THE RESULTS OF AN ENGLISH QUICK PLACEMENT TEST IN PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN SERBIA

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Sample

The sample included 39 participants with disabilities, of both genders, 18-59 years of age (M=33.18; SD=9.894). The complete sample was divided into three subsamples: 14 participants with mild intellectual disability, 13 participants with visual impairment, and 12 participants with motor disability.

The subsample of participants with mild intellectual disability included 6 male and 8 female participants, with mean age 34.07 years (SD=9.627). The IQ of all participants in this subsample ranged from 50 to 70. In addition to intellectual disability, one participant was also diagnosed with a comorbid psychiatric disorder. Apart from one participant who finished elementary school, all other participants from this subsample finished secondary school (note: in Serbia elementary school lasts eight, and secondary school four years). Eight participants attended a special school, while six attended a regular school. Eleven participants from this subsample had English at school, while three participants did not specify where they learnt English.

The subsample of participants with visual impairment included 6 male and 7 female participants, with mean age 30.77 years (SD=9.636). Three participants were totally blind, while the remaining ten had severe low vision. The most common cause of visual impairment in our participants was retinopathy of prematurity, glaucoma was somewhat less common, while one participant lost vision due to pituitary tumor. One participant from this subsample finished elementary school, 6 participants finished secondary school, and six graduated from university. Only one participant with visual impairment attended a special school. This participant denied learning English before, but still had 14 points on the Placement Test. Nine

participants had English at school, one participant learnt English both at school and in a language course, and one learnt English at school, in a language course, and independently.

The subsample of participants with motor disability included 3 male and 9 female participants, with mean age 34.75 years (SD=10.805). The causes of motor disability were different: cerebral palsy, poliomyelitis, paraplegia, quadriplegia, spina bifida, hypochondroplasia, epidermolysis bullosa, multiple sclerosis, etc. Nine participants finished secondary school, while three graduated from university. All participants with motor disability attended regular schools. Apart from one self-taught participant and another one who learnt English at school and independently, all other participants learnt English at school.

Testing procedure

We contacted the participants through the Association for supporting people with developmental disabilities "Live together", Creative-education center KEC, the Association of the blind and visually impaired in Belgrade, the Organization of the blind North Banat, the Organization of paraplegics from Novi Sad, and the Center for independent living of people with disabilities in Kragujevac. In this way, the research included 39 people from four cities.

Selection criteria were intellectual disability, visual impairment, or motor disability, age 18 years and over, and at least minimal knowledge of English. Thus, the obtained results indicate the level of English language knowledge in the selected group of participants. The average level of English language knowledge is far lower.

Before the beginning of the research, the participants signed informed consent for participation. The research aim was explained to each participant. In addition to general data presented in the sample description, the participants were asked to state how well, in their own opinion, they knew English, on a five-point Likert scale (1 being the lowest, and 5 the highest level of language knowledge).

The participants with motor disability completed the test independently, while each question was read to the participants with mild intellectual disability and visual impairment. The participants to whom the questions were read could follow the text in written form. Text with enlarged font was provided for the participants with low vision, while blind participants could use screen readers. The testing was conducted at the premises of associations the participants belonged to.

Results

Table 1 shows average values and standard deviations of scores the participants form all three subsamples achieved on the Placement test. The participants with motor disability had the highest average results, followed by the participants with visual impairment, while the participants with intellectual disability had the lowest scores. One-way ANOVA indicates that the differences in achievements of the participants from the three subsamples were statistically significant.

