

CHOICE OF INFANTS – ACCEPTABLE OR UNACCEPTABLE (CHILDREN AND ADULTS' POINT OF VIEW)

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Summary

This article deals with the results of a long-term four-year study of the problem of children's choice of the first year of life in the environment of various vital areas of knowledge of the immediate surrounding. The collected, analyzed, generalized facts of the infants' choice testify their active self-realization in the process of cognitive selective actions. It has been found that the parents' and teachers' insufficient understanding of children's natural rights of their choice leads to the suspension of such actions. As a result, there is a delay in the timely mental, sensory, physical development of infants. It was found that the full realization of children's reasonable choices is possible in conditions of adult recognition of infants' subjectivity in interaction with them. The authors established that infants show fundamentally important signs of subjectivity in contrast to the actions in the status of the object of interaction, which is constantly imposed on him by adults in the process of choosing. Using demonstrations of infant's subjectivity, it is possible and necessary to provide them with conditions for its further development and improvement in reasonable selective activities.

Keywords: choice, infants, early age, subject, object, interaction, parents, teachers.

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Don't expect that your child will be such as you want.
Help it to become not you, but itself.

Janusz Korczak

1. Introduction

Democratic transformations in social spheres have led to corresponding changes at all the levels in educational environment – from preschool to higher education. In order for today's younger democratically educated generations to continue the process of democratization and improve its results, they must become the direct subjects of it in modern conditions. Accordingly, the place, status, role of the child in the family and in educational environment of the preschool institution (PI) require a conceptual review.

From this multidimensional problem, the aspect of the child's choice of the desired for their own needs, preferences, interests has not yet been studied. In early and preschool childhood, research in this area has broad prospects, as children's lives are not yet as regulated

by the program content and organization of the educational process as schoolchildren or students.

Modern scientific developments and the practice of preschool education in democratic Europe were analyzed and generalized (*N. Melnyk and colleagues, 2020*), prove the positive consequences of the teachers' attitude to preschool children as the subjects of interaction with adults. The research of I. Bekh (*I. Bekh, 2003*), students and followers of his scientific school (*O. Reipolska, 2020*), revealed the progressive consequences of a multidirectional personality-oriented approach to preschool children. Theoretical and practical training of the future specialists in preschool education according to the research (*L. Artemova and colleagues, 2021*), (*V. Borova and colleagues, 2021*) provides appropriate specialists' training who are able to introduce the latest approaches to working with young children in Ukraine. At the same time, the problem of choosing early and preschool children's personal agency remains unexplored.

We consider the problem of choice as the rights of children to manifestation of natural activity and the desire for self-realization. Numerous choices where children demand to realize themselves in the position of the subject are mostly meet misunderstanding and neglecting by adults (parents, teachers), who receive children as the objects of their own actions. It provokes misunderstandings between these subjects of constant vital interaction. The insufficient study of this phenomenon of the children's choice and resistance of adults to its implementation, especially in early childhood, determines the relevance of study of this problem in the context of democratic transformations in educational processes of Ukraine.

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to identify and justify the presence of manifestation of the children's subjectivity from the first year of their life.

Objectives.

1. To concretize the choice of the desired by infants as natural and personal manifestation of their subjectivity.

2. To substantiate the natural and personal right of children in the first year of life to make the right choice and to warn adults about unacceptable choices.

Methodology of the Study. The conceptual basis of the study is a personal-oriented approach to the young child as a subject of interaction with adults: its understanding, perception by parents and teachers on a partnership basis. This multidimensional approach looks ahead the aspect of the children's reasonable choice of desire, but this aspect does not yet studied. Adults should perceive with respect and support to this aspect, making the conditions for such choices realization. At the same time, they need to take care of the correct reorientation of children from unacceptable choices to more appropriate ones.

Methods of the Study.

Theoretical analytical and synthesizing study of scientific sources from the point of view the problem of children's subjectivity in the educational process and, in particular, their choice.

