

## Interpretive Analysis of Children’s Essays as a Means of Identifying “Creative Initiative”

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### ABSTRACT

**Background.** In modern Russian psychology of giftedness, research on initiative in its various aspects occupies a prominent place. Creative initiative manifests itself not in the discovery of something objectively existing, but in the creation of something that has not yet existed: in particular, an individual artistic image.

**Objective.** Research on creative initiative in a child’s artistic creativity requires a special, “interpretive” analysis of children’s creative products and the situation of their appearance. Such an analysis is not focused on the compliance or non-compliance of the objective results of children’s creativity with a task’s requirements, but primarily on understanding the child’s goals and intentions, which are manifested in initiative actions that go beyond the scope of the proposed task. It is thanks to such proactive changes that an externally imposed task common to all children in a group turns into an individual, internally motivated creative product. The complexity of interpretive analysis is aggravated by the fact that the child’s intentions are most often not fully realized and are not clearly enough manifested in his/her works.

**Design.** This study examines the products of younger schoolchildren’s literary and artistic creativity, performed while learning literature based on the developmental program of G. Kudina and Z. Novlyanskaya, “Literature as a Subject of an Aesthetic Cycle.” The author briefly outlines the theoretical foundations of this program and describes the methodological principle of changing the positions of the author and the reader, which underlies the method of instruction.

**Results.** Examples are given of interpretive analysis of essays created while mastering the concept of “point of view”. Children’s essays showing different levels of understanding of the task and of authorial initiative are considered. The author, based on the assumption

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that literary and creative development is, in principle, accessible to every child, especially emphasizes that even in a weak essay, an interpretive analysis makes it possible to discover the germ of an independent idea that deserves to be noticed and supported.

Therefore, special attention is devoted to guiding the collective discussion of children's essays, which is designed to help little authors not only to see the shortcomings of their work, but, most importantly, to realize the most valuable thing in it, which they can improve in subsequent essays.

**Conclusion.** Attention to children's literary creativity and mastery of an interpretive analysis of its results is a missing link in the professional training of future literature teachers.

**Keywords:** Creative initiative; understanding; interpretive analysis; point of view; creativity; liberty; given space; space of the possible; literary and creative development

#### Highlights:

- The study of creative initiative, which manifests itself not in the discovery of something objectively existing, but in the creation of something that has not yet existed, requires a special, "interpretive" analysis of children's creative products and the situation of their appearance.
- Such an analysis is not focused on the compliance or non-compliance of the objective results of children's creativity with the task's requirements, but primarily on understanding the child's goals and intentions, which are manifested in initiative actions that go beyond the scope of the proposed task.
- Even in a weak essay, an interpretive analysis makes it possible to discover the germ of an independent idea that deserves to be noticed and supported.
- Attention to children's literary creativity and mastery of an interpretive analysis of its results is a missing link in the professional training of future literature teachers.

#### АННОТАЦИЯ

**Введение.** В современной отечественной психологии одаренности заметное место занимают исследования инициативы в различных ее аспектах. Автором исследуется *созидательная* инициатива, которая проявляется не в открытии чего-либо объективно существующего, а в создании еще не бывшего. В частности, индивидуального художественного образа.

**Цель.** Исследования созидательной инициативы в художественном творчестве ребенка требуют особого, «*понимающего*» анализа детских произведений и самой ситуации их появления. Такой анализ направлен не на соответствие или несоответствие объективных результатов детского творчества требованиям задания, а в первую очередь на понимание целей и намерений ребенка, которые проявляются в его инициативных действиях, выходящих за рамки предложенного задания. Именно благодаря таким инициативным изменениям общее для всех детей внешнее задание превращается в индивидуальное, внутренне мотивированное творческое произведение. Трудность понимающего анализа усугубляется тем, что намерения ребенка чаще всего не вполне осознаются им самим и бывают недостаточно отчетливо воплощены в его произведениях.

**Методы.** В статье рассматриваются произведения литературно-художественного творчества младших школьников, выполненные в условиях обучения литературе по развивающей программе Г.Н. Кудиной и З.Н. Новлянской «Литература как предмет эстетического цикла». Автор кратко излагает теоретические основания этой программы и описывает методический принцип смены позиций автора и читателя, лежащий в основе обучения.

**Результаты.** Приводятся примеры понимающего анализа сочинений, созданных в процессе освоения понятия «точка зрения». Рассматриваются произведения

разного уровня понимания поставленной задачи и наличия авторской инициативы в детском сочинении. При этом автор, исходя из убеждения, что литературно-творческое развитие в принципе доступно каждому ребенку, особо подчеркивает, что даже в слабом сочинении понимающий анализ позволяет обнаружить зародыш самостоятельного замысла, заслуживающий того, чтобы его заметить и поддержать.