Table 1 – Participants' results on the Placement Test

Subsample	M	SD	$F_{(2,36)}$	p
Intellectual disability	11.43	7.418		
Visual impairment	22.08	13.580	14.138	0.000
Motor disability	36.67	14.531		

By using the Scheffe's post-hoc test, it was determined that differences in average achievements of the participants with visual impairment and those with intellectual disability were not statistically significant (p=0.087). The participants with motor disability achieved significantly higher scores than both the participants with visual impairment (p=0.017) and those with intellectual disability (p=0.000).
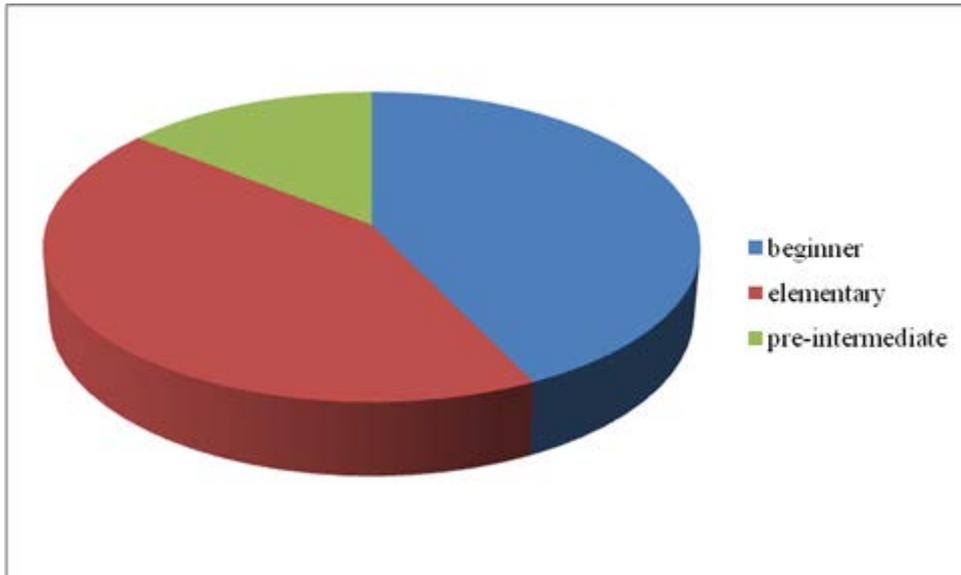
Chart 1 –English language knowledge of the participants with mild intellectual disability

Six participants with mild intellectual disability were at beginner level, six were at elementary level, while two participants from this subsample were at pre-intermediate level.
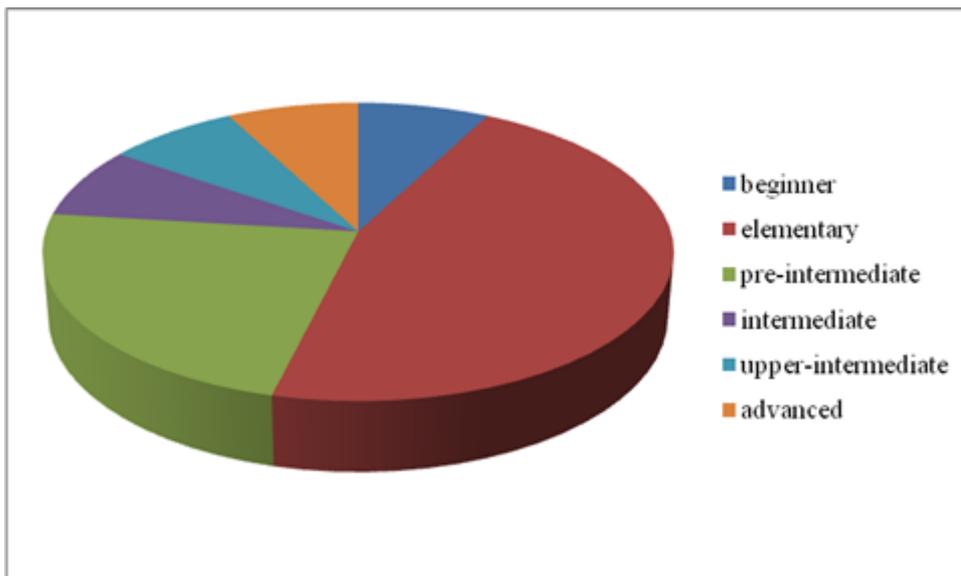

