A Model for Getting Acquainted with Fiction to Enrich the Image of the World in the Preschool Age

Summary

Introduction

The progress of information and telecommunication technologies granting us the access to information and ensuring its broad scope also provides an opportunity for a child in its senior preschool age to access information of most various types. Often the child is left alone amidst the manifold and frequently conflicting pieces of information. More and more time is spent by the TV without any control over the data perceived from the screen. The information received from the TV strongly influences the child's notions of the surrounding world and its values orientation, thus the image of the world. Fiction being a type of art gives us an opportunity to gain such experience that a child is unable to get under the given circumstances in his everyday life; therefore the child's experience is deepened and the formation of the values orientation is encouraged as well as the enrichment of the image of the world is being influenced as early as in the preschool age.

Aim of the study

Elaboration of a theoretical pedagogical model for the formation of the image of the world throughout the process of perceiving and experiencing fiction in the senior preschool age.

Materials and methods

Theoretical analysis of literature.

Results

Theoretical analysis of literature points to essential conditions influencing the formation of the person's image of the world and determining the organisation of the process of getting acquainted with fiction also in the preschool age.

Conclusions

Enrichment of the image of the world becomes possible when the content of the fiction makes personal sense in the child's cognition which, in its turn, is encouraged by emotional experiences during the process of perception and the child's purposeful post-perception action.

Key words: *Image of the world, personal sense, emotional experience, action.*

Introduction

The image of the contemporary child's world as a special sum of meanings, attitudes, motives and knowledge on the surrounding world forms as noted by Abramenkova under the conditions of an "informative boom" (Абраменкова 2000, 311) – under a strong influence of mass media with the visual images from tele-, video- and computer screens dominating and a system of values that has been largely deformed by the vast variety of films, series and informative programmes originally not meant for children. The social pressure dominating over the society that has been largely created by re-evaluation of values putting the material values and the cult of things in the foreground as well as the relatively rapid layering of the society have unfavourably influenced the atmosphere in many families. Due to the parents' business the possibility and wish to spend thoughtful time with children encouraging the learning of ethical values and perfecting the moral behaviour in a patient, purposeful and tolerant way is being lost. Often the child is left alone amidst the manifold and frequently conflicting pieces of information. More and more time is spent by the TV without any control over the data perceived from the screen. The information received from the TV the child sees as the truth and it strongly influences the child's notions of the surrounding world.

Taking into consideration the mirroring function characteristic to the human cognition as a result of which a person creates one's own subjective reality as an entirety accessible to the mind helping the person to adapt, orientate and self-actualise in this world, the following question becomes topical: what is the above-mentioned subjective reality - the image of the world - like for a contemporary child? As regards this matter, Siliņš' conclusions on the information stream that due to its ceaseless flow and changeability overloads the sensory memory erasing the previous sensory recordings with the amount of information assimilated into the long-term memory dropping rapidly. However, the expertise, individuality, funds of creative thoughts are formed by the information recorded in the permanent memory comprising the thesaurus - every human being's repository of spiritual treasures (Siliņš 2002, 117-118).

One of the possibilities encouraging the learning of the universally recognised human values as well as attitudes and behaviour based on them is getting to know various types of art. Art historian Celma notes that art is a specific means for learning values and influencing one's values orientation created by the society. Art is a mechanism for "duplicating" the life as it gives us a possibility to gain such experience that is not accessible to the person on the given day and time, thus it deepens the person's experience - values experience (Celma 1988, 22). Fiction being one of the types of art "ushers" the child out of its daily activities already in the preschool age enriching its experience, helping to see the proceedings of the surrounding environment from a different perspective and allowing to pass a judgement on them. Referring to the above-mentioned "information boom" experienced by the contemporary child we find Čaklā's conclusions as significant ones: a child knows a lot, however, it does not understand and cannot find a place for the facts in its "model of the world" therefore chaos sets in his world outlook leading to discomfort. The author emphasises that in the hasty modern world the significance and responsibility of literature in tangling the tasks grows when the parents' role in dealing with the chaos is constantly weakening (Čaklā 1982, 38).

