

Pupils with a hearing impairment in primary education – partner relationships

(scientific paper)

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Abstract: *A contribution entitled “Pupils with a hearing impairment in primary education – partner relationships” introduces the outcomes of a research realized in the Czech Republic among pupils with hearing impairments attending 8th and 9th grades of elementary school for the hearing-impaired and among non-disabled pupils of 8th and 9th grades. The research was realized using a questionnaire containing a total of 13 questions. It was focused on values preferences of pupils with a hearing impairment and those without; inclination towards marriage in pupils with hearing impairments and those without. The pupils with a hearing impairment were further asked about the choice of a partner while the non-disabled pupils were asked about hearing impairments. The theoretical part of the text defines pupils with hearing impairment, the system of their education and addresses the question of partner relationships in the target group. The legislative norms in force (acts and decrees) in the Czech Republic are used in the text. The practical part of the text introduces the target group, methodology and the realization of the research and complete outcomes. More detailed information may be found in the author’s article in a publication by Finková, D., et al. entitled „Iniciační analýza podmínek inkluze u osob se specifickými potřebami“ (Initial analysis of the conditions for the inclusion of people with special needs). The theme, partial and complete outcomes were also presented in foreign conferences in Poland and the Slovak Republic and domestic conferences in Olomouc and Hradec Králové.*

Keywords: *a pupil with hearing impairment; partner relationships of people with health impairment; the issue of socialisation of people with hearing impairment; the education of pupils with hearing impairment.*

1 Introduction

Partner relationships is currently a very debated theme which occurs in media within expert programmes, discussions, debates and general public programmes introducing the theme. The focus on partner relationships is mostly from the perspective of the fields of psychology and sociology, however, the field of special pedagogy ought not to be forgotten since a person with health impairment seeks to establish partner relationships and considers the issue just as much as non-disabled persons. From the perspective of developmental psychology the beginnings of partner relationships are formed in the early adolescence stage and gradually gain importance in one's life. The following text focuses on the understanding of partner relationships, marriage and parenting by pupils with hearing impairment attending 8th and 9th grades. In the first part some information about hearing impairment and possibilities of education for pupils with hearing impairment will be offered; we will, attempting to integrate the issue of hearing impairment, address the characteristics of a developmental stage of adolescence with emphasis on seeking identity, peer group and partner relationships. Then we will address the objective of the research itself, the choice of the target group and we will interpret respective research outcomes.

2 Pupils with hearing impairment as a research group

Since we will deal with the understanding of partner relationships by pupils with hearing impairment it is appropriate to characterise the target group.

Pupils with hearing impairment are a diverse group varying in the degree of hearing loss, the type of hearing loss, the time of onset of hearing loss or the preference of communication system. According to the legislative norm concerned with the education of pupils with special education needs, namely "Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on Pre-school, Primary, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education" as amended, the pupils fall into the category of pupils with special education needs since section 16 (1,2) of this act clearly states: *"A child, pupil or student having special educational needs shall be a disabled person, or a person disadvantaged in terms of health condition or social position. For the purpose of this Act, disability shall mean mental, physical, visual or auditory disability, language deficiency concurrent with more deficiencies, autism and development deficiency in learning or behaviour."* According to the degree of hearing loss the pupils with hearing impairment are divided into the hard of hearing, pupils with remnants of hearing, deaf pupils, deafened pupils and in recent years also a group of pupils with a cochlear implant.

2.1 Hard of hearing pupils

It is characteristic for hard of hearing pupils that their ability to perceive information and speech by hearing is impaired to a varying degree, however, this ability is not completely lost (Souralová, 2005). Within this group of hard of hearing pupils there are differences; they are therefore further divided into mildly, moderately, severely and profoundly hard of hearing pupils (Potměšil, 2012). The group of hard of hearing pupils in most cases has the hearing loss well compensated by a hearing aid and prefers communicating using spoken speech.

2.2 Pupils with remnants of hearing

The pupils with remnants of hearing form a specific category that is not defined in many countries at all. In medical terminology the remnants of hearing or “practically deafness” is a subcategory of deafness. In special pedagogy, however, it is better to perceive this group as an independent category, mainly for the purpose of communication since for the pupils with remnants of hearing it is typical that their hearing loss does not enable them a spontaneous development of spoken speech, although some hearing remnants which can be developed and used are preserved (Pulda, 1992).

