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**THE INSTRUCTIVE-EDUCATIVE ROLE OF STORIES AND  
SHORT STORIES IN THE PRESCHOOL TUITION**

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*Abstract*

Stories and short stories have been over the time the most loved creations. Having a strong emotional impression over the children and by their positive messages, stories and short stories have a special educational impact. Listening to stories, children develop communication, imagination, creativity and, last but not least, the need for knowledge. The stories used in kindergarten are forms of organized activity, with an important part in the development of the educational process. Thus, the story is and will be the most enjoyable language activity destined to children. Through the stories they hear, they can find useful information about animals, their way of life, their appearance and habits, and how people lived. The stories and short stories represent special categories for the pre-school children. The setting and plot, as well as the characters seem much more real. The identification of the pre-school children with the characters and actions presented in a story has to be made by a text having an accesible language and simple and easy to follow. The subject must be an exciting one and the characters should match the age of the children. The pre-school children are the greatest critics of children's literature. They have the critical spirit and the capacity to observe the elements of the story as well as the determination of independent expression. These texts require attention, thinking, memory, imagination and sensitivity.

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## **1. Introduction**

Pre-school age is the period characterized by a remarkable potential in which children acquire the skills to express their ideas, impressions, feelings, thoughts, desires in a more correct, clearer, more cursive and creative way, along with the intense development of thinking.

"During the preschool period it appears, in different proportions, both forms of curiosity, the perceptive one and the epistemic one, being important issues for education" (Rafailă, 2002, p. 177).

Childhood is the period that is shrouded in the fabulous world through fairy tales and stories that open up their appetite for books and stimulate them to develop their imagination, spontaneity, mimics, thinking and creativity.

Children are captured by the action of stories, characters and live every moment. By listening to stories, they develop communication, imagination, creativity and, last but not least, the need for knowledge. Thus, the story is and will always be the best tool in developing the children's language.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The narrative activity has informative and formative valences. Children assimilate various information, but at the same time, through fairy tales, stories and tales, they meet the need for knowledge and affection, stimulate imagination and provide the optimal framework for the exercise of communication.

## **3. Research Questions**

The short story is the most used modality with pre-school children, due to the fact that its content is more affectionate and accessible. Many times the contents of the stories reproduce the children's own experience and this is why there are many variations, sometimes surprising.

In the open story or without suggested beginning, the child may choose an insignificant, uninteresting aspect, but he can also widen the end, this being a feature of creativity.

The purpose of this study is to present an analysis regarding the role of stories and short stories in the developing of the communicative skills in preschool children.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The pre-school period may be described as a sensitive time and the story and short story have to be adapted to the children's personalities. The story and short story, as cognitive tools, have to succeed to lead the child towards an efficient communication.

Is it possible that using stories and short stories during the activities in the kindergarten to strengthen the communication abilities of the children?

## **5. Research Methods**

I will use the analysis of the narrative text as a means of research (for stories and short stories) from the perspective of the formative – informative perspective in order to develop the communicative ability in preschool stage.

## 6. Findings

"The short story is a teaching method that can be used successfully in pre-school and it consists in the vivid and suggestive oral presentation as narrative and description, through which there are depicted far away adventures, natural phenomena and many more things that children cannot find in any other way" (Ionescu, 2000, p. 62).

The usage of this method provides a lot of intuitive images that can lead to a series of generalisations. The facts have to be relevant for the plot and to contain a lot of significations and the language has to impress the children in order to develop their imagination and creativity, "developing their abilities of verbal and nonverbal communication as well as motility skills" (Mitu, & Antonovici, 2005, p. 7).

The stories used in the kindergarten period are forms of organized activities, which have an important and formative part during the process of educational- teaching tasks.

The short story is the most frequent method used for small children, because of its colorful, affectionate and accesible role. Many times, the content of the short stories evokes the children's own experience, this allowing the retelling of a motif(theme) every time having a new and surprising tone.

In the free or open beginning story, the child may approach an insignificant, dull aspect, may lengthen the story, may reach an irrelevant end , but the children's creative abilities have an important role.

For keeping the children's interest vivid when they listen to the stories, one must have in mind the text and its meaning, as well as its reproduction.

"As a method and means of teaching and educating, the teacher's stories are presented as activities of oral displays, having a realist-scientific or fantastic character" (stories, fairy tales, legends, ballads, short stories).

Listening to stories or fairy tales the children not only observe the verbal structures used by teachers, but also memorize the beginning and the final collocations that repeat themselves in fairy tales"(Gherghina, 2007, p.54).

Children love stories, are part of the action, love the characters and live each moment separately. Listening to stories they devdelop their imagination, creativity, communicative skills and their need for knowledge. Thus, the short story is and will always be the most pleasant activity of language education for children.

