



THE EFFECT OF TRADITIONAL GAMES ON THE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

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Annotation: This article talks about the effect of Traditional Games on language development of children. Traditional games have become a key tool for integrating young people in our society and gaining self-esteem. Playing traditional games help children to think for themselves, learn cooperation and teamwork skills, work on strategies and tactics, and learn how to hold a conversation with adults. Children play a role in social relations with social behavior, coming from the top of social conflict, social maturation, and self-esteem. The experiences gained while playing games give the child the ability to find solutions to the problems they face in the social environment. Traditional games have been shown to benefit children's cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development. Hence, it is distressing to see most children miss out on these benefits associated with traditional games. It is determined that traditional games increased the children's language development in a positive way.

Key words: Traditional games ; children ; primary education; students' association; development ; behavior ; play; learn ; give ; improving ; school ; language ; group ; team ; make ; students ; knowledge .

There are a lot of games which are meant for different age groups of children and adults. Some of those are used in working with children, due to the possible effects on the development of a child's psycho-physical state. Game gives the child a possibility of active participation and enables development, achieving self-confidence and better relations within the group. At a younger school age, play has



a special significance for children's improvement and can easily be integrated in the teaching process.

In higher grades play can be used within workshops, with the goal of improving children's communication skills and nonviolent conflict resolution. The multitude of games intended for school age also gives numerous possibilities for their application in working with children. Games are changing and are adjusted to the requirements of time in which they are implemented. Some old, traditional games, common in the past, are forgotten and disappear because today's children no longer know them. The problem of communication between people of different generations arises, but also between peers who spend less and less time in joint activities. Traditional games, which were the integral part of our ancestors' childhood, have almost vanished. Our parents' generations still recall some of those, but children in modern society know them poorly. They have had a great significance and have left a mark in the childhood of every human who played them. Traditional games did not require expensive props and everyone could play, regardless of age or gender. The question that arises is why parents no longer pass on traditional games to their children. Perhaps it is because they are trying to be contemporary or, due to the influence of the consumer society we live in, they have replaced genuine activities with their children with material goods. Today's children are poorer, because the feeling of togetherness which pervades in traditional games is lacking. Through those games children learned the skills of socialisation and acquired rules of behavior which apply during play. Every game has certain rules, and abiding by those rules gives meaning to the game. In the past, many more games than today existed, and there was no technique which made a young person physically passive during play (Vujanović, 2009). In traditional games the players pay attention to abiding by the rules and warn each other about certain deflections. Children are very critical and consistent in implementing certain rules. During play they warn each other about behavior which is not allowed. Today, the basic problem in working with children is adopting the rules and respecting agreements. It is very important to absorb the rules of behavior at the beginning of schooling. Through play children learn the fastest and acquire rules easier. The problem which arises with some children at the beginning of schooling is poor socialisation which results in difficulties in child's learning and behavior. Play helps to develop the ability of communication, instigates faster socialisation of a child and helps with establishing better relations with others. Play is an indispensable part of growing up. With it we can influence the positive growth and development of an independent child who cooperates with his/her peers. Traditional games give huge



possibilities for teachers, parents and children, so it is necessary to protect them from oblivion. Each of the games is designed for a certain number of players, from pair games to games in larger groups. Games are defined by rules and fill players with pleasure, and in doing so have the power of positive influence on those who play them. This feature of the game makes it possible for it to be widely implemented in working with children of preschool and early school age. With its influence, play helps fight negative influences amongst children and develop their positive characteristics. Play influences versatile developments of a child and creates new learning possibilities.

Play is an activity tied to childhood and it is an integral part of growing up. Some games revive the sense of belonging to a certain group, awaken emotions and send us back to the time of childhood. ‘Each of us knows play – knows it from our own experiences and from watching the everyday surroundings of man. As a phenomenon, play is familiar, close to us and ordinary’ (Fink, 2000, p.14)¹

