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“YOU CAN CHOOSE...
OR WE WOULD GO TO ‘TURKEYS’ OR TO HOUSES”
– VERBAL INTERACTIONS OF FIVE-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN
DURING STORY CREATION

The paper presents the results of an analysis of interactions which appeared during group storytelling. One of two methods was used for the storytelling: the Storyline method or the Associations Pyramid method. Seventy five-year-old children took part in the study. The results show that children are able to use different strategies to create a story together, the language and communication competence of the children is already well developed, and the children are ready for effective cooperation.

Key words: verbal interaction, storytelling, Storyline method, Associations Pyramid method, children’s cooperation

Cognition, knowledge acquisition and problem solving are processes which run best during group, not individual activities. To cite the views of psychologists and sociologists: constructing knowledge is a social process – children develop, learn, experience using everything around them (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Bruner, 1978; Vygotsky, 1986).

Knowledge and language come into existence and develop in relations between people, during joint activity (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This process is called “knowledge construction” (e.g. Rogoff, 1990). Describing the process, the following can be emphasized:

- a) Knowledge is always created as a result of activity and is focused around a concrete problem,
- b) Knowledge creation and problem solving is done between people, during joint activity, and everyone can add something of their own to this activity,

c) Knowledge creation and finding solutions is dialogical. A new way of understanding a problem or a new solution emerges as a result of dialogue.

The notion of “knowledge construction” means that knowledge changes, develops and helps to understand new information better (Rogoff, 1990; see also: Rzechowska, 2004). The process can take place in different situations, i.e. during cooperation or support. Both of them were used in the study described in this paper.

The first situation – cooperation – is a relation based on symmetry, which means there are no well-defined roles and every participant of interaction can hold different functions depending on needs. It is assumed that every group member taking part in an activity can have different knowledge and experience, and that is why they can complement the other members to create a joint solution. People who cooperate with one another seek such a solution, for which all of them are comparably responsible (Rzechowska, 2004).

The process of cooperation is positive also because people:

- a) motivate one another to be active,
- b) help and support one another,
- c) exchange information, and are capable of knowing, understanding and accepting different points of view and different perspectives,
- d) develop social and interpersonal abilities, learn how to solve conflicts in a group,
- e) learn to carefully refine ideas, and with time they can notice the relationship between the time dedicated to working on a task and the quality of the solution obtained.

Studies on interactions between children and adults and between children of different ages in situations of story creation have been conducted in the past (e.g. Bokus, 1991; Forman & Cazden, 1988; Piaget, 2006; Shugar & Bokus, 1988). In most cases they concerned dyad interactions or situations in which two or more children tell something to a third child. The authors analyzed different aspects of children’s utterances, i.e. ways in which children create arguments (Bokus & Garstka, 2009). In psychological empirical papers, three kinds of learning through peer cooperation have been distinguished and described in detail: peer tutoring (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976), learning through cooperation and peer cooperation (Damon & Phelps, 1989). Peer tutoring can take place when a child who has greater knowledge teaches another child who has poorer knowledge on a given topic. Learning through cooperation is a process in which children divided into teams work on different aspects of the same task to reach a joint aim at the end – solving a problem. Finally, peer cooperation is a process in which pairs of children with the same level of knowledge work together to solve a problem. In some studies (e.g. Holmes-Lonergan, 2003) attention was focused not only on verbal but also on non-verbal aspects of children’s interactions. Some analyses controlled the lineup of groups (girls, boys, mixed groups) as well as the types of

task given to the children. In other studies emphasis was placed mainly on the social aspect of children's interactions, paying attention to ways of negotiating the final solution and ways of managing conflicts which can appear between children during group work (Jones, 2002).

Method

The study presented below aimed to analyze verbal interactions among five-year-old children. The subject of the study is similar to those presented above. The difference is that in the present study children were observed in bigger groups than mentioned earlier, i.e. groups of five. The task for the five-year-olds was to tell one story together. The number of children in the groups influenced the length of the stories as well as affecting the frequency and extension of interactions between the children. The stories were created with the Storyline method (SL, first group) or with the Associations Pyramid method (AS, second group). The qualitative analyses of the interactions which are presented in this paper do not differentiate between stories created using the first or second method. It was noticed that the same verbal interactions appeared in both groups, and with the same frequency. The method used did, however, influence the final form of the stories. This issue is not the subject of the present paper, however. The information about the methods is given here mostly to enable readers to understand that the stories were created using two different methods.

