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ABSTRACT
              This paper describes a pilot study emphasizing
responsive research and incorporating the views of participants into
recommendations for future research using classroom videotaping. The
study was based on the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978), which
emphasizes the importance of an integrated perspective of child
language and thought. Classroom play was studied as a context for
studying children. Sixteen kindergartners and three adults from a
child care center were participants. The process of children's story
construction was explored and described in terms of collaboration
among adults and children in classroom sociodramatic play.
Sociodramatic play was found to be symbolic, thematic, and a valuable
context for studying children. Results also demonstrated that the
perspectives of children and adults differed and that collaboration
included elements of assistive and distractive actions and language.
The pilot study demonstrates that responsive conversations, such as
focus groups, offer opportunities to resolve differing perspectives
and to clarify and question meanings among individuals in classroom
communities. Two tables illustrate the discussion. (Contains 18
references.) (SLD)

AFFIRMING THE PILOT STUDY'S VALUE
IN RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM RESEARCH

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RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM RESEARCH

Introduction and Overview

When life is considered as narrative (Bruner, 1990), then children's developing narrative competence may be explored in the context of school life by examining multiple views of a shared classroom activity. Specifically, narrative competence has been linked to children's literacy learning (Pellegrini, 1985). Defined for this study as sense of story (Martinez, Cheney, & Teale, 1991), narrative competence denoted the ability to construct shared meaning (Bruner, 1990; Wells, 1991) in the form of collaborative stories.

Previously, the study of narrative competence was limited to a nearly exclusive focus upon individual competence assessed in terms of a child's ability to reconstruct adult selected or elicited stories (Galda & Miller, 1983; Galda, 1984; Guttman & Frederiksen, 1985; Williamson & Silvern, 1991). Boggs (1980), in his study of Hawaiian children's play discourse, suggested peer influence to be a better facilitator of child constructed stories than adult elicitation. Similarly, Brady, (1983) studied Navajo children's "skinwalker" stories and noted the role of peers as evaluators of storytellers' narrative competence.

Paley (1991), a kindergarten teacher/researcher, studied classroom "story playing" by recording children's stories in dictated form for classroom enactment. Warash and Workman

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(1993) used child-constructed stories for classroom videotaping. This study extended previous research of narrative competence by combining videotaping with focus groups.

This paper describes a pilot study, in which responsive research is emphasized. It discusses how views of participants were incorporated into recommendations for future research using classroom videotaping. The study was based upon Vygotskian (1978) sociocultural theory which emphasized the importance of an integrated perspective of child language and thought. It valued and preserved classroom play, applying the Vygotskian principle that play was an ideal context for studying children because play became the zone of proximal development, i.e., the theoretical region where children would go beyond individual achievements through collaborative assistance.

In this research, children and teachers were considered collaborators in the process of story construction, an important activity for responsive teaching (Stremmel and Fu, 1993; Tharp and Gallimore, 1992). Responsive teaching has been discussed in terms of small group reciprocal conversations developed from the expressed ideas of children (Stremmel, 1991). The pilot study confirmed the importance of responsive research in which the concerns and interests of participants informed design.

Methodology

Procedures

For this study, two small group activity centers were
utilized: the classroom housekeeping center and the focus
group. Perceptions of children, teachers, and the researcher
were obtained through three qualitative techniques: (1)
participant observation (Spradley, 1980); (2) focus group
interviewing (Morgan, 1988); and (3) individual teacher
interviews (Berg, 1990). Kindergartners were videotaped in
the context of classroom dramatic play centers. Then, in a
focus group format, they were allowed to view segments of
their videotaped play and encouraged to reflect upon their
stories. The children's focus group conversations were
videotaped also, as a means of sharing information with their
teachers, who viewed the tapes in a focus group. Together,
teachers and researcher discussed the process of children's
story construction both before and after viewing the
children's play.

Sample Selection

Participants in the pilot study were sixteen
kindergartners and three adults from a private child care
center in Southwest Virginia. This was a convenience sample
selected as a result of networking at a professional
conference where the center director invited me to conduct my
research in her center's five-year-old classroom.