2.3 Deaf pupils

Within this category there are pupils who were born with a hearing loss or who lost hearing in early childhood (Potměšil, 2012). From the medical perspective deaf are those individuals who do not hear any sounds even with the greatest enhancement (Kučera, Langer, 2012). A different, wider, view of the group of the deaf is offered by the Act No. 348/2008 Coll., on communication systems of the deaf and deaf-blind, as amended, defines the deaf as people *“who are deaf from birth or lost their hearing before their spoken speech had developed, and people with complete or practical deafness who lost the hearing before their spoken speech had developed, and hard of hearing people whom the extent and nature of hearing impairment do not allow to fully understand spoken speech by listening”*. These pupils have great difficulties communicating using oral speech and therefore prefer sign language.

2.4 Deafened pupils

The group of deafened pupils consists of pupils whose hearing impairment occurred in the final stages of spoken speech development or when the speech had been formed. The spoken speech does not disintegrate but the quality of its formal side is impaired, as well as the normal pace of broadening vocabulary (Potměšil, 2012).

2.5 Pupils with a cochlear implant

The last and quite specific group is comprised of pupils with cochlear implant (CI). *"Within this group we may speak of two subgroups – the deafened children with CI and deaf children with CI"* (Schmidtová, 2010, p. 218). According to the same author the deafened children in most cases regain their speech communication capabilities. In deaf children with CI the success of CI use depends on a range of factors. It is mainly the early diagnosis of hearing impairment, early operation and application of CI around the 1st year of life, intensive education of speech and hearing and intensive follow-up care of experts and parents.

3 The possibilities of education of pupils with hearing impairment

Currently, pupils with hearing impairment may be educated in the Czech Republic in an elementary school for the hearing-impaired or in the form of integration. The choice of an appropriate form of education is very important since it is one of the factors that greatly influence the integration into the greater society.

3.1 A pupil with hearing impairment in an elementary school for the hearing-impaired

In the Czech Republic pupils with hearing impairment may be educated in 13 school assigned to them. Namely, there are 3 schools in Prague, one school each in Liberec, Hradec Králové, Plzeň, České Budějovice, Brno, Olomouc, Valašské Meziříčí, Ivančice, Kyjov and in Ostrava-Poruba. The schools for the hearing-impaired are attended by all the mentioned degrees of hearing impairment together while these heterogeneous groups may be found in elementary school only since 1991. Before then the pupils with hearing impairment were placed in schools according to the degree of hearing loss. For this reason there were elementary schools for the deaf, elementary schools for pupils with remnants of hearing and elementary schools for hard of hearing in the Czech Republic. Following the year 1991 more changes were made in the field of education of pupils with hearing impairment, mainly the use of sign language and associated educational approaches.

The oral, bilingual and total communication approaches are the educational approaches being used in the education of pupils with hearing impairment (Komorná, 2008). Before the year 1991 the oral approach was the only approved educational approach in the Czech Republic. This approach focuses on the development of spoken speech through which the hearing-impaired pupil has a better chance of integrating into the greater hearing society. Sign language as a means of communication was forbidden. A disadvantage of the oral approach lies in the fact that it is mainly intended

for the hard of hearing pupils whose hearing loss is well compensated by hearing aids and are able to communicate via spoken speech without more difficulties. The other two educational approaches are better suited for the other pupils.

The bilingual approach is based on the transmission of information in two language codes: the written form of the national language and the national sign language. Both these codes are used simultaneously although greater significance is given to the sign language (Kučera, Langer, 2012).

The last educational approach used in the education of pupils with hearing impairment and which allows sign language is total communication. Total communication consists of *“a complete range of language modes, gestures created by children themselves, the sign language, lip-reading, finger alphabet, reading and writing and the development of the remnants of hearing with the purpose of improving speech and lip-reading abilities”* (Gregory, et al., 2001, p. 88).

When we look at the advantages of educating pupils with hearing impairment in specially designed schools we may mention lower number of pupils in class, trained pedagogic staff, application of special methods, procedures and approaches in working with these pupils, the possibility to receive education in the form of sign language and last but not least a group of pupils connected by a shared health impairment. These advantages may also be viewed by the sceptic as disadvantages since the bases future minority are being established and the entry into the non-disabled society is made more difficult for reasons of low social interaction with the hearing.

