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Oral and Moral Expression in Language Settings - Implied Dilemmas in Literacy Acquisition: An empirical phenomenological study of 7- to 9-Year-Old Greek Children's Ethical Reflection on Creative Storytelling.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines ethical concepts in verbal expression of children through narrative. The subject group of 82 participants (39 girls and 43 boys), were asked to tell their own story about the 'sun' as a story character.

They were all 7-9 years old children from Greece interviewed in school settings and the assembled material was a product of individual interviews in transcribed narration. The method used for the analysis of our data was the Empirical Psychological Phenomenological method. The results consisted of thirteen qualitative different categories of ethical meaning, which were decided by judges providing an image-analysis of the ethical traits and deeds of the heroes involved in children's stories. Implications for the influence of the educational practice of storytelling on the development of children's moral criteria as reflected in their oral language are discussed.

KEY WORDS: *children, ethics, phenomenology, creative storytelling, oral language, teaching.*

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A. INTRODUCTION

I. Aspects of ethical constructs in narrative construct - theoretical approach of our study

Stories as "narrative identities" give options to comprehend our selves in a different context and in that endeavor to find a different perspective on our lives and our former inner experience. The starting point in psychology regarding the study of children and morals is connected with Piaget's studies on moral judgements conducted during the 1930s (1969, p.32, Atkinson et al., 1996). In his studies Piaget observed and questioned children about the rules of playing marbles. Patterns for judgements on human meaning-making were worked through the presentation of moral dilemmas in story language settings. Subjects such as descriptions of world images were instructed to give solutions to or main subjects for discussion of these story dilemmas. Moreover, specialists gave another option of improvement in universal cognitive issues by which moral development was supposed and expected to develop. Kohlberg explained the development of moral reasoning in a theory of six stages. Kohlberg's six stages were grouped into three levels: pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional level of moral reasoning. He suggested that children of ten years were only capable of the lowest level (preconventional) of moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1976 and 1981). The pre-conventional level of moral reasoning, which is especially common in children, consists of the first and second stages of moral development, and is concerned with the self (egocentric). Research that resulted from Piaget's and Kohlberg's work influenced the study of morals and ethics but was criticised from different sides. Giorgi (1992) suggested that the method had weak points invalidity. The whole method could be considered as an artificial one and absolutely out of how individuals may act in real-life moral situations that are rather difficult. In the case of our study, for example, we could expect children to give different action roles to imaginative heroes, than these that they as story makers would play in real life. He also noticed that "moral life is not to be confused with tests meant to measure certain kinds of abstract (moral) thinking, or with tests that give people a chance to offer hypothetical responses to made-up plots. We never quite know what will happen in this life; nor do we know an event we will connect with ourselves" (Giorgi, 1992:52). His method, though, aims to uncover the meaning of a phenomenon as experienced by a human through the identification of essential themes. A story always involves an event concerning human actions. The human penchant for not being able to relate a story without some manner of reference (explicit or implicit) to one's earlier

experiences, but creating without retelling them bears some relation to the study. In these terms, which are also the terms of our study, the description of a person is actually of a first-order experiential character. Our challenge as phenomenological researchers is two-fold: To explicate these language dimensions such that the lived world – the real-life world – is reflected upon and to connect the linguistic components with the objects around us, as we perceive them in our experience of our self and our relationships.

The difficulty, when we deal with young children such as those of the age of our subject group is that their language is that of a child, which may pose a dilemma of validity in picking the right words to describe their moral reflections concerning the plot of their stories. Thus, the problem of validity in language forms was a matter that we had to overcome with a concrete study of the author's speech from judges, as we'll illustrate in the following part of this paper.

Psychological research on contemporary aspects of children and story-telling has dealt with how chil-dren develop stories as personal images from a sociocultural perspective (Mistry, 1993) and how chil-dren's narratives implicate ethics (Pramling et al., 2001). Children's thoughts about morals in relation to their oral language constitute the perspective of our orientation in terms of pedagogical view in this theoretical sequence.

