

*personal experience, the school attended, the knowledge of discipline theory). This approach has contributed to the development of students' self-cognitive opportunities, enhance the practical skills, developed the elements of perceived independence. Accentuation of educational impacts on constituent components of professional self-development motivation should be the basis for the formation of the specialist' self-development motivation in general.*

**Key words:** self-educational motivation, professional thinking, the future specialist.

УДК 37.034 – 053.6

**Zdzisława Załona**

*dr hab. prof. nadzw.*

*Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa (The State Higher Professional School) in Nowy Sącz  
Pedagogical Institute*

## DEFINITION OF THE LIE GIVEN BY CHILDREN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE

*The own research results concerning lies of children between 7 and 9 years of age are presented in the article. The study group of children consisted of 137 pupils of early school education, including 68 girls and 69 boys. The factual material collected during individual conversations with children allowed answering the research questions: how do children in primary school age define the lie, and what are similarities and differences in verbal definitions of the lie given by girls and boys.*

**Key words:** the lie, children of primary school age, moral development, the stage of moral heteronom.

### 1. Theoretical considerations concerning children lies

#### 1.1. Different authors' points of view on the lie

Psychologists claim that the lie has always been present in a human and they 'consider it as one of the leading nature laws' (Witkowski, 2006, p. 18). It is a common phenomenon in a human's life because both adults and children tell lies. One may lie with the use of words, gestures and also facial expressions. The lie may be conscious but also less conscious. One may lie other people, but also those who are the closest, e.g. parents, siblings, friends, teachers or oneself (Karwatowska, 2010, p. 81). Even though, we know subconsciously that the lie is something bad, we do not always tell truth. The issue of the lie is multidimensional, difficult to grasp and conditioned by various factors but always closely related to the human morality. O. Konkova points out that presently 'the issue of perceiving the "truth" norm by children is in the centre of the attention of researchers; it means that the lie in children is seen in the context of occurrence and development of moral awareness' (Konkova, 2007, p. 131).

The term 'lie' itself is also complex and therefore ambiguously defined in contemporary subject literature. J. Piaget believes that the lie 'is naturally related to the issue of objective responsibility and moral realism' (Piaget, 1967, p. 129). Hence, the problem of the lie is always directly connected with the moral development of the human. H. Malewska and H. Muszyński claim that the lie shall be defined as such a behaviour of people which results from the reason for misleading someone (Malewska, Muszyński, 1962, p. 10). Similar definition is found in the Dictionary of the contemporary Polish language, which is as follows: 'the lie is a judgment which does not reflect reality, we say it in order to mislead someone' (The Dictionary of the contemporary Polish language, 1998, p. 382).

W. Okoń describes the lie as 'a false statement which aims to mislead someone in a conscious way' (Okoń, 1996, p. 122). The author underlines that the lie is not a mistaken utterance which someone makes when he or she is convinced of its truthfulness. Therefore, such a person lies who gives false information consciously and intentionally. Supplement to the definitions cited which is additional and crucial for considerations taken into this article, is that one mentioned by

W. Chudy. It says that the lie is 'the act of misleading someone (else) in a conscious way which results in the disturbance of the basic social relationship, which is represented by the principle of communication' (Chudy, 2003, p. 627).

To develop the content of the definition of the lie, it should be added that some authors think that the concealment, acting or simulation of the situation which is not real is also considered as the lie (Malewska, Muszyński, 1962, p. 12). H. Muszyński (1962, p. 12) draws our attention to this aspect as well and he writes that concealment of facts and representation of situation which is other than the real one is also the lie. S. B. Walters dealt with the problem of the lie as well. He also thinks that the lie is represented by: cheating, vagueness, disinformation, concealment, hiding, interlacement, distortion, making up, twisting, counterfeiting, blinding, embellishment (Walters, 2003, p. 14). The presented definitions of the lie allow for deducing that although they have a lot of identical denotations, they differ among one another. These differences are the most visible in the aspect of the actions made by a person who lies and they concern his or her reasons, emotions by which this person is ruled.

