



<http://dx.doi.org/10.16926/eat.2023.12.15>

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Adjusting the conditions and the form of the eighth-grader Polish language exam to students with the spectrum of autism

How to cite [jak cytować]: Skrzypczyk-Gałkowska, I. (2023). Adjusting the conditions and the form of the eighth-grader Polish language exam to students with the spectrum of autism. *Edukacyjna Analiza Transakcyjna*, 12, 267–284.

Abstract

According to the idea of inclusive education, students with the spectrum of autism attend mainstream primary schools more and more often. That requires teaching such students in the way adjusted to their educational needs and conducting the eighth-grader exam taking into consideration the adjusted conditions and exam form, which is regulated by the provisions of the education law. The analysis of the material concerning the adjustments of exam conditions shows that they reflect individual needs of students with the spectrum of autism and are a great convenience for them. On the other hand, the comparison of the standard Polish language exam sheets and the adjusted ones leads to the conclusion that the sheet itself and the tasks are to a great extent adjusted to the needs of students with autism, including Asperger syndrome. However, there are areas calling for change so that the content of the exam is even better adjusted to students with the spectrum of autism.

Keywords: students with the spectrum of autism, eighth-grader exam.

Introduction

Students with the spectrum of autism attend mainstream primary schools more and more often. It complies with the idea of inclusive education (Zacharuk,

2008, pp. 167–168), but it requires teaching such students in the way adjusted to their educational needs, keeping a very individual approach to each case as the spectrum of autism is characterized with large diversity. One of the most important areas that might cause difficulties in teaching these children and lead to issues during the eighth-grader exam are communication disorders (see: Dłużniewska, 2018, pp. 17–19). These children learn to talk later, which translates into “the ability of speech developed differently than in their peers” (Plichta et al., 2018, p. 62), i.e. using vocabulary untypical for one’s age, talking willingly only about one’s interests, lack of the ability to understand jokes, irony, idiomatic expressions, metaphors and sarcasm. Due to that but also due to the presence of stylistic devices, students might find it difficult to analyse and interpret poems and narrative works.

A rigid path of reasoning and literal understanding of statements make it impossible to discern subtext, linguistic manipulation and finally to differentiate realism from literary fiction (Holajda, 2012, p. 316).

The students in question might also have difficulties in reading and writing, especially when it comes to longer texts. It derives among all from their difficulties in mastering grammatical structures, word declination and conjugation. Problems with writing overlap with those concerning fine motor skills, an inappropriate pen grip or hand tiredness, which results in disjointed, illegible handwriting. They might also find it challenging to do tasks concerning social relations and understand abstract terms. During the exam, the students in question might face organizational issues, for instance, not being able to pass on to the next task without completing the previous one. They might also have problems with taking decisions and making choices. They might lose their focus quite fast, especially when it comes to the subject matter that is not of their interest. They might also concentrate on irrelevant details from the point of view of the whole task, such as, for example, a too decorative font type. Motivation and memory are similarly impaired. The students might find it difficult to retrieve information required in a given task. Finally, the distorted concept of time that people with autism suffer from might negatively impact the management of time needed for the exam.

Scientists and teachers draw attention to the fact that there is a need to adjust didactic solutions to the needs of students with autism, including Asperger syndrome (Dłużniewska, 2018; Skrzypczyk-Gałkowska, 2018; Banasiak, Skrzypczyk-Gałkowska, 2021). It is a particularly important demand concerning the fact that the exam is a new, unique, unknown and unrepeatable event for the student, which, regarding the model of functioning of students with autism, qualifies as “a difficult situation” (Marcinkowska, Konieczna, Smolińska, 2017, pp. 153–155), which is particularly stressful and might have a negative impact on the outcome of undertaken effort.

Adjusting the eighth-grader Polish language exam in the light of selected legal provisions

The eighth-grader exam is regulated by several legal acts.¹ From the perspective of a student with autism preparing for the exam, their parents (legal guardians) and teachers working with them, the most important provisions can be found in:

- the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science of 15 July 2022 on exam requirements for the eighth-grader exam conducted in the school year 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 ([Dz. U.] The Journal of Polish Law, item 1591),
- the guidelines to the eighth-grader exam from the school year 2018/2019, including annexes to these guidelines binding in the school year 2023/2024,
- the announcement of the Head of the Central Examination Board of 17 August 2023 on the timetable of the eighth-grader exam and the matriculation exam (the final secondary school exam),
- the announcement of the Head of the Central Examination Board of 17 August 2023 on materials and auxiliary instruments that the eighth-graders passing the exam can use,
- the announcement of the Head of the Central Examination Board of 17 August 2023 on detailed adjustments of exam conditions and forms for the eighth-grader exam in the school year 2023/ 2024.

