

LANGUAGE TEACHING AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE DEVELOPING AT PRESCHOOL AGE, THROUGH FAIRY TALES AND STORIES

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Abstract: *We all know that the role of kindergarten is significant in the development and growth of the young child. Equally important is its education in his mother tongue, the language it hears for the first time from his parents. We often hear the question "Which kindergarten should I enroll my child in?" It is a difficult decision, the responsibility of the parent, who wants the best, the most suitable decisions for the child. Many parents tend to enroll the child in a group with teaching activities in Romanian language, wanting to help the learning of the Romanian language - the second language - from the preschool period. But with this decision we are not giving the child an easier start in life, no matter how much we are tempted to think so. The fact that we speak to them in a language other than our mother tongue will not help them integrate more easily into the community.*

Key words: *language; emotional intelligence; preschool.*

One thing is certain: we pass on a genetic baggage to our children regardless of the language we speak to them. Decisions are made by parents regarding their child's cultural identity.

Language is what brings people together. When they share the same language, relationships between individuals evolve. We can also tend to such an evolution from our relationship with children, when we speak our mother tongue. This happens because through mother tongue we transmit not only linguistic information, but also deep feelings, emotions and experiences that marked our childhood.

By passing on the mother tongue, our children will get to know us on a much deeper level than if we communicated in another language. This happens, for example, when we tell a proverb or sing a childhood song to the child.

The development of the mother tongue is an essential role in kindergarten, because the 3-6 years period is the most intense period of speech development, verbal structures and vocabulary enrichment. The acquisition of the mother tongue happens spontaneously, naturally, even at home, in the family - the child's closest community. This language represents the basis of the child's communication, ability to enter into contact with the world.

Breaking away from his little world (the family), the child arrives at kindergarten. It is very important that this first impact is a positive one, in an environment where the child can communicate in his language and it is understood. His affective state depends on that environment, where he is, and personality development happens parallel to emotional states.

The mother tongue is the first language that the young child acquires at home, then at kindergarten. This language will be the basis of his communication, necessary for integration into the preschool group. In a foreign environment, the preschooler will not be able to communicate if he does not speak and understand the language. At the moment of entering the group, the educator is that reliable person with whom the child talks and is also supported on an emotional level. We all know that we think, dream and experience our emotions in our mother tongue. This is exactly what happens with small children. Kindergarten is the place where preschoolers develop skills, impart knowledge, enrich vocabulary and prepare for school.

Language develops and progresses continuously in the child, and educators have a decisive role, because the child imitates in speech, gestures, mimicry. The warm, clean, beautiful expression of the educator is received by the children. Taking into account the content of the activities and the specifics of the instructional-educational process in the kindergarten, the first step in the development of language and creativity must be related to the stimulation of the imagination, which influences the flexibility and originality of thinking, the positive attitude towards the discovery of what is new. Stimulating the preschooler's creative thinking requires the use of various didactic means, active methods, then bringing these experiences to fruition in language education activities through storytelling and play.

As part of language educational activities, in the kindergarten, it develops and perfects phonetically, lexically and grammatically. Improving the language of preschool children is of particular importance, both for the integration of children in school and for the development of their entire personality. Using language as a means of education: intellectual, moral, aesthetic, the educator develops their speech, necessary in the process of communication and knowledge of the surrounding life, perfects their expression, corrects pronunciation, enriches the vocabulary and helps children acquire practically the grammatical structure of the mother tongue.

What and how do we tell?

"A fairy tale is the key to the universe. It knocks at the door of the soul."- Carl Gustav Jung

The thinking of the preschooler is completely driven by emotions, because the young child is not able to see things for real. He is always deceived by appearances. For this reason, this preschool period is called the magical period, and it is characterized by the fact that the child imagines that the connections between things and phenomena are magical. The child constantly wonders and admires the world around him.

