

“Learnt Time across Fairy Tales – Kindergarteners’ Sense of Temporality, Futures Planning and Time Socialisation”¹

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Abstract: *The current study concerns a phenomenological approach based on the meaning-making processes that accompany time socialisation, or how hurry, time pressure and busyness are passed down in early childhood by implicit learning involved in fairy tales. Face-to-face, in-depth interviews were carried out with a total of 61 kindergarten participants from nuclear, dual-earner families of Bucharest suburbs enrolled in state education. The narrative ethno-theoretical approach highlights how time use styles based on busyness, hurriedness, acceleration and time squeeze are constructed subjectively by young children, who reinterpret fairy tale assumptions and time use practices that they observe. Results suggest that time perspectives related to tangible time and polychronicity can be inferred by means of verbal cues and streams of meaning that circulate by means of fairy tales as socio-linguistic vehicles. Time socialisation mechanisms are deciphered using the language (partly shared, partly incongruent) of children’s expectations and fairy tales (more subtle or more evident) time implications. The study opens up to a prospect of plausible landmarks for the emerging conceptual model of time use lifestyle and early time socialisation, by stressing the impact of early childhood settings focused on fairy tales read through a time-oriented paradigm. The study questions latent messages which fairy tales launch, sometimes unintendedly, most often as peripheral cue, yet powerful twist that children resonate to regarding time conceptions. Children’s sensitiveness to pedagogical messages elicited indirectly by fairy tales means that they tend to build discursive time identities based on temporal coordinates configured by storytelling, in a subtle interplay of sensification and lived experiences.*

Keywords: Time use style; busyness, hurriedness; fairy tales; time socialisation.

Cuvinte-cheie: stil temporal (stil de utilizare a timpului); presiune temporală; grabă; basme; socializare temporală.

Introduction

The main objective of this study is to establish whether time use trends are absorbed since early childhood, in reference to the time reconfiguration that occurs from fairy tales, which rely on invention and moral closure. The paper aims to facilitate an effort of understanding as to

why and how fairy tales function as socialisation vehicle through the lens of which kindergarteners develop time-related notions, feelings, beliefs and attitudes. From this perspective, the study proposes a conceptualisation or working model of children’s intuitive ethno-theories related to the precautionous acquisition of time-centric notions. The study of fairy tales plots and

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axiological background can prove fruitful in shedding light on time socialisation and the construction of a temporal self.

As research rationale, the current study focuses on this under-researched topic which deserves close scrutiny, because time pressure constitutes an important challenge for grown-ups who ostensibly pass along this preoccupation to their offspring, through parental assumptions embedded in fairy tales. The study is relevant for the development of literature since this niche topic belonging to time sociology has not been previously analysed in a Romanian early education context, and is generally under-visited or in an incipient stage of scientific inquiry. Fairy tales are central to children's cognitive development, as their narrative plots and subjacent messages, structured around an intuitive, empirical time conceptualisation play a strong, inspirational role in shaping children's perspectives (Baruch, 2009; Kaasik, 2008).

The study concerns a discussion on what it is that children take from and bring to time-centric storytelling. Their vision is approached by means of a cultural underplay of inter-twined influences derived from classical and contemporary fairy tales adapted and re-branded by Disney – this selection criterion is relevant inasmuch as children can relate very easily and in a straightforward manner to these fairy tales that they are well acquainted of. To achieve the above-stated aim and objectives, the study makes use of qualitative method triangulation by means of inductive approaches, grounded theory and narrative techniques focused on storytelling, fairy tale recollection and story-crafting inside an in-depth interview that probes young participants for further explanations, rather than merely getting answers to a series of questions.

Regarding a brief structure outline, the study sets out to explore theoretical viewpoints through a literature review on time sociology, the 24/7 society (Levine, 2006) and its implications on children's agendas that influence the shift from spontaneous (un-structured) discretionary lived time to planned, structured activities inside a framework of conventional, "staged" quality

time from a time voracity (Gershuny, 2005) vantage-point. Early childhood educational practices are discussed as per fairy tale-based pedagogical toolkits.