3.2 Integration as a form of educating pupils with hearing impairment

Currently, the education of pupils with hearing impairment is addressed in the Decree No. 147/2011 Coll., amending the Decree No. 73/2005 Coll., on the Education of Children, Pupils and Students with Special Education Needs and Children, Pupils and Students who are Exceptionally Gifted. The decree fixes that the pupils with special education needs may be educated in the form of individual integration, in the form of group integration or at a school specially formed for pupils with a health impairment. An individually integrated pupil may be educated in a ordinary elementary school or in a school established for pupils with other kinds of health impairments. An individually integrated pupil is given an individual educational plan.

Jesenský (1995 in Michalík, 2000) views the pedagogic integration as *“a dynamic, gradually developing, pedagogic phenomenon that enables an equal comingling of the disabled and the non-disabled on a level of mutually harmonised adaptation during their upbringing and education and during their active participation at solving educational situations.”*

The pedagogic dictionary (Průcha, Mareš, Walterová, 2009, p. 107) states the following in connection with integrated education: *“Approaches and ways of involving*

pupils with special education needs in the main streams of education and in the common schools. The purpose is to provide the pupils with severe and permanent health disabilities with an experience shared with their healthy peers while respecting their specific needs.”

Beside the term ‘integration’ we may also encounter the term ‘inclusion.’ Although these terms are being mixed by some authors there is a difference in meaning. The above mentioned Pedagogy dictionary (Průcha, Mareš, Walterová, 2009, p. 104–105) explains inclusive education in the following way. Inclusive education is *“an education including all children into common schools. The basis is a transformed view on child’s failure in the system, or a failure of the educational system in the case of a concrete child. In case of failure it is necessary to discover the barriers in the system that is not sufficiently open to the needs of the individual. Each child possesses unique characteristics, interests, abilities and educational needs. As the core impulse for the development of inclusive education is considered the Declaration made at the conference in Salamanca in 1994 based on the belief that ‘common schools’ should educate all children irrespective of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, language or other conditions.”*

4 Elementary school pupil as seen by the developmental psychology

In the above chapters we were interested in pupils with hearing impairment from the point of view of the degree of hearing loss and their educational options. Now we will proceed to characterising the developmental stages of a pupil with a hearing impairment.

4.1 Period of adolescence in the life of a pupil with a hearing impairment

According to Vágnerová (2012) we may speak of the period of adolescence as an intermediary period between childhood and adulthood comprising the time between 10th and 20th year of life. This period is characterised by a complex change of personality consisting of a somatic, mental and social transformation. Two developmental stages may be defined within adolescence.

Early adolescence stage in the life of a pupil with a hearing impairment

Early adolescence, also called pubescence, is a period between 11th and 15th year. The most noticeable changes in this period concern the physical part. It is during this period that biological maturation takes place connected with the rise of secondary gender characteristics. The way of thinking also changes. The adolescent is capable of abstract thought. It must be mentioned that this may not be true in all pupils with a hearing impairment since these pupils’ ability of abstract thought is impaired due to their verbal dictionary being poor in content.

Zborteková (2001 in Vágnerová, 2008) mentions the following statement about the hearing impaired. Their *“thinking is more linked to the concrete reality—the real world—therefore it is more difficult to achieve such degree of understanding to enable abstraction and hypothetic thinking. Children with a non-standard speech development do not give full attention to various connections and relations between parts of knowledge. They are not able to make proper use of respective pieces of information in different situations and linger on the concrete context. The attachment to the current reality is also expressed in their unwillingness and difficulties in planning, thinking about the future and similarly in reflection, generalisation and evaluation of past experience. The development of logical operations tends to be slower, terminology thinking develops strenuously even in those adolescents who have mastered speech well.”* Emotional imbalances also occur in this period in adolescents – pubescents. Gaining independence from parents increases. Pubescents with a hearing impairment may encounter problems in this process since they often do not possess the necessary mechanisms for it (Vágnerová, 2012).

The period of late adolescence of a pupil with a hearing impairment

This period covers the time between 15th and 20th year of life when a more complex psychosocial transformation occurs. An important milestone of this period is the conclusion of professional preparation and the beginning of employment. The period of late adolescence is characterised by search and development of identity (Vágnerová, 2012). In people with a hearing impairment we talk about a so called ‘first identity crisis’ since they do not consider their hearing impairment a unalterable fact but rather begin to understand the limitations involved (Vágnerová, 2008). It may be thought that the form of education and the peer group are among the factors that influence the intensity of the realization of these limitations in pupils with a hearing impairment. Since the text’s primary objective is not to focus on the physical transformation of adolescence nor on its cognitive processes we will not address this issue further.

