

A Cultural-Historical Reading of the Emotional Development of Young Children

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Abstract

The telling of fairytales has been a longstanding practice within the field of early childhood education in many communities across the Asia Pacific region. But what do we know about how educators use fairytales for the development of emotions for preschool aged children? In drawing upon cultural-historical theory (Vygotsky, 1971, 1987, 1999), this paper presents the findings of a study into how fairytales were introduced to preschool aged children (n=30; from 3.3 to 5.3 years with mean age 4.2 years) and theorises the value of fairytales for the development of children's emotions in the context of the pedagogical conditions that are created through the use of fairytales. A pedagogical framework is introduced which captures the unique characteristics of fairy tales in the context of the pedagogical features that were used by the educators in the study presented. The key concept of affective imagination or emotional imagination is used to discuss the fairytale of "Jack and the Beanstalk" from the data set of 74 hours of digital video observations gathered over 16 preschool sessions.

Keywords : emotion regulation, emotional development, cultural-historical theory, fairytales

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Introduction

Much of the general literature into the emotional development of children treats emotions as an individual characteristic of the child (see Fleer & Hammer, 2013; Quiñones, 2013). In contrast, Vygotsky (1971) in his analysis of the psychology of art stated that “The feelings and emotions aroused by a work of art are socially conditioned” (p. 21). In this reading, emotional development can only be understood as a social condition and relation between the child and their social and material environment. This perspective opens up new lines of thinking about the emotional development of children in the birth to eight years period.

As children experience more intensive social relations and are oriented to fundamental human activity within those relations, children acquire a new sense of the social situation, where new goals, motives and norms of relationships between people become more consciously experienced. Zaporozhets (2002) found that through engaging in specifically created social situations, that “children gradually form more complex kinds of *anticipating* emotional regulation of [their] behavior” (pp. 64-65).

Interestingly, Zaporozhets (2002) also argued that fairytales can provide the necessary conditions for intensifying and making explicit emotions in social relations. Fairytale scholars have long pointed to the affective appeal of fairytales for children (Bettleheim, 1977) and the emotional bond between teller and listener (Warner, 1995). The issue of emotions in fairytales is gaining increasing attention in different areas of the literature, including sociology (Costa, 2012), language technology (Mohammad, 2011), computational linguistics (Volkova, Mohler, Meurers, Gerdemann & Bülthoff, 2010), and the intersection of folklore and popular culture in Japan (Shamoon, 2013). In the field of early childhood education, the role of fairytales in emotion regulation is gaining prominence (Hohr, 2000; Fleer & Hammer, 2013). According to Zaporozhets (2002), the fairytale acts as an ideal or developed form of emotional-cognitive activity. That is,

In the course of such emotional-cognitive activity, the child mentally occupies a specific position in the proposed circumstances, accomplishes certain imaginary actions, and acts out diverse variations of interaction with the environment in an ideal plane. Thus, he [sic] has an opportunity not only to envision, but also to experience the meaning of given situation, of the actions undertaken, and of their potential consequences for himself and for other people.. . . in the process of children’s assisting of and

empathizing with a literary hero. . . this activity initially is formed externally and extensively, and presupposes participation in directly perceived and experienced events. Only later, and only on this basis, can such an activity acquire an internal nature and be realized in the ideal plane of *emotional imagination*. (pp. 57-58)

In line with Zaporozhets (2002), it is argued in this paper that emotional imagination is realized through social activity rather than as something internally derived.

In the empirical research of Zaporozhets (2002) he states that during the role-play or story telling of fairytales, where problem situations present themselves, such as how it is possible for Jack in the fairytale of “Jack and the Beanstalk” (see Table 1 for story line) to secure an income after selling the family cow, the child “first mentally acts out the “diverse variants of actions” and through doing this, feels the sense of “their consequences” in both the story plot and through the social relations in which the child exists. The emotional imagination is first experienced socially, and only with repeated experience (El’koninova, 2002) does it become internalized as a conscious feeling state (see Damasio, 2003). That is, emotional imagination forms when the necessary social conditions are present. Zaporozhets (2005) argues that the intensification and explicit consideration of these emotionally intense situations can be created through the telling and role-playing of fairytales in early childhood settings.

