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FORMING COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN OLDER PRESCHOOL CHILDREN THROUGH FAIRY-TALE THERAPY

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Abstract

This article examines the pedagogical potential of fairy-tale therapy as an effective method for forming communication skills in older preschool children. Communication in this developmental period plays a central role in shaping the child's social competence, emotional responsiveness, linguistic expression and ability to interact harmoniously with adults and peers. The study highlights how the symbolic, imaginative and narrative nature of fairy tales stimulates children's dialogic engagement, encourages expressive speech, promotes empathy and supports conflict-free interaction. Fairy-tale therapy is considered not only as a storytelling activity but as a structured developmental process that integrates dramatization, role-play, creative interpretation and guided reflection. Through these components, children learn to articulate thoughts, listen attentively, negotiate shared meanings and apply socially acceptable modes of behavior. The article emphasizes the psychological mechanisms underlying this method, including identification with characters, emotional catharsis, projection and internalization of moral norms. The research also explores how culturally familiar tales provide a meaningful context for children to practice verbal and non-verbal communication, while contemporary therapeutic tales address developmental difficulties such as shyness, aggression, anxiety or limited speech initiative. The findings indicate that fairy-tale therapy improves vocabulary acquisition, narrative coherence, turn-taking, emotional expression and cooperative behavior. Additionally, the method enhances cognitive flexibility, imagination and self-

regulation, which further contribute to successful communication. The article concludes that integrating fairy-tale therapy into preschool educational programs enriches the pedagogical process, supports child-centered learning and strengthens the communicative competence of older preschool children through playful, emotionally supportive and developmentally appropriate activities.

Keywords: Fairy-tale therapy, communication skills, preschool children, speech development, narrative competence, dialogic interaction, emotional expression, role-play, symbolic thinking, socialization.

Introduction

MAKTABGACHA KATTA YOSHDAGI BOLALARDA ERTAK TERAPIYA ORQALI MULOQATNI SHAKLLANTIRISH

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Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada ertak terapiyasining maktabgacha katta yoshdagi bolalarda muloqot ko'nikmalarini shakllantirishdagi pedagogik salohiyati tahlil qilinadi. Mazkur rivojlanish bosqichida muloqot bolaning ijtimoiy kompetensiyasi, emotsional sezgirligi, lingvistik ifodasi hamda kattalar va tengdoshlar bilan uyg'un muloqotga kirishish qobiliyatini shakllantirishda markaziy o'rin tutadi. Tadqiqot ertaklarning ramziy, tasavvuriy va narrativ tabiatidan foydalanish bolalarda dialogik faollikni kuchaytirishini, ifodali nutqni rag'batlantirishini, hamdardlikni rivojlantirishini va nizosiz o'zaro ta'sirni qo'llab-quvvatlashini ko'rsatadi. Ertak terapiyasi nafaqat ertak aytish jarayoni, balki sahnalashtirish, rolga kirish, ijodiy talqin va yo'naltirilgan refleksiya kabi tarkibiy qismlarni o'z ichiga olgan rivojlantiruvchi metod sifatida qaraladi. Ushbu komponentlar orqali