The next sections of the study concern conceptualisation, methodological design, coordinates of interview setting, data collection and data analysis principles as well as ethical considerations customised according to the participants' profile liable to additional precautions due to children's sensitiveness and vulnerability to be easily influenced. Empirical results envision children's working theories and socially built cognition of time that is strongly influenced by fairy tale representations on haste, busyness and compliance to temporal constraints. Conclusions, recommendations and implications for educational practices ensue, aiming to connect and integrate rich, diverse qualitative data in an original contribution relying on the development of a robust explanatory model.

Literature review – research context and theoretical backdrop

Parents, as well as fairy tales, are influential figures at an early stage, when children eagerly seek for role models and idols, either purposefully, or most often unintendedly. Time-frustrated parents nurture high hopes for their children, by expecting the next generation to be more time-competent, inspired to develop more advanced time use strategies, and dream of having it all, in terms of finding time for both proficiency and togetherness (Ashbourne and Daly, 2012; Craig and Mullan, 2010). This idealistic, idyllic projection meets the corresponding catch-phrase of fairy tale happy endings: "And they lived happily ever after". There is a noticeable scarcity of research about the mechanisms of time socialisation by fairy tales embedded in early education practices.

The "cult of efficiency" (Robinson and Godbey, 1999) constitutes a trait liable to be passed along from predecessors to successors, as children borrow from their parents the

subconsciously embedded practice of turning its expressive value of discretionary interval, devoid of pressure or control, into an intrinsically instrumental utility. Traded time is strictly calculated and converted into investment, economising, consumption or loss, at adult age (Adam, 1998; Southerton, 2006).

Lack of control over organising one’s own time agenda constitutes the over-arching leitmotiv of any in-action in all walks of life (Adam, 1998; Adam and Groves, 2007). Conceptual models on sociological time envision instantaneity (or simultaneity) and succession (or discursive process) (Urry, 2000). Post-modern society is on auto-pilot drive, engulfed in a constant flow on experiences (Norgate, 2006; Levine, 2006; Lyons and Urry, 2005), zapped through unmemorably and relentlessly. As scarce resource, its inner limitations render it the ultimate luxury, and time disposed of at will is regarded as quintessence of free, self-determined life (Beck, 1992). The discretionary use of time as a matter of personal choice is brought into discussion as the parental individual time capital is not transmissible, but can be shared with children, as intangible, yet very precious gift, due to its rarity (Bianchi, Casper and King, 2005).

Children consider free time as gift from their parents, especially when it is devoted to recreational activities, other than primary care: playing and games, story-telling, attending shows, outdoor or indoor fun. Time constraints are frequently invoked as reasons for externalising childcare to paid service suppliers such as babysitters, nurseries or day-care centres; this recurring trend emerges since the first months of life, pressure on occupied time rendering family care an unavailable option (Tietze and Musson, 2002; Tillman and Barne, 2015).

Fairy tales are extensively used as supportive, accessible pedagogical tools in early childhood learning settings. From a functionalist viewpoint, apart from their imaginative, dream-like essence, fairy tales serve a social purpose of perpetuating status-quo principles and facilitating children’s assimilation of cultural norms and values, of

which time conventions constitute an important part (Kaasik, 2008; Baruch, 2009). Epic tales are subject to interpretation, idea germination and captivate young listeners, by proposing a vision on life and the world of which time forms a central topic in the meaning-making process. Time narratives, the succession of episodes and scenes anchor the story plot and are meant, either explicitly or, more often, implicitly, to pass forward various time lessons, such as discipline, thoughtfulness, punctuality and rigour, diligence, avoidance of laziness (Brock, Rimm-Kaufman and Wanless, 2014).

Meanwhile, the coercive nature of time limitations that appear most often in fairy tales introduce children to time thrift, ambivalence, incongruence to the point of perplexity and cognitive dissonance; as such, time discipline is envisioned as pre-requisite and catalyst in the development of mind-sets oriented towards decision-making, choice and solutions (Dai and Fishbach, 2013). The symbolic journey of children in the realm of magical time is guided by fairy tales, in the sense that they represent open windows to share emotional meanings, prone to make the transition between enchanted childhood and disenchanting adulthood, of which time socialisation is significantly responsible (Wartenberg, 2009; Baruch, 2009). As community, “crowdsourced” folklore artefacts, fairy tales are regarded as depositories of collective wisdom, and hence described as both treasure chests and treasure quests – in the sense that they are culturally legitimised and acknowledged as vehicles of shared meaning and products of social knowledge, but also as process of reinterpretation and enrichment – in both breadth and depth, as every new recipient can devise his/her own interpretive strategy to decipher under-toned significance.