In this paper we present the findings of a study which specifically followed 30 children as they engaged in the reading, role-play and puppet play of a fairytale with their teacher and during free play. Through an analysis of both the psychological characteristics of fairytales as derived from the existing literature and pedagogical conditions created by the teacher, we theorise the role of fairytales for the emotional development of children. In the first part of our paper we discuss a cultural-historical theorization of emotional development in relation to fairytales. In the second part of the paper we introduce the study and examples of data in order to elaborate the unique pedagogical features of fairytales for creating the conditions for emotional development in the context of early childhood practice. A pedagogical framework is presented in the form of a table, where the example of “Jack and the Beanstalk” is shown to illustrate how fairytales may be used by teachers for the development of children’s emotions.

A Cultural-Historical Reading of How Fairytales Can Create the Conditions for the Development of Children's Emotion Regulation

In his critical examination of the arts (literature, fables, poetry, fairytales, drama, and visual arts), Vygotsky (1971) noted that in the broader empirical literature, “scholars have excluded all intellectual processes from aesthetic analysis” (p. 33). In the studies of emotions the opposite has been noted. That is, traditional research seeks to study emotions devoid of its relationship to thinking. But thinking about emotions, as particular feeling states (Damasio, 2003), is foregrounded in a cultural-historical reading of emotion regulation (Holodynski & Friedlmeier, 2006).

Emotions, imagination and thinking were central concepts for Vygotsky. Vygotsky (1971) suggested that “Emotions play a dominant role in artistic creativity. They are generated by the content itself and can be of any sort or kind: grief, sorrow pity, anger, sympathy indignation horror, and so on.” (p. 33). This is particularly pertinent to children experiencing storytelling and role-play of fairytales, which the structuralists found to be replete with binary oppositions (Levy Strauss, 1978). In contrast, Vygotsky (1971) suggested that “the reader of the fable [and fairytale] will experience contradictory feelings and emotions which evolve simultaneously with equal strength” (p. 139). For instance, “The protagonist of a drama is therefore a character who combines two conflicting affects, that of the norm and that of its violation; this is why we perceive him [sic] dynamically, not as an object but as a process” (p. 231). Although this blending of fairytale dichotomies is noted in contemporary Japanese filmmaking by Cardi (2013), it has been noted in cultural-historical theory where dialectical logic is used, rather than Cartesian logic, that this blending is conceptualized as a synthesis of two relational dualisms.

In drama the conflicting affects emerge as a kind of emotional duality where “the hero weeps, while the spectator laughs. An obvious dualism is created” (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 232). This dualism only exists because there is an audience. This is also noted in the topsy-turvy world of nursery rhymes:

By dragging a child into a topsy-turvy world, we help his [sic] intellect work, because the child becomes interested in creating such a topsy-turvy world for himself in order to become more effectively

the master of the laws governing the real world. These absurdities could be dangerous for a child if they screened out the real interrelationships between ideas and objects. Instead, they push them to the fore, and emphasize them. They enhance (rather than weaken) the child's perception of reality. (p. 258)

Vygotsky (1966) also suggested that an emotional contradiction occurs in children's play where they experience the joy of playing, whilst also feeling frightened because the content of the play is scary. Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) highlight the importance of the dual position that children occupy when they are engaged in play. They state that the child can be the subject of the play, that is, acting out the play performance, whilst also being able to control the play at will, that is, acting as the director of the play. This dual positioning, they argue is important for both the development of the play script, but also for the development of the child as they are both the subject and director of the play. Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) argue that in play, as in role-playing fairytales, "The child learns to view the situation from two perspectives at the same time" (p. 32).