II. Approaches on story-making and teaching about story characters in language settings

An author-oriented approach, which can be labelled ideological, needs to also be mentioned, since it has resulted in considerably more solid theoretical stances. Its foremost proponent is Bakhtin (1990), who, in his essay "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" introduces some major notions about literacy heroes serving as the author's ethical organ. For Bakhtin heroes and stories are deliberately constructed to express views, and therefore may have little to do with human nature or psychology. Bakhtin, who by no means was a Marxist, views story characters in a different manner from the Marxist ideological and social origin of characters. This seems to have no relation to children's literature and teaching, but it is important to explain the parallels with critics and teacher specialists who view children's books exclu-sively as educational and ideological vehicles, and consequently their characters as bearers of "right" and "wrong" values.

In traditional children's literature the stories that adults provide young readers with have clear-cut morals and characters that function as mouth-pieces for the author's didactic views. One of the best ex-amples is the cricket

in Pinocchio (Collodi, 1988), treated in criticism as the voice of conscience (see Zipes, 1997).

Dealing with teaching situations places time demands, the course of which may be described and expressed through a story-telling language. This language can be met in different contexts in class, es-pecially in a class of language acquisition with young children (Kemp, 1991) Heroes in children's realistic fiction can be approached in relation to the theoretical model.

The first dilemma in teaching language at school is to consider the teacher as a class coordinator who presents text heroes as mere agents in the plot or as complete psychological beings. This central involvement of theory in discussing literacy heroes is not a new one (Chatman, 1978). Should persons in language textbooks be perceived and analyzed as real, living people or as purely textual constructions? In harmony with each country's curriculum, each educational system either gives guidelines for teachers in teaching language through moral interpretations, just as what takes place in the Norway, or states obligations for a neutral language teaching approach, far away from any moral aims, just as what takes place in England (Stephens, Tonessen & Kyriakou, 2004).

In spite of ethnological and political differences in curriculum approaches, we need to approach global and objective human attitudes towards ethics and childhood in terms of a contemporary need.

Ethics in Education should rather be neutral regarding the components such as the school and the teacher. Certain models of ethical behaviour and action are not encouraged, but there should be presentations of the total picture of optional behaviour and their consequences for particular problems, so that the free choice of students is accomplished in secure criteria. Thus, as far as logic presents the panel of alternative ethical attitudes depending on the conditions, reasons, interest and consequences, the indi-vidual must empower his/her ethical status (Karafyllis, 1999, pp.152-154).

The globalization and objectivity of criteria apparent in an ethical theory in terms of educational ethics projects through the work of Wilson (1969), who suggests that the idea of ethical independency for every system on ethics, rules, values or restrictions is also relevant to the feelings and interests of others.

It is rather more complex, if we consider that its connotations are oscillating between imitation and creation whereby "the imitation may be creative, and the creativity imitative" (Melberg, 1996:16). Semiotics as a theory of sign or using signs, including words, gestures, sounds and pictures gives teaching another vehicle to think and communicate in class.

A semiotic approach mandates that if the text offers nothing about Peter Pan's grandparents, for example, we have no reason to speculate about his re-

lationship with them (Scholes & Kellogg, 1966). The mimetic version is more applicable to younger children in terms of Piaget's stages of child development. However, older children can make more complicated semiotic applications of characters to ethical elements in a story plot (see Piaget, 1969).

The issue here is whether teachers are always aware of the approach which has been adopted in texts that they bring in class and moreover how children interpret their readings making comments and build-ing an ethical picture for their favourite or less favourite heroes from their readings. In other words, is it possible for insightful teachers, equipped with sufficient instructional strategies to guide language explorations, so that they develop better readers and more ethical people through the same procedure? The dilemma could be classified as a rhetoric one.

There are also differences between readers of ethical interpretations across time and space, or, in Jauss's terms, a shift in the horizon of expectations. Mark Twain's contemporaries understood their characters in a different sense than children do today (Jauss, 1982, p.34). There have been changes in expectations and values and there have also been revaluations of gender and race (Fish, 1982).