A long-term 4-year study of early children's choices in families and preschools was carried out by the following methods:

- providing conditions for children's access to a variety of object and toy environment at home, nursery groups, streets, public parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, etc.,
- purposeful selection of different types of toys (figurative, interactive, dismountable, auxiliary materials, etc.) for the infants' free choice of the desired,
- observation, various records (recordings, videos, photos, dictaphone) of demonstration of children's choices desired in their various activities: everyday, communication, games, etc.,

- making different situations for infants' choices of the desired – in accordance with an image, design, size, ability to act, organic, cognitive needs, preferences of singing, melody, pictures, constructive actions, etc.,
- offer to kids the choice of different feasible tools and materials for appropriate functional actions or random manipulations with them,
- providing children with a choice of different books (for children and adults) in Ukrainian, German, English, with vivid illustrations of the characters and the environment of the work, with printed text without illustrations, different composition (cardboard, paper),
- the above-mentioned questions were indicated in the developed questionnaires, these surveys are for the parents,
- communication with parents, teachers about their motivation to allow certain choices by children and obstacles to others,
- study of children's reactions to permissive or forbidden emotions, words, actions of adults concerning to the things chosen by kids,
- communication with children about their choice to identify their preferences for one subject among others,
- comparative analysis, synthesis, classification, generalization, interpretation of the facts of children's choices of the desired among a variety of subjects, in different conditions of action with them.

The study was conducted in families and preschools in Kyiv, Rivne and nearby regions of the Western region of Ukraine; in Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

2. The main text

Theoretical and methodological principles of the study. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted by the UN General Assembly on November 20, 1989, ratified by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on September 27, 1991) recognized the main provisions of the "Declaration of the Rights of the Child" according to law (these provisions were proclaimed by the UN General Assembly on November 20, 1959). The main articles of these documents, implemented in a number of legislative acts of Ukraine, determine the rights of children and the responsibilities of adults concerning meeting the vital needs of children in love, understanding, morals, best interests of the child, guarantee the usage of all rights and freedoms.

Guided by these documents, the state program "I am in the World" (*Team of Authors, 2019*) determines educational, upbringing, developmental tasks of young children from the first half of life. Among these tasks are the following: the optimal development of the infants' personality, taking into account their needs, cognitive interests, leading activities.

We believe that provision and observance of the children's rights and interests mentioned in these documents are for their optimal mental, sensory, physical development from an early age and all this is possible in terms of adult recognition of the children's subjectivity in partner interaction with adults.

Having analyzed many well-established concepts, it was possible to identify the fundamental features and differences between the subject and object. We can form the following concepts as working ones and offer them to you.

The concept of subject (Latin *subjectum* – is that which is at the basis) is a carrier of activity that knows the world around. The subject of cognition is a person who knows something, someone, a worker, the engine of some processes, a source of activity with the position of a researcher and a transformer.

The concept of object (Latin *objectum* – is oriented particular activity) – it is an object, a person who knows, the result of cognition, change, which is aimed at the activities of the subject.

The subject of cognition indirectly makes its efforts through subject-practical activity on the object in interaction with it, with other objects, with people, with the phenomena of reality; but the object – on the contrary, accepts the purpose, tasks, conditions of the offered activity, changes in environment of its influence. A child can be alternately a subject or an object in interaction with an adult.

Taking into account these concepts, we have analysed the facts of the young children demonstration of the subjectivity, expressed in their choices of the desired. It has been noted that infants' choices have characteristic features of subjectivity or objectivity corresponding to the essence of these concepts, namely: they actively express their own desires in their choice and try their own efforts or asking the help of an adult to make it; as a child grows and develops, such actions in his behavior become more and more comparable to the actions of the object – making out-of-the-box solutions, conditions, proposals of the adult. However, this relationship may vary depending on the predominant style of the behaviour of an adult with an infant from the first days of life – democratic or authoritarian.

Modern pedagogics is moving from the subject-object model of adult interaction with children to the subject-subject. However, the optimal balance of subjectivity and objectivity of the child in interaction with the adult in different activities and at different ages of life and cognition is still not sufficiently studied and understood.