Some of the fascination that fairy tales elicit for children, and sometimes for grown-ups as well (for example, if we look at blockbuster fantasy movies), resides in its time ethos pacing rhythms that accumulate to elicit mystery and suspense. The reiterative nature of storytelling means this fascination and curiosity do not fade

away after the first hearing, but tend to linger, over and over again, for countless full-length narrative exploits. Social learning of time occurs throughout fairy tales as relational process built on implicit knowledge (Meloni, Vanthuyne and Rousseau, 2015) – inasmuch as parents and teachers stimulate children to account for lessons on bravery, patience, commitment, trust and responsibility that they learnt from time metaphors used in fairy tales.

Time use, as multi-faceted notion, is indeed a way of life, deeply ingrained in everyday life, as well as cultural and social practices related to childrearing, which implicitly, but systematically, permeates both private and public arenas as vital topic of personal reflection and interpersonal dialogue (Wartenberg, 2009). Openness to time interpretation as attempt at rational questioning the meaning of life creates a frame of reference for self-development of today's kids, as future makers endowed with healthy scepticism, creative and critical thinking, skills that act as pre-requisites for residents of the post-industrial, knowledge society. Thinking about time passage, time irreversibility, or even the commodification of time (in mercantile terms of waste, investment, cost or saving) is important for a fluid knowledge perfectibility, for dismantling prejudice and clichés, for learning from mistakes and improving mind mapping and processing connectivity.

Inquisitive curiosity is an art that children master, and their propensity towards questioning various thinking patterns should be encouraged and purposefully fostered (Wartenberg, 2009), rather than smothered. Philosophy of time in terms of causes, consequences, logical assumptions, deductions, assertions or (counter) arguments seems, at first glance, unapproachable for children, however an intuitive approach to time can prove beneficial for improving cognitive processing skills related to logical thinking, argumentation and debate. Precocious time thinkers can prove the trend-setters for the new paradigm of reflexive modernity, in the wake of

discussions sparked by the risk society (Beck, 1992) that engages in genuine dialogue through flexible, creative idea sharing and intellectual learning inside a close-knit community of inquiry (Gruionoiu, 2013; Spyrou, 2011). The race for “meaningful”, beneficial activities means that free time is no longer “free”, but contaminated with compulsory requirements and full agendas. This structured approach to time use contradicts the essence of quality time, defined as interval infused with agreeable emotions, devoid of time-bound constraints (Southerton, 2006). Time strain and the sense of loss of control over the self-expressive function of time styles influences daily social practices and lifestyle options, such as food provisioning practices in US low-wage employed mothers (Jabs et al., 2007). Time use socialisation by shared meanings occur as implicit knowledge in family get-together settings, such as meals and pastimes, proven as beneficial to parents' emotional well-being (Offer, 2014). The emotional impact of family everyday practices, such as sharing fairy tales and their morale, has an echo on time socialisation, which the study endeavours to pursue.

Against this conceptual backdrop, the prospective inquiry relies on the following research questions regarding kindergarteners' time-bound perceptions:

- How do young children make sense of the abstract notion of time, using narrative cues extracted from fairy tales?
- What is the learning dynamics of pre-schoolers' clock-time self-discipline, in the storytelling cultural context in which they are immersed?
- How does time pressure and accelerated rhythm (“fast living”) impact on children's availability to internalise features such as patience, perseverance, gratefulness, resilience against adversity or the capacity to delay gratification?
- How do time use cues extracted from fairy tales (re)configure children's agendas or ritualistic time use?

Methodological approach

The current study involves a phenomenological approach based on qualitative inquiry and narrative ethno theories, an exploratory research design, relying on grounded theory and the constant comparison method, by which interviewees’ voices are juxtaposed to pre-established categories and conceptual models, to which they are afterwards compared and contrasted, following the above-mentioned research questions. Spontaneous experiential and reflexive contents were, thus, highlighted, aiming to configure phenomenal past, present and future and to capture a glimpse of lived time as slice of micro-reality that people can connect and relate to. Picture-induced inquiry and projective processing of visual (graphics) content gave vent to children’s creative thinking, whilst it facilitated ideas generation devoid of critical censorship. Data collection procedures involved audio recording and transcripts of discussions that took place. These support materials were synthesized throughout the data processing phase, by using content analysis categories.

