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**THE ROLE OF STORYTELLING ACTIVITY IN THE  
VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRE-SCHOOLERS**

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**Abstract:**

Storytelling is a way of doing activities within the scope experiential language and communication involves exposure and communication of knowledge, the form of activity to learning about the environment and speech development of the pre-schoolers, developing mental processes - memory, attention, thinking, imagination - and language in all its aspects. We can mention two types of stories: the story of the teacher and the story of children.

The efficiency of the story depends largely on how it is "spoken", on the language used throughout the exposure must be correct grammatically, the tone used, how it is used the semantic side of the words, the gestures, the eye contact made between storyteller and children, the rhythm of speech, alternate utterance slower or faster words, raising and lowering his voice, the way they are pronounced words, sentences, phrases, changing timbre meant to indicate the emotional state of the children. The story also contributes to activation, but also to the enrichment of the vocabulary, both performing and checking previously acquired knowledge to fix them. The assimilation of the vocabulary from the earliest age have a particular importance because they significantly stimulates the overall intellectual development of the child, positively influencing the dynamics of his life. The overall objective of our study is to demonstrate the importance of storytelling in developing creativity and enrich the vocabulary of the pre-schoolers.

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**Keywords:** Storytelling; vocabulary; pre-schoolers.

## 1. Introduction

Childhood is very important in the evolution of the individual and the adult presence and intervention are crucial. This period is marked by an emotional development and a special responsiveness



to the received information, so it requires a formative intervention to redeem this receptivity. From this perspective, education is required to be centred on the child and on his overall development, the educator assuming the task of giving equal attention to all areas of development: physical development, health, language and communication development, cognitive development and socio-emotional development.

The language and communication field (LCF) aims to develop language (in matters of vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and understanding the significance of messages), of communication (including listening skills, oral communication and written, verbal and nonverbal) and of the preacquisitions for writing-reading and accompanying development in each of the other areas. It covers mastery of oral and written expression, the ability to understand verbal and written. It is estimated that by listening and expression in group situations, preschoolers are able to explore the experiences of other people and thus to expand its repertoire of meaningful experiences. It is intended that they speak confidently, clearly and fluently, using appropriate means of expression for different categories of audience.

## **2. The integration of the Tale (Short Story) in the Educational Activities**

The tale (short story) is considered one of the most popular activities directed in kindergarten in order to satisfy the need for knowledge and affection of the children that stimulates their imagination and creates an optimal frame for communication. In the kindergarten are used two types of stories: the educator's stories and the children's stories (retelling the story, the story by model, the given start stories, the stories after a plan, after illustrations, stories on a given topic).

**The educator stories** are oral exposures of literary works (stories, tales), made by teachers. These activities are organized around the group as a compulsory activity or during games and activities selected, with the whole group or in small groups of children. By its content, this activity widens the knowledge of the children. They closely follow the events of the story or fairy tale, stores, discover traits and behaviours of the characters, analyzes and compares, establish certain relationships between facts and personages, get to the generalizations. Careful stories reception contribute to familiarizing children with language structure, with the wealth and expressive language; they appropriate the words with their own and figurative meanings, poetic expressions, formulas specific to these literary creations, rhymed and rhythmic constructions, sayings, proverbs, grammatical structures (Tătaru, 2009, p. 38).

The thematic of the literary works exposed in the storytelling activity differs from one age group to another. At the small group stories are short, affordable as language, attractive and should develop positive feelings and emotional states. At the middle group it can be used literary works which will familiarize children with various aspects of the life and influence their behaviour. At the big age group the stories become more complex, aimed at the notification of the real plan and the unreal real, stimulating children's creativity, practice communication skills.

The educator stories have a special importance because it provides children with knowledge about the various aspects of life, familiarizing them with the surrounding nature (the animal world, vegetable world, natural phenomena). The listening process is geared around the psychic activity of children, is practicing vocabulary by using vocabulary and artistic image, the children being familiarized with the meaning of words, with some new contexts in which they must use the assimilated linguistic structures, the harmonious combination of words in the sentence and their figurative sense (Dumitru, 2007, p.49).

We cannot ignore the ethical value that directly contribute to the formation of moral conscience (norms of behaviour - The apron, the consequences of disobedience –The goat with three baby goats, mutual aid – The huge radish, the love of parents towards their children, their sacrifice –The swans, The mom’s heart, the love for work and rewarding it–The old man daughter and old woman's daughter).

