



The Educational Dimensions of Stylization in Contemporary Children's Theatre Discourse

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Abstract

This study investigates stylization and its balanced relationship with the educational dimensions of contemporary children's theatre. It seeks to answer the following question: *What are the educational dimensions of stylization in contemporary children's theatre discourse?* The study aims to identify these dimensions within theatrical texts and performances. Its scope is thematically defined by the educational dimensions of stylization, spatially by Iraq, and temporally by the period 2023–2025.

The theoretical framework comprises two main sections: the first addresses the concept of theatrical stylization and its mechanisms in contemporary children's theatre, while the second examines the educational dimensions of children's theatre. The study adopts a theoretical deductive approach and analyzes a purposively selected sample of children's theatrical performances using indicators derived from the theoretical framework.

The findings reveal that stylization through symbolic transformation plays a significant role in shaping the child's cognitive and moral–value dimensions, as elements of nature are transformed into anthropomorphized characters that convey values and knowledge through an indirect educational approach. The study concludes with a set of conclusions, recommendations, and proposals for future research.

Keywords: Educational dimensions; Stylization; Children's theatre.

1. Methodological Framework

1.1 Research Problem

Between the selection and condensation of real-life elements and their reorganization within an educational artistic system, the role of aesthetic mechanisms capable of addressing the child's perceptual world becomes evident. Foremost among these mechanisms is stylization, regarded as a conscious artistic choice adopted by the director in children's theatre to transcend the literal reproduction of reality and move toward its symbolic and visual reconstruction in a manner consistent with the specificity of the child audience. Through this approach, the performance seeks to reveal the essence of human and social issues beyond the superficiality of realistic representation.

Stylization functions as a tool for simplifying abstract meanings, intensifying educational connotations, and deepening aesthetic vision away from direct didacticism and moral preaching. It serves as a means of producing a theatrical discourse that balances aesthetic and educational dimensions and is capable of reproducing meaning as its primary cognitive function. Thus, stylization does not aim merely to provoke emotional response, but rather to stimulate thinking and generate awareness based on firm foundations that deconstruct traditional systems of thought and shape individualized interpretations. This is achieved through a balanced reorganization that integrates the educational, aesthetic, social, and ethical dimensions of the child.

However, theatrical discourse directed at children continues to suffer from artistic and semantic inadequacy in the employment of stylization, fluctuating between excessive



formalism that empties the performance of its educational content and direct realism that weakens the aesthetic dimension and limits the effectiveness of reception. This is compounded by the scarcity of Arabic studies that address stylization in children's theatre as an integrated system encompassing all elements of theatrical production. Accordingly, the research problem is defined through the following central question: What are the educational dimensions of stylization in contemporary children's theatre discourse?

1.2 Significance of Research.

1. The present study represents an attempt to comprehensively examine stylization as one of the key concepts and foundations that influence and contribute to the production of an integrated children's theatre aligned with contemporary reality.
2. It emphasizes the aesthetic and structural relationship generated in children's theatre performances through educational dimensions.
3. The study benefits scholars and researchers in the fields of literary, theatrical, and psychological studies.

1.3 Research Objective

The research aims to identify the educational dimensions of stylization in contemporary children's theatre discourse.

1.4 Research Limits

- **Temporal limit:** 2022–2025
- **Spatial limit:** Iraq
- **Thematic limit:** The educational dimensions of stylization in contemporary children's theatre discourse

1.5 Definition of Terms

1.5.1 Educational Dimensions

Al-Gharbal (1959) defines *dimensions* as: "A philosophical term applied to knowledge that is formed after sensory data are apprehended; a proposition is considered *a posteriori* when its validity depends on experience of tangible reality, in contrast to *a priori* propositions, which are judged solely by examining their structural composition" (Al-Gharbal, 1959, p. 382). Zahran (2004) defines educational dimensions as: "The totality of cognitive, value-based, emotional, and social aspects targeted by the educational process with the aim of building the individual's personality in an integrated manner" (Zahran, 2004, p. 33). Ben Zidan (2010) defines the educational dimensions in children's theatre as: "A set of value-based, cognitive, psychological, and social functions performed by the theatrical performance in shaping the child's awareness and behavior through an imaginative discourse appropriate to the child's developmental characteristics" (Ben Zidan, 2010, p. 60).

Operational Definition:

Educational dimensions are defined procedurally as the set of value-based, cognitive, psychological, aesthetic, and social aspects produced by theatrical performances directed at children through stylized dramatic action and theatrical elements, in a manner consistent with the performance's concept and its educational message.

