

자유놀이 시간에 자발적으로 출현하는 유아의 쓰기 활동 양상

The Characteristics of Preschool Children's Emerging Writing Activities
within the Context of Play in the Child Care Center

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ABSTRACT

본 연구의 목적은 유아교육기관의 자유놀이 시간에 자발적으로 출현하는 유아의 쓰기 활동의 양상과 이를 지지하는 유아교육기관의 환경에 대하여 탐색하는 것이다. 이를 위하여 본 연구에서는 연구의 대상으로 미국 캘리포니아주에 위치한 대학 부설 유아교육기관과 유아를 선정하고 관찰한 후 그 결과를 서술하고 분석하였다.

본 연구의 결과 연구의 대상인 유아교육기관의 전반적인 환경에는 다양한 문해 활동 자료들이 풍부하게 마련되어 있었고 유아들은 이러한 환경에서의 자유놀이의 맥락 내에서 자발적으로 쓰기 활동에 참여하였다. 유아들은 실제 생활을 운용하기 위하여 효율적으로 쓰기 활동에 참여하였고, 또래들과 교사들과 함께 그들의 쓰기 작품을 읽고 그 의미를 토론하면서 쓰기 언어에 대한 그들의 발전적인 지식을 표출하였다. 본 연구의 결과는 형식적인 쓰기 교수법이 없이도 다양한 문해 활동 자료들이 풍부하게 갖추어진 질 높은 유아교육기관의 자유놀이 시간을 통해 유아의 쓰기 언어 학습이 효율적으로 이루어질 수 있다는 사실을 증명함으로써 유아교육기관에서의 언어 교육의 실제에 적용할 수 있는 시사점을 제공한다.

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I . INTRODUCTION

Play has become a primary curriculum vehicle in early childhood education. Educators are discovering that children "are highly activated in their play but are seldom equally motivated for such long periods with anything else" (Sutton-Smith, 1975, p.200). Play is a crucial element in a child's everyday life. It is one of the most important roles in a child's social, emotional, and cognitive development. Play, which has a problem-solving component, seems to be a crucial activity for children(Caplan & Caplan, 1973). Without this skill children seem to have difficulties making sense of their experiences, their world, and their interactions with people, which leaves them with bits and pieces of data rather than with generalizations and concepts(Lovinger, 1974).

Recently there has been a resurgence of interest in evaluative intervention research on the use of play as a vehicle to foster the cognitive and language growth of preschoolers(Fein, 1979a, 1979b; Golomb & Cornelius, 1977; Lovinger, 1974; McCune-Nicolich, 1981; Nicolopoulou, 1993; Saltz, Dixon, & Johnson, 1977; Saltz & Johnson, 1974; Sutton-Smith, 1967). When children are enabled to use play, their use of language increases; and creativity, problem-solving ability, language development, and other overall competencies also develop in the natural play mode of young children(Berk, 1994; Burns & Brainerd, 1979; Fein, 1981; Pellegrini & Boyd, 1993; Pellegrini & Galda, 1993; Schikenez, 1978). Children's ability to play predicts

achievement because the skills used in higher modes of play are also required in reading and writing(Calkins, 1980; Clay, 1975; Dyson, 1991; Piaget, 1962; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Vukelich, 1981; Vygotsky, 1976; Wolfgang, 1974). Glickman(1979) has even suggested that achievement scores have declined over the last generation because children have had less time and fewer opportunities to play.

There are also many research studies about the relationship between natural literacy development and children's play(Pellegrini, 1985; Schrader, 1990; Wolfgang & Sanders, 1981). According to these research studies, similarities exist between the processes involved in social symbolic play and literate behavior. Children use similar mental processes in both of these representational processes(Pellegrini, 1985; Rains, 1990). Schrader's(1990) and Schrader and Hoffman's(1987) study demonstrated that natural literacy development can be cultivated within the context of children's symbolic play. Providing literate-rich play settings for children enables them to represent through symbolic play literacy activities with which they have had experience and are working to understand. From the frameworks of both Fein(1979) and Clay(1975), if representational ability is necessary to becoming literate, then play provides a vehicle for enhancing such ability both in a general sense and more specifically with respect to language as a representational system(Wolfgang & Sanders, 1981).