‘As a multifunctional activity, play creates tension and excitement. It is realised in specific verbal and nonverbal communications (signals, agreements, rules, messages, and requirements). Play is motivated from within, so it is always free, open and valuable for children’ (Stevanović, 2000, p. 227). Through play, a child experiments and learns with a series of attempts and mistakes, cooperating with others. Through play, a child develops and communicates with its surroundings. Play is the activity which is different for a child and for adults, because adults consider it as fun in their free time. For a child, play is a work activity, form of learning and way of having fun. Preoccupation with play gives the players a possibility to imagine some other space and time in which it is happening. In play, a child stops being aware of surrounding reality, real people and events. It enters its imaginary world, creating the illusion of reality and some made up world in which special laws apply. Play is not only the preparation for future life, but also the content of child’s life (Malić & Mužić, 1986). A child makes its first social contacts by playing with other children and, because of that, play is an important segment in realising relations of individuals within a certain group.

In the process of growing up, a child communicates with other children and adults in different situations. This communication is tied to curricular and extracurricular activities in school and free time, through which a child is constantly developing and progressing. Play gives possibilities for learning social roles and acquiring behavioural norms. A child communicates with other participants in the game. Through play, it learns about itself and others, and also gets to know the values



which it will encounter throughout life. It is necessary to learn to accept the standpoints of others and to respect opinions of others, which is made possible for a child by participating in a game with its peers. Roller-Halačev and Vegar (1986) accentuate the role of play in the developmental process. Child's play ensures unity in respect to physical, intellectual, emotional and social growth of a child. Play affects child's bodily growth and development. Through play, a child develops and progresses in communication with others, and is also being prepared for life in society. At the same time, a child plays and learns, so we can speak of educational importance of play. Therapeutic influence of play in releasing emotional tension is also important.

Traditional games are part of one's heritage and cultural tradition, but, with the passing of time, they are being forgotten and are not passed on to younger generations, due to modern lifestyle and growing alienation. 'Many old games have lasted long, fiercely resisting all changes in people's lives, so some of them survived till the present day and, even if they are not present in today's inventory of children's games, at least they remained in the memory of older generations' (Kožić, 1988, p. 51). Traditional games are linked to life in the country. They are an integral part of childhood in rural areas. These games cannot be seen outside the context of time and space in which they existed. By knowing the conditions of life in our villages in the past, we can understand their simplicity and modesty in the use of props. The cause of this is poverty and modest conditions in which people lived in the country. Children used props from the natural surroundings in which they lived and, by using imaginative solutions, they played freely and had fun. Matoković (2003) accentuates that the type of child's play and its performance were defined by seasons, environment and space in which it took place. Children played in the meadows, pastures and planes where cattle grazed, by rivers and streams where they bathed, in the courtyards and on village roads. In winter, games were played in houses and in the snow, in river beds, frozen rivers and streams. With song and dance, children participated in customs connected with religious holidays throughout the whole year. Despite their obligations children found the time and place for play. Traditional games are connected with watching over cattle on pastures, and they were adjusted to these conditions. In time, changes occurred in rural life and many games disappeared. Due to the progress in technology and settlements spreading, small shepherds disappeared and, with them, their interesting games.

Traditional games are studied and noted with the goal of preserving some region's tradition, or influence of a certain game on the child and its development is



being examined. One of the methods which are used to study traditional games is noting games in their original form, the way they are described by older villagers (interview). Some games exist in the memory of older narrators who describe them. Games are noted and so valuable collections of games which are no longer played are created, but the testimonies of those who had once played them remain. Kolbas (1999) describes the way population passed the time with shepherd's games, children's games and adult fun. Shepherd's games are numerous because shepherds had much time for various forms of entertainment, and today old people remember these games which are mostly unknown to young people. With their testimonies, narrators who participate in research help save some of the old folk's games from oblivion. Usually they are older people who remember games from their own childhood, and their descriptions of customs and games are of extreme importance in keeping traditional heritage.