1.5.2 Stylization

Elias and Hanan (1997) define stylization as: "Departing from pictorial imitation of reality and limiting representation to signs that indicate or refer back to that reality" (Elias & Hanan, 1997, p. 33).

Operational Definition:

Stylization is a deliberate and methodical theatrical approach through which reality is reshaped into simplified, condensed, symbolic, and at times exaggerated semantic images



within theatrical performances directed at children. This approach transcends direct presentation, allowing for the creation of a distinct cognitive–aesthetic effect in the recipient.

1.5.3 Children’s Theatre

Habib (2004) defines children’s theatre as: “A theatrical performance based on the fundamentals of drama, while taking into account, within its semiotic structure, the child’s ability to decode the educational, instructional, and aesthetic meanings of the theatrical scene with ease.” Habib (2014) further defines it as: “A theatrical work directed at children that considers their age-related characteristics in terms of content, expression, and meaning, and aims to achieve aesthetic, educational, and cultural objectives” (Al-Salem, 2014, p. 25).

Operational Definition:

Children’s theatre refers procedurally to theatrical performances directed at children in Iraq, through which the educational dimensions of stylization are examined according to an analytical instrument specifically designed for this purpose.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Theatrical Stylization – Its Concept and Mechanisms in Contemporary Children’s Theatre Discourse

2.1.1 The Concept of Theatrical Stylization

Focusing on essence, rendering ideas more explicit, and simplifying forms and details constitute the most significant characteristics of stylization in theatre. This approach emphasizes distinctive features and adherence to specific aesthetic principles that enable liberation from precise realistic imitation. Stylization, as a concept associated with conditionality, refers to the extraction and development of inner worlds through internal textual analysis, highlighting the internal structure of objects and expressing it in a manner that affirms the relationship between theatre—its scenography and conditional form—and the pictorial image, as well as its capacity to evoke sensation within life. In this context, conditional theatre liberates the actor from heavy scenery and provides multidimensional spatial openness. As Meyerhold notes, “conditional theatre offers a simple technique... and aims to halt the fragmentation and division of theatre into isolated theatrical forms” (Meyerhold, 1979, pp. 84–85).

Accordingly, the theatrical image does not merely transcend reality in its literal sense, but rather engages with it through symbolism and suggestion, allowing the image to become deeper and more condensed within rapid semantic frameworks. It is not burdened by detailed explanations of every component, even in character construction, where performance exaggeration and repetition of movement and speech serve expressive rather than descriptive purposes.

The types of stylization in theatre revolve around transforming natural forms into simplified configurations, employing a distinctive expressive language, constructing rhythmically structured sentences, and repeating narrative patterns. According to Bakhtin, stylization manifests in several forms, including *variation*, which refers to a type of stylization in which the stylizer engages with the stylized material (language) in order to test it by placing it within new and unfamiliar contexts; and *parody*, which involves engaging with the stylized material with the intent of dismantling it and reconstructing it through a new formulation (Bakhtin, 2009, pp. 34–35).

From Bakhtin’s perspective, linguistic stylization does not employ language merely as a realistic communicative tool; rather, it transforms language into an aesthetic–semantic structure that transcends conventional everyday usage. This process relies on linguistic condensation within a unified stylistic framework, whereby all sentences and dialogues operate within a single stylistic system. Consequently, the overall stylization of spoken language evolves into a dramatic language that incorporates dance, gesture, and sign—



elements that penetrate space and gesture toward meanings across time—thus enabling communication with the widest possible audience (Watson, 2000, pp. 297–298).

With regard to the dramatic text, the more a playwright develops mastery over the tools of dramatic writing, the more complex the poetic imagery and metaphors become, owing to the playwright's ability to stylize events effectively (Al-Sudani, 2015, p. 31).

In directing, Meyerhold is regarded as one of the foremost advocates of stylization, closely linking it to the concept of conditionality, generalization, and symbolism. He argues that to stylize an era or a phenomenon means to reveal—through all expressive means—the invisible internal structure of that era or phenomenon, and to depict its unseen features embedded deeply within the implicit style of the artistic work. In one of his productions, a row of decorative trees functions as curtains extending deep into the stage, enabling the spectator to perceive—through an invisible expressive mode—the stylistic essence of the era (Meyerhold, pp. 36–37).