Sampling technique

The study comprised a total of 61 participants (kindergarteners aged 4 to 6 years old). All children were interviewed through face-to-face meetings at five public kindergartens, all with extended schedules and all located in Bucharest suburbs. The inclusion criteria for children concerned being enrolled in kindergarten education. They were approached during a series of parenting and self-development, child-and-parent conferences that took place in five public kindergartens across Bucharest suburbs. The data collection period lasted almost three months, from March to late May 2015.

For reasons related to homogeneity, coherence, variable control and facilitated comparativeness of findings, all selected suburban families shared five sample inclusion criteria:

- Dual-earner families (both parents being currently employed and earning an income by occupational involvement).
- Nuclear families (two generations living together, exclusively parents and children sharing the same living space).
- Equivalent marital status – parents were all married, not separated or divorced
- Living in a single-family house with a courtyard, not in an flat or another multi-family residence.
- Graduates of middle or higher education (level of studies indicative of a middle class positioning, when coupled with the first and the fourth inclusion criteria related to social-economic status).

Interview setting and ethical consideration

Data collection took place in vacant kindergarten rooms, to prevent interruptions or other disturbance. Children were interviewed separately and individually. All interviews with children took place during the morning, after breakfast, when they had the peak of activity due to lessons. The Institutional Research Ethics approval was demanded and received prior to beginning the study, concerning: purpose of research, participants’ guaranteed confidentiality and right to withdraw from the study, avoidance of any and all harmful action. Child consent, parent consent and institutional consent were the three forms of acceptance required and received, with an overall explanation of the research purpose and ensuing procedures, in accordance with ethical reporting standards in children research (Mayne and Howitt, 2014).

Legal guardians submitted their informed consent in writing as to the research purpose and methods being carried out, they were furthermore informed and reassured that the discussion carried out with their children had no psycho-diagnostic implication and their children will not be tested as intelligence assessment or other standardised skill test and they will consequently receive no scores, rating or other ranking. Kindergarten

management representatives also filled in a written approval for the study to take place in their respective institutions.

Children were furthermore presented with posters and cartoon images suggestive of time preferences, haste, lateness, free time, time spent for family bonding and togetherness, tales that illustrate various aspects of time orientation and time morale (e.g. *Cinderella*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Peter Pan* and newer cartoon-based tales such as *Frozen* and *Brave*), interruptions/overlaps and other inter-connected topics covered by the interview guide. This half-structured interview guide is attached in Annex I.

The standardised approach employed with all participants involved one-to-one interviews, which allowed for the respect of privacy and stimulated self-disclosure on sensitive aspects such as time-related anxiety, over-stimulation, feeling overwhelmed, tiredness, exhaustion or haste. Ethical considerations were carefully observed, as young participants' tutors provided their informed consent to take part in the survey, after the researcher explained the objectives of this study and the importance of providing sincere, undistorted input.

Conducting research with children requires supplementary ethical precautions, because of their sensitiveness and their tendency to be easily influenced by outward persons or situations, as well as the relational inter-subjectivity that elicits an effort of understanding complex inter-play of reflexive factors (Meloni, Vanthuyne and Rousseau, 2015). Projective images and storycrafting techniques involved a child-centric approach of figurative and intuitive meaning transmission. Hence, the research design aimed to counter-act habitual adult-led settings that almost invariably impede on authenticity in expressing children's voice.

The research design encouraged playful, participative, interactive approaches as catalyst for children's creativity (Riek, 2015), whilst abiding principles related to the minimisation of social distance and ethical participatory research conducted with children (Raffety, 2015). The

effort of understanding involved in a participative task of fairy tale deciphering and re-sensification is altogether an arduous, problematic attempt, and ethnographic approaches are needed to corroborate the feasibility and applicability of such methods that elicit young children's involvement (Wallera and Bitoua, 2011).