The Storyline method was created by Scottish educators Fred Rendell, Steve Bell and Sally Harkness from Strathclyde University in Glasgow. Storyline is a method which involves children. The method is based on developing and creating a story. Children are the main creators and participants of the story. However, at the same time a teacher's involvement is very important. The teacher presents the children with the next short threads of the story, and the children's task is to develop them, and to solve problems which are hidden in the story. The children can use drama, art and discussion as well as exploring the surroundings, writing and creative thinking. On the basis of the children's ideas and solutions the teacher presents the next fragment of the story to the children. Because the story is created by the children first and foremost, it motivates them to work. The participants are involved emotionally and intellectually in the learning process.

The Associations Pyramid method developed by Janusz Kujawski is a heuristic method based on producing associations and linking notions with one another (the notions are arranged in a pyramid shape). A good point of the method is that it links many pieces of information into one, coherent piece of information (Kujawski, 2000). The method has many applications. First of all, it is used for solving problems. Jacek Gralewski (2004) also mentions its educational application in, for example, analyzing masterpieces, creating texts (poems, stories, fairy tales) and movie scripts, learning foreign words, and much more.

The analyses presented here form only a small part of the study on the methods in question and the ways in which children use them during group classes. The study was experimental in nature (there was a cycle of four classes in two groups), but it was not a classic experiment. There was no pre- or post-test, children were only observed during classes. After the classes, the children's stories were analyzed.

The quantitative analyses are not presented in this text. The main aim of this paper is to present examples of the children's interactions and describe them briefly.

The types of interactions occurring during story creation were distinguished on the basis of two sources.

The first source was the literature of the subject, especially developmental psycholinguistics. The results of the studies mentioned earlier included descriptions of behavioral patterns similar to those distinguished below. That is why they were also expected to appear in this case. The second source was direct observation of children's behaviors. The study was exploratory. There were no hypotheses connected to verbal interactions between children. The main aim was to check whether such interactions appear and what they are like. Based on the two sources, a few main types of interactions were distinguished as being potentially possible:

- offering argumentation to support an opinion,
- developing a story by using the contributions of peers and an adult,
- negotiating the final form of a story,
- linking familiar stories and using them in a new context.

The research questions were as follows: How do interactions develop during story creation? Does group story creation have a positive influence on the final form of stories?

These questions have practical significance. First of all, by answering them we can find out whether five-year-old children are able to interact with one another to create something together – whether they can give up their own ideas to use the ideas of others, whether they know how to match their ideas to those that already exist. When a child can logically present its own ideas, and they are appropriate on account of semantics, pragmatics and syntax, it means that the child has language competence (Schaffer, 2006). However, it is only when a child can communicate with other people properly – present its ideas, defend its own opinion, match its utterance to someone else's statement, give up its own ideas because others are better – that it can be said that the child has communication competence (Hymes, 1972). Only these two competences together – language and communication – constitute proper knowledge about language. Secondly, conclusions about story complexity and elaboration can be drawn from analyses of stories made up individually and in groups. This in turn leads to the question of whether it might not be worth giving up some individual tasks in educational

practice and proposing more group tasks instead, in order to work with children more effectively.

Procedure

The classes took place in a few preschools in Warsaw, from October to December 2010. Each group took part in four classes with the Storyline or the Associations Pyramid method. The classes were held during morning hours in groups of five children twice a week. The storytelling took place in a separate class for better concentration. The classes were recorded to analyze their course and the children's statements after the classes had finished. The length of each class was not limited, but in most cases the classes lasted for 15-20 minutes, depending on the children's preferences.

The classes with the Storyline method were prepared in accordance with the plan proposed by the method's authors. At the beginning the children chose a setting for the story. Then, each child chose a character and played the role of this character until the end of the classes. The adult started the story and the children thought about how to develop the story. In the Storyline method the leader should ask "key questions" which should help children to develop the story. In this case such questions were also formulated. They were mostly simple, short, basic questions that did not suggest anything to the children, being a kind of inspiration for the next part of the story. They were questions like: "What happened there?", "What did those characters look like?", "Where did the children go?", "What did the children do there?", "How did the story end?" Such questions helped the children – without them the stories would have been much less complex.

