loudly say your first and last name. For example: "Hello, I am Mateja Novak." Then mention your role or position: "I am Mateja Novak, a preschool teacher." If your first or last name is difficult to pronounce, say it twice. For example: "I am Bonifina Košmrlj, Bonifina Košmrlj."
- 2. Establish eye contact:** Look the person in the eyes, as this shows confidence and respect.
- 3. Smile:** A friendly smile creates a good impression and shows that you are approachable.

## How do we shake hands?

Handshake is an important part of etiquette, expressing respect, trust and professionalism. Different types of handshakes can have different meanings. A firm, but not too firm, handshake lasting approximately 2-3 seconds is recommended. This type of handshake shows confidence and respect and helps to create a good first impression. It is advisable to maintain eye contact and smile during the handshake, which contributes to a friendly and open impression and shows that we are attentive and respectful.

A too firm handshake, where the grip is excessively strong, can cause discomfort or even pain, and may come across as aggressive, disrespectful, and unprofessional. Refusing to shake hands, by not offering your hand, is also discouraged, except for specific reasons such as health limitations or cultural practices. Using the left hand for a handshake, which is rarely accepted, may seem inappropriate or odd, as most cultures expect a right-hand handshake. An excessively long handshake can become uncomfortable and is therefore not recommended.

The term “dead fish” handshake describes a handshake that is limp and weak. The person’s hand remains soft and without pressure, signalling a lack of energy, confidence, or interest, and is generally discouraged.



Excessively strong handshake



Dead fish handshake

Erving Goffman describes the rules of social interactions, including who should offer their hand first in different social contexts. He emphasizes that the handshake should be initiated by the person of higher social status, that a lady should always offer her hand to a gentleman, and that an older person should offer their hand to a younger person. He also advises that when approaching a group, the handshake should be extended to everyone present or to no one. The principle of precedence provides guidelines on whom to introduce to whom: a newcomer is introduced to those present, a stranger to an acquaintance, a subordinate to a superior by function, oneself to someone who has been announced, a younger person to an older person, and a man to a woman.

## First impression

A first impression is the opinion we form of someone immediately after meeting them for the first time. This impression is formed quickly, often within the first few seconds of interaction,

and is based on observable signs such as appearance, behaviour, body language and the way they communicate.

The author of the definition of first impression is the psychologist Solomon Asch, who is known for his research in the field of social psychology. He found that people quickly form a strong opinion about someone based on limited information, which is the basis for the First Impression Concept. Because it is formed so quickly, we need to be prepared the first time we meet someone. Our body language, facial expressions, movements and body odour play an important role in how others perceive us. We need to make sure that we are well-groomed and that we reflect confidence and friendliness. Once the first impression is formed, it persists and influences the subsequent opinion of us. When parents first meet the kindergarten teacher, their first impression will be used to assess whether the educator is competent and trustworthy.

## Glossary

**Social psychology is the field of psychology that studies how individuals think, feel and behave in social situations. It is interested in the effects that other people have on the individual and how the individual influences others.**

Here are some tips we can use when we want to make a good first impression. Remember that a first impression is strong and long-lasting. With the right preparation, we can make a great first impression that will be useful in many situations later on:

**Punctuality:** arriving on time for a meeting shows that you respect the other person's time. This shows that you appreciate their effort, which is an important part of a positive first impression.

**Neatness:** Make sure you are neat and that your clothes are appropriate for the occasion.

**Greeting:** Greet in a friendly and confident manner.

**Smile:** A smile is a powerful tool that can immediately create a positive atmosphere.

**Eye contact:** Maintain eye contact, as it demonstrates confidence and attentiveness.

**Body language:** Pay attention to your posture, facial expressions and movements. Avoid closed body postures such as crossed arms.

In addition to the first impression, everyday communication with parents is also crucial. The educator should address parents formally to show respect. Conversations should be respectful and friendly, without any belittling comments about colleagues or management, and without discussing personal matters, other children, or parents. Clear and simple communication is key so that parents fully understand all information. Active listening is also important to recognize and understand parents' concerns and needs. When problems arise, we must collaborate with parents and seek joint solutions. It is equally important to always find opportunities for praise, while delivering criticism in a constructive manner.

For more on active listening and body language, see chapters 2.5 *Clear and Effective Communication* and 3 *Non-verbal Communication*.

Our behaviour in the kindergarten is extremely important, as it affects the overall image of the kindergarten, opinions about staff, the building of trust among all participants, establishing a pleasant atmosphere, the demonstration of respect, and care for the well-being of everyone involved. This means that our behaviour is not only important for how others perceive us but also has broader consequences that impact the overall reputation and environment of the kindergarten.

### **What I have learned:**

- Etiquette (bonton) comes from the French words for “good tone” and includes rules for maintaining respectful relationships.
- The educator creates a good first impression with parents through a friendly greeting, self-introduction, and eye contact.
- During conversations with parents, the educator maintains respect, clarity, actively listens, and offers support.
- The preschool teacher refrains from derogatory comments and from discussing personal matters.
- With children, the educator creates a safe and encouraging environment, sets clear boundaries, and respects their dignity.
- A good relationship among educators and colleagues is essential for a positive work atmosphere and success. The educator strives for open communication, support, and constructive conflict resolution.

### **Acquire and integrate knowledge: from revision to understanding**

1. Explain the term 'bon ton'.
2. How do we present ourselves properly in a formal setting? What is important when handling someone?
4. Explain the term dead fish in the context of handling.
5. How should you, as an educator, introduce yourself to parents at the first meeting and why is this important?
6. How would you deal easily with an unfavourable first impression you might have made when meeting new colleagues for the first time?
7. How should the educator address parents' concerns about their child's progress?
8. What would you do if there were disagreements between colleagues when coordinating activities for children?
9. How does the influence of etiquette in communication with children contribute to their emotional and social development?

10. Evaluate the impact of the educator's first impression on the relationship with parents and children. How could the educator improve his/her first impression?
11. How would you analyse the role of etiquette in resolving conflicts between kindergarten teachers?

## 5. CONFLICTS

### In this chapter you will learn:

- what conflicts are,
- the sources of interpersonal conflicts and developing skills to resolve them,
- how to resolve conflicts or disagreements using various principles and conflict resolution techniques,
- the importance of effective resolution of interpersonal conflicts,
- how to identify the source of a conflict in specific situations, and
- analysing the sources of conflicts in real-life situations, implementing appropriate resolution strategies, and evaluating them from the perspective of constructiveness.

Lana's parents and the kindergarten teacher, Mateja, found themselves in a conflict because the parents noticed that Lana shows signs of anxiety when they bring her to kindergarten in the morning. Lana clings to her mother and cries, which the parents find worrying. On the other hand, teacher Mateja believes that Lana is happy and cooperative at kindergarten, but she is not sure whether this anxiety at home is a serious problem.

The parents feel misunderstood, as it is important to them that Lana does not experience anxiety. Both the parents and Mateja value their relationship and want to resolve the situation.

During the next meeting, Mateja invites the parents to explain their concerns in detail. The mother explains: "In the mornings, Lana gets very upset and doesn't want to stay at kindergarten. We've been struggling with this for some time, and we are really worried about how it affects her." Mateja listens empathetically and responds: "I understand your concern, and I'm very sorry that Lana feels this way. At kindergarten, she is happy, but clearly something is not right with the transition from home to kindergarten. What do you think would help her feel safer?"

Together, they consider possible solutions. Mateja suggests: "Perhaps we could spend a little more time with her in the morning so that Lana has a chance to get used to the environment before you leave. You could also bring one of her favourite toys so she feels more at home." The parents agree and add: "That's a good idea, we'll try it. It's important to us that Lana experiences the transition with less stress."

**Consider:** Why did the conflict arise between Mateja and Lana's parents? What is Mateja's goal? What is the parents' goal? What are the benefits of this conflict? Is the described way of resolving the conflict constructive?

Conflict is a natural part of everyday life and an inevitable occurrence in all interpersonal relationships. **Conflict arises when one person's action hinders or makes more difficult the action of another.** It is important to understand that conflict is not only normal but also potentially beneficial for the development of interpersonal relationships. The ability to resolve conflicts constructively creates an educational environment where different views are respected, cooperation is encouraged and empathy is developed. In this chapter, we will explore basic conflict resolution methods that will help educators to manage conflict situations effectively in kindergarten.

## 5.1 CAUSES OF CONFLICTS

Conflicts arise for a variety of personal and communication reasons. The causes of conflicts arising from personal reasons are:

- 1. Not knowing oneself:** When a person is not in touch with his/her own feelings, values or pathways, this can lead to conflicts. When parents or educators do not recognise their own fears or expectations, misunderstandings and disagreements can arise.
- 2. Uncontrolled emotions:** Strong emotions, such as anger or sadness, that are not under control can lead to conflict. If parents do not control their worry and anger about Lana's crying, this can affect their communication with the teacher.
- 3. Prejudice:** Prejudices are negative pre-judgements about people that can interfere with objective judgement. If parents or educators have prejudices about each other, this can hinder their cooperation and communication.
- 4. Lack of humour:** Humour can help reduce tension and facilitate communication. If parents or carers do not know how to use humour in difficult situations, this can increase feelings of stress and conflict.

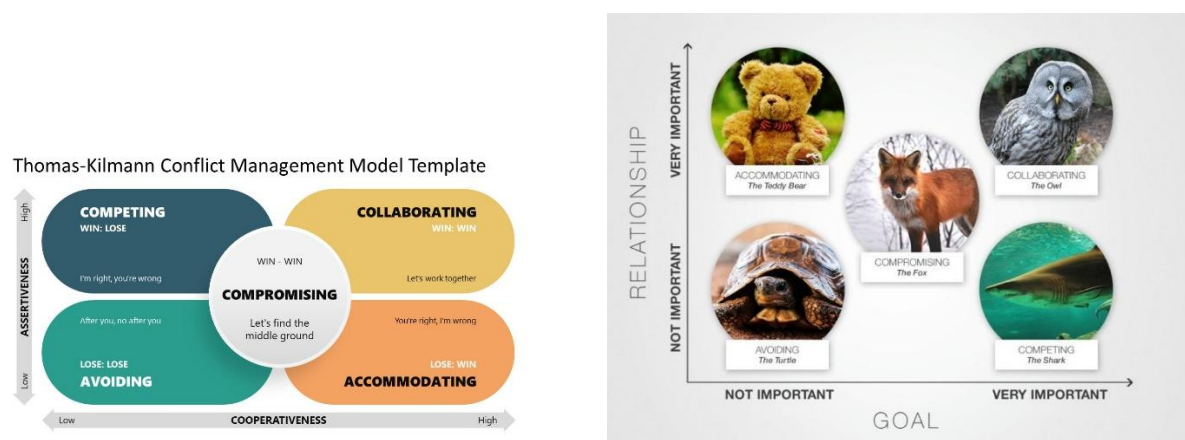
Causes of conflict arising for **communication reasons** include:

- 1. Misunderstanding of the meaning of the message:** This occurs when the recipient understands the message differently than it was intended. For example, if a teacher says: "Lana is playing nicely in kindergarten" and parents take this as a denial of her morning problems, a misunderstanding may arise.
- 2. Inappropriate emotional reaction:** When an emotional reaction is inappropriate to the situation, it can lead to conflict. If the teacher reacts to Lana's parents' concern with defensiveness instead of understanding, this can make the situation worse.
- 3. Inconsistent verbal and non-verbal communication:** When inconsistent, confusion can arise. For example, if a teacher says that everything is fine, but at the same time looks worried, this can cause uncertainty and mistrust in the parents.