Historical and social context is emphasized in Hochman's (1985) understanding of ethical storytelling view. Young readers in a language class may not be aware of the change in values over time. A child abandonment and abuse, for example, were once acceptable acts in children's literature, but today readers judge this behaviour for a contemporary father by different measures. The societal norms encoded in such adjectives as desirable virtues and beautiful differ considerably both over time and from culture to culture.

As Scholes and Kellogg (1966) suggest: "Characters are concepts in anthropoid form or fragments of the human psyche masquerading as whole human beings. Thus, we are not called upon to understand their motivation as if they were whole human beings but to understand the principles they illustrate through their actions in a narrative framework"(p.88).

Stock characters and round characters are two versions of another dilemma in working on ethics through storytelling. Stock characters are predictable and conventionalized types of human behaviour. Round characters are not typical. They are memorable, unpredictable and more complicated in a psychological study of their appearance and actions. Narration and illustration of contemporary children's books deftly depicts the body language and **the facial expressions** to create a character with a distinct personality and, ultimately, a decidedly un-wolf-like attitude towards others (Temple et al, 2002).

Description, settings of the story and relationship of the characters with other characters in the plot also reveal ethical components in contemporary

narrations (Martinez & Roser, 2003).

Tappan (1992), as a researcher who turned the study focus on morals to different contexts such as moral language, gender, racial, socioeconomic class or cultural components has built **an hermeneutic perspective on studies** of ethical human development. Tappan's point of view is that moralist voices and language are reflected in the inner self so that the child using the silent dialogue of thinking and creating polyphone voices becomes able to 'talk itself' in problem solving (e.g. Tappan, 1992, p.96).

B. THE STUDY

I. Purpose of our Study

The purpose of our study was to examine how ethical outlooks (such as notions of good and bad) are expressed in children's creative storytelling in school settings (age 7-9 years old: second and third grade). We investigate how children perceive notions of bad and good efforts in their story plots, as verbal actions, in terms of their experience of themselves and others.

II. Method- Procedure

In phenomenological approaches we take as a starting point each individual's own experience of the particular phenomenon under study as regards what and how these phenomena occur (Georgi, 1997). There are different methods for phenomenological research regarding the psychological perspectives (Lemon &Taylor, 1998). These have similarities in terms of following a thematic process of analysis so that theoretical implementations can be obtained. Karlsson's (1993, p. 97) **Empirical Phenomenol-ogical Psychological Method** (EPP) offers from our point of view a more concrete and descriptive analysis that presents the results in a more authentic form of qualitatively distinct categories (Norlander et al., 2003). In our study we had to follow five steps. These steps were adapted to the particular phenomenon under study (ethical concepts of the children about a hero) and the condition of the material (storytelling and literacy expression). The Sun as an issue of children's narration in the pragmatics of a language approach was in agreement with the environment of the summer camp, where they were asked to construct their stories.

The analysis of this method was used in five steps to treat the material assembled. Since the purpose of the study was to provide information about conceptualizations of ethical meaning in creative storytelling, a phenomenological approach and methodology was deemed the appropriate one.

Procedure in EPP Study:

STEP 1: The researcher selects the material with children's narrations and listens to the stories again and again, keeping notes upon the written transformation of children's speech into text without any changes or omissions from the first narration of the individuals who were involved in the procedure. This reading of the storytelling is performed with focus upon relevant phenomena.

STEP 2: Units of meaning (UM) are distinguished from the material. The stories get divided into smaller linguistic units whereby these units of meaning are identified every time some 'switch in meaning' concerning the ethical study as a phenomenon in children's speech occurs. We should also add here that the meaning units are not considered as elements individually studied but are rather treated as inte-gral parts of the whole language context of the story told.

STEP3: Meaning Units are interpreted with regard to their psychological and pedagogical meaning making. According to Gadamer (1997) we assume the explicit functions of linguistic expression out of the implicit horizons of the story. At this point language of the narratorchild is reformulated to a scien-tifically applicable language that depends on special psycholinguistic theoretical study.

