

THE SITUATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF COHERENT SPEECH OF 5-6 YEAR OLD CHILDREN AT PRESCHOOLS IN THAI NGUYEN PROVINCE

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 27/02/2023 Revised: 31/3/2023 Published: 31/3/2023	Coherent speech is a form of mental activity that determines a child's level of language and intellectual development. The development of coherent speech has an important impact on the formation of a child's personality and socialization ability, and it largely determines success in the early school years. Therefore, the development of coherent speech is the central task of the speech development process for preschool children. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess the level of coherent speech development of 5-6-year-old preschool children. The study used the document research method to synthesize articles and scientific works related to the research problem, and at the same time using qualitative research methods and quantitative research methods to collect, process and evaluate the results of the development of coherent speech of 132 preschool children 5-6 years old at preschools in Thai Nguyen province. Survey results show that, while speech coherence was good in some children, it was medium and low in most children who participated in the survey. This result contributes to providing useful information in building a measure of coherent speech development for 5-6 year old preschool children.
KEYWORDS	
Language	
Coherent speech	
Coherent monologue speech	
Coherent speech development	
Kindergarten children	

THỰC TRẠNG MỨC ĐỘ PHÁT TRIỂN LỜI NÓI MẠCH LẠC CỦA TRẺ 5-6 TUỔI TẠI CÁC TRƯỜNG MẦM NON TRÊN ĐỊA BÀN TỈNH THÁI NGUYÊN

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài: 27/02/2023 Ngày hoàn thiện: 31/3/2023 Ngày đăng: 31/3/2023	Lời nói mạch lạc là một dạng hoạt động trí óc quyết định mức độ phát triển không chỉ của ngôn ngữ mà còn cả sự phát triển trí tuệ của trẻ. Sự phát triển của lời nói mạch lạc có tầm quan trọng rất lớn đối với việc hình thành nhân cách, khả năng xã hội hóa của trẻ và quyết định phần lớn đến sự thành công ở giai đoạn đầu đi học. Do đó, phát triển lời nói mạch lạc là nhiệm vụ trung tâm của quá trình phát triển lời nói của trẻ mẫu giáo. Chính vì vậy, nghiên cứu này được thực hiện nhằm mục đích đánh giá mức độ phát triển lời nói mạch lạc của trẻ mẫu giáo 5-6 tuổi. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp nghiên cứu tài liệu để tổng hợp các bài báo, công trình khoa học có liên quan đến vấn đề nghiên cứu, đồng thời sử dụng phương pháp nghiên cứu định tính và phương pháp nghiên cứu định lượng để tiến hành thu thập, xử lý, đánh giá kết quả mức độ phát triển lời nói mạch lạc của 132 trẻ mẫu giáo 5-6 tuổi tại các trường mầm non trên địa bàn tỉnh Thái Nguyên. Kết quả khảo sát cho thấy, bên cạnh một số ít trẻ có mức độ phát triển lời nói mạch lạc ở mức tốt, lời nói mạch lạc của đa số trẻ còn ở mức trung bình và thấp. Kết quả này góp phần cung cấp thông tin hữu ích trong việc xây dựng biện pháp phát triển lời nói mạch lạc cho trẻ mẫu giáo 5-6 tuổi.
TỪ KHÓA	
Ngôn ngữ	
Lời nói mạch lạc	
Lời nói độc thoại mạch lạc	
Sự phát triển lời nói mạch lạc	
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1. Introduction

Coherent speech, as a special type of speech, has become a topic of interest not only in the field of linguistics but also in the fields of psychology, pedagogy, and societal study and medicine. From in-depth studies, it is shown that “coherent speech” (CS) is not always understood with a single meaning. The complexity of the term gives “coherent speech” a variety of interpretations. According to Alekseeva and Yashina [1], coherent speech is a detailed statement of semantics (a series of logically combined sentences), which brings about communication and mutual understanding. According to Lvov [2], CS (monologue) is a type of speech that is organized according to the laws of logic, grammar and layout, being a single whole, having a theme; performing a certain function, being independent and relatively complete, being divided into structural components and more or less meaningful. In Vietnam, the study of CS started around the second half of the twentieth century with the refraction of the Soviet Union's research results on CS. Up to now, studies on CS in Vietnam show that, on the one hand, they have inherited the results of previous studies, on the other hand, there is a tendency to develop theories based on new conditions and situations. With the consensus on CS of Ph.A. Sokhin, author Dinh Hong Thai cited the concept of CS as follows: "Coherent speech is understood as an extended expression of a definite content that is performed in a logical, sequential, precise, grammatically correct manner and expressive" [3]. Most recently, authors La Thi Bac Ly, Nguyen Thi Thu Nga, Cao Thi Hong Nhung, in a published study on CS, including that CS is the product of speaking activities in which speakers perform a certain content/topic clearly and fluently, and there is a reasonable connection of thoughts, feelings, method of linking sentences and layout to achieve the listener's understanding [4]. From the above points of view, some basic characteristics of CS (monologue) can be pointed out as follows: having a topic and focusing on that topic; implementing topic logically; having a clear layout; using connectors properly; being grammatically correct and meaningful [5].