Comparison of the mentioned and chosen definitions of the lie shows that their scope of content is not significantly different, and the clear boundary between authors' views concerning description, interpretation and understanding of this term is blurred. It supports the thesis that the lie subject-matter is multidimensional and complex on the ground of the psychological and philosophical reference.

#### 1.2. Moral development of a child of primary school age

When writing about the lie of children of the primary school education age, this issue shall be considered in the context of moral development of a child. The period in humans' life between 7 and 11 – 12 years of age is called the primary school age; it is also described as the late childhood. This age is during the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of school education in the Polish education system. The school environment, specific learning measure and established rules which prevail in the school, require compliance with obligatory regulations in a class, peer group and in contacts with other people.

Morality is a behaviour consistent with the rules adopted which are generally acceptable. The development of the children morality takes place through cooperation and ability to respect obligatory norms and rules. In the children of primary school age, the ability to moral understanding becomes better. It means that they are able to analyse and assess situations and events in the context of social norms, orders and prohibitions. Moral understanding determines the child's behaviour. Therefore, the level of the development of this personality aspect in children in classes 1-3 is important (Harwas-Napierała, Trempała, 2010, p. 136). Through adolescence and social contacts, children learn rules of behaviour and understanding, and the assessment what is correct and what is undesirable.

Referring to the theory of J. Piaget, it shall be noted that in moral development there are two basic periods in moral development of a human, that is, heteronomy and autonomy periods (Piaget, 1967, p. 376). Children of primary school age (especially those in classes 1-3 of primary school) are in heteronomy period which is defined as a compulsion morality period or moral realism (Roszkiewicz, 1983, p. 69). It means that moral norms are imposed on children, non-negotiable and have to be strictly obeyed. It concerns prohibitions and orders from adults, whose authority is important. Moral realism is revealed when a child does not analyse intentions or reasons of a specific behaviour but he or she takes into account whether the behaviour or conduct were in accordance with a moral rule established by adults (Chylińska, 2000, p. 32). Therefore, it cannot be expected that younger children can justify why, f. ex. is it not allowed to lie – in such situations they rely on someone who established norms or imposed a prohibition.

In the contemporary pedagogical thought, the concept of phasic moral development of H. Muszyński (1983, p. 55) functions as well; he claims that the stadium of the moral heteronomy consists of two phases: the first one is the egocentrism phase and the second one is conformity which occurs between 5 and 9 years of age. The author emphasises that moral concepts in this period are related mainly to the actions which are considered as good or bad. It is symptomatic to obedience morality towards the authorities – the child does not take into account any circumstances of events but he or she exclusively concentrates on particular behaviours. Not until c. 8 – 9 years of age does the children develop the system of moral concepts which is closely related to the development of his or her intelligence, influences of social environment or experiences of family life (Hurlock, 1985, p. 451). A 9-year old child has the system of more general moral concepts and can transfer the rules of behaviour and related assessments from one situation to another one, classify specific behaviours according to the imposed rules of behaviour and relativize moral assessments with the results and then with intentions of the actions assessed. (Muszyński, 1983, p. 74).

It is impossible to talk about moral development and do not refer to the theory of L. Kohlberg who developed the concept of J. Piaget. He recognized three levels of moral understanding; that is pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional. Each of them comprises two stages. The pre-conventional level and its first stage include the heteronomy morality and reflects the moral realism of Piaget in which authorities define the morality, and create rules of conduct which have to be obeyed (after: Szczęsny, 2001, p. 179). Early school age, especially its period during early

school education is a stage in a child's life in which he or she learns rules of truthfulness and understanding and that the lie do not favour confidence and good interpersonal relationships. The age of a child is of a major significance because it determines the possibilities for understanding the truth and the lie and their intentions. It should not be forgotten that children are convinced on the basis of the experiences of the closest environment that it is sometimes easier to reach the goal through the concealment of the truth rather than in the situation in which one is truthful. It is also worth adding that in a complex system of the aim of the education, the establishment of the value hierarchy in children, based on the timeless axiological rules of the good and truth, cannot be missing neither in a family home nor at school. The problem of the lie of children belongs to this general canon of the education issues and although it concerns only the fragmentary field, it shows how do pupils of classes 1-3 define the lie nowadays.