STEP 4: Meaning Units are combined to make a synopsis. These situated structures may look quite different to the subject of our investigation. This description though brings together "what" and "how" things happen, in other words noisis and noema of the phenomenon in the study procedure. Noesis from the greek word νους, (νόησις) refers to the mind functions of human thought. The word noema which can be translated from the Greek word νόημα as meaning refers to the product of human thinking capacity. The researcher seeks to describe both what the phenomenon is and how it expresses itself.

STEP 5: The meaning units (MUs) turn to general structures of the study, in terms of keeping the meaningful verbal component of the storyteller and thinker in a literacy context. At this stage, the researcher puts the empirical material aside in order to reflect on a more general or abstract demand. The 'situated structures' are shaped to 'typological structures'. This is the stage that Karlsson implies as the researcher's separation from his/her empirical data. . At this stage of data analysis the subjects' daily language is altered by the researcher's language. This alteration is not theory associated (i.e. is not language defined through a certain theory and is not too vague for the needs of the experiment).

In our study, each child was asked to think and create a narrative and tell his/her own story about the sun. They were assigned the task of narrating

about this subject without any other objective than to give a starting point for telling a story. Sun, as a theme, is neutral in terms of cultural characteristics or human traits and was something that we wanted children to know from their life experience. Parents, teachers and books were not involved in the story-telling procedure, as we wanted children to give their ethical connections to the characters of the story and unfold their imaginative plot.

Moreover, children were encouraged to fantasize as much as they wanted to and make their own decision about the duration of the story and about when to stop. They were asked to create a story and not to retell one they had already heard, because the authenticity of the ethical concepts would thus be better accomplished. To make sure that they wouldn't influence each other by hearing each other, they were interviewed individually. They were allowed five minutes to consider their narration. In some cases children asked for more time and they were allowed to think a little more before starting the narration.

Children were interviewed in school settings. Age, name and the story were tape-recorded. As we already mentioned, each child was interviewed individually. This is why the duration of storytelling varied from five to thirty minutes. There were no other adults than the experimenters to observe the procedure or other group storytelling before the experiment; thus, we kept close personal contact with children's ethical concepts.

The children derived from large middle-class areas in Greece. In total there were 82 participants, of whom 39 were girls and 43 were boys. The research took place during the summer of 2002 (summer school camp in Chalkidiki, Northern Greece). The interviews were terminated by allowing each child to listen to a portion of their own recorded material. The interviews were transcribed verbatim.

In order to verify the results of the study, two co-judges were assigned to help the process of categorization from the random collection of 64 MUs. This is not a big number of meaning units considering the method's average in this process. The number, though, ought not to be considered low as the meaning units depend upon the phenomenon of each particular study and ethical categories in children's stories at this age can hardly be obtained for a number of meaning units that are able to correspond in validity of the results. The co-judges obtained 73 percent agreement with the initial categorization, and following three more meetings co-operation was accomplished in order to verify agreement in the communication and definition of each category.

As Kvale (1997) suggests, the validity of studies like this depends upon the degree to which the results are communicated and motivated. The researcher's perspectives and the comparison with other observers' viewpoints

form the validity of the percentage of their agreement. The one reviewer gave a concordance rate of 68 percent with the obtained categorization whereas the other reviewers gave a concordance rate of 76 percent. Following discussions with the reviewers it was found that in fact a consensus of 87 percent regarding the categorization was achieved. Therefore the necessity to obtain context meaning was verified in terms of communicative validity.