Results – children's socially built cognition on time

Time interpretation represents a fuzzy area, suitable for philosophising, and children employ intuitive thinking, concrete examples and hands-on experience to relate to such complex subjects. Their understanding is fragmentary and non-linear, sometimes contradictory or divergent, however it pushes forward a fresh, innovative approach of simple, elementary ideas (sometimes forgotten or under-toned) that make sense and offer grown-ups inspirational insight.

Time use censorship is enforced by extrinsic sanctioning in the case of lateness or postponement. Social learning of time use habits and norms reflects the avoidance of such sanctioning that most often take the shape of negative emotional reactions on behalf of adults, also in fairytales.

Being pressurised for squeezing more activities in the briefest time slot, as symptomatic features of time deprivation and the busyness syndrome constitute unwanted inheritances between older and younger generations related to the transfer and propagation of time-ridden anxiety and "a social capital of fear". The voracious consumption of time (Gershuny, 2005) can be traced to families with high social-economic status, who earn a lot and also spend a lot.

Embedding haste since early childhood

Kindergarteners' thoughts and feelings about time use experiences (e.g. hurriedness, lateness, time squeeze and time strain) open up on a time "Weltanschauung", a horizon of social cognition convertible to ethno-theories concerning

the following dimensions: being in a hurry, multitasking (navigating through simultaneous activities and assignments), being late, time scarcity, waiting, holidays, interruptions, wasting time, patience and delayed gratification, time acceleration, involuntary postponement, week-end vs. week-day schedules, boredom and time under-use, time strain, time management skills.

A recurring topic of discussion was that related to irrelevant, minor worries and emergencies that out-weigh meaningful and long yearned-for activities in the daily race, both "for and against" time. In exchange, parents meet the re-internalisation of family time by taking back one's quality time and managing to spend more time with children in educational and fun activities with a feeling of relief and exhilaration, a sense of achievement for a break-through, a revelation or rediscovery of one's true self through the return to simple pleasures.

The rediscovery of spontaneity is flagged and upholstered as a new time manifesto, as up-front rebellious attitude. Time thrift requires insurgence for snatching or defending it against "time thieves" and time scarcity commandments. Although it may seem too complex for their age, young children sense intuitively that time intimacy, away from imposed rigour and limitations, is something delightful. This new form of discretionary time, which transcends traditional definitions of free time, since forgetting about time boundaries, just losing track of time represents the ultimate achievement.

Hearing these interviewees voice their experiences, beliefs and concerns about time raised a lot of unexpected questions and nuanced analytical theoretical perspectives, as philosophising on time is arguably one of the most fertile grounds of discussion and debate. Planned family outings, trips or fixed family game nights can help with time allocation; however, the downside is that parents consider them as forced and artificial (Gillis, 2001; Kremer-Sadlik, 2007). Children do not

seem to mind or share parental doubts about planned quality time as forced, a shortcut of paradoxical "planned/staged spontaneity" or as mere compromise solution that parents resort to because it functions, and less is better than nothing at all.

For young children, the functionality of time measurement boils down to the following aspects:

- Time measurement serves to lead an organised life, be reliable and committed to perform according to the expectations of their significant others: "*I want to learn to "read" the clock so I'm not late for kindergarten or ballet lessons*" (Luca, 5).

- Tracking time is necessary for impression management, as antidote to "losing face", inasmuch as grown-ups appreciate children who are on time as reliable, committed, well-behaved, good-natured, responsive, responsible and mature for their age. Children's awareness of how time discipline and time remembrance influences others' perceptions of them acts as important milestone in the way of constructing one's projection of the adult self: "*I show up on time, so people know I'm well-behaved and all grown-up, almost*" (Cristian, 6).

- Clocks and watches are useful mnemonics or memory keepers that keep people alert and avoid oblivion, so that they do not forget when to do what they should: "*We need a clock in the house so that my grandma won't forget to take her medicine*" (Raluca, 5), or "*I need a clock so that I don't over-sleep or I don't stay up too late, past my bed-time*" (Flavius, 4). Children's assumptions envision time as memory aid and as means of streamlining everyday activities, by a smooth rhythm of continuity, composed of routine moments allotted to waking up, washing up, dressing, eating, going to kindergarten, napping, learning, playing, coming back home, etc.