He is fascinated by new phenomena, his curiosity, his thirst to know, to learn more and more. We call this period the "What is it?" and "why?" period. The child wants to understand the causes of some phenomena or things, for a more accurate knowledge of the surrounding world. He asks us questions about insignificant details, and if these questions are not answered, he fills in the information gap with fantasy. It needs clear explanations, because the world around is in a continuous transformation: now it is day and there is sun, then it is dark and the moon appears in the sky. "But who placed the sun in the sky?", "Why is there a moon?", "Who made the night?" are frequent questions at this age. Personalize objects, phenomena, heavenly bodies, everything lives and everything that is alive. Only after the age of five, does he become convinced that only what moves is alive. Thinking is intuitive at this age - the preschooler combines concrete experiences with impressions and emotions and is not able to differentiate between possible and impossible. In his view, any thing or desire is possible, you just have to really want it. He knows no other perspective than his own, he assumes that everyone sees things that way, as he does; all phenomena and events happen in his favor. For example: "The sun is setting so we can go to bed", "It is snowing so we can go sledding", etc. His thinking prefers extremes, opposites are present in all the preschooler's activities and are reflected in his expression. A significant characteristic of this period is self-centeredness, everything is centered on the child, and everything makes sense from his perspective. This does not mean selfishness, but the fact that he interprets things from his point of view. During the period of 3-5 years, the small child imagines that all things are made by man, at 6 years old he believes that man and nature together create, and after 8 years old he is convinced that everything is made only by nature. "The mountain is built by people, the lake is filled with water also by people" etc. In a child's life, time is not linked to the clock, but to the routines, daily habits and schedule that we, the adults, establish. If events are repeated regularly, they gain continuity, and these routines provide security for the young child. Routines must be

present both at kindergarten and at home. The child becomes calm, balanced, knowing the procedure of a day, weeks and following these routines.

Knows that after dinner comes the bath, the evening story and bedtime.

He knows that after he wakes up in the morning, he will go to kindergarten.

He knows that if he serves lunch, he gets dessert.

He knows that after breakfast at the kindergarten, the morning meeting follows.

Very often it happens in my group of preschoolers, that the children ask me: "Ma'am, what do we do now?" Then they all answer, "Shall we sit in a semicircle?". All that, because, they already know the procedure of a day at kindergarten.

We can continue with the examples, but it is essential to realize the importance of these habits, and to apply them, thus giving the child the fixed landmarks he needs to orient himself and move confidently in his space.

Such routines can also be applied to group storytelling moments. For example:

- *We roll out the magic carpet, so a story follows;*
- *We place the magic pillows at the corner of the doll, so a story time follows;*
- *The bell rings three times, so a story follows;*
- *We light the scented candle, so a story follows;*

It is important to allocate the necessary time to the story, to ensure a pleasant, quiet environment, to create that magical moment, when the child is captured for at least 10-15 minutes in the world of stories. During the story, the child must see our appearance, have visual contact, feel our presence in the experiences of his emotions.

When choosing the story, we must take into account the age characteristics of the group, the children's preferences, their personality and their emotional state that day. It happens frequently, as children want to listen to the same story over and over again. This "phenomenon" happens because children like to follow the thread of the story - the events, the sequences in the story - to actively participate in the action, already knowing every moment, knowing what is coming next. In these storytelling activities, the children are present in the action, not only physically, but also emotionally-affectively living the story again, but this time through an emotional safety that offers them a more relaxing participation.

The story must be presented as expressively as possible, with appropriate mime and tone. The better the storyteller "role" is played, the more profound is the realization of the child's inner images. If we manage to become

children during the story and let ourselves be absorbed by the events and feelings, our story will be authentic. It is advisable to tell the story orally, instead of reading from the book, and we must avoid explaining the fairy tale, the story. By telling with our words, even ordinary everyday events, the child gains courage and will have the initiative to tell and communicate too.

In past generations, children loved fairy tales, subconsciously recognizing their importance. The fairy tale guides the child to discover his identity and suggests new experiences to try, through which he can develop his character. Through intense experiences through stories, children learn to dare, to get involved, to look for and experience situations, to be brave. Also from fairy tales, he realizes that the timid will never succeed, a bitter fate may even await them.

Nowadays, many children don't even have the chance to ever listen to or read a fairy tale.

Authentic stories have become simplified, tamed versions, which, through cartoons or TV series, lose their deep meaning, to offer the child (and not only) to discover solutions for solving the inner conflicts of that moment of life.

Classic stories such as: Snow White, Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, The Three Little Pigs, Hansel and Gretel usually debut in a realistic setting. A child who is familiar with fairy tales, however, understands that these stories "speak" to him in a symbolic language, not about facts, characters or real situations. After a simple beginning, the fairy tale wanders into fantastic events with wide detours, carries the child into an enchanted world, but at the end brings him back to reality, in a quiet manner. In this way the child will learn, that it is not wrong to let ourselves be carried away by magic and phantasms for a short time, but in the end we return to a happy reality, devoid of magic.