Поэтому специальное внимание в статье уделяется руководству коллективным обсуждением детских сочинений, которое призвано помочь маленькому автору не только увидеть недочеты своей работы, но, главное, осознать наиболее ценное в ней, что он может совершенствовать в следующих сочинениях.

**Выводы.** Одним из главных выводов исследования становится утверждение, что внимание к детскому литературному творчеству и овладение понимающим анализом его результатов является недостающим звеном в профессиональной подготовке будущих преподавателей литературы.

**Ключевые слова:** Созидательная инициатива; понимание; понимающий анализ; точка зрения; творчество; свобода; пространство заданного; пространство возможного; литературно-творческое развитие

#### Ключевые положения:

- Исследование созидательной инициативы, которая проявляется не в открытии чего-либо объективно существующего, а в создании еще не бывшего, требуют особого, «*понимающего*» анализа детских произведений и самой ситуации их появления.
- Такой анализ направлен не на соответствие или несоответствие объективных результатов детского творчества требованиям задания, а в первую очередь на понимание целей и намерений ребенка, которые проявляются в его инициативных действиях, выходящих за рамки предложенного задания.
- Даже в слабом сочинении понимающий анализ позволяет обнаружить зародыш самостоятельного замысла, заслуживающий того, чтобы его заметить и поддержать.
- Внимание к детскому литературному творчеству и овладение понимающим анализом его результатов является недостающим звеном в профессиональной подготовке будущих преподавателей литературы.

## RESUMEN

**Presentación.** En nuestro tiempo, en la psicología rusa del talento, la investigación de la iniciativa en sus diversos aspectos ocupa un lugar destacado. El autor explora una iniciativa creativa que se manifiesta no en el descubrimiento de algo que existe objetivamente, sino en la creación de lo que aún no es. En particular, la imagen artística individual.

**El objetivo.** La investigación de la iniciativa creativa en la creación artística del niño requiere un análisis especial «comprendivo» de las obras infantiles y la situación misma de su aparición. Tal análisis no está dirigido a la conformidad o no conformidad de los resultados objetivos de la creatividad infantil con los requisitos de la tarea, sino principalmente a la comprensión de los objetivos e intenciones del niño, que se manifiestan en sus acciones proactivas que van más allá del alcance de la tarea propuesta. Es gracias a tales cambios proactivos que la tarea externa común para todos los niños se convierte en una obra creativa individual e internamente motivada. El análisis de la comprensión se ve agravado por el hecho de que las intenciones del niño a menudo no son plenamente conscientes de sí mismo y no están plasmadas con suficiente claridad en sus obras.

**Métodos.** En el artículo se examinan las obras de la creación literaria y artística de los escolares más jóvenes, realizadas en las condiciones de la enseñanza de la literatura según el programa de desarrollo de G. N. Kudina y Z. N. Novlyanskaya «la Literatura como objeto del ciclo estético». El autor describe brevemente los fundamentos teóricos de este

programa y describe el principio metodológico de cambiar las posiciones del autor y del lector, que subyace en el aprendizaje.

**Resultados.** Se dan ejemplos de análisis comprensivo de escritos creados en el proceso de dominar el concepto de «punto de vista». Se consideran obras de diferentes niveles de comprensión de la tarea y la presencia de la iniciativa del autor en la composición de los niños. Al mismo tiempo, el autor, basado en la creencia de que el desarrollo literario y creativo es, en principio, accesible para todos los niños, enfatiza especialmente que incluso en un ensayo débil, un análisis comprensivo permite descubrir el germen de un plan independiente que merece ser notado y apoyado.

Por lo tanto, el artículo presta especial atención a la dirección de la discusión colectiva de los escritos de los niños, que está diseñado para ayudar al pequeño autor no solo a ver las deficiencias de su trabajo, sino, lo más importante, a darse cuenta de lo más valioso que puede mejorar en los siguientes escritos.

**Conclusión.** Una de las principales conclusiones del estudio es la afirmación de que la atención a la creatividad literaria infantil y el dominio del análisis comprensivo de sus resultados son el eslabón perdido en la formación profesional de los futuros profesores de literatura.

**Palabras clave:** Iniciativa creativa; comprensión; análisis comprensivo; punto de vista; creatividad; libertad; espacio de lo dado; espacio de lo posible; desarrollo literario y creativo

#### **Disposiciones clave:**

- La investigación de la iniciativa creativa, que se manifiesta no en el descubrimiento de algo objetivamente existente, sino en la creación de lo que aún no es, requiere un análisis especial «comprensivo» de las obras infantiles y la situación misma de su aparición.
- Dicho análisis no está dirigido a la conformidad o no conformidad de los resultados objetivos de la creatividad infantil con los requisitos de la tarea, sino principalmente a la comprensión de los objetivos e intenciones del niño, que se manifiestan en sus acciones proactivas que van más allá del alcance de la tarea propuesta.
- Incluso en un ensayo débil, un análisis comprensivo permite descubrir el germen de un diseño independiente que merece ser notado y apoyado.
- La atención a la creatividad literaria de los niños y el dominio del análisis comprensivo de sus resultados son el eslabón perdido en la formación profesional de los futuros profesores de literatura.