Now, the problem of subjectivity in pedagogics has been mainly studied concerning children at school, students of higher education. Scientific School (*A. Boiko, 2006*), studies the problems of up-bringing, studying, education on the basis of specially organized activities, communication, self-regulation, subject-subject moral and aesthetic relations of adults and children. The theoretical results of this scientific school are used in the corresponding articles (*Encyclopedia of Education, 2008*). The study (*O.Halian, 2017*) proved the system-forming category "subjectivity of the student's personality" for pedagogical paradigms, theories and educational models focused on subject-developmental pedagogical cooperation. Other researchers (*O. Popova, A. Lesyk, 2021*) have studied the place and role of personal relationships in correspondence of primary or secondary with the motives and impacts of the activities in which they unfold and are realized for the scientific substantiation of subject-subject interaction technologies. (*O. Savchenko, 2018*) proves that the primary basis is the subject-subject interaction of the teacher with the student. He considers the educational process to be secondary in its types of activities, where these relations exist. From the experience of this study, it can be argued that the primary or secondary subject-subject interaction of children is a variable trend depending on the type of activity, the level of its development and perfection in children of early and preschool age.

Scientific school (*M. Hryniowa, 2015*) directed to study three dominants: a student – a teacher – educational environment, where self-regulation is the highest degree of activity. The study (*A. Khomenko, 2015*) of subject-subject relations as the basis of personality development, formation of subjectivity of teachers (*A. Bekirova, 2019*)

Concerning preschool children, humanistic ideas developed by a Polish teacher are still relevant today (*J. Korcezak, 2016*). A thorough study (*O. Koshelivska-Melnyk, 2002*) concerning the problem of children's choice among moral norms attracts attention. As to young children, a fundamental study of the scientific school of psychologists (*M. Lisina, 2009*) reveals the dynamics of communication between infants and adults from the first months of life. However, research on the choice of infants has not been identified.

Choices of the desired by the children of the 1st year of life.

Four-year long-term studies have shown that even a baby can make and defend its choice. The initial incentives for its choice are vital needs for food, sleep, care, external impressions, communication and other activities.

Thus, from the first days of its life, the newborn may refuse breast milk, because it is difficult to suck from tight breasts. Mothers first try to feed the baby wholesome breast milk. But while it is still not enough, they feed infants from the feeding bottle with other milk or formula milk. As a result, the baby gets an alternative to choosing between: significant effort and still lack of breast milk or rapid satisfaction of hunger with the help of the feeding bottle. Subconsciously, but persistently, the newborn chooses a feeding bottle, because it is easier to suck and satisfy hunger. Exhausted by the crying of a hungry baby, mothers give in to it and feed with the help of the feeding bottle. An infant need it when it wants to drink water. But after all, a well-fed baby is still crying, needing water and refusing milk. Here the behavior of the baby and the mother depend on the natural stimuli of thirst or hunger. The baby is not able to resist them, and the mother understands how important it is to satisfy them in a timely and adequate manner. Thus, the first choice and the first victory of the baby in the competition with an adult for the main way of survival – facilitation of nutrition. Mother made away with crying of the infant. But she has new problems: pump out breast milk in time (you still have to learn it!) or feed her baby by formula feeding from the first days of life. Both the first and the second injure loving mothers. Some of them withstand these excessive worries until almost the end of the first year. And some, mostly French mothers, leave babies to 3 months of age to breastfeed (*Druckerman, 2019*). So who in such cases declared and defended their own subjectivity in a vital competition? And who is the winner? In the end, both mother and a baby became partners, because their only goal is to eat and grow. And it is the most important thing for both of them.

Along with the choice of ways to meet the vital physiological needs of the newborn, there is a social need – knowledge of the immediate environment. The baby, from the first month of its life, distinguishes something from the environment, choosing the attractive things: he stops looking at the faces of the closest people who communicate with it every day, on the bright objects. Next, its primary choice concerns those toys that sound and move. This selective concentration of the baby first by means of looking, and then with the help of auditory, tactile sensory organs helps it to calm down: anxiety disappears, even crying stops. Both the baby's interest in external stimuli and the reassurance of focusing on them show that such early baby's choices in the immediate environment reveal the emergence and realization of the need for contact with the outside world. These and similar choices socialize the child, promote its development.

Since such needs are natural and indicate the timely mental and physical development of the baby, is it possible to deny it the satisfaction of not yet realized, but important for it to choose? It is known that the systematic neglect of the staff of nurseries in the needs of infants in contact with the outside world leads to "phenomena of hospitalism" – not a reverse delay in mental and physical development of children in orphanages (*N. Shchelovanov, N. Aksaryna, 1960*).