The "dual (or two)-positional" aspect of play allows the player to orient him/herself to the role of another, the character or hero being "represented" in the game. ... These two-sides of play (as the player and nonplayer) allow the participant to be the subject of the play, and the child to control the play at will. (p. 33)

It is argued by Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) that the development of higher mental functions occurs when children are both the subject and the director of their play – that is, they take on a dual position. Vygotsky (1987) referenced this development as the dynamic movement from interpsychological to intrapsychological functioning of the child (Vygotsky, 1997). Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010) suggest "that the ability to master one's natural mind and behavior, in whatever form it is presented, represents the path toward human cultural development" (p. 28) where the "logic and laws governing the emergence and development of higher mental functions" are evident because "Natural functions become cultural functions through one's ability to self-regulate and master them" (p. 28). Taken together, the studies of Vygotsky (1971) and Kravtsov and Kravtsova (2010), suggest that in children's play and in role-play in the performance of the theatre (audience or player), the possibilities for children to take a dual position is heightened, and therefore it can be argued that the role play of

fairytale is likely to support children's emotional development.

El'koninova (2002) noted in her empirical studies of why children like to hear fairytale stories over and over again, that complex emotional-cognitive reflection is realized through the repetition of the fairytales, where emotional anticipation of events in the fairytale plot itself create the conditions for the emotional development of the child. The "mental activity" is achieved during the process of the reading of fairytales through the creation of what Zaporozhets (2002) calls an "emotional image". He argues that an emotional image lies in contrast with a "purely rational image". It is through the creation of an emotional image by the child that "emotional reflection" becomes possible (p. 63) and therefore the possibilities for emotion regulation are heightened. It was found by Zaporozhets (2002) that during children's emotional imagining that this "sets their special motivating, activating character and ensures their regulatory influence on the orientation and dynamics of subsequent practical activity. This influence, however, is not direct; it is mediated by internal mental activity, which develops in the image field, that is, in the field of the emotional-cognitive reflection of the surrounding reality" (p. 63). This theorisation has particular relevance for an analysis of the structure of fairytales for supporting the emotional development of young children.

But the history of fairytales is complex and transcultural (see Haase, 2010), with early versions emanating from Asia (Dundes, 1988), undergoing a long intertextual development which has been characterised as Eurocentric (see Jameson, 1988 on Cinderella in China), but being reincorporated in new and creative ways into, for example, Japanese fairytale collections, cinema and popular culture (Cardi, 2013; Fraser, 2013; Mayako, 2013; Ridgely, 2013). We take as the basis for our structural analysis of the fairytale, the story of "Jack and the Beanstalk", which has been popular with early childhood educators in Australia (see Fleer & Hammer, 2013) and on this basis present the findings of a study into the pedagogical conditions that were created. We theorise from this the value of fairytales for the emotional development of young children in preschool settings. However, we also note that other forms of storytelling can also have the same results, but the pathways and pedagogical conditions may be different (see Ferholt, 2010). We also suggest that modified versions of traditional fairytales are part of many young children's culture through on-line games, Disney films and the proliferation of DVDs.

Study Design

We were interested to know what pedagogical conditions and psychological characteristics become evident when the fairytale of “Jack and the Beanstalk” is introduced to young children in a preschool setting. In order to answer this research question we set up a naturalistic study design where we specifically invited the educators to use the cultural device of fairytales (see Fler & Hammer, 2013) in the centre as a basis of an extended science and technology program.

The research site

The study took place in a university-run children's centre in a culturally diverse suburb in the south east of Australia.

The centre is well equipped with a variety of physical spaces that facilitate the collective social practice of learning. Prior to this project, children in the centre had been working with fairytales introduced and dramatised by the preschool children on an outdoor stage where younger children had participated. For this study the teachers introduced the story of “Jack and the Beanstalk” and framed a series of activities, such as making components of the story for the “Jack corner” (imaginary space), role play using puppets, and investigations into the science concepts arising from the story, including the concepts of sound and plant growth. The children made an animated representation of their understanding of the story and of the growth of the beanstalk.