C. RESULTS

I. Traits of children's heroes related to ethical characteristics

Children seem to have their own definition for ethical capacity of their story characters to the law and the social obligations. To give a comparative picture, though, it would be useful to present scientific categories of ethical traits, before we pass on to the description that we derived in our study from children's narrations. Kohlberg's (1976) categories of ethical traits focus on:

Pre-conventional level

    1-Obedience in order to avoid punishment
    2-stage of shared own good and the law of return when you give (self-interest orientation)

Conventional level

    3-acceptance of superiority and admiration-interpersonal accord and conformity(the good boy/girl attitude)
    4-Authority and social-order maintaining orientation (Law)

Post-conventional level

    5-social contract orientation (the greatest good for the greatest number of people)
    6-Humanistic values-universal ethical principles (one acts because it is right, not because it is instrumental, legal or expected)

In our study we derived fourteen (13) final categories, with seven subcategories for one of them (about ethics and the relation of a person with others); The subcategorization arose from the nature of the linguistic samples that stories of the children involved in relative and interdependent units of meaning (UM).

Ethical traits in the categories are described above accompanied with examples in relation to gender and frequency of traits in the study's Units of Meaning. As mentioned before, "Thinking of stories about a character related

with the Sun" was the first demand which led to the children's narrative responses.

II. Presentation of the Categories and examples

1-Hyperbatic action in terms of **logical control** and **ethical decision** of the heroes
They dare to do when others are afraid. They put themselves in danger and have crazy adventures and do not do ordinary and logical things. They are helpful.
(Category: **Good heroes related to: transcendental behaviour / words, extraordinary, nerve, being risky**)
52 MU, 27 boys and 25 girls

Example:

"Anny the Sunny had to give her last ray as she promised coastguard. She did't think of herself. But afterwards she got very sick and the whole world felt cold and lonely. She thought that if she did nothing she would die and the earth would die with her. So Anny, the Sunny, came up with an idea. She visited the land of fire, her place of birth where all the suns live and her friends gave her new rays..."

2-The heroes (The Sun in our case and in various forms depending on each child's perception of the hero) do the right thing because:
They know what and how to do better than anyone else
(Category: **Knowledge, capability and ethical behaviour**)
36 MU, 23 from boys and 13 from girls

Example

Sun Antonio, the handsome prince of wherever knows everything. You have to go and tell your problem There, said the little cat to the mouse. The sun is the most wise man in the universe...

3-They feel free to do something, although others are obstacles for his decision-independent personality-They don't always obey to rules, when rules are not fair, and they fight for survival
(Category: **Virtue and independence, offence and reasoning, deviation, obedience**)
41 MU, 25 girls and 16 boys

Example

"What will your Sun parent say, when he finds out the light is stolen from his treasure tree box and he learns you gave it to save some blind stars of another

country?", *I am a grown up sun, little bird, I know what the right thing is and I am not afraid of anyone. Let's go, said the sun to the bird.*

4-Ethical persons are strong and fight to provide justice

(Category: **Physical strength, spiritual power, fair-minded, right, justice**)

59 MU, 30 boys 29 girls

Example

"I can't fight the Sun. He has won every race as far as I know. He is burning, I can not even look at his streams, his muscles are shining ready to punch my nose.", Said the noisy nose of the hurricane Katrina.

"Katrina is a bad Hurricane. She brings disaster to the house of the poor. Rich people don't need her help. Only the sun can judge her crimes. And the trial will be held right here.

5-Ethical persons are smart and have brilliant ideas

(Category: **Intelligence-creativity and virtue**)

29 MU, 16 boys and 13 girls

Example

One day the sun went to the riverside. There he found that the air had drunk all the water and the poor fish were almost dying. 'Show me that you can blow strong enough so as to move the lake's water back into the river, said the clever sun. The wind was ready to show up; everybody knew him to. Ok, said the wind and blew. So the sun left happy. His idea had saved the fish and he didn't do anything more than play with the wind.

6-Ethical persons do the right thing mostly for other people's shake, for global good-their altruistic behaviour is uncommon

(Category: **Virtue and being helpful for humanity, altruism**)

38 MU, 17 boys and 21 girls

Example

It's not fair said the Sun. The Moon didn't understand why. Then the sun explained: "Look at me; I am not expecting anyone to give me his light. I am different than the other stars. I give all the light I have. And I don't ask for anything. It's not fair to hide for such a long time. You must understand we are important in the sky. I have to save the world, because the dark and the cold will make animals die. And the ships will never find their way, if I don't help. You have to help, too. Please", the sun said. The moon said ok and they became friends forever. Since then the sun gives light in the morning, the moon at night.

