

24 - 26 April 2026

Madrid , Spain

## **The Relationship Between Embodied Methods and Motivation for Learning the Croatian as A Mother Tongue**

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### **Abstract**

The acquisition and learning of the mother tongue form the foundation not only for communication but also for mastering other content to which a child is exposed during preschool and primary education. The development of communicative competence in the mother tongue is a fundamental goal of the primary school curriculum and presupposes balanced mastery of all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Research indicates (Rijavec, 2025) that preschool children, as well as primary school students, are increasingly experiencing difficulties in expressing their thoughts in their mother tongue, as well as speech and language impairments resulting from excessive exposure to screens and other media stimuli. At the same time, they show a decreasing need for face-to-face information exchange. Consequently, various difficulties related to fear of expression are becoming more common. In addition to declining motivation for developing language skills, students of this age often demonstrate difficulties in reading comprehension and, subsequently, in understanding content and the world around them. This is frequently associated with an increasingly limited vocabulary, which results from poor reading habits and reduced exposure to reading. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to examine whether embodied and aesthetic methods, such as musical and drama-based activities, can enhance students' motivation in mastering language content, with a particular focus on vocabulary development. A group of primary school students (N = 50) will be exposed to aesthetic and embodied methods over a two-month period. Focus group interviews will be conducted both before and after the experimental period in order to determine whether these methods influence students' motivation in acquiring language content. Following thematic analysis, it is expected that students exposed to embodied and aesthetic methods will demonstrate greater interest in mastering language content.

**Keywords:** Croatian (Mother) Tongue, Embodied Methods of Learning, Motivation