Meyerhold was among the earliest directors to depart from naturalistic directing and from the Stanislavskian method, prompting him to search for new theatrical forms. This led him to adopt stylization in his works through the application of impressionistic techniques (Al-Juthari, 2024, p. 58). His vision of alternative theatre laid the groundwork for theatrical divergence through what he termed *stylized theatre* or *stylization*. In theatre, stylization does not rely on replicating reality, but rather on suggesting it by focusing on the essence of the phenomenon. Thus, stylization does not aim to reproduce the style of an era or an event, but instead to construct its structure and essence—that is, to extract the internal core of an era or event and reconfigure its concealed attributes using all expressive means, thereby linking convention, generalization, and symbolism (Elias & Hanan, 1997, p. 33).

2.1.2 Stylization in Contemporary Children's Theatre Discourse

Stylization in children's theatre is not merely an aesthetic form; rather, it constitutes a conscious educational approach and a pedagogical–aesthetic strategy through which theatrical performance reconstructs dramatic reality by means of reduction, simplification of theatrical signs, regulation of symbolism, and semantic condensation. Through these mechanisms, theatrical discourse is transformed into an indirect educational–aesthetic experience that respects the child's awareness, cognitive capacities, and individuality, while fostering imagination and creative engagement.

Stylization in contemporary children's theatre discourse manifests through a systematic and carefully structured engagement with all elements of theatrical production. These elements operate integrally within a unified stylistic system that positions the child as an active participant in the reception process. This approach is referred to as structural stylization, whereby all elements of the theatrical performance directed at children are harmonized formally and conceptually. As Ibrahim (1990) emphasizes, "theatrical scenery must correspond with all accompanying expressive and compositional elements, including performance, lighting, style, and design, both in form and content" (p. 160). Accordingly, stylization is not a superficial decorative device, but rather a coherent stylistic system that regulates the educational meaning of the performance.

One of the primary mechanisms of stylization at the semantic-structural level is reduction, whereby symbols are assigned clear functional roles that complete the construction of theatrical discourse, retaining only those signs that are meaningfully significant. This requires that symbols be clear and uncomplicated rather than overly complex. At the level of scenography, stylization relies on visual economy, employing a limited number of elements that serve the central idea of the performance and prevent perceptual distraction. Color, for instance, is used as a value-based or emotional signifier (such as good, evil, joy, or fear), not as an abstract idea but as a functional element intended to convey meaning to the recipient. As Read (1986) notes, "color is one of the compositional elements of the complete artwork; it suggests mass or form and grants it a spatial expressive rhythm" (p.



71). Thus, color may at times function as a substitute for dialogue or as a structural element shaping theatrical space. In this sense, color becomes an autonomous visual language comparable to scenography and lighting, which together form abstract semantic structures capable of producing independent meaning.

However, excessive reliance on symbolism and over coding may lead to counterproductive outcomes, namely excessive ambiguity, which can obscure rather than enhance audience comprehension, thereby undermining the intended aesthetic appeal (Zaher & Fatin, 2006, p. 3). Stylization also corresponds to the child's natural inclination toward brevity in sound and movement—that is, semantic condensation grounded in clarity of meaning—thus aligning with the dramatic event and endowing it with expressive aesthetic and semantic dimensions while avoiding narrative complexity.

At the level of symbolism and representation in children's theatre, one of the most significant stylization mechanisms is the anthropomorphizing of abstract concepts, transforming them into tangible, perceptible characters accessible to the child's sensory cognition. As Zahran (2005) observes, "at this stage, the child thinks concretely, relying on images, tangible objects, and movement, and is capable of dealing with abstract concepts only within limited bounds" (p. 45). This mechanism—referred to as symbolic transformation—plays a vital role in translating values from abstract intellectual levels into dramatic imagery that aligns with the child's perceptual capacities and serves the thematic and narrative structure of the performance.

Another significant stylization mechanism is the flattening of theatrical characters by associating each character with a single dominant value (such as good, evil, greed, or sacrifice). This approach is particularly effective in children's theatre, as it provides semantic clarity appropriate to the child's cognitive abilities and facilitates moral and educational comprehension.

Exaggeration or amplification constitutes one of the most important stylization mechanisms at the levels of physical, vocal, and visual performance. This technique aligns closely with the nature of children's theatre, which frequently employs exaggerated movement, costumes, makeup, scenery, gestures, and vocal intonation to achieve educational, aesthetic, and cognitive effects. Exaggeration captures the child's attention and enhances emotional engagement. For example, exaggerated makeup may embody the psychological dimension of a character and the nature of its actions within the dramatic context, particularly in fantasy characters. Similarly, amplified physical performance strengthens the child's emotional response, while exaggerated vocal tones or physical features may signify a character's emotional state or social role, such as monsters or imaginary creatures.

