

THE COMPLEXITY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THINKING, SOCIALIZATION AND LANGUAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG SCHOOLCHILDREN

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Abstract: Among the general trends regarding the structure and content of education under the new curricular vision—which emphasizes both the flexibility and adaptability of the teaching framework and methods, as well as the child’s openness and receptiveness to what is new and aligned with their needs and requirements—is the focus on adapting to the children’s age-related and individual psycho-physical characteristics, in order to support the full development of their personality. The preschool and early school years are among the most important stages in the formation and development of a child’s personality. During this early school period, the child learns not only how to learn but also how to build meaningful connections with those around them. This is the time when the foundation is laid for an education that shapes not only cognitive skills but also character, empathy, and the ability to confidently navigate a complex world. Furthermore, in this stage, education must be an integrative process—one that does not merely form a student, but a person capable of understanding and connecting with others, building relationships, and being an active and responsible member of the community.

Keywords: language, thinking, child, learning, skills

The complexity and purpose of the educational-instructional process encompass a range of methods, tools and procedures that must meet the diverse requirements of this process, as well as the specific characteristics of the many phases of work with those involved in the actual educational act. Modern education seeks to adopt structures, content, and forms of organization that facilitate faster and more effective intellectual development, placing children in situations that allow them to grow and fully realize their potential and abilities. From the preschool period, efforts are made to enhance and improve children’s outcomes by maximizing the potential specific to each age.

Preschool education plays a fundamental role in preparing children for school, as it can provide the necessary elements for an effective start in formal education. "Children must be stimulated and supported in preschool education to acquire the physical and psychological attributes necessary for learning and for easily adapting to new life conditions." (Nica & Vintanu, 1978, p. 87) There is a very close relationship between learning and development and the educational process must consider both the already formed psychological functions and the potential capacities and emerging functions in children. "This implies knowing the children in order to apply the principle of respecting individual differences through differentiated treatment." (Ibidem, p. 87)

The school age, between 6 and 11 years, is an intense period of cognitive, emotional and social transformation. Entering school leads to a reconfiguration of the child’s relationship with the surrounding world, marking the transition from preschool play to structured, systematic learning. "The child begins to understand rules and norms, accept authority, and interact within a structured framework, all of which have a profound impact on the developing personality." (Șchiopu & Verza, 1997, p. 112)

Early School Age – A Crucial Stage in the Child’s Development

Early school age is a crucial period in a child’s development, marked by the acquisition of new cognitive, emotional, and social skills. This stage is not only characterized by the beginning of formal schooling but also by significant changes in the way the child perceives and interacts with the world. During this period, the child is no longer merely a “player” in their own world, but becomes a “beginner” in the world of structured knowledge and learning.

Therefore, it is advisable that from this early age, children are guided and encouraged to develop self-awareness, build habits, and adopt appropriate behaviors. This helps the teacher understand the type of children they are working with, allowing them to group students according to their personalities and temperaments. The teacher’s knowledge of each child’s personality and behavior is essential for ensuring differentiated and individualized instruction.

The teacher’s role is “to guide the children’s psychophysical development processes along a continually upward path, aiming to harness their innate potential and support their integration into society.” (Păiși-Lăzărescu & Ezechil, 2015, p. 35) Even if the teacher does not fully understand the anatomical, structural, neurological, or biochemical specifics of development, she can still rely on “certain psychopedagogical knowledge that can be adapted to the specific psychophysical development of the child.” (Ibidem, p. 35)

Thus, it is essential that the teacher knows the children she works with very well, focuses on their needs and interests, and always takes into account their skills and inclinations. By doing so, she can succeed in differentiating and individualizing instruction, achieving the desired progress, and carrying out educational and play activities effectively. Through the implementation of an individualized education program, the teacher can plan a set of activities that contribute to the development of skills and competencies, while also stimulating and creating a supportive environment for both education and development. All of this is done with the goal of “developing in children basic psychosocial competencies, as well as general and specific learning and social integration abilities.” (Albulescu & Catalano, 2019, p. 163)

Thus, the child learns to structure their time and organize their activities in a more systematic manner. Unlike the preschool period- when activities were often spontaneous and free- school imposes a stricter schedule, with fixed hours and clearly defined learning tasks. The child begins to understand the importance of discipline and personal responsibility, learning to manage their time and resources efficiently. This shift has a significant impact on the development of self-regulation and autonomy.

During this stage, the child also learns to accept authority, to follow rules and to interact within an organized framework. In school, teacher becomes a central figure and the child learns to respond to the teacher’s expectations and demands. Accepting authority does not merely mean obeying orders, but also involves understanding the importance of respecting norms for the harmonious functioning of the group and for effective learning. In this context, the child develops skills in compliance and social adaptation, learning to regulate their behavior and reactions according to the social setting.

