#74 PAPER 101 -
THE ROLE OF THERAPEUTICALLY-AIMED GAMES AND STORIES, BASED ON THE “TOTAL COMMUNICATION“ CONCEPT, IN SOCIO-EMOTIONAL ADAPTATION OF PRESCHOOL CHILD SUFFERING FROM SPEECH DEFICIENCY/ DISORDER.

Ionescu Claudiu-Eduard
University of Pitesti, Faculty of Educational Sciences, No. 1; Targu din Vale Street, Pitesti 110040, România

Abstract
The socio-emotional abilities developed in children while in kindergarten become the foundation of school learning. School success is very much influenced by each child’s emotional and social development level. To stimulate the verbal, nonverbal and paraverbal communication abilities during the educational activities is both a major target and an important condition for what we could call the best “maturity/growth level” for beginning school education, which is characterized by a good socio-emotional adaptation of the child.

Keywords: socio-emotional adaptation, total communication, preschool.

1. INTRODUCTION

The specialists in interpersonal communication are concerned with the approach of some aspects that might adversely affect the process of passing the information from one person to another and are looking for solutions to cancel what causes them or diminish their influence. It often happens that a child, who usually has an open behavior, while in a great emotional circumstance, to block themselves or communicate with difficulty (to forget their poem lines at a school festivity, cry, not to be able to master their gestures, breathe rapidly, stutter). The presence of some development deficiencies in a small child may lead to speech disorders that can sometimes have a violent start/debut and even persist during primary school (Verza E, Verza E.F., 2011). Speech disorders may occur not only amid normal intellect but also in mentally disturbed children and those with sensory impairments, to whom they are usually more severe and more frequent.

2. THEORETICAL SUPPORT

Communication difficulties, especially language disorders, have a negative impact, in a disruptive manner, on self-image and psychosocial behavior of the child, leading to inferiority complexes, frustration and isolation.

To remove these unwanted effects of this language disorders in preschool children, we consider useful using a systematic pedagogical intervention model based on boosting total communication at pre-school and small children with speech disorders. This assumes the following requirements:

• creating a favorable total communication learning environment that meets the interests of preschool and small children with speech disorders and reaffirms their curiosity,
• presentation of cases and situations similar to the problems faced by children with speech disorders and ways to overcome them by using clinical and development bibliotherapy (which involves using a set of stories and educational games, for therapeutic purpose) and involving children in finding new solutions, stimulating their imagination and creativity;
• adaptation of verbal means, pantomime expressions, teachers’ gesture, acting and prosodic means, on children's mental and chronological age;
• fostering positive attitudes towards life and activity, to themselves and to the people around them.

The development of socio-emotional skills in preschool, foundation for school success

* Corresponding author. E-mail address: psiho_eduardionescu@yahoo.com, edii0807@yahoo.com
Socioemotional skills that develop in children in preschool years become the foundation of school learning, school success being influenced by the emotional and social development level of each child, as expressed through: self-confidence, curiosity, interest and perseverance in work, self-control, the ability to restrain impulses and inappropriate reactions, the ability to anticipate the behavior educators and peers expect from them, be patient in activity, ability to follow the educator’s instructions, asking for support from the teacher when necessary, the ability to communicate, to express ideas freely when in the company of educator, colleagues, family, friends, ability to cooperate, to empathize, to relate to others.

3. EXPERIMENTAL SEQUENCE

The experimental group – it was made up of pre-school children aged between 6-7 years old (average age 6.5 years), coming from public preschools, a homogeneous group in terms of age and level of preschools training. These ones suffer from language disorders and come from both urban (10 children - five boys + five girls) and rural areas (10 children - five boys + five girls). The „population” the preschoolers were selected from and who participated in the experiment was represented by children in preparatory groups, trained and educated in public kindergartens with extended hours from Arges and Valcea. In the observational sequence of the research the level socio-emotional adaptability of children in the experimental group has undergone assessment. In this sense, it was applied “The rating scale of social and emotional adaptability of the child” (after Dănescu E., 2009), which contains 10 items, which aim at: the child’s sociability, the child’s participation in group activities, respect for the norms and rules of the group work (this is an early indicator of self-control), empathy, receptivity to the emotions of others, child expresses the will, desires, needs, independence, asserting their own self initiative in activities, curiosity, harmony with themselves, self-confidence.

