

## LANGUAGE EDUCATION OF SENIORS AS A TOOL OF ACTIVE AGEING

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**Abstract:** The world population is getting old rapidly, the number of old people is increasing and this mentioned fact represents an opportunity and a challenge for particular societies. It is important so that the seniors can live actively up to their very old age, they can participate in the social events and so that they are healthy, self-sufficient and independent on the help of other people. One of the tools of active ageing is also education. In the education and active living of the old age there is hidden a potential which is necessary to use for the benefit of the current and future generations of seniors. The article deals with the topic of language education as one of the tools of active ageing. Seniors are not a marginal group and it is important to pay adequate attention to them in the society.

**Key words:** old age, ageing, active ageing, education of seniors, language education of seniors, specific features of education of seniors

### 1 Introduction

The European Union is experiencing a rapid ageing of population which is caused mainly by the increasing life expectancy in combination with the low birth rate. The mentioned fact is considered to be one of the main European challenges, the social systems are being transformed, the requirements for the health care are being increased, the ageing of population has an impact on the employment, economic growth and the competitiveness of the regions. The concept of ageing is generally understood as a complex of changes in the structure and functions of the organism which influence its increased vulnerability and decrease the ability and performance of an individual (Langmeier, Krejčířová, 2006). With the growing age there gradually occurs the slowdown of the developmental changes, the faster growth of certain dispositions and functions is accompanied with the slowing of other functions (Směkal, 2012). The virtue of this life period is the wisdom as a result of the whole developmental cycle of an individual (Drapela, 2011). However, the ageing is individual and different by every individual. The breakthrough is the leaving of the working life and beginning of the retirement. With leaving of their profession seniors can lose social contacts and they can get into the social isolation (Vágnerová, 2007). It is important so that seniors find a new meaning of their life.

There are growing also the demands and needs of seniors which should lead to the improvement of the quality of their life. The basic need is the health and it is related to the creating of conditions in order to motivate seniors to the healthy lifestyle. The need of health is immediately followed by the need of safety. Almost on the top of their needs there is the need of appreciation and the need to be useful, to transmit their legacy to younger generation and, last but not least, there are also the social needs. More and more opportunities are created in providing new services aimed on the older generation. One of the provided services, connected with the active ageing of population, is the education which can have different forms and kinds. The language education belongs to the preferred ones (Oreský et al., 2016).

Education belongs to the significant activities in the life of the man and its importance is changed in particular periods. Education is a lifelong process and all age categories should have an access to it. Thanks to the education and activities the man keeps his/her good physical and psychic condition and he/she is getting old actively.

### 2 Ageing and the old age

Nowadays, the ageing of population is one of the significant demographic trends. In Europe there the number of people older than 60 will increase up to 35% in the year 2050. The biggest growth is supposed in the category of long-living people, i.e. the

oldest ones. The given demographic situation is influencing all the areas of the social life (Bútorová et al., 2013).

It is important to distinguish between the concepts of ageing and the old age. "The concept of *the old age* marks a certain period of the life cycle of the man which is related to the period of the legal right of the man for the receipt of the retirement pension and to the period when the man notices more involutionary changes in his/her organism and personality" (Határ, 2011, in: Határ, 2014a, p. 45).

*Ageing* is "a process of gradual involution with the accompanying biological, psychic and social changes in the organism and personality of the man" (Hotár, Paška, Perhács et al., 2000, in: Határ, 2014a, p. 46). Křivohlavý (2011) says that the maturing and growth of the personality and its integration does not finish when the man leaves the working process, it can fully develop in the third phase of life (above the age of 70). It was proved that the man in the period of the old age can also learn something new because there are created new cells and nerve connections. It was confirmed that people in the third phase of life (above the age of 70) are, in average, more clever and the wisdom becomes independent on the intelligence, the man acquires it in the course of his/her life. The third phase of life involves also the period of the biggest measure of happiness. Several researches confirmed that the happiest people feel to be the people above the age of 70. It is related with the fact that people above the age of 70 have a calmer daily regime, more free time they have at their disposal without any restrictions. The task of the period of the old age is to grow and mature personally to become a completely developed, integrated, respectable and harmonic personality who still tries to participate in the cultural legacy and to pass it further (Křivohlavý, 2011).