With regard to social relationships, the child begins to better understand concepts such as friendship, collaboration, and competition. They develop more complex relationships with peers, learning to cooperate, resolve conflicts, and accept the diversity of opinions and behaviors. Moreover, during this period, the child learns to express feelings and needs more clearly and appropriately, which supports the development of essential social skills for integration into society.

Additionally, learning becomes increasingly abstract and conceptual. The child transitions from learning through observation and imitation-typical of the preschool years-to learning through thinking and reflection. For example, rather than learning solely through repetition, the child begins to understand causal relationships and to apply knowledge in

various contexts. This is the stage when higher-order cognitive skills begin to emerge, such as logical thinking and problem-solving.

Thus, early school age represents a transitional moment, but also one of consolidation of fundamental abilities in a child's development. It is a time of intensified educational engagement, laying the foundation for more complex skills in the years to come. The child becomes more responsible, more autonomous, and increasingly capable of understanding and interacting with the world in an organized and rational way.

Cognitively, the child "enters the stage of concrete operations," as defined by Jean Piaget. This means they can perform logical operations on concrete objects and situations, but not yet on abstract concepts. Reasoning becomes reversible; the child learns to classify, to sequence, and to establish causal relationships. However, thinking is still dominated by immediate experience and the visual context.

The memory of early school-age children develops significantly, especially due to their constant exposure to new information in the school environment. A distinction begins to emerge between mechanical and logical memory, with a marked increase in voluntary memory. "At this age, the child can memorize poems, mathematical formulas, and also recall events or stories in a logical sequence, which reflects the development of narrative thinking." (Crețu, 1991, p. 84)

This memorization ability is supported by a growing interest in learning and by the intellectual curiosity characteristic of this developmental stage. The child begins to differentiate between what must be remembered and what can be forgotten, developing simple learning strategies such as repetition, highlighting, or association. Furthermore, the school environment stimulates memory activity through educational games, varied tasks, and interactive activities, which not only help consolidate information but also encourage its creative use.

Memory becomes increasingly selective and organized, as the child manages to form connections between pieces of information and integrate them into a coherent system. Additionally, there is an increase in the retention span and the ability to voluntarily recall information, which contributes to improved academic performance. Thus, memory-closely linked with thinking and language-becomes an essential tool in building academic skills and shaping a positive self-image in the cognitive domain.

Moreover, this period also sees the development of metamemory- the child's awareness of their own memory processes. The child begins to understand which methods help them retain information best, when a break is needed, or how to organize material to learn it more efficiently. These early cognitive gains are crucial for learning autonomy and lay the foundation for reflective thinking.

The role of the teacher is also essential in stimulating memory through didactic methods adapted to the child's developmental level, by repeating information in a creative manner and by connecting new concepts to previously acquired knowledge. Activities that involve positive emotions—such as role-playing, storytelling, or group work—contribute to memory consolidation by creating meaningful associations. Attention becomes more stable and more distributed. The child learns to focus on school tasks even in the presence of distracting stimuli. At the same time, voluntary attention develops, supported by interest in school activities and cognitive motivation. "Teachers play an important role in exercising this cognitive function through structured activities." (Cosmovici & Iacob, 1998, p. 112)

Language, a fundamental component of human development, gains new dimensions during early school age. The child already has a well-developed active and receptive language, but school prompts its refinement. They learn to articulate thoughts more coherently, to use correct grammatical structures, and to distinguish between formal and informal registers.

“Reading and writing become fundamental tools for expression and learning.” (Sălăvăstru, 2004, p. 97)

Language is a continuous process of development and refinement throughout childhood, especially during early school years. At this age, the child already possesses a fairly rich vocabulary, but in school, this vocabulary undergoes a complex process of enrichment and specialization. Beyond simply learning new words, the child begins to master a wide range of linguistic registers, using language more appropriately according to the context and situation. For example, in a classroom setting, the child will use more formal language, whereas in conversations with friends or at home, they will use informal language suited to interpersonal relationships.

Another important aspect of language development during this period is the close connection between language and thought. Primary school children are in the process of developing logical and abstract thinking, and language becomes a tool through which they structure their thoughts and express their opinions. For instance, children begin to use more complex sentences, with subordinate clauses, reflecting more nuanced thinking. In this way, language becomes not only a means of communication but also a tool for cognitive and emotional development.

Language is not just a means of transmitting information; it also plays an important role in forming social relationships. Through the use of language, children begin to interact with their peers, negotiate rules, resolve conflicts, and share ideas and feelings. These interactions are essential for the development of children’s social and emotional skills. Additionally, language helps children express their needs and desires, make friends, and learn how to collaborate in a group.