Participants

The study took place in the preschool room, with 30 children who were at the beginning of the research aged between 3.3 and 5.3 years (mean age 4.2 years). Some children attended between 1 and 5 days per week with most coming 3 days per week. The study ran over a period of 5 weeks (filming did not take place for one week during this period due to staff illness). Three teachers from the preschool room participated in the study. The preschool room leader has a Bachelor degree and 5 years' experience in this centre. The other teachers

are Diploma qualified.

Video observations

A total of 16 preschool sessions were video recorded by a team of research assistants. This involved gathering data from the beginning of the day until the end of the morning preschool session on most occasions, and on 4 days the research assistants filmed the afternoon session. One camera video recorded the children and staff as they were engaged in aspects of the program which featured fairytales, and a second camera mounted on a tripod captured the broad interactions in the centre. A total of 74 hours of video observations were captured.

The Structure of Fairytales for Supporting Children's Emotional Development

In this section we discuss important structural features of fairytales drawn from the literature, but in the context of the findings of the study where we examined both the pedagogical elements and the psychological characteristics evident for emotional development. We argue that fairytales have 'content'¹ (Kravtsova, 2009; Shopina, 2009) that gives the pedagogical structure for actively supporting the emotional development of young children in group situations. Bredikyte (2011), in her *playworlds* research, uses fairytales for raising questions and aggravating contradictions, noting 'there is always a dramatic collision in a good story' (p. 106). In particular, a synthesis of the literature suggests that there are eight structural elements of fairytales that support children's development (see Campbell, 1993; El'koninova, 2001; Hohn, 2000; Meletinsky et al., 1974; Propp, 1968; Tiffin, 2009; Vygotsky, 1971). They are:

1. Opening phrase
2. The initial situation

¹ The word *content* in Russian, *soderzhanie*, denotes everything that is held within the fairytale: the plot, characters and structure of the fairytale, the real *substance* of the tale.

3. The preliminary test: misfortune befalls the hero
4. Counter action: the crossing of the border
5. The main test
6. The supplementary tests: mirror tensions (first and second tests)
7. Return of the hero
8. Closing phrase

These structural elements are used as an analytic for examining the data gathered for the possibilities for emotional development. We begin by introducing one example of the preschool children role-playing “Jack and the Beanstalk” during free play within the preschool room. This is followed by a detailed analysis of this example using the structural elements of the fairytale in the context of the whole program operating within the room where the extract from the full data set is discussed.

Extract from Data Set of Free Play in the Jack Corner

Context: One area of the preschool has been set up to represent the fairytale world of “Jack and the Beanstalk”. Two bookshelves give a boundary to the space. It is known to the children as the *Jack Corner*. Inside this area is a table where all the props for the fairytale are placed. A brightly painted cardboard box made by the children represents the castle. A bucket with sand which is used as a garden to plant the beans, and a brightly painted 1 meter cylinder with cardboard leaves representing the giant beanstalk, are placed near the table. Fabric glove puppets to represent the Giant, Jack and his mother, and a plastic cow are on the table. On a chair near the table is a CD player which plays the fairytale story of “Jack and the Beanstalk”.

Video observation: Two girls, Lara and Summer are in the *Jack Corner*. They each have a glove puppet on their hand and are facing each other. Lara is holding the Jack puppet and Summer is holding the Giant puppet. Playing on the CD is the fairytale story of “Jack and the Beanstalk”. The storyteller on the CD says “Fee Fi Foo Fum” as Summer screws up her nose, waves her glove puppet, and sternly and loudly says the words along with the storyteller “Fee Fi Foo Fum!” With each word, she waves the glove puppet up and down to accentuate the