The classes with the Associations Pyramid method were also prepared according to the guidelines of the method's author. At the beginning the teacher proposed one word, and the children could come up with an unlimited number of associations to this word. Then, each child could choose one word. This set up the base of the pyramid, which consisted of five words. These words were combined into pairs (the first word with the second, the second with the third and so on). The associations formed in this way were again combined so that in the end there was only one word at the apex of the pyramid. This word was the basic topic for the story. The transition between producing associations and starting the story was difficult for the children, which is why the leader helped them a little bit at this point. The teacher started the story alone, and after that the children developed it. The method assumes that the stories should be based mostly on the associations, which is why the questions were limited to just one: "What happened next?" During subsequent classes the children produced associations much better. They also used more associations from the pyramid in their stories – in further classes they started to see the link between producing associations and preparing the story.

It was important that the classes prepared using the two methods had a similar topic. In the case of the Storyline method the topic was presented at the beginning. In the case of the Associations Pyramid the children produced associations for the same topic (e.g. forest, park etc.). Despite the fact that the topic was the same, the stories sounded different. This was mostly because the children had different ideas for their stories.

Symmetric cooperation was used in this study. This means that:

- the children were on the same or a similar level of knowledge and abilities,
- the children worked together to reach one goal,
- there were only short periods of domination of one member of the group, and the contributions of all the members were comparable,
- the children shared the same situation, the same problem,
- the exchange of information was often simultaneous, and the children used abbreviated speech.

Text analysis

The analysis used to assess the children's interactions is not a classical method of discourse analysis (cf. Rapley, 2008), among other things because the presented study is not a typical qualitative study. The examples of statements illustrating the interactions between children are only fragments of a whole. Each story was created in a specific context and it is difficult to show all the relations occurring between the children on the basis of short fragments. However, it is possible to outline whether interactions can be observed and, if so, what kind.

The units of analysis are of different length. The kind of interaction was determined on the basis of sentence exchange between the children when they focused on one problem, character or event. When one child changed the topic or added something to the thread and thus directed the children's attention to something else, this moment was treated as the beginning of a new interaction. When assigning the interactions to categories based on the guidelines of Rapley (2008), also those statements which appeared just before an interaction and just after an interaction were considered wherever possible. Such an approach helps to show how a statement was understood in the group. Five to six exchanges between children were analyzed in most cases.

The categories which were distinguished are not separate from one another. This means that a single interaction can be assigned to several categories. However, when presenting the examples of interactions, the decision was made to assign them to one category.

Participants

The subjects were five-year-old children. Two preschool groups took part in the classes for each of the two methods (four groups altogether). In total, 70 children participated, 35 children each in the Storyline and Associations Pyramid

groups. Not all the children were present during every class. The classes were held in autumn/winter, when children are often sick.

The children created stories in five-person groups. The number of groups translates into the number of stories created during the classes. Each group created one story in each class. Thus, during all the classes the children created a total of 53 stories. The classes with the Storyline method yielded 27 stories and the Associations Pyramid classes resulted in 26 stories.

The groups were not controlled on account of the number of girls and boys. Some studies (Smogorzewska, 2009) have shown that there is no statistically significant difference in storytelling ability. However, other studies cited above (Holmes-Lonergan, 2003) have shown that girls and boys cooperate with one another differently. However, it was assumed that it is not necessary to have identical groups on account of gender.

It is important to note that the groups in which the children told stories had a different lineup each time. It was assumed that in this way the children would be less likely to get used to one another and to ideas that could be repeated, and maybe it would make them create more original stories. It was also assumed that a variable lineup can help prevent undesirable, negative processes which can develop when the same group works together too often.

Results

The empirical material was analyzed for the purpose of answering the research questions: How do interactions develop during story creation? Does group story creation have a positive influence on the final form of stories? It has been stated that interactions occurred during the classes and during group storytelling. However, they could be observed with different frequency – some of them appeared very frequently, even many times during one meeting, others appeared occasionally, or were of a different form than in the initial assumptions. It was also observed that, apart from the listed kinds of interactions, it is possible to distinguish other forms of information exchange. All the kinds of interactions are described below, and some examples are presented as well.