When preschool teachers were polled in order to find out their understanding on the significance of the fiction in upbringing the children, it turned out that 73% out of all respondents use fiction only for several limited reasons. Mostly the tasks related to speech development were mentioned, for instance, tasks for enlarging the vocabulary, improving sound pronunciation, narrating skills, reporting skills as well as enriching the knowledge on a particular subject. Thus, the teachers devote less attention to the possibilities the fiction offers in encouraging the development of the children's emotional world, ethical and aesthetical upbringing.

Aim of the study

To offer our interpretation to the concept "the image of the world" as grounded on the theoretical analysis of literature and to elaborate a theoretical pedagogical model for the formation of the image of the world throughout the process of perceiving and experiencing fiction in the senior preschool age.

Materials and methods

Analysis of philosophical, psychological, psycholinguistic and art-teaching literature.

Results

Formation of the image of the world in human cognition is connected to the reality mirroring function that it possesses manifesting itself as personality's inner (psychological) construction of the subjective world during the inteorisation process of the outer reality. A necessity to adapt to the world, to comprehend it and sort in a way that it becomes an entirety accessible to the mind which, in turn, provides for such human necessities as security, trust, belonging and the system of viewpoints as well as self-organising processes characteristic to the psyche turning the chaos of impressions created by the outer world into an orderly system of concepts and knowledge is mentioned as a significant base for the existence of the image of the world in human cognition.

In interpreting the concept of the “image of the world” we applied the concept analysis from *phenomenology, individual psychology* and *action theory*. After summarising the results of the analysis we conclude:

- The theories listed indicate the existence of a subjective reality created by the cognition of an individual influencing the person’s activities in life, lifestyle, attitudes, motives, feelings and aims. The subjective reality is known under different names: “the around world of the I subject” (Huserls 2002), “space and self of the experience” (Rodžerss 2005), “the fifth quasidimension”, “the system of meanings, the field of meaning”, “the image of the world” (Ľeontjevs 1983).
- During the process of the formation of the subjective reality the subjective emotional (experience), cognitive and necessity fields, I-image or the self, self-projection in future and the aims connected with it creating the inner experience of the person are accentuated. It influences the way the surrounding world is perceived and processes and forms the basis of the person’s behaviour and actions as it possesses an “energetic nature” (Huserls 2002; Mamardašvili 1994; Rodžerss 2002; Adlers 2002; Ľeontjevs 1983; Smirnovs 1981; Zinčenko).
- Subjective reality is formed also by the entirety of knowledge alias the person’s understanding of the causality of the proceedings of the reality, space and time, meanings of concepts, mastering of a sign system and symbols that forms on the basis of inteorisation of the perceptive perceptions (Huserls, Ľeontjevs, Zinčenko, Artemjeva 1999).
- The subjective reality of an individual as well as his/her self or the I-image are under a constant process of formation and they are also determined by social and ethnic culture in which the person develops (Huserls, Rodžerss, Ľeontjevs, etc.).

We call the subjective reality in question **“the image of the world”** and we interpret it as a subjective integral, continuously developing itemized **sensual image created by the person’s cognition, the totality of the system of meanings** (*concepts, symbols and the system of signs, entirety of knowledge on the world of nature, things and social interactions, features of objects, interpersonal relationships, causality, existence of time and space and so on*) and **personal meanings** (*synthesis of needs, emotional experiences, values, attitudes, motives and aims*) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Levels Forming the Structure of the Image of the World

The levels of the image of the world interact with one another, however, the central level in the image of the world is that of the personal meaning. It is a synthesis of the person's most significant needs, motives, values, emotional experiences and aims depicting his/her inclusion into the world, the deepest bonds between the person and the world creating the basis of the image of the world or, in other words, fundamental foundation for the existence of the person as a conscientious being. (Petuhovs 1984; Smirnovs 1981). The level of the personal meaning forms throughout the process of the interiorisation of the surrounding world accompanied by emotional experiences. It is exactly the emotional experience that encourages the understanding of the personal meaning concerning the perceptions of the surrounding world or, to put it differently, the process of the objective turning into the subjective.