The research results have shown the improvement of students' relations after traditional games implementation. Before the implementation, 76% of the students in class teaching considered relations with other students to be good, and after the application of traditional games that percentage was 85%. The results have also shown that students played traditional games less during school breaks, and more after classes. More than one reason can be stated to explain the given results. At the beginning of implementing the programme, some difficulties connected with the lack of space and time for playing in school occurred, due to larger number of students in classes and insufficient space for playing. Since students learned the games in school, it took time to acquire the rules of particular games, and the problem of disregard for the games' rules also arose demanding teacher's intervention. It was harder to secure the mentioned conditions for playing in school, so it is understandable that students played the traditional games more outside of school. Furthermore, the research results have shown an increase in students' socializations after classes, and they were 36% prior to implementing traditional games and 51% after the implementation. Those results confirm the positive contribution of traditional games to spending quality free time outside classes. They also show the students' interest in this kind of content, which can be used in organising extracurricular activities. By analysing the data gathered before and after traditional games application, it was determined that the number of friends children played with has not changed significantly. Mostly, children played with six or more of their classmates, and that confirms good friendly relations between students in primary education. Good 109 Croatian Journal of Education, Vol.16; Sp.Ed.No.1/2014, pages: 95-112 relations within the class can be



considered the result of positive classroom climate in lower grades of primary school, and also the teacher's influence which affects the development of friendly relations in class by directly working with the students. Parents also have an important role in developing friendly relations in class. By encouraging their own child's socialization, they encourage the development of friendship with other students as well. Students have shown an interest and accepted traditional games, despite many modern games which are available today. 56% of the interviewed students consider that traditional games can improve their relations in class. It is important to accentuate that the implementation of traditional games alone does not require additional teacher's work, but his/her knowledge of the games and the desire to preserve tradition to which traditional games surely belong to. When introducing traditional games in teaching, different possibilities for their application in working with children have revealed themselves. In the course of the research, traditional games were used in PE teaching, but they can serve as motivation within all school subjects. In the initial primary school grades, games can be used with the goal of achieving better children's socialisation. It is possible to introduce traditional games as one of the extracurricular activities in school, through which students would learn and examine traditional games and customs of their homeland themselves through project and research work. Togetherness, which springs in play, is a prerequisite for more harmonious relationship within particular groups of children. The important segment in preserving traditional games is connecting with members of older generations, who pass their knowledge and experiences onto children. During this research, students examined and discovered new games in the course of their conversations with parents, relatives and other fellow-citizens. In this way, they got to know the tradition and values of their folk heritage. Further research is needed to examine traditional games of a certain area. Students, who would present the results to other students and parents, and organise presentations and competitions in traditional games, could participate in this research. Traditional games could, in such a way, be used to improve the quality of spending students' free time. This is one of the possibilities we can offer children, with the goal of their mutual relations improvement and the reduction of violent behaviour amongst school children. Traditional games are a cultural virtue and part of a tradition which should be nurtured and kept from oblivion. Play is an indispensable part of growing up and with it we can influence positive children's growth and their development as autonomous people. Therefore, traditional games offer immense possibilities for teachers, parents and children. This research contributes to the prevention of oblivion of some



interesting games, played by generations before us, and their educational values which are unjustly neglected and almost forgotten. A well deserved place should be secured for play and we should benefit from its positive effect on children's development.

During games, children not only have fun, but also experience basic moral values such as sharing, obeying the rules, showing respect to opponents, being tolerant, etc. Many researchers (Aneja, 2014; Aypay, 2016; Bozkurt, 2019; Dehkordi, 2017; Önder, 2018; Singh, 2011; Sulistyanningtyas & Fauziah, 2019) state that traditional games make positive contributions to children's perceptions of value.

For a long time, physical activities have been regarded as bio-energetic acts. It is until Marcel Mauss work that we discovered that bodily practices are cultural social phenomenon. Marcel Mauss defines body techniques as “the ways in which men, society by society, in a traditional way, know how to use their body” [MAUSS Marcel(1934)]. The ways of playing and moving one's body are not universal but as diverse as languages, clothes and dwellings. Adding to cultural aspect of body, there is diversity in practice movement. For examples, swimming is practiced differently from one society to another and even from one generation to another. In short, “each society has its own unique habits”. Mauss Marcel [MAUSS Marcel(1934)]. everything is not innate, but transmitted, learned and acquired through education. Everyone must learn to use their body according to what they learn from their family, their environment and their society. Everything is acquired. We are in the presence of a “phenomenon-biological-sociological. This emphasizes the strong impact of society individual's behavior. In fact, physical activities reflect their social context. P. Parlebas a pioneer of the praxiology-motrice sums up this phenomenon with the concept of “ethnomotricity” which is defined as the set of “fields and nature of motor practices considered from the angle of their relationship to their cultures and to the social environments in which they are located, developed” [Parlebas P.1981].