CS has important implications for the comprehensive development of young children in general, 5-6-year-old preschool children in particular. Many researchers emphasize that CS clearly shows the close connection between speech and psychological aspects of children [1], [5], [6]. It is considered as a knot that converges many different aspects of mental development such as thinking, memory, perception, imagination, etc. Hrechyshkina [7] asserted that coherent speech is not only a product of speech but also an intellectual activity. Sharing the same opinion, Khmelkova [6] believes that coherent speech is the highest form of speech thinking activity - which determines the level of speech and mental development of children. Therefore, basically, the level of achievement of CS is important for the development of 5-6 year old preschool children. Coherent speech not only helps 5-6-year-olds develop thinking, both visual and logical ones [8], but also has a particularly important meaning for children's intellectual development [9]. Besides, CS also helps children's communication process to take place effectively [5] because people around them can understand what they need and think thanks to their clear and coherent speech [8]. Alekseeva and Yashina [1] assessed that the children's speech development and native language proficiency are two of the main factors influencing their personality formation and the development of values of the national culture. Besides, CS is also a means for children to perceive the world around them, and at the same time is a necessary preparation for children to enter first grade [10] and lays the groundwork for discourses in written form [11].

From the presentation and analysis of the above viewpoints, it can be seen that the development of CS has important implications for 5-6 year old preschool children, especially in the context of preparing children with the necessary prerequisites for entering elementary school. However, a child's coherent speech must be taught specifically because this skill does not arise spontaneously in the process of growing up. In order to give practical measures and ensure feasibility, it is necessary to study the actual status of children's CS development. Therefore, this article will focus on presenting the survey results and making general assessments to clarify the following research

questions: (1) At which level is the development of CS of 5-6-year-old children? (2) What is the difference between children in urban-rural areas and those in mountainous areas? (3) Does gender affect the level of CS development of 5-6 years old children?

2. Methodology

2.1. Subjects, time and location of the study

This study was conducted on 132 5–6 year old preschool children studying at several preschools in Thai Nguyen province. The children participating in the survey were selected by cluster sampling, stratified random sampling and quota sampling. After identifying suitable schools, the researchers conducted a list of 5-6 year old kindergarten classes and randomly selected one class in each school. All children in these grades were classified into a number of strata with similar characteristics (gender stratum; mountainous strata and urban-rural stratum), and then a criterion sampling method was applied to select a number of children and included in the general sample. In this study, there are 66 boys and 66 girls. The number of survey samples by each school is described in the table below:

Table 1. Information about subjects by school unit

No.	School name	Number of samples
1	Quang Trung kindergarten	22
2	19/5 – Thai Nguyen city kindergarten	21
3	Huong Son kindergarten	20
4	Van Lang kindergarten	21
5	Phu Cuong kindergarten	26
6	Yen Trach kindergarten	22

The author received parental agreement to conduct the study on all children participating in the study. The study was conducted from August to September 2021.

2.2. Data collecting method

To collect children's language samples, the study used the following exercises/tasks: (1) describing toys (describing a rooster made from felt); (2) telling a story based on a series of pictures with a certain plot (the comic series "Bunny goes to school"). All assignments/tasks were new to the children participating in the survey. In both exercises/assignments, the data collecting process follows the following steps: (1) providing children with perceptual objects (toys and picture books); (2) encouraging children to tell their own stories; (3) children telling stories based on their ability; if the child had difficulties in the process of telling, the teacher would support them with suggestions. When the child was telling their story, the teacher recorded it. The recording of the narration was conducted individually with each child in a quiet corner/room, avoiding the influence of one child's narration on another, making the assessment results inaccurate.

2.3. Data processing method

To process, analyze and evaluate the survey results, the research used a combination of qualitative research methods and quantitative research methods.

