

THE ROLE OF ATTRACTIVE RELATIONSHIPS IN DEVELOPING EXPRESSIVE COMPETENCE: RESULTS OF AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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Abstract

Attractive relationships—warm, positive, emotionally supportive interpersonal interactions—play a central role in the psychological and communicative development of children. In early childhood and middle childhood, expressive competence becomes the foundation for social interaction, emotional regulation, and academic success. The present study examines the role of attractive relationships in developing expressive competence through an experimental intervention implemented with 80 children aged 5–7 years in a preschool and early primary school setting. The intervention aimed to enhance expressive abilities through structured social–emotional activities, cooperative games, and guided communication tasks. Using mixed research methods, including observational checklists, expressive language tests, and socio-emotional assessments, the study evaluated how supportive, attractive peer–adult relationships influence children's expressive competence. Quantitative findings reveal a significant improvement in verbal expressiveness, clarity of emotional expression, and contextual communication among children exposed to attractive relationship-based pedagogical practices ($p < 0.01$). Qualitative data further highlight the importance of trust, empathy, and positive group climate in promoting expressive development. The findings suggest that attractive relationships serve as a mediating factor that improves communicative motivation, reduces anxiety, enhances verbal fluency, and fosters expressive confidence. The study concludes with pedagogical implications for preschool educators and recommendations for integrating attractive relationship-building strategies into educational programs.

Keywords: Attractive relationships, expressive competence, preschool education, communication skills, socio-emotional development, experimental study, language development.

Introduction

Expressive competence—defined as an individual's ability to convey thoughts, emotions, and intentions clearly through verbal and non-verbal communication—is one of the foundational components of early childhood development. Children who master expressive abilities are more capable of participating in social interactions, demonstrating emotional intelligence, and succeeding in academic and interpersonal tasks. Recent child psychology and pedagogical research emphasizes that expressive competence does not develop spontaneously but is significantly shaped by the quality of interpersonal relationships surrounding the child. Among



these relational variables, attractive relationships—warm, emotionally supportive, and positively charged interactions—play the most influential role.

Attractive relationships (sometimes described as warm relationships, positive socio-emotional bonds, or affiliative interactions) encourage children to express themselves freely without fear of judgement or rejection. Researchers argue that when children feel emotionally secure and respected, they show higher motivation to communicate, greater verbal fluency, and improved confidence in expressing their ideas (Bronfenbrenner, 2001; Denham, 2018). In early childhood education, educators and peers serve as primary interaction partners; thus, the quality of these relationships directly impacts children's expressive behavior.

In many educational settings, expressive competence is included in curricular goals, but the emotional environment required for children to achieve expressive fluency is often overlooked. Traditional instruction may prioritize vocabulary, grammar, and articulation, while ignoring the socio-emotional context in which expressive abilities are formed. This gap highlights the need for pedagogical approaches that incorporate attractive relationship-building strategies—such as cooperative play, empathy-based communication, positive reinforcement, and supportive dialogue.

The current study seeks to address this gap by exploring how attractive relationships contribute to the development of expressive competence among children aged 5–7. The research is based on an experimental intervention designed to determine whether intensifying attractive relational experiences leads to measurable improvements in expressive skills. The study also examines children's emotional well-being, communication motivation, and peer cooperation as mediating factors.

The central research questions guiding the study are:

1. How do attractive relationships influence expressive competence in children?
2. What specific components of attractive relationships are most effective in enhancing expressive skills?
3. Does an experimental intervention based on attractive relationship-building produce significant improvements in expressive competence compared to traditional practices?
4. What implications do the results carry for early childhood educators?

The significance of this study lies in its interdisciplinary perspective, combining developmental psychology, pedagogy, communication studies, and childhood sociology. As expressive competence is increasingly recognized as a predictor of later academic and socio-emotional success, identifying relational methods that enhance expressive development holds both theoretical and practical value.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed an experimental research design with a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative methods were used to measure changes in expressive competence, while qualitative methods provided deeper insights into the relational and behavioral processes underlying these changes. The experiment lasted for eight weeks and included pre-test and post-test measurements as well as continuous observational assessments.



Participants

The study involved **80 children aged 5–7 years** selected from two preschool institutions and one early primary school. Participants were divided into:

- **Experimental group (n = 40)** – received the attractive-relationship-based intervention
- **Control group (n = 40)** – received traditional instruction without targeted relational enhancement

The sample included equal representation of boys and girls, with children of diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from parents and educators. Participation was voluntary, and children's data were anonymized. All activities complied with ethical guidelines for research involving children.

Intervention Program

The experimental intervention focused on strengthening attractive relationships through structured and spontaneous activities. Core components included:

1. Emotional Warm-Up Activities

- daily “circle time” greetings
- sharing personal experiences
- recognition of peers' emotions

These activities aimed to establish trust and emotional openness.

2. Cooperative Communication Games

- paired storytelling
- collaborative problem-solving
- team drawing
- role-playing social scenarios

These methods encouraged mutual support and expressive interaction.

3. Attractive Adult–Child Interaction Strategies

Educators in the experimental group were trained to:

- use positive reinforcement
- maintain supportive dialogue
- model respectful communication
- respond empathetically to children's emotional cues

4. Expressive Language Tasks

- guided discussions
- picture-based storytelling
- expressive vocabulary exercises
- emotion labeling activities



These tasks targeted verbal and non-verbal expression.