Given the educational value of the story, the teacher has a few tasks well defined to be fulfilled: ensuring a careful hearing, retention of the key moments, the chronological retelling, to resume the action based on an intuitive support, illustrations, issuing assertions about characters, addressing some key questions in understanding the text message, creating another final, correlation with other stories / characters (thus ensuring retention and transfer of knowledge through original combinations, capable of stimulating children's creativity and language). Although the story is by nature it's a passive method, due to the affective emotional experiences assembly that can trigger it, the tale(short story) can provide a deep personal involvement of the child in the organized activities by the very way of establishing an intersubjective educator-child relationship (Ezechil & Păiși-Lăzărescu, 2001, p. 126). The child may purchase precise expressions, sometimes poetic expressions, artistic epithets, stereotype formulas specific to the stories style and with these various inflected forms or syntactic groups, which, insofar as they are corrected in the adult's language develops the child right speech and submit various stylistic means of adult speech. But, something more: using verbal means systematized by the adult, in those tales(short stories), words with certain grammar forms, idioms, phrases as such or sentences, the child gets along with them an organized content for them to thinking about. (Cazacu, 2005, p. 417).

**Children stories** appear as retelling stories or stories created by children. All language education activities conducted in kindergarten, aims to build the capacity of precise, intelligible, smooth expressing. Children should be able to use the encountered words to express their needs, thoughts and feelings, to be able to communicate among themselves but also with adults. Preschoolers learn in this way to express freely and easily their impressions about the tales or fairy tales heard, but also to expose their reproductive content (Dumitru, 2007, p. 58). Through the work of retelling of literary texts (stories, tales) exhibited by the teacher, are developed the logical thinking and memory of children, are practicing the free and expressive speech, the correctness of lexical structures. Children should be able: to restore real or imaginary events in their sequence; to present traits of the characters; to appreciate their deeds; communicate thoughts and impressions about the stories and characters; to choose the character they liked or that they consider a model, giving reasons for their choice. In retelling children's contribution is limited. Depending on age, they describe, simpler or broader the literary content, the reproduction is accurate through the use of their own language, correct under the phonetic, lexical and grammatical aspects.

The retelling activity can be organized from the small group, but tales and stories should be simple, accessible. The success of the telling activity depends on the degree of assimilation of the story by children, namely the conscious assimilation of the story. (Mitu & Antonovici, 2005, p. 34). The main purpose of retelling it sums up to the training of expose smoothly and logically stories, tales, fables skills, and to exercise the speech in all its aspects (phonetic, lexical, grammatical).

The stories created by children have an obvious formative value, helping to develop creative thinking and imagination, develop a correct, fluent, expressive expression. In kindergarten the stories

created by children have different shapes: the story created over a series of illustrations; story with a given beginning; story based on a given plane; story after the teacher model.

Retelling the stories by the children stimulates their creativity, nourishes baby's desire to assert themselves, to be in the spotlight. If at the small groups they have the intuitive support (illustrations) and verbal support of the educator (guiding questions on content), at the big group will be trained and encouraged to retell independently, using its vocabulary, practicing it in new contexts of verbalization. Towards the end of the preschool cycle they will be able, after the heard stories, to create them-selves, combining elements of known stories. Besides the role of activation /enriching vocabulary and installation of a proper moral conduct, the tales and stories constitute also means of aesthetic education being an example of chosen expression which strongly influences children's speech and the aesthetics of their behaviour. The child has the opportunity to acquire beautiful expressions, artistic, harmonious combination of words and different figures of speech that lead to the formation of an expressive habit of speaking. The role and importance of the story is therefore in their cognitive, ethics and aesthetics value in the multilateral influence that they exert on the entire personality of the child. (Varzari, Taiban, Mamas, & Gheorghian, 1970, p. 182).

### **3. The Tale as a Method in the Teaching Approach**

The tale (short story) is one of the methods that are enjoying a great success in preschool. With a predominantly expository character, it relies on oral exposure, living, arts, taking the form of a narrative or of a description and through which events are portrayed, recent or distant events in space / time. The teacher must use an expressive language, able to arouse feelings, deep emotions, the teacher also must choose carefully the edifying materials so that it will develop the imagination and creativity to the preschool children. *Modern pedagogy does not seek to impose any rigid recipe, on the contrary, (...) it does not oppose to the initiative and originality of the individual or of the collective for the rethinking and reconsideration in a creative spirit of any issues concerning the improvement and modernization of education methodology at all levels.* (Cerghit, 2006, p. 67). More, designing teaching activities in terms of focusing on skills provides the design of the following elements of educational approach: designing teaching strategies and ways of learning; design teaching methods and forms of organization; design methods and assessing tools for communication skill (Tudor, 2016, pp. 106)

The preschoolers involved in this intellectual activity with his whole personality: he closely follows the data of the story, memorizes, compare, analyze the different situations, establishes in mental plan some facts, relationships and qualities of the character. The tales calls the creative imagination, the thinking, the language and ensures the transition from one stereotypical stage to one based on problem solving, leading to finding various solutions on the same theme. They will be put in a position to build their own story/tale and thus they will give rise to chains of facts to undergo a logical succession and take the form of and developed and appropriate presentations. It is a laborious work that requires logic, organization and responsibility of both partners of the teaching communication (teacher and preschoolers). Even if we consider a retelling, it will have a relative and personal touch that will be marked by the striking personality of the subject. No retelling will be the same with the other; the sound side will be given by the creativity of the individual.