drama of the moment. Lara moves her Jack puppet over to the castle and goes to hide him, when Summer quickly intercepts her actions and says “No! We are not hiding him yet”. Lara is anticipating the next scene in the fairytale. Summer is correcting her premature role playing by giving instructions to adjust the situation. Meanwhile the storyteller continues with the fairytale. Summer catches up to the place in the story by quickly moving her puppet and loudly saying “dead” and “bread” at the end of each part of the sentence told by the storyteller: “Be he alive or be he **dead**; I will grind his bones to make my **bread**”. Summer’s tonal quality for the word “dead” is firm and definitive, whilst for the word “**bread**” it is eerie and evil, mirroring the music which plays along with the storyline. The storyteller says “Where is he?” referring to the Jack puppet who is now hidden in the castle, to which Summer responds firmly and defiantly “Nowhere!”. ...As there are only two children, but 3 characters in the story (Jack, the Giant and the mother) Summer picks up another glove puppet and asks “The Mother?” followed by “This is the Mother. Dad doesn’t look after the Giant”... In the next part of the story, both children hold their puppets acting out the robbery that follows in the story. As the storyteller explains the robbery, Summer takes the Jack puppet and grabs the bags of money from inside the castle, she then takes the Jack puppet over to the beanstalk and purposefully and quickly runs Jack down the beanstalk, as Lara moves across to the bottom of the beanstalk with her Mother puppet and says “You got the money?” to which Summer replies “Yes” showing a smile. Later in the story the storyteller says: “Quick bring me the axe. The Giant is chasing after me. Jack grabs the axe and swings at the beanstalk which comes tumbling down”. Here Summer follows the storyline carefully by both saying the words and swinging Jack into the beanstalk, toppling the prop to the floor. As Summer does this, she smiles and throws the puppet violently to the ground saying “Bam” and laughs expressively.

It is possible to note an emotional quality to the role-play of the children during free play in the Jack Corner. In order to understand the emotional intensity that is represented by the children in their free role play, we turn to a cultural-historical analysis of the fairytale in the context of the full data set. We feature the traditional tale of “Jack and the Beanstalk” (Jacobs, 1890).

Opening Phrase

Once upon a time and its many variants are opening stock phrases that together with the closing phrase *enclose the tale* and signal to the child they are entering an imaginary situation. In the analysis of the full data set for the introduction of an opening phrase, it was revealed that each time the teachers told, read or performed a puppet play of “Jack and the Beanstalk”, the phrase “Once upon a time” was heard. It was evident that this signaled to the children at the onset that the story they were about to hear was a fairytale. All other stories read to the children during the observation period did not begin with this sentence. Here the emotional experience they were about to embark upon through the fairytale was clearly marked for the children.

The Initial Situation

The fairytale of “Jack and the Beanstalk” is set in the home of a widow and her only son, who are poor. They own a cow whose milk provides their income. These are the essential details of the story. There are no complicating extra details for the children to comprehend. The homely family setting resonates with the children. The missing family members establish a tension between Jack and his mother. It is suggested by Vygotsky (1971) that the problem situation is understood when an everyday and meaningful context is created for the children. An analysis of the data set showed the children actively engaged in making the props for the fairytale. They made the props with the story in mind, often role-playing elements of the story as they worked. The simplicity of the situation was also captured in the extract above, when Summer picked up another glove puppet and asked “The mother?” followed by “This is the Mother. Dad doesn’t look after the Giant.” Summer knew the storyline well and understood the initial situation that was captured through the role played by the mother puppet who was initially angry with Jack.

The Preliminary Test: Misfortune Befalls the Hero

Fairytales usually contain a series of tests for the hero of the story. The first of these tests

triggers the action of the tale and is referred to as the *preliminary* or *negative test*: a misfortune or lack of a desirable object is introduced. For instance, in the fairytale of “Jack and the Beanstalk”, the cow’s milk dries up, and the family has no income. This sets up the *central conflict* of the story. This function mirrors the *demands* children face in their lives (Fleer, 2012). It is the preliminary test, in which the values and personal qualities of the hero are established (Hohr, 2000). We see this conflict played out in the role play in the extract when the children use the Jack puppet to take the bags of money from inside the castle and purposefully go down the beanstalk quickly, and where Lara says “You got the money” to which Summer replies “Yes”. Stealing is justified because of the misfortune bestowed on the family.