**4. Competitiveness:** Competitiveness in communication means that one party tries to dominate the other, rather than seeking a common solution. If the teacher or parents compete to see who is right instead of working together to get the child better, this can lead to lasting conflict.

## 5.2 WAYS OF RESOLVING CONFLICTS

Understanding conflict resolution strategies is important, especially in a kindergarten environment. Almost everyone has their own way of dealing with different situations when disagreements arise. It is important to be aware of these strategies, to develop them and to use them consciously according to what we want to achieve. Kilmann identifies five strategies for conflict resolution.



Kilmann's model of conflict resolution strategies

### 1. Withdrawal – the Turtle

Turtles withdraw when there is conflict. They prefer to avoid controversial topics and people with whom they are in conflict because they believe that trying to resolve conflict is doomed to failure. They choose this strategy when **neither their goal nor their attitude is important**. It is neither assertive nor cooperative. In a kindergarten setting, this would mean that the teacher or parents avoid dealing with the problem, for example ignoring Lana's morning anxiety because they believe it will eventually sort itself out.

### 2. Dominance – the Shark

The shark **tries to achieve its goal at any cost, even at the expense of the relationship**. It is highly assertive and low in cooperation. It is not interested in the needs of others and wants to demonstrate its superiority. This strategy is used when the personal goal is very important and the relationship less so. In a kindergarten setting, this would mean that the teacher insists on doing her own thing, regardless of the parents' opinion, because she thinks that her way is



safer. Parents want their son to go on a summer forest hike in sandals in the local hills, but the teacher does not give in and demands the use of hiking boots.

### 3. Smoothing – the Teddy Bear

Teddy bears are very interested in good relationships. They prefer **to give up their feelings in order to maintain a harmonious relationship** and avoid hurting the other party. They are highly cooperative and low in assertiveness. They choose this strategy when the relationship is important and the goal less so. In a kindergarten setting, this would mean that the teacher agrees with everything the parents suggest, even if she feels it is not the best for the child, in order to foster a good relationship with them.

### 4. Compromise – the Fox

Foxes look for joint solutions where both sides gain something, even if it is not ideal for either side. They are willing **to give up part of their goal for the good of the other**. It is medium assertive and cooperative. They choose this strategy when both the goal and the relationship are important, although not equally so. In a kindergarten setting, this would mean that the teacher and the parents work together to find a solution to Lana's anxiety, with both partially accommodating each other.

### 5. Confrontation – the Owl

Owls **value both their goals and their relationships and see conflict as an opportunity to improve both**. They sincerely seek solutions that satisfy both sides. This is the strategy they choose when both the goal and the relationship are very important. It is highly assertive and sociable. In a kindergarten setting, this would mean that the teacher invites the parents to a meeting where together they explore Lana's problems in detail and find a solution that will benefit Lana and maintain a good relationship between them.

Understanding and applying conflict resolution strategies will help us to resolve disagreements more effectively and build better relationships in the future profession of early childhood educator. Being aware of our own strategies helps us to better understand how we deal with conflict and how we can improve our interpersonal relationships.

## 5.3 THE BENEFITS OF CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

When conflicts are resolved constructively, they can be very beneficial. Below are some positive things that can come from constructively resolved conflicts:

Conflicts **can alert us to problems in the relationship** that need to be resolved. They often reveal underlying problems or tensions in relationships that we may not have noticed before. This allows us to focus on these problems and look for solutions.

Conflicts **can stimulate the changes** needed to grow and improve the relationship. They can encourage participants to confront existing problems and develop new strategies to solve problems, leading to positive changes and improvements in the relationship.

Conflicts **can increase energy and motivation to solve problems**. When conflict arises, we often feel a greater need to find solutions and to meet challenges, which can increase our energy and motivation to actively solve problems.

Conflicts **can break the monotony** and bring new challenges and interests. They introduce new challenges that can bring fresh ideas and stimulate the search for innovative solutions.

Confronting conflicts can encourage us **to weigh up our decisions** and actions and consider their consequences, leading to better decision-making in the future.

Conflict **can help us to know ourselves better**, what makes us angry, what we fear and what is important to us. During conflict, we often become aware of our feelings, values and fears, which allows us to gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and our needs.

Conflicts **can deepen and enrich a relationship** because successful resolution reinforces the perception that the relationship is strong. Successful conflict resolution can strengthen a relationship because participants can overcome obstacles and still reliably support each other, which strengthens their relationship and increases trust.

When we resolve conflict constructively, our relationship becomes stronger and our willingness to cooperate and communicate increases. We notice that mutual trust and affection increase as we feel that we have something to gain by resolving the conflict. This leads us to better resolve future conflicts.

We will use a practical example to share what we have learnt so far and look at how to identify the source of conflict, choose a strategy to resolve conflict and evaluate that strategy.

**Identifying the source of the conflict:** Two kindergarten teachers, Mateja and Marko, are arguing about the division of tasks. Mateja thinks she works more than Marko, while Marko claims that the tasks are evenly divided. The conflict can stem from a difference in assessment of workload, as Mateja and Marko have different opinions on how much work each does. It may also stem from communication reasons. They may not have had a clear discussion about the division of tasks and expectations.

**Choosing and using a strategy:** In this situation, Mateja and Marko could use the Compromise – the Fox strategy. This strategy focuses on finding solutions where both sides gain something, even if they do not reach a perfect solution for both. It is about finding a middle way that allows both sides' needs to be met, even if not perfectly. Mateja and Marko would meet in a meeting where they would both make clear their positions on the division of tasks. It is important that they listen to each other without prejudice and try to understand how the other feels. Instead of each insisting on his own opinion, Mateja and Marko would review the division of tasks together and try to find a middle way. They might decide to adjust the tasks, with Mateja getting slightly fewer tasks, but not so many that it would jeopardise her job, and Marko taking on additional tasks, but to a lesser extent than he might have suggested. During the discussion it would have been useful to stress that the aim is to improve the working environment and increase the efficiency of the team. Finding

a solution that makes both parties feel that their needs have been taken into account can easily lead to better cooperation in the future.

**Evaluation of the strategy:** Using the Compromise – the Fox strategy would allow Mateja and Marko to reach a reasonable solution that takes into account the needs of both. This approach is useful as it allows both to feel valued and satisfied with the solution, which can contribute to a better working atmosphere. However, compromises often mean that neither side achieves the full objective, which can easily lead to temporary dissatisfaction. However, in the long term, finding a solution that allows both stakeholders to gain something is often better for maintaining positive relations and efficiency within the group.

### What I have learned:

- Conflict is a natural part of life and occurs in all interpersonal relationships.
- They arise for personal and communicative reasons.
- There are five conflict resolution strategies: withdrawal, dominance, smoothing, compromise and confrontation. We choose them according to whether we are more concerned with maintaining the relationship or achieving a goal.
- Successful conflict resolution can easily strengthen relationships, increase trust, improve cooperation and communication, and help to better resolve future conflicts.

### Acquire and integrate knowledge: from revision to understanding

1. Define conflict.
2. List and describe two personal and two communication-related causes of conflicts.
3. Name the conflict-resolution strategy that is associated with a highly assertive and low-cooperative approach.
4. Name the conflict-resolution strategy that involves seeking mutual solutions where both sides gain something.
5. Imagine that the educator notices that the parents often express dissatisfaction regarding Lana's behaviour in kindergarten. How could the educator use the smoothing/appeasement strategy in this situation?
6. If the parents and the educator do not correctly understand the meaning of the message regarding Lana's progress in kindergarten, what steps could be taken to prevent further misunderstandings?
7. How could a conflict between parents and educators affect the child in kindergarten, and what could be done to protect the child from the negative effects of this conflict?
8. How can the use of humour help in resolving conflicts between the educator and the parents?
9. What would be an example of using the withdrawal strategy in cases where the educator and the parents cannot reach an agreement regarding educational approaches?

10. Compare the advantages and disadvantages of the strategies of domination and compromise in the context of resolving conflicts in a preschool environment. In which situation is each strategy more appropriate?
11. How can constructive conflict resolution affect long-term relationships between educators and parents? Analyse concrete benefits and possible challenges that may arise.
12. Analyse the impact of inconsistency between verbal and non-verbal communication on understanding and resolving conflicts. How could one avoid these difficulties?

## 6. GROUP COMMUNICATION

In this chapter you will learn:

- what the basic leadership styles and techniques are, and what their advantages and disadvantages are,
- how the situation and the children's prior knowledge influence the teacher's leadership style in kindergarten,
- the role of positive interaction with the child and the group,
- what a team is,
- which roles are taken on by members of the team,
- how to plan the goals of team work,
- the impact of motivation on working in a team, and
- how to create an implementation plan for team work with clearly defined roles and a time schedule.

During the morning circle, the teacher Mateja gathers the children so they can talk about what they will be doing that day. She first asks the children how they spent the previous day at home. Each child gets the opportunity to say something while the others listen. When everyone has finished, the teacher presents the planned activities for the day — creating autumn decorations. She encourages the children to share their ideas about what they would like to make. One child suggests making a tree, another says he would like to draw leaves. Mateja makes sure that each child has a chance to speak and feels included. When some children begin speaking at the same time, she gently guides them to wait for their turn. Throughout the conversation, she uses different listening techniques — she paraphrases and acknowledges what the children say and asks open-ended questions to encourage their thinking. Together, all the children form the final idea and agree on how to divide the tasks, with Mateja guiding them through the process of coordination.

**Reflect:** How did the teacher Mateja ensure that all the children were included in the conversation? How did she manage the situation when the children spoke at the same time? How did her open-ended questions influence the children's thinking and cooperation? What can we learn from this situation about the teacher's role in encouraging group communication?

### 6.1 LEADERSHIP IN GROUPS OF PEOPLE

A preschool teacher plays an important role in planning and carrying out educational work. Their task is to organize and lead children's activities, prepare didactic materials, observe children in various activities, and monitor their development. In doing so, they develop their own leadership style.

A leadership style is a relatively stable pattern of influencing people with the aim of mutually achieving set goals. Each style includes a set of specific behaviours and leadership actions. A group leader uses various techniques, shaping their own characteristic form of leadership. The first experimental studies of leadership styles were conducted under the guidance of Kurt Lewin, who aimed to explore the influence of different leadership styles on the behaviour of both the group and the individual. His research had a significant impact on later leadership theories, as it identified three basic leadership styles: **authoritarian (autocratic)**, **democratic (authoritative)**, and **laissez-faire (liberal)**.



### AUTHORITARIAN LEADERSHIP STYLE

The **authoritarian leadership style** is a style in which the teacher makes all decisions without consulting other members of the group and without involving the children. The teacher controls the work and expects everyone to follow instructions without question. A teacher who uses an authoritarian style leads the group of children during a creative activity. Instead of encouraging children to express their ideas and create independently, she strictly determines what and how they must do it. She tells them exactly which colours they must use and which shapes they must draw, without giving them the opportunity to decide for themselves. When one child suggests using a different colour, she quickly interrupts him and firmly says, “No, that is not allowed. Do it the way I told you.” If a child does not follow the instructions, the teacher quickly reacts with sharp criticism and punishment instead of encouragement or explanation. As we can conclude, this style is generally not suitable for leading a group of children.