Ageing people differ from each other, the reasons are in different genetic predispositions, in the environment where the man lived during his/her life so far, in the way the man has lived, what he/she has experienced and how he/she has coped with it, what he/she has encountered in his/her life and how he/she has been influenced with it. Regarding this fact, we talk about the biological, chronological and psychological age (Křivohlavý, 2011).

A radical change for the man happens with his/her retiring. The senior suddenly has a lot of free time, he/she can decide what he/she will do. He/she has enough time for himself/herself, the senior learns the art to live, he/she looks for peace and relax. The senior personally matures and he/she concentrates on himself/herself and his/her inner living, he/she releases from work and deepens into himself/herself. There occurs deeper self-knowing, he/she is still interested in being someone. The senior acquires spiritual satisfaction, his/her identity is being changed and also the society of people the senior is in contact with, there are changes in his/her attitude towards what has been, is and what will be. The senior changes his/her approach to all what he/she wants from the life and also his/her orientation of hobbies (Křivohlavý, 2011).

The man in his/her old age reviews his/her life and his/her important aim is to achieve a general harmony which depends on his/her ability to adjust to the life conditions, to change his/her behaviour in the course of time, to cope with difficult life situations by means of selection (to concentrate only on a certain point of interest), prioritization (the need to break with all what we have done until now), optimization and compensation. It is important to acquire the feeling of satisfaction, inner safety and integrity, belief, hope and love, thankfulness and realistic self-perception, to achieve the feeling of happiness, to experience well-being and joy whose source is the meaningfulness of life - a higher measure of religiosity, spirituality, engagement and pleasing of other people (Křivohlavý, 2011).

### 3 Active ageing and lifelong education

Active ageing is a process of optimizing the opportunities for health, participation and safety with the aim to support the quality of life in the process of ageing of people. (WHO, 2002, in: Repková, 2012). The concept active ageing was introduced by the World Health Organization at the end of the 90' and it includes not only the healthcare, there are also possibilities of participation of the seniors in the social events, one of the options can be also the volunteering of seniors.

According to the World Health Organization, the concept of "active" in relation to the ageing means not to stop participating in social, economic, cultural and spiritual matters, as well as the ability to stay in the working process as long as possible. (Active Ageing - A Policy Framework, 2002).

The demographical changes in the population development led to the thinking about a meaningful and quality living of the senior age and about active, successful, productive and healthy ageing. The result was the acceptance of several national and transnational documents, resolutions and programmes out of which we mention the documents adopted in the year 2013, namely: *Stratégia aktívneho starnutia* (Strategy of active ageing), *Akčný plán naplnenia stratégie aktívneho starnutia* (Action plan for fulfilling the strategy of active ageing) and *Národný program aktívneho starnutia pre roky 2014-2020* (National programme of active ageing for the years 2014-2020). In these documents there was fully established the idea of active ageing (Bútorová et al., 2013, in: Határ, 2014a).

The document *Stratégia aktívneho starnutia* (Strategy of active ageing) deals with the lifelong education of older people what can be one of the tools of active ageing. The concept of lifelong education represents two levels - the whole-society level and the individual level. From the point of view of the whole society, this concept is becoming very meaningful due to the reason of keeping and increasing the competitiveness of the economics in general, there are changes in the nature and character of work and also changes in the labour market. The individual positive approach to the lifelong education increases the civic responsibility. It means that the senior can keep his/her active attitude for long time and he/she can participate in the social events (*Stratégia aktívneho starnutia*, 2013).

The document *Akčný plán naplnenia stratégie aktívneho starnutia* (Action plan for fulfilling the strategy of active ageing) sets specific aims in relation to the education of older people. These aims are centred on how to make the lifelong education attractive for older people and support it by all participating actors. At the same time, it emphasizes the improving of language skills as well as skills in Information Communication Technologies (*Akčný plán naplnenia stratégie aktívneho starnutia*, 2013).