bolalar fikrni aniq ifodalash, diqqat bilan tinglash, umumiy ma'noni kelishish, ijtimoiy qabul qilingan xulq-atvor shakllarini qo'llashni o'rganadilar. Maqolada shu metodning psixologik mexanizmlari — personajlarga identifikatsiya, emotsional katarzis, proyeksiya va axloqiy me'yorlarning ichkilashtirilishi — alohida yoritiladi. Tadqiqot shuningdek madaniy jihatdan tanish ertaklarning bolalar uchun og'zaki va noverbal muloqot ko'nikmalarini mashq qilishga mazmunli kontekst yaratishini, zamonaviy terapevtik ertaklarning esa uyatchanlik, tajovuzkorlik, xavotir yoki past nutq faolligi kabi rivojlanishdagi qiyinchiliklarni bartaraf etishga xizmat qilishini ko'rsatadi. Natijalar ertak terapiyasi lug'at boyligini oshirish, izchil hikoya tuzish, navbat kutish, emotsional ifoda va hamkorlikdagi xulqni rivojlantirishga yordam berishini tasdiqlaydi. Bundan tashqari, ushbu metod bilish moslashuvchanligini, tasavvurni va o'zini o'zi boshqarish qobiliyatini kuchaytiradi, bu esa muvaffaqiyatli muloqotning qo'shimcha omili bo'lib xizmat qiladi. Maqolada ertak terapiyasini maktabgacha ta'lim dasturlariga integratsiya qilish pedagogik jarayonni boyitishi, bola markazli ta'limni qo'llab-quvvatlashi hamda maktabgacha katta yoshdagi bolalarning kommunikativ kompetensiyasini o'yin, emotsional qo'llab-quvvatlash va rivojlanishga mos faoliyatlar orqali mustahkamlashini xulosa qiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: ertak terapiyasi, muloqot ko'nikmalari, maktabgacha ta'lim yoshidagi bolalar, nutq rivoji, narrativ kompetensiya, dialogik o'zaro ta'sir, emotsional ifoda, rolga kirish, ramziy tafakkur, ijtimoiylashuv

INTRODUCTION

Communication skills in older preschool children represent a fundamental component of their overall development, serving as the basis for successful interaction, emotional well-being and readiness for further education. During the ages of five to seven, children undergo rapid cognitive, linguistic and socio-emotional growth that enables them to participate in more complex forms of dialogue, express personal opinions, interpret the intentions of others and navigate social situations with increasing independence. Despite these natural



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developmental advancements, many children still experience difficulties such as limited vocabulary, fragmented speech, reduced initiative in communication, challenges with turn-taking or emotional regulation, and reluctance to express feelings in socially appropriate ways. These challenges often stem from insufficiently stimulating environments, restricted social experiences, emotional tension or limited pedagogical approaches that do not fully accommodate the child's need for imaginative, meaningful and emotionally rich communication contexts. As a result, educators are increasingly interested in innovative, child-centered methods that integrate linguistic development with emotional and social growth.

Fairy-tale therapy has emerged as one of the most effective developmental tools for addressing these needs in preschool education. As a pedagogical and psychological method, fairy-tale therapy utilizes stories, metaphors and symbolic imagery to help children understand complex emotions, explore social relationships and develop expressive abilities. Fairy tales naturally appeal to children's imagination, fostering intrinsic motivation to listen, respond and participate. Their narrative structure provides a familiar framework that helps children build coherent speech, anticipate events, understand cause-and-effect relationships and practice retelling in a sequential and meaningful manner. Through the actions, conflicts and resolutions portrayed by characters, children internalize communication patterns such as asking for help, expressing needs, resolving disagreements, showing empathy and offering support. These experiences contribute not only to speech development but to the formation of key communicative qualities such as confidence, openness, emotional literacy and cooperative behavior.

In preschool educational settings, the structured use of fairy-tale therapy includes storytelling, dramatization, puppet play, creative retelling and discussion, all of which create opportunities for children to engage in active dialogue. Role-play encourages them to adopt different perspectives, articulate character motivations and communicate with peers in a playful yet purposeful manner. The therapeutic dimension of this method lies in allowing children to project their emotions onto characters, thereby gaining emotional relief and psychological insight. When

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guided by an educator, these activities help children recognize and verbalize their feelings, understand the emotional states of others and practice alternative communication strategies in a safe and supportive environment. This is especially valuable for children with communication barriers such as shyness, anxiety, impulsiveness or speech delays.