#### **RESUME**

**Origines.** Dans la psychologie russe moderne du talent, la recherche sur l'initiative sous ses divers aspects occupe une place prépondérante. L'auteur de ce travail explore l'initiative créatrice, qui se manifeste non pas dans la découverte de quelque chose qui existe objectivement, mais dans la création de quelque chose qui n'a pas encore existé. En particulier, une image artistique individuelle.

**Objectif.** Le but est de faire une recherche sur l'initiative créatrice dans la créativité artistique d'un enfant nécessite une analyse particulière et « compréhensive » des œuvres des enfants et de la situation même de leur apparition. Une telle analyse ne vise pas à la correspondance ou à la non-conformité des résultats objectifs de la créativité des enfants avec les exigences de la tâche, mais avant tout à comprendre les buts et les intentions de l'enfant, qui se manifestent dans ses actions proactives qui vont au-delà de la portée de la tâche proposée. C'est grâce à de tels changements proactifs qu'une tâche externe commune à tous les enfants se transforme en un travail créatif individuel, motivé en interne. La difficulté d'une analyse compréhensive est aggravée par le fait que les intentions de l'enfant

ne sont le plus souvent pas pleinement réalisées par lui et ne sont pas suffisamment clairement incarnées dans ses œuvres.

**Méthodes.** L'article examine les œuvres de créativité littéraire et artistique d'écoliers, réalisées dans les conditions de l'enseignement de la littérature selon le programme de développement de G.N. Kudina et Z.N. Novlyanskaya « La littérature comme sujet du cycle esthétique ». L'auteur expose brièvement les fondements théoriques de ce programme et décrit le principe méthodologique de changement de position de l'auteur et du lecteur, qui sous-tend la formation.

**Résultats.** Des exemples d'analyse compréhensive d'essais créés dans le cadre du processus de maîtrise du concept de « point de vue » sont donnés. Les travaux de différents niveaux de compréhension de la tâche et la présence d'une initiative d'auteur dans un essai pour enfants sont pris en compte. Dans le même temps, l'auteur, à partir de sa conviction que le développement littéraire et créatif est, en principe, accessible à tout enfant, souligne surtout que même dans un essai faible, une analyse compréhensive permet de découvrir le germe d'une idée indépendante qui mérite d'être remarqué et soutenu.

Par conséquent, dans l'article, une attention particulière est accordée à l'orientation de la discussion collective sur les essais pour enfants, conçue pour aider le petit auteur non seulement à voir les lacunes de son travail, mais, plus important encore, à réaliser ce qu'il y a de plus précieux, ce qu'il peut s'améliorer dans les essais ultérieurs.

**Conclusions.** L'une des principales conclusions de l'étude est l'affirmation selon laquelle l'attention portée à la créativité littéraire des enfants et la maîtrise d'une analyse compréhensive de ses résultats constituent le chaînon manquant dans la formation professionnelle des futurs professeurs de littérature.

**Mots-clés:** Initiative créative ; compréhension ; analyse compréhensive ; point de vue ; création ; liberté ; espace donné ; espace du possible ; développement littéraire et créatif

#### Points principaux:

- L'étude de l'initiative créatrice, qui se manifeste non pas dans la découverte de quelque chose qui existe objectivement, mais dans la création de quelque chose qui n'a pas encore été, nécessite une analyse particulière de « compréhension » des œuvres d'enfants et de la situation même de leur apparition.
- Une telle analyse ne vise pas la conformité ou la non-conformité des résultats objectifs de la créativité des enfants avec les exigences de la tâche, mais avant tout la compréhension des buts et des intentions de l'enfant, qui se manifestent dans ses actions proactives qui vont au-delà de la portée de la tâche proposée.
- Même dans un essai faible, une analyse compréhensive peut révéler le germe d'une idée indépendante qui mérite d'être remarquée et soutenue.
- L'attention portée à la créativité littéraire des enfants et la maîtrise d'une analyse compréhensive de ses résultats constituent le chaînon manquant dans la formation professionnelle des futurs professeurs de littérature.

## Introduction

In modern Russian psychology of giftedness, creativity, and development, the concept of initiative in its various aspects occupies an increasingly prominent place (Bogoyavlenskaya, 2009; Bogoyavlenskaya, 2021; Elkonin, 2022; Tsukerman, 2019). In most cases, we are talking about free initiative by a student or test subject, leading to the *discovery of something that already exists*: an implicit pattern, an educational problem, etc. Of course, such a discovery is a creative act, but since its result exists objectively, it is not marked with the stamp of individuality and can be the same for a variety of people.