Reading is a fundamental element in language development, and in primary school, it becomes an essential learning tool. By reading stories and books, children not only enrich their vocabulary but also begin to understand more complex narrative structures and develop critical thinking skills. Furthermore, reading provides children with the opportunity to learn about different cultures, abstract concepts, and hypothetical situations, all of which contribute to cognitive development and broaden their horizons.

As the child learns to read and write, language also becomes a fundamental tool for self-expression and reflection. Through writing, children not only organize information but also express their thoughts and emotions in a structured and coherent way. Writing helps them develop higher-order cognitive skills such as attention to detail, planning, and idea organization.

During this period, language development is closely linked to the educational context in which the child is immersed. Teachers and parents play a key role in stimulating language through constant interaction and by promoting an environment that encourages speaking and active listening. For example, group activities, classroom discussions, role-playing, and vocabulary exercises are all methods through which children can practice and enrich their language skills.

Through learning to read and write, the child expands their symbolic universe. They access abstract knowledge and gain tools to better understand the world. “These skills contribute to the development of critical thinking and linguistic creativity. However, this stage also brings challenges such as dyslexia or dysgraphia, which can affect learning and school adjustment.” (Crețu, 1991, p. 129)

Affective development is characterized by greater emotional stability compared to the preschool period. The child becomes more self-controlled, begins to express feelings verbally, and emotional states are no longer as changeable. At the same time, attachment to the teacher becomes an essential motivational factor. “Self-image is in full formation and is deeply

influenced by successes or failures in the school environment.” (Șchiopu & Verza, 1997, p. 136).

An important aspect of development is the formation of moral conscience. The child begins to distinguish between right and wrong, not only based on the concrete consequences of actions but also according to social and moral rules. The notion of “fairness” emerges, along with the desire to respect rules and gain approval from others. This heteronomous morality is strongly influenced by adults. At this stage, the child shows an increased need for equity and justice, often being concerned with the idea of “what is fair.” Furthermore, the internalization of moral norms is supported by the behavioral models provided by parents and teachers, who become essential references in building personal values. As Piaget (1932) points out, the child in the stage of heteronomous morality perceives rules as absolute and the authority of adults as unquestionable.

Social development is closely linked to interactions with classmates. The child begins to form stable friendships, develops empathy, and learns cooperation. “Competition and comparison with classmates contribute to shaping a school-related self-image, which can act as a motivating factor or, conversely, as a source of anxiety. The child needs support to manage these emotions and to maintain a balanced self-image.” (Cosmovici & Iacob, 1998, p. 135).

Parents play a fundamental role during this stage. Parenting style, communication, and the emotional climate at home significantly influence the child’s school performance and mental state. “Children who are emotionally and motivationally supported by their parents adapt better to school demands, while those who lack support may develop avoidance or frustration behaviors.” (Sălăvăstru, 2004, p. 112). Moreover, parental involvement in school activities, showing interest in the child’s progress and providing a stable and secure environment contribute to developing self-confidence and responsibility. Thus, the family becomes an essential factor of balance, shaping attitudes toward learning and influencing the child’s intrinsic motivation.

As the child progresses toward the end of the primary school cycle, an evolution in the complexity of language and thinking becomes evident. The child is capable of writing compositions, formulating opinions and arguments and understanding metaphors and figures of speech. “Vocabulary development is accelerated through reading, discussions, and interactive educational activities.” (Crețu, 1991, p. 151).

The child becomes more aware of their own learning process, with the emergence of self-regulation and metacognition. They can assess the difficulty of a task, organize their time and working methods. Additionally, “the child begins to set personal goals and seek solutions to achieve them, indicating the onset of cognitive autonomy.” (Vasta, Miller & Harwood, 2001, p. 305).

During this period, the relationship with the teacher is fundamental. The teacher represents a secondary attachment figure for the child but is highly influential. “A positive attitude, encouragement, and emotional support contribute to strengthening self-confidence and motivation for learning. The child internalizes the values and behaviors of significant adults.” (Sălăvăstru, 2004, p. 138). Moreover, a teacher who shows interest in the child’s personal and educational development can stimulate their desire for learning and self-awareness. This type of relationship helps the child feel accepted and encouraged to express thoughts and emotions in a safe environment, which supports both intellectual and emotional development. During this period, the child learns to form an identity, and the teacher’s influence can have a major impact on how the child builds confidence in their abilities and perceives authority and interpersonal relationships. Additionally, an empathetic teacher attentive to each child’s needs can assist in managing behavior and frustrations, creating a conducive environment for learning and emotional growth. Patience, support, and positive

examples are essential for the child to develop a proactive attitude toward school learning and become more independent in their educational process.