The announcement of the Head of the Central Examination Board of 17 August 2023 on detailed adjustments of exam conditions and forms for the eighth-grader exam² on the basis of art. 9a sec. 2 point 10(a) third indent of the act of 7 September 1991 on the system of education gives detailed information on the adjustment of exam conditions and forms of the eighth-grader exam to the needs of, among all, those with special educational needs, including the disabled among whom are students with autism and Asperger syndrome.³ Adjusting the exam forms for the eighth-grader exam consists in preparing separate exam sheets adjusted to the needs and capabilities of the examinees, and adjusting the conditions of the exam for the eighth-grader exam, among all, consists in the following:

¹ Information on the way of organising and conducting the eighth-grader exam for the school year 2023/2024. The eighth-grader exam. <https://cke.gov.pl/egzamin-osmoklasisty/o-egzaminie/>. Accessed on 14 November 2023.

² The announcement of the Head of the Central Examination Board of 17 August 2023 on detailed adjustments of exam conditions and forms for the eighth-grader exam for the school year 2023/ 2024. <https://cke.gov.pl/egzamin-osmoklasisty/harmonogram-komunikaty-i-informacje/>. Accessed on 14 November 2023.

³ The terminology used in educational documents and exam sheets referring to students with the spectrum of autism.

- minimizing the limitations deriving from the student's disability;
- ensuring an appropriate working space reflecting the student's educational needs and their psycho-physical capabilities;
- using appropriate specialist equipment and didactic means;
- appropriately prolonging the exam time for the eighth-grader exam;
- establishing assessment rules for the tasks used for the eighth-grader exam, described in 9a sec. 2 point 2 of the act on the system of education, taking into account the student's educational needs and their psycho-physical capabilities;
- ensuring during the exam the presence and support of an assistant teacher helping the student in reading or writing, or a specialist appropriate for a given disability, if it is necessary for appropriate contact with a given student or support in operating specialist equipment and didactic means.

The student with the spectrum of autism is entitled to the adjustment of exam conditions and forms for the eighth-grader exam on the basis of a special educational needs certificate issued by a psycho-pedagogical counselling centre, yet the way or ways of adjusting the conditions or forms of this exam for a given student are defined by the teaching staff council. It does so on the basis of the announcement of the Head of the Central Examination Board on detailed adjustments of exam conditions and forms for the eighth-grader exam, following the list of possible ways in which the eighth-grader exam conditions and forms can be adjusted. In case of a student with the spectrum of autism, the list includes the following information:

- the exam sheet for students with autism, including Asperger syndrome, shall be adjusted to the aforesaid dysfunctions and take into account:
 - prolonged time of the exam;
 - the right not to fill in the answer sheet (i.e. marking the answers for closed tasks on the exam sheet);
- using the support of an assistant teacher for reading instructions and texts and for writing down the student's answers (allowed only if during their whole education the student was accustomed to such cooperation with their teacher);
- writing down the answers to the tasks on the computer if during their whole education the student was accustomed to such a way of working (allowed when the student's graphia disorder makes it impossible to read their handwriting and appropriately mark their answers to the exam tasks OR when the examinee used alternative and auxiliary communication methods);
- the presence of a person necessary to maintain proper contact with the examinee and/ or to help to operate specialist equipment and didactic means;
- adjusting the work space to the student's dysfunction.

The student can also benefit from exam conditions and forms not defined in the announcement, but each case like that needs separate arrangements between the school principal and the head of an appropriate regional examination board.

In case of a student with a special educational needs certificate issued due to their multiply disabilities, there is a possibility to use adjustments foreseen for particular disability types. Such adjustments require a written arrangement of the school principal and the head of an appropriate regional examination board, usually signed till mid-November of a given school year (in the school year 2023/2024 – till 16 November 2023). The application of the school principal should be justified and confirmed by required documents.