In our study devoted to the children's literary and creative development, we examined the phenomenon of "creative" initiative, which expresses itself in the creation of an individual verbal and artistic image *that has not yet existed* (Novlyanskaya, 2022).

The value of such initiative is obvious, but what are the conditions and means for its development? How to recognize and support the diverse and sometimes not easily distinguishable manifestations of creative initiative by little authors? In our view, an "interpretive analysis" of children's creative products can become the teacher's main tool. This article is dedicated to this analysis.

Understanding as such is the most important problem of the humanities of the last two centuries — sciences whose goal is not accuracy of knowledge, but depth of insight (Bakhtin, 1979, pp. 371–372). Various aspects of this problem were touched upon in the works of the greatest scientists of the 19th–20th centuries (Bakhtin, 1979; Buber, 1995; Dilthey, 2001; Frankl, 1990; Gadamer, 1988; Jung, 1939; Potebnya, 1999; Spranger, 2014). Following the interpretive (descriptive) psychology of W. Dilthey and E. Spranger, interpretive sociology appeared (Weber, 1990) and interpretive psychotherapy (Vasilyuk, 2023). In the artistic development field, the question was raised about the need for interpretive diagnostics (Melik-Pashayev, 2015).

Studies on qualitative research methodology are directly related to this topic (Busygina, 2011).

Of course, we cannot present and analyze all this material within this article. Let us formulate only the key things that are important for justifying and describing the method of interpretive analysis.

The need for *understanding* makes itself felt especially clearly when we are dealing not with a person's reaction to external demands or to objective influences that can be measured and controlled, but with unpredictable manifestations of one's freedom, with what a person does not "because..."; but "in order to...". From this point of view, *creativity* research, as convincingly shown, in particular, by C. Jung (Jung, 1939), is possible exclusively on the basis of an interpretive approach. We will try to show examples of such an analysis of the literary creativity of younger schoolchildren.

We will consider a number of creative works produced by children during instruction under the program of G. Kudina and Z. Novlyanskaya, "Literature as a Subject of an Aesthetic Cycle" (Kudina, 2005; Novlyanskaya, 2020). We will be interested, first of all, in the author's freedom in certain conditions. The specific subject of our attention will be *the child's initiative action*, that is, an action that does not directly follow from mastery of the educational material, is not a response to the requirements of the task, and is not prompted by the teacher.

Our analysis will be based on attempts to dive deeply into the birth of the child's own idea, into the intentions (which are not fully realized by the child and are not always convincingly implemented in the text), and will be aimed at interpreting the changes that the child brings to the original task, not discarding it, but transforming it.

Thanks to such changes, the "external" task assigned to all the pupils is transformed by each pupil into an individual "internal" plan, someone else's initiative into a child's own, and free creative action is generated, not required or regulated by instruction.

With this approach to a child's creative product, as already mentioned, we are dealing not so much with why it appears, but with what the initiative of the little author is aimed at, with his/her own intentions and goals.

What are the working tools for such analysis? At this research stage, the following can be identified. Firstly, a comparison of the initial general task and the results of the child's subsequent free actions in the process of individual work on an essay. Secondly, identifying task requirements and actions sufficient to fulfill them, that is, actions "in the given space" (Veraksa, 2010). Thirdly, identification and interpretation of actions taken by the child on his/her own initiative, *redundant in relation to the task*, implementing the young author's own plan; that is, actions indicating an entrance "into the space of the possible" (Veraksa, 2010).

## Results and Discussion

Before moving on to interpretive analysis of the children's essays, we describe the conditions under which the task itself was presented and performed and the actions that ensured its successful completion. In order to do this, brief information about the program for teaching literature that we are using is needed. It is based on the initial relationship "author – literary text – reader" (Bakhtin, 1979), which guides students to reconstruct the author's *point of view* while reading literary works and to express their own point of view in their attempts to create literary texts. It is this fragment of work with the "point of view" concept, which opens the path to an ascent to authorship, that will be considered in this study. By mastering this concept, the reader discovers the author's attitude to what is said in the text. Readers learn to find and distinguish the points of view of the author, narrator, and characters in a literary text, as well as to express them in their own creative works. "Point of view" is the children's main discovery at the beginning of their education, and their work with this concept, gradually becoming more complex, continues throughout the school course.

In order for theoretical knowledge to have meaning for a child and immediately become a means of practical work, it must be introduced by a special, non-traditional method: theoretical knowledge is not communicated to the child in a ready-made form, but is discovered and mastered by the children themselves in their reading and writing practice.

