

## The Assessment of Social Capacities of Communicative Competence of Primary School-Age Children

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### Abstract

*The present position paper aims at identifying the social capacities needs in developing primary school children's communicative competence. The results of this research on the level of social capacities of communicative competence were presented. Turning from survey results, it has been determined that girls possess a significantly higher average value of the social capacities comparing to boys of the same age. Students attending schools in major cities of Lithuania feature the highest average values of social abilities, while the third grade students going to rural schools feature the lowest values. Statistical analysis of the data of quantitative research is conducted by using SPSS version 17.0. To characterize variables, descriptive statistics and multidimensional statistical methods were employed.*

**Keywords:** *communicative competence, social capacities, students;*

### Introduction

Not only linguistic but also social capacities are important for successful communication to interact in different life situations within the sociocultural context of each situation, by choosing the appropriate linguistic means, by applying the strategies of understanding and compensation [5; 6]. The sociocultural context consists of the peculiarities of everyday life as well as conventions and rituals of social life. The social aspect of communicative competence is further reinforced by the definition provided in [10]: "Communicative competence is a set of skills, knowledge and experience of an individual, which determines his flexibility, self-confidence and orientation when communicating with people" [10, p. 51]. Furthermore, theoretical analysis indicate that communicative competence consists of a set of social capacities are manifested by willingness to communicate with others, confidence in oneself and others, to behave properly in different life situations [5; 6; 8].

A student needs to master certain forms of behaviour to be able to participate in social life, to adapt to different social requirements, also to effectively and constructively solve the problems [1]. Students' proper behaviour is most strongly encouraged by the awareness of values – when they act driven by internal stimuli rather than fearing to be reproached or hoping to be awarded; this process is based on social interaction [9]. Values reveal how developed is the ability of consciousness to regulate the activity and behaviour in accordance with convictions, moral norms, perspectives of life, and to distinguish between what is worthless and hostile in the life of a personality and society [7; 8, 9]. With respect to physical and psychological maturity, linguistic development and other peculiarities of primary school-age children indicate the following social capacities based on value principles that allow to acquire the communicative competence [1]:

- To willing to communicate, listen and understand others, to respect others' and to defend one's own opinion.
- To seek to understand, foster and protect the good traditions and culture of communication of one's community and nation, to tolerate other communication practices.

The purpose of this research is to assess the social capacities of communicative competence of primary school-age children and to distinguish the factors that influence them.

The research has been designed as a *written survey of experts*. To process the research data the following statistical methods of analysis have been employed: descriptive statistics, calculation of percentage frequency, Pearson's linear correlation coefficient between single variables ( $r$ ) – to identify statistically significant relationships between variables and the strength of these relationships; Student's t-criterion – to verify the hypothesis when there are more than two independent variables; the method of one-factor dispersion analysis of inferential statistics (ANOVA) by applying the Post hoc comparison [2; 3; 4; 11]. The data of the research have been processed by using SPSS version 17.0.

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## Methodology

**The sample of the research.** To assess the social capacities (hereinafter referred to as SC) of communicative competence (hereinafter referred to as CC) of primary school-age children and factors that influence them, the quantitative method – the expert method – has been applied. The research involved 1000 third-grade pupils, they have been assessed by 52 their teachers (experts) (hereinafter referred to as TE).

**The instrument of the research.** TE have been provided with an assessment protocol, which comprised of the filling instruction and statements revealing the features of SC of CC of primary school-age children. The manifestation of frequency has been equated to four levels of SC (4 – very high, 3 – high, 2 – medium, 1 – low). The reliability of the scale of the assessment protocol has been verified by measuring the internal compatibility of the variables comprising the scale – by testing the variation intervals of consistency coefficient *Cronbach alpha* and resolution coefficient *r/itt (Item Total Correlation)*. The scale of *Cronbach alpha* = 0.971 and the variation interval from 0.207 to 0.801 have been determined [4; 11].

## Results

In an attempt to disclose the expression of SC in primary school-age children's communication, most attention has been paid to their features. The results of the research (Figure 1) reveal that the highest are the averages of the pupils' capacities *to respect oneself and one's interlocutor* ( $A = 3.29$ ) and *to use the phrases of politeness if interrupting* ( $A = 3.14$ ). It has been found out that pupils are sufficiently successful in *using nonverbal means of expression if interrupting* ( $A = 3.09$ ) and *in listening to without prior judgement* ( $A = 3.08$ ). Lower averages of the assessment indicate that pupils find it more difficult *to wait for the right moment to interrupt* ( $A = 2.96$ ) and *to keep their attention for a longer period of time* – the lowest value ( $A = 2.93$ ).