When asked about what they would prefer: to receive a gift (toys, games, books or clothes) from their parents or to spend more time with them, 52 from the 61 small interviewees counter-intuitively enough chose the latter option. This finding relates to the participants'

social-economic standing, as parents who belong to a minority of parents who can afford sending their children to private education. As such, children who come from less financially privileged family backgrounds could opt for more material gifts instead of time budget presents, as in the case of the income rich, time poor category.

Originality factor

Children use fairy tales as imagination playground made up of both familiar and unexpected elements. Stories form their main source of insight on time use that they can mirror back to their own life circumstances. Children responded favourably to images depicting key scenes from fairy tales that they came across in storytelling experiences, with multifaceted impressions, such as subtle differences between having time and making time. Because of fairy tales implications, joint with their own background examples on being late and being pressed for time, pre-schoolers believe time to be a silent villain, an invisible enemy or a source of threat and punishment lurking behind every situation or playing tricks to make people feel uncomfortable. Moreover, children raise questions about time (they ask for 10 more minutes to complete a task or ask upfront how long a particular exercise will take), they exhibit reflexive sensitiveness, coping and negotiation skills on time use which would be unexpected, given their precociousness.

Pre-schoolers seem to pass through a transition phase that reunites two contradictory tendencies, respectively:

- The advent of conventional time, by learning obedience to time-bound limitations, rules and rhythms (which can be conceptualised as instrumental or coerced time).
- Magical time, wherein everything is possible, by means of sorcery and symbolic make-believe objects (amulets, magic wands) like in fairy-tales (conceptualised as expressive or hedonistic time).

Children learn the importance of obeying conventions regarding clock time, whilst they pursue a type of magical thinking in regards to time. Children live and cope with this paradox, in a straightforward, matter-of-fact way, by displaying the “coincidentia oppositorum”, the synergetic reconciliation between opposing views.

Employing a qualitative methodology based on phenomenology and hermeneutic analysis, the study revealed that there is a constant give-and-take and renegotiation of priorities for children, in the realm of time use. No clear boundaries are set, as they strive to maximise time use by reaching a lean, altogether fragile point of balance between spontaneity and cautious planning. Children believed time to be reversible, inasmuch as past events and one’s personal history of events can be reiterated in the future. Yesterday and tomorrow converge in children’s representations on time use strategies, to shape a continuum dominated by an anxiety-ridden race against time. Bygones convert to buy-back tips for time relapses, as children believe past situations can be brought back and re-lived: “*When you want to re-live the past, all it takes is a time machine that you can buy in a toy shop. Carrefour [hyper-market] has them too*” (Tudor, 4).

The use of technology for time freeze or time relapses is recurrent in boys’ narratives, whereas the use of magic for the same purposes appears in girls’ accounts. This tendency echoes fairy tale plots and characters, as stories or cartoon series and movies that target boys as main audience are often SF-like projections of future tense, unfolding outer-space, sky rockets, robots and sophisticated equipment for time travelling or teleportation. Young boys do not differentiate between such phantasy present-day reality. The boundary between fact and fiction is blurry for girls too, except for the story line for girls’ tales and cartoons that focus mainly on fantastic characters, like elves, fairy God-mothers, maleficent witches and good fairies that can reverse time at free, will by use of magic dust, potions and similar sorcery apparel. In conclusion, time is not yet an abstract notion

for children, but an enchanted, mystical element embedded in stories that children can relate to in a concrete manner, full of emotional attachment and identification.

Conclusions and implications for child-centric educational policies

A surprising finding of the study is that the apparently arid, overly complex topic of time turns out to interest young children, as they are willing to philosophise almost ceaselessly on its various facets. Thinking about time, questioning aspects, such as aging, favourite pastimes, likes and dislikes about time use, haste, lateness and slowness would seem an inaccessible exercise for small children. However, empirical findings indicate pre-schoolers are actually willing to answer questions on time use, they are proactive in designing time-related interpretations based on images, as they are communicative, thoughtful and insightful, when stimulated and challenged to reflect. Pre-schoolers reflexive capacities reflect a dynamic, ocean-like diversity of time use strategies associated to the early shaping of life-styles in a multi-dimensional portrayal of children's expectations, hopes and fears concerning time passage.