Counter Action: The Crossing of the Border

In the fairytale the hero responds to the *negative test* and starts a *counter action*, a test of his or her qualities, and if he or she passes, the hero is given a magical object or magical assistance with the forthcoming *main test*. For instance, Jack crosses the threshold of the home and leaves by himself for market, meeting a ‘funny-looking’ man who negotiates to swap five magic beans for the cow. He establishes himself as simple and trusting in this exchange. When his mother finds out that he has sold the cow for 5 beans, she sends him to bed and throws the beans out of the window. Jack feels as sorry for his mother as he does for himself, establishing his pure motives and paving the way for children to empathise with him. We also see this border between the Giant’s castle and Jack’s home as exemplified by the beanstalk. Summer, smiling in response to being home safely with the bags of money, suggests a different emotional quality to that of being in the castle hiding from the Giant, as demonstrated through the quick descent down the beanstalk. The beanstalk acts as the border between these two emotionally charged contexts.

Both El’koninova (2001) and Hohr (2000) find Meletinsky et al.’s² work of relevance in the area of the tensions within fairytales: Hohr (2000) notes ‘the opposition between the preliminary test and the main test is fundamental in the fairytale’ (p. 91). It is suggested that

² El’koninova (2001) and Hohr (2000) are referring to Meletinsky et al. Russian edition of 1969. In this paper we also refer to the English translation of 1974.

in the preliminary test, the values and personal qualities of the hero are always established.

The Main Test

According to Hohr (2000) the main test results in balance being restored, often at a higher level. Zipes (2011) symbolises this restoration of balance in terms of the return to home. In the fairytale of “Jack and the Beanstalk”, the Beanstalk grows overnight up to the clouds and Jack wakes, gets dressed, and climbs out the window and up the Beanstalk. The actions happen sequentially and without explanation. Jack benefits from the *magical assistance* of the beans and is helped again in the magical realm by the Giant’s wife who initially feeds him and hides him from the Giant. She also warns him that the Giant eats boys for breakfast, establishing the Giant as the *villain*, and establishing an emotional tension between the Giant and Jack as the *oppressed hero*. As a result of successfully resolving the main test, the lives of Jack and his mother are *reconstituted on a higher plane* with the wealth provided by the bag of gold that Jack takes from the Giant. We saw this re-enactment of the tale through Lara simultaneously saying the words to the story with the storyteller on a number of occasions, but also at the end where the storyteller says: “Quick bring me the axe...”. We saw through Summer’s actions of swinging Jack into the beanstalk, toppling the prop to the floor, that she appeared to show pleasure at passing this main test through smiling and by throwing the Giant puppet violently to the ground saying “bam” and laughing.

The Supplementary Tests: Mirror Tensions

The fairytale literature shows that there may also be further tests and responses which mirror the initial negative test and main tests. For instance, a new misfortune may befall the hero. The first of these supplementary tests generates a new problem. In the case of “Jack and the Beanstalk”, the bag of gold runs out. In mirroring the preliminary test, a new source of income is needed. The second test is concerned with identifying who is the worthy person in the story. Jack’s victory over the *villain* Giant re-establishes Jack as the hero. We saw the re-establishment of Jack as the hero in the extract through the forceful actions of Summer as she threw the puppet to the ground and laughed about the fate of the Giant at the end of the tale.

Thus a system of tensions occurs within the structure of the fairytale. The sequence of actions is hierarchical, and the formal goal of the fairytale is a resolution or unity, such as a wedding at the end, or as in Jack's case, being rich. The magical assistance serves this goal (Hohr, 2000).

Return of the Hero

We know from the semantic structure described by Elkoninova (2001), that the Giant cannot be allowed to cross the border from his magic realm, delineated by the beanstalk, into the semantic space of Jack and his mother, the garden to their home. Some storytellers are tempted to eliminate killing or cruelty from the story and just have the Giant run away and never be seen again. In the extract the pleasure of being evil and reflecting an eerie quality to the voice during the role play was evident. The story line of potentially 'being dead' by Jack or the Giant dying adds to the emotional tension experienced by the children. Removing this ending or changing the storyline, however, violates the semantic structure and destroys the system of tensions within the tale as it means the magical realm has entered Jack's real world and in the child's mind there remains the nagging question of whether the Giant could return: The time of the tale is not contained within the plot and threatens to leak into the child's life (Elkoninova, 2001). The required cathartic experience (Vygotsky, 1971) allows the child to internalise the experience and begins the return to reality. But this is not possible if the Giant lives on.