4.2 The issue of socialisation of the hearing-impaired pupils in the period of adolescence

Generally it may be stated that the biggest problem of any hearing impairment is not the impairment as such but a communication barrier and the problems it causes in other areas of life. Hearing-impaired people often have problems in social orientation, are disoriented due to difficulty in understanding. Problems with the needs of their communication partner also often occur; they do not understand social situations,

do not know what is allowed and what is forbidden. In the context of their hearing peers the communication barrier is a significant limitation (Vágnerová, 2008). The speech impairment is greater the sooner the hearing impairment occurred and the bigger the hearing loss. For people with a hearing impairment communication with their hearing partner may be uncomfortable and the hearing people may perceive the hearing-impaired to have a lower level of cognitive abilities. Another big problem are non-verbal expressions comprising of an intensive eye contact, higher frequency of touches, noticeably loud breathing or champing during eating. Sign language represents another great communication barrier in a relationship between a hearing-impaired and a hearing person. In the previous developmental stages in the life of a pupil with a hearing impairment a significant role in socialisation was played by the family, however, in the adolescence stage the adolescent gains independence from family more intensively as a result of which it does not have such an important role in the interaction with the person's social environment. A significant socialisation role is covered by a peer group. Vágnerová (2008) states that in the case of an adolescent with a health impairment emancipation from the family is more difficult since the person often does not have the necessary abilities to manage it. On one hand adolescents with a health impairment may be, due to an inappropriate upbringing, dependent on their parents, on the other the mutual emotional relationships may be weak or idealised in case the family did not address the child's need for safety and security; in neither case can the emancipation process occur.

4.2.1 The importance of a peer group in the period of adolescence

Peer group provides an individual with support during the creation of individual identity through the group identity. Connection with a group diminishes individual responsibility and strengthens self-confidence and self-assurance. In case an individual is not accepted by a group from some reason such acceptance is being sought. Sometimes an adolescent may accept anyone who offers acceptance (Vágnerová, 2012). In people with a hearing impairment the creation of individual identity depends on whether they are in interaction with hearing or hearing-impaired peers.

In adolescents who are in a group of healthy peers the sense of belonging may be worsened by an indifference of the hearing to their impairment and the differences involved. A hearing-impaired individual may be isolated on the outskirts of a peer group, may lack the necessary social contact and have problems initiating peer relationships whether friendly or partner-like and these may be significantly asymmetric. A different situation arises when an adolescent with a hearing impairment is in every day interaction with a group of peers with the same impairment (Vágnerová, 2008). This situation arises in individuals educated in elementary schools for the hearing-

impaired. All pupils are equal in this type of educational institution since they all have a hearing impairment.

During the period of adolescence sexual relationships are also in the forefront. A sexual relationship of an adolescent fulfils several functions: *“contributes to the development of socialisation, supports the development of intimacy, it is a source of knowing one’s self and influences the formation of identity. It may bring satisfaction not only on an emotional and erotic level but also in the area of self-realization because it may contribute to achieving a desired social prestige”* (Vágnerová, 2012, p. 438). The situation is more complicated in case an individual with a hearing impairment is looking for a partner, mainly because of the mentioned communication barrier. Individuals who are educated in an elementary school for the hearing-impaired have significantly higher chances of finding a partner among their hearing-impaired peers because they have daily contact. On the other hand this prolonged, intensive and every-day contact, often starting in preschool age, leads to the pupils with a hearing-impairment not seeing each other as potential partners. This usually changes with the start of secondary school for the hearing-impaired with an introduction to new hearing-impaired peers. Preliminary results of the research suggest that pupils with a hearing impairment in an elementary school for the hearing-impaired prefer to have a hearing partner. According to Vágnerové (2008) a partner relationship has a greater significance for a person with a hearing impairment because it confirms one’s normality.

5 Partner relationships as seen by the pupils with a hearing impairment in the context of the research

In the text above we have addressed the theoretical basis of the issue. Now we will introduce the research realised in the year 2013 as part of a project called: “Initial analysis of the conditions for the inclusion of people with special needs”. Partial goals of the research and the target group will be defined, the research method will be characterised and possibilities and methods of further research will be outlined.

5.1 Research objectives

The research focused on the understanding of partner relationships in pupils – adolescents had for its aim to find answers to these research questions:

1. What is the hearing-impaired pupils’ view on marriage and parenthood?
2. In what age do the pupils want to enter into marriage?
3. How many children do the pupils want to have?