The school principal or a teacher authorised by them is obliged to make students and their parents familiar with the ways of adjusting the conditions and forms of the eighth-grader exam and to inform the students' parents of they way such adjustments are established, the dates, usually till the end of September (in the school year 2023/2024 – not later than 28 September 2023). The school principal or a teacher authorised by them informs the student's parents or the adult student in writing about the recommended ways of adjusting the eighth-grader exam's conditions or forms to the educational needs and psycho-physical capabilities of a given student (in the school year 2023/2024 – till 21 November 2023), and the student's parents or the adult student declare whether they shall or shall not use the aforesaid adjustment forms (in the school year 2023/2024 – not later than 24 November 2023).

Adjusting the eighth-grader Polish language exam sheet

For students with autism including Asperger syndrome, there are special exam sheets marked with the symbol OPO⁴-200. The adjustment concerns the content and such changes in comparison to the standard exam sheet (for student without any dysfunctions) that could be called editing ones. Adjusting the content of the exam sheet can be seen at the stage of choosing texts constituting the basis of exam tasks and the form of the very tasks. The first text is an extract of a literary text, the second one is non-literary (scientific, popular-science or journalistic). Both texts should count no more than 1000 words. Under each text, students can find open-ended and close-ended questions accompanying it.

The differences in text selection for the eighth-grader standard exam and the one adjusted to the needs of students with autism, including Asperger syndrome, are illustrated by Table 1. The review encompasses exam sheets from the years 2021–2023 as exam sheets from previous years did not differ in the aspect of text selection.

⁴ OPO is a symbol for the Polish language exam sheet.

Table 1

Differences in text selection in the eighth-grader Polish language standard exam and the one adjusted to the needs of students with autism, including Asperger syndrome in the years 2021–2023

Exam year	Text type	Exam sheet for students without disabilities and specific learning difficulties	Exam sheet for students with autism, including Asperger syndrome
2023	Literary text	Juliusz Słowacki <i>Balladyna</i>	Antoine de Saint-Exupéry <i>Little Prince</i>
	Non-literary text	Jolanta Maria Berent <i>Odblokuj swój talent</i>	Marcin Waincettel <i>Ludzie listy piszą...</i>
2022	Literary text	Aleksander Fredro <i>Zemsta</i>	Aleksander Kamiński <i>Kamienie na szaniec</i>
	Non-literary text	Andrzej Kojder <i>Pochwała przyjaźni</i>	<i>Czy ciekawość pomaga w nauce?</i> Based on: www.akademia-umyslu.pl
2021	Literary text	Adam Mickiewicz <i>Pan Tadeusz</i>	Henryk Sienkiewicz <i>Latarnik</i>
	Non-literary text	Tadeusz Płużański <i>Przyjacieli mądrości</i>	<i>Im więcej czytamy, tym stajemy się lepsi!</i> Based on: www.ciekawe.org


Source: own study based on the data included in the eighth-grader Polish language exam sheets in the years 2021–2023 made available on the website of the Central Examination Board. Table 2. shows examples of differences in forming instructions between the exam sheet without and with adjustments and the essence of these adjustments.

Table 2

Examples of differences in instructions and the essence of the adjustments in the eighth-grader Polish language exam sheets with and without adjustments to the needs of students with autism, including Asperger syndrome

Exam sheet without any adjustment	Adjustment	Exam sheet adjusted to the needs of students with autism, including Asperger syndrome
<p>Choose the correct answer among the given ones.</p> <p>A. B. C. D.</p>	<p>More precise instruction and changed layout of answer options – one in a line instead of putting two answers in the same line</p>	<p>Circle the right answer.</p> <p>A. B. C. D.</p>
<p>Choose P if the statement is true, or F – if the statement is false.</p>	<p>More precise instruction.</p>	<p>Circle P if the statement is true, or F – if the statement is false.</p>
<p>Complete the sentences below so that they create a cohesive summary of the text...</p>	<p>More precise instruction and removing the words that might distract the student from focusing on crucial elements.</p>	<p>Complete the sentences below so that they create a summary of the text...</p>
<p>Study the poster below for a theatre show <i>Balladyna</i>. The author of the poster showed their interpretation of Juliusz Slowacki’s work with the help of various graphic elements. Choose two graphic elements and explain their meaning in the context of <i>Balladyna</i>.</p>	<p>The right selection of content and graphic material acceptable for students with autism – avoiding metaphorical images. Giving the instructions with the help of bullet points in order to signal to the student particular tasks to be completed – “compartmentalizing” the instruction into stages.</p>	<p>One editing house wants to encourage students to read books. In order to achieve the goal, it throws in bookmarks inspired by selected set school books. There are examples of such bookmarks below. Choose one bookmark and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • give the title of the set book that the graphic elements of the bookmark refer to, • explain the relation of two chosen graphic elements placed on the bookmark with the content of the set book that you have chosen.