German philosopher Schmidt is of the opinion that the meaning is *uncovering of the interconnections, comprehension*: separate things, people, cases and experience are not isolated – they show themselves in interconnections. The author suggests *sensual* meaning felt deep in the soul, spiritually thinkable and transcendental alias a *meaning going beyond one's life*. Sensual meaning is always a meaning of the moment; it is based on the situation and is thus limited yet fulfilling. In the modern world a person spends much time watching TV which results in losing of the sensual meaning, in its turn leading to the interconnection of the self to the world. The meaning felt deep in the soul can be attributed to the world of feelings realising itself in people's mutual relationships; it manifests itself in the attitudes towards oneself, the others, world whereas the spiritually thinkable meaning is connected to the intellect allowing to analyse and synthesise the interconnections of life. He indicates that the meaning is also founded by ethic and aesthetic interconnections (Schmidt 2008).

For the personal meaning to form, emotional experience is highly significant in the process of interiorisation therefore it is essential to analyse what encourages the origination of an emotional experience. Karpova notes that the most significant place in the formation of a personality advancing and stimulating its actions, activities and behaviour is taken by the subjective values orientation preoccupying itself with the clarification of the meaning of external and internal stimuli. In order to find out the meaning of the stimulus, the personality has to "measure" it with its own tools – the scale of personality's subjective values (Karpova 1994, 102). Božovica thinks that the system of emotional experiences and further development of the child's psyche depends on the character of the child's "inner position" (system of needs and dispositions) and its correlation with the child's outer state as well as real possibilities. The inner position, in its turn, is formed through a correlation of what place the child holds in the system of the people's relationships available to him/her and the demands s/he has to meet as well as those psychological peculiarities that has already been formed due to prior experiences (Božovica 1975, 116).

It is exactly the process of socialisation, its cultural demands, in which the child is growing and developing that is forming the personality, however, the personality forms only when the experiences become personally meaningful (Vigotskis, Ļeontjevs 1978). Personal meaning influences the child's action motives and aims. Lieģeniece emphasises that a person can change his/her hierarchy of personal meanings through the aim as a new motive of ideals in which the personal meaning is under the process of development and in the course of an action corresponding to the aim (Lieģeniece 1995, 18).

The above allows us to come to a conclusion that in the course of formation of the personal and thus the subjective meaning emotional experiences are an integral component depending on the child's values orientation, needs, experiences and information that brings something new to his experience – something that is topical for his needs. Only when the stimuli (information) have acquired a personal meaning, can they become motives for the personality's actions, activities and behaviour. And the origination of the awareness of the personal meaning sets the aim for the action and it is the process of the realisation of an action when the personal sense is grasped to a fuller sense. By attributing the above to the role of the fiction in the formation of the image of the world we can conclude the following:

- a literary work has to ignite an emotional experience therefore one must take into consideration the "inner position" of the child along with what the literary work can bring into it;
- after the perception of the literary work, it is important to process the perceived information and bring it into the child's action, realises it and acquires personal meaning over the events, phenomena and actions of the heroes that are topical for his experience;

- if the emotional experience is being encouraged in the process of perceiving the piece of fiction and the perceived is processed in further action of the child, fiction may influence the formation of the child's image of the world on all levels of its structure.

Based on the above it is possible to create a theoretical model on the possibilities how fiction can encourage the formation and enrichment of the image of the world (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

The Model for the Proceeding of the Development of the Image of the World During the Process of Perception and Emotional Experiences at the Preschool Age

Fiction also includes information on the motives of the actions going on in the surrounding world.