Since pre-school years, children develop representations on traded time, and engage on an intellectual pursuit to find out what they have to do to avoid time waste. As such, children make precautionary inferences regarding:

- Time saving solutions: "*When I am in the car, I play on the tablet, lest I get bored*" (Raluca, 5).
- Assumptions on the meaning of time waste: "*People waste time when they just sit around doing nothing*" (Alessia, 5).
- Attitudes about their own time management skills, either self-assured ("*I am very punctual indeed, and proud about it*" says Ștefan, 6) or downright doubtful ("*It's hard and I don't know if I can make it on time*" says Tiberiu, 5).

Giving voice to young children, such as the acknowledgement of their worth, their unique

personality and their entitlement to expressing their opinions are ethically important matters when conducting reflexive or meta-cognitive research (Phelan & Kinsella, 2013). This conclusion pinpoints the need for child-centric pedagogical designs and educational systems that support creative, interactive methods of debating for the early development of logics and argumentation capabilities. Fairy tales, by a user-friendly, very familiar content, provide an optimal ground for facilitating kindergarteners' acquaintance with notions of time. Children's accounts and opinions are unwittingly an easy target for outward influences and, consequently, difficult to portray faithfully, given their complex, improvised, impromptu and non-normative character (Spyrou, 2011).

The study reconfirmed previous findings that all such intuitive "bricolage" content produced by children is challenging to integrate in a rational action paradigm and diverts focus from original research goals. Using recommended post-hoc interpretation and retrospective impression elicitation (following Pinter and Zandian's methodological suggestions, 2015) revealed pre-schoolers still remembered the discussion that took place one month before.

They were eager to have a follow-up meeting, especially since they found the picture-led inquisitive approach to be attractive, colourful and vivid, they asked the researcher: "*When are you coming back to ask us some more?*" (Radu, 5), as they were eager to take the discussion further. They remember issues that remained untold previously, or they were concerned with how their name appeared in the paper, they got involved in story-telling about time tokens (old grandfather's clock, sports stop-watches or hourglasses) that can be exhibits in a family time museum. They also inquired whether they would receive some diploma or other recognition for their cooperation.

Children become knowledgeable about time duration by relating abstract notions to concrete life experiences. For example, they do not know to answer questions about how long an hour

lasts, when asked about duration, but they can estimate durations based on previously acquired knowledge (“*a year is made up four seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter*” says Sofia, 5) and on daily habits (“*two minutes is how long it takes to brush my teeth*” says Filip, 4). Such intuitive meanings are indeed largely derived from speech patterns of significant others, especially parental figures, finding which supports Tillman and Barne’s (2015) conclusions about early childhood acquisition of time duration notions.

The intensification of living time, time gentrification and its relentless, non-linear trajectory, with no buffer or available gap set aside for slowness or “*dolce far niente*”, is an aspect which children find particularly tiresome, emotionally exhausting, almost impossible to grasp. However, the positive side of all this restlessness is that children develop a strong sense of making time worth, making sense of time, of adding value to time. They discern between having time and making time, and wish for their parents to provide them with the gift of quality time, devoid of constraints. Moreover, children’s availability to philosophise over time issues is important especially for developing their intellectual capacity and knowledge capital, by means of the early onset of reflective meta-cognition on lifestyle choices based on time use strategies.

Children’s interpretation of Leitmotifs of time in fairy tales

The above-illustrated findings support a conception on the velocity of the race against time as leitmotiv of the experience of a “Turbo-kids generation” – tagline concept elicited by pre-schoolers’ time narratives dominated by haste and time pressure. Reconceptualised and “re-sensified” within classical fairy tales that can be read through the lens of contemporary time strain. An integrative, synthetic approach to research findings reflect three cardinal features and recurring topics or Leitmotifs of time narratives, as deciphered by children:

- Shaping the time perspective – escapism and past temporal orientation in fairy tales: „Once upon a time” – evoking a yearned-for era of yore, shrouded in myth, mystery and lingering quietude.

- “Out of time” and the race against the clock to dodge off a great danger or solve a life-and-death test.

- Tips and tricks as keep-sake against getting old, or ways to avoid too hasty, short-lived time passage: e.g. as long as they remain in NeverLand, Peter Pan and the lost boys will remain children forever.