Furthermore, we were interested in the values of pupils with a hearing impairment, the position of partner relationships and factors influencing the choice of a partner.

Besides the findings concerned with the ideas of the adolescents with hearing impairment on partner relationships the research also aimed to ascertain whether the views of these adolescents on the partner relationships differs from their healthy peers (Švecová, 2013).

5.2 Research group characteristics

The research focused on pupils of 8th and 9th grade of elementary school for the hearing-impaired and their non-impaired peers who posed as a control group. The target group was chosen with regards to the pupils with a hearing impairment because the speech of these pupils is often poor in content, as was mentioned in the theoretical part, and this makes reading comprehension and the comprehension of questions more difficult. Since the pupils learn about partnership, marriage and parenthood within the educational field “The Human and the Society” within the Framework Educational Programme only in the 8th grade the participants of the research were from 8th and 9th grades.

Altogether 23 pupils were hearing-impaired out of which 11 were girls and 12 were boys. Their mean age was 15 to 17. For the purpose of the research the pupils with the hearing impairment were considered as one target group. The control group was chosen from the pupils of 8th and 9th grade of common elementary school. This was a group of 31 pupils out of which 16 were girls and 15 boys.

Pre-research was realized before the start of the research itself. 10 respondents participated in the pre-research: 5 respondents of 8th grade and 5 respondents of 9th grade. Due to the low number of respondents they were not divided according to grades, only according to gender. 6 girls and 4 boys participated in the research. The mean age of the girls was 15.5 and the mean age of the boys was 16 (Švecová, 2013).

5.3 The characteristics of the research method

Questionnaire with 13 questions was chosen as a research method. Based on pre-research some questions were deleted or edited. One of the problematic questions was a question regarding ideal qualities of a father and a mother. Because of limited vocabulary most pupils answered with adjectives such as “good”, “nice”. In the case of qualities the pupils also based their answers on their concrete reality because in cases when they grew up with only parent they did not answer the question regarding the qualities of the absent parent.

The pre-research questionnaire consisted of 18 questions (6 open ended questions, 3 scaled questions and 9 closed ended questions). After the conclusion of pre-research some questions were deleted, formulated differently or added. After the edits the final version of the questionnaire consisted of 13 questions (Švecová, 2013).

5.4 Realisation of the research

The main emphasis was placed on the pre-research which was realized in an elementary school for the hearing-impaired and in which 10 respondents participated. The questions as well as the procedure of filling out the questionnaire were explained at the beginning. More explanation was offered individually where necessary. The first question aimed to ascertain whether the pupils understand the meaning of the word 'marriage'. This question was later deleted from the questionnaire based on 90% rate of correct answers. The fourth question required the pupils to choose one item from a list that they desire the most. The pupils were not able to choose one or make plans for the future and this question was therefore changed so that the respective items were to be placed on a numeric scale. The most problematic questions were the open ones. Question number 6 aimed to ascertain what qualities should have an ideal boy or girl. Most respondents were not able to answer this question so it was deleted. A similar problem was encountered in the questions 15 and 16 asking how the pupils imagine an ideal father or a mother. When answering these questions the pupils focused solely on the description of qualities. Based on their poor vocabulary the pupils had difficulties finding the correct terms for the respective qualities. Generally it may be concluded that open questions often ascertain the pupils' vocabulary level and not their attitudes or opinions. Open questions are not appropriate in a questionnaire. After the realization of the pre-research the questionnaire was distributed to schools for the hearing-impaired in Olomouc, Brno and Valašské Meziříčí and to an ordinary elementary school in Olomouc (Švecová, 2013).

5.5 Interpretations of the results

54 pupils participated in the research, out of which 23 were hearing-impaired.

The research aimed to ascertain the existence of a direct relationship between the preference of marriage and the hearing impairment. The hypothesis was formulated in the following way:

H1: Pupils with a hearing impairment prefer marriage significantly more compared to pupils without a hearing impairment.

The hypothesis was **not confirmed**. It may be concluded that there are not statistically significant differences between the preferences of marriage in pupils with and

without a hearing impairment. 39.13% of pupils with a hearing impairment would enter marriage in age 18–25; 30.43% between ages 30–35 and the same percentage has not decided.