The document *Národný program aktívneho starnutia pre roky 2014-2020* (National programme of active ageing for the years 2014-2020) deals with the topic of the lifelong education. At this time the education of older people is provided by the institutions of further education, Universities of Third Age at 16 universities in the Slovak Republic, Academies of Third Age, the daily centres for seniors and other educational institutions (e.g. the civic organizations). The demand of older people for education is much higher than the possibilities of the mentioned institutions. It is necessary to widen the possibilities of education of older people and to orientate them not only on the interest education and free-time activities but also on the professional education at the labour market. The contribution of education is not only in the support of the active way of life of older people but it is also reflected in the increased economic and whole-society contribution of older individuals (*Národný program aktívneho starnutia pre roky 2014-2020*, 2013).

„One of the first influential definitions of lifelong education was that of Dave who regarded lifelong education as a process of accomplishing personal, social and professional development

throughout the lifespan of individuals in order to enhance the quality of life of both individuals and their collectivities“ (Jarvis, 2004, s. 62).

### 4 Education as a tool of active ageing

The education of seniors means a purposeful process which has its inner principles, aims, methods and means (Špatenková, Směkalová, 2015). J. Průcha and J. Veteška (2012, in: Špatenková, Směkalová, 2015) say that in the professional meaning learning is denominated with the concept of "education", i.e. it is a process of guided learning and teaching which takes place in the educational environment of the school or in another educational environment.

R. Čornaničová (2005) mentions several factors which support the development of the education of seniors: the increase of the number of seniors in the population, the prolonging of the human age, respectively prolonging of the old age, changing expectations of seniors about the life in the retired age, the effort to achieve the quality and dignity of life in the old age, the search for the social mission of the old age, the secondary economic aspects of education, the factor of change as a phenomenon of the present time, the democratization of the society and looking for the new models of life in the old age, the increasing model of the lifelong education of the man, the social support of the education of seniors (in: Balogová, 2009).

From the point of view of the target orientation, R. Čornaničová (2009) distinguishes four groups of the programmes of senior education:

- a) programmes primarily aimed on the institutional interest education (e.g. U3V, A3V),
- b) programmes primarily aimed on the professional - civic engagement of seniors (e.g. social - educational activities for the employees in the pre-retirement and retired age, volunteering of seniors, civic engagement in the retirement),
- c) programmes primarily aimed on the cultural - social activities of seniors and the social climate for the benefit of the senium (e.g. education of seniors in the cultural centres, libraries, daily centres, greeting activities during the life anniversaries, transgenerational educational activities with the participation of seniors),
- d) programmes primarily aimed on the biological-psychological-social and spiritual support of the adaptation of seniors to the changes related to the ageing and the old age in the residential facilities for seniors (in: Határ, 2014a, p. 66).

The significance of the education for an older man and his/her environment can be subsequently defined: education as a prevention of social segregation of seniors, as a prevention of psychosomatic illnesses and a tool of elimination of the consequences of illnesses in the old age, as a tool of creating of the society based on the knowledge, as a tool of personal development, respectively stabilization (keeping) of the personal potential of seniors, as a meaning of life of seniors, as a tool (of help) for solving real and/or potential problems of seniors, as a tool of elimination of the processes of ageing, as a tool of forming new ways of behavior by seniors and as a tool of increasing the quality of life of seniors (Határ, 2014a, p. 70-71).

### 5 Language education of seniors

Nowadays the topic of education of seniors by means of providing different programmes and courses is very up-to-date. After the leaving from the active productive age into the retirement, seniors have enough free time and therefore it is necessary to find suitable activities for filling the time. It is important so that seniors use their free time in the active, quality and meaningful way, i.e. they do things which fill them with joy, feeling of satisfaction and pleasure. One of these ways can also be the language education. The aim and meaning of the education of seniors is the cultivation of life and its enrichment, understanding of the developmental tasks of the senior age and

easier adaptation to the changed way of life, keeping, help by the orientation in the current and rapidly changing world (Petřková, Čoraničová, 2004).

Seniors represent a specific target group for the language education. With the growing age there begin to be evident involuntary processes, involuntary changes and therefore it is necessary to take them into the consideration and respect them within the educational programmes and activities for seniors. According to Čoraničová (1998), seniors in the educational process differ mainly with their interests, motivation to fulfil their educational needs and interests, with their acquired education, social environment, creativity, work requirements (already in the working phase of life), social involvement, health condition, adaptation to the retirement, search for new tasks, challenges and life programme, level of specific competences, potentials and abilities (in: Špatenková, Směkalová, 2015).

