

## LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL SELF-CONTROL OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN THROUGH STORIES: CASE STUDIES

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**Abstract:**

*This article continues a previous debated issue in an anterior number of the journal - story impact on the language development, emotional and behavioral self-control of preschoolers. There are three case studies that follow the formative role of stories / tales in language development, emotional and behavioral self-control of preschoolers, presented in a methodical and scientific works to obtain the first didactic grade.*

**Keywords:** *preschool, language, communication, emotional self-control, behavioral self-control, case study.*

### **1. Introduction**

Preschool period is the age development in all areas: physical, cognitive and socio-emotional, it is the age of game, imagination and externalization, through language, impressions, fantasy and involvement in the game. It is the period in which the child externalizes two forms of language: emotional language - nonverbal communication - and verbal language - with the distinctive role of communication and socialization.

Through emotions, the child receives information about himself and others, begins to store them in memory, and as the life experience increases, he learns to anticipate and interpret the emotional language produced or identified at others, becomes more careful at the way they communicate through this language therefore gain self-regulation.

Mihaela Roco attaches great importance to the role of parents in developing the child's emotional and social potential. This role must be assumed also by the teacher.

Children will learn:

- „to identify and differentiate personal feelings;
- to learn more about how and where they can express their feelings;
- to develop empathy - the ability to share the feelings of another;
- to read body language and other nonverbal aspects, to understand communication;

- learn to listen;
- learn to be constructive (affirmative)” (Roco, 2004, p. 155).

In the previous article, we described the *formative role of stories / tales in language and communication development, emotional and behavioral self-control of preschoolers*, based on the research started under our coordination, by Oana Miron, preschool teacher in Brețcu kindergarten, Covasna County, made to achieve the scientific methodological study to obtain the first didactic grade. We focused on revealing the educational experiment results on verbal language and emotional developments in children’s group (Norel, M., & Popa, D., 2014).

To highlight the stories formative effect on children's language in the preschool period, were conducted three case studies, selecting subjects aged between 4 and 6 years old, different genders, the tiebreaker criteria being the emotional behavior development.

## **2. Presentation of case studies**

During middle preschool period, the language development intensifies. „Along with language development starts the development of the most important functions, that is: communication function, retaining the cognitive experience and the activity’s organization” (Șchiopu, cited in Sion, 2003, p. 110).

This period is full of activities that aim to exploit the life’s experience, observations, emotions, actions and behaviors that surround the preschool environment. Middle preschooler (4-5 years old) is more sensitive to events around him and is able to make judgments, fair enough, on the other’s behavior. He passes this period by widening his behavior with social and cultural environment in which assimilates life models determining a more active integration in the human condition.

„Attracting the children’s attention to particular aspects of human behavior makes possible the development of the sensitivity to various emotional expressions, the knowledge of the causes and consequences of emotional behavior being richer. Therefore, the attention to the emotional side can contribute greatly to the harmonious development of the child, thus favoring the achievement of a better social adjustment” (Vernon, 2006, p.142).

The research has the following assumptions:

1. If the story is adapted in presentation, in an accessible language to children may influence the reception of the dominant formulas that the story highlighted;
2. If the story is deepened by different teaching methods (drawing, coloring, dramatization), its impact on the child's behavior will be increased;

These considerations led to the selection of the three subjects presented below.

**2.1. Case study 1**

Subject N. I., male, grew up in a mixed family from an ethnical point of view, having a Hungarian mother and a Romanian father. The growth medium is a stable environment, with the father being employed in a relatively stable job with a contract for an indefinite period of time, and the mother currently taking care of 3 children, the subject being the second born in the family. The family's financial situation is good, the living conditions and financial support being enough for a family with 5 members.

The state of health of the subject is good, his development being consistent with his chronological age, as there is nothing in the subject's history or family's history to suggest extreme situations of deterioration of health. From the mental development point of view the subject does not show obvious attentional or memory developmental disorders (only slight inaccuracies in compliance with the graphic space).