Offering argumentation to support an opinion

This kind of interaction was defined after Marek Tokarz (2006) as a group of activities taken up to justify one's opinion. Giving argumentation for one's opinion in the context of creating a story in a peer group is understood here as the ability to provide good justification of an idea, explaining why the story's action should go one way and not another, why the child thinks this event happened, why this idea is better than the idea of another child (cf. Bokus & Garstka, 2009).

It was assumed that the children would rather frequently try to justify their opinions to convince their peers that their opinions were important and should

be a part of the joint story. The plan was to use patterns of argumentation distinguished in an earlier paper on the role of argumentation in children's utterances (Bokus & Garstka, 2009) to analyze the argumentation in this study. However, it turned out that in the presented study the children very rarely offered argumentation. Even if arguments appeared, they had the least developed form of simple arguments which supplement one's own utterance or are a direct answer to the previous utterance of another child. Such expressions include the following:

G3. And the children took him home

B1. And used him as a ball for table tennis

Children: No, no...

G4. He would be lost then [SL_I_2.2]¹

B1. The children woke up and saw that there were no toys

G3. Yeah, because they went to other preschools

G2. Because there was a mess and they [the toys] were scattered [SL_II_3.2]

G2. A roe deer in this forest was very sad

G3. Because someone took her toy away

G2. And the fairytale forest disappeared

B1. It was only a dream [AS_I_4.2]

It was impossible to observe other forms of arguments, such as parallel argumentation, linked argumentation or complex argumentation in the material (Bokus & Garstka, 2009, pp. 40-41).

Developing a story by using the contributions of peers and an adult

When operationalizing this kind of interaction it was assumed that it is typical for situations in which stories are created in peer groups and when an adult is present. Children use adults' statements in their utterances. Co-constructing a text with an adult is an earlier form of creating a statement compared to individual text construction.

Previous results of studies have shown that peer cooperation during creating stories is significant, and a child treats its partner as an important source of information (cf. Bokus, 2009). The studies also proved that a child who is only a listener asks the children telling the story questions from time to time and in this way has a role in enriching the content of the story.

The statements assigned to this category expand upon a previous person's statements (i.e. adding new ideas coherent with an element created earlier) or

¹ Abbreviations: SL – Storyline method, AS – Associations Pyramid method, I, II – first or second preschool group [each method was used by two groups], 1.1-4.4. – number of the class and team that prepared the story, B – boy, G – girl + the child's number in the group.

show an attitude toward a previous statement (confirmation or negation of a statement).

The assumption that this category would be especially numerous represented among the groups was confirmed during the analysis. It can even be stated that the majority of the children's utterances were answers to the statements of peers or the adult, as in these examples:

A. What did this land look like?

G1. Maybe it was a maze... [SL_II_1.3]

B2. The magician accidentally showed his power, he caused an explosion...

B1. ... and a black hole appeared [SL_I_1.1]

This category can also have different forms – for example negotiations or repetition of a peer statement. This theme would be developed in a further part of the text. The described category not only appears often in the stories. Such statements are additionally coherent with one another and the sentences that follow are real answers to what an interlocutor said before. It can be noticed that children listen to the leader and one another and follow the story's threads. This means that in most cases the stories are complete episodes.

The analyzed stories also include interjections that are not coherent with the text. For the purpose of this analysis these were called "new threads." However, such statements are rather rare. They do not stimulate the children to change the story. In most cases they were related to a child's personal experiences.

Negotiating the final form of a story

Negotiation is defined here as a positive behavior, cooperation whose aim is to prepare a joint product. It is typical for this strategy to focus on interests and on the aim of the cooperation, but not on individual opinions. Ways of acting need to be found that are creative and help arrive at alternative solutions (for more about cooperation during the negotiation process, see B. Bokus and T. Garstka, 2009).

In accordance with information given in the literature (e.g. Tokarz, 2006), it was assumed that negotiation can take place when:

- children have unlimited possibilities of communicating in the group,
- there are situations in which the children have a chance to agree or disagree with one another,
- there are situations in which group members want to negotiate.

