

Left to right

MANNHEIM, G., *Balról jobbra*. Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó Zrt. 2011.
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A slim publication *Balról jobbra* (a workbook designed for the development of spatial orientation) I bought at the end of August in the Hungarian city of Szombathely in the store Interspar. I picked it out of the range of books published by the Hungarian educational publishing house Nemzeti tankönyvkiadó and I was happy that in this “cathedral of consumerism” unobtrusive and useful things also occur. On the counter, there were a few coloring books for children, and a number of workbooks *Kispilóta* (Small pilot) for teaching preschool children, their familiarization with the basics of counting *Számolj 5-ig!* (Count to five!), the concentration of attention *Figyelj!* (Watch out!) and developing their logical thinking *Gondolkodj!* (Think!). From this offer I was most interested in the workbook *Balról jobbra*, because the Hungarian language is very specific for its differentiation and thus marking specific locations in space. Children at pre-school age must learn the meanings of words such as left, right, center, front, back, backward, up, down, around and others very well otherwise later they have problems with fine distinction between these directions and a location in space, which could be compared for example to the Slovak “*zpodmedzi*” expression. For example “*vyjít zpodmedzi ...*” means to come from somewhere outside of the gap between two or more objects. Czech translation “*z prostředka*” or even English “from the center” in this case are not very accurate.

The entire workbook respects the principle of gradually increasing difficulty. It also uses transparent icons that clearly indicate to parents and children how to work with different tasks. Children in the workbook circle, match, talk, watch, draw, colour and paint marks above and below each image. From the start of the book the authors motivate the children by the forthcoming celebration of Adam and Lili and draw young readers into the story about the preparations for a birthday party. Initial exercises focus on the training of a compliance of the directionality from left to right. They are referred to the left side and thus the location of the heart from the

very beginning. In the following exercises, children distinguish which of the figures look left or right, where cars are going, which line of flower pots is at the top, middle, bottom. At this stage, the principle use of the right hand (the welcome and farewell) is also fixed. The picture of children swinging on swings illustrates the meaning of the terms below and above. Somewhat questionable is the use of images, where the figure is looking back over its shoulder – from the perspective of the reader to the left but for itself to the right.

At the very end of exercise sheets children reinforce the importance of learned words and verbally describe the direction of their wandering in the labyrinth. Below this maze they inscribe the directions of their “march” by the arrows. Finally, they learn to identify the left and right side using the example of their paired organs, and learn to recognize these parts not only on themselves but also on other people.

Worksheets Balról jobbra are not only a useful tool for the development of spatial orientation in intact Hungarian population of preschool children, but also a welcome inspiration for work with the minority group of children with cross-laterality hand and eye or with a less favorable preference of a leading left hand. They can also well serve to children, who are at pre-school age and where later learning problems in the area of specific learning disabilities can be expected. And these children can be found throughout the world.

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