Regarding the stylization of time and space in children's theatre, this process relies on reduction and semantic condensation to reconstruct them symbolically in simplified forms (such as temporal leaps, circular time, or play-time structures). Rather than realistic imitation, stylized temporal and spatial frameworks employ rapid transitions, open or flexible spaces, and generalized signification in ways that correspond to the child's perceptual abilities and limited capacity to follow complex temporal and spatial structures. Consequently, temporal and spatial stylization directs the child's attention toward dramatic action and educational value, rather than toward detailed contextual realism.

With respect to reception and interaction, stylization functions as an educational methodology through which the child is verbally or physically engaged during the performance, often through breaking the fourth wall. This enhances interactive learning and participatory reception. As Atiyah (2003) notes, "children's theatre is based on the principle of direct interaction with the young audience, due to its effect in activating attention and reinforcing educational action" (p. 57). Accordingly, stylization encompasses



several essential mechanisms in children's theatre, including simplification of presentation to align with the child's awareness through the employment of imagination—which constitutes the foundation of the theatrical text—and precise directorial construction that bridges reality and fantasy. Emphasis is also placed on image, movement, and color, while avoiding prolonged narration.

Stylization further contributes to creating cohesive aesthetic dimensions across all theatrical elements, thereby achieving suspense—one of the most essential components of children's theatre performances—and encouraging positive audience interaction. This balance between aesthetic appeal and educational purpose renders theatre an effective medium for instilling values, developing imagination, and cultivating awareness in the child recipient.

Based on the foregoing, the researchers conclude that stylization in theatre represents a methodological approach for condensing vision through deeply layered meanings. This approach does not negate reality but rather reconstructs it within a theatrical structure open to interpretation, wherein each element carries its own independent expressive vision. In this context, the recipient is afforded a creative space to participate intellectually in the performance through alternative modes of thinking and interpretation.

2.2 Educational Dimensions in Children's Theatre

Education constitutes the fundamental foundation from which value-based principles emerge, whether through intentional or unintentional educational processes within both formal and informal contexts. It functions to construct educational values grounded in solid foundations. Educational theorists emphasize the role of education in building human civilization, a process that necessitates the reconstruction of the human being in a manner in which moral values represent its core and essence. Education is therefore a comprehensive system that extends beyond instruction to encompass all cultural media according to societal need.

Theatre represents an important and effective cultural and educational medium, as it serves as an applied intellectual platform for educational dimensions. Children's theatre, in particular, functions as an educational medium through which moral, social, aesthetic, and cognitive values are presented via dramatic action and exemplary characters, thereby facilitating the internalization of positive behavior within an enjoyable aesthetic framework (Ben Zidan, 2010, p. 62). Accordingly, the educational dimensions of children's theatre are realized through "the process of transmitting knowledge, experiences, skills, and habits from one individual to another and from one generation to the next, while refining and expanding them" (Al-Khawaldeh, 2003, p. 17).

What distinguishes the educational dimensions of children's theatre from other theatrical forms is its reliance on imagination and stylization rather than direct realism, its consideration of the child's developmental levels (cognitive, psychological, and linguistic), and its ability to integrate entertainment and education without allowing either to dominate the other. Among the most significant educational dimensions upon which children's theatre is based is the moral and value-based dimension, which is embodied through dramatic action rather than direct moral preaching. This allows the child to internalize values behaviorally, as values in children's theatre are not taught explicitly but are practiced dramatically through character and conflict (Ben Zidan, 2010, p. 112).

Children's theatre also fundamentally relies on the cognitive dimension, as it contributes to the development of thinking and the capacity for comprehension and inference by transforming knowledge and skills into lived experiences. As Hasan (2003) indicates, "children's theatre helps in understanding causal and temporal relationships through dramatic action" (p. 64). Thus, knowledge is transmitted through dramatic events and



situations, as well as through the elements of dramatic structure and visual scenography, which function as supportive visual systems.

Given that "education is a process of adaptation or interaction between the individual and the environment in which they live" (Al-Amairah, p. 11), positive interaction becomes a tool for psychological and social adaptation through which the child understands knowledge and simulates reality via theatre. Theatre thus emerges as a comprehensive educational, cultural, instructional, and moral tool. Through this framework, the social dimension is realized through the following elements (Samir, 2016, pp. 304):

- **Collective Work**
The theatrical process cannot be achieved without the integration of multiple individual talents within a collective effort. Correspondingly, the audience represents a decisive and essential component of the theatrical process.
- **Participation Children's**
Theatre productions are often designed to allow the participation of the largest possible number of children, fostering a sense of importance and belonging to an active group.
- **Cooperation**
Participation provides the child with an initial practical lesson in the value of cooperation with others in producing something beautiful and complex that cannot be achieved individually.
- **Sacrifice**
The child learns to sacrifice leisure time and comfort in order to participate in a valued and committed collective endeavor.
- **Sense of Responsibility**
The child becomes aware that their contribution is essential to achieving the collective goal of the group.