Table 2
 Examples of differences in instructions... (cont.)

Exam sheet without any adjustment	Adjustment	Exam sheet adjusted to the needs of students with autism, including Asperger syndrome
	<p>Removing extra graphics from the task as it can be distracting and plays a solely decorative role in the task.</p>	<p>One of the sentences below referring to origins of <i>The Little Prince</i> does not follow punctuation rules. Circle the sentence with the wrong punctuation.</p> <p>A. The author of <i>The Little Prince</i> was fascinated with planes from his childhood, that is why he became pilot at an early age.</p> <p>B. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry served in the military and civil air forces and he flew over Europe, Africa, North and South America.</p> <p>C. When the author of <i>The Little Prince</i> had a machine failure during a flight he was forced to land on the desert.</p> <p>D. When Antoine de Saint-Exupéry was waiting for help, he got an idea of writing <i>The Little Prince</i>.</p> <hr/> <p>Among the words given, show the one in which the spelling of "ó" <u>is not justified</u> by the presence of "o" of this word's other grammatical form. Circle the right answer.</p>

Source: own study based on the data included in the eighth-grader Polish language exam sheets in the years 2021-2023 made available on the website of the Central Examination Board.

Table 3

Differences in paper topic forms in the eighth-grader Polish language exam sheets with and without adjustments to the needs of students with autism, including Asperger syndrome in the years 2021–2023

Exam year	Topic	Exam sheet for students without disabilities and specific learning difficulties	Exam sheet for students with autism, including Asperger syndrome
2023	Topic 1.	Do you agree with the statement that it depends on us what kind of people we are? Write an essay in which you present your opinion. In your justification refer to one set book and another literary piece.	Do you agree with the statement that it depends on us what kind of people we are? Write an essay in which you present your opinion. In your justification refer to one set book and another literary piece.
	Topic 2.	Write a story about your meeting with a hero of a selected set book. Your adventure should convince you that the one who is patient will achieve their goal. The paper should show that you know the selected set book well.	Write a story about your meeting with a hero of a selected set book. Your adventure should convince you that the one who is patient will achieve their goal. The paper should show that you know the selected set book well.
2022	Topic 1.	It is easier to overcome difficulties when you have a friend. Write a paper in which you determine whether this statement is true or not. In your paper refer to a chosen set book and another literary piece.	Write a paper in which you determine whether it is worth protecting what is most important for a person. In your argumentation refer to a chosen set book and another literary piece.
	Topic 2.	Write a story about meeting a hero of a chosen set book. Your adventure convinced you that it was worth travelling to the world described by this set book. Your paper should prove that you know the selected set book well.	Imagine that you have got an opportunity to travel in a time machine to the world described by one set book. Write a story about your adventure in this world. Your paper should prove that you know the selected set book well.
2021	Topic 1.	Write a paper in which you discuss the accuracy of the statement that in a difficult situation a man learns about oneself. In your paper refer to a chosen set book and another literary piece.	Books help us experience fantastic adventures. Write a paper in which you prove the accuracy of this statement. Refer to a chosen set book and another literary piece.
	Topic 2.	Imagine that one hero from a set book lands in your world. Write a story about your adventure during which the hero was awarded the title of The Friend of Wisdom. Your paper should prove that you know the selected set book well.	It was an extraordinary journey... Write a story about your journey with a hero of a chosen set book. During that journey you managed to help someone in need. Your paper should prove that you know the selected set book well.*

* The whole topics are written in bold print. Selected topic elements are underlined, e.g. Write an essay. The aim is to draw the students' attention to the written form they are supposed to use.

Source: own study based on the data included in the eighth-grader Polish language exam sheets in the years 2021–2023 made available on the website of the Central Examination Board.

The last task in the exam sheet consists in writing a paper on one of two given topics. The student should show that they are familiar with the written form shown in the topic: argumentative or creative in character (a creative story). In the paper they should refer to a chosen set book (the list of set books is placed in the exam sheet). The work should count at least 200 words.⁵ Table 3 illustrates the differences in paper topics for the years 2021–2023.