All of the listed elements were present during the classes. The children had unlimited time for communication (they could create stories for as long as they wanted), and almost unlimited space for interaction (the classroom was very big, so the children could sit as comfortably as they wanted). In a situation of group

story creation, much more often than in individual storytelling, differences in children's opinions become apparent. Group work also gives children a chance to support other children's ideas. The classes were not obligatory, so when a child did not want to take part in a class, that was its choice. All the children's reactions were spontaneous. The adult's role was only to observe the children's behavior and interactions.

For the purpose of the analysis it was planned to show some examples of negotiations as one item. However, it emerged during the analysis that the utterances had different forms and in most cases were based on text changes, and were not classic negotiations. It is worth presenting the observed forms separately because they offer a view of children's language creativity.

Confirming a peer's opinion

This type of utterance means that a child (children) confirms the rightness of someone's opinion, or additionally (apart from universal agreement) expresses a positive opinion about another's statement, and in this way enhances it. Here are examples:

B2. The children stayed there forever

G2. Yes, because they were happy there [SL_II_4.4]

B3. This letter wasn't nice at all and the children wanted to send it back to where it came from

B2. Yeah, you are right [AS_I_2.1]

B1. It was only a dream...

G1. Yes, the child only dreamed about it ... [AS_I_4.2]

Such statements appeared only a few times in the analyzed stories.

Rejecting a peer's opinion

Expressing one's own opinion by rejecting an interlocutor's statement was one of the most popular forms of interaction. It can be noticed that it was important for the children to place their idea in the story. However, in most cases the children strongly rejected other opinions but at the same time they could not justify why they were doing so and they were not able to present another solution instead. Maybe it means that children liked the act of rejecting. This was the children's main aim, not offering another idea. It is a little bit problematic to call such behaviors 'negotiation'. However, there were some exceptions where the children knew how to justify their opinion, and that is why this element was placed in the 'negotiation' category. Examples include:

- G4. And in the evening they went to the beach where the swimming pool was
 G1. No, rather they went to the sea, to travel by ship [SL_I_2.3]
 G4. And maybe they went to the city. And the children turned out to be
 'flying children'
 G3. I can't agree with that [SL_I_3.2]
- B5. The witch had a cat
 B2. No, she didn't!
 B3. Yes she did!!!

Disagreement with a peer's statement caused some changes in the text. This means that rejection/contradiction is of significant importance for the final effect of cooperation.

Supplementing a peer's statement

These interactions are defined as very short supplements of a peer's statement. The supplements are a kind of confirmation of a statement and they add a little detail to the utterance at the same time. This detail makes the previous statement more complex or better understood by a listener. Here are examples:

- G2. And we landed on a ship. There are balls, swimming pools, because the ship is cool
 B1. We play on this ship
 G2. We play there on a ball [SL_I_1.2]
- B1. They felt safe and they went home
 Children: They came back home safely and without any troubles [SL_II_4.2]
- G2. He went to prison
 B2. He was locked up there because of some forgeries [AS_I_1.1]

Developing a peer's statement

This point is slightly similar to the previous one. However, the changes in the texts listed here are more developed. The children gave more details in their ideas, at the same time using the previous idea. Examples are as follows:

- B1. The children were happy because of this adventure
 G1. And in the end it stopped raining and there was nice sunshine [AS_I_2.3]
- G1. Maybe she was talking to the children
 B1. Yes, and she told them a tornado was coming, so... the children went to the preschool very fast [AS_II_2.1]

- G3. It was a huge land in which there was a forest and some mushrooms
- G1. The mushrooms were glowing, and there was also a castle, and in this castle lived a king [SL_I_4.1]

Exchanging ideas without making any final decision

The statements classified in this group served only as an opportunity for exchanging ideas, they can be called a kind of “brainstorming,” but after this exchange the children often (though not always) did not choose the best/most suitable idea or answer. The children went to another thread of the story and did not care about what they had said a second ago. The final choice was not so important to them. Rather, they preferred to think about many options. This kind of play is important for developing divergent and creative thinking, but does not help in preparing one joint, original story. Sometimes more ideas meant more details in the story. Examples include:

- G2. Or maybe... that we travel by huge ship
- G4. Or maybe that we met many different animals
- G1. Or that we are in Africa
- G3. Or in Turkey [SL_I_1.2]

- G1. The wizard has flown...
- B1. ... On a picnic
- G2. ... On a trip
- B2. ... ‘On’ the mountains
- B3. ... To the seaside [AS_II_1.2]

- G3. It is a land of eating
- B1. Ice cream could be there
- B2. Mushrooms
- B3. Sandwiches
- G2. The place was full of apples and of everything
- G3. There were many oranges, many apples [AS_I_4.1]

Attempting to reconcile several different stands

This group can be classified as true negotiation. It appears rather rarely in comparison with the other interactions, but it seems to be one of the most important ones during group storytelling. Children who tried to reconcile different, sometimes very contradictory stands did this ingeniously. They were trying to reconcile both sides of a dispute. Such attempts can be observed in the following examples:

- G2. I would like to come back by plane
- B1. But swimming is cool!

- G3. Maybe it was a plane which had such parts for swimming, and the plane could swim and fly? [SL_I_1.2]
- G2. The forest was glowing
- G3. And the flowers were nice and yellow
- G4. I know!!! The whole forest was glowing and it was yellow! [SL_I_4.1]
- B2. It was a pine
- B4. Because it had a white trunk
- B1. They were oaks
- B3. I know! This was a tree which has different trees inside... [SL_I_4.3]

Linking familiar stories and using them in a new context

This category is not a kind of interaction, but a combination of several stories is the result of an interaction. That is why this category has been placed among interactions. An original story is not only a story which is created absolutely from the beginning (probably such a story does not exist – every story is based on something which was created earlier), but also a story that contains elements of familiar stories. Those elements are, however, combined in an interesting way, and that is why the story has good content and a suitable ending. It is important, though, to combine the elements properly – they should match one another. It is also important to find suitable stories (cf. Smogorzewska, 2008).

It was assumed to be possible that the children would create their stories on the basis of well-known stories, but such a situation did not occur. None of the analyzed stories was a modified version of an existing story. However, the titles of well-known stories and references to other stories could be found in the children's statements. It happened mostly when a child outlining an idea used the title of a story to make the idea more comprehensible to the listener. There were also some cases when a mostly original story included a fragment which was taken from another story. Examples of such a strategy are as follows:

- B1. He was strange, there was a book where there was an entrance, there were different stories and such a dark forest
- G4. They came into one story
- B1. I took it from "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" [SL_I_1.4]
- B2. There was Little Red Riding Hood and she was picking the toys
- B3. Instead of Little Red Riding Hood I would propose Hansel and Gretel
- B4. And this witch 'on' Hansel and Gretel kept them in a cave and she wanted him to be fat and she wanted to eat them [SL_I_4.3]

- G1. I know! The dwarfs were living there... such as Sneezzy or Sleepy. Grumpy does not speak and has a green jacket and purple hat
- G3. And Sneezzy sneezes all the time
- G4. And he was all blue
- G2. And had glasses
- B1. And looked like a Smurf [SL_I_4.1]

Apart from the strategies listed at the beginning, there were three other categories of children's statements. The first one, which relies on adding new threads to the story, was already described earlier. The other two categories are: using repetitions and making a final summary or drawing conclusions from a part of the story.

Repetitions were often used by children who did not have their own ideas, but who wanted very much to add an element to the story. Sometimes repetitions were used to emphasize a statement or to show that someone agreed with an opinion. Examples of such strategies can be observed in the following fragments:

- B1. I was successful
- B2. Me too
- G1. And me [SL_II_1.3]

- B1. They were red...
- B2. Red all over [SL_II_4.3]

- B3. And he went to prison
- G2. Went to prison [AS_I_1.1]

Summaries in most cases were in the form of a final conclusion drawn from the story and their role was to end the story. Most often, a summary was used at the right moment, when it was easy to see that the story was drawing to a close. Sometimes it was observed that children became tired of talking and then the ending was produced rapidly and was not coherent with the whole story. In a few cases children tried to formulate conclusions for one part of the story, as a method of summarizing the current content. The summary, similarly to linking of stories, is not an interaction, but is an effect of an interaction. Examples include the following:

- B1. The children ate all the food there
- B2. All, but they used plates
- G2. And after that they had a stomach-ache [AS_I_4.1]

- B1. And they felt warm, I hope
- G2. Because they went to another country
- G1. And the bird was finally happy [AS_II_1.4]

Discussion and conclusions

The analysis of children's cooperation during storytelling enables different types of verbal interactions to be distinguished. The existence of patterns was hypothesized, but some differences were observed in relation to the predictions. It was observed that children used argumentation rarely and not in a well-developed way. It was probably too difficult for them, they did not need it (because other children did not question their ideas), and sometimes there were unable to use it because after one statement there immediately came another. This did not facilitate the use of argumentation. Contrary to this category, the children competently and effectively used the statements of their predecessors – peers and the adult – to create a new fragment of the story. Sometimes they also added new threads, but these were rarely coherent with the whole story. It turned out that the most developed interaction was 'Negotiating the final form of a story'. Several operations made on the texts were distinguished in this category: confirming a peer's opinion, rejecting a peer's opinion, supplementing a peer's statement, developing a peer's statement, exchanging ideas without making any final decision, and attempting to reconcile several different stands. The last of these can be called 'true negotiation'; the others are rather examples of presenting one's own idea (rejecting a peer's idea and proposing one's own idea appeared the most often), or a form of enriching someone's idea. As initially assumed, the stories included elements taken from other, familiar stories. This happened most often when a child proposing an idea described it using other stories or threads. Sometimes children 'used' characters from other stories (like Snow White, dwarfs, Smurfs etc.). Additionally, there were three more categories of interactions which had not been hypothesized. The first one – adding new threads – has already been mentioned. The second was repetitions, but the children did not use these very often. Their function was probably to give special emphasis to a statement (especially when the repetition was not literally the same, but had the same meaning), or was the result of a child lacking its own ideas but wanting to say something. This shows that talking to others was important to the children. The preschoolers reacted very emotionally, for example, when they had to wait for their turn, to wait before they could say something, or when other children distracted them. The third kind of interaction not hypothesized in the study was summarizing the story or drawing a final conclusion from the story.

The distinguished interactions that appeared during storytelling show that children create stories with the help of different methods. In my opinion it shows how inventive and creative children are. Even though competent judges did not assess the stories as very original, they were inventive. It is worth mentioning that the children were very committed to the whole process of story creation. The enthusiastic attitude of the preschoolers shows that it is

important to propose different forms of classes to children. They are charming participants who are able to show real interest and appreciation thanks to cooperation with one another and with an adult. Such a positive attitude toward the classes could be enhanced by the main subject of the classes. The children stressed very often that the story was 'their story'; they had created it. The story was a kind of 'product' of a 'creative process' and it was important to the children to have as good a story as possible. From one perspective, in this study the story was treated as a text which focused the children's attention and enhanced their motivation. On the other hand, the analysis of the stories served as a method for studying the language and communication competence of preschoolers.

Comparing stories created in groups and individually, it was noticed that stories produced in groups were more original, had more details, were semantically more complex and coherent. The only element which was less developed in the stories prepared in groups was syntactic complexity. Telling a story by themselves, children use more complex sentences. Individual storytelling offers a chance to think more deeply about utterances. Creating stories in groups has a fast speed of interaction, and is a kind of competition, which is why children pay less attention to the style of their speech. It seems to be more important to present an idea, not elaborate it. All in all, a comparison of individual and group work confirmed the positive role of children's cooperation as more effective for solving problems.

It was also observed, similarly to other studies on this subject, that group work is not very problematic for five-year-olds. It proves that children at this age have language as well as communication competence. Five-year-olds can be treated as conversation participants who are able to transmit information properly (comprehensibly, in a manner adapted to the age of the interlocutor and to the situation). It was noticed that in spite of the fact that interactions were observed from the very first class, they improved with every next class. This means that such group classes are opportunities for children to assimilate new abilities – in this cases the ability to cooperate better with other people, to present one's own opinion and to show respect for other people's ideas. Social competence, which is based on effective cooperation, is, in turn, one of eight key competences whose development is supported by the European Union. It is believed that social competence is the basis for the self-realization, personal development and social integration of every human being.

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