One researcher(Yawkey, 1979; 1983) argued that play is intelligence. Its link with intelligence is through transformation and language. Through transformation of self, objects, people, and situations, thought is developed and used. Language in nonverbal and verbal forms helps the child transmit and share meaning in the play transformations with others. Since transformations and language are elements of play and intelligence, extending and planning for them are crucial to children and teacher. Materials, roles played, teacher guidance, time, space, and boundaries are all important factors used in planning for play. With increased recognition of its value to learning, and complement to the curriculum, play is another resource that can be fruitfully tapped in classrooms for the benefit to children, their intellectual growth, and to teachers.

This study attempted to investigate how children's writing activities emerged naturally in their play in a child care setting. As was discussed above, there is a growing body of theory and research that suggests that play contributes to children's learning. Especially, Piaget(1962) discussed play as assimilation, the driving force behind learning and Vygotsky

(1976) theorized that play is the foundation to later abstract thought. Some researchers(Calkins, 1980; Clay, 1975; Dyson, 1991) have commented that children's early reading and writing efforts often resemble play. Jacob(1984) found that Puerto Rican kindergarten children engaged in literacy activities at home and that many of these activities were playful. So we need to study whether children's writing activities emerge naturally in their play or not and the characteristics of children's writing activities. If children's writing emerge naturally in the context of their free play, it means that we don't need to give them formal writing instruction which might occur too much stress which influence for the rest of their lives. So in view of the research on the role of playful literacy activities and their role in developing literacy, the researcher conducted exploratory case studies to answer the following questions. What are the nature and characteristics of preschool children's playful writing activities? How do preschool children's writing activities emerge naturally within the context of their play in the child care setting and how does the child care center's environment support preschool children's naturally emerging writing activities?

II. METHOD

Since the purpose of this study was to investigate the characteristics of preschool children's emerging writing activities within the context of their play in the child care center and the child

care center's environments that support the preschool children's natural writing emergence, the following steps were taken: (a) children and a local child care center were selected for this

descriptive case study, (b)the overall child care center's environment and the children's play in the child care center settings were observed, (c)the overall child care center's environment and the children's literacy activities in the settings were described and analyzed.

1. Participants

Twenty-four preschool children, 12 boys and 12 girls, from one child care center in Berkeley, California, USA. were selected as participants for the study. The children ranged in age from 3 years 3 months to 5 years 3 months. At least one of their parents was a university staff person or faculty member. Most of the children were from white middle class families. The selected child care center was university-based and had a good reputation as an early childhood education provider.

2. Procedures

Children use play to facilitate their understanding of their own life experiences; and, in the context of play, it was assumed that children's early writing activities were emerging naturally. Therefore, the qualitative, naturalistic observation in a case study research design seemed to be appropriate for this study.

(1) Observation of the child care center: The child care center's overall environment was observed first for one week so that the observer might become familiar with the child care center's program and to allow

the children and teachers to become accustomed to the observer's presence. The child care center's overall environment was observed for later description and analysis.

- (2) Observation of children's play: Focused, nonparticipant observations of children's play were conducted. Observations of children's writing activities during their spontaneous play in the child care center served as the primary means of data collection. The observational notes were supported with field notes taken by another observer(a teacher).
- (3) Collecting children's writing artifacts: The productions of children's writing artifacts made in the context of their play were photographed and samples of them were collected to document the children's intended use of writing in their play. Teachers were asked to discuss with each child the content and purpose of his or her use of writing to verify further the meaning.
- (4) Data collection: Triangulated data collection was accomplished by (a)observational notes of the children's play and writing behaviors, (b)children's writing artifacts productions with explanations of intended meanings, and (c)a teacher's field notes of children's play and writing activities. This triangulated procedure enabled the researcher to (a)study the children's use of writing activities incorporated into their play, (b)confirm the data, (c)obtain a check on the dependability of the data collected, and (d)give credibility to interpretations of the data. Data was collected for 13 days over a

7-week period.

