NARRATIVE COMPETENCE IN PRETENSE PLAY AND STORIES

R. Glaubman, H. Glaubman
Bar Ilan University (ISRAEL)

Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to examine the Realistic-Imaginal Scale (RIS) as an appropriate and valid measuring instrument for the analysis of children's narratives in pretense play as well as in replica stories. The RIS was constructed based on a structure of behavioral components manifested in the relevant empirical literature derived from works of Bruner and Fein. The scale consisted of 17 items grouped into four categories: The Physical World, Social-Cultural Content, Inter and Intra-Personal Relations and Structural Features. The narratives were measured on three levels of the realistic-imaginary scale:

R - Realistic;
T - Transitional;
I – Imaginal.

On each occasion of a child's act in play, or a story element, they would receive a score of 1 in the corresponding level. The score sum of each level constituted the child's final score. To illustrate, when a child acted a drinking action in play, if an actual object (e.g. an empty cup) was used the child would receive a score of 1 on the R level. If a substitutional object (e.g. a round playing block) was employed to execute the action a score of 1 would be granted on the T level. When the play action of drinking was performed using no objects at all (e.g. using an imaginary cup) a score of 1 would be allotted on the I level. In the present study, 92 play observations were collected of 31 Israeli children from six kindergartens of age 5:0-5:8. The scale was also applied to 16 Replica Stories chosen from a collection of 52 stories told by 16 American children between the ages of 4 and 5 years.

The results show inter-scorer reliability of 92% for pretense play scores and 94% for the replica story scores. A correlation of $r=.74$ with Applebee's narrative organization scores was found indicating its validity. Moreover, the score distributions revealed a striking resemblance between these two culturally and contextually different samples corroborating the scale's validity.

In conclusion, the study substantiated the RIS as a potent tool for research in the field of children's narratives in both - pretense play and replica stories. This is based not only upon the reliability and validity data, but also on the strong theoretical framework, and on the resemblance between the score distributions of two culturally different samples.

Keywords: RIS-Realistic-Imaginal Scale, narratives, pretense play, replica stories.