Closing Phrase

As with the opening, we also saw a closure to the fairytale: 'And they lived happily ever after'. This phrase signals the final transition from the story world to the child's concrete world. This requires careful mediation by the storyteller, as evident in the study by the use of the same story and phrasing in books, during teacher puppet dramatisation, and through the use of a CD, as was observed in this study. The fairytale is always presented between the opening phrase and closing phrase giving a level of predictability for the children.

Pedagogical Conditions

In fairytales there is predictability to the texts and there is a structure that is consistently followed. This predictable structure allows children to consciously opt to be in the imaginary situation by following the well known storyline, or not, during free play time. This structure also provides educators with the opportunity to create the conditions for exploring with children the emotional tensions inherent in the tales. As was shown in the extract, there are many emotionally charged situations in the fairytale. In the example, both children dramatise the story, re-enacting not only the story actions but reproduce the emotional qualities associated with the emotional tension that is inherent in the fairytale. The story line itself includes: the Mother being angry with Jack for selling the cow for just a few beans; Jack and Mother being frightened by the Giant climbing down the beanstalk; and the emotional anticipation and fear by Jack as the Giant repeats at each phase of the fairytale “Fee Fi Foo Fum....”). The study showed through the example above, that the children re-live these emotionally charged situations during role-play. As such, educators can use the predictable and dramatic structure of fairytales for further developing children’s emotional development. In Table 1 an analysis of the structure of the tale of “Jack and the Beanstalk” is summarized as a pedagogical framework to support educators interested in using this medium for emotional development of children. However, this particular framework may well be applicable to all fairytales of this type (see Aarne & Thompson, 1928) across cultural communities when appropriate fairytales are selected.

A cultural-historical reading of emotions seeks to examine the social and material conditions in which emotions are embedded, rather than focusing on just the individual child. It was found that the playing of the CD of the fairytale created the conditions for role-play that involved explicit expressions of emotions. The narrative on the CD and the predictability of the fairytale genre, helped hold together the full tale, allowing the children to join in the emotionally charged situations easily and to act out the contradictions, where they were both happy in their play, whilst feeling anxious as they empathized with Jack as he tried to get away from the Giant.