Chart 2 – English language knowledge of the participants with visual impairment

Six participants with visual impairment were at elementary level of English, three were at pre-intermediate level, while there was one participant at each of the following levels: beginner, intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced.
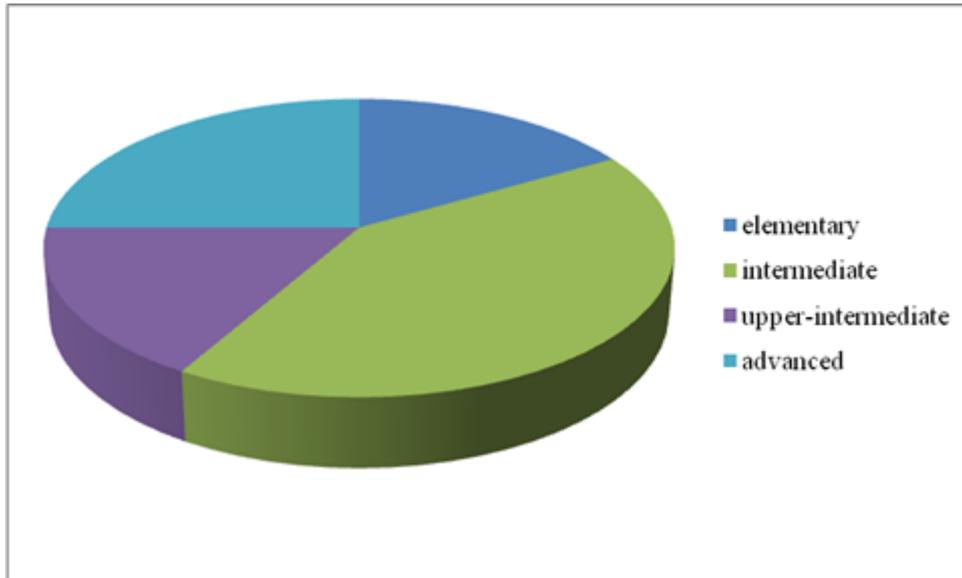
Chart 3 – English language knowledge of the participants with motor disability

Five participants with motor disability were at intermediate level of English, two participants were at elementary, and two at upper-intermediate level, while three participants from this subsample were at advanced level of English language knowledge.

Table 2 – Correlation between self-assessment of English language knowledge and Placement Test results

Subsample	r	p
Intellectual disability	0.577	0.031
Visual impairment	0.732	0.004
Motor disability	0.858	0.000

A positive, moderately high, statistically significant correlation was determined between self-assessment of English language knowledge and the Placement Test results in the participants with intellectual disability. In the subsamples of participants with visual impairment and motor disability, the correlation was high, positive, and statistically significant. The obtained data indicate that, compared to other participants from the sample, the participants with intellectual disability were the least realistic in assessing their English language knowledge. The higher the language knowledge, the more realistic the self-assessment was.