The same question was answered by the hearing pupils. 64.52 % wants to enter marriage between 25–30; 22.58% between ages 30–35 and only 6.45% before year 25. Based on the fact that 93.55% of hearing respondents wants to study university in the future and also the fact that marriage is being pushed to later years nowadays, the hearing respondents fall into this trend.

As to the issue of life values of pupils – adolescents they could choose from 7 items. Each item had a 5-point scale from the lowest 1 to the highest 5.

It may be concluded that there are no significant differences in the values of both groups of adolescents. Both groups put health among the first. This is because the hearing-impaired do not consider their impairment a disease. Relatively small significance is given to appearance and school success by both groups although appearance is a significant factor in the formation of identity.

The pupils with a hearing impairment were asked whether they would prefer a hearing-impaired partner, a hearing partner or any. 47.83% of the hearing-impaired adolescents preferred a relationship with a hearing partner; 30.43% do not care whether their partner is hearing or not and 13.04% adolescents prefer a hearing-impaired partner. The preference of a hearing partner by adolescents with a hearing impairment may be influenced by the degree of their impairment or a pattern in their family. Three factors usually play a role in the choice of a hearing-impaired partner by a hearing person: 1. The degree of the hearing impairment and the degree of communication; 2. Previous experience with hearing-impaired people; 3. The degree of attractiveness of the partner for the hearing peers.

Based on the assumption that the healthy pupils are currently not in a partner relationship with a person with a hearing impairment and they are not considering such a person as a potential partner the first question aimed to find out how the pupils understand the term 'hearing impairment'. The answers of the hearing adolescents show that they think it means "people who do not hear or are deaf". Only a small percentage of pupils was able to differentiate various degrees of hearing loss and only one pupil mentioned the terms 'deaf' and 'hard of hearing'. A positive finding of the research is that 58.84% of adolescents met a person with a hearing impairment but only 16.13% is able to imagine a relationship with a hearing-impaired person. The low number is probably consistent with the distorted view on hearing-impaired people by the majority of the society.

Both groups were to choose from the following items the criteria important in the choice of a partner: 1. Common interests; 2. Appearance; 3. School success. The results are shown in the following table.

THE HEARING			THE HEARING-IMPAIRED		
1.	Common interests	4	1.	Common interests	4.13
2.	Appearance	3.8	2.	Appearance	3.7
3.	School success	2.7	3.	School success	2.74

Figure 1: Criteria for the choice of a partner

96.77% of the hearing respondents answered positively the question regarding children compared to 67.57% of the hearing-impaired. The lower number may be connected to the fact that 30.43% is from a single-parent family without a father.

5.6 Discussion of the results and suggestions for future research

The text above introduced the issue of partner relationships as viewed by the hearing-impaired pupils. The theoretical part of the text addressed the hearing impairment, the possibilities of education of the hearing-impaired and the issue of their socialisation. The research realized among the pupils of 8th and 9th grades for the hearing-impaired was introduced and the results were interpreted.

Marriage is currently being preferred by the hearing-impaired pupils as well as the hearing. The hypothesis about a higher preference of marriage in the hearing-impaired pupils was not confirmed.

There are no significant differences between the life values of the hearing-impaired and the hearing pupils. Both groups emphasise health and lower meaning is given to school success and appearance.

The pupils with a hearing impairment were asked whether they would prefer a hearing-impaired partner, a hearing partner or any. Almost half of the hearing-impaired adolescents preferred a relationship with a hearing partner. The preference of a hearing partner by adolescents with a hearing impairment may be influenced by the degree of their impairment or a pattern in their family. Three factors usually play a role in the choice of a hearing-impaired partner by a hearing person: 1. The degree of the hearing impairment and the degree of communication; 2. Previous experience with hearing-impaired people; 3. The degree of attractiveness of the partner for the hearing peers.

In case the healthy pupils are in a partner relationship we do not assume they are in a relationship with a person with a hearing impairment and we also do not assume that they are considering entering a relationship primarily with such a person. A great role in a partnership between a person with a hearing impairment and without is played by the degree of the hearing loss and communication. Another important factor is whether the healthy pupils have met a person with a hearing impairment and the individual characteristics of the person. If the same question was given to

the healthy individuals it would be misleading. Therefore the question was not used and instead the pupils were asked how they understand the term 'a hearing impairment'. The answers of the healthy pupils show that the distorted view of the hearing-impaired pupils is still prevalent. Most pupils understand this term to describe deaf or deafened people. Relatively positive is the finding that 60% of healthy pupils have met a person with a hearing impairment (Švecová, 2013).

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