- (5) Data transcription: After conducting the observations, the researcher's observational notes were transcribed. These observational notes were then compared with a teacher's field notes and the children's writing artifacts and explanations of intended meaning. From these combined data, a narrative description of the children's writing activities at the child care center was produced.
- (6) Data analysis: In these narrative records, all instances of the children's playful writing

activities were identified. Playful behavior was defined as that which was pleasurable, had no extrinsic goals, was spontaneous and voluntary, and involved some active engagement on the part of the player(Garvey, 1977). After this identification, the children's writing activities were identified and analyzed. Children's written language use was analyzed according to Halliday's(1973, 1978) seven functions of language in use (Table 1). Coding decisions for each instance of writing identified in the play were

〈Table 1〉 Halliday's seven functions of language

Category	Functions	Examples
Instrumental (I want)	to satisfy one's material needs, to enable a person to obtain the goods and services wanted	Writing a list. Writing a check Writing an order
Regulatory (Do as I tell you)	to control the actions and behaviors of others and self.	Writing plans for future actions Writing a sign Writing directions or instructions Writing an assignment Writing prescriptions
Interactional (Me and you)	to interact with others, to participate in social relationship	Writing letters, post cards, notes
Personal (Here I come)	to identify and express personal feeling and attitudes	Writing one's name Writing about me Writing a diary
Heuristic (Tell me why)	to explore the world around the child, to discover, seek information, and solve problems	Writing questions
Imaginative (Let's pretend)	to create a world of one's own	Writing a story Writing a poetry
Informative (I've got something to tell you)	to communicate new information to someone who does not already possess that information	Writing memos, bulletins, signs Writing reports Writing labels, name tags Writing a newspaper Writing textbooks or resource books Writing money Writing name, address, phone number

based on three sources of data: the researcher's observational notes, the teacher's field notes, and the children's writings and explanations. Interpretations of written lan-

guage functions were discussed with the other researcher, who was the expert on the content of this research.

III. RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate characteristics of preschool children's emerging writing activities within the context of their play in a child care center's environment supportive of the preschool children's natural writing emergence. The results are as follows:

1. Environments

The center's whole environment was enriched with literacy-materials. Each child's name was on their cubbies. The walls of the center were decorated with the children's drawings, which had explanations about the pictures. In addition, all the children's big name tags were on the wall. The alphabet and word-cards were also on the wall. At the book corner, there were many books and the books were changed occasionally. In the classroom and outside, there were writing corners equipped with writing tables, paper, markers, pencils, crayons, and various kinds of alphabet samples. There were chalkboards, chalk and erasers, and a box filled with paper, newspapers, and magazines near the writing table. There were also other areas with shelves filled with various kinds of magazines, papers, and so on.

2. Overall results

The children's early writing activities were emerging naturally in their play in the child care center. They wrote in the context of their play. The children demonstrated their developing knowledge of written language functions by writing for real-life purposes, by reading their writing, and discussing the meaning of their written language with their friends and teacher. They wrote to express themselves and their families, to make stories, to learn about letters, to interact with others, and so on. There were 71 examples of writing activities recorded during this research period. Writing activities of 17 of the 24 children were observed: 70.8 percent of all children wrote at least once during this research period.

3. Analysis of writing activities

The researcher observed children's writing activities in the context of their free play and collected many of their writing artifacts. The children demonstrated their developing knowledge of written language functions not only by writing for real-life purposes but also by read-

ing their writing and discussing the meaning of their written language with their friends and teacher. The children's actions further verified the intended meaning of their writing. This enabled the researcher to identify and classify the children's written language productions according to Halliday's seven functions served by language. The children wrote for regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative, and informational purposes. They were not observed using the instrumental functions of writing(Table 2).