Item analysis presents the achievements of the participants from all three subsamples on individual items. The charts show the percentages of correct answers. Item analysis was done separately for each Section for greater clarity.
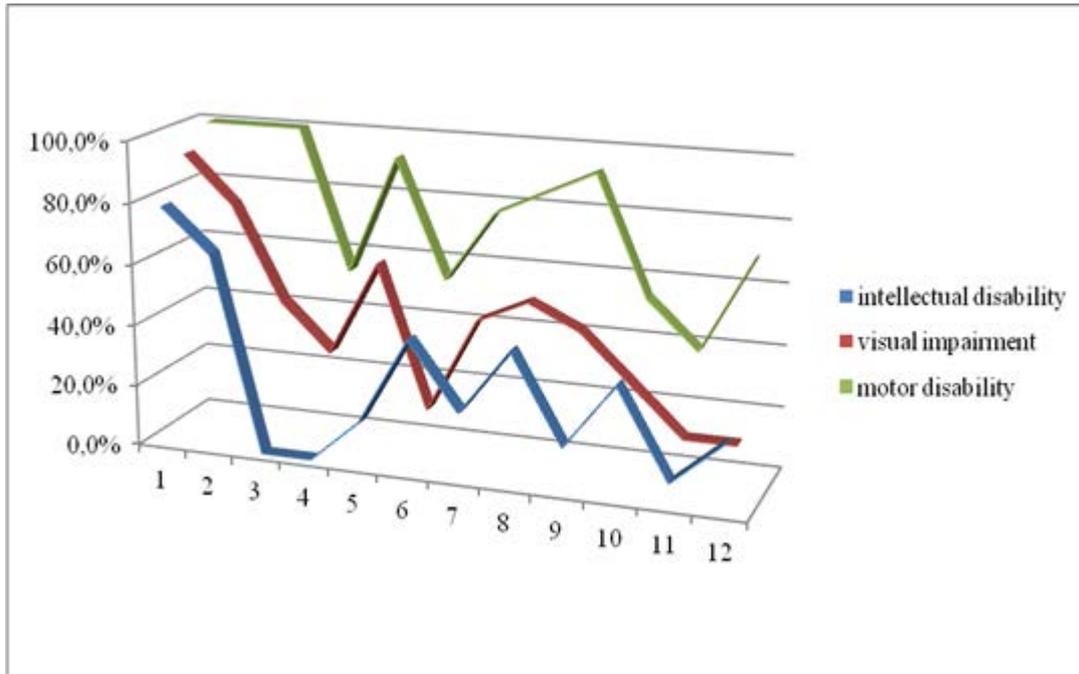
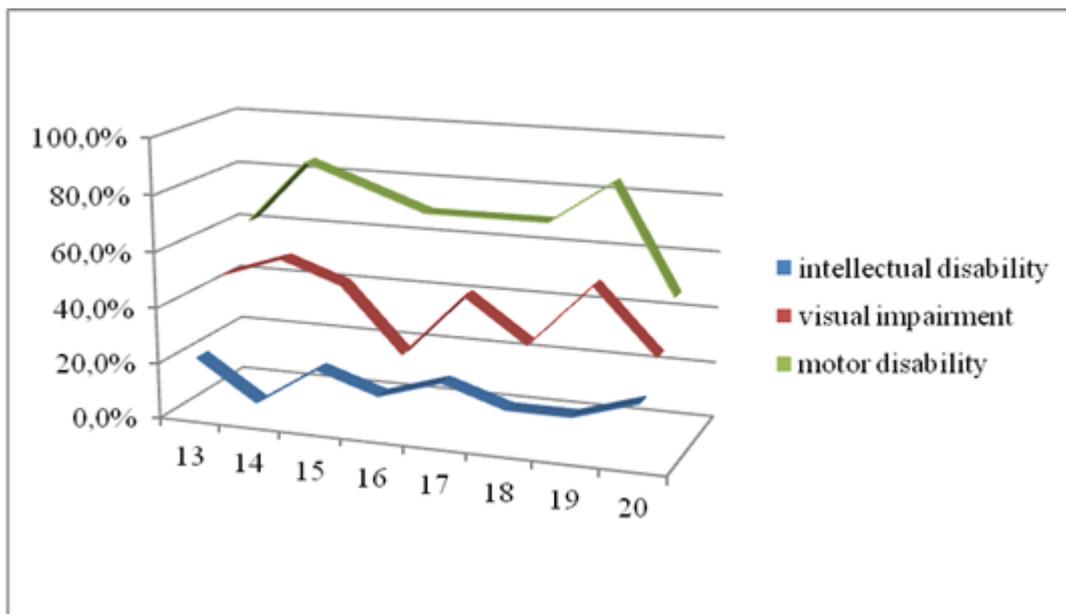**Chart 4** – Item analysis of achievements in Section 1