The **advantage** of the authoritarian leadership style becomes apparent in situations that require quick decision-making and rapid response. This style is time-efficient. It is effective in crisis situations, such as natural disasters, when efficiency and speed are crucial. It is used, for example, in the military. In kindergarten, it might be appropriate in situations where

immediate action is required — for example, in the case of an accident. A teacher with an authoritarian leadership style sets clear work guidelines and gives clear expectations.

The **disadvantage** of the authoritarian leadership style is the lack of creativity and independence in decision-making. Due to the strong authority of the leader, fear of making mistakes may occur. Some children may eventually start to resist and ignore the rules. Others may become passive and submit to the leader's will.

## DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE

In the **democratic leadership style**, the teacher involves the children in the decision-making process and encourages cooperation and the exchange of ideas. Decisions are made together. A teacher with a democratic leadership style would, during a creative activity, suggest that the children choose what they would like to work with. She offers them options such as drawing with markers, modelling with clay, and painting with brushes. Each child would express their opinion, and then together they would choose the activity.

The **advantage** of the democratic leadership style is that it encourages creativity and independence within the group. Children are more motivated to participate in activities because they feel that their opinion matters. During the activity, the teacher encourages the children to think about different options and solutions, which helps develop critical thinking. It is important to emphasize that in the democratic style, the child's responsibility is central. Children can participate in making choices, but they must then stick to the collective agreement. If they do not, consequences follow. In this way, democratic leadership raises children to become responsible individuals who learn to respect agreements and take responsibility for their actions.

The **disadvantage** of the democratic leadership style is that involving children can slow down the decision-making process. Freedom of choice allows each child to express their wishes and opinions, which may lead to conflicts when decisions need to be made.

## LIBERAL LEADERSHIP STYLE

The **liberal leadership style** is characterised by the teacher setting only minimal rules and allowing the children to act independently. They intervene only when necessary. This style of leadership shows the weakest results in children's motivation and their engagement in activities. A teacher with a liberal leadership style would prepare different creative materials for the children and then let them work freely without further instructions.

The **advantages** of this type of leadership are that it encourages independence and responsibility among group members, as children have a great deal of freedom in making decisions. This allows them to make use of their talents and creativity.

The **disadvantage**, however, is the lack of direction and structure when leading a group. The child is left on their own most of the time. There are no clearly defined rules or goals, which can lead to disorganisation and chaos in the playroom. Too much freedom without clear guidelines or support may lead to feelings of insecurity. In such an environment, children often do not develop sufficient motivation or discipline to complete activities effectively, which can influence their outcomes.

### Interesting fact:

The liberal leadership style emerged by chance. The study involved groups of five students who, after school, engaged in extracurricular activities. Within the groups, the teachers alternated in a certain rhythm between democratic and authoritarian leadership styles. When a teacher with a democratic style lost control over the group and received instructions from the researchers to leave the group to manage itself, a new leadership style emerged.

	<b>AUTHORITARIAN</b>	<b>DEMOCRATIC</b>	<b>LIBERAL</b>
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- quick decision-making</li> <li>- clear work guidelines</li> <li>- clear expectations</li> <li>- suitable in crisis situations and when rapid action is required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- encourages creativity</li> <li>- greater satisfaction and motivation of members</li> <li>- greater sense of belonging to the group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- promotes independence and responsibility</li> <li>- higher creativity</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lack of creativity and innovation</li> <li>- dissatisfaction and low motivation</li> <li>- limited sense of belonging in the group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- decision-making takes too long</li> <li>- conflicts may arise among members</li> <li>- uncertainty may occur if tasks are not clearly defined</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lack of direction and structure</li> <li>- problems with coordination and collaboration</li> <li>- no clear guidelines or support</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increases productivity</li> <li>- leads to lower creativity and dissatisfaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- motivates and encourages creativity in the long term</li> <li>- lack of direction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- low productivity</li> <li>- offers the most freedom</li> </ul>
<b>Requests and acceptance of the child</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- high expectations of the child</li> <li>- low acceptance of the child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- high expectations of the child</li> <li>- high acceptance of the child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- low expectations of the child</li> <li>- high acceptance of the child</li> </ul>



### Expanding knowledge: Situational leadership theory

Recent research on leadership styles has examined the relationship between a particular leadership style and group effectiveness, but the results were not very conclusive. As a result, researchers developed increasingly complex leadership approaches and models in an effort to identify the most crucial factors in leadership. The outcome of these trends is the **situational leadership theory**, which is based on the assumption that **leadership results do not depend solely on the leader, but also on the interaction between the situation, the leader, and the followers**. This theory ultimately disproved the belief that there is a single ideal leadership style that is successful in all situations.

Situational leadership is a way of leading that allows the teacher to choose a pattern of behaviour appropriate to the given situation. In kindergarten, this could involve the number of children, the complexity, and the duration of the task. Four styles are distinguished: **directive, coaching, supportive, and delegating**.

They differ in terms of the degree of **directiveness** and **supportiveness** in the teacher's behaviour when leading the class. Directiveness means a high level of structure (what, how, when, where), clarity, and control by the teacher. Supportiveness means that the teacher involves the children in setting and achieving goals. The teacher encourages interaction and communication among them and listens actively. Leadership can also be viewed from the perspective of **task orientation** or **relationship orientation**. Task orientation is reflected in the teacher's focus on knowledge, while relationship orientation is reflected in fostering the relationship between the teacher and the children.

#### Directive Style

Leadership with a directive style is characterised by strong guidance from the teacher, who sets goals and structure, provides clear instructions and directions, and simultaneously monitors task completion and goal achievement. The directive style involves a high focus on tasks, making it suitable for situations when children encounter a task for the first time or find themselves in an unfamiliar environment. This includes moments when the group is still forming, during the first dance lessons, or in art activities with new materials. The teacher sets the goals and explains how they will be achieved. Since the situation is relatively new for the children, the teacher establishes a clear structure and guides them throughout the process. After the task is completed, the teacher evaluates the children's performance.

#### Supportive Style

The opposite of the directive style is the supportive style, which is relationship-oriented or support-oriented. This leadership style encourages reflection, takes into account the opinions and suggestions of others, and involves activating children's prior knowledge, ideas

and views. This develops reciprocity and confidence in one's own abilities. It is primarily aimed at developing attitudes and is therefore most appropriate when children have had a lot of experience with a particular activity. The educator's main task is to guide the children in making a joint decision on how to carry out the task, taking into account the children's ideas, reflections and experiences. This style is useful when organising work in groups, where children have to work together to reach a common result. At the end, the children and the teacher, according to performance criteria that are clear and understandable to them, evaluate the result achieved.

### Coaching Style

The leader, with a coaching style, clearly defines the objectives, the ways of achieving them and the ways of monitoring the achievement of the objectives, while taking into account the children's suggestions, reflections and search for answers. This style encourages and develops a relationship with the children, while clearly and firmly guiding the activity towards the set task. It is both relationship- and task-oriented, and is therefore successful in situations where children's motivation to work is low. In such cases, the educator's task is to encourage, support and motivate the child towards the chosen task, towards the goal. This can be achieved by activating the knowledge already acquired, encouraging the integration of knowledge and building on it with new material. In this way, children can feel a sense of achievement, stimulate their interest and increase their motivation. At the end of the activity, the educator evaluates, with the participation of the children, what has been achieved.

### Delegating Style

A leader with a delegating leadership style does relatively little to structure and monitor the learning activity, nor does he or she develop a relationship with the learners in the chosen task, as this relationship is probably already formed. Responsibility for setting and achieving objectives is delegated to the children. Responsibility for the relationships between them (e.g. cooperation, taking suggestions on board) is also transferred to them. The children thus become the creators of their own learning situation. It is particularly suitable in situations where the children have a good command of a particular area and the teacher can trust them completely to carry out the task as expected. Throughout the activity, the children are guided towards achieving performance criteria that are clearly set and well known. Throughout the process, they are constantly focused on evaluation, assessing what has been achieved. For example, if the children have already played the movement game "Tag" several times, this allows the teacher to only announce the game. The roles of the catcher and the punishments for those caught, including the control of the observance of the rules of the game, are left to the group.

A good assessment of children's developmental level by the teacher allows the appropriate choice of the most effective and appropriate management style for the situation.

	<b>DIRECTIVE</b>	<b>SUPPORTIVE</b>	<b>COACHING</b>	<b>DELEGATING</b>
<b>Teacher's behaviour</b>	tells, leads, directs, justifies	tells, leads, directs, justifies	suggests explains, clarifies, persuades,	delegates, observes, monitors, concludes
<b>Suitable for</b>	children with too little knowledge, without confidence and motivation	children with a lot of knowledge, but variable or insufficient motivation and confidence	children with too little knowledge, but with low or sufficient motivation and confidence	children with a lot of knowledge and sufficient motivation and confidence
<b>Success assessment</b>	the teacher evaluates the result of the activity	children, together with the teacher, evaluate the achieved results	the teacher evaluates the results with the children's cooperation	children evaluate the results themselves

The use of a greater number of leadership styles leads to greater effectiveness of the educator, as it allows him/her greater flexibility. The educator can adapt his behaviour to the current situation and to the characteristics of the people in the group. Greater flexibility is expected from the educator in the case of:

- a greater number of objectives,
- more complex tasks,
- sleeping emblems in the learning process, creative tasks, and
- unstructured tasks.

The behavioural pattern that is most often used in leading others is called the dominant leadership style. In the case of leaders, we can also identify the complementary leadership style, which is the behavioural pattern used by the leader in his or her leadership. In all of them we find the dominant leadership style, but the complementary one is not necessary. The combination of the two leadership styles, i.e. directive-supportive, and complementary, makes up the profile of leadership styles.

## 6.2 THE ROLE OF POSITIVE INTERACTION WITH THE CHILD AND THE GROUP

The teacher is with and among the children all the time, either in the group or individually. He or she sets an example to the children by his or her behaviour, and it is therefore important that his or her attitude is encouraging, reassuring, courteous and respectful in all interactions. Communication with the child is based on acceptance, active listening and responding to the child's questions and concerns. Every slightest acknowledgement that he or she is heard and reassured, whether by the educator or the group, builds the child's positive self-image. This is the basis for the healthy growth and development of all children, and it is therefore the main task of the educator to influence the development of a positive self-image in children.

## Glossary

**Self-image is the experience of oneself. It includes ideas, thoughts, and feelings about oneself. The areas of self-image are: physical, academic, emotional, and social.**

Youngs lists **six fundamental elements of self-image** that can be developed in a child to strengthen their self-esteem. Educators can foster **a sense of physical security**, because a child who feels safe in their environment and is not afraid of being harmed by others can express confidence more easily and act decisively. The educator's role is to help children feel secure in the kindergarten setting, making it a place where they do not worry about real or imagined dangers. Educators should be aware of all the things children might fear. Fear can be triggered by empty hallways, bathrooms, peers, or even educators. Educators should not underestimate a child's fears. The sense of not being alone and having a safe place to turn to overcomes their helplessness. Educators teach children how to act, what to say, and where to seek help when faced with an unpleasant situation. Educators should intervene promptly when a child is in distress. For appropriate intervention, educators must know the rules that apply in kindergarten and ensure that children and parents also understand these rules. Educators teach children problem-solving skills and emotional regulation. It is also important for educators to pay attention to children's behaviour and listen when they talk about other educators or staff members, as individual employees can also be sources of distress.