"Today, as in the past, the minds of both creative and average children can be stimulated to appreciate the beautiful things in life through fairy tales..." (Bruno Bettelheim, 2017, pg. 35)

The development of emotional intelligence in childhood

Reflecting, understanding, and regulating emotions are composed of both innate and learned factors. The fact that emotions are genetically inherited is recognized from the spontaneous reactions of a newborn, because in the first weeks he already smiles if he sees the adult smiling. The "social" smile appears only after the age of two or three months, through which it challenges the adult to communicate. The adult's reactions cause the baby to copy, to imitate these gestures.

In addition to the primary-innate emotions: joy, sadness, hatred, wonder, fear, secondary emotions gradually appear. Around the age of two,

envy appears, after two and a half years, pride, shame, guilt appear. Around the age of three, the child is able to interpret the emotions of other people - he recognizes and names these emotions. By the age of six, the preschooler identifies states in 80% of cases and is able to express his own states as well. The expression of more complex states and feelings becomes possible only at the early school age.

The development of emotional intelligence depends to a large extent on appropriate feed backs - at appropriate moments - from the adult. The ability to recognize emotions in the child is closely related to the ability to attach.

Ericson defines age 0-2 as the period of building a foundation of emotional safety. He says that "personal development is a process, from the cradle to the grave". From the perspective of the development of emotional intelligence in the child, it is prioritarian, that the parents do not idolize him, but love him and accept him as he really is. These positive feelings are the basis for his self-confidence and future security. It also represents a resource for critical periods and for dealing with emotional crises that will follow.

We must know that during the kindergarten period the emotions control the child and not the other way around. This age is characterized by emotional instability and irritability. Feelings are very strong and can change quickly. It is wonderful how the child behaves during this period. He doesn't wear masks, he doesn't pretend, but he shows exactly how he really feels in a situation or moment of life.

The kindergarten period is also the period of initiatives, of experiments, of getting to know the world around, where the child wants to feel capable of carrying out a plan that he proposes.

Frustration tolerance is very low at this age. This was demonstrated by the famous "Marshmallow" test - in the experiment of Professor Walter Michael. The test was repeated countless times, but the most recent result shows that those children, who could wait for the delayed reward, became more confident and got higher achievements, or had success in life.

The development of emotional intelligence in kindergarten is achieved through personal communication, free play, stories, singing or musical auditions, painting. All these activities contribute to the formation of emotions and encourage their manifestation in the preschool group. Holidays, events, birthdays experienced together are also a suitable form in reflecting the emotions of the young child.

Emotional "communication" is acquired, not only through the relationship with parents, but through communication and observation of other people. Any situation in which the child comes into contact with various people offers the possibility of developing and expressing emotions. The child

observes and copies the forms of communication with others, be it parents, grandparents, friends, going to the market, to the park, etc.

The basic condition of emotional education is safety. If as a small child we assure him that we love him, understand him, that he can rely on us, then he will learn the value of human relationships.

"Four hugs a day we need to survive, eight hugs keep us going, and with twelve hugs a day, we can thrive" - says Virginia Satir.

From the school psychologist Kádár Annamária, we learn that the greatest fear of children is the state of nervousness, anger and low patience of the parents, as well as the failure to explain these states to the child. The attention given to the other, the positive example always practiced, in all the family routines, the quality time spent with our lovers, the jokes, the pranks made with small children - are factors that contribute to a healthy emotional development and necessary for the child's growth.

These emotional skills take time and patience, not commands or impositions. The child does not become curious, empathetic or more sensitive to our command. Sentences like: "I've told you so many times"...- don't work here. Verbal and non-verbal communication must be in sync, children cannot interpret controversial situations and "read" feelings that are not genuine very easily. Encouragement to try something new, something unknown, frequent inspirations instead, give wings to the child. He will be proud, that he manages to overcome an obstacle, achieves something new, knowing that his parents trust him.

Cultivating emotional intelligence through fairy tales and stories

Stories play a significant role in the development of children's EQ. At preschool age, the child bears very hard, that he does not have enough will to oppose the prohibitions and limits set by the adult.

