



The Story as a Journey: Finding One's Voice through Creative Arts Therapies in Stuttering Therapy

Zgodba kot potovanje: najti svoj glas skozi umetnostno terapijo v terapiji jecljanja

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The purpose of this case study was to explore the use of selected elements of Creative Arts Therapies (CATs) in the treatment of children who stutter. Specifically, the study examined the impact of the therapeutic story and other CATs elements in fostering a positive attitude toward one's speech, enhancing communication confidence, and developing self-reflective capacity. The research aimed to identify possibilities for integrating various CATs elements into stuttering therapy.

Based on theoretical insights, research findings, and examples of good practice, an original therapeutic creative arts program was designed for children who stutter. The program was conducted through workshops aimed at strengthening communicative self-confidence and positive self-image, while enabling children to recognize, explore, and transform their attitudes toward their own speech in a creative and enjoyable way. The children personified their stuttering and illustrated it as a unique, imperfect vehicle facing various challenges along its journey. They created stories and poems about these experiences, which they later brought to life through performative storytelling.

The impact of CATs approaches in stuttering therapy was analyzed through participants' self-evaluations, the researcher's reflection on the implemented program, and triangulated observations from participants, their parents, and external observers (a special education professional and a professional storyteller).

Qualitative and quantitative analyses indicate that the use of the therapeutic story and selected CATs elements improved participants' attitudes toward their speech and overall



self-image. However, due to the small and non-representative sample, a more detailed quantitative analysis capable of yielding statistically reliable conclusions was not possible. The findings confirm that art is a tool deeply connected to the core of human nature, supporting processes of reflection and self-awareness. Through artistic expression and perception, individuals can reconnect with their inner world, gain new perspectives, and explore complex emotional and cognitive dimensions of human experience.

Biography

Maša Budič holds a master's degree in speech and language therapy and works at the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Center Domžale, Slovenia, where she provides preventive, diagnostic, and therapeutic support in the fields of communication, speech, and language. She is also an active storyteller engaged in performative storytelling, collaborating with artists across disciplines such as theatre, music, and movement. She regularly leads storytelling workshops for children and adults. In her interdisciplinary practice, she explores the complementarity between performing arts and therapeutic approaches in supporting children and adolescents with communication, speech, and language difficulties.

Alenka Vidrih is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. She heads the Creative Arts Therapy Program and teaches Creative Arts in the Department of Primary School Education, Preschool Education, and Special Education. Her research interests focus on the role of Performing Arts in Health and Education. She is currently a part of a national research project on creativity and gifted education. As an artist, she performs and works in theater direction. She has published widely on the creative arts in education and therapy and regularly presents her work at international conferences exploring intersections between these fields.

Recent publications and presentations

Vidrih, A. (2022). **Everything That We Can Remember: How to Create a Safe Environment Through a Poetic Story – An Introduction to Forest of Lost Memories.** In C. Holmwood (Ed.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Therapeutic Stories and Storytelling* (pp. 382–383). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.



Vidrih, A. & Grošelj, T. (2025). **Improving the Social-Emotional Well-Being of a Child with Multiple Developmental Disabilities by Incorporating the Performative Drama**

Model into the Learning Process. *CEPS Journal: Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 15(2), 73–94. <https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.2001>

Vidrih, A. (2020). **Stand-Up Comedy in Rehabilitation of People with Physical Disabilities.** In Marija Cestarić, Antonija Balić Šimrak, & Marijana Županić Benić (Eds.), *Book of Abstracts: ACE 2020 – 2nd International Artistic and Scientific Conference, Zagreb, Croatia, 18–19 October 2020* (pp. 328–329). Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb. https://ed2.ufzg.hr/ACE/ACE_2020_BOOK_OF_ABSTRACTS_SPREAD.pdf