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***Symbolisation in Child Art: Creation and Interpretation
of Visual Metaphors and the Assessment of Symbolization Skills***

Symbolisation has always been at the core of the visual language of children. Making ideas and moods visible is a challenging task especially for 6–10-year-olds, whose intuitive representational style is often associated with Surrealism and Symbolism. Interpreting children’s drawings was easy when adults served as primary sources of icons, signs and symbols routinely used in a transparent cultural environment. During the last decades, however, visualisation practices of generations drifted apart. “Child art” is influenced by peers, practiced through (multi)media that adults can neither handle, nor process.

This paper is based on results of the Hungarian Visual Competence Survey (2009–2011) involving more than 3500 students aged 6–12 from 24 primary schools. The main objective of the project was to develop a new competence structure incorporating media literacy and utilising online digital tools for development and assessment. Symbolisation tasks presented target visualisation of concepts and relationships, representation of processes, and expression of moods and situations in one single sign. Drawings and paintings of children of three age groups (6–7, 8–10 and 11–12 years) will be compared to identify the development of visual competence involved in the interpretation of tasks and creation of solutions ranging from strikingly simple icons to sophisticated symbol systems.

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