The examples mentioned above show that in the current school year the paper topics in exam sheets for students without any dysfunctions and students with autism, including Asperger syndrome, did not differ (!). In 2022, topic 1 for students with the spectrum of autism started with the operational verb form, which should clearly point to the activity expected from those students. However, it is difficult to admit that the use of the word “determine” was justified as it is an ambiguous word. Using more straightforward lexis is suggested. Topic 2 begins with the reference to imagination of students with autism, probably used to make the situation to describe more familiar. However, scientist point to imagination disorders as one of autism symptoms occurring at a very early age (Winczura, 2017, pp. 69–94). The paper topics of 2021 for students with autism seem acceptable.

Adjusting the exam sheet for students with the spectrum of autism also concerns the following:

- the way of conveying information about marking the right answers and mistakes,
- bigger space between text lines, the so-called spacing – interline 1.5;
- the way of showing points for particular tasks. Students not using the adjustment are informed about the number of points in the following way: 0-1, 0-2, 0-3, and students with the spectrum of autism can see: 1 pt, 2 pt, 3 pt.;
- the message “You can continue on the following page” placed at the bottom of the exam sheet devoted to a writing task.

Students with autism, including Asperger syndrome, do not mark their answers on the answer sheet – teachers do it for them. It is a convenience for such students as due to their difficulties, especially in the area of concentration and fine motor skills, they might make mistakes while performing that activity.

The eighth-grader exam in a separate classroom

Students with the spectrum of autism can write their eighth-grader exam in a separate classroom if they benefit from at least one of the following adjustments:

⁵ In the assessment of papers written by students with autism, including Asperger syndrome, teachers use the assessment rules taking into account specific learning difficulties. This rule also applies to the answers given to open-ended questions from the Polish language exam. See: The guidelines to the eighth-grader exam from the school year 2018/ 2019, p. 11. <https://cke.gov.pl/egzamin-osmoklasisty/informatory/>. Accessed on 14 November 2023.

- using technical devices,
- using a CD with the adjusted recording in case of the exam from a contemporary foreign language,
- participation of an assistant teacher (member of the examination board) helping in reading and/ or writing,
- exam time with additional pauses,
- using the help/ participation of a specialist in the exam, i.e. a psychologist, pedagogue (member of the examination board).

Organising the exam in a separate classroom is beneficial from the point of view of students with the spectrum of autism and the way they function. Usually they are distracted by outside stimuli, mainly noises and visual stimuli, which can be avoided by putting them in an exam room where they can be alone and accompanied only by examination board members.

Extending time set for working with the exam sheet

The working time with the exam sheet adjusted to the needs of students with the spectrum of autism that figures on the cover page of the exam sheet takes into account the time extension. Therefore, if the standard Polish language exam sheet predicts maximum 120 minutes of exam time, students with the spectrum of autism are entitled to 180 minutes of exam time, i.e. 60 more minutes.

Such an adjustment makes students with the spectrum of autism write their exam in the exam room with other students that also benefit from extra exam time. It facilitates to create favourable exam conditions of silence and maximum concentration as all the examinees should finish their exam at the same time.

It seems that the question of exam time control by students with the spectrum of autism needs considering. Although the time span devoted to the exam should be written in a visible place and the exam room should be equipped with the clock, students may still have problems with defining how much time is left till the end of the exam or whether they will manage to complete all the tasks, which undoubtedly makes them more stressed. Students may not inform the examiners about their concerns, which derives from the typical features of their functioning (they cannot ask for help, they do not initiate contact). The examiners should be attentive and react to such a situation, but the exam procedure does not predict any particular behaviour in such a case.

It seems unacceptable to let students with the spectrum of autism who benefit from extra exam time write their exam in an exam room with other students who would start leaving and making noise an hour before the end of their exam time limit.

The eighth-grader exam with the use of a computer

Due to their graphia disorder, students with the spectrum of autism often use a computer during their eighth-grader exam in order to write down the answers.⁶ In order to be entitled to use the computer, the extent to which the student's graphia is distorted should make it impossible to decipher and appropriately assess their answers in the exam paper. There are several requirements the students should meet to be entitled to the aforesaid adjustment: a special education certificate or individual teaching certificate, being familiarised with working with the computer during regular lessons, or such a recommendation listed in the opinion issued by the psychological-educational counselling centre. The computer should be autonomous, linked to the printer (with loaded paper) in order to print out the student's work, and cut off from the Internet. The student records exam tasks' solutions on the computer and each of their answers is numbered in accordance with the number of a particular exam task in the exam booklet. In case of close-ended questions, it is enough to give the marking of a given answer, e.g. 1. A, 2. B, and in case of a paper from Polish, it should include information on the chosen topic, e.g. "Paper on topic number...".