## **2. Methodological assumption of the own research**

### **2.1. The goal and research problems**

The aim of the research interests presented in this article is to establish how do children of primary school age (the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of education in the Polish education system, classes 1-3 of primary school) define the lie. It has been acknowledged that the issue of the lie is close to children because teachers execute this subject-matter in a nursery school within the field of the aim of the education. Experiences of children gained in a family home, concerning good conduct and values (including the moral ones) which are preferred in a family, are also not without significance. School education in the 1<sup>st</sup> stage in the Polish education system promotes shaping and developing the attitudes socially desired which are based on axiological value of the truth. Provisions in the actual core curriculum, approved by the Ministry of National Education in September, 2014 justify this stance because social and moral values, as well as, education of the truth are strongly emphasised in the Polish language and social education. These premises confirm the significance for doing diagnostics tests which concern the lie in a group of 7-9-year-old children.

Research interests were focused on two problems which were formulated in the following questions:

- How do 7-9-year-old children define the lie?
- Are there any and what are the similarities and differences of definitions of the lie given by girls and boys in classes 1-3 of primary school?

### **2.2. The research method**

The factual material was being collected in the second semester of the school year. Such a period was consciously and intentionally covered because children, especially those in the 1<sup>st</sup> class, underwent the time of adaptation to the school and functioning as a pupil which was difficult to them. It has been assumed that this situation will optimize the course of the research. In relation to the fact that there was a will to know how do particular children describe the lie, individual conversations were used. The conversations were made separately with every child (in order not to repeat phrases heard before). In order this situation will not be difficult for the child and will not cause anxiety, the conversation was organised in a funny way. A person, who had conversations

with children (children knew him or her because he or she was present during the lessons in every class several times) said that every child will take part in a play.

In a separate room which children knew, the question was put: What is the lie? In order to make friendly atmosphere of cooperation, short talk was allowed at the beginning which was not related to the question essential for the research.

**2.3. The research area, the study group**

The research was conducted during four months, from February to March, 2013 in six primary schools. One class participated in the research in each of them. In total, the research was carried out in two 1<sup>st</sup> classes, two 2<sup>nd</sup> classes and two 3<sup>rd</sup> classes. The number of pupils researched and their sex are presented in a table 1.

Table 1

**The study group of children from classes 1-3**

No.	Classes	Pupils		In total	
		Girls	Boys	Number	%
1.	1	24	22	46	33,6
2.	2	22	21	43	31,4
3.	3	23	25	48	35,0
In total		68	69	137	100

Quantitative data presented in a table suggests that the researched classes 1, 2, 3 were composed of totally 46, 43 and 48 pupils, respectively. Total number of girls and boys differed with the respect of only 1 person which is a situation favorable for considerations in this article because it enables to compare answers in the pupil groups with regard to their sex.

**3. The analysis of the own research results**

**3.1. Definition of the lie given by 7-9-year-old children**

The lie subject-matter is unknown to 7-9-year-old children. It is proven by the factual material collected from pupils of primary classes which is put in order in seven categories of similar answers and presented in a table.

Table 2

**Definition of the lie given by the researched pupils of primary school age (N = 137)**

No.	Categories of pupils' answers	Class			In total	
		1	2	3	Number	%
1.	Something wrong/ the wrong	9	7	8	24	14,0
2.	The act of giving a specific example of the lie	14	7	1	22	12,0
3.	Saying the untruth/ cheating	11	8	13	32	18,7
4.	Making up	5	6	10	21	12,3
5.	The sin	3	22	19	44	25,7
6.	Something bad for another person	0	3	10	13	7,6
7.	Something bad for the friendship	0	1	8	9	5,3
8.	The lack of response	4	2	0	6	3,5
In total		46	56	69	171	100,00