The teacher sets a specific creative task for the children as well as the direction in which to move to solve it. Let us emphasize: *the direction* is the only thing that may be set by the teacher, since if the task is truly creative, it cannot have a single "correct" artistic solution; all the children solve it in their own way. When solving a problem turns out to be impossible without theoretical knowledge, then it that knowledge introduced, and to master a particular concept, the child actually does the work of an author, reader, and theorist, making a full circle by interchanging these positions<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The educational program "Literature as a Subject of an Aesthetic Cycle" implements a positional teaching method. The main positions that children master are those of "author" and "reader"; from the latter there spin off the auxiliary positions of "reader-theorist" and "reader-critic". For more information about this, refer to Melik-Pashaev (A.A. Melik-Pashaev, 2006) and Z.N. Novlyanskaya (Novlyanskaya, 2016; Novlyanskaya, 2022).

Let us consider the method of moving along the circle of changing positions using the example of classes in which the *point of view* concept is introduced.

The idea is based, first of all, on the assumption of the very possibility of the existence of different points of view “about the same thing”, the ability to see and evaluate the same object, event, or life phenomenon in different ways. And this is the main difficulty for children who have not previously thought about points of view other than their own. Therefore, it is advisable to begin with a collision of different points of view, extremely distant from each other. A striking example of such distance for children can be, for example, the points of view of a person and an animal.

Our work begins with a collective creative sketch, which the teacher uses to invite the children to talk, on behalf of a dog, about the medal it received at an exhibition. Among the children’s attempts, the teacher singles out those that fulfill one of the task’s requirements: they keep the story’s form “from the first person” (the point of view of the hero — the dog), marks this as successful, and asks: “Did you talk about the medal in the way that a dog or a person might see and evaluate it?” Usually the children agree that they talked about the medal “in a human way”. Then the teacher gives the following task: “Try to imagine and show in the story what a dog can notice and appreciate in a medal, how *it* sees it in its own way, in a dog’s way.” And again, from the children’s answers, the teacher selects and supports those with more or less successful attempts to transition to the hero’s point of view, and evaluates such answers as successful. Further, it is possible to specify the task: e.g., to ask to talk about the medal on behalf of a young dog who is at the exhibition for the first time, or a dog whose chest is covered in medals, or on behalf of a homeless mongrel, etc.

Each subsequent answer by a child seems to advance the whole class along a path of solving the common task — making an imaginary transition to the hero’s point of view. Working on a collective sketch in the author’s position, children begin to practically master very complex concepts: “point of view”, “narrator”, “storyteller”, “hero”. But this knowledge appears before them not in an abstract, verbalized form, but as a necessary means of practical creative work. The assimilation of knowledge and its application in practice are not separated in time, but are a single, holistic process.

In the following lessons, similar holistic discovery and assimilation of knowledge occurs when children work in the position of a reader-theorist. The children discover and at the same time assimilate knowledge about the hero-storyteller and his/her point of view while collectively exploring the tale by A. Kuprin, “Sapsan”, where the story is told from the perspective of the main character — a dog.

The story’s very first paragraph shows children how a real writer addresses the same problem that they tried to solve while working on a collective creative sketch. “I am Sapsan Thirty-Sixth — a big and strong dog of a rare breed, red-sand color, four years old, and I weigh about six and a half poods [104 pounds–ed.]. Last spring, in someone else’s huge barn, where there were a little more than seven of us dogs locked up (I can’t count higher than that), they hung a heavy yellow pancake around my neck, and everyone praised me. However, the pancake did not smell like anything.”

While reading, the teacher asks a series of questions: “On whose behalf is the story being told?” This question is quite understandable to children, and they easily determine that the story’s narrator is a dog. Then the teacher begins to guide the



children through the text, offering them interesting prompts: "From whose point of view are the events described?"; "Whose eyes see things, life phenomena, the heroes?" and "What thoughts and feelings are expressed in this passage? Who do they belong to?" The solution to these problems can be deepened to the extent of identifying those text fragments where the author's point of view is clearly expressed through the dog's thoughts; where the points of view of the author and the hero merge; where they diverge; and where it is difficult to determine through whose eyes this or that life phenomenon is seen.

Different interpretations are possible here, sometimes unexpected for the teacher — unexpected precisely because these are creative interpretations. Variability is an indicator of the reader's creative activity, the birth of individual interpretations. It may turn out that the child will put a new emphasis on understanding that does not contradict the author's intention, but perhaps is inadequate to it. And the teacher's task is to direct children to search *in the author's text itself* for evidence of the adequacy of a particular interpretation. The task of the teacher and children, now working in the position of reader-critics, is to agree with this interpretation of the text or to reject it. This kind of work both deepens the "point of view" concept and opens up the possibility of immediately using it as a means of reading practice.