7-Ethical persons and other - attitudes towards others: There are seven more subcategories

(Category: **Attitude towards others**)
52 MU, 28 boys, 24 girls

* Examples for each subcategory:
7a-they are **generous**
...the spider was ready to go without saying goodbye. She was ashamed be-cause she pretended to be the sun and lied to the little flies. But the sun stopped her. He took the spider in his arms and made her web shine like himself. ...You see, said to the flies. The spider's web looks like the sun, now. I'll stay with her, Spider, I give you light presents. Just let the flies go, and ...I ll be your friend forev-er, whenever you need me, ok?
7b-They **forgive**
You didn't know that the wolf is coming and you went out to play on the hill. I'll tell the farmer to for-give you, because you are good kids. Go and tell him you are sorry. In the evening they went to the farmer. But the sun wasn't there. They were afraid. But they did it. They said "We are sorry" and left. The wolf didn't show up ever again. The sun was right.
7c-They **share**
On the way to school, Apollo lost his breakfast. He was hungry. And he didn't know what to tell the teacher. He didn't want to go without meal. The Sun from the sky saw him without his bag: I'll give you half of mine. We don't have to tell the others about it, he said to his friend. That's how Sun and Apollo are friends and share the light and everything.
7d-They are not **jealous, they don't hate , no envy**
I don't know how to play this game, but this is not a reason to take it from you and break it. I like watching. "Do you want to play with us? The girl said.
7e-They feel **superior**
I am the king of the stars; I give my light to the dark sides of your ground. I won't wonder around like this any more. I could have more complains, but I don't like complaining. Let's go out and play again.
7f-They have a sense of **humour**
Then he got an idea. He told them one of the jokes he knew and everybody stopped crying. And the rain stopped.
8-They **punish**, to treat situations in justice, not for revenge without reason.
(Category: **Punishment and reward**)
Found in 19 MU, 10 boys and 9 girls

Example

We made a deal said the crocodile, the son of Sun. Now you have to do as we said. The punishment is to stay out of the jungle.

... The little elephant told the truth. And came when we said the elephant will become the king of the jungle.

9-They are honest, and keep their promise

(Category: **Credible- reliability**)

In 28 MU 13 boys and 15 girls

Example

Well, if he said he will help, he will come. Don't be afraid, said the eagle to the tree. "The sun is a good friend. You can count on him. Just wait...

10-They feel love and care for others, especially the weak heroes

(Category: *Caring, protective*)

41 MU, 21 Boys 20 girls

Example

The tiger wanted to eat the little frog. But the sun sent a strong ray of his sword lights and the tiger became blind for a while. The frog jumped in the river and saved himself. But it was the sun, the frog's friend that saved his life for one more time. Then he showed all the way back home to the lost tiger.

11-Good heroes don't cheat, they always tell the truth. When they do, their purpose is not to harm, but to help and give justice.

(Category: **Honesty and truth**)

31 MU, 17 boys and 14 girls

Example

We have to give the money back, they don't belong to us. ...The court decided to call the Sun and ask about the little cat. "It was night, I wasn't there, said the sun. But I know this cat. She is a good cat". The sun smiled to the cat and asked for forgiveness. I can't tell I saw you, I wasn't there. But don't worry, I have an idea...

12-People admire ethical heroes and they are popular, they have friends. At the end, their real friends prove to be rather rare. But they have good friends, even though they don't know at first. Ethical heroes need friends and sometimes they are vulnerable. From time to time, they feel abandoned but they don't trust others easily without reasoning.