The tabular overview presents that 137 pupils from the researched classes gave 171 answers. In Total, 34 pupils, including 13 from the 2<sup>nd</sup> class and 21 from the 3<sup>rd</sup> class gave two different definitions of the lie. All pupils from the 1<sup>st</sup> class mentioned only one definition. When analysing the results obtained, the attention should be drawn to the fact that the group of 32 (18,7%) pupils represents the lie as 'saying the untruth'; 'cheating someone else'; 'false words'; 'not saying the truth'. These expressions are highly accurate if we assess

them under the category of defining this term as a judgment which does not reflect reality. The phenomenon that 7-year-old children gave specific examples of the lie – 14 people in the 1<sup>st</sup> class – is symptomatic in the researched group of pupils. The number of children who defined the lie with giving an example is decreasing with the age - 7 children in the 2<sup>nd</sup> class and merely 1 person in the 3<sup>rd</sup> class. In total, 12,9% of the researched people used an example of specific known situations reflecting the lie – it proves that these children properly understand what does it mean when someone lies. It is corroborated by the following examples: 'the lie is when someone says that one likes him or her but one does not like him or her; if I say that I read a book but I didn't do it at all; if I tell my mum that I was good but I teased my sister; if I did something wrong but I say that it was done by someone else; if I say that I was praised by the teacher at school but I was reprimanded'. Interesting answers of children are under the category that the lie is making up. Pupils refer to the common children's literature works in which characters were making up. They mention the poem entitled „Kłamaczucha”<sup>1</sup>. ['The liar girl'] and say that 'a sister changed into a skylark; instead of rainfall there was an orangeade fall; a duck drowned in a pond' and comment that the liar girl were making up because it couldn't be real at all. They also refer to the poem entitled „Zosia Samosia”<sup>2</sup> ['Zosia do-it-herself'] and answer that 'Zosia could everything but she was only making up because it wasn't the truth; she didn't say anything but she was boasting about and making up that she knows everything'. Apart from that, children mentioned a book entitled „Kozucha kłamaczucha”<sup>3</sup> ['The goat liar'] – they added that „The goat was making up; the goat accused Zazulka that she didn't pasture it although it wasn't the truth'. Additionally, they referred to the poem „O Grzesiu kłamaczuchu i jego cioci”<sup>4</sup> ['About Grzes the liar and his aunt'] and claimed that „Grzes told lies; he said that he put the letter into the post-box but it turned out that the aunt didn't give him a letter to be put into; the aunt wanted to see whether Grzes tells the truth but he lied'. The cited examples of the lie which were given by 12,3 % of the researched pupils confirm the fact that children in this group identify the lie with making up which does not correspond to the truth. Referring to the classics of the Polish children's literature gives evidence that children of primary school age know these works. Probably it means that the content of these poems and prose was discussed in kindergarten, at school or family home.

It is characteristic that over ¼ of the researched people (25,7 %) understand the lie as a category of the sin. Pupils of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> classes are primarily in this group. Their statements were as follows: „the lie is wrong, therefore it is a sin; to lie means to prevaricate and this is a sin; it isn't allowed to lie because it is a sin; according to me, lies are wrong words, untrue and that's why it is a sin because one shouldn't lie'. Justification of these statements shall be provided on the basis of the situation which directly concerns 8 and 9-year-old pupils. All researched children were raised in

\*Children's answers in the text are cited as an accurate record of their statements.

<sup>1</sup> Jan Brzechwa „Kłamaczucha”

<sup>2</sup> Julian Tuwim „Zosia Samosia”

<sup>3</sup> Janina Porazińska „Kozucha kłamaczucha”

<sup>4</sup> Julian Tuwim „O Grzesiu kłamaczuchu i jego cioci”



catholic families and attended to the religion classes systematically. They received the First Holy Communion in the 2<sup>nd</sup> class. Previously, the issue of the lie was discussed as a category of the sin during religion classes. Catechetical education was probably related to the assessment of the lie in the aspect of moral behaviour. The authority of the catechist additionally enhanced the understanding of the lie as a sinful behavior. Results of there search conducted confirm that children in this developmental stage develop and strengthen the system of moral terms through enriched social and moral experience not only in family home and at school but also through cognitive development.