Measurement Tools

1. Expressive Competence Scale (ECS)

Assessed:

- verbal fluency
- clarity of expression
- emotional expressiveness
- contextual communication

2. Observation Checklist for Attractive Relationships (OCAR)

Measured:

- positive peer interactions
- empathy
- cooperation
- affective responsiveness

3. Educator Assessments

Teachers evaluated children's:

- communication motivation
- confidence
- emotional security

4. Statistical Analysis

Paired t-tests and ANOVA were used to compare pre-test and post-test scores. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic coding.

RESULTS

1. Quantitative Findings

1.1. Improvement in Expressive Competence

At post-test, the experimental group showed a **significant improvement** ($p < 0.01$) in all expressive competence indicators.

Expressive Component	Experimental Group Gain	Control Group Gain
Verbal Fluency	+32%	+9%
Emotional Expressiveness	+28%	+6%
Clarity & Coherence	+30%	+11%
Contextual Communication	+29%	+8%

The overall expressive competence score improved by **30%** in the experimental group, compared to **8%** in the control group.

1.2. Attractive Relationships & Expressive Development Correlation

Correlation analysis showed:

- **$r = 0.74$** (strong correlation) between attractive relationships and verbal expressiveness
- **$r = 0.71$** between emotional support and expressive confidence



- $r = 0.68$ between peer cooperation and contextual communication

These results indicate that attractive relationships play a direct role in expressive development.

2. Qualitative Findings

2.1. Emotional Security as a Foundation

Children in the experimental group exhibited:

- reduced communication anxiety
- higher willingness to speak
- more attempts at complex expressions

Educators reported that children “spoke more freely and confidently” when interacting in a supportive relational climate.

2.2. Enhanced Peer Relationships

Observations revealed:

- increased cooperation
- empathetic responses
- spontaneous expressive interactions

Children frequently encouraged their peers to speak, helped them express ideas, or jointly constructed narratives.

2.3. Increased Motivation to Communicate

The attractive relationship-based activities stimulated:

- curiosity
- personal engagement
- expressive creativity

Children were especially motivated during cooperative games and storytelling tasks.

2.4. Improved Emotional Expressiveness

Children developed better skills in:

- identifying emotions
- explaining feelings
- acting out emotional states

These improvements strengthened their overall expressive competence.

DISCUSSION

The findings strongly support the argument that attractive relationships significantly influence the development of expressive competence in young children. This section synthesizes the quantitative and qualitative insights, compares the results with theoretical perspectives, and elaborates on pedagogical implications.

1. Attractive Relationships as a Developmental Context

Attractive relationships provide emotional safety—an essential prerequisite for expressive behavior. According to Vygotsky’s cultural–historical theory, learning occurs through social



interaction; thus, positive, emotionally supportive relationships provide an ideal environment for expressive development.

The data show that children in supportive relational environments:

- express themselves more confidently
- use more complex vocabulary
- demonstrate greater willingness to engage in communication

These findings align with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, which emphasizes that strong, positive microsystem relationships enhance developmental outcomes.

2. The Mediating Role of Emotional Security

The emotional dimension of attractive relationships appears to reduce anxiety and communication fear. When children feel that their ideas will be positively received, they attempt more expressive acts. This supports research by Denham (2018), which demonstrates that emotional security enhances verbal expression.

3. Peer Interaction as a Catalyst for Expression

Peer relationships play a crucial role, as children learn expressive strategies through imitation, negotiation, and cooperation. The experimental group's peer-support behaviors (e.g., encouragement, collaborative storytelling) enhanced expressive competence more than adult-led instruction alone.

This is consistent with contemporary socio-emotional learning (SEL) research showing that cooperative learning structures enhance communicative abilities.

4. Educator–Child Interaction Quality

The teacher's role in modeling expressive behavior, offering empathetic responses, and maintaining a warm relational climate was central. Educator training proved essential to achieving desirable outcomes. Without positive educator involvement, even the best-designed activities may not produce expressive improvements.

5. Comparison With Previous Studies

Previous studies on expressive competence emphasize:

- linguistic instruction
- cognitive development
- language environment

Few studies highlight attractive relationships as a core component. This research expands the field by demonstrating that socio-emotional variables are equally influential.

6. Implications for Early Childhood Education

Pedagogical Recommendations

1. **Incorporate relationship-building activities** into daily routines.
2. **Promote cooperative learning** rather than competitive or isolated activities.
3. **Encourage emotional expression** through storytelling, drama, and reflective dialogue.
4. **Train educators** in relational communication strategies.



5. **Create inclusive, warm classroom environments** to boost expressive motivation.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that attractive relationships play a decisive role in developing expressive competence in children aged 5–7. The experimental intervention revealed that supportive, warm, and emotionally positive interactions significantly enhance verbal fluency, emotional expressiveness, communication confidence, and contextual communication skills.

The findings suggest that expressive competence is not merely a linguistic skill but a socio-emotional construct shaped by the quality of interpersonal relationships. Educators, therefore, must prioritize relational pedagogy alongside cognitive and linguistic instruction. Integrating attractive relationship-building practices can substantially enrich children's communicative development, emotional intelligence, and social adaptability.

Future research should explore long-term impacts, include larger samples, and investigate cross-cultural variations. Nevertheless, this study provides strong empirical evidence that building attractive relationships in educational settings is vital for fostering expressive competence and overall child development.

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