Interviewed kindergarteners are receptive to countless examples of time haste that expose dire consequences of being late:

- In *Alice in Wonderland*, if the white rabbit, nervous, impetuous and always running late, does not make it on time to the Queen of Heart’s, he risks being beheaded.

- In *Brave*, if princess Merida does not reconcile with her mother, the latter will remain bewitched as a bear forever.

- In *Frozen*, Anna’s heart was frozen by mistake by her sister, Elsa, the ice-maker, and she will turn into an ice-block lest a gesture of true love melts a frozen heart *in due time*.

- In *Beauty and the Beast*, if the prince, cursed by a witch to turn into a monster, does not find true love and learn to make kind gestures to his beloved in time – until the rose has lost its last petal – then he will remain a beast for all eternity.

Fairy tale plots tell a time narrative that teaches children about the importance of time management and conformity to deadlines, as pre-requisites to becoming responsible, full-right (or more precisely, fully obliged) grown-ups. Children encounter this time projection of maturity with a strong emotional reaction, as this envisioned future is either frowned upon, dreaded or waited with impatience. Children understand suspense-driven time limits as the most important complication in storylines that can trap heroes and block the awaited happy end.

The current study assumes limitations regarding its lack of representativeness (inherent

in qualitative, exploratory studies based on inductive designs). It would also benefit, in terms of applicability and usefulness, from a comparative outlook with kindergarteners from less privileged family backgrounds – since the current sample of participants shared a middle-class social standing stemming from parents' dual-earner status. The level of felt time deficit and ensuing preoccupations on time rate maximisation would expectedly vary for financially challenged vs. relatively affluent children, should the hypothesis of null-sum game between time and money as scarce resources was to be confirmed.

Stories are an inexhaustibly rich, evocative and meaningful source of lessons on time use, time constraints, time passage and other symbolic milestones that act as coordinates for subjective experiences of early temporal attitudes and emerging time-based lifestyles. Kindergarteners extract insight on time socialisation and derive significance about its impact on the process of building one's own time views and time personality (as correlative of becoming adult)

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based on time notions embedded in storylines and favourite character descriptions.

The study involves an exploration of early childhood settings, based on time learning, which proves a fruitful approach to understanding self-regulated learning of time implications through the use of fairytales. In terms of time patterns, preschoolers seem to extract from fairy tales moral lessons on: the consequences of time insubordination, appraisal of time conformity, time-bound constraints and limitations. Early childhood intervention through training considers narratives that serve as lessons for moral character. Considering the current findings, introducing pre-schoolers to time notions, with the aid of fairy tale time cues, enhances shared understanding of time and conventional knowledge on time passage and subjacent rhythms. Hence, time learning supported by fairy tale content can prove an effective pedagogical approach for early childhood settings for learning time notions and flows.

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Interview Guide – Preschoolers on Learnt Time Practices

What would you like to spend more time on, if you could?

Why was Cinderella in a hurry? Why do you think the fairy God Mother let her attend the ball only until midnight?

Why was the Easter Bunny in Alice in Wonderland in a hurry?

Why do you think her mother urged Little Red Riding Hood to avoid wasting time and not be late?

Why did the Beast have time only until the rose lost its last petal to become human again, if he managed to find love and make a kind gesture?

What part of the day do you enjoy most: morning, afternoon, evening? Why?

If your mom or dad or grandma/grandpa (whoever picks you up from kindergarten) tells you that you cannot remain to play anymore, because you're in a hurry, why do you think this happens?

What does it mean to be in a hurry?

What do you most like to do?

What do you most dislike to do?

What does it mean to have free time? What does your family do in its free time?

What do you do so that you are not late for kindergarten?

What does „weekend” mean? What does it mean to be on holiday?

What part do you like more: staying at home or going to kindergarten?

When does time pass more swiftly – when you are at home or at kindergarten, or somewhere else, say, a playground?

Do you like to do more things at a time (like, for example, drawing while you watch a cartoon) or each thing at a time?

What do you think means „to lose time”? Do you sometimes lose or waste time? When?

What do your parents or grandparents tell you about time? What did you remember?

What does „history” mean?

What does the word „future” mean for you?

What does the word „past” mean for you?

Please take a look at the next pictures. What do you think happens in each on them? Please describe what you see.



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