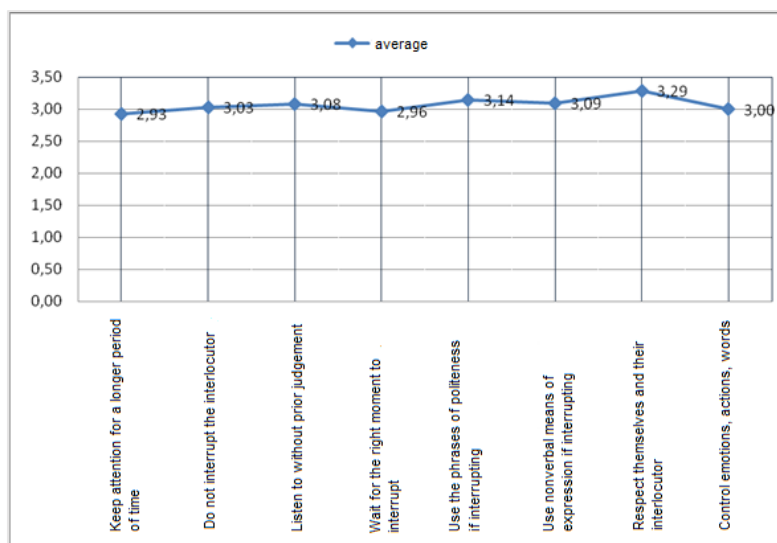


Figure 1. Averages of the features of SC of pupils' CC

The author of the article also sought to find out the frequency of manifestation of individual features of SC (Figure 2). According to the assessments by TE, almost half (46.8%) of pupils are always successful in *respecting themselves and their interlocutor*. Almost one third of pupils succeed in *not interrupting the interlocutor during a conversation* (always succeed even 34.0%, often succeed 20% of the investigated pupils) and in *keeping their attention for a longer period of time* (30.9% and 26.2% respectively). On the other hand, the results of manifestation frequency of features also indicate that pupils find it more difficult *to keep attention for a longer period of time* in the course of communication (5.8% of pupils do not succeed, 37.1% rarely succeed) and *to listen to without prior judgement* (1.7% of students do not succeed, 46.9% of pupils rarely succeed).

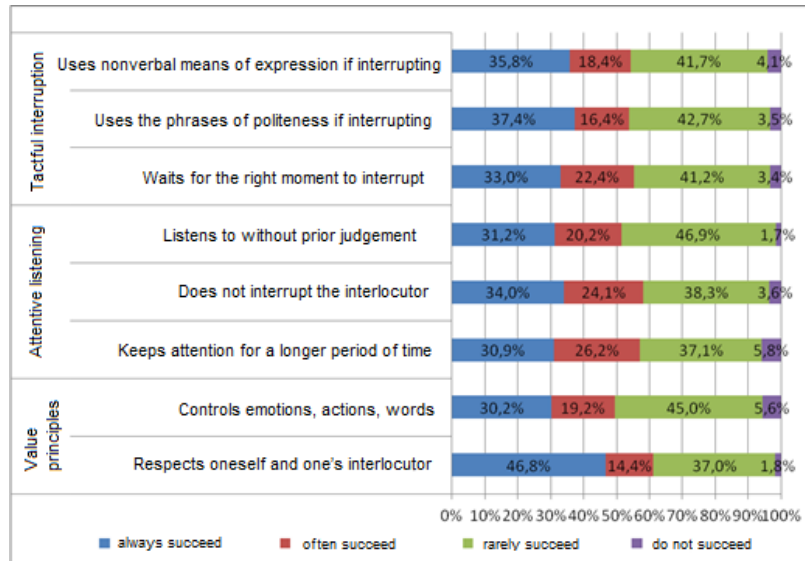


Figure 2. Frequency rates of the features of SC of pupils' CC (%)

The peculiarities of SC from the point of view of gender. It has been determined that primary school-age girls possess a significantly higher average of SC ( $A = 3.26$ ) comparing to boys of the same age ( $A = 2.90$ ). The analysis of the dependence of SC on gender (to compare the two samples *Student's t-criterion* has been applied) has revealed a very prominent and difference is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Comparing the rates of SC of girls' and boys' according to their individual features it has been found out that all the empirical features of all rates from the point of view of gender were statistically significantly different ( $p = 0.000$ ) (Table 1). It has also been noticed that in all cases, the averages of rates of girls' SC of CC and of their individual features are higher than boys', while all  $p$  values are lower than 0.001. Moreover, the highest assessments of girls' ( $A = 3.46$ ) and boys' ( $A = 3.13$ ) on the feature *respect themselves and their interlocutor* coincided, while the lowest averages have been ascribed to pupils' ability *to keep their attention for longer period of time during a conversation* (girls  $A = 3.15$ , boys  $A = 2.73$ ). It has been noted that high averages have been ascribed to the ability of the two genders to tactically interrupt the conversation. Girls more often succeed in using the phrases/words of politeness if interrupting a conversation (girls  $A = 3.35$ ), while boys are more successful in using nonverbal language (to show by giving a glance, gestures, movements) ( $A = 2.96$ ).