Regarding the specific features of seniors, it is indispensable to respect the personality of seniors, their possibilities and limitations in the education, to support their positive thinking and to strengthen their self-confidence, to take into account the age, psychic, physical or individual differences of older people, to communicate with them effectively, to choose the topics of education carefully, to make use of working and life experiences of participants in the education as much as possible, to lead them to the self-education (Špatenková, 2013). Seniors, who educate themselves, have a better-quality life and they keep their intellectual abilities and physical power. The self-realization and keeping of dignity are closely connected with the further education of seniors. Seniors who participate in educational activities actively, are more self-confident and self-assured, more active and strenuous, they keep their independence longer than passive seniors, the passivity is pathogenic. It is important so that seniors are educated in the calm, non-formal and friendly environment (Ondráková et al., 2012).

## 6 Individual specific features of seniors in the language education

In the language education there it is necessary to take into consideration individual specific features in learning of a foreign language. It is indispensable to be aware of the influence of many specific features, intersubjective and intrapsychic differences among the learning individuals which determine their individual success. The success in learning a foreign language depends more on what is happening inside the man than on the materials, techniques and linguistic analyses (Stevick, 1980, in: Lojová, 2005). Excessive concentration on the contents, methodology and environment overshadows the personality of the learning individual. Stevick (1980, in: Lojová, 2005) emphasized the importance of not only the linguistic and cognitive factors but also of the affective and personal factors mainly determining the success in learning of a foreign language. Language education is aimed on the communicative part, in the centre of attention there is a learning individual what is based on the humanistic psychology. All what is being achieved within the framework of the language education, ultimately depends on what is happening in the psychic of the learning individual and the teacher has to be prepared for it. In the centre of attention there is the man himself/herself (Lojová, 2005).

It is necessary to take into consideration which characteristic features of learning people are 1. relatively common, biologically influenced such as working of the memory of seniors (crystalline, fluid), working of the brain and which characteristic features are 2. *partially given*, i.e. their further development is determined by the factors of the outer environment. The teacher with his/her acting influences their working to a certain extent. For example, here are included the respecting of the specific features of seniors, the knowledge about the language skills, styles of learning, personal qualities. The third group is formed by 3. *relative characteristic features* which are changing and unstable. Here belong emotions, emotional barriers, attitudes, needs, motivation, acquired strategies of learning and several personal features. In order to

respect individual features of learning people, the teacher needs to be really involved, he/she has to have empathy, sensibility and effort to achieve the best result possible. Every learning person is a personality himself/herself with his/her individual needs. Knowing of the individual features, needs, aims, interests or motivation enables to individualize the education (Lojová, 2005).

Learning of foreign languages is a psychic process which is influenced by the working of its "material base", i.e. the nervous system and mainly the brain. The knowing of the principles of its working in older age opens the way also to the understanding of the process of learning a foreign language. The teacher has to know the principles of working of the brain/memory of the learning individuals, respect them and adapt them to the teaching - learning process and he/she has to adjust his/her educational acting to it. Speaking is the youngest, most complicated and most vulnerable psychic function and whatever stressful situation, inner tension or strong emotions are reflected mainly in the spoken expression, not to mention the spoken expression in a foreign language (Lojová, 2005).

It is also equally important in the language education to take into consideration the working of hemispheres. A learning person with the right-hemisphere dominance has a tendency to express more feelings, emotions, humour and to use a different intonation. A person with the left-hemisphere dominance uses mainly the logic, facts, his/her conversation is structured, it has its clear orientation and aim. It is important so that the teacher knows what kind of learning seniors he/she has in his/her class and subsequently the teacher has to adjust his/her educational acting to it (Lojová, 2005).

It is suitable to take into account the gender differences in the language education. Women master grammar, spelling and interpunctuation better, they have better developed verbal skills. Men have more limited speaking skills, they usually speak briefly, directly, clearly and with more facts. However, also here it is important to regard individual features of individuals (Lojová, 2005).