According to the conclusions of British philosopher and logician Russel on two types of cognition through which a person learns to know the world, fiction can be attributed to the *cognition according to a description* that includes knowledge of the existence of an object, phenomenon or a proceeding obtained by the person in an mediated way perceiving the notions from various sources of information. Cognition according to the description is significant as it allows the individual to go beyond the boundaries of his/her private life (Rasels 2008, 53). Agejevs suggests social information that is a qualitatively new type of information of the information existing in nature that has been transformed during the course of the socially practical action. It can also be seen as a type of aggregating and passing over of the experience (knowledge, feelings, thoughts), a means of spiritual interaction among people. Movement of social information takes place with the help of such means of communication as a *language, folklore, literature* and other types of art (Agejevs 2005, 83). Through getting to know fiction communication takes place with the help of a written word, thus, social information flows through the person's (including social) cognition with the help of verbal mechanisms. This conclusion leads to the concept of the view of the

language world" that is widely used in psycholinguistics. It is interpreted as a specific perception of a person's world's outlook that is fixated in a language being one of the deepest layers of the world outlook for a human being that have originated when the cognition reflects the objective world of a certain society (Serebrennikovs 1988; Maslova 2004; Korņilovs 2003) and as such it has its peculiar national characteristics revealing a certain type of world perception and organisation or a kind of conceptualisation – almost a type of collective philosophy for all the users of the language in question (Humbolts 1984; Kolšanskis 2006; Meļņikova 2004; etc.). With the help of verbal images and language models the supplemental seeing of the world is being done. Language models are by-products of the cognition, reality awareness supplementing the world of knowledge of the person and adjusting it.

Fiction as a form of information affects the child during the process of perception in the preschool age on the perceptive, semantic and values' levels. The level of perception or, in other words, itemized and sensitive experience is connected to senses, perception and brain as a biodynamic action of the cognition. German philosopher Schmidt believes that the grasping of the meaning begins exactly with the sensual experiences: with the help of senses a link between the self and the world is established becoming a tool in looking for a meaning. (Šmids 2008, 40-41). Based on the inteorisation of the sensual perceptions concepts and meanings - the future level of the image of the world - form. The level of the meanings described as an "outlook of the world" by several authors (Kolšanskis, Artemjeva, etc.) is made of an entirety of knowledge, a system of signs including a language that embodies social and historical experience and helps to orientate oneself in the processes of social and cultural life. The impact on the perceptive level manifests itself in the psycho-physiological aspect. In the preschool age a child is introduced to fiction as a listener therefore throughout the process of perception the perception of genre rhythm of the piece read and the expressiveness of the reader or the teller, his/her voice intonation and pacing as well as the overall mood of perception (the child's body posture, visual material to be perceived – illustrations, lighting, etc.) plays a significant role. All the above contribute to physiological and biological rhythms in the human organism also influencing the child's psychological level by either encouraging psychic activity or a relaxation of the organism. It was as early as Nieche that the rhythm of poems was discovered; a rhythm incorporating an encouragement or a stimulation for a physical movement that the soul aspires to follow. Vygotsky, in his turn, accentuated the necessity for a psychophysical catharsis that trains and frees the power of muscles and brain, solves and processes some high-level complex leanings and necessities of a human body, frees from inner tensions thus proving the biological origination of the art. Vygotsky refers to the principle established by Sherrington: struggle for the movement field that is explained in the following way: thanks to the fact that the field made by nervous receptors is many times larger than the field made by the executing neurons, the body perceives many more impulses and affections than it can actually express. It creates an inner tension, and the art serves as a means for discharging it: a means necessary for discharging the nervous energy (Vigotskis 2003).