The second fundamental element of self-image is **a sense of emotional security**, which develops when a child feels they will not be humiliated, belittled, intimidated, or hurt by harsh words. They do not fear feelings of inferiority. The educator's task is to dedicate time and full attention to the child, helping them develop positive inner dialogue. This can be achieved through the use of positive language. Even if the child struggles with a task, the educator carefully frames their comments to ensure the child knows the intention is to help and that support is available to improve performance. Educators should choose expressions that build positive self-image and freely offer praise and compliments. If a child expresses disdain or belittlement through language, the educator points it out, teaching children the difference between positive and negative statements. Educators can encourage children to use positive vocabulary and reinforce positive statements or counter negative statements with positive ones. Children should be encouraged to accept and share compliments.

The third fundamental element of self-image is **a sense of identity**. Educators help children answer the question, "Who am I?" They encourage children to describe themselves and talk about their qualities, asking open-ended questions such as: "How do you see yourself?" "Which three words best describe you?" "In which area are you particularly successful?" Educators set a positive learning model, speak positively about themselves and others, and help students understand that they are responsible for their actions, that they control their perspective on life, and that they create their own reality. Gradually, children develop a sense of knowing themselves well, having self-confidence, believing they are valued and respected, feeling special, and worthy of praise.

The fourth fundamental element of self-image is **a sense of belonging**. This feeling emerges when a child senses that they are part of something bigger and accepted by their environment, and that they know they are welcomed, respected, and valued. Educators can develop a child's sense of belonging through activities that encourage interaction among children in the group and allow them to get to know each other and form bonds through play. Through these activities, educators can highlight similarities between children so they can recognize what they have in common and connect more easily. Educators should provide various opportunities for exploring emotions, behaviour, and relationships with others. Children should be given chances for model learning of desired behaviours, which encourages socially isolated children to begin changing their behaviour.

The fifth fundamental element of self-image is **a sense of competence** or success in a certain area. When we feel capable and successful in at least one area, it is easier to engage in other activities as well. A child who feels capable persists in their work and does not give up when facing difficulties. They want to succeed because this motivates them to overcome obstacles. Educators can foster a sense of competence through praise, constructive criticism, and guidance. Criticism should focus on the child's actions, not the child themselves.

The final fundamental element of self-image is **a sense of purpose**. A child with this feeling perceives that their life has meaning and direction. They set goals and strive to achieve them. They look for creative solutions to obstacles, feel internally at peace, and gain a better understanding of themselves and others, valuing themselves positively. Educators should observe what captures the child's attention, help children transform desires into goals, and assist them in finding meaning.

Educators recognize a child with **high self-esteem** by their **willingness to cooperate** and participate. These children are confident in their abilities, believe they can succeed, and are **ready to share with others**. They enjoy talking about themselves and are not ashamed to mention praise and compliments they have received. Highlighting their achievements in this context reflects a sense of satisfaction and self-acceptance. Furthermore, children with high self-esteem **can accept advice without feeling criticized**. They perceive feedback as constructive, are willing to acknowledge mistakes, and correct errors. High self-esteem is also evident in **contentment with oneself**; these children can enjoy being alone and feel satisfied in their own company, not needing constant external validation. For children, high self-esteem also involves a **desire to achieve**; they strive for success and are not intimidated by more complex, difficult, or confusing tasks.

Children with **low self-esteem**, on the other hand, display **negative behaviours**, act inappropriately, and show that they do not value themselves. They often provoke teachers and seek validation that they do not deserve positive attention. **Continuous self-deprecation** is common, and even when they achieve success, they cannot acknowledge it. Low self-esteem also appears in **admiration without competition**, when a child believes they will never be as good as a friend, idol, or someone they admire. A child with low self-esteem **does not seek an educator's attention** and may appear indifferent to whether they

are accepted by their environment. **Excessive criticism** of others to elevate their own value is also noticeable. They are often **overly concerned with the intentions and opinions of peers** and may adopt others' opinions and behaviours, even when internally they feel these are not aligned with their own sense of what is right.

## 6.3 TEAMWORK

A team is a group of people who work together to achieve common goals, with each member contributing their knowledge, skills, and experience. Teamwork involves coordination and collaboration among team members to reach shared objectives, where each individual takes on specific responsibilities and roles.

Characteristics of a team:

1. **Collaboration and interdependence:** Team members work together and rely on each other to achieve common goals.
2. **Role specialization:** Each team member takes on a specific role based on their knowledge, experience, and skills, contributing to the team's overall progress.
3. **Coordination:** The team organizes tasks and allocates resources according to the needs of the objectives.
4. **Communication:** Open and effective communication among team members is essential, as well as the ability to resolve conflicts.
5. **Shared goals:** The team has clearly defined common goals focused on achieving results.

### Roles within a team

To achieve objectives effectively, it is important to define the roles of individual team members. This allows understanding of the strengths and potential weaknesses of team members. Each member in a kindergarten team has a specific role that contributes to the overall functioning of the group. These roles can include educators, teaching assistants, specialists (such as psychologists or speech therapists), administrative staff, and other support personnel. Understanding these roles is crucial for the team's effective operation, as each role carries specific responsibilities and contributes to the team's shared goals. Individual personality traits determine which roles a person is best suited for within a team.

### Glossary

**Personality traits are relatively stable characteristics that determine how an individual thinks, feels, and behaves. These traits influence interpersonal relationships and how a person handles various situations.**

One of the most well-known theories of teamwork is **Belbin's Team Role Theory**. It focuses on identifying the different roles that individuals take on within a team. An individual can assume multiple roles simultaneously. Belbin identified nine different team roles, each contributing to the team's success in planning and achieving goals in its own way.

The **Co-ordinator** directs the goal-planning process, organizes meetings, and delegates tasks. The **Shaper** motivates the team to set ambitious goals and ensures they are achieved. They help overcome obstacles and maintain focus on the objectives. The **Plant** contributes creative ideas to achieve goals and solves potential problems in an innovative way. The **Resource Investigator** searches for external resources, such as workshops or seminars, that can help achieve objectives. The **Implementer** ensures plans are put into action and organizes the concrete activities needed to reach the goals. The **Completer-Finisher** makes sure all tasks are completed on time and accurately, reviewing details and ensuring the quality of execution. The **Team-worker** maintains a positive team atmosphere and helps resolve potential conflicts, encouraging collaboration and support among team members. The **Monitor-Evaluator** objectively assesses progress toward goals and suggests improvements. The **Specialist** contributes specific knowledge and skills needed to achieve certain objectives.

Belbin's team roles can be grouped into three categories based on what each role emphasizes:

- Action-oriented roles: Completer-Finisher, Shaper, Implementer
- People-oriented roles: Coordinator, Team-worker, Resource Investigator
- Idea-oriented roles: Plant, Monitor-Evaluator, Specialist

### Comparison of Different Team Member Roles

Teacher Mateja can assume different roles in her work with children and colleagues in the kindergarten. As an **Implementer**, she transforms ideas into practical activities and carries out planned tasks. For example, in the topic "animals," she organizes making animal masks, reading books about animals, and related games, ensuring consistent implementation of the curriculum. As a **Team-worker**, she encourages collaboration among children and educators, strengthening team spirit and harmony within the group. For instance, she organizes group projects where children and educators work together to create a large poster or a presentation. As a **Plant**, she brings new ideas for learning activities and projects, enhancing creativity and innovation in working with children. For example, she introduces new learning techniques through play or uses new materials and technologies to stimulate children's creativity. Assistant Teacher Andrej can take on the role of a **Completer-Finisher**. He pays attention to details and ensures tasks are completed, helping educators with daily activities, preparing and tidying all necessary materials for activities, and ensuring accuracy and timely completion of tasks.

## Achieving Teamwork Goals

SMART goals are a method for setting objectives. The word **SMART** is an acronym for the English terms **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound**.

Goal Characteristic	Explanation
Specific Goal	Clear and well-defined. It answers the questions: Who, What, Where, When, and Why.
Measurable Goal	Has clear criteria to measure progress and success. It defines how we will know the goal has been achieved.
Achievable Goal	Realistic and attainable with the available resources and means.
Relevant Goal	Important and appropriate. Aligned with other goals and long-term plans.
Time-Bound Goal	Has a defined timeframe. It is clear when the goal should be achieved.

The teacher Mateja, who works as a co-ordinator in the kindergarten, together with her team set educational goals for the children. Their **specific** goal is to increase the number of children who can identify and name basic colours. The measurability of this goal is set by the target that 90% of children will be able to recognise and name the basic colours by the end of the kindergarten year. The goal is **achievable** through daily activities, games and interactive teaching aids. The **relevance** of the objective is underlined as early colour recognition is crucial for children's further cognitive development. The timeframe of the objective is set to the end of the kindergarten year.

## Motivation for Teamwork

The motivation of team members in a kindergarten is essential for ensuring high-quality work. Educators and assistant educators are often intrinsically motivated because they enjoy working with children and find meaning in their development and progress. **Intrinsic motivation comes from personal fulfilment**. Individuals who are interested in specific areas such as art, music, or science are motivated when they can include their interests in everyday activities with children. Opportunities for continuous education and the development of new pedagogical methods encourage educators to improve their skills, which includes attending workshops and seminars.

**Extrinsic motivation from the environment** is also important. Adequate financial rewards and bonuses for additional achievements can have a significant impact on the motivation of kindergarten staff. They are also motivated by a safe and pleasant working environment, which includes appropriate materials, equipment and support for working with children. Recognising teachers' efforts and achievements through praise, awards and public recognition reinforces a sense of value and motivation to continue working.



## Assessing the Level of Satisfaction of Individual Team Members

Regular assessment of team members' satisfaction helps to identify problems and improve the working environment. It helps maintain a positive working climate and prevents burnout. Satisfied team members are more motivated and productive, which increases the quality of work. Satisfaction assessment can involve a variety of methods, both formal and informal.

Job satisfaction surveys are common among **formal methods**. These surveys ask questions on various aspects of work, such as working conditions, communication, growth opportunities and work-life balance. The aim is to analyse team members' satisfaction and also to identify specific problems. Regular performance reviews are also important. Both give us a comprehensive picture of the achievements, satisfaction and needs of the individuals.

**Informal methods** include regular conversations where employees openly discuss their well-being, challenges and suggestions for improvement. The purpose of these discussions is to provide a safe environment to express concerns and needs, to encourage open communication and to tailor support to individuals.

We can also contribute to a more positive working climate and team relations. **Self-reflection** is a key part of professional development. Team members should regularly reflect on their own experiences and reactions to different situations in the team. This process allows us to gain a deeper understanding of our own role in the team, to identify relational conflicts and to find ways to improve cooperation and communication.

## Organization of the Work Process in the Professional Team

The teamwork implementation plan describes how the team will work together to achieve common goals. It usually includes clearly defined objectives, clear roles for members and a specific timeframe for an activity. Let's take a look at how teacher Mateja and assistant teacher Andrej would prepare, implement and evaluate an activity called *The Colourful World of Nature*.