The storytelling sums up the both informative and formative valences. The preschoolers will assimilate various informations, but will meet the in same extent the thirst for knowledge and affection, stimulating their own imagination, and finally resulting the optimum frame for practice the communication skills. Thus, using this method develops the mental processes as: language, logical thinking, voluntary memory, attention, imagination. The purpose of the educating the language activities is to form the communication skills that facilitate learning reading and writing at school, forming a reliable basis in order to prepare children for understanding and learning the sounds / letters, charging aware of their structure into words and of words in sentences. The children are early acquiring many words, but behind them lies only a vague picture of their meaning and significance because they are acquired spontaneously. In the early kindergarten language has a situational character, depending on the specific circumstances and smashing by the difficulty of issue and pronunciation. From here comes the kindergarten as an important factor, the task of educators assuming to enrich and activate the language of preschool children through activities, among which it is situated the method of the tale/story.

*The task of organizing children's language experiences lies in the kindergarten. The road travelled by the child in the language world alongside the educator is an incontestable right of its development phase, which gives him in the next stage, the school, equal opportunities regardless of its home environment and the school unit where it comes from. (Dumitru, 2007, p. 60). In terms of contemporary life, the assimilation of a rich vocabulary at a young age has a special importance because it significantly boosts overall intellectual development of the child, positively influencing the dynamics of his life. The act of communication requires a more complex process than that of speech, which is why the education of communication skills is distinct from the education of speech skills and further them development. In other words, the communication skills should be the express subject of the educator's concerns. Otherwise, you cannot say that is not communicated, but that this process may be deficient. (Ezechil, & Păiși-Lăzărescu, 2001, pp. 100-103)*

## **4. Methodology of Research**

### **4.1. Study objectives:**

- Identifying the characteristics of the vocabulary volume depending on the preschoolers age;
- Identify the characteristics of the vocabulary volume depending on the sex differentiation;
- Identify the characteristics of the vocabulary volume depending on the time of kindergarten attendance

The general hypothesis of this research will highlight the real differences existing in terms of language baggage that constitute the vocabulary of preschool children, occurring by age, sex and the time of attendance at the educational activities, especially the storytelling held at kindergarten.

### **4.2. Subjects**

To prove the hypothesis from that leave the present research, and also the proposed objectives were targeted as subjects the preschoolers from a private kindergarten in Pitesti that are part of three groups: small, medium and big. So were formed three experimental groups of 10 children each, but with a different period of attending the educational environment:

Group 1: Preschoolers from the small group who attended the kindergarten for 7 months;

Group 2: Preschoolers from middle group who attended the kindergarten for 1 year and 6 months;

Group 3: Preschoolers from the big group who attended the kindergarten for 2 years and 6 months.

We must point out that all the children originate from urban areas, with no significant differences between them in terms of financial and social. Also, none of them presented development or learning difficulties.

#### **4.3. Instruments**

As a research method, we used the test method (developed by the researcher as a research tool: the language evaluation tests), observing the behaviour of pre-schoolers learning (the grille of observation, the spontaneous observation); for the expression of results and measurement of the validity of the hypothesis, we conducted the descriptive and interpretive analysis of the measured data.

#### **4.4. The organization of research**

The research was conducted in the second semester of the school year 2015-2016. There were designed tests that include certain words encountered in the stories studied in the group. These were applied precisely in order to identify those defining characteristics for the preschoolers vocabulary volume according to age, sex and the time of attendance the kindergarten.

*Material and ongoing:* The test was applied to each child individually, without involving other people present; all this time, other colleagues were involved in recreational activities or routine. The action has been to be read, clear and expressive, a list of words chosen according to their age and level of knowledge that would have to be acquired up to that point, words encountered and studied in each groups through storytelling activities. To determine the amount of words known by preschoolers were chosen several methods. Thus, whether the questions were addressed to the child and he was asked to say if he understands what the question refers to, what he understands by that word to which the question asked is reported. They were used, for example, explanations like: *I'll ask a question and I would like you to tell me what you understand from it. - What is a car?*

Whether after each word, the child was asked to say what they understand by that word. To make sure that he understands what is required, it was conducted a demonstration: I said the word and I explained and / or I showed him the corresponding image to the word; I explained to the child that he must give the explanation that he considers necessary to understand if he knows what it relates to. To all children were offered the necessary explanations until they understood what was expected from them. Also, the children were asked to make a short sentence with each of the words.