These and identical facts prove that the choice of infants among the various environmental phenomena from the first days of life is a reasonable need of a growing human individual. The phenomenon of selectivity of infants testifies their timely mental development and promotes socialization in the human environment.

In further studies of the phenomenon of choice in dynamics during the first year of the infants' life revealed a number of their numerous and varied attempts to choose and have the desired.

Timely maturation of the baby's nervous system stimulates the emergence and development of cognitive processes, speech, various movements, actions and more. With the advent of these new opportunities to know about the environment, the range of baby's choices is expanding. The growing ability of not yet skilled small little hands to take and hold objects, toys encourages it to choose the most attractive to it in colour, comfortable in shape, size, weight-bearing. Parents, obviously, consider such choices of children reasonable, because they usually satisfy them and even provide the child with ergonomically appropriate and safe items, toys. Only the choice of dangerous objects for infants, approaching to them, causes fair restrictions on adults. If these restrictions precede the appearance of such objects on the way to their achievement by the infant, it does not notice this and does not feel the prohibitions of the chosen one. And so it acts calmly in the object-toy environment that surrounds it, with the permission of its parents. If the adults do not take care of it in time, they have to take away the dangerous objects chosen by the child or voluntarily limit access to important things for parents. But the baby insists on its own choice, protests against the prohibitions in ways available to it: crying, capricious, fussy, seeking the desired. Without understanding the reasons for the restrictions, the infant asserts its subjectivity in the right of choice, which it previously exercised. Without realizing it, the adults consider themselves as the victims. After all, these are their things, and children are not yet able to use them. So why are the things important and dear to adults? That is why these reactions of infants are classified as fuss in psychology and pedagogy, and even more so in everyday vocabulary. The studies (*L. Artemova, 2020*) have shown that it is possible to avoid negative traumatic emotions for infants and adults. It is only necessary to understand their choice, respect the right to it, accept and recognize the infant as a subject of interaction with an adult.

With development of movements, in particular, crawling, walking, the baby expands its space, enters in to the space and field of adult activity. It is especially interested in modern household appliances. The child chooses and studies everything he can get his hands on, picks up everything new and unfamiliar to him: telephones, cutlery, keys, various papers, books; clicks on a computer keyboard, opens cabinet doors, pulls out drawers, looks into the oven, on the stove, and more. Adults are usually not ready to allow a child into their daily living space and often more or less authoritarian stop these and similar attempts by infants to know about the immediate environment. But protecting their material world, parents do not notice (or do not know) that forbidding such a choice of the child, they extinguish his natural curiosity, its cognitive interest, stop the initiative, returning the child to the environment of the only game world. Is this baby's choice reasonable? We think, that a baby as the small curious explorer has a right for it. Adults only need to understand their child, find the time for it and have the inspiration to satisfy its choice and thus open such an interesting yet unknown adult world. After all, the baby already lives in it. It is better to show the baby what he wants, to allow him to touch everything with his fingers, to take him in his arms, protecting him from disappointments, and his precious things – from loss and damage. If the adults do not do this, the child will seize the moment to look at everything contrary to what is not allowed, unnoticed, stealthily from the adults, to touch everything, to take his hands, even slyly looking at them. This is a casual request of the child about himself, his interest, his own choice, a certain ability to achieve and know what he wants. He does not understand why adults can use all the riches of the environment uncontrollably, and children are not allowed. Because, all it attracts him uncontrollably.

At the same time, adults encourage children's movements for their development, considering it reasonable for them to choose to stand on their feet, get up, crawl, and finally walk. So why do parents often put their "VETO" on the items that the baby wanted to get? After all,

it was to them that he tensely walked or walked, stumbling and falling. Try to imagine yourself with his difficulties and perseverance. None of the adults remember their first steps towards the chosen one! But you should know that the prohibition of learning new things – is the brake of emotional, intellectual and ultimately personal development from infancy. Neither parents nor teachers want it. Adults are usually led by the expediency of one or not the expediency of another in the choice and behaviour of the child. But he did not understand this for a long time, nor did he learn to respect the rights of adults. Because adults are smarter and more experienced than young children, it is probably the parents and educators who have a responsibility to respect children's rights to learn about the world and their first choices.