**The aim of the activity** is to learn about basic colours and shapes, which corresponds to the SMART objectives: specific - children will recognise and name basic colours and shapes; measurable - success will be assessed through questionnaires and observations; achievable - activities are age-appropriate; relevant - relevant to the curriculum and children's interests; timed - to reach the target by the end of the kindergarten year.

Mateja, **in her role as coordinator**, took on the task of planning and organising the activities, including the selection of appropriate materials and the preparation of the curricula. Andrej, **in his role as implementer**, was in charge of preparing the space, preparing the materials and directly leading the activities with the children.

To **evaluate the achievement of the objectives**, Mateja and Andrej used observations of the children during the activities and a parent survey on the children's progress in identifying colours and shapes. They found that the children recognised most of the basic colours and

shapes, but that the teaching methods had to be adapted slightly to improve the results. When assessing the appropriateness of the ways of working in the team, Mateja and Andrej noted that the ways of working were effective, but that the communication with each other and with parents could be improved to communicate engagement in the activity. Mateja suggested that in the future additional visual and interactive methods could be included to better coordinate and increase children's participation.

### What I have learned:

- A leadership style is a relatively stable pattern of influencing people with the aim of mutually achieving established goals.
- The basic leadership styles are authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire.
- Using a greater variety of leadership styles leads to higher effectiveness, as it allows flexibility.
- A team is a group of people who work together to achieve common goals, with each member contributing their own knowledge and skills.
- Belbin's theory describes nine roles that contribute to a team's success.
- To effectively achieve results within a team, we set SMART goals, which include specificity, measurability, attainability, relevance, and time-bounding.

### Acquire and integrate knowledge: from revision to understanding

1. Define the leadership style.
2. Compare the advantages and disadvantages of the authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles.
3. Play the role of a mentor for a younger peer or a new group member. Help them understand different leadership styles. Prepare a joint activity in which the younger member will take the role of leader, while you observe and guide them.
4. Think of a situation in which you led a group or an individual. Describe the situation. Which leadership style did you use? What were the results of your leadership? What did you learn from this experience?
5. Think of a situation in which someone else was leading you. Who was the leader, and which leadership style did they use? How did you feel in this situation? What was effective and what was ineffective about this leadership style? How would you act in a similar situation if you were the leader?
6. Describe the role of a coordinator in a team and explain why this role is important for successfully achieving goals.
7. Imagine that educator Marko is part of a team working to improve communication with parents. How could he use SMART goals to plan this process, and what could be a specific goal for his task?
8. Analyse how different team roles, such as the Implementer and the Completer-Finisher, can contribute to the success of a project titled "*The Colourful World of Nature.*" How would

the roles need to be adjusted if the evaluation shows that the children had difficulties recognizing basic colours?

## 7. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

### In this chapter you will learn:

- how to recognize the religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity of a family,
- how to find ways to meaningfully include the diversity of families in work with the group,
- how to enable parents to express their personal principles and beliefs in accordance with professional ethics and the pedagogical principles of the kindergarten, and
- the influence of stereotypes and prejudices in working with children.

### 7.1 UNDERSTANDING ETHNIC, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

Mateja, the kindergarten teacher, wanted Lily and Jack Thompson, who are from Australia, to feel accepted and included in their new environment. She had previously spoken to David and Emily to find out about the particularities of Australian culture and the country's religious practices. To introduce the children to Australian culture, Mateja organised an Australia Day where the children learnt about Australian games, stories and art. Emily brought traditional Australian desserts such as lamingtons and pavlova and explained their importance to the children. Mateja also incorporated Australian fairy tales and stories into the day's activities, which allowed Jack to share their cultural experiences with their peers. As the Thompson family is Protestant, Mateja organised workshops where the children learnt about different religious traditions. On Reformation Day, she used simple activities to introduce the children to the meaning of the holiday, and both Lily and Jack shared their traditions with their peers. Mateja made sure that each child felt valued and included, and encouraged understanding and acceptance of the diverse cultural and religious experiences among all the children.

**Reflect:** *How does Mateja promote the integration of different cultures and religious traditions? How can the presentation of cultural specialities, such as Australian games and desserts influence the social inclusion of children?*

### Glossary

**Lamington** is an Australian dessert made of squares of sponge cake covered with chocolate icing and coconut flakes, sometimes filled with jam or custard. **Pavlova** is a meringue dessert, crisp on the outside and soft on the inside, topped with whipped cream and fresh fruit, named after the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova.

Children from **different cultural backgrounds** bring with them different traditions, customs, language and ways of communicating. To ensure an inclusive environment, we need to adapt teaching methods and content to reflect children's different cultures and backgrounds and to promote open communication and respect among all children. It is also important to involve parents in the educational process. We need to be aware of how much **ethnicity (ethnic affiliation)** can affect a child's sense of belonging and acceptance in kindergarten. To strengthen this feeling, we can include different ethnic and cultural characteristics in everyday activities. In this way, children can freely express themselves and share their stories. Children also come from families with different **religious beliefs**. We need to respect these differences and provide a space where children feel comfortable about their religious identity.

In practice, there are many ways to create an inclusive environment. We can talk to parents and get information about the special features and traditions that are relevant to the children. We can organise days dedicated to different cultures. There, children learn about the special customs, food, games and art of different cultures. Taking into account the different religious and cultural festivals, we can include activities that reflect these festivals. We can organise creative workshops where children make artwork typical of their culture or represent traditional techniques. Where possible, the kindergarten can include dishes from different cultures. This way, children get to know different tastes, which encourages openness to culinary diversity. In this way, we create opportunities for interaction between all the children, which contributes to mutual understanding and friendship.

## 7.2 COMMUNICATION IN A MULTICULTURAL PRE-SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

We need to give parents the opportunity to express their values. It is important that they do so in accordance with professional ethics and pedagogical principles that ensure respect for all children and their backgrounds. Parents can be involved in shaping the kindergarten's activities in a way that is consistent with the aims of education. Professionalism must be maintained and the rules of professional ethics observed. This means treating all children equally, regardless of parents' beliefs. For example, if parents do not want their child to participate in a separate activity because of their religious beliefs, we respect this and offer a suitable alternative. This approach enables children to develop tolerance and respect for diversity and strengthens the partnership between the kindergarten and the family.

## 7.3 STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICE IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN

Prejudices are (usually negative) opinions about social groups that are not supported by facts -but are accompanied by strong feelings. Stereotypes, on the other hand, are simplistic and generalised ideas about these groups, which can also be positive. As we saw in the introductory chapter, stereotypes and prejudices are one of the barriers to communication. Both can influence expectations and the treatment of children. For example, if an educator assumes, based on prejudice, that a child from a certain cultural group will not succeed in

specific activities, the child may eventually believe they are indeed incapable and stop trying. Stereotypes and prejudices can also affect a child's self-image and self-confidence. If children perceive that certain behaviour is expected of them because of their cultural background, this can lead to internal conflicts and lower motivation. To reduce the influence of stereotypes and prejudices, it is important to encourage open communication and create an environment where all children feel safe and valued. Ideally, educators should regularly educate themselves about the impact of stereotypes and prejudices and actively work on overcoming their own biases. Creating positive interactions with a child and the entire group should include the diversity of all children. This way, we enable the recognition and respect of these differences.

### What I have learned:

- Educators encourage open communication and mutual respect.
- Active involvement of parents in the educational process helps create an environment where children feel accepted and can share their cultural and religious experiences.
- Educators must be aware of recognizing their own stereotypes and prejudices, which can hinder communication.

### Acquire and integrate knowledge: from revision to understanding

1. What are stereotypes and prejudices? How can they affect a child's self-image and self-confidence?
2. Imagine that children from different cultural backgrounds are coming to the kindergarten. How could an educator incorporate various holidays into everyday activities so that children understand and respect the diversity of their peers?
3. The parents of one child do not want their child to participate in a certain activity due to religious beliefs. How should the educator act in this situation to respect the parents' beliefs while still ensuring an inclusive environment for all children?
4. Analyse how stereotypes and prejudices can affect relationships within a group of children. How could an educator identify and reduce the influence of these factors?
5. Evaluate the effectiveness of different ways to involve parents in the educational process. Which methods would be most appropriate to ensure parental participation in designing kindergarten activities, considering professional ethics and pedagogical principles? How could these methods contribute to a positive educational environment?

## 8. PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD CHILDREN

### In this chapter you will learn:

- different types of families,
- legal regulations regarding parental rights and responsibilities toward children, parental care,
- the principle of the best interests of the child, and
- the principle of protecting privacy.

Mateja carefully observes the principle of the best interests of the child and the protection of privacy in her work with the family. She creates a safe environment for Lana where she can express her curiosity and energy and encourages her to manage her stubbornness, for example by introducing clear routines and praising her for her cooperation. If Lana shows stubbornness, Mateja patiently helps her to redirect her attention to interesting activities and offers her a choice of tasks, which gives her a sense of control. She provides Rok with ample opportunity to explore and play and helps him develop listening and following instructions through structured games with clear steps and rewards for successful performance. Mateja organises fun activities that allow Roku to learn in a pleasant environment. She always acts in the best interests of Lana and Rok, taking into account their individual needs and developmental goals. She provides advice and resources to help the mother balance work and family responsibilities, respecting her privacy and not sharing personal information without permission.

**Reflect:** *How does educator Mateja ensure the principle of the best interests of the child in her work with Lana and Rok? In what ways does she protect the family's privacy, and why is this important? How does she support the mother in balancing work and family responsibilities while maintaining their privacy and dignity?*

### 8.1 TYPES OF FAMILIES

Distinguishing between different types of families and including children from diverse backgrounds in a preschool group are important aspects of educational work that promote tolerance, diversity, and inclusion. Knowledge of different family types enables us to understand and respect diversity. It highlights a child's individual background and forms the foundation for establishing a high-quality relationship with the child, as well as for providing successful support in their development and upbringing. Different types of families, such as single-parent families, multigenerational families, traditional family units, and foster care, bring their own unique challenges and advantages. Understanding these differences allows educators to better understand a child's life from the perspective of the home environment.

For example, an educator can more easily recognize how economic difficulties in a single-parent family affect a child's experience of certain activities, or how multigenerational families provide additional emotional support and a sense of security. Respect for family diversity is also crucial for building trust between the educator and parents. When the educator understands the background and dynamics of a child's family, they can cooperate more effectively with parents in supporting the child's individual needs and goals.

**Single-parent families** are families in which a child lives with one parent, either the mother or the father. These families often face specific challenges, including economic difficulties (only the mother or the father takes on the role of providing financial support, which can bring additional burdens and limitations), emotional support (children in single-parent families often seek emotional support and attachment from one parent, which creates additional challenges due to the absence of the other parent), and the balancing of roles that the parent must take on (work, upbringing, and time spent with the child).



**Multigenerational families** bring together several generations in one household, including grandparents, parents, and children. These families can provide rich emotional and material support, but they also bring their own challenges. In multigenerational families, conflicts may arise due to differing values, beliefs, and habits among different generations. Sharing living space among multiple generations also requires coordination and respect for privacy and the individual needs of each family member. Grandparents can play a key role in the care and upbringing of children and in providing emotional stability and support.