In this study, the scale to evaluate the CS development of preschool children was built based on the CS diagnostic technique of Yashina and Alekseeva [1] with specific criteria: 1) integrity and unity of the subject; 2) the structure and sequence of the story; 3) formal connectivity; 4) the length of the story; 5) independence; 6) fluency. In which, the score of each criterion would range from 0-2, based on the comparison of the rating scale with the expression level of each criterion in each child's story. The total score of each child for each task would range from 0-12. In which: at high level, children get 12 points; at medium level, children get 6-11 points; at low level, children get 0-5 points. The overall outcome of the assessment of CS development is determined by the total score of both completed tasks, with three levels: high, children score 17-24 points; medium, children get 9-16 points; low, children get 0-8 points.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The situation of CS development level of 5-6 year old preschool children

3.1.1. General results

Based on the analysis of the survey results, the study identified three levels of children in performing 2 exercises/tasks – which, at the same time, indicate the CS status in these children – as high, medium and low. The results of the assessment of the child's CS development are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. CS development level of 5-6 year old preschool children

Task	Level					
	High		Medium		Low	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
General result	21	15.9	55	41.7	56	42.4
Specific result						
(1) Describing toys	10	7.6	59	44.7	63	47.7
(2) Story telling with pictures	7	5.3	57	43.2	68	51.5

Table 2 shows that the CS levels of the majority of children were medium and low. In which, the percentage of children reaching the low level was high, with 42.4%, exceeding the medium level of 0.8% and the high level of 26.5%. Specifically, when describing toys, the percentage of children with a high level of 7.6%, lower than that of medium level, at 37.1%, and that of low level, at 40.2%. When telling stories with a series of pictures, the rate of children reaching a high level even accounted for only 5.3%, while the figures for medium level and low level were 43.2% and 51.5%, respectively. Thus, basically, the CS of 5-6 year old preschool children was not good.

Conducting qualitative analysis, we can see that there are significant differences in children's stories at three levels. The specific descriptions are presented below:

Regarding describing toys, at the high level, the story was complete in terms of composition, with connections between parts of speech, using a variety of linguistic means, including a large number of grammatically correct sentences with complex structures; the story flowed smoothly without gratuitous pauses. At the medium level, the structure and sequence of description was broken, children only listed the characteristics and the content of the story information; containing simple structured sentences; pausing a lot and needing help. At a low level, children tried to create a story with teacher's support but was limited to short sentences, without beginning or end, with a fair number of pauses.

Regarding story telling with pictures, at the high level, the child completely covered the events depicted in the pictures, establishing connections between events; semantic links were arranged in the correct sequence; the 3-part layout was complete and clear; using a variety of sentences and children could complete the story on their own. At the medium level, children covered certain parts of the event described, showing a slight bias about the situation, making some grammatical errors, incomplete composition, having certain pauses, needing help from a teacher. At the low level, despite being helped, children did not establish relationships between objects, stories violated the structure of the text, events were not guaranteed logically, they did not know how to use links; pausing constantly during the story.

3.1.2. Results according to each criterion

To evaluate the specific expression levels of CS in 5-6-year-old children according to two narrative forms, we analyzed each criterion of the CS evaluating scale. The results of the study are presented in Table 3.

Looking at table 3, we can see that there are differences in the expression of criteria of children's CS. These differences are described as follows:

* C1: The number of children reaching the medium level dominated in both narrative tasks. The percentage of children reaching the high level when describing toys was 3.0% higher than that of

children telling stories with pictures. Meanwhile, the proportions of children reaching the low level in the two tasks were not much different with that of story-telling by pictures being a little bit higher. With C1, high-achieving children often constructed stories appropriate to the situation, using semantic connections in the correct sequence. While the story's topic was slightly distorted at the medium level, the story had little semantic connection or was incomplete at the low level.

Table 3. The expression level of each CS criterion of 5-6 year old preschool children according to two narrative forms

Criteria	Describing toys						Story telling with pictures					
	High		Medium		Low		High		Medium		Low	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
C1	25	18.9	85	64.4	22	16.7	21	15.9	85	64.4	26	19.7
C2	21	15.9	69	52.3	42	31.8	12	9.1	70	53.0	50	37.9
C3	20	15.2	68	51.5	44	33.3	11	8.3	56	42.4	65	49.2
C4	16	12.1	81	61.4	35	26.5	14	10.6	68	51.5	50	37.9
C5	25	18.9	81	61.4	26	19.7	16	12.1	75	56.8	41	31.1
C6	45	34.1	72	54.5	15	11.4	32	24.2	75	56.8	25	18.9

Note: C1: Integrity and unity of the subject; C2: The structure and sequence of the story; C3: Formal connectivity; C4: The length of the story; C5: Independence; C6: Fluency

* C2: While the percentage of children achieving high level in describing the toy was higher than that of children telling the story with picture, the percentage of children reaching the average and low level when doing the latter was higher than that of doing the former, at 0.7% and 6.1%, respectively. In both tasks, the number of children reaching the medium level was quite similar and together accounted for a higher percentage than the other levels. With C2, at the high level, the child's story had a full layout, the events were logical, whereas at the medium level, the story had a clear structure but the events were not arranged logically. At the low level, the story did not have a proper layout; the events were presented in a disorderly manner.