Table 1. The dependence of average values of SC of the research subjects on gender according to individual scales (rates and their features)

The rates of social capacities	Empirical features	Boys (N = 520)		Girls (N = 480)		Student's t-criterion	
		A	SD	A	SD	t	p value
Attentive listening	Keep attention for a longer period of time	2,73	0,92	3,15	0,81	-7,655	0,000
	Do not interrupt the interlocutor	2,86	0,85	3,21	0,81	-6,686	0,000
	Listen to without prior judgement	2,93	0,77	3,24	0,71	-6,686	0,000
Tactful interruption	Wait for the right moment to interrupt	2,86	0,83	3,20	0,79	-6,492	0,000
	Use the phrases of politeness if interrupting	2,95	0,83	<b>3,35</b>	0,76	-7,981	0,000
	Use nonverbal means of expression if interrupting	<b>2,96</b>	0,84	3,24	0,80	-5,363	0,000
Value provisions	Respect themselves and their interlocutor	<b>3,13</b>	0,81	<b>3,46</b>	0,70	-6,997	0,000
	Control emotions, actions, words	2,80	0,86	3,21	0,77	-8,003	0,000

The peculiarities of SC from the point of view of pupils' place of living. The analysis has revealed that children attending schools in major three cities of Lithuania feature a relatively high average values ( $A = 3.31$ ;  $SD = 0.60$ ), a little bit lower values are ascribed to pupils attending schools

in district centres ( $A = 3.10$   $SD = 0.65$ ) and in other cities of Lithuania ( $A = 2.95$ ;  $SD = 0.66$ ) as well as to the third-grade pupils going to rural schools ( $A = 2.92$ ;  $SD = 0.72$ ). Statistically significant differences have been identified ( $p = 0.000$ ) (Table 2).

Table 2. The dependence of average values of SC of the research subjects on the place of living

Place of living (studying)	N	Averages	Standard Deviations	ANOVA test results	
				F	p value
Three major cities	221	3,31	0,60	16,009	0,000
Other cities	300	2,95	0,66		
District centres and towns	326	3,10	0,65		
Rural areas	153	2,92	0,72		

It has been noticed that the average of the assessment of SC of pupils attending schools in district centres and towns ( $A = 3.10$ ) is slightly higher than the assessment of the third-grade pupils attending schools in other Lithuanian cities ( $A = 2.95$ ). SC of pupils living and studying in rural areas are considered to have the lowest average ( $A = 2.92$ ), although the difference from the average of the third-grade pupils attending schools in other cities of Lithuania is not prominent (0.03).

After testing the dependence of the average values on the place of living (*Post hoc* test), statistically significant differences of the averages of SC have been found among the pupils attending schools in major cities, other cities and districts ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $p = 0.004$ ;  $p = 0.007$ ). The statistically insignificant difference between the averages of SC has been found only among children living in other cities and rural areas ( $p = 0.738$ ) (Table 3).

Table 3. The dependence of average values of SC of the research subjects on the place of living (comparison of four independent samples)

(I) place of living	(J) place of living	Results of the <i>post hoc</i> test
		p value
Three major cities	other cities	0,000
	district centres and towns	0,000
	rural areas	0,000
Other cities	three major cities	0,000
	district centres and towns	0,004
	rural areas	0,738
District centres and towns	three major cities	0,000
	other cities	0,004
	rural areas	0,007
Rural areas	three major cities	0,000
	other cities	0,738
	district centres	0,007

## Conclusions

To sum up, it can be stated that the averages of the assessment of SC features have revealed that pupils succeed in respecting themselves and their interlocutor during a conversation ( $A = 3.29$ ) and in using the phrases of politeness if interrupting ( $A = 3.14$ ). However, it has emerged that pupils find it more difficult to wait for the right moment to interrupt ( $A = 2.96$ ) and to keep their attention for a longer period of time – the lowest average value ( $A = 2.93$ ). It has been determined that girls possess a significantly higher average of social capacities comparing to boys of the same age. Children attending schools in major cities of Lithuania feature the highest average value of social capacities, while the third-grade pupils going to rural schools feature the lowest value.

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