A significant role in the language education is played by the age, the usage of the left hemisphere is dominant by adults when they learn a foreign language whereas children make use of the right hemisphere. However, we all use the right hemisphere in the beginning phases of learning a foreign language irrespective of the age. Learning of grammar in higher age is more problematic than in younger age. The right hemisphere influences the non-formal mastering of the language in the natural environment and the left hemisphere impacts the formal learning of the language at the lessons (Fabbro, 2001, in: Lojová 2005).

Learning people with the left-hemisphere dominance like to gather information about the system of the language, they like to learn grammar, they prefer analytical exercises. In the practical usage of the language they make use of the created system of the language and of the principles they apply consciously. In their communication there is evident a logical story line, they do not have problems with spelling. In reading and listening they catch partial pieces of information and subsequently they can create a general picture out of them. They memorize vocabulary, they create mental maps and they translate texts literally. They can express themselves more easily, exactly but it can be at the expense of the fluency of the spoken expression. Learning people with the right-hemisphere dominance like to use different illustrations, memory maps and posters when they learn grammar and vocabulary. They learn more easily by means of cards, illustrative materials in order to create associations. They use the language in a creative way, they like imaginative exercises, games, roleplays, they prefer learning grammar by means of games, puzzles, funny solutions and mysteries. They rather make use of the language feeling than of the learnt grammar rules. Their communication is aimed on emotions, atmosphere and general impression. They can make mistakes in reading and writing. In listening they are able to perceive the

whole text, they understand the meaning intuitively, they make grammar mistakes more often, in their spoken expression are mistakes but it is fluent. It is suitable so that the teacher takes into consideration the mentioned specific features and he/she knows what kind of learning people are in his/her class. In this way the teacher can adjust the activities to both kinds of students. However, adult people make use of the left hemisphere in a higher extent than of the right hemisphere. Students, who master the language at a higher level, use rather the left hemisphere as well. It is important to combine the activities and to try to activate both hemispheres. The teacher should also know which is his/her own dominant hemisphere and according to this fact he/she should adjust his/her own educational acting so that it is not too unilateral (Lojová, 2005).

According to Krashen (1983) we know two ways of acquiring a foreign language - *unaware learning*, i.e. mastering of the foreign language and *conscious learning*, i.e. the formal acquiring of foreign-language knowledge. Unaware learning occurs by children when they live in the foreign-language environment, their acquisition of the language is spontaneous. Adult people master a foreign language with more difficulties. If an adult person has to start to use the foreign language actively in the phase when it is still not acquired completely, he/she often uses incorrect constructions and wrong phrases. These mistakes and bad habits can be removed in a difficult way. The guided learning takes place in artificial conditions. More complicated acquisition of the foreign language by adults is connected with the development of abstract thinking. The mastering of the foreign language is not related to the age but to the form of learning. An adult student learns by means of audio-lingual habits or analysis of the language structures (in: Ondráková et al., 2012).

It was proved that the opinion saying that a senior is able to learn a foreign language only with difficulties, is incorrect. The ability to learn a foreign language is changed during the course of life but it never disappears completely. The age is not a decisive factor. It depends more on the conditions and methodological approach (Lojová, 2005). Older learning people have a bigger motivation, ambition, effort and mastered learning strategies. A very significant factor by the seniors is their voluntary approach to learn a foreign language, it is their decision to start studying, they are not under the pressure, they are not forced by the situation around them and they can change this activity for another one whenever they want. Learning of the foreign language is connected also with the talent. Learning people differ from each other with a level and area of the talent. The ability to acquire a foreign language depends also on the teacher and his/her approach (Ondráková et al., 2012).

Seniors have problems to master logically non-structured information, their acquisition of new knowledge requires more time. The problem is also in the insufficiently mastered strategy of learning. The topic, which is presented with higher speed, sets bigger limitations in the quality and quantity of the mastered information by seniors more evidently than it can be seen by younger people. A very important role in the acquisition of a foreign language is played by the psychic and physical condition of the individual and his/her health limitations. Seniors need to have topics explained in the mother tongue. Choděra (2007) holds and opinion that a mother tongue should be used only when its presence is more effective than the presence of a foreign language, e.g. in the grammar overviews. On the other side, Butzkamm (1993) prefers the usage of the mother tongue in the acquisition of a foreign language (in: Ondráková et al., 2012).