In terms of language, the language spoken at home is the paternal language respectively Romanian, the subject has developed a vocabulary dominated by commonly words specific to the shared growth environment, without important acquisitions of cultural language, or scientific language. As we can notice in Table 1. Changes at language and communication level of the N. I. subject, in the experiment were identified significant changes in verbal and language capabilities:

*Table 1. Changes at language and communication level of the N.I.subject*

<b>Evaluation period</b>	<b>low level of capacity development</b>	<b>level of expression with verbal support of abilities</b>	<b>good level of capacity development</b>
preexperimental	33%	56%	11%
postexperimental	<b>11%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>56%</b>

Relations between expressions of communication skills were reversed. But it is interesting to see where they recorded the most significant changes and where there have been setbacks, to see if the relations change is due to aging or implementation of the tale experiment.

The most significant changes were recorded at the level of the ability to expressively reproduce poems, roles and the ability to use appropriate nonverbal communication (gestures, attitudes, drawings). These transitions from a low level of acquisition to a good acquisition level can be considered

to be due to tale topics because it involved the dramatization based on lyrics (thus involving expressive reproduction and use of gestures in role play), but also coloring drawings related to the tale (expressing emotivity through color).

Also, there was some stagnation at the same level, these being at the capacity to explain, analyze sounds from words, from the expression of opinion and use of greeting and request formulas. These stagnations indicate that the changes recorded are not dominantly due to aging, because they ought to alter at the transition towards the age of 5, therefore the changes recorded dominantly due to fairytale content.

The chromatic expression of emotions stimulated by the tale is highlighted particularly by the drawings that represent the dog from the fairytale. In the phase in which the character was suffering, the subject also manifested aches, sadness, fear (black and gray), but also an expectation, even receptivity to aid, respectevly to relations (blue). Thus there has been a maximum degree of empathy from the subject. When the situation of the character changed, beeing happy, healthy and grateful, the representative colours designed for emotions has changed to orange and red (thanks, goodwill), yellow (joy) and blue (openness to relationships). Once again unconscious expression of emotion indicated a high degree of empathy with the new state of the character, occuring an intense gratitude for being saved.

The most obvious changes are recorded in terms of seeking help from others when needed, especially the ability to take responsibility, eg "old man's girl". Also the spontaneous outpouring of emotion increased to maximum, this being also observed from the role play of the dramatization of the tale.

Socio-emotional changes, recorded during the experiment, are reported in Table 2. Changes at the socio-emotional abilities level of N.I. subject:

*Table 2. Changes at the socio-emotional abilities level of N.I. subject*

<b>Evaluation period</b>	<b>low level of abilities development</b>	<b>level of expression with verbal support of abilities</b>	<b>good level of abilities development</b>
preexperimental	25%	40%	35%
postexperimental	<b>10%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>75%</b>

Like language and verbal communication, it can be observed that the relation was reversed, which indicates a strong emotional impact on the subject from the course of events contained by fairy tale. In the case of N. I.,

improvement of the concerned issues indicates a general behavioral change, a qualitative leap in personal development, which normally occurs at the age of 4 ½ years. This indicates that cognitive stimulation is dominantly related to language and namely to communicational skills of the child. Thus, involvement in educational activities generated by stories and tales messages can generate an internalization of operational relations of thought, thus making the transition from practical action with objects, to operations and intellectual activities. This is enhancing correct integration in the educational environment.

### 2.2. Case study 2

Subject **T. R.**, female, is the only child of the family, but grows only with the mother, bowth living with the grandparents after the parents divorce. Supervision and education of the subject falls to 3 adults. The mother is employed, family income is provided by the mother’s salary, alimony and child allowance, to which is added the pensions of the grandparents, making financial situation not a problem.

Physical and mental health are developed within the normal limits, according to chronological age, exhibiting an increased caution in relationships, being considered to quiet and withdrawn when compared with other colleagues in the group. From the point of view of psychological development, the subject manifests a development consistent with age, with slight inaccuracies in compliance with spaces in which to color, which is naturally at the age 4 ½ years in terms of focusing attention. Memory capacity is at level of support on suggestive movements and intuitive support, and reactualization needs initial language support.