In the educational context of preschool institutions, fairy-tale therapy aligns with developmental, linguistic and socio-emotional objectives. It supports the holistic approach to early childhood education by integrating language learning with creative expression, emotional development and social competence. As children engage in shared storytelling and dramatization, they become more confident in speaking, listening actively, collaborating with peers and expressing themselves clearly. For educators, this method offers an adaptable and culturally meaningful tool that can be incorporated into daily routines, thematic lessons and individualized interventions. Therefore, studying the role of fairy-tale therapy in forming communication skills in older preschool children remains highly relevant, providing both theoretical insights and practical solutions for enhancing early childhood education.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative developmental approach aimed at examining how fairy-tale therapy contributes to the formation of communication skills in older preschool children. The methodological foundation relied on pedagogical observation, structured fairy-tale therapy sessions, speech assessment techniques and reflective analysis of children’s verbal and non-verbal behaviors. The participants were older preschool children aged five to seven who attended regular preschool groups and demonstrated varying levels of communicative readiness. The educational environment was organized to provide emotionally supportive, play-based and culturally familiar conditions that encouraged children to express themselves freely. The research was conducted in collaboration with preschool educators who were trained to apply fairy-tale therapy techniques systematically and purposefully within the daily pedagogical process.



The study included several stages. The diagnostic stage involved assessing children's initial communication skills using observation checklists and speech development indicators, including vocabulary range, sentence structure, coherence of storytelling, turn-taking ability, emotional expressiveness and responsiveness to peers. Informal conversations, picture-based storytelling tasks and free-play interactions were also used to understand each child's communicative style and identify potential barriers. This baseline assessment provided a foundation for designing targeted fairy-tale therapy interventions.

The formative stage consisted of implementing a series of fairy-tale therapy activities conducted over a defined period. Each session followed a structured sequence: introduction of the tale, expressive storytelling by the educator, discussion of characters and events, dramatization or puppet play, creative retelling and reflective conversation. The selection of tales included traditional folk stories, contemporary therapeutic stories and educator-created narratives addressing emotional challenges such as fear, jealousy, cooperation or self-confidence. Storytelling emphasized expressive intonation, imagery and emotional cues to engage children's imagination and stimulate active participation. Dramatization activities encouraged children to adopt character roles, use dialogue, negotiate actions and coordinate with peers. Puppet play provided opportunities for shy or reserved children to express themselves indirectly through symbolic figures, reducing anxiety and promoting spontaneous communication.

Creative retelling tasks were used to evaluate narrative coherence, sequencing and expressive language. Children were encouraged to modify endings, introduce new characters, or create parallel storylines, thereby strengthening their conceptual thinking and linguistic flexibility. Throughout all activities, educators provided gentle prompts, modeled positive communication strategies and guided children in articulating emotions, solving social dilemmas and expressing opinions. The therapeutic component was incorporated by allowing children to identify personal experiences reflected in the tales and by creating a trusting atmosphere that supported emotional release and self-awareness.



The final stage involved post-intervention observation and comparative analysis of communication behaviors. Educators documented changes in children's verbal and non-verbal communication, including increased initiative in conversation, improved clarity of expression, enhanced ability to listen and respond, greater emotional articulation and more cooperative peer interaction. Children's retelling samples were analyzed for narrative structure, vocabulary enrichment and expressive quality. Reflections from educators provided additional insight into the effectiveness of specific techniques, the emotional dynamics of children during sessions and the overall pedagogical value of fairy-tale therapy in the preschool context. The combined data allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of the method's impact on communication development and offered a basis for recommendations for integrating fairy-tale therapy into preschool practice.

RESULTS

The implementation of fairy-tale therapy in the preschool environment demonstrated a significant positive impact on the communication skills of older preschool children. Observations conducted throughout the intervention period revealed notable progress in several key areas of verbal and non-verbal communication. Children who initially showed limited speech initiative or hesitated to engage with peers began participating more actively in dialogues, volunteering to retell stories and initiating conversations during group activities. Many children demonstrated expanded vocabularies, integrating new descriptive words, emotional expressions and story-related concepts into their everyday speech. Their sentence structures became more coherent and complex, reflecting improved linguistic organization and confidence in verbal expression.