(Category: **Friendship**)

48 MU, 24 boys and 24 girls

Examples

-The sun has an open eye, like the Cyclops. But he has only friends. Not like Odysseus. The sun is my friend, too. Once I almost fell in a hole with water near

*my home. But The Sun sparkled in the water of the hole. And I didn't fall.
Thanks, Sun...er.. ..*

*-...The sun is everywhere at the same time, that's why everybody knows him, he
is like god. Everybody wants to be his friend. In Greece we are better friends with
the sun. He is here most of the time. But in other places, no. Africa is a close
friend of sun, too.*

13-The end of an ethical hero is mostly good for all.

(Category: **Circular solution –Happily ending stories**) Motives of stories:
**Circular- Home /safe environment for a start –safe ending through inter-
rupting dangerous episodes of an adventure**)

59 MU, 28 boys, 31 girls

Examples

*-The sun lived at this side...He is alive now. East is the name of his home. But
he doesn't stay at home. He has so many friends. He visits all of them every day...
At night, he goes back home to sleep on the other side. He is tired every night, and
sleeps well. I Think he turns down the west path up in the sky, you see? .Up there.
And he lived well...*

*-And it was a very hot and strong sun. It tore at it, the other star... "The sun is
really stupid even the sea can turn his light down. But the sun put a bomb to the
bad stars and relieved the good planets from threats. They lived happily ever after.*

III. Discussion

Children in tasks of literacy acquisition such as narration and storytelling
demonstrate a multitude of ethical expressions. Even the children of eight and
nine years that took part in the experiment in school settings, remain at a level
in which their knowledge about ethical behavior is multifaceted. It is appar-
ent that some categories in our study are related.

Children's language is not free of moral comments and ethics of characters
in their storytelling reflect their concepts about human behavior. From the
children's point of view, to be an ethical person consists mostly of helping oth-
ers or behaving altruistically, as the opposite of selfish behavior. Contem-po-
rary ethics of children seem to have changed in comparison with findings of
similar researches on children's concepts of ethics (e.g. Kohlberg, 1981). They
don't prefer, as we will see, "obedience" and the fear of "punishment" as a
reason for being good any more. They mostly project "independence" and
taking "risks" as more preferable components than 'obedience' to an ethical
behavior.

The last category involving the circular exploration of the character from

home out to the world and all the way back home may be compared or related to the psychological content of Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby, 1995). This theory suggests that the child's starting point in narration is from a person with whom he or she is in regular interplay with in discovering the world. The assigned or attachment figure provides the secure settings of the base from which the unknown environment may be searched and end in the experience of a good life.

Further research on the ethical reflection of children ought to examine other linguistic settings such as story-writing instead of storytelling and other literacy approaches in class at different school or family environments, in verbal context with younger and older children.

Children's judgments about the good and the bad, their reasoning in relation to the characters of the story involve their previous experience of ethical dilemmas (such as stories told to them with moral judgments, comments of adults, especially parents, in a familiar environment). Experiences are structured through children's formulations of the ethical traits with the aid of primary qualities such as altruism, generosity, strength, potentiality. There were no prominent differences between Greek boys and girls.

In the children's narratives the first category of behavior of the main character of the story moves from uniformity to being special. We found fifty-two units of meaning concerning this certain dilemma of endeavors where heroes put themselves in danger in order to feel special. This certain category can be related to the last one which also has many units of ethical meaning concerning adventure and effort from safe to risky episodes with the aim of obtaining safety in terms of ethical action. Ethical action as a component of moving from boring usual life to risky and extraordinary choices and adventures of the hero seems to be the most profound category in our study.

Risky persons and right persons are met in one character. Special heroes do the right thing with actions that cause the surprise to others. A lot can be said on this finding and a more concrete search of children's experiences from television, readings and close discussions on stereotypes could avoid pitfalls and dangers of oversimplifying or reinforcing stereotypes on ethical shapes.

Another interesting category to be discussed has to do with the ideal viewpoint of children's preference (36 MU) to heroes who know how to do things and find solutions to difficult situations (2nd category). The number of units concerning knowledge was important, but not as much as the physical power and muscular strength involved in traits (59), as we can assume, for example, from the study results of the 4th category.