After this, the children again become authors, but now authors of individually written compositions, in which they must again try to look at the world through the eyes of their main character — some animal. This task is presented with the following instructions:

"At home, please, compose a story on behalf of the hero – an animal. The narrator can be any living creature except a dog: for example, a cat, a sparrow, an ant, a butterfly, an elephant...". (The limitation is due to the fact that the imaginary transition to the dog's point of view was the subject of the collective creative sketch and collective research in the "Sapsan" story.) "Imagine what this creature could tell us if it could speak. How does it see the world? The same as we do, or differently? What does it care about? What makes it happy?"

And finally, during discussion in class, the children again work as reader-critics, but this time of their own essays. They are quite ready to evaluate them according to two criteria of the assignment: whether the essay follows the monologue form ("in the first person") and whether the author managed to make an imaginary transition to the hero's point of view. This ends the cycle of changing positions around the "point of view" concept.

The teaching methodology developed for the course allows interpretive analysis to identify creative initiative, since it includes:

- a) a collective creative sketch as an organizational form of proposing a task, *common for all the children*, that allows one to see how and to what point in the lesson the children acted in "the given space";
- b) a collective research task with a literary text, aimed at discovering a certain literary technique or means of expression (in this case, "point of view");
- c) an individual and independent completion of the task of using this technique in practice, allowing one to monitor whether the author moves into the "space of the possible" or remains in "the given space";

- d) a collective consideration of created works, discussing with the authors their successes and failures and showing them cases of creative initiative in some of their works.

An interpretive analysis of children's essays (created as a result of the cycle described here) should be aimed not only at ascertaining what the child is currently coping with or not coping with in "the given space", but, first of all, at what is becoming, or ready to become the children's free action "in the space of the possible," a point of growth of their individual creative initiative.

We believe that the best way to talk about interpretive analysis is not to look for general definitions of this method, but to show examples of its use with specific texts, which will allow us to navigate in other, always uniquely individual situations. To do this, let us consider three essays created by 7–8 year-olds while mastering the "point of view" concept.

#### **Essay one (Natasha).**

*I was given a hedgehog for my birthday. He knocked on the door at night. In the morning, my brother went to school, looked, and saw a hedgehog sleeping in the elevator.*

What could be said about Natasha's essay? First of all, that the girl *is not coping with the task*. There is no attempt to take the point of view of the animal hero, to imagine and show what the world is like in its perception, different from the perception of the text's creator herself. It also does not reproduce the required genre — a monologue of the animal hero was requested, not the narration of another person about that hero.

But our research and pedagogical practice convinces us that the ability for artistic and, in particular, literary creativity is potentially natural to all children – not as a special individual talent, but as a generic, universal ability that could and should be developed without thinking about the achievements' limits or about the child's future profession.

How can one find a "growth point" in such an essay? This is where that special analysis that we call interpretive becomes necessary.

In this case, the key to the possibility of further creative development is, firstly, the choice of real-life material for the essay, which Natasha selected independently. Having paid attention to the event that is presented in the girl's work, we highlight that it is interesting because of its unusualness and does not in any way contradict the topic of the proposed assignment.

The animal is at the center of this event; it finds itself in new conditions (in a city apartment, at a birthday party, and then in an elevator!). A situation has been created where the hedgehog hero may well receive impressions that do not fit into its usual life. This means that one of the general essay tasks – the event-related one – has been partially solved. Secondly, the genre problem has also been partially solved: the monologue form is preserved, but it is not the monologue of the hedgehog, but of the narrator herself, the girl who received it as a gift. It is this "partial" solution to the general artistic problem that needs to be shown to Natasha not only as a failure, but also

as an opportunity for further development of a more complex idea that is adequate to the task. It is crucial to show that her essay can become the first draft of a future interesting story. This kind of work is usually carried out in the final lesson within the methodological cycle — a collective discussion of the essays.

Here is a fragment of the lesson's minutes when Natasha's essay was discussed.

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher shows the children the cover of the class essay magazine, which shows a large eye and a question mark.

*Teacher.* Here is our new magazine, which includes all your essays about animals. Why do you think there is a picture like this instead of a title? What does it mean?

*Children.* An eye and a question mark. An animal's eye! This is a point of view!

*Teacher.* That's right! You had to not only write an essay on behalf of the hero, which could be any animal, but also try to look at the world through its eyes, from its point of view. So let's figure out how you coped with this task. Listen to Natasha's essay.

The teacher reads the essay.

*Teacher.* Did the author reach our goals?

*Manya.* Very little has been written!

*Sasha.* Why is it at home first, and then "in the elevator"?

*Artem.* We have to talk about the animal and its point of view, and not about the person! The hedgehog's point of view is not shown here.

*Teacher.* Who is talking about the hedgehog?

*Children. (all together)* A boy!

*Teacher.* Or a girl. This means that there is a hero who is telling the story, but he/she is a person. Let's help Natasha make the hedgehog talk about itself. After all, her story turned out to be interesting!

