

**ABSTRACT:**

This thesis addresses preschool education in the COVID-19 pandemic from a speech therapy perspective. The aim was to determine whether the pandemic affects the development of communication skills in children's school maturity and readiness.

For the research, a quantitative method was used. A sample of 50 respondents from kindergartens in the Vysočina region completed a self-administered questionnaire to provide data for this work. The research sample was teachers of children with compulsory school attendance.

The research found that the number of deferrals of compulsory school attendance is higher in the school year 2020/2021 than in previous years. The root causes cited by the respondents were psychological immaturity, including impaired communication skills. It was also found that for more than half of the respondents, children in the classroom have the same difficulties in communication skills as in previous years, yet 92% of teachers admitted that the educational objectives in the field of communication, according to the Framework Education Programme for Preschool Education, were not met in the 2020/2021 school year. According to the respondents, children most often had difficulties pronouncing the L, R, and Ř syllables, spontaneous narration according to a picture, the formation of sentences, and following the rules of conversation.

The main finding confirms the stated hypothesis that the development of communication skills in the context of school maturity and readiness was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, specific recommendations are formulated that could improve the development of communication skills in children when practicing distant education.

**KEYWORDS:**

Preschool education, communication skills, school maturity and readiness, COVID-19, distant education.