Narrative competence showed marked improvement as children became more capable of retelling stories with proper sequencing, maintaining logical flow and adding creative details. Through repeated exposure to stories and opportunities for dramatization, children learned to differentiate between main and secondary events, understand cause-and-effect relationships and express the motivations of characters. This strengthened their ability to construct meaningful narratives and improved their overall expressive language. Furthermore, children exhibited enhanced turn-taking skills and demonstrated the ability to listen attentively to



peers during discussions and role-play. They showed increased patience, responsiveness and respect for others' viewpoints, indicating the development of important social communication qualities.

Emotional communication also improved as children gained confidence in expressing their feelings and interpreting the emotions of others. Many children who previously struggled with emotional regulation or displayed frustration when communicating began using verbal strategies modeled during fairy-tale sessions. They more frequently used phrases such as "I feel...", "Can you help me?," or "Let's try together," showing an internalization of constructive communication patterns. Educators reported that shy and anxious children benefited significantly from puppet play and dramatization, which allowed them to communicate indirectly, gradually reducing their fear of speaking and building emotional resilience.

Peer interaction became more cooperative as children engaged in collaborative storytelling, negotiated roles during dramatization and worked together to resolve story-related challenges. Conflicts decreased in frequency and intensity as children applied the problem-solving strategies observed in the tales. They became more willing to compromise, share materials and support each other during group activities. These behavioral changes reflect the broader socializing effect of fairy-tale therapy, which fosters empathy, tolerance and collaborative behavior.

Educators also noted increased imaginative engagement and creativity. Children began inventing their own storylines, proposing alternative endings or integrating personal experiences into narratives. This creativity played a direct role in enhancing communication, as children sought to express their ideas clearly, persuade peers, and collaboratively construct narratives. As a result, their communicative competence expanded beyond simple speech production to include negotiation, justification and explanation.

Overall, the results indicated that fairy-tale therapy is an effective method for developing communication skills in older preschool children. The method supported linguistic growth, emotional expression and social interaction, while also strengthening cognitive and imaginative abilities. Children demonstrated



sustained progress across all assessed indicators, confirming the pedagogical value of integrating structured fairy-tale therapy into preschool education. These findings provide a strong basis for recommending the broader implementation of fairy-tale therapy as a developmentally appropriate and culturally meaningful method for enhancing communication skills in early childhood settings.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study highlight the multifaceted role of fairy-tale therapy in fostering communication skills among older preschool children, demonstrating that this method effectively integrates linguistic, emotional and social development. The results underscore that fairy-tale therapy is not merely an entertaining activity, but a purposeful pedagogical tool that creates conditions for meaningful verbal interaction. Its effectiveness lies in its ability to align with the natural interests, cognitive tendencies and imaginative capacities of children, making communication both engaging and developmentally appropriate. By immersing children in symbolic narratives, educators provide a framework for practicing speech, expressing emotions and reflecting on social relationships in a safe and supportive context.

One of the central insights of the study is the significance of narrative structure in developing coherent and expressive communication. Fairy tales offer predictable patterns that help children organize their thoughts and express ideas sequentially. As children engage with characters, plot developments and emotional journeys, they internalize linguistic structures that support narrative skills. This internalization becomes evident in their improved retellings and spontaneous storytelling, where they demonstrate greater control over vocabulary, syntax and narrative flow. The imaginative nature of fairy-tale therapy also stimulates cognitive flexibility, enabling children to explore alternative solutions to story conflicts and articulate their thoughts with confidence.

