

How to introduce the sounds of the language in Waldorf school?



In Sweden, every child has to work with linguistic awareness in school from the age of six years old, this also applies to the Waldorf school. There are different intellectual methods to create awareness around language and the sound of the language to children. This can create challenges for those who work from the Waldorf pedagogy impulse due to their will to make children's knowledge and learning to come from practical work where the body and senses are active. It is desirable to work from songs, jingles, stories, play and interaction, rather than to put focus on the idea and the development of the comprehension.

During two years, a colleague and I worked with our different groups of six year olds. We examined and developed a material with the basis coming from the linguistic gestures of eurythmy. We made the sound of the language in verses, that in a playful and subconscious way strengthened the children's ability to comprehend the different sounds of the words, which letter sound words start with, spelling etc. The gestures of eurythmy together with sound of the language verses enabled the children to connect with the sounds of the letters in a completely different way than if they only got it from a theoretical standpoint. Even sounds of the language which are difficult to differentiate, like D and T in Swedish, became easier to tell apart because we didn't just put emphasis on the hearing and mind, but also different senses (Rudolf Steiner).

The work and the study also included a test where children got to hear the story "Bockarna Bruse" told verbally and with puppets as an illustration for five continuous days. They also got to perform "Bockarna Bruse" as an eurythmy story at two occasions. There were a difference in the text between the two stories. When the children later were to tell the story, they all chose the eurythmy version even though the puppet version had been told five times. They simply remembered the version where they had contributed physically better.

This work showed us that eurythmy in a gentle way can help children in to a good first experience to conquer the skills of reading and writing, without taking the intellectual forces in use.

