Child Concept of Comic Content Analysis

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Abstract: Researches studying correlation of child humor and cognitive abilities are being intensively conducted, social and emotional aspects of humor application thought childhood are being studied. However, actions that constitute funny for children are little learned; we still do not know much about emotional process in relation to them. Current research goal is to study child vision of comic, discovering cognitive actions and emotions which constitute funny. We offered children to make and tell a funny story. Using content analysis we managed to discover 6 action groups which participate in creating comic content by pre-school age children: metamorphose actions (39%); action which destroy the image of object or event (24%); actions of falling (19%); play actions (8.5%); conventional behavior violation of physiological type (5.7%); direct actions (3.8%). Child story descriptions for each group are given. Action group definition enables us to state that child cognitive advancement takes place through resolving contradictions, when first image and than idea little by little assume contradicting qualities. Mane character groups of children funny stories are: animals, humans, cartoon heroes, real objects. Related research showed that dialectic metamorphose actions take part in creating comic content. In their stories, children created situations with visible metamorphose strategy; it lay in initial image transformation to the opposite one in child's percept. Research results can be used in developing pre-school children humor understanding methods in creating child cognitive and emotional advancement programs.

Key words: Percept, humor understanding development, pre-school children, content analysis, funny stories, action metamorphose, story heroes, dialectic actions

INTRODUCTION

Researches on such humor aspects of child humor development (McGee, 1983), cognitive development to humor understanding relation (T. Shultz) and national humor properties (D.S. Likhachev) are intensively conducted in modern psychology (Martin, 2009). Home and foreign psychologist think that child laughing reaction is caused by unexpected or incoherent to child's developing cognitive patterns actions. In opinion of Sroufe and Wunsch (1972), laugher bursts out in response to unexpected event or event that contains contradiction; it corresponds to baby cognitive level but does not correlate with its developing cognitive patterns. Such incoherent events first draw child's attention, stimulate information perceiving efforts and then cause positive (laugher) or negative (cry) reaction (Sroufe and Wunsch, 1972).

When children come of pre-school age, laugher appears more and more often in the context of play collaboration and not just with parents but also with other children. Bainum *et al.* (1984)'s research established that smile and laugher as 3 years old children reaction more often were caused by funny actions (funny facial expressions or body-movements) and 5 years old children reaction more often were caused by funny verbal behavior (funny comments, stories, songs and unusual word use).

Being "prisoners of emotions" little pre-school children are yet unable to control their feelings and emotions and should and unusual combination of objects and events appear familiar to a child, it is comic (Tsivilskaya, 2014). A child laughs wildly seeing a dress-clothed trained dog or a picture of a cat in a hat. A child only sees the outer side of events that is why children can laugh seeing an elder man fall, who finds himself in unusual, somewhat funny situation. Only advancing personally children form ability to comprehend and control their tellings step by step, understand emotional state of other people.

Incoherency which is an important humor component can be described as usual expectation deviations, disruption of habitual order of things. Child expectations are based on cognitive patterns mental representations, stored in their memory. Children are apt to laugh at objects or events out of their pattern. Since, these patterns evolve as a child gains experience and gets to know the world around him, event type and objects he sees as incoherent and funny also change. What seems incoherent and funny in early age becomes offensive and less funny on later cognitive development stages when more complex older child's patterns enable him to comprehend new types of incoherency and more complex humor forms.

Cognitive development influence on humor percept and comprehension is stated in P. Maggie's research; author distinguishes 4 child humor development stages. McGee (1983) insisted that humor comprehension only appears in the middle of child's second year of life when children pass to cognitive development pre-operational stage and develop capacity for playing games in which they see themselves someone different (1 stage, defined as "incoherent actions towards objects"). According to McGee (1983), at this age children are able to imagine objects using inner mental patterns and their humor consists of object play assimilation into patterns they usually do not correspond to. Children often learn to make jokes when their occasional cognitive mistakes cause undeliberate parent or other adult laugher. When they understand such incoherent actions may cause people to laugh, they start to act like this on purpose to make others laugh.

Second humor development stage, according to McGee (1983) is called "incoherent object and event names"; it starts in the beginning of the 3rd year when a child becomes able to use language in play forms. This language comic use stage includes incorrect object and event naming. A child should know the correct word meaning and understand he uses it wrong in order for it to sound comic.