Language development is also consistent the age, with the vocabulary beeing dominated by words from the family's area, with regional accents on words. From the Table 3. Changes at language and communication level of the T. R. subject can be seen that in the experiment were identified significant changes in the verbal and language capabilities:

*Table 3. Changes at language and communication level of the T. R. subject*

<b>Evaluation period</b>	<b>low level of capacity development</b>	<b>level of expression with verbal support of abilities</b>	<b>of good level of capacity development</b>
preexperimental	5%	61%	34%
postexperimental	<b>5%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>84%</b>

The moderate temperament from an actional point of view, allowed language development to be more radical, concentration being more focused

on verbal communication than actions. The differences presented above, observed when it is compared to peers, indicate two major differences:

- every month in the preschoolers life enriches acquisitions in terms of language (the difference between the two subjects being 4 months);
- preschool found within the grace period of personalism development tends to value it's ego and receive approval from the adult (here being about the teacher which must be the one impressed, whereas in the family has no competence).

The development of affectivity and its expressions, materialized in emotional language, can be observed in the color analysis, primarily, but also in the Evaluation Grid of socio-emotional skills. For the color analysis there were selected drawings from two opposite situations of the tale, in which one of the secondary characters is initially suffering, then presented in total integrity.

Chromatic expression of emotions stimulated by the fairytale is highlighted by the drawing file representing the well, which in the first phase indicates uncomfortable emotions, lack of security, fear (purple, brown and black), while in the second phase indicates joy, complacency and safety (yellow, red, blue). Unconscious expression of emotion indicates a high degree of empathy with the character, with an intense joy for his salvation.

Analyzing socio-emotional skills and changes recorded during the experiment, all can be related to the following ratios:

*Table 4. Changes at the socio-emotional abilities level of T.R. subject*

<b>Evaluation period</b>	<b>low level of abilities development</b>	<b>level of expression with verbal support of abilities</b>	<b>good level of abilities development</b>
preexperimental	15%	65%	20%
postexperimental	<b>5%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>65%</b>

It can be seen that the relations have a pronounced move toward a good level of socio-emotional capacity development. The fact that in the initial phase of the evaluation the subject needed a more pronounced verbal support to manifest one of the skills, therefore it was urged and encouraged to manifest itself, creates the impression that the socialization skills of the child remains at medium level, which makes any person to believe that the child is "a withdrawn child" or "a shy child", or "a child who does not want to stand out". These assessments are supported also by the fact that self-confidence, feelings and responsibilities are still in the sphere of verbal support in manifestation. The decisive step in other socio-affective behaviours indicates that the subject identify herself with "the old man's girl" who accepts fate and

act as her father says, which is influenced by the old woman. This indicates a high degree of awareness to the content of the tale.

In the case of T. R. the improvement of the linguistic aspects is more obvious compared to the socio-affective skills, which indicates a behavioral change at a communicational level, a qualitative leap in personal development in this regard. These findings do not exclude subject from related to age particularities, while the inclusion within the grace period primary feature is the desire to be "seductive for surrounding adults and for its own satisfaction". This indicates that involvement in educational activities of stories and fairy tales messages can generate behavior that develops the child in one of the personality areas, reaching a balance only at the end of preschool period.

### **2.3. Case study 3**

Subject **F. A.**, female, grew up in a mixed family from an ethnical point of view, having a Hungarian mother and a Romanian father. The family financial situation is very good, the subject growing in an environment full of harmony and understanding. Physical and mental health are developed within the normal limits, according to chronological age, exhibiting an increased sensitivity to everything from outside generally being perceived as "sensitive" to any induces emotions in the preschool environment.

In terms of mental development, the subject exhibits an age consistent development from the operational perspective, recording only a slight emotional lability. Attention is normally developed for the chronological age, such as for focus or concentration, as well as distribution. Memory capacity is very good, improving even during the experimental period, having a great contribution the tendency to assume the specific roles of the age over 5 years.

Language development is also consistent with the chronological age, being more developed than colleagues usual vocabulary, accordingly the language used in the family is much more developed than other subjects' development environments (Table 5. Changes at language and communication level of the F.A. subject). The Evaluation Grid of language assessment shows that following the experiment there were identified important changes of language and communication skills covering in the total acquisition area (33%) or partial (67%), hence a 100% good level.

*Table 5. Changes at language and communication level of the F.A. subject*

<b>Evaluation period</b>	<b>low level of development</b>	<b>level of expression with support of abilities</b>	<b>good level of capacity</b>
preexperimental	0%	44%	56%

postexperimental	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>100%</b>
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The development of affectivity and its expression is embodied in emotional language. We use the chromatic analysis and the Evaluation Grid of socio-emotional skills as evaluation instruments for these areas. Regarding chromatic analysis there were selected drawings that illustrate a secondary character in different situations during the development of the story.