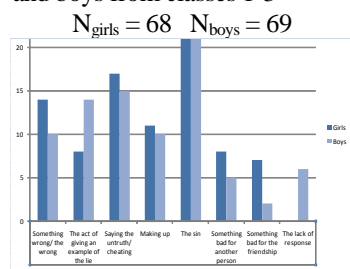
It is also worth indicating that a trend in a researched group of children is observed which is related to their age and definition of the lie. The older children become, the more frequently they notice that the lie is something bad for another person (7,6%) and for friendship (5,3%). On the basis of such reasoning, 12,9% of the researched 8 and 9-year-old children reveal that the lie is understood wider in a society. These children notice the consequences of the lie in the categories of other people and friendship relations. Although phrases such as „*something wrong, bad*” are not very accurate, they indicated story in the confidence and stable interpersonal relationships. Simultaneously, there are premises in these statements which allow for claiming that this group of children indicates the ability to assess behaviours in the category of negative impact which they lead to.

3,5% of the researched pupils did not give the answer to the question what the lie is. These children could not verbalize the term of the lie. They said f. ex.: *‘I know but I don’t know how to say it; the lie is the lie; we discussed it in the class but how to say it’*. These exemplary expressions indicate that there are poor language skills in children what is justified taking into account the fact that 2,4% of such answers were given by 7-year-old children who greatly improve the structure, the form and the scope of the verbal and written statements during further education.

### 3.2. The lie defined by girls and boys in classes 1-3

The empirical data gathered may be classified according to the sex of the researched children because it is interesting from the point of view of the research conducted, whether 7-9-year-old girls and boys define the lie in a similar way. A comparative analysis may be performed by showing the quantitative results concerning the lie in a bar chart.

Chart 1  
Answers to the question: What is the lie? given by girls and boys from classes 1-3



When analysing the total number of answers received from girls and boys, it can be noticed that 19 girls and 14 boys gave two different definitions of the lie. Among 87 answers from researched girls, 14 of them concerned the definition that the lie is *‘something bad’*. In the group of 84

answers received from boys, 10 of them defined the lie as *‘something wrong’*.

When it comes to giving examples of the lie, the tendency of such answer is more clear in boys because 14 of them cited an example. There were 8 of them in the group of girls. The results with regard to the sex are similar – 17 girls and 15 boys believe in definitions that the lie is *‘saying the untruth, cheating’*. Furthermore, similar figures were received in the category of defining the lie by pupils as *‘making up’* – 11 answers of girls and 10 answers of boys.

The slight difference is also in the defining the lie as *‘a sin’*; this is claimed by 23 girls and 21 boys. Huge discrepancies are observed in the defining the lie as *‘something bad for another person and something bad for the friendship’*. In total, 15 girls and only 7 boys drew their attention to this aspect of the lie. Although it is only a supposition, it may be claimed that the researched girls in the age of 8 and 9 are more sensitive, and maybe they are aware of negative impact of the lie on interpersonal and friendship relations. The fact that all researched girls could define the lie verbally is also a characteristic thing. There were only boys in the category of *‘the lack of response’*. This fact corroborates the developmental correctness of children of the primary school age and individual sex differences concerning verbal skills.

#### Research findings:

1. Researched children (c. 45%) in the age of 7-9 when defining the lie, they say that it is a false and untrue utterance which does not reflect reality. Moreover, they notice that the lie is also making up facts and cheating. Answers of girls and boys were similar in that regard.

2. Children understand that the lie is a bad and undesirable behaviour and they identify it with the sin (c. 26% of the researched), there was no difference in children’s answers with regard to the sex.

3. Almost 13% of children (where 7-year-old children are the majority) give specific examples representing the lie. Children in this group refer to their own experiences and cite examples of characters from children’s literature who lied. This tendency is more clear in boys.