The story reflects the child's emotional state and helps him understand and separate conflicting feelings. He can find the anger, the annoyances in a fierce animal or in the negative characters in the story, without having any remorse, that he got angry with someone dear to him.

Listening to a story, the left hemisphere of the brain processes the verbal content of the text and takes in practically all the information, and in the right hemisphere metaphors, mimicry and tonality, the sensitivity of the story appear. By listening to the story, the two hemispheres act simultaneously, thus ensuring the full experience of the action. Intellectual and emotional functions are activated at the same time.

The young child is very emotionally receptive, so it is important that the content matches the facial expressions and tone of the storyteller. The story is like a mirror - it reflects the moods we carry in our souls, therefore it is not

advisable to explain the ideas or the content of the story/fairy tale; she must act emotionally.

From stories, the child learns that all his feelings belong to him and that these emotions can be controlled and coordinated. Stories contribute to intellectual and spiritual enrichment: „*the fairy tale is the textbook with which the child learns to decipher his thoughts in the language of images, the only one that allows him to understand himself before reaching intellectual maturity*” - says Bruno Bettelheim

The fairy tale, as the author himself states, not only entertains the child but *”enlightens him about his own being and contributes to the formation of his personality. It gives meaning on so many levels and enriches a child's existence in so many ways that no book can emphasize the many and varied contributions such stories make to a child's life.”*

Because it touches and activates both the conscious and the unconscious level, the fairy tale becomes a healing artistic expression, and the listener, through reflection, can find their own, unique solutions to the inner conflicts they face at that moment in their life.

The formation of our personality, emotional fulfillment, is a process that lasts throughout life. On this road, we have to find our balance in many important moments (beautiful or unpleasant). We can only experience the feeling of integrity if we are persistent, determined to overcome obstacles and resist problems, able to overcome difficult moments. Climbing the tree, which stretches up to the sky, is actually the development of our personality, the path we follow emotionally and intellectually.

Metamorphosis, change, transformation are necessary components of the fairy tale and also conditions for solving problems. *”If you haven't done something yet, try three times. The first time, to overcome your fears, the second time, to learn how to do it, and the third time, to discover if you like to do it”* - recommends Virgil Thomson.

The character in the fairy tale - with whom the child identifies - wants to solve exactly those problems that the preschooler is facing. This is also the model for emotional progress. Evil may work for a moment, but the ultimate lesson remains: in the long run, goodness wins.

Research methodology

Total number of preschoolers/ Age category	Girls	Boys
15	9	6

2 years	-	1
3 years	4	1
4 years	2	2
5-6 years	3	2

Table 1. Structure of the sample of preschoolers

The group consists of 17 preschoolers, 15 of whom regularly attended the kindergarten.

Intervention plan:

In organizing the experiment, we went through the following stages:

1. Knowing the psycho-physiological age characteristics of children;
2. Documentation;
3. Establishing the purpose and objectives;
4. Formulation of hypotheses;
5. Establishing the conditions for conducting the research;
6. Adapting activities to the learning pace of preschoolers;
7. Methods of data processing and their interpretation.

The present study wants to verify and confirm the importance of fairy tales and stories in stimulating children's creativity in all aspects, but especially in language education in kindergarten. In carrying out the experiment, I used the following psychopedagogical methods:

- Observation;
- The conversation;
- Psycho-pedagogical experiment method: "Let's tell a different story";
- The method of analyzing the products of children's activity;
- Method of pedagogical tests (trials) and the survey.