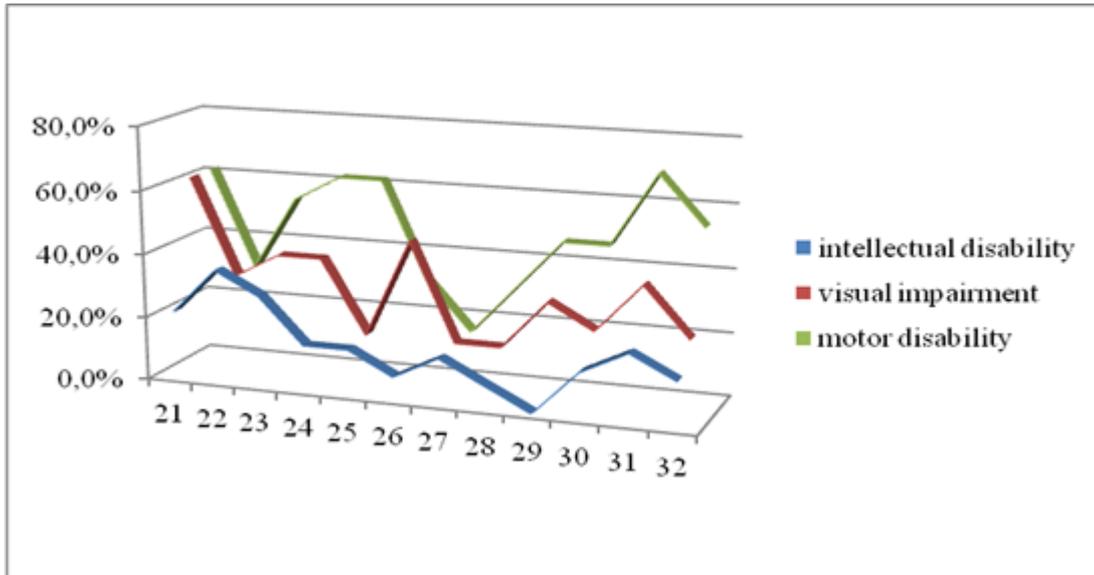**Chart 5** – Item analysis of achievements in Section 2

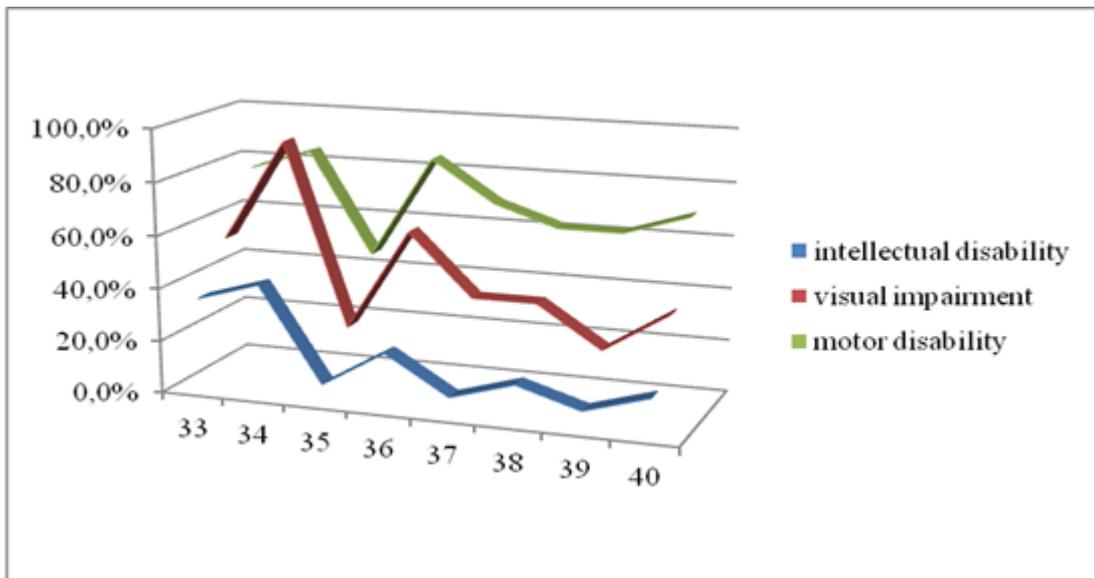**Chart 6** – Item analysis of achievements in Section 3