**Traditional family units**, also known as **nuclear families**, include a mother, a father, and children who live together in the same household. They provide a stable environment for children's upbringing, where strong family bonds and a sense of security can develop. Parents in traditional family units face the challenge of balancing the roles of parenthood, partnership, and personal goals.



**Foster care** is a situation in which children live with foster parents when their biological parents are unable to provide care for them. This form of family dynamic requires special understanding and support. Foster parents provide children with a safe and loving environment that enables their continued development and growth. They must be prepared to adapt to the children's needs and to offer emotional and educational support. Successful foster care includes cooperation between foster parents and biological parents whenever possible.





## 8.2 LEGISLATION GOVERNING THE OPERATION OF KINDERGARTENS

Regardless of the type of family in which a child grows up, the applicable legislation ensures the protection of the child's rights. Since educators are also an important part of a child's upbringing and development, they must be well acquainted with the regulations and act in accordance with all those that protect children's rights. All laws, regulations, and by-laws governing this field can be found in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia. The most important laws regulating the operation of preschools are: the Preschool Act, the Act Regulating the Exercise of Rights from Public Funds, the Act on the Placement of Children with Special Needs, the Act on the Comprehensive Early Treatment of Preschool Children with Special Needs, and the Organisation and Financing of Education Act.

### Glossary

**The Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia is the official publication in which laws, regulations, decrees, notices, and other official information important for the functioning of the state are published. The website of the Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia provides easy access to the complete collection of official publications.**

An educator must act in accordance with the regulations governing the field of preschool education, especially those provisions that protect children's rights, such as the right to education, the right to equal treatment, the right to a safe and stimulating environment, and the right to privacy. This means that the educator must act in the best interests of the child and respect the child's individual needs.

### Interesting fact:

**In the Republic of Slovenia, the rights mentioned in the previous paragraph are regulated by several laws, regulations, and international documents, such as:**

- **The Preschool Act, which defines the rights of children in preschools, including the right to quality education and care, the right to equal treatment, and the right to a safe and stimulating environment.**
- **The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees the fundamental rights of children, including the right to education, the right to equal treatment and protection, and the right to privacy.**
- **The Personal Data Protection Act, which protects the right to privacy of children and defines how personal data, including children's data, may be processed.**
- **The Protection Against Discrimination Act, which guarantees the right to equal treatment of all children without discrimination based on personal characteristics.**

We can see that the legal basis for working with children is extensive. Becoming familiar with the entire body of legislation certainly exceeds the purpose of this textbook. Therefore, in the following chapters we will focus only on the key aspects of legislation. We also encourage you to explore on your own the valid legislation governing the rights of children and families.

### 8.3 PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE PRINCIPLE OF THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD

The **Family Code** is an important document for the everyday life of families in Slovenia, as it defines the basic rules governing family relations. It sets out the rights and duties of parents regarding the care of their children. These include ensuring appropriate care, upbringing, education, and protection of children, as well as care for their well-being and development.

The Family Code defines the key aspects of **parental responsibility**, which represents the **entirety of parents' obligations and rights to create, in accordance with their abilities, the conditions that ensure the child's holistic development.**

Parental responsibility is complemented by the **principle of the best interests of the child**. This principle stipulates that parents **must act in the child's best interests in all activities related to the child and raise the child with respect for their personality, individuality, and dignity.** Parents act in the child's best interests by appropriately satisfying the child's material, emotional, and psychosocial needs, while taking into account the child's personality, age, level of development, and wishes. Not only parents, but also state authorities, public service providers, holders of public authority, local community bodies, and all other natural and legal persons must act in accordance with the best interests of the child in all activities and procedures concerning the child.

### 8.4 THE PRINCIPLE OF PRIVACY PROTECTION

The **principle of privacy protection means protecting individuals' personal data from unauthorized access, collection, processing, disclosure, or misuse.** This principle ensures that personal data are handled with the greatest care and that individuals are informed about how their data are collected, processed and used. In relation to children, this principle is regulated by several laws. The main law that sets the rules regarding the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy is the **Personal Data Protection Act**. Specific protection of children is also defined in the Social Protection Act and the Act on the Protection of Children's Rights.

#### **Interesting fact:**

**In the European context, the principle of privacy protection is specifically defined in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which sets out the rules for the processing of**

personal data and the precise conditions for the protection of individuals' privacy. In accordance with the GDPR, the processing of personal data of children under the age of 16 requires the consent of parents or legal guardians. In Slovenia, this age limit has been lowered to 15 years, which means that the processing of personal data of children under the age of 15 requires the consent of parents or legal guardians.

## 8.5 FAMILY RIGHTS

In Slovenia, **family rights** are defined in the Family Code, which provides legal protection for all family members and regulates marriage, cohabitation (non-marital partnership), parent-child relationships, forms of state support for problems in partnership and family life, and many others. In addition to the Family Code, the Child Protection Act, which focuses on children's rights, and the Social Welfare Act, which regulates issues of social protection and support in family matters, are also relevant.

**Specific family rights** guaranteed by the state at the birth of a child include **maternity, paternity and parental leave**, as well as **financial allowances** to help parents reconcile work and family life. In addition, families can receive a **child allowance** to help cover the costs of raising and caring for children. Eligibility for child benefit is determined by the average monthly income per family member. Income limits are divided into income brackets, which affects the amount of the Child Benefit. Families exceeding the upper income thresholds are not eligible for child benefit.

**Children with special needs** have **the right to special care and financial support**, while parents are offered financial reductions on kindergarten fees to make childcare affordable. Additional benefits and financial support are also available for families with several children.

### What I have learned:

- Knowledge of different types of families enables a better understanding of a child's background and contributes to respect for diversity and improved support for children.
- Educators must be familiar with the applicable legislation to ensure a safe, stimulating, and equal environment for children.
- Parents and professionals must act in the best interests of the child, which includes appropriate care, upbringing, education, and protection of children, as well as respect for their personality and dignity. This is referred to as parental responsibility and the principle of the best interests of the child.
- The Family Code provides legal protection for all family members.

### Acquire and integrate knowledge: from revision to understanding

1. List the different types of families that we know.
2. How should a preschool educator act if they notice that children's personal data are being unintentionally shared among parents through unauthorized communication channels?
3. Analyse how the principle of the best interests of the child influences parents' decision-making when enrolling a child in various activities, and assess how preschool educators can cooperate with parents to ensure the child's best interests.

## 9. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE KINDERGARTEN AND PARENTS IN THE UPBRINGING OF THE CHILD

**In this chapter you will learn:**

- different forms of cooperation with parents,
- how to organise activities that involve the active participation of parents,
- how to evaluate activities in which parents have participated,
- basic skills of rhetoric and public speaking in front of a group of parents, and
- the importance of cooperation between the kindergarten and parents in the upbringing of the child.

Preschool teacher Mateja is preparing a play session. David and Emily Thompson will also participate with their two children, Lily and Jack, who are adapting to their new environment in Slovenia. Mateja first defines the main objective of the play session as encouraging cultural exchange and getting to know Australian cultural heritage. She then selects suitable topics and activities: a creative activity, namely making Australian lamingtons, drawing Australian animals, and a movement game called “Boomerang Catch”.

Mateja prepares the space where the play session will take place. She arranges the play areas and prepares and checks the appropriate materials, such as creative supplies and toys, to ensure they are safe to use. She also asks two colleagues to assist with translation, as Mr and Mrs Thompson do not yet speak Slovenian well enough. She informs the parents about the date, time, and theme of the play session by email.

When the play session begins, Mateja welcomes the parents and children and presents the purpose of the event, paying special attention to the Thompson family and their Australian cultural heritage. Emily leads the lamington-making workshop, while David explains Australian animals and creates drawings together with the children. The children play “Boomerang Catch” in the playground. Throughout the session, Mateja observes the interactions between the children and the parents, paying particular attention to the inclusion of Lily and Jack and their adaptation to the new environment.

After the play session, Mateja meets with the team to discuss the success of the achieved goals, identify strengths, and recognize possible areas for improvement for future play sessions. She analyses the impact of Australian cultural elements on the children. The parents are invited to share their impressions and feedback. Emily and David share their views on the presentation of Australian cultural characteristics and its impact on Lily and Jack.

**Reflect:** *Is the active involvement of parents in kindergarten work beneficial? What are the advantages of cooperation with parents? Could Mateja have effectively encouraged the learning about Australian cultural heritage through another form of cooperation with parents as well? Justify your answers.*

## Glossary

**“‘Boomerang Catch’ is an Australian game in which a player throws a boomerang and tries to catch it as it returns to them, with skill in throwing and catching being assessed.”**

We are in the final chapter, which summarizes what we have learned about communication so far. In the first chapter, we became familiar with the basics of communication. In the second and third chapters, we explored professional communication in more detail, which includes clarity, respect, and openness. In this context, the educator must maintain a professional tone, meaning they avoid excessive emotionality and focus on facts and solutions. In the fourth chapter, we examined the basics of etiquette used in communication with parents. In the fifth chapter, we explored the causes of conflicts in relationships and different ways to resolve these conflicts, which can be applied to disagreements with parents and colleagues. We found that conflicts, despite the negative connotation of the word, bring advantages such as stronger relationships and increased trust. In the sixth chapter, we addressed group communication, and in the seventh chapter, we focused on different types of families and their cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. In the eighth chapter, we learned about the rights of families, the duties of parents, and the legislation governing these areas. All the knowledge acquired is essential for successful cooperation between educators and parents, contributing to the optimal development of children.

The Kindergarten Act outlines the following areas of development: developing the ability to understand and accept oneself and others, the ability to negotiate, respect differences, and cooperate in groups, recognizing emotions and encouraging emotional experience and expression, nurturing curiosity, a spirit of exploration, imagination, and intuition, and developing independent thinking. It also includes promoting language development for effective and creative use of speech, and later reading and writing, encouraging the experience of works of art and artistic expression, conveying knowledge from various fields of science and everyday life, promoting physical and motor development, and fostering independence in hygiene and health care. All this can be achieved only through strong partnership and cooperation with parents.

Without the collaboration of educators and parents, the successful development of a child cannot be imagined, as together with parents, we shape the child's growth. Effective communication promotes cooperation and partnership between educators and parents, which is essential for creating shared goals and strategies for the child's development. Regular and constructive feedback between educators and parents is vital for monitoring the child's progress. Communication skills make it possible to provide this feedback in a way that is helpful and positive.

## 9.1 FORMS OF COOPERATION WITH PARENTS

Different forms of cooperation with parents contribute to a more effective educational environment. Each form has specific characteristics:

**Play sessions:** These are intended for parents and children to spend time together in the kindergarten, where they can play, explore, and learn together. They encourage interaction between parents and children in the kindergarten setting, allowing parents to become better acquainted with their child's development and interactions with peers.

**Individual conversations:** These take place between the educator and a specific parent, usually in a private setting, such as a meeting room. They allow the educator and parent to focus on the child's specific characteristics and needs. These conversations can address the child's progress, behavioural patterns, social interactions, or other important aspects of the child's life in the kindergarten.



**Discussion meetings:** These are organized group meetings between educators and a group of parents, where general topics important for all children in the group or kindergarten can be addressed. They encourage open dialogue between educators and parents regarding educational practices, kindergarten programs, special events, or challenges faced by children and parents.