Another important characteristic is the high plasticity of psychological development. Educational interventions, the school climate, teaching strategies, and family relationships can significantly shape the child's trajectory. "This period is, therefore, a privileged one for the formation of attitudes toward learning, responsibility, and communication." (Cosmovici & Iacob, 1998, p. 143).

Early School Age: A Critical Stage in the Formation of the Child's Personality

The early school age represents a decisive period in shaping the child's personality, during which thinking, language, and social relationships develop simultaneously, laying the foundation for a healthy emotional, moral, and intellectual life. "Constant adult support, adapted educational interventions, and a stimulating environment can transform this period into one of accumulation, confidence, and self-assertion." (Șchiopu & Verza, 1997, p. 158).

The Role of Cultural and Social Environment in Language Development

Language development is strongly influenced by the cultural and social environment in which the child lives. Children exposed to a rich language environment both at home and at school tend to develop superior linguistic skills more rapidly. Florian Colceag argues that "early cognitive stimulation, carried out through word games, stories, and dialogues, promotes the development of verbal intelligence." (Colceag, 2006, p. 67).

The Importance of Artistic and Musical Activities

Artistic and musical activities play an essential role in children's psychological development by contributing to emotional expression, fine motor skills development, and the formation of aesthetic perception. Veronica Luca states that "children's involvement in creative artistic activities consolidates their autonomy and develops their ability to symbolize and communicate emotional states." (2012, p. 89).

The Psychosocial Climate of the Classroom and its Impact on Development

Relationships among students and between students and teachers significantly influence psychological development. "A climate based on respect, cooperation, and emotional support allows children to express their ideas and emotions authentically, gain self-confidence, and actively engage in the learning process." (Pânișoară, 2009, p. 134).

Moral and Prosocial Development

The values promoted at school have a major impact on moral and prosocial development. According to Kohlberg's theory, children in this stage are in the pre-conventional or conventional level, where behavior is guided by the desire to obtain rewards, avoid punishments, and be accepted by adults (Zlate, 2004, p. 201).

Educators must create opportunities for moral reflection and empathy, facilitating the formation of moral conscience, a sense of responsibility, and the ability to distinguish right from wrong based on social norms. Through personal example, clear explanations, and discussions about justice, respect, and solidarity, adults contribute to the development of a solid ethical sense in children.

Activities that involve cooperation, group responsibility, rule-following, and mutual support play a significant role in encouraging prosocial behaviors. Through role-playing games, stories with moral themes, tasks that require decision-making, or solving ethical dilemmas, children can be guided toward a deeper understanding of the consequences of their actions and the value of empathy.

Moreover, rewarding positive behaviors and encouraging emotional expression contribute to the development of positive relationships with others. Thus, the child learns not only what is permitted or forbidden but also why certain behaviors are desirable in a social context. They gradually develop the ability to put themselves in others' shoes, feel compassion, and act in support of those around them.

Therefore, educational intervention in the moral domain must be constant, coherent, and adapted to the children's level of understanding. A secure emotional climate, where the child feels valued and heard, fosters the internalization of moral values and the adoption of responsible and prosocial behavior. Thus, school is not only a place for cognitive acquisition but also an essential space for character formation and the development of healthy ethical conduct.

The role of didactic play in learning at this age should not be neglected either. Although the child has entered the stage of organized learning, play continues to be an effective way of acquiring knowledge. Through play, the child learns without pressure, practices social and cognitive skills, and develops imagination. Studies conducted by Iolanda Mitrofan show that "integrating playful activities into the teaching process has beneficial effects on school performance and students' emotional well-being." (Mitrofan, 2000, p. 59).

During this transitional period, teachers, parents and other educational actors have the role not only to provide a structured educational framework but also a safe emotional environment where the child feels encouraged to explore and surpass their own limits. Children begin to understand that learning is not just an obligation but an opportunity to discover themselves, to express their ideas and feelings through increasingly sophisticated and precise language.

Moreover, building self-confidence is essential during this time. Children need to learn that mistakes are part of the learning process, and success comes not only from memorizing information but also from developing the ability to collaborate with others and express their thoughts coherently. In this sense, communication skills become a powerful tool not only for academic success but also for healthy interpersonal relationships that will influence their long-term development.

Therefore, we can conclude that the psychological and language characteristics of children in early school age are not merely temporary developmental stages but fundamental for building a complete personality. During this phase of life, children are like receptors who assimilate not only scientific information but also models of behavior and social interaction. Their ability to learn and adapt their language to social and school demands reflects not only cognitive evolution but also profound transformations in their perception of the world and their place within it.

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