Data interpretation

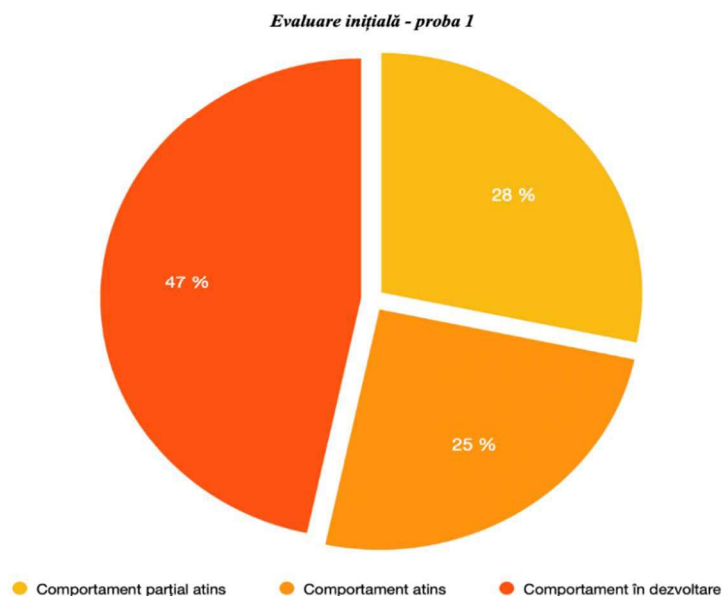
The most significant acquisitions in preschool age in terms of vocabulary occur through communication with adults and other children. With the help of language, processes are formed and organized in which knowledge is integrated, and this contributes to the systematization and increase of the inner conditions of personality formation. Through language, the child creates complex relationships in his small society and all language allows the child to express his inner states and ideas, to organize his activities (inner language), but also to accumulate information.

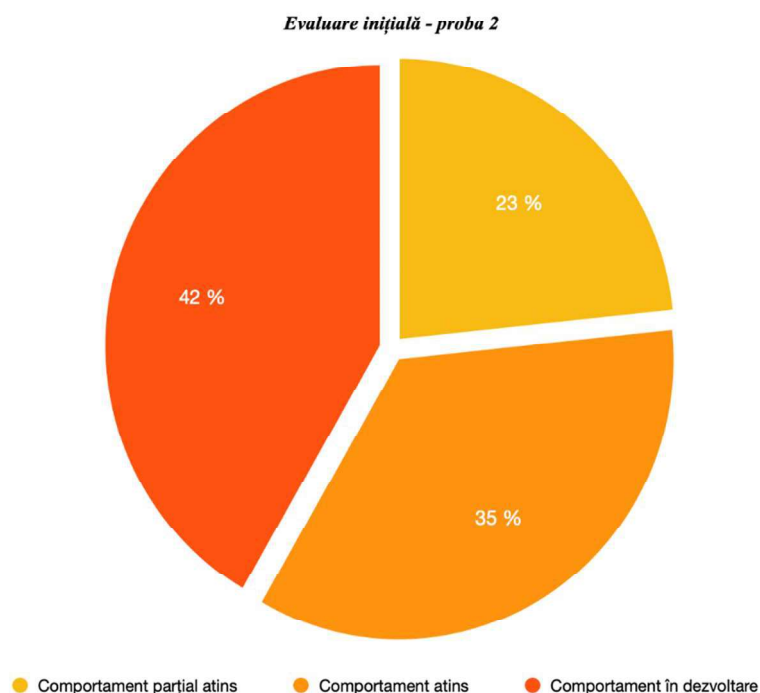
A considerable part in the acquisition of new words takes place in preschool age, through socialization contexts. Few children know how to read before the age of 6, so regular listening to stories both at home and in kindergarten is very important. The volume of the vocabulary increases through active listening, only when the child has the chance to meet new words.

From the data collected in the initial stage, we have found that the possibilities of psychic, emotional and cognitive development are promising and based on the initial test samples applied to children at level I and level II, I can apply the didactic strategies that I proposed. The modern methods of stimulating creativity, developing thinking and language, cultivating affectivity, voluntary behavior, age-appropriate motivation, thus the whole personality, aim at developing the great acquisitions of preschoolers.

The initial stage

Analyzing the results of the initial testing, we found that the preschoolers' acquisitions are favorable and appropriate for their age, and the level of receiving the oral message and expressing themselves orally in different contexts is appropriate. The results of the evaluation tests indicate an adequate expression of the children in their mother tongue, which allows the application of the proposed intervention plan.





In terms of aesthetic and creative acquisitions, preschoolers have the basic skills necessary to carry out the experiment on the stimulation of creativity.