While the social dimensions of children's theatre are manifested through social and psychological aspects, collective work, participation, sacrifice, cooperation, and responsibility serve as effective tools for instilling educational values within the moral and ethical dimension. This is achieved by delineating patterns of appropriate behavior through theatrical situations, ideas, or even a central character that embodies a clear value-based role within the performance. The child "needs to identify with a character to the extent that it is elevated to the status of a hero, while other characters revolve around it; the hero is central to the child because the hero embodies the child's hopes and aspirations" (Al-Faisal, 1998, p. 56). Furthermore, "the child is also influenced by the actions of those they admire, whose stories revolve around them, adopting them as role models and striving to emulate their principles and ideas" (Ameli, n.d., p. 161).

For a character to function as a role model, it must possess attributes with educational dimensions. Among the characteristics of a well-constructed theatrical character is the strength of its dialogue and its capacity to convey civilizational and intellectual dimensions, as well as attention to internal monologue or self-reflection, which aids in revealing the character's depth (Al-Anani, 2007, p. 29).

The aesthetic dimensions of children's theatre are realized through scenography, lighting, color, makeup, costumes, and other performance elements designed thoughtfully to align with the core idea and objective of the production. As Yusuf (2016) notes, "beauty in children's theatre is not ornamentation, but an educational means for shaping awareness" (p. 58). Theatre in general—and children's theatre in particular—provides an integrated sensory experience through which aesthetic sensibility and artistic taste are cultivated, a role significantly supported by the mechanisms of stylization in children's theatre.



Accordingly, drama directed at children achieves “direct situations drawn from daily life, expanding the concept of characters and situational meanings, highlighting the values of actions and behaviors, thereby enhancing comprehension, deepening emotional awareness, facilitating learning, and enabling the child to interact successfully with society” (Mousa, 1992, p. 11).

In light of the above, the educational dimensions of children’s theatre represent a balanced and integrated theatrical structure based on the fusion of value systems through dramatic action, achieved through stylistic plurality and diversity.

3. Indicators of the Theoretical Framework

1. Stylization in theatre constitutes a methodological approach for condensing vision through deeply layered meanings. It does not negate reality; rather, it reconstructs it within a theatrical structure open to interpretation.
2. Stylization seeks to reveal the latent educational systems and contexts embedded within discourse and texts through movement, gesture, and dramatic action in performance.
3. Emphasis is placed on image, movement, and color, while avoiding prolonged narrative complexity. Stylization focuses on action and semantic condensation without diverting the child’s attention through secondary details.
4. Stylization aims to employ imagination, which represents the foundation of theatrical dialogue and is carefully crafted by the playwright to function as a bridge between the text and the creative aesthetic dimension.
5. Stylization contributes to creating coherent aesthetic dimensions across all elements of the theatrical production, thereby achieving suspense, one of the most essential components of children’s theatre and encouraging positive audience interaction. This process establishes a balance between the aesthetic and educational dimensions.
6. One of the key stylization mechanisms at the level of symbolism and representation in children’s theatre is symbolic transformation, whereby abstract concepts are converted into anthropomorphized, tangible characters perceptible to the child’s sensory cognition. Such character’s function as educational mediators that support learning through moral and value-based dimensions.
7. Stylized images of scenery, lighting, and music are transformed into signifiers with intentional educational effectiveness through reconstruction processes that align with the child’s general perception across different developmental stages.
8. At the level of symbolism and representation, stylization in children’s theatre seeks to flatten theatrical characters by associating each with a single dominant value. This approach enhances the child’s cognitive comprehension while reinforcing moral and ethical dimensions.
9. Time and space in children’s theatre performances are stylized elements reconstructed through reduction into simplified symbolic forms that reflect educational and perceptual values intended by the text, thereby strengthening the child’s cognitive dimension.
10. Stylization emphasizes visual imagery and its capacity to shape awareness, adopting mechanisms of simplification, semantic clarity, and visual economy in scenographic elements to formulate aesthetic, educational, and instructional discourse while reinforcing cognitive dimensions.
11. Among the theatrical stylization mechanisms related to reception and interaction with the child audience is addressing or engaging the child verbally or physically during the performance—often through breaking the fourth wall—which contributes to enhancing the child’s cognitive and social dimensions.