In our opinion, the impact of fiction on the image of the world can be connected to the perception of objects and sensual proceedings of the outer world (visual, audial, tactile, palatal, movement) and its mediation, "illumination" with the artistic word. We believe that by combining the sensual perception with that of the artistic word – the semantic level – it is possible to arouse an emotional experience in a child which, in turn, will encourage the development of the personal meaning in relation to the stimuli perceived as well as their linguistic description encouraging the development of certain attitudes (ethic and aesthetic, etc.). We especially accentuate the perception of the beautiful found in the outer world, and the language of the fiction helps the child to feel and grasp it. Schopenhauer highlights the *aesthetic joy* over the beauty that gives people a possibility to free themselves from the worries, to become free from their own selves. The author accentuates the freedom of the spirit from a mind always indulged in solving problems (Šopenhauers 2001, 138). A parallel idea can be found in Gadamer's conclusion on a play in the experience of art. He invites us to consider art as a game with a medial significance, and the essence of every game is always redemption, pure fulfilment, *energy* (Gadamers 1999, 103-109). Through listening to linguistic descriptions of the observations of nature and surroundings – art of word – and thus by bringing new information in the process of perception that has not been there in the prior experience and then including the new perceptions into the child's activities that can take various forms

of expression (drawing, forming, drama, discussion, etc.) the enrichment of the image of the world takes place.

To discuss the literary work during the process of interiorisation, Anajeva's conclusion has to be noted: in the course of art perception process interiorisation mechanism do not always depend on the personality. The outer circumstances can influence the process of perception and everything perceived in various ways including the artistic perception, development and activities (Ananjevs 2003, 452-464). We think this comes especially true when the perception process of fiction takes place in the preschool age organised by an adult. It makes us think about the impact of other circumstances either hindering or stimulating the birth of emotional experiences. Among them there are: narrator's or reader's personality, the process of reading itself as a ritual and the atmosphere created by the situation, the expressiveness of reading or telling, illustrations or toys that are used while the story is being read etc. (Freiberger 2000, 54-55).

The child's activities also play a significant role after the perception process of a piece of fiction as to the moral upbringing (influence on the level of moral values). Emotions that have originated during the process of perception when the existing system of values meets an act or behaviour of a hero from a book that is contradicting it may evaporate easily if it is not given a chance to become personified in an action; besides when in action they allow reaching another level of awareness. We can label them as pedagogical situations when a child is given an opportunity to express his feelings, assess his and his peers' stand points, to refine feelings on the grounds of emotions and from situational attitudes form habitual and initial self-regulatory attitudes that are incorporated in the level of the personal meaning of the image of the world. Pedagogical situations can include problem solving. Gudjons defines the concept of the problem as follows: "a problem is an undesirable initial position, a desirable position of the aim and barriers that exist between the two positions" (Gudjons 1998, 249). A problem situation that is offered by fiction leads us to understanding the problem in its entirety. It actualises the child's existing experience - the semantic level of the world's image and the personal meaning. Inner emotional activity and the unconscious motives for action triggered by it gradually grow into awareness. The child on his own or together with an adult set the aims and objectives of his activity, choose tools for implementing them and then implements them. The process of action itself and the results achieved turn the emotions aroused by the piece of fiction into formations of new meanings, activating the child's creative potential and implement a continuous development of the world image.

Conclusions

Fiction influences the process of formation of the world image as its content acquires a personal meaning in the child's awareness. It is encouraged by emotional experiences in the process of perception.

In order to arouse an emotional experience, one must take into account the development level, needs, experience as well as literary experience, values orientation and interest achieved by the child. Circumstances under which the literary work is being perceived also play a significant role as they can either enhance or hinder the origination of an emotional experience.

It is important to personify the inner emotional activity created by the experience in manifold activities carried out by the child on his own or together with an adult: conversations, dramatisations, drawings, creation of one's own version, etc. Correspondingly, a personal meaning of the plot of the piece of fiction is acquired, the existing image of the world is actualised and thus the enrichment of it is encouraged.

Fiction affects the perceiver with the help of the artistic language. It broadens the child's linguistic experience, encourages the language learning and the development of speech giving the child an opportunity to understand his own feelings and express them in speech.

In the process of getting acquainted with fiction in the preschool age an adult plays a significant role as s/he is choosing the piece to be read, organises the process of its perception and encourages the child to act after he has listened to the piece.

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Researcher Mg. paed. **Inese Freiberga**

Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy

Address: Imantas 7. linija 1, Riga, LV-1083, Latvia

Phone: (+371) 29169285

E-mail: inesef8@inbox.lv