Before the formative experiment itself, the dimensions of socio-emotional adaptability in preschoolers with speech disorders included in the experimental group, had a medium to low level of development, as follows:

- at item sociability (item 1), more than half of the children had low levels of sociability (70%), no child has been assessed as having a high level of sociability or very high;
- at item participation (item 2), almost half of children (40%) were assessed as having it developed at a very low level, no child having a high level of participation in group activities;
- at item compliance (item 3), most children were evaluated as having it developed at a very low level (40%) and low (40%), no child of the evaluated ones having a high level of development or a very high one;
- at item empathy (item 4), most of the children have this dimension developed at a very low level (60%) or low (40%), no child of the evaluated having a high level of development or very high;
- at item will affirmation (item 5), a high percentage of rural children show a low level of development of this item(60%), but most of preschoolers from urban areas show very low levels of it (40%), while only 20% of them sometimes presents striking voluntional manifestations, no child of the assessed ones having high or very high level of development;
- at item assertiveness (item 6), most of the subjects present trends of very rare manifestation of inner self (60%) and rare - 40%, no child of the evaluated ones having a high or very high level of development;
- at initiative item (item 7), over 60% of subjects show a very low level, while no participant in the test has been assessed as having a high level thereof;
- at the item of curiosity (item 8), 40% of children have a very low level of this scale, 40% low and only 10% of those in urban areas sometimes presents this feature, no child of the evaluated ones having a high or very high level of development;
- item good mood (item 9) - this feature is present sometimes in 20% of children in urban areas, while 60% of girls in the rural areas this size has a low level, no child of the evaluated ones having a high or very high level of development;
- at the item of confidence (item 10), approximately 60% of the children were evaluated with a very low level, while 40% of them showed a low development level, no child of the evaluated ones having a high or very high level of development.

In the formative sequence of the research it was applied the "Systematic pedagogical and psychological approach model based on boosting total communication at pre-schoolers and small pupils with speech disorders" (Ionescu C.-E, 2013). The stories and fairy tales for children, by their contents, are full of lessons, highlight the positive qualities of heroes (either personified animals or people), thus influencing the children’s growing personality, behavioral manifestations, their behaviors and attitudes in different situations, as well as their language.
4. THE CONTENTS OF INTERVENTION MODEL

According to the environment they were conducted in, the activities were of two main categories: stories and educational games.

There were presented the following stories in the experimental model: "The Story of a Drop of Rain" and "The Shy Prince" (Drugas I., Birle D. - coord, 2008).

The games presented in the experimental model were the following: a game for boosting the nonverbal communication, group cohesion, social relation development awareness of strengths and weaknesses: "The troublesome string" (Drugăș I., L. Hârdălău, Oradea, 2011), a game for identifying the types of assertive, aggressive, passive and fostering assertiveness in communication: "The Talkative Wheel " (Drugăş I., Oradea, 2010), a game for behavioral modeling game "The Magic Arrangement" (Drugăş I., Oradea, 2010), a game for identifying the emotional states game: "The Balloons Of Anger" (Drugăş I., L. Hârdălău, Oradea, 2011), a game for networking, self-esteem, increasing motivation to participate in dialogues: "My boyfriend shot" (Hârdălău L. Drugăş I., Oradea, 2010).

5. MEASURES

At the end of attending the program it was conducted the evaluative sequence (post-test), subjecting the group of preschoolers with speech disorders to the same samples test which was applied in ascertaining sequence (test), covering the same variables.

The results we obtained, after they were processed using the same statistical methods, were compared to those obtained before the start of the intervention program in the observant sequence.

A comparison of the two sets of results showed the following:

- a 10% reduction in preschoolers’ frequency of speech disorders initially identified and a significant improvement in fluency of speech, both the spontaneous and of the caused one - by associating it with appropriate elements of nonverbal communication;
- the compensation of speech disorders by activating and using the total communication model in educational activities with preschoolers, has positive influence on relational behavior, openness, sociability, emotional balance, self-confidence, initiative and their participation in specific activities conducted in kindergarten and primary school.

Using in the same time the organized and systematic means of nonverbal communication which having precise designative value and verbal communication, the psycho-pedagogy program developed and applied by us in the natural context of the educational process in kindergarten and primary school, led to a significant improvement in all the variables (dimensions) that were taken as a target in research and were tested in observational sequence.

Data analysis can show that participation in the proposed program led to significant improvements of social and emotional adaptability.

While in the pre-test stage, the children presented a medium to low level of development, in stages that followed the application of the experimental model, the results show that the level of this capacity has increased in most cases. Thus:

- more than half of the children presented a medium to high 70% level where sociability is concerned, only one boy living in a rural area having a very low level of this item;
- for participation item, almost half of the children were evaluated as having developed this size from an average (45%) to high (40%), none of the subjects having a very low level of participation in group activities;
- for compliance, most children were evaluated as having it developed to a very high level (40%) and a high one (40%), only one child of the assessed maintaining a low development level, but none really low;
- for empathy, most of the children assessed have this item developed to an average (45%) or high (40%) level, no child having a very low level of development;
- for will affirmation of a high percentage of rural children show a low level of development of this item (30%), but most of preschoolers from urban areas, have an average level of it (40%), one child of those evaluated having a very low level of development;
- for assertiveness, most of the subjects (40%) sometimes presents trends for expressing their inner self, 20% of them rarely shows these trends, and 5% of them were at a very low level of development;
- for initiative, over 40% of respondents have a high, very high 20% level, while no participant tested was evaluated as having a very low level thereof;
• for curiosity, over 40% of respondents have a high, very high 20% level, while no participant tested was evaluated as having a very low level thereof;
• for good mood - sometimes this feature is present in 60% of urban boys, while 40% for girls in the rural areas this item is at an average level, while for 20% it is high; no child of those evaluated were on a very low level of development;
• for self-confidence about 80% of the children were evaluated at a high level, while 20% of them showed a low development level, none of the evaluated child having a very low level of development.

6. PROCESSING AND INTERPRETATION OF STATISTICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESULTS OBTAINED IN OBSERVATIONAL SEQUENCE (PRE-PROGRAM) AND THE EVALUATIVE (POST-PROGRAM) ONE

Evaluating the results of previous tests, we can say that the presence of speech disorders in preschool and young schoolchildren may adversely affect their integration into collective and specific educational activities. To provide these data a scientific objective relevance, we proceeded to their statistical processing, creating the proposed intervention program based on the comparisons between the steps "test" and "post-test" of correction/improvement stage and also on checking the assumptions we made and the effectiveness of the program. The "T" test for paired samples shows that there are significant differences in terms of socio-emotional development between pretest and post-test stage. Thus, the post-test socio-emotional competence is higher than the pretest stage. This result shows that the intervention program was effective. Regarding gender differences, "t" test for independent samples showed there are no statistically significant differences between boys and girls in terms of socio-emotional development pretest phase. "T" test for independent samples show that neither in the pre-test stage there are no significant difference between boys and girls, demonstrating that the experimental intervention was equally effective for both categories of subjects, boys and girls. Analysis of variance showed no differences in socio-emotional development and adaptability according to preferential status in the pre-test stage. Yet in the post-test stage there appear statistically significant differences in terms of socio-emotional development and adaptability, according to the preferential state. In the case of adaptability and its dimensions, the results are similar. The "T" test for paired samples shows that there are statistically significant differences between the stages of adaptability for all sizes/items of the pre-test and post-test. This shows that adaptability level increases to all participants, being significantly higher in the post-test stage. The statistical significance of the mean difference in pretest and post-test stages regarding socio-emotional development revealed that we cannot get gender differences statistically significant in the case of adaptability, in any stage of the experiment (pre-test and post-test). One size highlights gender differences, namely child responsiveness to the emotions of others, the post-test: t (38) = 2.85, p <.001, the difference is in favor of boys. In other words, after the experimental intervention, boys improve their empathic abilities significantly unlike girls. Differences between the results obtained in the evaluative and ascertaining stages (post-test), the samples taken were statistically verified by calculating the "t" test for correlated arithmetic mean.

Except in two dimensions (variables), namely "affirmation of" and "assertiveness" those differences, proved highly significant thresholds between p <0.01 and p <0.05 ("p" - less higher or at least equal to 0.01 and "p" higher or at least equal to 0.05). This allows us to say that improvements in most of the products covered in the research dimensions of a like character and they were explained the formative value of psycho-pedagogical intervention program that I proposed. Differences between the results ,for the samples taken ,obtained in the observational and evaluative stage (post-test), were statistically verified by calculating the "t" test for correlated arithmetic mean. Except for two dimensions (variables), namely "will affirmation "and "assertiveness" the differences proved highly significant having levels between p <0.1 and p <0.05 ("p" - higher or at least equal to 0.01 and "p" higher or at least equal to 0.05). This allows us to say that improvements in most of the dimensions covered by the research have an authentic character and they were due to the formative quality of the program we have proposed.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Language disorders provided to be for preschoolers a disruptive factor, with negative effects on entire personality, worsening the relationships with others and group integration (kindergarten and school) and also educational activities. Educational activity carried out in the kindergarten is more effective and has a much higher formative value, since it is based on the principle of total communication, combining in a consistent manner, using verbal (linguistic) and paraverbal (paralinguistic) and nonverbal components which accompany,
the so-called "psycho-pedagogical intervention program" based on therapeutical stories and games. So, starting in kindergarten and continuing then in primary school and even elementary school, the use of such programs adjusted to the chronological age of the beneficiaries, would greatly enhance the formative value of the educational process, favoring a good socio-emotional adjustment of the child with language disorders and prevent largely the phenomena of inadequacy and school dropout. On the other hand, compared to preschoolers with speech disorders, educational communication cannot achieve the full potential of its informative-formative targets, unless the teachers manage to combine properly, depending on the situation (learning, game or cultural, arts or sports), verbal communication, nonverbal communication and paraverbal communication.

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