4. Research Procedures

4.1 Research Methodology

The researchers adopted the descriptive–analytical approach, as it is the most appropriate for achieving the objectives of the study and addressing its research procedures.

4.2 Research Population

The researchers conducted a survey of theatrical performances directed at children within the temporal boundaries of the present study. The research population consisted of twelve (12) children’s theatre performances, as presented in Table (1) below.

Table (1): Research Population

No.	Play Title	Author	Director	Year of Performance	Venue	Producing Body
1	Princess of Dreams	Faleh Hussein Al-Abdullah	Hussein Ali Saleh	2021	National Theatre	Cinema and Theatre Directorate
2	The Mouse	Jamal Al-Shatti	Alawi Hussein	2021	National Theatre	Cinema and Theatre Directorate
3	Sinan, the Super Hero	Sadiq Al-Nasrawi	Karrar Al-Safi	2022	Palace of Culture Theatre	General Secretariat of the Al-Abbasiya Holy Shrine
4	A Drop of Rain	Mahmoud Abu Al-Abbas	Mahmoud Abu Al-Abbas	2022	University of Basra Theatre	Cultural Center of the University of Basra
5	The Lazy and the Active	Hazem Rashk Al-Tamimi	Ammar Naeem	2022	School Activity Hall / Nasiriyah	Nasiriyah Acting Group
6	Shihab and the Secret of the Book	Hussein Ali Saleh	Hussein Ali Saleh	2023	Al-Rasheed Theatre	Mobile Children's Theatre Troupe
7	The Tale of Nu`man	Hussein Ali Saleh	Saad Shaaban	2023	Al-Rasheed Theatre	Mobile Children's Theatre Troupe
8	Tarboosh and the Dental Clinic	Wissam Al-Quraini	Maytham Al-Batran	2023	Palace of Culture Theatre	General Secretariat of the Al-Husseiniya Holy Shrine
9	Savings Book	Rahim Al-Iraqi	Hussein Ali Harf	2024	Al-Mansour Theatre	National Bank of Iraq
10	The Kingdom of Games	Mohammed Hammad	Mohammed Hammad	2024	Al-Mansour Theatre	Cinema and Theatre Directorate
11	Shanshool's Adventure	Wissam Al-Quraini	Maytham Al-Batran	2024	Palace of Culture Theatre	General Secretariat of the Al-Husseiniya Holy Shrine
12	Me and the Clown	Zainab Abd Al-Ameer	Zainab Abd Al-Ameer	2025	Al-Mansour Theatre	Land of Babylon Cultural Foundation

4.3 Research Sample

The research sample was selected using a purposive sampling method, based on the following justifications:

1. The performance demonstrates a greater diversity of stylization techniques compared to other productions.
2. It emphasizes multiple educational dimensions through the philosophical presentation of its central idea.
3. The performance has received several local and international awards.

Accordingly, the research sample was identified as the theatrical performance *A Drop of Rain*, as presented in Table (2) below.



Table (2): Research Sample

No.	Play Title	Author	Director	Year of Performance	Venue	Producing Body
1	<i>A Drop of Rain</i>	Mahmoud Abu Al-Abbas	Mahmoud Abu Al-Abbas	2022	University of Basra Theatre	Cultural Center of the University of Basra

4.4 Research Instrument

The researchers adopted the indicators derived from the theoretical framework as the research instrument for analyzing the study sample, considering them as analytical criteria for the purposes of analysis.

4.5 Instrument Validity

To establish face validity, the researchers examined the instrument in its initial form, which consisted of eleven (11) analytical items, by presenting it to a panel of experts and specialists in the fields of art education and theatre. An agreement rate of 80% or higher was adopted as the criterion for determining the validity of the analytical items. The instrument items received full approval and consensus, rendering the instrument valid and ready for application in its final form, which comprised eleven (11) analytical items.

4.6 Instrument Reliability

In order to minimize evaluator subjectivity, ensure objectivity, and achieve acceptable reliability for the analytical instrument, the researchers established inter-rater reliability by applying the instrument through consistency analysis between the two researchers and additional independent analysts.