Likewise, we see “the game as a system” [Parlebas, P.1999]. There is interaction between the players themselves, and between the players and the environment. Thus, the player is continuously in interaction and in communication with others, whether it is his partner or his opponent, and in relation with the external environment which is the space where the game takes place, and it is in these interactions that the game makes sense [Parlebas, P.1990].

Thus, playful practices are not only physical acts, but they are also nourished by social representations, norms and values of a given group. Although, the richness, study of the games, there have been a little interest even ignored. A few classical



authors have taken an interest in play and have studied it as an object. Among them, Johan Huizinga, in his seminal work *Homo-ludens* [5]. He defined the game as follows: “A free action, felt as ‘fictitious’ and situated outside of everyday life, capable nevertheless of fully absorbing the player. An action devoid of any material interest and any utility that is accomplished in a time and in an expressly circumscribed space, taking place in order according to given rules.” Thus, gambling is a leisure and entertainment activity which allows the player to escape from work and obligations. But this freedom is achieved within the limits of time and within the framework of the circumscribed space. The game is rich, it has a meaning,. For Huizinga, play is older than culture and is the core of culture. He writes: “Culture in its primitive phase is played out. It does not arise from the game as a living fruit that separates from the mother plant, but it unfolds in the game and as a game.” He adds: “However, it is important to characterize it as a basis and a factor of culture. This approach is shared by Caillois [6]. According to the author, this activity is unrestricted. Gambling as a leisure hobby is opposed to well-spent working time. If the working time is paid and productive, the game is characterized by free and unproductive. “Indeed, the game produces nothing: neither good nor work. It is essentially sterile”. Another author Lévi-Strauss in (1962) devoted part of “A wild thought” to the analysis of an exotic game, with P. Bourdieu [7, 8, 9] who leaned on the question of the sociology of sporting tastes linked to style and social class. Much has been done since then, and the sociology of games has now established itself as a discipline in its own right. She therefore considers games to be a phenomenon that can be justified by a scientific approach, which attempts to objectify the movements of the human body, to understand how it develops and flourishes in a social environment.

The neglect of traditional games in the sports practices of daily life of leisure time and the predominance of sport raise the question of our identity. It could be described as invasion that require awareness. According to Hall, in order to Preserve the cultural aspect, and to escape the latent constraints of a naturalized culture “is to become actively and consciously involved in those aspects of one’s existence that seem most natural to him.” [10].

In fact, to escape the predominance of sport, there must be an awareness of the crucial role of traditional games as a cultural and socializing phenomenon. In fact, Socialization plays a crucial role in the development of a child’s personality. Through the socialization we are filling in the child by by the means of the bodily practices the standards to be respected, the values to be adopted, namely courage,



strength, wisdom... All these aspects structure to model of the behavior of the person in accordance with society's expectations.

It is clear that traditional games constitute a heritage of great wealth and a major source of information for the ethnologist. However; it is surprising that it has not been further exploited. It could be due to the mentality that prejudices traditional sports games as optional, uninteresting and old-fashioned objects; According to the general expression of those interviewed about traditional play practices in children's leisure games today, the answer is often: "Times have changed, this is a game from before."

The loss of traditional games is a factor of considerable cultural impoverishment which creates emptiness and boredom in the villages and reinforces the importation of another model of foreign entertainment: football, cinema, radio, TV (Warnier, Laburthe: *Ethnology, Anthropology*).

Reinventing these games, taking them out of memory, instilling them in state institutions (schools, sports clubs), making them known to this new generation ... require that we question the mentality that believes that sport is the unique model of excellence. To change this dilemma, it is up to sports managers and school educators to find solutions to reinvent games in children's sports activities as an identity cultural heritage, so that they know themselves as well as others. As Joseba Extxebeste suggested it so rightly: "It is not a question of seeing with nostalgia a time gone by, but of reinventing the traditional playful culture by adapting it to the needs and to the reality of our days." (Extxebeste Joseba,).

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