Table 1. *Pedagogical framework for emotional development*

<i>Structural elements</i>	<i>“Jack and the Beanstalk”</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Pedagogical feature</i>
Opening phrase	Once upon a time	Signals entry into the ‘time of the tale’, the imaginary situation	Teacher mediates the child’s entry into the story world, directs children’s thoughts to a separate place in their imagination
Initial situation	There was a poor widow with an only son and a cow. All they had to live on was the cow’s milk	Jack established as oppressed hero – child identifies with hero. Setting in family home - resonates with child No father or sibling - creates <i>tension</i>	Establish a separate area in the preschool for children to imagine entering into the land of the story (the door of Jack’s home). Extends the children’s imaginings Use of puppets or figurines to represent the cast of the story
Preliminary or negative test / central conflict / dramatic event	One day the cow gives no milk. Jack and his mother must find a new way to earn a living	<i>Lack</i> of milk (i.e. income) triggers the action of the tale, establishes the <i>central conflict</i> as social (within the family economic situation), the <i>dramatic event</i> (no milk, no income).	Teachers mediate the child’s emotional anticipation, for example, teacher comforts child during frightening parts of the tale. Help the child to speculate solutions
Counter action / hero crosses border	Jack sets off to market to sell the family cow. Meets ‘funny looking’ man who persuades him to swap the cow for five magic beans (magical object). Mother throws the beans out of the window in anger. Sends him to bed with no supper.	Crosses the first boundary (leaving home) – child lives through this with Jack Tests Jack’s qualities (simple, trusting) – child further identifies with hero	Teacher supports the narrative by emphasizing the border crossing through physical features in the dramatization or storytelling, such as hoops, ropes or movements from one area to another. This mirrors transitions in the child’s world.
Main test	Jack climbs out of the window and up the beanstalk (magical object), walks along the path and enters the castle Giant’s wife feeds and hides Jack from Giant (magical assistance)	The window marks the boundary of Jack’s ‘real’ world, his home. The journey establishes the tension	The window is often overlooked in setting up for children’s play, but is important for children to pretend to climb through. The teacher supports this process by asking the children to climb through a model window (e.g. cardboard box or block frame) having the children role play.
		The beanstalk (magical object) ‘belongs’ to the semantic space of the imaginary world	Create an artifact that represents the beanstalk, so that children can imagine themselves as Jack climbing and crossing the border into Giant’s world
		Familiar homely (if tall) helper makes child feel more comfortable in the story world. Magical objects serve the goal of the final union, i.e. they produce the wealth that Jack and his mother lack. Fairytale models ‘motives’ of moral behaviour (<i>oppressed</i> Jack takes from <i>villain</i> Giant to help his mother)	Magical objects (especially golden ones) resonate with children and facilitate changing the meaning of objects in their fairytale play. Provision of a range of props, including the ‘magical objects’.
First supplementary test	The bag of gold runs out Jack climbs the beanstalk again, is helped by Giant’s wife (magical assistance) Makes off with the hen that lays the golden eggs (magical object)	Mirrors the preliminary test – a new <i>conflict</i> (no income) and <i>dramatic event</i> as Jack is compelled to cross the border again New tension created	Sequence and repetitions of Giant’s ‘fee-fi-fo-fum’ help children follow the story line. These can be accentuated by the teacher during the storytelling.
Second supplementary test	Jack is ‘not content’ and makes the third and final ascent No help from Giant’s wife Jack takes Golden harp (magical object) gives him away Giant gives chase threatens to enter Jack’s realm	Motive for Jack to try a third time	Tension builds for the child. Teachers can emotionally charge these by slowing the pace of story reading, and deliberately building the tension with exaggerated expressions.
Return of hero and threshold struggle	Jack chops down the beans stalk and Giant is killed. Jack and his mother live in greater wealth	The border between the two realms is severed Home reconstituted on higher plane Catharsis as the tale resolves	Child is brought back to the real world in stages by the teacher. Over time child experiences inner transformation with hero
Closing phrase	They lived happily every after	Signals the transition back to the real world of the child listening to the tale.	Skillful mediation by the teacher as storyteller

(This table draws on the work of Campbell, 1993; El'koninova, 2001; Hohr, 2000; Meletinsky et al., 1974; Propp, 1968; Tiffin, 2009; Vygotsky, 1971)

Conclusion

It was shown in this paper that the storyteller creates the conditions where ‘the world of the listener and the world of the story [are brought] together’ (El’koninova, 2001, p. 38). The nature of fairytales, as identified through our analysis of the structure of “Jack and the Beanstalk”, is at the heart of the characteristics described by Bredikyte (2011) in her *playworld* research. That is, the educator tells the story to create a highly motivating shared theme or imaginary situation; secondly the structure of the fairytale itself supports the active ‘in role’ participation of adults in the shared theme (imaginary situation) and as discussed in Fler and Hammer (2013), the emotional nature of fairytales encourages a form of affective involvement of adults in the world of the child; and finally the dramatic tension in the play script as identified by Bredikyte (2011) and noted in the analysis of the data, supports the building of the dynamic tension. As has been theorized in this paper, and as shown through our analysis of the structure of fairytales drawing upon data from our study, these conditions created by the storyteller deliberately support the emotional development of young children. Rather than only dealing with emotionally charged situations as they arise in early childhood settings as opportunities to support children’s emotion regulation, this paper has introduced the idea of systematically using fairytales for creating the conditions for supporting children’s development of emotions. The cultural-historical perspective taken in this paper gives another reading of how educators can actively participate in creating the conditions for emotional development in early childhood settings through the use of fairytales.

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