Names of the Expert Reviewers

- Prof. Dr. Imad Hadi Abbas Specialization: Theatrical Techniques College of Fine Arts, University of Baghdad
- Asst. Prof. Dr. Kazem Imran Specialization: Theatre Directing College of Fine Arts, University of Baghdad
- Prof. Dr. Saleh Ahmed Mahdi Specialization: Art Education College of Fine Arts, University of Baghdad

Names of the Analysts

- Lect. Dr. Ghada Abdul Sattar Specialization: Art Education College of Fine Arts, University of Baghdad

Accordingly, a random sample was selected from the research population to serve as the reliability sample, represented by the theatrical performance *The Lazy and the Active*, written by Hazem Rashk Al-Tamimi and directed by Ammar Naeem. The sample was analyzed independently by the analysts in accordance with the items of the analysis instrument.

Following a thorough review of the analysis results, correlation coefficients were calculated between: (a) the researchers' analyses and the first analyst, (b) the researchers' analyses and the second analyst, and (c) the first and second analysts. This was conducted using Pearson's correlation coefficient. The overall average reliability coefficient for the analysis indicators was found to be 0.81, which represents an acceptable level for ensuring confidence in the reliability of the analysis. Consequently, the analysis instrument is considered valid and reliable for use.

4.7 Sample Analysis

A Drop of Rain (2022)

Written and directed by: Mahmoud Abu Al-Abbas

Venue: University of Basra Theatre



Theatrical Concept

The events of the performance unfold between the sky and the earth. In the sky appear the characters of the cloud and the raindrop, while on earth the characters include the tree, the child, hot air, and the bird. The central character is a small raindrop that rebels against the cloud and descends to the earth in an attempt to explore it. The raindrop ignores the advice of the cloud, which embraces all the raindrops and is implicitly positioned as a maternal figure. The raindrop denies this maternal relationship and refuses to remain within the collective of raindrops.

The Cloud:

"Raindrop, you are alone; you are of no use by yourself. Alone, you will be lost. Wait for your sister raindrops."

The Raindrop:

"No—go to your sister clouds... goodbye."

The raindrop then descends to the earth and freely settles among the small trees. At this point, the dramatic action intensifies as the raindrop attempts to escape the hot air in order not to return to the cloud. It encounters the hot air, the bird that seeks water to drink, the child who needs a drop of water to cleanse dust from their eye, and the tree that asks for the raindrop to water it. All these characters are in need of water; however, the raindrop, being alone and weak, realizes its inability to fulfill these needs. Consequently, it returns to rejoin its sister raindrops within the cloud.

Analysis

The director employed theatrical techniques within an educational discourse characterized by effectiveness and intentionality, primarily centered on simplification of presentation to enhance the embodiment of the child recipient's perceptual and sensory dimensions. Temporal structure was rendered in a repetitive circular form to emphasize the cognitive dimension related to the natural cycle of rain, water, and clouds. The performance begins with the moment of the raindrop's separation and concludes with its return to the collective. In this context, temporal stylization was imbued with a cognitive educational dimension that conveys concepts of natural formation and continuity in a condensed, indirect manner.

Spatially, the setting was constructed symbolically rather than within a fixed realistic framework. The spatial discourse alternated between sky and earth, functioning as a mediating structure that reinforced the aesthetic dimension of nature and reconstructed celestial reality through a poetic visual language that nurtures the child's imagination.

Repetition was prominently featured in the performance of language and songs, contributing to reinforcement and consolidation of the communicative and linguistic educational dimension. This was achieved through linguistic stylization, consciously adopted by the director-author to ensure balance between expressive form and the child's cognitive level. In addition, exaggeration was employed in certain physical characteristics and movements of the characters, most notably in the character of the hot air. Exaggeration was utilized to emphasize its danger and negative impact, serving to capture the child's attention and warn against harmful behaviors or phenomena through an engaging theatrical form.

The director also relied on reduction of characters and events to ensure effective communication of the central idea to the child audience. Each character embodied a single, clear concept: the raindrop represented individuality, the bird symbolized separation, the tree reflected isolation, and the hot air represented danger. This simplicity of presentation contributed to the formation of clear meanings with a strong cognitive dimension accessible to the child recipient.



The symbolic connotations of stylization were structured around a central axis within the performance, whereby elements of nature were transformed into anthropomorphized human symbols. Symbolism played a vital role in conveying educational values within moral, ethical, and social dimensions—such as cooperation, belonging, and participation—through an indirect approach that enhances the child’s interpretive thinking. The director employed stylization to condense the core idea concerning the importance of belonging to a collective and engaging in collaborative action, not by negating natural reality, but by imaginatively reconstructing it through symbolic representation (the raindrop, the cloud, the tree, the bird). Each character carried a distinct educational significance open to multiple interpretations, thereby strengthening the child’s capacity for symbolic and imaginative understanding.