One of the main reasons why the seniors want to educate themselves is the inclusion into a collective, a certain community of people where they have a possibility to develop their social contacts, relationships, they do not feel lonely, they want to fulfil their dream to study what they could not study before. Seniors study a foreign language in order to perfect their language competences, to improve their communication abroad, e.g. on holidays or with family members living abroad. Their motivation

is also to keep their physical and psychic condition and to train their memory at the same time. The motivation is also in the need to have a regular activity and the need to renew forgotten knowledge and skills, a language as a hobby, a life partner coming from abroad and the effort to speak with him/her fluently, their desire to speak with the grandchildren (Ondráková et al., 2012) and their wish to know other cultural environment by means of a foreign language (Repka, Halušková, 2005).

A very important factor in the acquisition of a foreign language are the skills which are genetically predisposed (Cook, 2001, in: Lojová, 2005). There are mentioned certain problems in learning a foreign language by seniors such as the inability to understand audio recordings due to the running physiological changes (hearing impairment, decreasing of the functions of the sensory organs), difficulties in learning new vocabulary what is related to the different working of the memory, difficulties in creating grammatically correct sentences. The problem can also be in the incorrectly formed habits in a foreign language, reactions to the questions are slower, they lack a contact with a native speaker. It is necessary to repeat the topics more frequently, seniors do not like incessant changes and they appreciate rewards (Ondráková et al., 2012). In the current style of teaching there is dominant the communicative method with the intercultural dimension which is the most preferred method by students (Repka, Halušková, 2005).

The environment should be adjusted to the needs of seniors, i.e. bigger boards, comfortable sitting, good acoustics, a big room suitable for comfortable moving of seniors in the class, the place of education should be in the nearest area, the possibilities of education should be in different localities so that seniors can access them without any problems. The teacher should be kind, friendly, sensitive, empathic, communicative, patient. He/she should not behave to the seniors as to less competent people. The teacher plays a significant role, students very often attend courses due to the personality of the teacher (Ondráková et al., 2012). Every teacher should study a publication dealing with the developmental psychology before the beginning of the course. According to Choděra (2007) a teacher should start to learn a new language every five years so that he/she can better understand the situation of learning people (in: Ondráková et al., 2012).

## 7 A survey of the language education of seniors

Due to the submitted article there was carried out a survey in the community centre in Bratislava (we do not mention its name in order to keep its anonymity) which provides social, professional and humanitarian services without a residence of a client, it organizes preventive and interest activities. The survey took place within the months June and July 2017 at the sample of 18 seniors (14 women and 4 men) at the age from 60 to 85 who attend courses of German and English language in their free time. The survey was carried out by means of a questionnaire created by us (in formulating questions we were inspired with the work of Ondráková et al., 2012). The questionnaire consisted of 10 items/opened questions. However, only 6 questions were quantitatively (percentually) and qualitatively evaluated for the needs of this article. These are the following ones:

What is your motivation for attending a language course: 70% of seniors mentioned that they want to improve in the foreign language they learnt already before, they want to further educate themselves, repeat the language and go into more details in it. 10% of seniors said they want to establish new relationships, to be in the company of people and they do not want to sit at home. 10% of seniors want to fill their free time with learning and the remaining 10% of seniors have relatives and friends living in Germany and Austria and they attend the course in order to be able to communicate with them. The attendance of the course provides to the seniors a good feeling, joy, enrichment and meaningful spending of their free time.

What kind of activity would you appreciate besides the course of German and English language: 80% of seniors mentioned they

would appreciate other language courses, they would like to learn Russian, Italian, French and Spanish language. Other seniors mentioned courses such as a literary course, a course of self-defence, a course of healthy lifestyle, a course of psychology about the coexistence and mutual understanding of older and younger generation, different courses of physical exercises.