Chromatic expressions are rooted in the surrounding reality while preserving natural environment colors. Differences observed arise in the implementation of colors, which in the difficulty phase of the character is blander compared to the end, when the character is healthy and strong. The joy of success and gratification of the character is represented through strong colors, yellow being very well defined (joy) and the used green (strength, balance) is intense. Following the experiment we observed that the uniformity to the socio-emotional skills occurs, in the skills and abilities acquired in part area, this indicating that it is manifested a good behavioral and emotional selfcontrol, thus a withdrawal from small childhood dominated by instability. Compared with other female subjects aged 4 years the balance of socio-emotional behaviors is clearly seen.

The analysis of socio-emotional skills and changes recorded after the first half, in which the experiment was conducted indicates the following (Table 6. Changes at the socio-emotional abilities level of F.A subject):

*Table 6. Changes at the socio-emotional abilities level of F.A subject.*

<b>Evaluation period</b>	<b>low level of abilities development</b>	<b>level of expression with support of verbal abilities</b>	<b>good level of abilities development</b>
preexperimental	5%	44%	51%
postexperimental	<b>0%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>84%</b>

It can be seen that relations have a pronounced move toward a good level of socio-emotional capacity development, although it can be seen that this level had higher values even before the experiment. This development, or balance toward behaviours already or partially acquired highlights primarily controlled behavior, according to an adult model. Imitation is in the height of its fullness at this age, signaling the close relationship between the situations she lived in, language and verbal behavior.

It can be appreciated that the subject **F. A.**, aged 5 years, has made obvious progress in language development, 33.3% of the assessed indicators became fully acquired while at the socio-affective behavior level they are acquired at only 25% at a total level and constantly exhibited. This indicates that only a good acquisition of language and communication skill leads to



good and effective relationship making which indicates the key role of language in the personality development. In terms of content of the tale, presented and processed at different levels for awareness, we can say that there has been an important contribution to language development, but also desirable behaviors.

### 3. Conclusions

The analysis made in the three case studies can highlight the following conclusions:

- Around the age of 5 years old there is a passing from partial to the total acquisition of language, without the need for verbal or intuitive support;

- The tale with the course of events can influence language, as long as the words used within have correspondent in everyday life;

- The tale "The old man girl and the old woman girl", which contains elements from rural areas, is a message well received by children aged 4-5 years, leading to accelerated development of usual language and vocabulary in excess of 60% of children. This conclusion partly confirms the first hypothesis.

- Language development based on the fairy tale was supported by related activities, which foster awareness to tale content, stimulating emotional expression of the message, which favored the assumption of linguistic expressions and formulas of fairy tale. This finding supports and confirms the second hypothesis: if the tale is presented and enhanced as content, it can determine the development of an emotional language that results in an expressive communication.

- The tale can have an increased influence on language development in preschool children only if acknowledged and valued through at least three teaching methods, which on the one hand triggers the emotional experiences, and on the other hand also they externalize them (graphic representation and chromatic, dramatization, retelling ). And also this finding supports and confirms the second hypothesis.

- The tale may influence both verbal and nonverbal language, but especially the conduct of preschool age within group, which means that the choice of tales should be made depending on the environment in which the kindergarten is placed and also the children's age from the group. This finding supports and confirms the second hypothesis which assumed that if the tale is enhanced by different teaching methods (narrative, drawing, coloring, and dramatization), its impact on child behavior will be increased.

- The tale and how it is valued within the preschoolers' group can lead to socio-emotional skills development in excess of 45%, which largely supports the hypothesis no. 2.

- Both in language development and communication skills, as well as socio-emotional skills development the fairy tale has different influences depending on the sex of preschoolers, but especially on psihoindividual particularities of children.

- By confirming hypotheses, the entire investigative approach has led to the realization of the research objectives proposed at the start of this study. But to introduce the fairy tale as a themed child activity there must be a judiciously examine about what fairy tale has a value as close as possible to reality, especially the reality of behavioral and social values, but also which fairy tale brings those social values accessible to the living environment of children.

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