**Parent council:** Establishing a parent council allows for regular collaboration and discussions between parents and educators on important issues and decisions in the kindergarten, contributing to an effective educational environment in the kindergarten.

**Workshops and lectures:** The kindergarten can organize workshops and lectures on various educational topics, where educators and experts share useful advice and information with parents. They promote the exchange of knowledge between educators and parents, which can improve understanding of children's needs and educational approaches.

**Exhibitions and events:** The kindergarten can organize events where children showcase their creative achievements (drawings, crafts, projects), allowing parents to view and participate. These activities strengthen children's confidence in self-expression and foster connections between parents and the kindergarten through shared activities.

**Written communication:** Regularly informing parents through written messages, emails, online portals, or social media about important events, news, and activities at the kindergarten ensures transparency and keeps parents informed about what is happening, while establishing an open channel of communication.

The listed forms of cooperation allow educators and parents to jointly create a supportive environment that promotes children's holistic development and strengthens the connection between home and kindergarten. For better understanding, you may revisit the example of

the preparation and analysis of the play session for the group with educator Mateja and the Thompson children at the beginning of this chapter.

## 9.2 BASIC RHETORICAL SKILLS AND PRESENTING IN FRONT OF A GROUP OF PARENTS

When discussing different forms of cooperation with parents, it becomes clear that we will often have the task of speaking in front of a group of parents. Mastering basic rhetorical skills and the art of presenting involves the ability to clearly and effectively convey information while maintaining the audience's attention. This means being able to use rhetorical techniques such as an appropriate speech structure, clear articulation, suitable body language, visual aids, and the ability to answer questions posed by the audience.

The basic rhetorical skills are **ethos**, **pathos**, and **logos**, as defined by Aristotle in his work *Rhetoric*. These three categories or principles represent fundamental ways of persuading and addressing an audience:

1. Ethos represents the trust and credibility of the speaker. It is built on the speaker's moral authority, character and reputation. The speaker must demonstrate that he or she is trustworthy and has mastered the subject matter of the speech.
2. Pathos refers to the emotional appeal to the public. It involves the use of emotional appeals to encourage the audience to respond to a particular idea or action. This can include storytelling and creating an emotional connection.
3. Logos represents the logic and rationality of an argument. It is based on the use of evidence, facts, statistics and logical explanations to support arguments and persuade audiences through reason.

Successful rhetorical communication depends on a balanced application of all three principles. A speaker must be credible (ethos), emotionally connected to the audience (pathos) and logically persuasive (logos) in order to effectively influence his audience.

Preschool teacher Mateja stands in front of a group of parents at a regular kindergarten meeting, aiming to clearly present information and establish a connection with the parents to encourage their involvement in the upbringing of children. She first introduces herself as an experienced professional, which gives parents a sense of trust. Then she uses an emotional appeal to emphasize the importance of empathy and understanding the child's emotional world, sharing personal experiences that allow parents to emotionally connect with her approach. This is followed by a presentation of research, statistical data, and practical examples, which support her statements with logical arguments. Mateja reinforces her words with body language, such as an upright posture and eye contact, further strengthening her confidence and professionalism. At the end,



she answers parents' questions with clarity and patience, demonstrating her ability to understand their concerns.

### 9.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKING WITH PARENTS

The cooperation between the kindergarten and the parents leads to the most successful development of the children. The importance of cooperation can be summarised in the following points:

1. **Supporting child development:** Cooperation between the kindergarten and parents allows for a better understanding of the child's development, needs and interests. Parents and educators can monitor the child's progress together, which allows for more targeted support.
2. **Aligning educational approaches:** When parents and educators are aligned in terms of educational methods and goals, the child's experience is more consistent. This helps to create a stable and predictable environment for the child.
3. **Increasing child motivation:** When parents are actively involved in the child's education and experience, the child often feels more supported and motivated. Parents can reinforce what children have learnt in kindergarten at home and encourage the child to learn new skills.
4. **Problem-solving:** Collaboration enables early identification of the problems and challenges a child is facing and the search for solutions in collaboration with all those involved.
5. **Encouraging positive relationships:** When parents and educators build a positive attitude, this influences the child's perception of the kindergarten setting and the relationships within it. This makes the child feel more secure and accepted.
6. **Information sharing:** Regular communication between parents and educators allows the exchange of important information about the child's progress, interests and possible problems. This includes keeping parents informed about plans and activities at the kindergarten.
7. **Increasing involvement:** Parents' active participation in various activities and events in the kindergarten fosters a sense of community and togetherness, which contributes to creating a positive environment for the child.

In short, kindergarten cooperation with parents is essential for ensuring quality education, as it contributes to the holistic development of children and to improving the quality of the educational process.

### **What I have learned:**

- Successful child development requires close cooperation between educators and parents, as they jointly shape the child's growth and development.
- Different forms of cooperation, such as play sessions, individual conversations, or group meetings, contribute to a better educational environment and allow for a deeper understanding of the child's development.
- A successful speaker must combine the principles of credibility (ethos), emotional appeal (pathos), and logical argumentation (logos) to effectively engage and address their audience.

### **Acquire and integrate knowledge: from revision to understanding**

1. What is a play session, and how does it contribute to cooperation between parents and children?
2. What is the form of cooperation called in which the educator and parent individually address the child's specific needs?
3. How could an individual conversation between an educator and a parent influence the child's development and progress?
4. Explain how discussion meetings can affect the alignment of educational approaches between parents and educators.
5. Analyse how the use of rhetorical skills (ethos, pathos, logos) in a presentation in front of a group of parents could influence cooperation between educators and parents.
6. Evaluate different forms of cooperation (play sessions, workshops, parent council) in terms of their effectiveness in promoting positive relationships between parents and educators and solving children's problems.

# **SOLUTIONS**

## **CHAPTER 1**

1. Communication skills are a subset of social skills that include the ability to collaborate successfully with others, encompassing cooperation, conflict resolution, and empathy.
2. Verbal communication and non-verbal communication.
3. Active listening means understanding what others are saying, providing feedback, and asking questions for clarification.
4. Linear communication model.
5. The educator should use clear and simple instructions and ensure they speak loudly enough. They can also use non-verbal cues to support their words.
6. A child could use body language, such as smiles, gestures, and eye contact, to show interest and friendliness and encourage other children to play.
7. The educator could use an interactional model to allow parents to give feedback on changes and clarify information if needed. They could also check whether parents received and understood the notice.
8. A child can use active listening to understand another child's viewpoint, express their own feelings and suggestions, and work together with their friend to find a compromise solution.
9. Poorly structured instructions can cause confusion in children, leading to misunderstanding of tasks and mistakes in execution. The child may become frustrated or demotivated, which can affect their overall development and attitude toward tasks.
10. The educator could use the linear model for one-way information, such as notifications to parents via email. For interaction with children, they could use the interactional model to check children's understanding and responses to changes. For communication with colleagues, the transactional model could be used to establish and maintain relationships and collaborate on problem-solving.
11. A change in one person's emotional state can affect the communication process by altering how they express themselves and interpret messages. An upset person may be unable to express their thoughts clearly and calmly, which can lead to misunderstandings and increased conflict. Solutions include waiting until emotions have settled and using active listening and patience to clarify misunderstandings.

## **CHAPTER 2**

1. Preoperational stage, which lasts approximately from the age of two to seven years.
2. Through symbolic play, such as role-playing or using toys that represent different objects (for example, playing "shop" or "family").
3. Personal communication is direct conversation between people. It is the oldest form of communication.
4. The educator politely greets the parent. Her posture is open and inviting, encouraging the parent to enter the classroom. She briefly describes the child's behavioural characteristics to the parent. Then she politely says goodbye to both the child and the parent.

5. To prepare a message, we use a word processor to write and format the text. Then we copy the text into an email interface and send it to the parents. At the same time, the text is printed and posted on the preschool notice board.

<b>Title:</b>	Notice about the Upcoming Family Day at Preschool
<b>Message content:</b>	<p>Dear Parents,</p> <p>We kindly invite you and your children to Family Day at the preschool, which will take place on Saturday, September 15, 2024, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on the playground in front of the preschool.</p> <p>The program will include various activities: creative workshops, sports games, a picnic with homemade treats (please bring something to share), and an entertaining program with activities for the children.</p> <p>Please confirm your attendance no later than September 12, 2024, either by email at <a href="mailto:info@kindergarten.com">info@kindergarten.com</a> or in person with your child's educator.</p> <p>We look forward to spending time with you and your children.</p> <p>Kind regards, The Educators of Abracadabra Kindergarten</p>

6. Digital applications allow educators to record children's progress, plan activities, and communicate with parents, which contributes to better organization and efficiency at work. Parents can follow preschool events and their children's progress through the application.

7. Interaction with peers through group games and conversations enables children to develop social skills, express their thoughts, listen to others, and understand different perspectives, all of which contribute to their social and language development.

8. Educators can use formal language in official situations to ensure accuracy and professionalism. Everyday conversational language is more suitable for daily interactions, as it allows for more relaxed and accessible communication, building trust and better understanding between educators and parents. A combination of both styles allows communication to be adapted according to context and needs, improving overall communication effectiveness.

9. When someone interrupts me during a conversation, I feel angry, because I cannot say everything I want to.

10. We can explain the above model to a child using examples and encourage them to apply it in different situations.

11. a) Noisy environment, as the children were not calm. The educator did not gain the children's attention. She was interrupted because the children disturbed her during the explanation. The educator did not check whether the children understood the instructions. b) It is necessary to calm the environment and gain the children's attention. Instructions should be given clearly and slowly. It is important to check whether the children understood the task.

12. Checking message understanding is important because we often think we have understood a message correctly, but mistakes frequently occur. Verifying understanding is important for both the sender and the receiver of the message, following a process of clarification from both sides until agreement is reached. Understanding a message can be checked by asking the other party to repeat what they understood if we are the sender, or by paraphrasing the message if we are the receiver, using phrases such as “If I understand correctly...” or “Could you correct me if I didn’t understand correctly that...?”

## **CHAPTER 3**

1. Body posture, facial expressions, and hand movements.
2. Children who withdraw from the group, clench their hands, hold their stomachs, or avoid eye contact often indicate distress. Silence or crying without words can also be a sign that a child needs help. It is very important to pay attention to changes in behaviour that suggest something is wrong.
3. The educator can respond appropriately through physical closeness and a calming presence, signalling to the child that it is safe to express their emotions. Using a calm tone of voice and gentle physical contact (for example, lightly tapping the shoulder) can help the child feel supported and understood.
5. Joy, satisfaction, cheerfulness, curiosity.
6. Dark colours and unusual shapes in a child’s drawings could indicate worry, sadness, or insecurity. It is important to discuss the drawings with the child and examine other aspects of their behaviour and emotional state to gain a complete understanding.
7. Various creative activities allow children to express their emotions in different ways, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of their state. For example, drawing can reveal a child’s emotions and self-image, whereas clay or playdough creations can reflect motor skills and interests. Singing can indicate mood and social connectedness, whereas dancing allows expression of emotions through movement. Analysing all these activities together provides a complete picture of the child’s emotional and social state and enables better adjustment of support and approaches for developing the child’s identity and stress management skills.
8. Body posture: The child may often appear slouched, withdrawn, or closed off. Their posture may be rigid, with arms crossed or held close to the body, indicating a need for protection or defence.
9. Movements: Restless shifting from foot to foot, shaking hands or legs, frequently turning away from others. The child may withdraw more often, hide behind furniture, other children, or adults. Restricted hand movements, often clenching or holding them together. They may also pull at clothing, hair, or toys, indicating inner restlessness and anxiety. Eye contact: Children who do not feel safe often avoid eye contact. Their gaze is directed toward the floor or away from people, signalling reluctance to interact or feelings of threat. Facial expressions: Their face is often tense, lips pressed together, eyebrows raised, indicating fear or concern. The child may frequently scan their surroundings with a worried expression or show a frozen, blank facial expression.