Third humor stage is called "conceptual incoherence", begins on 3rd year approximately, when a child starts to understand words are class-divided as objects or events which have certain key definition properties. On this stage, humor implies violation of one or more definition properties, not just incorrect object naming. Children also develop more complex syntactic abilities enabling them to play various language games, including rhyming words and creating words with no meaning.

Fourth and end stage of humor development according to McGee (1983) is called "plural meanings"; it starts at the age of 7 approximately, when children pass from inoperational stage to specific operation stage. Children obtain the ability to comprehend that other people may have opinions different from their own. Understanding of complex humor types, based on more complicated game with reality, comes. Thus, child event comprehending process takes place two ways: through "assimilation into reality" which is reality-based or "assimilation into imagination" or more play-type which is space and imagination based. In latter as similation type child reacts to incoherency, applying incorrect patterns to objects game some, treating objects as if they are something else (McGhee, 1983).

According to Piage (2003)'s theory, when a child acquires information unmatched to specific object or event pattern, he feels the incoherency. In order to fill this incoherent information with meaning, a child usually either interprets it differently, so it would correspond to existing pattern or changes the pattern they way it would include new information.

More complex image forthcoming, child sense of humor complicacy implies intellectual capacity development of new knowledge about outer world accretion.

Intellectual mechanisms (conceptual thinking development and ability to reconstruct in child's own mental space the psychic space of the other: images, motives and thoughts of situation other participants) provide "technical" side of the comic perception according to Shcherbakova and Osorina (2009). As soon as, these mechanisms begin functioning inside observer's personal meaning subjective system, understanding of comical emerges. Successful interpretation of behavior and general plot understanding depends on full and exact "reading" of comic text characters' psychological state by the recipient (Kholodnaia, 2004; Shcherbakova and Osorina, 2009).

Comic material context psychological transformations become possible only providing that recipient is emotionally developed, able to understand his own emotions and emotions of other people (Artemyeva, 2013a, b; Nigmatullina and Artemyeva, 2015; Akhmetzyanova, 2014).

Entering upon pre-school children concept of comical and funny research, we assumed that their concept of oppositions and contradictions would constitute their concept basics. We were interested to find out which thinking actions would take part in child funny stories' construction.

We assumed that dialectic thinking actions will take part in comic story creation for these are the very actions enabling colliding properties' and correlation's operating.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Total 78 children aged from 5-7 took part in the experiment. We offered children to make and tell a funny story. If a child found it difficult he was offered to remember a movie, cartoon or real-life funny story. The task was relatively difficult for children. Some children refused to remember or make a funny story, saying they don't know and don't remember funny stories and don't like to laugh. Some children made >1 story. All in all 105 stories were made and processed. In order to separate most commonly used actions and their groups a content analysis was held including software-assisted partial analysis (SPSS v.20.0 and MS Excel).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on 105 child story content analysis 6 action groups were made for action description children used to create comic content. Frequency (%) and rank of action description children used are showed in Table 1.

Metamorphosis action: Child stories in which direct narration was interrupted by action with event opposite to initial narration logic ("Hare got out of wolf's box and put the box on wolf's head", "Lynx came hunting for the fox but fox attacked the lynx and made it run away", "Man ate the warlock who wanted to eat him", "Gandma nad grandpa bought a bull and he started goring wolves", "A man who fell into the air-hole jumped out of it and became an ice statue") were put into this group.

Incoherency, object image disruption: This group consists of stories and tales in which children endowed objects and events with inexistent properties ("Frog speaks human tongue", "A bed with a tongue", "Talking traffic lights", "Snowflake fell and did not melt", "Food fell from the sky"). Invent image incoherency to the real one seemed funny and amusing to children. In child story, historical images of objects and events have been violated.

Fall: This group contains answers, reflecting children, people, animals and objects fall from certain hight ("Fell from chin-up bar to the couch", "A man swung the maul and dropped it on his own head", "A cat fell while catching mice", "A boy stumbled and fell into snow pile", "A wolf fell from the tree scared by squirrels' cries", "A girl climbed the mountain and fell"). The funny thing was that someone felt bad; negative affective side of humor manifested itself.