One of the key stylization mechanisms at the level of symbolism and representation in children’s theatre symbolic transformation was clearly manifested through the conversion of abstract concepts into anthropomorphized, tangible characters perceptible to the child’s sensory cognition. These characters functioned as educational mediators that contribute to learning through moral and value-based dimensions. This was evident in the multiplicity of anthropomorphized characters (the raindrop, the wind, the cloud, the bird, and the tree), whose stylized representation contributed to embodying the cognitive dimension by reshaping reality symbolically, allowing for simplification of meaning and condensation of significance within the structure of the performance.

The stylized imagery of the performance in each scene was realized through transforming theatrical action, movement, and gesture into educational tools and dimensions rooted in societal needs. Scenes such as the exhausted bird rejoining the flock, or the raindrop realizing that isolation leads to evaporation while collective action yields growth, enabled the child to internalize values without direct moral discourse.

However, direct audience interaction through verbal or physical engagements such as breaking the fourth wall, which constitutes a significant stylization mechanism in reception was not explicitly achieved during the performance.

The director emphasized imaginative scenes that connected the child to the creative dimension, rendering the theatrical discourse engaging and influential in shaping awareness: the raindrop descending, the bird leaving the flock, and the tree growing in isolation. Furthermore, the use of fast-paced music, a rear projection screen, and multi-colored lighting enhanced the visual experience and reinforced suspense, encouraging positive interaction from the child audience while preserving the educational dimension (cooperation, belonging, and care for nature) through the harmony of visual systems with dramatic events.

The Tree:

"Everyone in nature is my friend; we complete one another. Come and water my small roots—you think only of yourself."

The Raindrop:

"I am very small in size; how can I help a tree that is so large?"

The Tree:

"Help has no size."

5. Findings and Conclusions of the Study

5.1 Findings

1. Circular temporal stylization constituted a cognitive educational dimension that effectively reinforced the concepts of belonging and continuity, embodying the



child's perceptual and sensory dimensions, as illustrated by the event of the raindrop descending from the sky and subsequently returning to it.

2. Stylization through linguistic repetition in dialogue formed a cognitive dimension that emphasized educational values and achieved a balance between theatrical discourse and the child's cognitive level, as evident in the repetition of certain dialogues by the raindrop and the hot wind.
3. Stylization through intentional exaggeration or amplification, employed by the director in the forms, voices, and movements of characters—such as the wind and the raindrop—constituted both cognitive and aesthetic dimensions. This approach contributed to transforming each theatrical element into an educational tool with clear pedagogical dimensions.
4. Stylization was evident in the formation of imaginative scenes that connected the child to the creative aesthetic dimension and rendered theatrical discourse engaging and influential in shaping awareness. This was frequently achieved through the flexible theatrical space representing place (sky and earth) and the stylization of time (the cycle of the raindrops from its descent from the cloud to its return at the conclusion), without severing the connection to reality.
5. Symbolic transformation as a stylization mechanism contributed to shaping the child's cognitive and moral-value dimensions, as elements of nature were transformed into anthropomorphized characters (the raindrop, the cloud, the wind, and the bird). This facilitated the transmission of values and knowledge through an indirect, pedagogically effective approach.

5.2 Conclusions

1. Stylization in contemporary children's theatre reflects a transformation in both educational and aesthetic awareness, affecting the child recipient as well as specialists and practitioners concerned with children's theatre.
2. Stylization affirms the centrality of the child as an active recipient by engaging the child cognitively, emotionally, and physically.
3. Stylization stimulates the child's mental and intellectual interaction by transforming theatrical discourse from a didactic mode into an indirect educational discourse through mechanisms such as repetition, exaggeration, anthropomorphization, and reduction.
4. Stylization contributes to directing audience reception by presenting an integrated aesthetic-educational system that corresponds to the child's cognitive and emotional characteristics.

5.3 Recommendations

1. Adopting stylization as a fundamental educational strategy in children's theatre texts and performances, rather than treating it merely as an aesthetic option.
2. Organizing training workshops for directors, actors, technicians, and writers of children's theatre, with a focus on employing stylization mechanisms that carry clear educational dimensions.
3. Encouraging openness toward applied studies that examine children's theatre performances and texts in light of stylization as an integrated educational-aesthetic strategy.

5.4 Proposals for Future Research

The researchers propose conducting studies on the following topics:

1. The stylistic structures of theatrical discourse directed at children.
2. Temporal stylization and its manifestations in contemporary Iraqi children's theatre performances.

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