(1) Instrumental function: No instrumental functions of writing were observed.

(2) Regulatory function: Children wrote to control the actions and behaviors of others and themselves. Two examples of regulatory function writing activities were observed.

JM wrote YES and NO to let others to know what that signs meant and not disturb her.

SL wrote sign NO to let others know his condition and not to disturb him.

(3) Interactional function: Children wrote to interact with others and to participate in social relationships. There were eight examples of interactional writing activities. The children wrote while they were interacting with others - other children, their parents and/or teachers - at the writing table. Also they wrote letters.

MM wrote to interact with her father at the writing table. She copied her father's writing. BF wrote a letter with a teacher to his mother.

MPM wrote a letter to her mother.

LS wrote a letter to her father.

NB wrote her name and her friend's name

who sat beside her.

(4) Personal function: Children wrote to identify and express their own feeling and attitudes. The observer observed 40 cases of personal functions of writing(about 56.3 percent). The children wrote their names, their family members' names, and their friends' names. They wrote about their family and friends. They also wrote to express their own feelings.

Many children wrote their own name, a family member's name and a friend's name.

Many children wrote about their family.

NB wrote about her friends.

JM wrote her friend's name and her mother's name and express her feelings(I LOVE U).

SL wrote about his feeling 'Stupid'.

(5) Heuristic function: Children wrote to explore the world around themselves, to discover, to seek information, and to solve problems. In this research, many children were learning about letters. They wrote about the letters, wrote the alphabet, and copied the alphabet. They were asking about the alphabet and wrote letters during free play.

NB wrote after asking the first letter of her friend's name and elephant.

YG wrote after asking about the spelling of her sister's name.

Six children wrote alphabets.

SG wrote a word and letters.

JM copied her friends' names from a list.

(6) Imaginative function: Children wrote to create a world of their own. They wrote about their own drawings and about a story they knew. One child even created a story about the alphabet.

NB, KF and other children wrote about their drawings.

JMG wrote about a story 'Zorro'.

SG wrote about a story of ghost trap.

MPM wrote her own story about presents and friends.

NB wrote stories with alphabets.

(7) Informative function: Children wrote to com-

municate new information to someone who did not already possess that information.

Two cases of informative writing activities were observed.

NB wrote to teach her friend the first letter of his name, 'B'.

DS wrote the list of recorders in the child care center.

<Table 2> Occurrences of Functions of Writing Activities

Functions	N	Examples(N)
Instrumental	0	
Regulatory	2	Writing signs(2)
Interactional	8	Writing to interact with others(5) Writing letters(3)
Personal	40	Writing children's own names, family member's name, and/or friends' name(26) Writing about children's family and/or friends(12) Writing to express children's own feelings(2)
Heuristic	9	Writing to learn about letters(2) Writing alphabets and words(6) Writing to copy other's writing(1)
Imaginative	10	Writing about children's own drawings(4) Writing about stories(5) Writing children's own stories(1)
Informative	2	Writing to teach others(1) Writing lists(1)

IV. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the characteristics of preschool children's emerging writing activities within the context of their play and the child care center's environments that supported the preschool children's natural literacy emergence.

The results of this research indicated that young children write in the context of their

free play in the child care center when literacy materials are available to them. The children's early writing activities were emerging naturally in their play. The children demonstrated their developing knowledge of written language functions by writing for real-life purposes, by reading their writing and discussing the meaning of their written language with their friends and

teacher.

From the results of this research, the researcher found that the children were able to use six of Halliday's(1973, 1978) seven functions of language for writing within the context of their play. These functions were(in order of observed occurrence): personal, heuristic, interactional, informative, and regulatory. The instrumental function was not observed. Children wrote to express themselves, their families and friends; to make stories; to learn about letters; to interact with others; and so on. The children wrote for regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative, and informational purposes.