* C3: While there were many children reaching the medium level in the task of describing toys, a majority of children reached the low level in the task of story-telling with pictures. The percentage of children who scored high on story-telling with pictures was 6.9% lower than that of children who scored in describing toys while the figure for low level exceeded 15.9%. High-level stories revealed the ability to use formal connectivity fluently and flexibly; while it was sometimes inappropriately used in medium-level stories. At the low level, stories often did not have formal connectivity.

* C4: Regarding the task of describing toys, children mainly reached the medium and low levels, there are some children reaching high level. In the task of story-telling with pictures, although the average rate of children reaching the highest position, it is still less than the task of describing toys by 9.9%. In terms of high-level children's stories, they were often quite long, having many difficult sentence patterns and few mistakes. At medium and low levels, children's stories were basically short, containing mostly simple sentences to describe or set up story situations. In particular, the stories of low-level children also contained many sentences that violate the grammatical structure.

* C5: In the toy describing task, while the percentage of children achieving high and low levels was not significantly different, the percentage of children reaching the medium level occupied the highest position, with 61.4%. This rate exceeded the figure for storytelling task, at 4.6%. The number of children reaching the low level in the task of picture-based storytelling was much larger than the high level, by 19.0%. In this criterion, children with high scores were able to tell the story independently, while at a medium level, children needed some cues to complete the story. At a low level, children needed a lot of support but still could not complete the full story.

* C6: This is the criterion with the highest percentage of children reaching the highest level of all criteria. In particular, the percentage of children who reached a high level when telling stories based on pictures was 9.9% less than that of children describing toys. The percentage of children

achieving the medium level in the two tasks prevailed with a negligible difference, only 2.3% in favor of the task of story-telling with pictures. The percentage of children who reached the low point when telling stories with pictures was 7.5% higher than describing toys. Thus, children's stories at the high level had absolutely no gratuitous pauses while there were few pauses in the story at a medium level; at the low level, the number of pauses in the story was quite high.

3.2. Comparison of CS development of 5-6 year old preschool children by region

Based on the criteria for identifying regions and areas, the study synthesized the survey results on the CS development of children in mountainous areas and urban-rural areas according to three levels. The results of the study are presented in a general way in Table 4.

Table 4. CS development level of 5-6 year old preschool children by region

Region	n	Level					
		High		Medium		Low	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Mountainous	69	0	0.0	29	42.0	40	58.0
Urban-rural	63	21	33.3	26	41.3	16	25.4

The results presented in Table 4 demonstrate that in urban-rural areas, 33.3% of children achieved high CS level, while no cases were recorded in mountainous areas. On the other hand, the proportion of children reaching average and low levels was higher in mountainous areas than in urban-rural areas. Specifically, the rate of children with medium CS level in mountainous areas accounted for 42.0%, which exceeded the rate in urban-rural areas by approximately 0.7%. Additionally, the rate of children reaching low levels in urban-rural areas was lower than in mountainous areas by 32.6%.

The results of the qualitative analysis reveal that most children in urban-rural areas could confidently and independently tell a story when asked to do so. Although children in this group knew how to express their emotions, their stories sometimes violated logic, lacked order, and had incomplete layout due to their age-specific characteristics. In contrast, the stories of mountainous children tended to be shorter and less informative. Most of the children's stories in mountainous areas were often interrupted, the structure and sequence of the narration were broken, and simple sentence structures prevailed, resulting in a lack of cohesion.

To gain a more specific perspective on the development level of CS of 5-6-year-old children in different regions, the study synthesized the results according to each task of storytelling. The findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Comparison of the CS development level of 5-6 year old preschool children in two tasks of storytelling across regions

Region	n	Task					
		Toy describing			Storytelling with pictures		
		Level	No.	%	Level	No.	%
Mountainous	69	High	0	0.0	High	0	0.0
		Medium	26	37.7	Medium	22	31.9
		Low	43	62.3	Low	47	68.1
Urban-rural	63	High	10	15.9	High	7	11.1
		Medium	33	52.4	Medium	35	55.6
		Low	20	31.7	Low	21	33.3