The short stories have an ethical, but also a formative values, guiding the children to form a moral conscience. The children reveal different characteristics, they choose models, meet embodiments of good and evil.The themes of literary works exposed in the retelling activity are different from an age group to another. When working with small children, teachers have to teach short, accessible, attractive stories which develop positive states and feeling. In the middle group there can be used stories that may familiarize children with different aspects of life, these being able to influence their behaviour. In the pre school group, the stories become more complex, they have as a purpose the recognizing of the real and surreal plan, the stimulation of children's creativity and practising the communication skills.

Through listening and retelling the stories, the children have the opportunity to acknowledge specific sentences and collocations, enriching their vocabulary. The aesthetic value of the short stories is

most important because it reflects and expresses the people's inner beauty, because they show to small children a perfect atmosphere to aim to.

In the stories they heard, they could find useful information about animals, their way of life, their appearance and habits, and how people lived. In the Ugly Duckling by H. Ch. Andersen, preschoolers learned about the swan out of the egg that looked like an ugly duckling until it grew and turned into a beautiful swan.

Another story, that of the Bear fooled by the Fox, shows us how the bear lives: he lives in its den, hibernates all winter, and when the spring comes, the bear wakes up and leaves the lair.

When interpreting the roles of the characters or talking about the story, as already mentioned, pre-school children will develop their language in classroom communication, express their personal opinions and preferences about the characters.

In the Red Riding Hood story, pre-school children can express their preferences for their favorite characters; their moral values are divided into two categories: positive moral values and negative moral values. The positive ones are represented by the Red Riding Hood, which is diligent, modest, friendly; the hunter is brave, wise and eager to offer help to the ones in need. The wolf, a representative of the negative characters, is characterized by cunning and lying. Preschoolers will be able to distinguish between these characters by facts, to judge, to bring arguments.

Words and expressions will be enriched in acquiring pre-school knowledge and "learning and practising of the language is focused on a task that implies using an adequate terminology" (Dumitrana, 1999, p. 8).

These literary creations educate children, train the ability to verbalize, develop language and creativity, and help them socialize easier within the group.

Written text for children presents characters with a unique status and identifies animals endowed with intelligence and speech, people with supernatural powers, even animals, toys which come to life, characters acting in various ways to find solutions in problematic situations. Regardless of the character of the characters presented in the literary texts, they manage to put their place in the memory of preschoolers to increase their feelings.

For a preschool child to identify with the characters and actions presented in a story, the language must be simple and easy to follow. The subject must be an exciting one and the characters should match the age of the children. It is noted that the characters are the ones which are retained the most, not the literary texts, the actions being centered on the characters.

The general classification of the characters is done according to the good and evil criteria with positive traits: modesty (the bunny in "The shoes of the hound"), wisdom (the bear in "The shoes of the hound"), diligence (the daughter of the old man in "The daughter of the old man and the daughter of the old lady") and the negative features of the character: laziness (the big piglets in "The three little piglets"), the disobedience ("The goat with three kids"). Characters are not always clearly good or evil and leave the reader's freedom of assessment, "they distinguish themselves through courage and love for their peers" (Bîrlea, 1981, p 175).

The most exciting topic in children's literature has always been the world of animals. Their presence is quite common in literary works such as: The bear fooled by the fox, The goat with three kids,

The three little piglets, The ugly duckling, The story of the wise hedgehog, The lion and the puppy, Devoted friend, The brown bear story, The bag with two coins, etc...

Animals act like people, dress, eat, talk, ride, drive, and other actions. The humanization of these beings leads to a better approach and identification with the characters, the children being attracted to animals in everyday life, the authors seek to make them feel attracted to reading and identify themselves with the characters.

In the world of fairy tales, most characters are invested with supernatural powers. Wisdom, gentleness, diligence, obedience, patience and humility are some of the moral values that the characters of the good possess and develop in their actions. While lying, pretending, stubbornness and greed are moral values which are related to the negative characters.

Story characters show bravery, courage and wisdom. The decision to help the elderly, to protect the weak, to provide support and save lives is a model of moral values. Such characters represent the ethical models, though lacking the experience of life, face the challenges during the initiation.

The meaning of the names of the heroes in fairy tales is given by the condition of their life, for example Cinderella, orphan and living with their mother and sisters, she had to do the housework, her dress had traces of ashes (in Romanian "cenusa" means ashes).

The Red Riding Hood was much loved by those around her, especially her grandmother, who gave her a red scarf she always wore. Harap-Alb (The white Lad) the Emperor's son, went through several challenges. The Bald Man is a negative character, it is the meaning of Evil who is dressed with an appearance of Good. White Snow represents beauty and kindness.