*Tata.* I am a hedgehog. I was given to a person for its birthday. I didn't like it very much, and I wanted to run away, so I knocked on the door. But when this person's brother went to school, I was discovered in the elevator....

*Pavlik.* One day I was given as a gift to some strange creature. I didn't like it, and I ran away into the elevator...

*Teacher.* How does a hedgehog know what an "elevator" is?

*Zara.* I was given to a hedgehog who was strange and tall...

*Children.* Without quills! Without quills!

*Zara.* I did not like it. There was no air, no trees... I climbed into some kind of box, and the door closed. I felt scared. And the house started moving somewhere....

*Teacher.* Is the author satisfied with our help?

*Natasha.* Yes!

In the essays of other children, an interpretive analysis allows us to see a qualitatively different task performance. Some young authors manage the selection of real-life material that corresponds to the topic, and also cope with its meaningful transformation, and the proposed genre form. But their work on the essay is not limited to this. They change the original task in accordance with their own plans. An example is Manya's essay.

**Essay two (Manya).**

## A RASCAL

*One day I was walking with my master on the lawn. And I saw a small gray puppy. My master took it and carried it home. All my masters began to come up with names for him.*

*Everyone suggested different names, for example, Sharik, Tyav. Sapsan, Tosha.*

*And suddenly my mistress came up with the name Mika.*

*He didn't respond to "Sharik", "Tyav", and other names, but he ran to her when she called "Mika"..*

*The mistress immediately gave him something to eat, because he was very thin.*

*Then we began to think about whether to leave him with these masters, or to take him with us.*

*We decided to leave Mika with the masters where we found him. So he stayed with them.*

*He began to grow and get fat. Then he grew up, and now when I come to visit, he gets very angry with me and doesn't even let me go to his bowl.*

*This Mika is very picky about food, so he eats the meat and leaves the porridge. And I eat anything, just to get more. But he won't let me finish his porridge.*

*But he used to love me very much, because I found him.*

*He used to be so grateful, but now he won't even give me his porridge. What a rascal!*

We see that Manya, like Natasha, chooses life events and heroes that are completely consistent with the proposed assignment's topics. She finds in her own life experience the particular case within which a transition to the point of view of the hero (the animal) is possible and appropriate.

Another interesting circumstance indicates a conscious and non-random choice of this event. The day after receiving the assignment for individual work, Manya approached the teacher and asked permission to break the established restriction and write specifically about a dog, because "we had such an interesting incident at our country house in the summer!"

The selected real-life material, a "raw" reality event, undergoes a significant transformation in the essay-creating process, in full accordance with the task's requirements. Manya makes an imaginary transition to the hero's point of view (the dog's), showing the features of her vision of the situation, and builds a story about the event "from the first person" as an extended monologue, so that she produces the proposed genre form.

But there is one significant feature in her essay that was *not outlined in the assignment*. The hero's monologue not only describes what is happening, but also conveys *an assessment* of the events and characters. In the dog's speech one can feel complete trust and respect for his masters, complete unity with them: "... we began to think about whether to leave him...", "We decided to leave Mika with the masters where we found him." The protagonist's attitude towards Mika is also expressed interestingly — it changes from pity and sympathy for the homeless, ownerless, skinny puppy to resentment towards the overweight, prosperous, and ungrateful greedy dog who does not want to share food from his bowl with the narrator. Even food that he doesn't eat

himself. ("He eats the meat and leaves the porridge. And I eat anything, just to get more. But he won't let me finish his porridge").

This establishment of special relationships between heroes within a situation, and assessment of their behavior, are manifestations of creative initiative, the independent creation of something that was not suggested by the assignment.

In this case, the story's title is of particular importance in searching for such initiative. After all, "rascal" is a strikingly evaluative word that sets the content and semantic aspect of the entire essay. It immediately makes an ethical emphasis and draws attention to the moral conflict that arises in the real-life situation described by the girl. The construction of this conflict, which the author introduces into an external assignment, is a significant manifestation of her creative initiative. As a result, the essay's main character is not the character delivering the monologue (as assumed in the assignment), but another character — the ungrateful foundling Mika.

The integrity of this artistic statement also deserves attention, which is also one of the signs of a full-fledged author's action. However, within this article, we are not able to dwell in detail on the problem of the integrity of a children's creative product and the means that the author uses to create it.

Interpretive analysis allows us to record the variety of additions and changes that different children make to the same task. To verify this, it is enough to compare the essays of Manya and her classmate Misha.

