

INTRODUCTION

„It is a great truth that says that the worst blind person was the one who did not want to see...“

*(Quotation from **Blindness** by Jose Saramago)*

Presented scientific monograph, “The analysis of social welfare and education of people with visual impairment focusing on teaching English”, deals with visual impairment and its influence on a person's life.

Nowadays the need to assist to the weakest and most vulnerable members of our society has been often talked about. There is no doubt that children, young people and sometimes also adults with visual impairment need our support. In some cases just short-term help is sufficient when they need to solve a specific problem but more effort is needed in everyday assistance and care of the individuals with the impairment in their families, schools or other institutions. The beginning of the school attendance and then every time of transition to the next level of study or life (transition between the grade levels, changing the school, transition between the primary and secondary school, transition for university and adult life) can be strongly reflected by the particularities of the impairment. These pupils usually have more difficulties in adapting to the new environment; they might not have sufficient knowledge and communication skills that would help them to eliminate negative feelings such as fear from the unknown. It is therefore necessary that a teacher working with pupils and students with impairment helps them to overcome their initial frustration. The best way to do so is throughout the teacher's open attitude, pedagogical tact and sensitivity, but also through the use of appropriate teaching approaches, methods and activities, as well as by creating friendly environment and positive atmosphere in the classroom. This is crucial talking about teaching a foreign language to the visually impaired pupils and students, mainly because the cognitive processes of these students are different. Visually impaired students have special educational needs and it is necessary that teachers know about them, respect them and are able to help them to compensate their vision deficit throughout using appropriate teaching materials,

technical and educational aids. Having a positive attitude to new language can be highly motivating factor for achieving good educational results. Students with visual impairment are not excluded from the foreign language learning and a good knowledge of language can help them to be more independent and applied in the labour market.

In recent decades the issue of definition and classification of people with visual impairment has been intensively investigated by many experts from the field of special pedagogy and others related disciplines. We elaborated the first part of the work on the basis of the available Slovak, Czech and foreign literature. The issue was devoted by Vašek, Čajka, Požár, Vágnerová and other authors. The complex perception of the issue would not be reached without methodological materials published by Slovak Blind and Partially Sighted Union and also materials dealing with the education of students with visual impairments that are available on the Internet.

The people with visual impairment have the greatest problem with the inclusion into the intact society. Our aim is to analyze the issue of visual impairment, particularly from the point of view of teaching English language to students with visual impairment.

We used analytical, synthetic and comparative method and method of questionnaire while writing our monograph.

The scientific monograph is divided into three chapters. The first one discusses the definition of visual impairment, the classification of persons with visual impairment, the specifics in cognitive processes and socialization of visually impaired individuals. The second chapter discusses the valid system of education for pupils and students with visual impairment and also addresses the position of English language as a school subject in educational system, as well as strategies and methods for teaching English visually impaired students. The third chapter analyzes the data obtained from questionnaires and case studies and maps the current situation. It also pays attention to attitudes of students with visual impairment to learning English. In conclusion we summarized the findings and recommendations for practice.