Children's choice of desired in communication. An interesting fact was revealed in this experimental communication with infants. At the end of the first year, children actively learn the words often used by their parents and relatives. Adults encourage, approve this choice of infants and are even proud of their achievements. If some adults have too many words "No", "Do not take" and similar, the child even responds to positive appeals, requests, wishes of adults: "No!". So, "come back to bite you later", "you reap as you sow". The conclusions are obvious: there are too many prohibitions in communicating with children. The kids have borrowed them and do not accept even positive offers from adults. It is necessary to avoid of objections, not permissions, and look for positive forms of bias or replacement of unacceptable choice of the baby.

It is very easy to switch the children of the first year from their chosen one, but unacceptable both for them and from the point of view of adults – biting off pieces of rubber toys, cardboard boxes, books, sucking ribbons, laces when teeth are cut; springing paper, and then pages from children's books, knocking on the glass from idleness. You can play the piano, guitar, trumpet or something other, or take a ball and play with it, or start a whirligig, flash a light of the toy, roll a car, clockwork toy, flutter a bird's wings, moan like a cow, bark like as a dog and etc. in case to keep children's attention away. Children immediately take such toys from the hands of an adult and imitate the actions of adults, even diversifying them.

Such joint with adult activities is interesting and useful for infants because it enriches their play activities. Because the children are not yet able to use toys functionally enough. Therefore, it is important to build a turret of 3-5 rings together with them, to build simple small structures from cubes, roll balls and play with them, "feed" dolls, animals, imitate sound, carry them in a cart, put them to bed, etc. The richer the range of functional play activities of children with toys, the more frequent and meaningful their games with them, the more there are their own inventions or random new actions of children (*L. Artemova, 2021*).

3. Conclusions

The analyzed research communication and various activities with the infants of the first year of life revealed their diverse choices in various spheres of life: food, subject, communication, etc. We consider the infants' choices as demonstration a manifestation of self-realization and cognition, a statement of their own subjectivity.

It was found that not always and not all adults notice and properly evaluate the infants' choices, do not ready to understand them as a bright natural indicator of the baby's self-expression and self-development, its way to join the human community, the material world, to realize themselves among others. This creates a problem relationship between omniscient adults and uninformed infants. As a result of misunderstanding each other, parents and infants lose a lot. It is difficult for adults to get along with an infant and, accordingly, opportunities

for effective developmental emotional, tactile, speech influences on it is reducing. The infant loses many opportunities to meet natural personal needs in the cognitive sphere and self-development, subjective perception of the diversity of the world. All this reduces trust and sincerity in relationships with adults, due to its prohibitions and obstacles to choosing by a baby, not recognizing its subjectivity.

It has been found that, adults consider the infants' choices as the following: reasonable, acceptable or unacceptable. The attitude of adults to the different baby's choices determines: support, encouragement of reasonable choices; non-perception, suppression, prevention of unacceptable choices.

As a result of the study, it was found that the attitude of adults to the infants' choice determines the further course of this phenomenon: activation or extinction.

In the conditions of systematic attentive and friendly attitude of adults to the infants' choices, they are always address their wishes, intentions to adults, waiting for their approval, support or assistance to achieve or realize the desire. Understanding and respecting the choice of infants, participating in its implementation, parents and teachers ensure the free personal development of the child in accordance with the sensitive periods of its growing body.

Numerous research situations show that inadmissible, unacceptable baby's choices should be prevented by changing the conditions of their occurrence, resorting to switching the attention and interest of children to another choice, organizing their joint activities with adults and interesting activities for children. In cases that adults constantly and systematically cancel, block, neglect the infants' choices, children, get annoyed, resist, get angry, and conflict with adults because they do not understand the reasons for this. The kids, although do not always the winners of such clashes, but they do not forget them. They are often becoming naughty about anything and even without it, they become capricious, trying to defeat an adult. And they often succeed. There is an imbalance in the relationship between adults and children. It is harmful for children and parents to be in a such conflict situation because since childhood it inhibits the natural free development and realization of the child's personality in a democratic society.

Prospects for further research. With the growth and development of young children, the sphere and content of children's choices change significantly. The growing life experience and activity of children are changing both the forms and ways in which children express their own choices. Accordingly, it is important to study, analyze, interpret the peculiarities of the children's choices (on the 2nd and 3rd years of life) as an important component of their subjectivity in relationships with adults and peers.

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