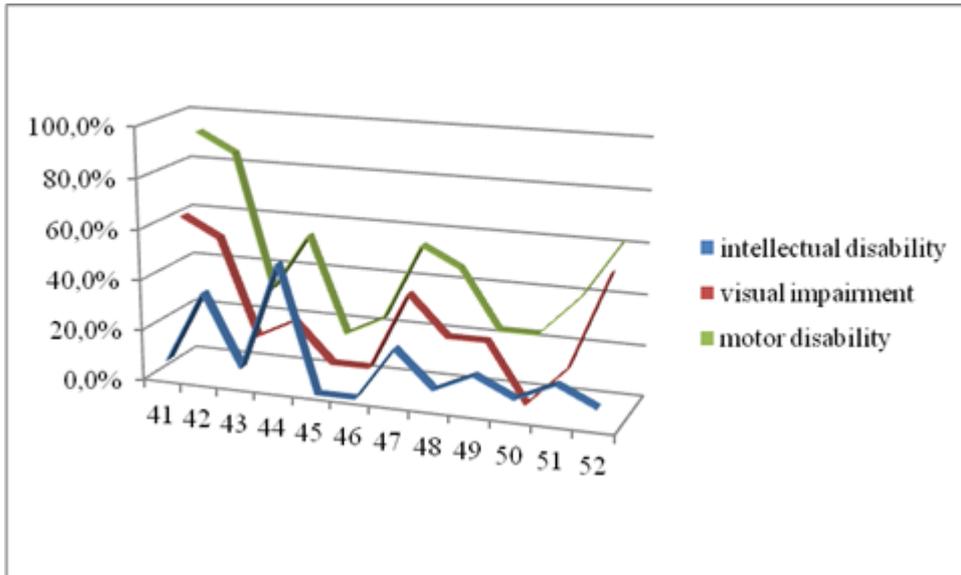**Chart 7** – Item analysis of achievements in Section 4
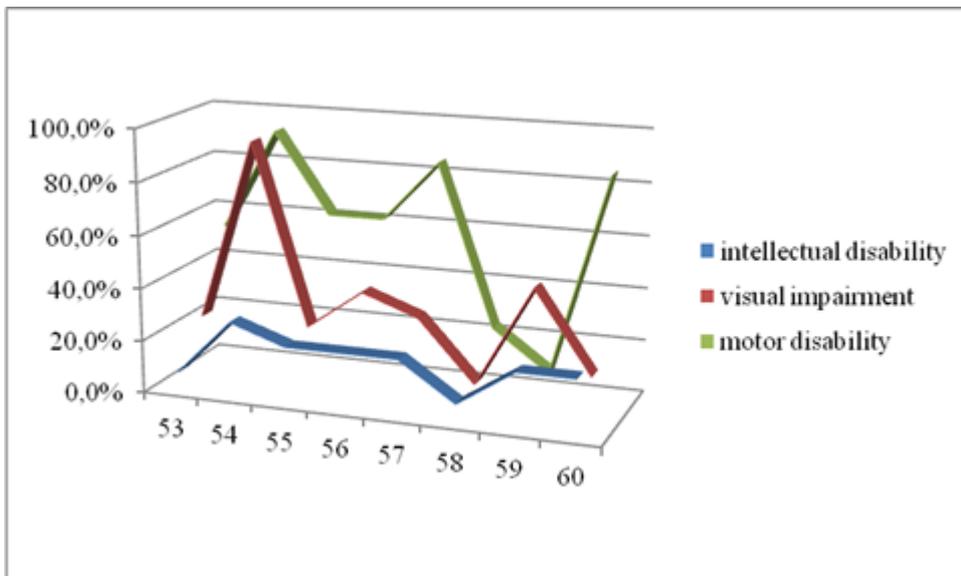
Chart 8 – Item analysis of achievements in Section 5

Chart 9 – Item analysis of achievements in Section 6