Play action, collaboration: This group answers seemed funny and amusing to children because they contained communication, interaction with parents, small children and animals. Play interaction performed by child story heroes within social convention gave heroes a lot of pleasure. Family members and animals are heroes of these stories ("It was fun when a dolphin touched my face and we wanted to talk to each other", "Daddy tickled", "Mouse and hare became friends and had fun", "Girl bought his little brother a present and played with him"). Spotlighting such actions confirms social nature of humor, emphasizing its positive affective component.

Social convention violation (of physical type): Social convention violation (of physical type) seemed funny to children ("Boys played and made funny noises", "Director farts").

Direct (simple) actions: This group contains child answers in which usual, standard cooperation between subject and object and between subjects is described ("Policemen are saving the car", "Boy was brought back to his mother" etc.). Child story analysis enabled us to come forth with main child comic stories' heroes (Table 2).

Table 1: Groups of actions and frequency children use them

Action group	Child choice (%)
Metamorphosis action	39 (I)
Incoherency, object image disruption	24 (II)
Fall	19 (III)
Play actions, collaboration	8.5 (IV)
Social convention violation (physical type)	5.7 (V)
Direct actions	3.8 (VI)

Table 2: Frequency of hero appearance in child stories

Groups	Hero quantity in a group	Frequency of appearance in a group	Heroes
Animals	51	9	Wolf
		7	Cat, Kitten
		5	Hare
		4 choices accordingly	Dog, Fox
		3 choices accordingly	Mouse, Squirrel, Hen, Bear
		2 choices accordingly	Hedgehog, Frog
		1 choice accordingly	Bull, Lynx, Elephant, Goat, Horse
Human	37	16	Boy, Girl
		10	Man
		6	Children
		3	Grandma, Grandpa
		2	Policeman
Cartoon heroes	31	4	Smeshariki
		3	Masha and the Bear
		2 choices accordingly	Sponge Bob, Kolobok
		1 choice accordingly	Dwarfs, Zhaika, Warlock, Clown, Petrushka, Dragon, Red Riding Hood, Djinn, Fixies, Cinderella, Magician, Deuce, Robot
Real subjects	19	3	Car
		2	Footwear (slippers, baffies)
		2	Headwear (hat, coif)

Table 2: Continue

Groups	Hero quantity in a group	Frequency of appearance in a group	Heroes
	2		Building (tower, house)
		1 choice accordingly	Maul, Patty Cake, Money. Traffic Light, Snowflake, Skates, Berry, Bubbles, Tree, Pan

Most popular story heroes were animals. Most popular among children are images of wolf, hare, cat, fox and dog. Stories are often told by a boy or a gill narrator. Favorite cartoon heroes from "Smashariki" and "Masha and the Bear" often make heroes for children comic stories. Object images are less common for children stories. Child story hero analysis may prove useful in further diagnostic methods developing of pre-school children humor comprehension (Artem'eva, 2001).

CONCLUSION

Child story analysis confirmed research results, stating that: humor is caused by contradictions which need to be resolved. Comic component function is not only to entertain and create propitious emotional background but also to create certain barriers to complicate the task for children. A task to create a comic story was rather difficult for children, some refused to perform it. This statement corresponds to research results by Shcherbakova and Osorina (2009) who discovered that task comic content presents difficulty for children, a child can only understand it in case of discovering incoherency, contradiction by which we mean deviation or difference from usual expectations.

Research, we held enables us to come up with 6 strategies for comic story creating by pre-school children. Direct actions children stated in their stories can't actually be called funny or referring to comic context. Contradiction to norms, present in children stories, placed in "Social behavior violation" cause outer humor (physiological type violation is represented). In child stories we place in "Play action, collaboration" and "Fall" positive affective humor component prevails. In "Fall" story group negative emotional component dominates. In "Play action, collaboration" group positive emotion prevail. In "Incoherency, image concept violation" and "Metamorphosis action" groups concept cognitive component is mainly shown. Total 39% of children use dialectic metamorphosis action in creating comic stories. In researches of Veraksa (2010) and Baianova (1996) is stated that dialectic action develops in pre-school childhood and is most successful in controversial situation resolution. Research; we undertook showed that dialectic metamorphose action takes part in creating comic content. Children created situations with metamorphose strategy in their stories. Situation is that in his imagination a child passes from one image and idea to the other which is opposite. Groups; we came up with enable us to state that child thinking development is based on resolving contradictions when first an image and then an idea obtain controversial properties in their marginal manifestation (Artem'eva, 2012; Artemyeva, 2014).

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