Each student with the spectrum of autism that uses a computer during their exam receives an exam sheet that should be coded according to the requirements. Having finished their work with the exam sheet, they have to hand in their exam sheet and their answers in form of a printout to the examination board, which should literally mean they should print their answers on their own. On the first page of the exam sheet, a member of the examination board notes down as follows: "The examinee's answers can be found on a computer printout – the number of pages is..." or "The examinee's answers can be found in the exam sheet and on a computer printout – the number of pages is...".

Giving an opportunity to a student with autism, including Asperger syndrome, to use a computer during their exam is a very good adjustment. However, it is important that teachers preparing such students to such an exam commence their preparations early enough, implementing computer work during their lessons. This recommendation derives, among all, from the fact that although students very often can operate a computer very well, they do not know Word or they cannot type fast enough, are unable to do automatic paragraph indentation or print their work once it is finished. What is more, the opportunity of writing the exam on a computer requires, pursuant to legal regulations, making a student accustomed to such a working mode during their learning process,

⁶ Information on the course of the exam describes in detail all the requirements concerning the file in which a student saves their answers. These are the requirements defining, among all, margin size, font size and line spacing.

which is crucial in case of students with the spectrum of autism, for whom routine and schematic behaviour or following the instructions contributes to the feeling of their safety and comfort.

As far as the requirements addressed to the examination board concerning detailed remarks and annotations on the examinee's printout are concerned, they should be revisited. They should be reduced to an absolute minimum or simpler solutions should be suggested.

The eighth-grader exam with an assistant teacher

During their eighth-grader exam, students with the spectrum of autism can benefit from the support of an assistant teacher in reading and/ or writing if the teachers' council selected such an adjustment on the basis of appropriate documentation provided by a given student. The examinee and their assistant teacher should be familiarised with such a form of collaboration and communicate efficiently. Together, they agree on communication and working rules. If the examinee's dysfunction is coupled with a speech defect, it is necessary that the assistant teacher in writing should understand the examinee's utterances well. In case of students with autism, including Asperger syndrome, the assistant teacher may make the examinee focus on the exam sheet if they notice that the student is not concentrated.

The eighth-grader exam conducted with an assistant teacher in reading/ writing must be organized in a separate exam room.

Both the examinee and their assistant teacher receive exam sheets. Before the work with the exam sheet is commenced, the assistant teacher performs all the coding activities and marking of the exam sheets for the examinee (on the first page they write "the examinee's exam sheet" and "the exam sheet of the assistant teacher in writing/ in reading/ in reading and writing"). Next, the assistant teacher makes the examinee familiar with the instruction placed on the first pages of the exam sheet.

Once the exam sheet is open, the assistant teacher in writing and/ or in reading reads the entire exam sheet or reads it in extracts and waits for the examinee's signal that they are ready to dictate the answers. The content of particular answer options is read by the teacher, skipping the letter or number markings (e.g. A., B., C., 1., 2.). The teacher cannot give any explanations to the examinee concerning the tasks, including texts. Reading the text of the exam sheet is included in the time devoted to working with the exam sheet, which is printed on the title page of the exam. Within the framework of the time given, the examinee may ask to have their written answers read in full or in extracts in order to make corrections.

The student with the spectrum of autism points to the content of the answer, and the assistant teacher writes it down or writes down the answer's marking. The examinee gives orally the content of the answer that they have chosen in closed-ended tasks and the assistant teacher marks it in an appropriate place on the answer sheet (attached to their exam sheet). The student can write down their answers to some tasks on their own, but in such a case these tasks have to be additionally marked.⁷ The examinee decides on their own on the order of completed tasks.

In case of assistance in writing, the basis for the assessment of the examinee is the assistant teacher's exam sheet sent to the regional examination board. If the examinee wants to write down their answers to selected tasks on their own, the assistant teacher gives them their exam sheet. The exam sheet of the assistant teacher in writing, partially completed by the examinee, constitutes the student's work subject to assessment. The examinee's exam sheet will not be assessed; notes in their exam sheet are treated like a rough draft.

If the student makes use of the teacher assistant's help in reading and/ or writing, the progress of the eighth-grader exam must be registered with the help of a device recording sound. Sound recording constitutes an integral part of the exam sheet.

