

**Manifestation of Spirituality in Claire Joubert's Children's  
Stories Based on the Theory of Communication Awareness**

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**Introduction**

Spirituality is one of the dimensions of human existence. There are different tendencies in the definition of spirituality. The historical tendency is that spirituality be known as a subset of religion (Koenig<sup>1</sup>, 2011: 198). In Islamic education, too, spirituality is recognized in relation with religion, and one will be a spiritual person only if one is a true religious person. This is while other groups do not consider spirituality as necessarily limited to the structure of religion. The existence of different theories in the field of spirituality shows that this

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<sup>1</sup> : Koenig

subject has been one of the most important subjects in human history. As such, the discourse of spirituality has come to the center of attention in children's literature, too.

In this article, we have used the theory of "communication awareness", which is an established theory in the field of children's spirituality, as the scientific framework of our discussion. Therefore, first we will review the background of the research; then we will explain the theory of communication awareness and its outlines; and then, we will redefine the foundations of this theory for use in critique of children's stories based on what Hay and Nye have explained. Finally, we will analyze four books by Claire Joubert from the perspective of spiritual education based on these new definitions.

### **Materials & Methods**

Rebecca Nye<sup>2</sup> first introduced the "theory of communication awareness" in 1998 in her dissertation entitled "Psychological Perspectives on the Spirituality of Children<sup>3</sup>". Later, she introduced the concept in her co-authored book with David Hay<sup>4</sup>, "The Spirit of the Child<sup>5</sup>" (2006) and numerous articles. According to Hay and Nye, there are five elements in the discussion of children's spirituality: "contexts, conditions, strategies, processes and consequences" (Nye, 1998: 236). The contexts encompass four axes of communication with which spirituality forms: God, other people, the world and the self. The contexts in children's spiritual stories are reflected as the main themes

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<sup>2</sup> : Rebecca Nye

<sup>3</sup> : Psychological Perspectives on Children's Spirituality

<sup>4</sup> : David Hay

<sup>5</sup> : The Spirit of the Child

of the story. Condition is the language chosen by the author to convey spiritual concepts to the child. Strategy is the author's method of bringing spiritual concepts into the story; and finally, in the processes and consequences section, character changes that are referred to directly or indirectly in the story are considered as part of the consequences. and the main consequences are also interpreted based on the characters' moods, conversations and behaviors at the end of the story.

### **Results & Discussion**

In the next section, four books by Claire Joubert are analyzed based on the theory of communication awareness:

#### **1. In Search of God**

The background of this book is about the child's relationship with God. In terms of conditions, Joubert has used religious language. Dealing directly with the concept of God, which is essentially a religious concept, illustrates this claim. God is also described throughout the story in a way that is often described in Islamic religious literature. In the strategy section, searching and asking questions are the main strategies that the author has dealt with in writing this spiritual work. And the consequence of this story is attaining more knowledge about God.

#### **2. God's cookies**

According to the theme, the main context of this book is about the relationship between the child and others. In terms of conditions, the language that Claire Joubert chooses to convey spiritual concepts in this book is, on the one hand, a religious language and, on the other hand, a language of values and morals. In this story, Joubert's most important

strategies are searching and journey. Finally, the most important consequence that attracts the attention of the audience is the change in the little bear's attitude.

### **3. Goodbye Old Raccoon**

The main theme of this book focuses on the child's relationship with the world and the axis of transmission of spiritual concepts is based on the subject of death, life before birth and the continuation of life after death. Joubert conveys spiritual concepts by the help of religious language to children. Her most important strategy in this story is the use of symbolic space for expressing spiritual concepts. The main allegory of this story, that is, the child coming out of the mother's womb, on the basis of which the raccoon describes the process of death, is based on a story in the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Ultimately, the consequence of reading this book for children, in addition to gaining awareness about the quality of death and the world after it, is a sense of peace and confidence in the ultimate good.

### **4. The Grief of the Little Green Lizard**

The main context of this book and the spiritual concept that the author intended to convey to the child is in the context of the child's relationship with himself. The language that the author has used in this book, according to her direct hints to the concept of God as the creator, is taken from religion. In addition to religious language, the author has also used the language of the natural world. Searching, experiencing and asking questions are strategies that the author uses to guide children in this spiritual journey. Ultimately, the result of reading this book is a sense of calmness, gratitude, and worth.

### **Conclusion**

The results of our studies show that in the category of context, Joubert has included all the four contextual axes in the theory of communicative awareness in her stories. In the category of conditions, the most important space that the author receives spiritual concepts and imparts them to children is the religious literature. In each of the four books in this research, the religious attitude has a strong role in the selection of subjects and ideas and thoughts and actions of fictional characters. It seems the author's personal life and her conversion from Christianity to Islam and then her theological education (level two in Islamic teaching) are key factors of this tendency and concern. Finally, the most important process and consequence of these four spiritual stories are primarily to change the level of spiritual awareness and attitude of children, and secondly, the ending of the stories induce a sense of peace and confidence in the ultimate good. Also, in the consequences section, we can mention the sense of worth and gratitude (in *The Grief of the Little Green Lizard*) and the sense of moral goodness (in *The God's Cookies*) that is conveyed to the audience at the end of the story.

**Keywords:** communication awareness, David Hay, Rebecca Nye, Claire Joubert, children's spirituality

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