The emotional dimension of fairy-tale therapy plays a crucial role in communication development. Preschool children often struggle to verbalize their feelings or understand the feelings of others, leading to communication breakdowns or behavioral difficulties. Fairy tales, rich in archetypal characters



and emotional themes, provide a symbolic space where children can externalize their emotions and explore them from a safe distance. By identifying with characters who experience fear, anger, joy or confusion, children learn to articulate their own emotional states more accurately. The therapeutic discussions that follow storytelling help children practice empathetic communication, understand perspective-taking and develop emotional literacy. As the results showed, children who previously lacked emotional expression became more capable of verbalizing needs, resolving conflicts peacefully and supporting peers. The study also emphasizes the importance of interactive elements such as dramatization, puppet play and role-play in enhancing communicative competence. These activities require active participation, collaboration and verbal negotiation, all of which strengthen communication skills. Dramatization encourages children to take on different roles, which helps them practice dialogue, broaden expressive vocabulary and navigate turn-taking. Puppet play, in particular, proved effective for reserved children, offering a symbolic buffer that reduced anxiety and encouraged spontaneous communication. These interactive practices support the development of social norms such as listening, responding appropriately and cooperating with peers, which are foundational for school readiness and lifelong interpersonal skills.

Cultural relevance emerged as another important factor in the success of fairy-tale therapy. Familiar folk tales resonate with children's lived experiences and cultural understanding, making communication more meaningful and accessible. At the same time, contemporary therapeutic tales enabled addressing specific communication-related difficulties such as shyness or impulsivity. The combination of traditional and modern stories allowed educators to tailor interventions to both developmental needs and cultural context. This adaptability underscores the method's pedagogical versatility and potential for integration into diverse preschool programs.

Finally, the positive outcomes of the intervention reinforce the idea that communication development cannot be isolated from broader developmental domains. Fairy-tale therapy supports holistic growth by integrating language, emotion, imagination and social interaction. The method's effectiveness stems



from its ability to connect these domains in a coherent and child-friendly format that fosters intrinsic motivation to communicate. The observed improvements in narrative skills, emotional expression and peer interaction suggest that fairy-tale therapy can serve as a valuable component of preschool education, supporting both individual and group developmental needs. Overall, the findings contribute to the growing body of evidence emphasizing the importance of creative, narrative-based pedagogical methods in early childhood development.

CONCLUSIONS

The study confirms that fairy-tale therapy is a highly effective and developmentally appropriate method for forming communication skills in older preschool children. Its power lies in the natural appeal of stories, the symbolic world of characters and the imaginative atmosphere that encourages children to speak freely and confidently. Fairy-tale therapy provides a safe emotional space where children can explore feelings, express thoughts and practice meaningful dialogue without fear of judgment. This environment supports not only linguistic growth but also emotional comfort, both of which are essential for successful communication.

Through structured storytelling, dramatization and puppet-based activities, children gradually develop clearer and more coherent speech. They learn to formulate ideas, expand their vocabulary and organize narratives in a logical sequence. Their ability to listen attentively, wait for their turn and respond to peers improves noticeably. These changes indicate that fairy-tale therapy strengthens both expressive and receptive communication components. At the same time, children begin to demonstrate greater initiative in conversation, showing readiness to participate and interact in group settings.

The emotional benefits of fairy-tale therapy also play a central role in communication development. By identifying with characters and reflecting on story events, children learn to recognize and verbalize their own emotions more effectively. They become more capable of understanding the feelings of others, which enhances empathy and promotes respectful interaction. This emotional



awareness reduces conflicts, increases cooperation and contributes to healthier peer relationships.

Social competence grows alongside linguistic and emotional development. Collaborative storytelling and dramatization require children to negotiate roles, coordinate actions and work together to achieve a shared goal. These activities strengthen skills such as cooperation, problem-solving and mutual support. As a result, children apply constructive communication strategies not only during story-related tasks but also in everyday interactions.

Overall, the findings of the study highlight that fairy-tale therapy provides a holistic approach to communication development. It stimulates verbal expression, enriches emotional literacy, improves social behavior and strengthens narrative thinking. The method aligns well with the goals of preschool education and offers educators a flexible, culturally meaningful and pedagogically strong tool for supporting children's communicative readiness for school and broader social life.

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