Children used written language to carry out those functions with which they had had some experience; and it seemed that the children in this group had most of their experiences with themselves, their friends, and their family. They wrote about their drawings and stories(imaginative functions of writing). They wrote to know something(heuristic functions of writing) and to interact with others(interactional functions of writing). There were only two examples of informative writings; thus, it is possible that the children in this group were not yet ready for this level of writing. There was no chance to observe any instrumental functions of writing. This result may have occurred because the children in this child care center used oral language for this function, or simply because the researcher did not have an opportunity to observe this function of writing.

The results of this research supported the findings of recent studies about the relationships

between play and cognitive and language/literacy development in preschool children. There has been much interest about research on the use of play as a vehicle to foster the cognitive and language growth of preschoolers(Curry & Arnaud, 1974; Fein, 1979; Fink, 1976). According to these studies, when children are enabled to use play, their use of language increases; and creativity, problem-solving ability, language development, and other overall competencies also develop in the natural play mode of young children(Marbach & Yawkey, 1980; Nicholich, 1975; 1981). Children's ability to play predicts achievement because the skills used in higher modes of play are also required in reading and writing(Gentile & Hoot, 1983; Isenberg & Jacob, 1983a, 1983b; Pellegrini, 1980).

Also according to the research studies about the relationship between natural literacy development and children's play, similarities exist between the processes involved in social symbolic play and literate behavior. Children use similar mental processes in both of these representational processes(Pellegrini, 1985). Schrader's (1990) study demonstrated that natural literacy development can be cultivated within the context of children's symbolic play.

Like the findings of above studies, in this research, which attempted to investigate how children's literacy activities emerge naturally in their play in the child care settings, play contributed to children's literacy learning. Children wrote in the context of their free play. Children's writing activities emerged naturally in their play, not by formal instruction which

could stress children for the rest of their lives.

It is also very important to understand the adults' role. It is the teacher who exerts the most influence on the classroom social environment and the parents who do the same at home. The teacher's role as preparer of the classroom environment is an especially important one, since children learn the language they experience around them(Schrader, 1989). It becomes necessary for early childhood educators to create literacy environments that facilitate such learning. Beyond choosing materials, arranging space, and scheduling, teachers can facilitate learning interactions by moving in and out of the play centers, by making comments and suggestions, and by modeling role-appropriate behaviors(Smilansky, 1968).

This study supported the contention that teachers should offer their students many play experiences. These play experiences can enable the young children to learn more about written language. Through the experiences of play, children learn that writing activities are meaningful and useful for their everyday lives. These writing activities in the context of children's

free play can be very important parts of the curriculum. These activities would enable the children to make sense of literacy activities and facilitate those activities in their lives.

These results seemed to be consistent with Halliday's developmental sequence for oral language: The children were observed most frequently writing for personal purposes; heuristic, interactional, and informative the next; and regulatory, the least. Thus, it may be concluded that children in this age group wrote primarily for their personal purposes: They wrote their own first names; their family and their friends' names and about them; and also wrote to express their own personal feelings.

Given the supportive role of the adults observed in this study, it may be concluded that the role of the teacher exerted the most influence on the classroom social environment much as parents do at home. By preparing the environment - choosing materials, arranging space, and scheduling - teachers were seen facilitating the emergent literacy of the children by moving in and out of the play centers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Given the small number of children in the present study(24), other researchers are urged to replicate the study to determine more completely whether the results as seen here are typical of three- to five-year-old children in general or whether the results obtained in

this study are limited only to this particular population.

2. Since the population in this study was comprised largely of children from white, middle class families, the study should be replicated with children of the same age but from

different racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds.

3. Also, since the setting of this study was a university child care center, researchers are

urged to replicate the study in settings other than those associated with a college or university.

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