Children correlate power to ethical traits more than intelligence alone. In other words, they choose their heroes to be strong and smart rather than to be

just smart. They also refer to physical strength in more units of meaning which can be explained through the picture that they have for themselves at this age. Young children wish to become big and strong as soon as possible. This tension can be projected in their ideal pictures of characters as highly valued in storytelling. Other components such as the cultural shaping of cognitive abilities and attitudes toward ethical behavior need further investigation.

The third category of independent traits and the dilemma between doing the right thing to avoid punishment and doing the right thing even though the hero risks to be punished because of his/her fair behavior, is also interesting and needs to be compared to the eighth category (punishment and reward).

On the basis of this study we assume that children prefer the independent person than the obedient person in more units (41 versus 19). Thus, in most cases the storytellers imply that independence is a sequence of reasonable choices of persons involved in the episodes of the story.

Justice and altruism are prevalent and valued on a frequent basis in children's narratives. This is profound in the fourth category (59 MUs) and the sixth one (38) where young children express the good motives of the hero in good actions for global use. Even half of the units studied mentioned the good for others or the world as a total form, as more important than the good for individual profit. However, this finding (52 MUs) may be false because the sun as a starting point for a story telling involves general rather than particular schemas in action.

A more secure finding can be illustrated from the next category, the seventh (7th), which gives the opportunity for discussion on particular components in children's language through a process of clarifi-cation and refinement with subcategories. Generosity, forgiveness, sharing, superiority, mental flexibil-ity as human traits are clear in children's preferences for this category. The sense of humor (MUs: 17) is portrayed as a substantial element of a 'good' hero's traits (Subcategory 7f). This can be considered as a cluster of great value, which is involved in the solution of the story's ending (see also the last category, 13th). It may be considered as a typical trait that children adjust to the ideal picture of a person.

To a degree the same suggestion can be adjusted to the preference of children to have their good heroes taking good care of weak and non-main characters of the story. Protection of weak people is mentioned in 41 units, which is a secure portion of validity in the study.

A certainly important virtue discussed in the stories is the dilemma of choosing between truths and lies. Although truth is involved in straight preference, lies can be involved in good traits for the hero's achievement and the good result at the end of the story (something must be accomplished to attain

the desired effect, which is the right and pleasant ending of the plot).

The issue of friendship seems to be involved in "good" values for the created hero's behavior. (48 MUs). This category can be discussed with regard to the last category, which we have already mentioned as the most interesting and common in our study. A lot can be said about this category from a cultural point of view. The culture observed and the particular social influences to children's concepts of the right behavior places great value on praising and rewarding children for their participation and accomplishment both in school and in society. It would be a sad irony or an incomplete study of the research project we present here, if we didn't take into account social, cultural and psychological integral parts of children's emotional and mental exposure to this linguistic study.

The most important factor in the critique of the development of the study is to keep aware of how linguistic functions and storytelling can shape and reflect children's values from childhood to adulthood as a cognitive filter for ethical dilemmas with methods that teachers encourage when teaching oral language. When we ask or listen to children's stories about their heroes, we make decisions on moral components through ethical reflection. Interruption of speech in storytelling and guided storytelling through asking questions may change the determination of children's meaning making. Teaching linguistic approaches in terms of intellectual styles imply ethical styles, since narration is involved in language communication and language social or cultural dynamics. Children's and adult's storytelling is always part of this consideration.

Finally, once alerted to the possibilities of self-directed speech as an intellectual style, it becomes possible to see this study in terms of proceeding validity of the children's literacy. Teachers of language classes should be aware of the intellectual styles (Zhang& Sternberg, 2005) in educational settings involving ethical approaches and learning contexts. This sort of studies raises fewer ethical and political dilemmas for the researcher because of their theoretical nature, since theory is dealing with textual analysis of speech. In contrast to scientific study, practice in literacy education is a more complicated task as it is a contemporaneous incidence with school life. Therefore, investigation on ethical units of meaning is constructed and occurs every minute that language is used from practitioners in school settings.

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