4. 8 and 9-year-old pupils – 12,9% of the researched people notice that the lie has a negative impact on interpersonal relationships. A doubled number of girls drew the attention to this aspect.

5. A group of 3,5% of the researched people, who could not define verbally what is the lie, was purely consisted of boys from the 1<sup>st</sup> class (4 people) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> class (2 people).

6. The fragmentary diagnostic research conducted proves that children’s answers reflect their moral development stage, refer to the lie primarily as an act which is believed to be bad and wrong in the context of rules and norms of behaviour known to children and established by adults.

#### Final conclusion

The issue of children’s lie is complex and multidimensional. The results shown shall be closely investigated and additionally extended with the diagnosis and opinion concerning the fact whether children of primary school age lie, who do they lie, why do they do it and whether

they are aware of their lies. Indicating these aspects to further research comes out from the fact that in the study group there

were no children who said directly that the lie is conscious and that its reason is to mislead someone.

#### Bibliografia

1. Chylińska M. (2000), *Mała „Kozucha kłamczucha”*, Wychowanie na co dzień, nr 4-5, s. 32-33.
2. Chudy W. (2003), *Kłamstwo* [w:] Encyklopedia XXI wieku, red. T. Pilch, t. II, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak”, s. 627-630.
3. Harwas-Napierała B., Trempała J. (2010), *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
4. Hurlock E. B. (1985), *Rozwój dziecka*, t. II, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
5. Karwatowska M. (2010), *Uczeń w świecie wartości*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.
6. Konkova O. (2007), *Prawdziwe i fałszywe zachowanie w rozwoju psychicznym dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym* [w:] *Studia Psychologiczno-Pedagogiczne*, tom I, redakcja naukowa Yuri Karandashev, Tatiana Senko, Bielsko-Biała: Wyższa Szkoła Administracji w Bielsku-Białej, s. 129-132.
7. Malewska H. E., Muszyński H. (1962), *Kłamstwo dzieci*, Warszawa: Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictw Szkolnych.
8. Piaget J. (1967), *Rozwój ocen moralnych dziecka*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
9. Muszyński H. (1983), *Rozwój moralny*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Szkolne i Pedagogiczne.
10. Okoń W. (1996), *Nowy słownik pedagogiczny*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak”.
11. Roszkiewicz J. (1983), *Psychologia rozwojowa dla rodziców. Młodszy wiek szkolny*, Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy „Nasza Księgarnia”.
12. *Słownik współczesnego języka polskiego* (1998), t. I, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
13. Witkowski T. (2006), *Psychologia kłamstw*, Taszów: Wydawnictwo Moderator
14. Walters S. B. (2003), *Kłamstwo cała prawda o...*, Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.
15. Szczęsny W. (2001), *Edukacja moralna*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak”.

*В статье представлены результаты собственных исследований на тему лжи детей в возрасте от 7 до 9 лет. Исследуемая группа детей насчитывала 137 учеников раннего школьного возраста – 68 девочек и 69 мальчиков. Собранный фактографический материал, в процессе индивидуальных разговоров с детьми, отвечает на вопросы исследовательской проблематики: как дети в младшем школьном возрасте определяют ложь и какие сходства и отличия существуют у девочек и мальчиков в вербальных способах определения лжи.*

**Ключевые слова:** *ложь, дети младшего школьного возраста, моральное развитие, гетерономная стадия морали.*

*У статті представлено результати власних досліджень на тему брехні дітей у віці від 7 до 9 років. У досліджуваній групі було 137 учнів молодшого шкільного віку - 68 дівчаток і 69 хлопців. Зібраний фактографічний матеріал, в процесі індивідуальних розмов з дітьми, відповів на питання дослідної проблематики: як діти у молодшому шкільному віці описують брехню та які подібні і відмінні ознаки подають дівчата і хлопці у вербальних визначеннях брехні.*

**Ключові слова:** *брехня, діти молодшого шкільного віку, моральний розвиток, стадія моральної гетерономії.*