### **Essay three (Misha).**

The Parrot Carlusha

*I am a budgie. I live in a big house. It has a very comfortable perch. I sleep on it. There is also a ring hanging in the house that I like to tumble through. I have a saucer. I drink water from it, and sometimes I bathe in it. My favorite food is wormwood sprigs. It is very delicious. And the greatest entertainment is looking in the mirror. I know that a parrot lives there, but he is very mischievous and unsociable. I invite him to play, but he only imitates me and doesn't come, and it's always like that. Isn't he tired of it?*

*I often fly for a jaunt in the forest on the edge of our planet. Behind the forest the planet ends, there is a transparent wall, and behind it is another planet. I love looking at it while sitting on a big, big perch. But two huge multi-colored leaves still hang on it and make it difficult to look at the other planet. I peck and tear them, but they are very strong and I cannot tear them off.*

*I'm also friends with a girl who also lives on my planet. Her name is Carlusha. I often talk to her, but she does not understand parrot language. But I have already learned her language well. She often asks me:*

*– Is Carlusha a good bird?*

*She's really good. That's why I always answer her:*

*– Carlusha is a good bird.*

*And she brings me wormwood sprigs.*

Misha also fulfills all the external task's requirements. He chooses the appropriate hero (this is a pet parrot), endows him with the gift of human speech (using a conventional technique typical of verbal creativity), makes an imaginary transition to the hero's point of view (an attempt to see the world through the bird's eyes). The parrot

Carlusha shares in his monologue various impressions of the world around him. This world is very small — it is limited by the space of the room. However, Carlusha is happy with it, considers it his own, lists everything that is in his domain: the house, the ring, and the saucer.

He also knows his world's boundaries — this is “a forest on the edge of our planet”, behind which there is a barrier, a “transparent wall”. Behind it is another space, an unfamiliar and inaccessible world (“another planet”). So unusually, “parrot-like,” the hero sees the window in the room. For him, the plants on the windowsill are a whole forest, the curtains are “two huge multi-colored leaves” that prevent him from seeing another world. And in the mirror lives a strange, uncommunicative bird who does not pay attention to Carlusha and does not come out to meet him.

The description is full of precise and varied details that convey the features of the chosen hero's vision. The monologue form is consistently maintained. Nothing else is needed to complete the assignment. But the boy continues to compose! And another character appears, a girl who brings Carlusha his favorite delicacy, wormwood sprigs.

Why did Misha need this heroine? This is where the opportunity arises to “capture” the most distinct manifestation of the author's creative initiative! The boy sets himself an additional task. Even two! The first is to show the warm relationship between the parrot and his owner, or rather not even the owner, but a friend. And the second is to demonstrate the interesting features of this relationship. The parrot believes that he is smarter than the girl: she doesn't know his language, but he has already learned hers well. But, understanding all the words that the girl says, he is not able to grasp whom they refer to. He believes that the girl's name, not his own, is Carlusha. And that she is a “good *bird*.” And with pleasure he repeats the phrase that the girl says in order to please her, to express his attitude towards her.

And the girl is happy that she taught the parrot to speak, and as a reward, like a trainer, she brings him these very twigs of wormwood, which, as it turned out, did not accidentally appear at the monologue's beginning.

There is no complete understanding between the friends. The parrot's naive pride is funny, it makes us smile, maybe a little sadly. And the essay as a whole grows with deep personal meaning, as befits a full-fledged work of art. And it doesn't matter how old its author is.

## Conclusion

To summarize, let us once again emphasize some features of interpretive analysis and point out its significance for pedagogical work on the literary and creative development of children.

1. Interpretive analysis is not required when we evaluate the compliance of our students' actions with pre-known, external requirements assigned by us for mastering the material with which children work under our guidance.

2. Interpretive analysis is necessary when we want to identify the child's initiative action, which goes beyond the boundaries of our common work with the class, an action that freely continues and rebuilds this joint work.

3. Such an analysis, on the one hand, should reveal the "optional" features that a little author introduces into an external task. On the other hand, we should carefully monitor whether these free additions are actually a continuation and development of what was started during the collective activities. It is important to see whether the work product created by the child loses its connection with the original artistic task, whether it is completely lost or replaced.

4. Without interpretive analysis, it is almost impossible to prepare a collective discussion of children's essays — the final lesson of the cycle of changing positions. Indeed, during such a lesson, it is necessary to teach children who are working in the position of critics not only to evaluate the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the "external" task's requirements, according to the criteria outlined in the previous stages. We also need to teach them to notice individual expressions of that creative initiative, which testifies to the independent authorial work of their classmates, about their creative findings and intentions. And you can only teach what you have mastered yourself. Therefore, preparation of such classes should always begin with an interpretive analysis performed by the teacher, according to which those works are selected that will be presented for collective discussion and critical evaluation.

5. It is obvious that not all teachers are ready to use interpretive analysis in their practice. After all, their professional training does not even include familiarity with children's verbal creativity, not to mention how to guide its development. In order for creative initiative to be identified and supported in school education, serious changes are needed not only in educational programs, teaching and learning materials, and literature teaching management at school. An equally radical restructuring of teachers' training on this subject in universities and colleges is needed.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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