After this stage the test itself was started. In this regard, I used formulas: *Look, we begin! (I will read clearly and expressively a list of words. After each word please tell me what you understand by that word. If you do not understand please tell me and I'll explain you by examples.)*. Every answer was noted, and finally the answers were analyzed. A wrong answer or no reply was noted with 0, with 1 point was noted each good response, and with 2 points was noted a complete response. Among the words read, we give a few examples: *to leave, slide, always, jewellery, pause, mop, angry*.

## **5. Results**

For the quotation of the measured data, we used the following scoring grid: complete response – 2 points, good response – 1 point, wrong answer or no reply – 0 points, total score - 40 points.

#### *The test result according to the age variable*

Regarding the age variable the conclusions of the research were: children aged 3 and 4 years have obtained 25-30 points, those between 4 and 5 years have obtained 30-35 points, while children aged between 5 and 6 years –35-40 points. Given the results presented, the vocabulary volume features varies according to age so that the children from the big group have a vocabulary better developed towards the preschoolers from smaller groups, and those in the middle group to the ones from the small group. We can conclude that the vocabulary volume at preschoolers increases gradually with their age. It has been found however, that the preschoolers from the big group who were present more to the story activities performed within the group are better than those who had less attendance.

We admit that these results may be influenced by other variables and that the evolution of the vocabulary volume depends not only of the age variable that we analysed (narrated stories of the pre-schoolers). But we appreciate that the related stories have an important impact on the development of cognitive and emotional language of the pre-schoolers, for the following reasons: they use in their utterances words / phrases from the stories; in the role play the pre-schoolers are using the exclamations found in stories, they recognize words / expressions as belonging to the related stories.

#### *The test results depending on gender variable*

From the point of view of the gender/sex variable, the score obtained by the preschoolers from the three groups was: the girls have achieved 35-40 points, while the boys received only 30-35. The results show that girls are more attentive than boys at this age, but also that they are consistent in terms of frequency of kindergarten.

We also acknowledge that the influence of the uncontrollable variables in this research, as a storytelling content (it is renowned the boys attraction for the fantastic stories, the character of the heroes). In the preschool period the storytelling has a very strong influence, in particular the modern stories (new characters, the modernity assumed of the story as time and space, actions adapted scientific and technological reality) compared to classic stories. Pedagogical studies have shown in the recent years the low interest of the children about reading, but we observed the maintaining or increasing interest in *modern* movies or stories. Also, the same studies reveal the receptivity most visible face of these boys versus girls.

#### *The test results depending on the period of attending kindergarten variable*

The period of attending kindergarten is the third variable, results showing that the subjects who attend kindergarten for only 6 months have the lowest rated 20-30 points, while the subjects that are enrolled in kindergarten for more than 9 months scored a ranging from 30-40 points. It is obvious the contribution of the attendance at the educational activities, in which the story occupies an important place in the development of the preschoolers vocabulary. The results are further confirmed by the theory of the primary socialization of the children, supporting the role of group activities in developing relations communication, implicit in the action of enriching the vocabulary.

Children enrolled in any of the three groups - small, medium or big - that are attending kindergarten since the beginning of the school year scored higher than those who came to kindergarten during the school year or in the second semester, from where we deduce that they have a richer vocabulary volume. The learning situations created in the kindergarten, optimally structured logically,

psychological and pedagogical, which causes more complex learning experiences, superior to those outside the kindergarten are assisting the children in the formation of a richer vocabulary.

**Table 1.** The scores depending on the variables– age, gender and frequency of kindergarten

Age	Results	Gender	Results	Frequency of kindergarten	Results
3-4	20-25	Male	30-35	Only 6 months	25-30
4-5	30-35			More than 9 months	
5-6	35-40	Famale	35-40		30-40

## 6. Conclusions

The research results confirmed the hypothesis that linguistic baggage that constitute the vocabulary of preschool children varies by age, sex and period of kindergarten attendance and thus the participation or not in storytelling activities conducted frequently at the kindergarten. The collected and processed data during the course of this research validates the hypothesis from which we started coming to the conclusion that it is observed indeed a higher vocabulary volume at the females preschoolers, and that growing older and attending educational activities from an early age, more the language baggage which constitutes the vocabulary is developed. It should be emphasized, therefore, the role of kindergarten especially through the activities of the experiential domain language and communication for supporting the children in their attempt to form a rich vocabulary to be able to express themselves freely, expressive, consistent and grammatically and semantically correct.

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