What should be the teacher of a foreign language like? 95% of seniors mentioned that the teacher should be patient, kind, likeable, empathetic, friendly and communicative. The seniors also said that the teacher should be at the adequate language level with a pleasant acting, he/she should be able to motivate, enthuse and keep the attention of students with correctly chosen methodological approaches, he/she should be creative, sensible, smiling and optimistic as well.

Is it important to stay active and why: 100% of seniors said that it is very important for them to keep themselves active. The reason is creating of social contacts, keeping fit and healthy so that they are not a burden for their family. They want to be useful for the others, for family and to help other seniors. The activities provide them satisfaction and other knowledge. Activity is life. However, the regularity of the activity sometimes seems to be problematic because seniors are sometimes ill and they have health problems and not enough energy or they care about their grandchildren.

What style of teaching and learning would you prefer: 90% of seniors mentioned that they prefer the communicative method. The others said that they like variability, illustrative examples, games, practical exercises, songs.

What kind of problems regarding the learning do you encounter with at the course: 85% of seniors mentioned that they learn and remember new things with more difficulties. The others said that they do not want to write already. They prefer just talking about different topics from life, they do not want to work with a textbook, the lesson should be running spontaneously so that they can feel that they do this activity for pleasure and not because they have to do it.

It is evident from the given survey that active ageing is very important for the seniors, they are more self-confident, independent, healthier and they feel more useful. A similar survey using the questionnaire method aimed on active ageing and language education was carried out in the Czech Republic at the Universities of the Third Age in Hradec Králové and Liberec. In the survey participated 14 students of German language and 20 students of English language from the University of the Third Age in Hradec Králové and the same number of participants of language courses from the University of the Third Age in Liberec (Ondráková et al., 2012). 42 participants filled in the questionnaires, i.e. 61,76% out of the total number of 68 distributed questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of questions with the possibility to mark the answer from the given options. The questions in the questionnaire were similar to the questions in our questionnaire which was prepared for the community centre in Bratislava. Besides the reasons for studying a foreign language which were mentioned also by Slovak seniors, here appeared answers such as: the studying of a foreign language perceived as a training of the memory, the understanding of the computer language, the ability to understand instructions written in a foreign language. Seniors would appreciate also other courses such as photographing, a course of tourism and travelling, a course of legal minimum, astronomy, psychology of the period of the old age, history. The teacher should have an ability to teach seniors, to choose an individual approach regarding the senior age and health limitations. The participants of the survey mentioned that, within the study at the University of the Third Age, they are the most satisfied with the teacher of the foreign language. The personality of the teacher represents a key factor for them. It was clear from the answers that the style of teaching should be chosen with regard to the specific features of seniors, the education should be carried out in a slower speed. Regarding the

problems with learning seniors encounter with at the course, the seniors mentioned that they have problem to understand audio recordings, to create grammatically correct sentences, to perceive a spoken language and to react promptly (Ondráková et al., 2012). The results of the questionnaire survey could serve as an aid for improving certain areas, such as the area of methodology of teaching a foreign language for the seniors.

## 8 Conclusion

Ageing is a natural process the man is going through. The old age is an equally meaningful period which has an individual meaning for every person but also a social mission. All particular periods have their own value. Seniors represent a considerable group in our society, the life expectancy is increasing and therefore it is necessary to pay such attention to the seniors they deserve and to appreciate the role they have had and still have in the contribution to the development of the society. Ch. Bühlerová says that old people can contribute to it with a unique way not only due to their experience but also due to their ability to evaluate social issues from a wider perspective (in: Langmeier, Krejčířová, 2006). It is important so that seniors stay active after being retired and they use their free time meaningfully and effectively. According Ch. Bühlerová a E. H. Erikson, every person should have an experience of inner satisfaction which is typical of the man who fulfilled his/her best assumptions in the world and human society (in: Langmeier, Krejčířová, 2006).

It is important so that seniors are self-dependent, productive and personally happy as long as possible. It is necessary to take into consideration all individual possibilities and wishes of every man because changes are reflected by every individual in a unique way. Education is undoubtedly one of the ways to keep active life. Language learning has become a favourite kind of education and there are manifold offers of language courses in different institutions. These courses should respect the specific features of seniors as an educated group and to take into account their individual character and potential.

## Literature:

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**Secondary Paper Section: AM**