



# The Effect of Fantasy Context on Emotion Word Learning

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## Introduction

Childhood emotional competency is related to social and academic outcomes<sup>1</sup>, and can be targeted through teaching intervention<sup>2</sup>

Fantasy may be an appropriate context to teach emotion concepts<sup>3</sup>

## Current study

Provides a comparison in children's emotion word learning between fantastical and realistic storybooks.

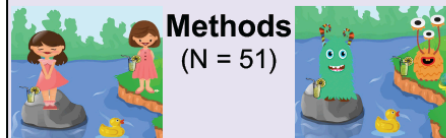
## Hypotheses

- A) Fantasy context will better facilitate participant's learning of the emotion words as measured by ability to produce a definition (productive measure)\*
- B) But not learning as measured by ability to recognize aspects of the emotion (receptive measures)
- C) Greater fantasy orientation, measured through the CIQ and by having an imaginary companion, will lead to better performance within the fantasy condition

\*Due to a potential for fantasy to enhance creativity

## Methods

(N = 51)



### Participants

- Fantasy condition: n = 24
- Reality condition: n = 27
- 57% female, 43% male
- 1/3 of sample had an Imaginary Companion
- Ages
  - 4-year-olds: n = 15
  - 5-year-olds: n = 18
  - 6-year-olds = 18

### Procedures

1. Imaginary Companion Question
2. Two stories (carefree + discouraged)
3. Measures of learning after each story
4. Child Imagination Questionnaire (CIQ)

## Measures

### 1. Facial Receptive (n = 51)



Carefree Discouraged  
Points possible = 2

### 2. Productive (n = 51)

- What does it mean to feel carefree/discouraged?
- Can you tell me about a time someone could feel carefree/discouraged?
- Follow up asked if child gives answer
- Points possible = 6

### 3. Situational Receptive (n = 43) \*added after pilot\*

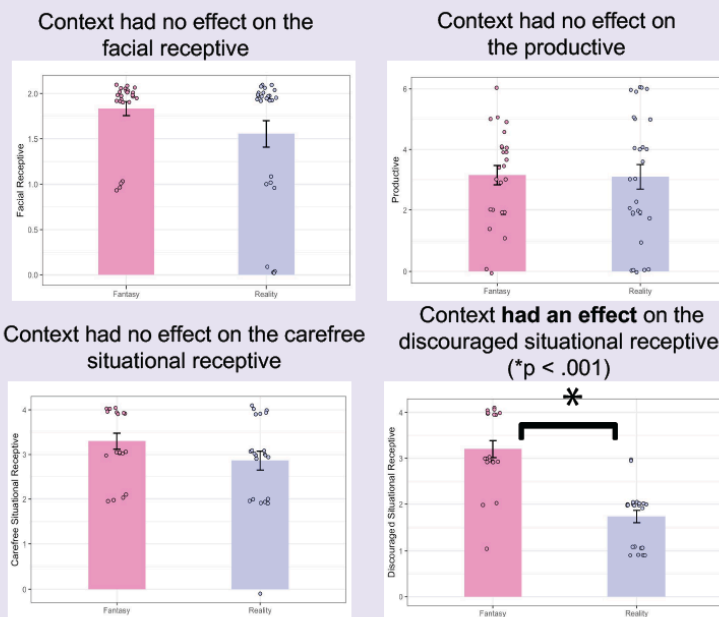
Split by emotion word valence because the words differed (p < .01)

- Series of scenarios
- Would this make [child] feel carefree/discouraged?
- Points possible (per story) = 4

## Results

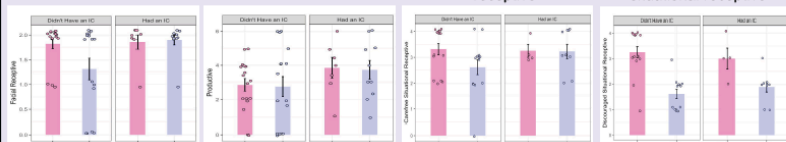
All Data are M + SD)

### Condition Differences



### Condition Differences x Having an Imaginary Companion

IC presence had no effect on the facial receptive    IC presence had no effect on the productive    IC presence had no effect on the carefree situational receptive    IC presence had no effect on the discouraged situational receptive



## Summary

- Fantasy context was significantly better ONLY for the discouraged story's situational receptive measure
- IC presence did not significantly improve performance on any measures
- None of the hypotheses were supported

## Conclusions

- Fantasy condition participants performed better than reality condition participants on every measure
- IC presence did influence performance, although not according to predictions
- Changing only the identify of characters may not be a drastic enough manipulation to reveal differences in learning
- Situational questions about emotion may be a valid way to observe generalized knowledge of a new emotion word
- Future research should...
  - Investigate the level of fantasy as a determinant of learning
  - Assess long term learning

## References

1. Denham, S. A., Bassett, H. H., Way, E., Mincio, M., Zinsner, K., & Graling, K. (2012). Preschoolers' emotion knowledge: Self-regulatory foundations, and predictions of early school success. *Cognition & emotion*, 26(4), 667-679.
2. Pons, F., Harris, P. L., & Doudin, P. A. (2002). Teaching emotion understanding. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 17(3), 293-304.
3. Gilpin, A. T., Brown, M. M., & Pierucci, J. M. (2015). Relations between fantasy orientation and emotion regulation in preschool. *Early Education and Development*, 26(7), 920-932.

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