The help of an assistant teacher during the exam seems to be a very important convenience for a student with autism, including Asperger syndrome. Pursuant to the legal regulations, the student must be familiarized with such cooperation, thus, collaboration with their assistant teacher should be the result of at least a few-month-long training, which can render very good results. Such a teacher should watch over the student's concentration, read their texts and tasks, write down the answers, which might positively influence the exam result.

Conclusions

The eighth-grader exam adjusted to the needs and capabilities of students with autism, including Asperger syndrome, is well-organised as far as adjusting its conditions is concerned. It is prepared in such a way so as to minimize unfavourable external factors for such students (for example, noise, excess of movement in the student's surroundings), as well as the internal ones (for example, poor and unstable attention span, decreasing motivation, tiredness, difficulties in reading and writing).

⁷ On top of the first page of the exam sheet, the numbers of these tasks have to be additionally mentioned and in the text of the exam sheet, next to each such task, there should be an annotation e.g. "the student completed the task on their own."

It should be noticed that students with autism, including Asperger syndrome receive the exam sheet, which should respond to their individual needs and capabilities with its choice of content, sentence construction or editing adjustments. However, this exam sheet, like the standard exam sheet, tests knowledge and skills acquired by the student during their learning process in primary school and complies with the school curriculum and/ or exam requirements.⁸ No content is removed due to this disorder. It is a very important remark that should be emphasized to make teachers, parents and students aware that this adjustment is executed by selecting appropriate working methods and forms, and not by eliminating any content.

I suggest introducing changes in the eighth-grader Polish language exam sheet adjusted to the needs of students with autism, including Asperger syndrome so that it is constructed in accordance with real needs of these students and so as to make it more accessible to these students (Cf. Krakowiak, 2016). Examples of changes include:

- removing bold print in exam tasks' content in favour of putting only the most important, key words in bold print;
- giving up double marking: bold print and underlining at the same time;
- no italics for titles;
- writing subsequent sentences of a complex instruction in a new line;
- beginning and ending one sentence on the same page of the exam sheet;
- selection of accurate vocabulary in instructions, including the way topics for papers are written.

It should be born in mind that the term “students with autism, including Asperger syndrome” can refer to people of various levels of functioning. That is why introducing additional changes in the exam sheet is necessary in order to satisfy the needs of students functioning in a comparatively weaker way but attending mainstream primary schools and wanting to finish this stage of education with the exam. These changes should not impact the standard of the exam sheet, but should make it more accessible to people with disabilities.

⁸ In 2023 and 2024, the eighth-grader Polish language exam is conducted on the basis of examination requirements defined in the annex to the regulation of the Minister of Education and Science of 15 July 2022, henceforth called “exam requirements”. *Aneks do Informatora o egzaminie ósmoklasisty z języka polskiego obowiązujący w latach szkolnych 2022/2023 i 2023/2024. Egzamin ósmoklasisty. Język polski, p. 2.*, <https://cke.gov.pl/egzamin-osmoklasisty/informatory/>. Accessed on 14 November 2023.

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Dostosowanie warunków i form egzaminu ósmoklasisty z języka polskiego dla ucznia w spektrum autyzmu

Streszczenie

Zgodnie z ideą edukacji włączającej uczniowie w spektrum autyzmu coraz częściej uczą się w szkołach podstawowych ogólnodostępnych. Powoduje to konieczność nauczania takich uczniów w sposób dostosowany do ich specjalnych potrzeb edukacyjnych oraz przeprowadzania egzaminu ósmoklasisty z uwzględnieniem dostosowań warunków i formy egzaminu, co regulują przepisy prawa oświatowego. Jak wynika z materiału na temat dostosowania warunków egzaminu, odpowiadają one indywidualnym potrzebom uczniów w spektrum autyzmu i są dla nich dużym udogodnieniem. Natomiast z przedstawionego porównania arkuszy standardowych z języka polskiego z arkuszami dostosowanymi można wnioskować, że sam arkusz oraz zadania w dużej mierze są dostosowane do potrzeb uczniów z autyzmem, w tym z zespołem Aspergera. Istnieją jednak obszary, w których należy dokonać zmian tak, by jeszcze lepiej uprzystępnąć treści egzaminu uczniom w spektrum autyzmu.

Słowa kluczowe: uczniowie w spektrum autyzmu, egzamin ósmoklasisty.