The data in Table 5 shows that in the toy describing task, while 15.9% of children in urban-rural areas achieved high levels of CS, no child in the mountainous areas achieved this level. The proportion of children with medium levels in the mountainous area was about 14.7% lower than that in the urban-rural area. Conversely, the gap in the proportion of children with low levels between the two areas was quite large, with 30.6% leaning towards the mountainous area. Thus,

the CS of the majority of children in the mountainous area was still at the medium and low levels. In the task of storytelling with pictures, while 11.1% of children in the urban-rural areas achieved high levels, there were no children in the mountainous areas. While the mountainous area recorded a high proportion of children (68.8%) with low levels of CS, the urban-rural area had an advantage in the proportion of children with average levels (55.6%). The results between the two storytelling tasks show that no child in the mountainous area achieved high levels of description and narration, while in the urban-rural area, the proportion of children with high levels of description exceeded the proportion of children with high levels of narration by 4.8%. The proportion of children with average and low levels of CS when telling stories according with pictures was higher than compared to that of describing toys.

3.3. Comparison of CS development level of 5-6 year old preschool children by gender

To evaluate the CS development of 5-6 year old preschool children, a survey was conducted on 132 children, comprising of 66 boys and 66 girls. The CS development levels of children by gender are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Comparison of CS development of boys and girls

Gender	n	Level					
		High		Medium		Low	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	66	11	16.7	27	40.9	28	42.4
Female	66	10	15.2	29	43.9	27	40.9

Quantitative analysis of CS development in 5-6 year old children by gender revealed that more boys had higher levels than girls. Specifically, while 16.7% of boys reached a high level, only 15.2% of girls reached this level. Similarly, the medium rate for girls was 43.9%, while the rate for boys was less than 3.0%. With low levels, the proportion of boys was 1.5% higher than girls. Nevertheless, the difference between boys and girls was minor, indicating that their CS development levels were similar. Qualitative analysis results indicated that girls tended to produce longer, more fluent stories with greater use of vocabulary and sentence patterns, whereas boys showed better ability to develop topics and construct story layouts.

The study synthesized the results for each narrative task to provide a detailed and specific assessment of CS development for boys and girls, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Comparison of the levels of CS development according to two tasks of boys and girls

Gender	n	Tasks					
		Toy describing			Storytelling with pictures		
		Level	No.	%	Level	No.	%
Male	66	High	4	6.1	High	3	4.5
		Medium	30	45.5	Medium	27	40.9
		Low	32	48.5	Low	36	54.5
Female	66	High	6	9.1	High	4	6.1
		Medium	30	45.5	Medium	30	45.5
		Low	30	45.5	Low	32	48.5

Table 7 results indicate that for both narrative tasks, the descriptive and narrative language proficiency of most boys and girls scored at a medium or low level, with only a few children achieving a high level. Specifically, in the task of describing toys, although the percentage of girls reaching a high level was about 3.0% higher than that of boys, the proportion of boys and girls reaching a medium level was equal, at 45.5%. Boys scored 3.0% higher than girls at a low level, with a rate of 48.5%. Notably, although the percentage of boys reaching a low level was higher than that of boys reaching a medium level, the percentage of girls reaching a low level was about the same. In the task of telling stories from pictures, the percentage of girls achieving a

higher level than boys was 1.6%. At the medium level, girls scored 4.6% higher than boys, but at a low level, the rate of boys exceeded that of girls by 6.0%. Consequently, in both storytelling tasks, the number of boys with the medium and low level was higher than that of girls.

4. Conclusion

The research study investigating the actual status of CS development among 5-6 year old preschool children revealed that their development levels were uneven, with most children scoring at a medium or low level, and only a small percentage achieving a high level. In particular, when analyzing and evaluating the development of CS by each type, it can be seen that more children achieved descriptive CS better than narrative CS. This has to do with the complexity of the visual aids as well as the requirements of the assessment exercise. When identifying and assessing children's CS development by region, the research results also show that children in urban areas showed higher levels of CS development than those in rural and mountainous areas. Although there were differences in the development levels of boys and girls, the discrepancy was minor, indicating a similar level of CS development between the genders. The results described in this study are relatively consistent with those of previous studies when they emphasize that the differences in gender and socioeconomic status contribute to diversity in the level of CS of 5-6 year old children. These research findings reinforce the importance of promoting CS development in 5-6 year old preschool children, as it is necessary and appropriate from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Furthermore, these results serve as a crucial basis for developing appropriate, timely, and effective measures to enhance CS development in preschool children. However, because of limited conditions, the survey was conducted in a narrow scope, and it has not analyzed the factors affecting the level of CS development of 5-6-year-old children. In the future, there is a need for further studies on a larger number of children in different regions, and in-depth studies on the factors affecting the level of CS development of preschool children in general.

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