Consequently, I noted the following observations:

- children have the ability to understand the meaning of an oral message;
- active listening in small children is deficient, in 5-6 year olds it is in training;
- some children present difficulties in the correct and logical expression of ideas;
- the active vocabulary is sufficiently developed to allow normal communication;
- in some preschoolers, voluntary attention is passive and diffuse;
- most children are very easily distracted from a storytelling activity;
- voluntary memory is sometimes not present;
- preschoolers are familiar with different artistic-plastic tools and use working techniques common to these activities;

In order to achieve the desired results following the formulation of the research hypothesis, I proposed some corrective, development and stimulation measures for the group of preschoolers:

- diversification of oral communication contexts for educating active listening behavior;
- training voluntary attention through stories;

- training in group activities, learning tasks that require practicing communication;
- diversification of learning tasks that stimulate vocabulary activation;
- creating new play and learning situations that stimulate communication;
- alternating traditional learning activities with modern ones;
- the introduction of modern work techniques in artistic-plastic activities to encourage creative imagination;

These measures were implemented during the experimental period. In this phase, five activities per center were carried out over a period of five months.

Final stage

At this stage we used the tests from the initial evaluation, changing only their content, the samples and items remaining the same.

Throughout the experiment, I was careful to ensure the ideal socio-affective climate, which is necessary in the manifestation of children's creativity, in a free, warm manner. I also carefully studied the artistic-plastic creations of the children.

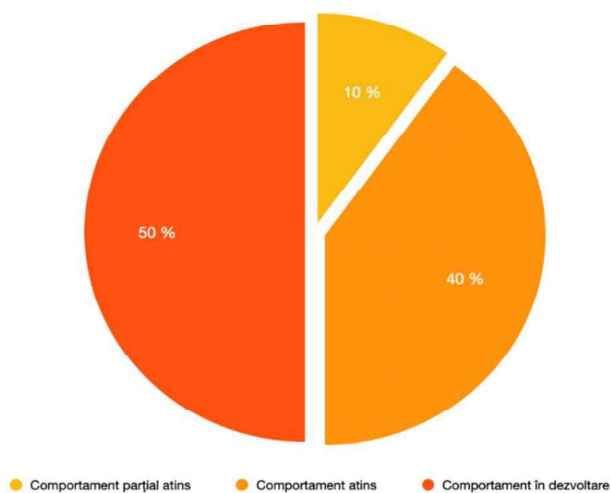
Following the observations made during the course of the experiment and analyzing the results of the tests, we reached the following findings:

- the active listening time for children has improved;
- an increased ability to concentrate on activities was observed,
- children's oral expression developed;
- increased children's active vocabulary;
- increased attention and voluntary listening;
- children can concentrate more easily on a storytelling activity;
- communication became easier between group members;
- it becomes possible to recognize, express and accept emotional states;
- children are more tolerant and fair in interactions;
- increased children's artistic expressiveness.

Nr. Crt .	Nume/ Prenume preșcolar	Proba 1				Proba 2			
		I1	I2	I3	I4	I1	I2	I3	I4
1	A.A.	CD	CD	CPA	CPA	CPA	CD	CP A	CD
2	CS.ZS.	CA	CD	CA	CD	CD	CA	CD	CD
3	D.E.	CA	CA	CA	CA	CA	CA	CA	CA

4	<i>D.V.</i>	CD	CD	CPA	CPA	CPA	CD	CP A	CD
5	<i>H.A.</i>	CA	CA	CD	CD	CA	CA	CD	CA
6	<i>K.Á.</i>	CD	CA	CD	CD	CD	CA	CA	CD
7	<i>K.D.</i>	CD	CD	CPA	CPA	CD	CA	CP A	CPA
8	<i>K.J.M.</i>	CA	CD	CD	CD	CA	CA	CD	CD
9	<i>N.R.</i>	CA	CA	CD	CA	CA	CA	CA	CD
10	<i>N.GY.M.</i>	CA	CA	CD	CA	CA	CA	CA	CD
11	<i>N.ZS.</i>	CA	CD	CD	CD	CD	CA	CD	CPA
12	<i>SZ.T.</i>	CA	CA	CD	CA	CA	CA	CA	CD
13	<i>SZ.B.</i>	CA	CD	CA	CD	CA	CA	CD	CD
14	<i>V.N.</i>	CA	CA	CD	CD	CA	CD	CD	CD
15	<i>V.Á.</i>	CA	CA	CD	CA	CA	CA	CA	CA

Table 2. Final evaluation results

Evaluare finală - proba 1

By comparing the graphs from the initial assessment and the final assessment, it is clearly recognized that the pedagogical intervention has yielded results.

The tests applied during the experiment show that the modern methods applied in the integrated activities were effective and improved the children's performance. Preschoolers' qualifications have increased to higher levels, which was reflected in their daily actions within the instructional-educational activities.

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