## CHAPTER 4

1. The term “bon ton” comes from French and means “good tone.” It is associated with etiquette, which is a set of rules for establishing and maintaining respectful relationships among people.
2. We introduce ourselves correctly by clearly and audibly stating our first and last name, as well as our role or position. For example: “Hello, I am Ana Kralj, an educator.”
3. When shaking hands, it is important to have a firm but not too strong grip, maintain eye contact, and smile kindly.
4. “Dead fish” describes a handshake in which the hand is soft and lacks firmness, indicating a lack of energy, confidence, or interest.
5. As an educator, one should introduce themselves clearly, stating their name and role. This is important because the first impression affects parents’ trust and perception of the educator’s professionalism and friendliness.
6. One can try to improve the first impression through better preparation, punctuality, neat appearance, and friendly behaviour. It is also important to apologize for any mistakes and maintain open communication.
7. An educator should communicate clearly and respectfully about a child’s progress, listen to parents’ concerns, offer support, and seek joint solutions for any potential problems.
8. It is important to engage in constructive discussion, look for common solutions, respect others’ opinions, and focus on the children’s well-being and a pleasant working environment.
9. Respectful and positive communication with children, including praise, active listening, and clear boundaries, promotes their emotional development and social skills, as children feel safe, valued, and understood.
10. The educator’s first impression affects the building of trust and relationships with both parents and children. An educator can improve the first impression through punctuality, neat appearance, a friendly greeting, a smile, and eye contact. It is also important to avoid belittling comments and focus on constructive communication.
11. Etiquette (bon ton) plays a key role in conflict resolution, as it encourages respectful and professional communication, active listening, and seeking joint solutions. By applying the rules of etiquette, educators can resolve conflicts constructively, improve the work environment, and maintain focus on the children’s well-being.

## CHAPTER 5

1. A conflict occurs when the actions of one person hinder or obstruct the actions of another.
2. Personal causes: lack of self-awareness, uncontrolled emotions. Communication causes: misunderstanding the meaning of a message, inappropriate communication style, or poor delivery.
3. Dominance strategy – Shark.
4. Compromise strategy – Fox.
5. An educator could accept parents’ suggestions, even if they do not fully agree, to maintain a good relationship and reduce tension.

6. One could organize a meeting to explain the message more clearly, use concrete examples, and ensure that all participants understand the information correctly.
7. A conflict can cause stress for the child, affecting their behaviour and emotional state. To protect the child, parents and educators should communicate honestly, focus on the child's needs, and ensure that the child does not become a direct target of the dispute.
8. Humour can reduce tension and stress, facilitate communication, and create a more relaxed environment for finding joint solutions. This can improve relationships and increase willingness to cooperate.
9. Educators or parents may choose to avoid further discussions and allow the situation to calm down on its own, avoiding contentious topics until emotions settle.
10. The dominance strategy can lead to a quick solution but may harm relationships. The compromise strategy allows for finding mutual solutions and maintaining relationships, though it may not achieve the ideal outcome for everyone. Compromise is more suitable when relationships are important, while dominance may be necessary when the goal is urgent and relationships are less critical.
11. Constructive conflict resolution can strengthen long-term relationships through increased trust and openness, as participants see that they can solve problems together. However, prolonged conflicts can cause fatigue and stress, requiring additional effort to maintain positive relationships.
12. Mismatch between verbal and non-verbal communication can lead to confusion and distrust, as the recipient may misinterpret intentions and feelings. To avoid these problems, it is important to align words with non-verbal signals and communicate clearly and openly, using both verbal and non-verbal communication.

## CHAPTER 6

1. Leadership style is a relatively permanent pattern of influencing people in order to mutually achieve set goals. A particular style is a set of specific behaviours and leadership behaviours.

2.

	<b>Authoritarian Leadership</b>	<b>Democratic Leadership</b>	<b>Liberal Leadership</b>
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- quick decision-making</li> <li>- clear work guidelines</li> <li>- clear expectations</li> <li>- suitable in crisis situations when quick action is needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- encourages creativity and innovation</li> <li>- greater satisfaction and motivation of members</li> <li>- greater sense of belonging to the group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- encourages independence and responsibility</li> <li>- higher creativity</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lack of creativity and innovation</li> <li>- dissatisfaction and low motivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- solutions take more time</li> <li>- possible conflicts among members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lack of direction and structure</li> </ul>

	- limited sense of belonging to the group	- possible lack of clarity in the group if roles are not clearly defined	- difficulties in coordination and collaboration - no clear guidelines and adequate support
<b>Outcome</b>	Increases productivity but leads to lower creativity and dissatisfaction.	Encourages long-term motivation and satisfaction, fosters creativity.	Low productivity and lack of direction, even though it offers the most freedom.

6. The coordinator guides the goal-planning process, organizes meetings, and delegates tasks. They are important for the successful achievement of team goals, as they ensure that tasks are appropriately distributed, that all team members are aware of their responsibilities, and that activities are carried out according to plan.

7. SMART goals to improve communication with parents would include a specific goal of implementing regular monthly meetings with parents. The goal should be measurable—for example, achieving at least 80% parent attendance at the meetings. The goal should also be attainable and use appropriate methods. It is important because better communication between parents and educators improves child care. The goal would be time-bound, with meetings organized on the first Tuesday of each month.

8. The facilitator, such as Andrej, is responsible for preparing the space, materials, and directly leading the activities. The completer ensures that tasks are finished accurately and on time. If evaluation shows that children have difficulty recognizing basic colours, it would be sensible for Andrej to adjust activities and use additional visual aids or interactive games to make learning colours easier for the children. The completer should review and coordinate these adjustments and ensure that the new methods are included in the curriculum. This way, the effectiveness of the activities would improve, increasing the likelihood of successfully achieving the goals.

## CHAPTER 7

1. Stereotypes are simplified and often generalized ideas about social groups, whereas prejudices are usually negative opinions about these groups that are not supported by facts. Both can affect a child's self-image and self-confidence, as the child may perceive certain expectations or limitations regarding their behaviour and abilities based on their cultural background, which can lead to internal conflicts and reduced motivation.

2. An educator could organize activities that present these holidays, for example, by showcasing customs, stories, artworks, or foods associated with the holidays. The educator can invite parents to come and share their holiday traditions with the children, allowing all children to better understand and respect the diversity of their peers.



3. The educator should respect the parents' beliefs and provide the child with an alternative activity that aligns with their religious convictions. At the same time, they should ensure that the other children in the group still participate in activities important for an inclusive environment and find ways to include children with different needs in shared activities. For example, a child from a family that does not celebrate Christmas for religious reasons might have difficulty participating in Christmas-related activities. Instead of making Christmas decorations, the child could engage in creating artworks with autumn leaves or decorative items made from natural materials.

4. Stereotypes and prejudices can create unfair expectations and treatment of children, which may lead to social conflicts or reduced motivation. For example, if an educator believes that children from a certain culture are less capable in creative activities, a child from that group may receive fewer opportunities to express their abilities. An educator can reduce the impact of these factors by consciously avoiding general prejudices, actively monitoring their own biases, educating themselves about the influence of stereotypes, and ensuring equal opportunities for all children.

5. Parents can be involved through regular meetings where they can share their values and suggestions. They can be invited to organize workshops and participate in preparing activities. After the activities, they can provide feedback through discussions or surveys. These methods are appropriate because they allow parents to feel included and valued, while ensuring that the educational process remains consistent with professional and ethical standards. Parental involvement in activity planning contributes to a positive educational environment by strengthening the partnership between the kindergarten and families and promoting open communication and collaboration.

## **CHAPTER 8**

1. There are single-parent families, multi-generational families, traditional family units (nuclear families), and foster care.

2. The educator should first immediately stop sharing personal data through unauthorized channels. Then, they should inform the kindergarten management about the incident and ensure that the data protection violation is properly reported. The educator should also educate all involved parties about correct procedures for sharing personal data and ensure that only authorized and secure communication channels are used in the future. Additionally, the educator should cooperate in any further measures to protect the children's data and in staff training regarding privacy protection.

3. The principle of the child's best interest means that parents, in all decisions, consider what is most beneficial for the child, including meeting their material, emotional, and psychosocial needs. When involving a child in various activities, parents must assess whether these activities contribute to the child's holistic development, respect the child's wishes, and are appropriate for their age and developmental stage. Kindergarten educators can collaborate

with parents by advising them on the selection of activities that nurture the child's talents and interests, and by offering programs aligned with the principle of the child's best interest. Educators can also organize meetings with parents to jointly assess the child's progress and needs and develop individualized plans that support the child's well-being and development. This collaboration ensures that decisions made both at home and in the kindergarten collectively contribute to the child's optimal development.

## **CHAPTER 9**

1. It is designed around the theme of parents spending time together with their children in kindergarten, where they can play, explore, and learn together. It encourages social interaction between parents and children in the kindergarten environment, allowing parents to better understand their child's development and interactions with peers. It enables parents to gain insight into their child's abilities and behavioural patterns and to connect with the child within the kindergarten setting.

2. This form of collaboration is called an individual meeting. In it, the educator and parent discuss the specific needs and characteristics of the child in a private setting, which allows them to focus on the child's progress, behavioural patterns, and other important aspects.

3. Individual meetings allow the educator and parent to focus on the specific needs and progress of the child. This form of collaboration can contribute to faster problem-solving, more targeted support, and alignment of educational methods between home and kindergarten. In this way, it ensures that the child receives appropriate assistance and encouragement, which contributes to their holistic development and progress.

4. Group meetings provide an open dialogue between educators and a group of parents. These meetings address general topics and issues relevant to all children in the group or kindergarten, enabling the alignment of educational approaches. When parents and educators are on the same page regarding educational methods and goals, the child experiences a consistent and coherent environment, which supports better understanding and adherence to educational guidance.

5. The use of rhetorical skills in presentations to groups of parents is key for successful communication. Ethos helps educators gain parents' trust, strengthening their authority. Pathos allows educators to evoke emotional connection, increasing parents' interest and engagement. Logos ensures that the information is clear, well-founded, and persuasive. A balanced use of all three elements contributes to effective communication and collaboration and improves relationships between educators and parents, which is crucial for the child's well-being.

6. Play sessions encourage direct interaction between parents and children and allow parents to better understand their child's interactions and progress in kindergarten. This strengthens relationships between parents and educators and helps identify potential issues. Workshops and lectures provide parents with useful information and strategies to support their child's

development, increasing their confidence in the educators and improving alignment of educational approaches. The parents' council enables systematic discussion of important issues and decisions related to the kindergarten, fostering collaboration and joint problem-solving. It increases parental involvement and strengthens the sense of community.

**COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

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