Regardless of the social status of these positive characters in stories, the struggle between good and evil completed with the victory of good manages to impose ethical values in the mind of the child.

The fairy tale is valuable for the artistic education of children, but also for the developing of language. The children observe the ideas, but also the poetic expressions which they acquire, in order to enrich their vocabulary with popular expressions, learning better the native language, enjoying its richness, its poetic imageries and its sayings, all of which lead to the developing of children's personality.

"Reading the fairy tales, children always meet new collocations and expressions and when they know them, they are thrilled. They memorize the words that start or close the story, as well as the ones that repeat themselves, in this way the specific collocations become part of their vocabulary." (Munteanu, & Vistian, 1973, p. 32).

The stories influence indirectly the children's behaviour, help them enlarge their horizon through their usage of different realistic aspects. "When the pupil reads a book (story) he might ignore the descriptions, looking for the facts" (Șchiopu, 1963, p. 324).

During the listening of the story the child's psychic activity is involved. He listens carefully the data of the story, keeps in mind details and compares them and also establishes the characters' peculiarities. In this way it is also involved the child's thoughtfulness, thus being able to understand the characters' facts, thoughts and feelings.

The retelling activity that the teacher does is organized after a methodologic pattern, that require the following of certain stages. It is compulsory that, during this activity, the teacher should use expressivity that has an emotional character.

Thus, there are used some dramatic artistic techniques: the voice (has to be adapted to the content of the story), the rhythm of speech (leads to emotions and expressivity), pauses and accents (express the message and underlines the imagey elements) and last, but not least, gestures and pantomime (enlarge the expressivity of story and the affective perception). There can be used as forms of big attraction: silhouettes, filmstrips, cartoons, layouts and even puppets. The children's stories know a lot of forms: retelling, the story after the teacher's model, stories with a given beginning, stories after a plan, images or theme.

The retelling has as a fundamental aspect the consolidation of the story (stories and fairy tales). The main purpose of the retold stories represents the abilities of exposing accurately and logically stories or fairy tales and practising the language under all aspects: phonetically, lexically and grammatically. The success of the retold story is embodied by the way in which the children acquired the teacher's story.

The child is an excellent story teller who loves retelling the facts, not just asking, but also being able to participate in a discussion as a clever partner. Thus, the language becomes the main skill that the child acquires.

It is known that, in some stage of their ontogenetic development, there are some special features that express special and general peculiarities. All of these give the text a definite importance regarding verbalisation.

The children's possibilities of retelling are different from an age group to another. Stories and retold stories represent a good reason through which the small children practice their vocabulary in games, didactic games, creative games and puppets shows and dramas. Their effectiveness depends on the precision of the vocabulary used in special context. When preparing the games, an important part is represented by development and precisising of the vocabulary.

The preparing of the games can not be interrupted by the content of the stories, without one could not improve the vocabulary under all its aspects. In the development of each game I have always started from the most known contents which may be reflected in it in a real way.

The characters in children's literature representing ethical models can be included in conversations within the Domain of Language Education. Preschoolers can independently express their opinions through their own vocabulary within a group. In addition to the characteristics of the grammatical vocabulary, the choice of the words used, the careful follow-up of the dialogues in the group and the updating of the knowledge gained previously.

Children, together with the teacher, can initiate a discussion about the story presented about the action, but also about the characters who have acted positively or negatively, for example: "Was Harap-Alb (The White Lad) worth the help from Holy Sunday?", "was it right for the Bald Man to deceive the son of the Emperor?" Preschoolers agree or disagree and are encouraged to present arguments, thus forming behavioral norms within the group as: initiative, cooperation and politeness.

Additionally, attitudes are formed by reference to the subjects of fairy tales and characters that will then be classified by preschoolers as favorite, pleasant and less pleasant characters. The criteria for the classification sometimes take into account the physical appearance of the characters but also their actions too. Some of the children will prefer to choose the character they liked in view of their actions, whether positive or negative, showing kindness, bravery, courage, pity or even a lie. Of course, we can say that the opinions will be divided as the personalities of children are so different.

## 7. Conclusion

Using the story as an activity of language (activities of personal development) as an educational means, but also as a method, helps the children feel important and motivated to take part in such activities with pleasure and interest and his communicative skill develops even more.

Using the stories and short stories in the classroom activities, one can notice a proper behaviour of children, being implied more in the development of activities, managing the feelings, even their concentration grows.

Thus, in pre-school, teachers have the duty to stimulate communication between children, to take into account their spontaneous need for communication and to intervene to correct the style, to clarify the ideas formulated by children.

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