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Responding to Participants

The pilot study was particularly valuable for structuring subsequent dissertation research, a larger study of story construction in six kindergarten classrooms, in response to interest and concerns of participants. Conducted over a three-day period, the pilot study permitted the incorporation of both children's and teachers' views into the planning of optimal strategies and issues of equity in videotaping. From the study, concepts were generated regarding ways to be **responsive** to the spontaneous interest of children related to the researcher and her camera in their classroom. The pre-planned design was altered from the first day due to the camera's potential to distract both researcher and children and due to concerns about equity and confidentiality in classroom videotaping.

Strategies for camera use. Before all was <u>ready</u>, from the researcher view, the children demonstrated eager interest in the camera, and requested that they be allowed to see "how we all look". In response to their request, the plan of taping "unobtrusively" was modified to scan the room with the camera as a way of introducing whole class discussion of the camera and the process of videotaping. Therefore, children had an opportunity for questioning and "hands-on" exploration of the camera before data collection of their play. The pilot children were given a chance to view themselves immediately after the initial taping in an attempt

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to minimize their curiosity during taping of their play center on the following day. For subsequent research the decision was made to demonstrate the camera on the first day and then have two follow-up classroom sessions. The camera would be set up without the children's knowledge of which day the actual taping occurred. After videotaping, the children who played were invited to view and discuss their stories in a follow-up focus group.

Equity issues. All children whose parents gave permission were permitted to be videotaped and to view themselves. Fortunately, in the pilot study all sixteen children had permission to participate, since the project had captured the enthusiastic support of the entire class. As more classes were involved in the subsequent study, it became necessary to plan alternative activities for children who did not have parental permission to participate. All were assured that children would choose to play in the housekeeping center according to their usual classroom routine and that they would not know which day taping would occur. Equal opportunity would be given to all children who had permission to participate, and any child could choose not to participate at any time.

Confidentiality issues. Confidentiality was an important issue in videotaping children. Parents and teachers needed to have written statements of the purpose of the study and to be allowed a time for questioning the procedures. For this study

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the school and its teachers and children were identified only
as a day care center in Southwest Virginia. Audiotapes were
heard only by the researcher. Permission was obtained to show
videotapes to adults who attend educational presentations
about the study as well as for viewing by participants in the
study. Children viewed peers in their own classroom.
Teachers viewed a 10-minute selected segment including story
playing and children's focus group conversations about their
story.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the pilot data, we realized that many
pre-categories were related to various theoretical definitions
of children's play. As with other socially constructed
definitions, their meaning would be open to multiple
interpretations. So, the study focused upon Roskos' (1988)
procedure for isolating pretend episodes in a stream of
children's social pretend play activity as a guide toward
building the researcher's perspective of children's
collaborative story construction. By combining information
from the pre-categories with Roskos' (1988) checklist for
locating pretend play episodes in children's social play,
assumptions about story construction were developed from
resesarcher experiences with children in classroom settings
and from a review of child development literature.

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Following are researcher assumptions about collaborative pretense:

1. Social pretense is collaborative when two or more children communicate shared meaning either through language or actions.

2. Story construction involves understanding of abstract symbols and the substitution or transformation of objects, roles, and sense of time.

3. Story construction in sociodramatic play involves stated or implied themes about which children communicate.

4. Through instructional conversations, children and adults may share mutual understanding regarding the meanings of stories constructed in classroom play.

5. Sociodramatic play is a valuable context in which stories are constructed.

The Children's Scripts

Segments of story scripts were isolated from the center activity. Nine children were videotaped during their housekeeping play and in the follow-up focus group. Their story "Mother Is Very Ill" lasted approximately ten minutes. The collaborative drama was sustained by a variety of players whom the children identified as: Mother, Sisters, The Prince of All Fairies, and The King of All Fairies.

Audio and videotapes were scanned repeatedly, at least three times each, and selected segments were transcribed as the story theme was identified. The typewritten script was read and color coded into categories which reflected child/peer and child/adult transactions. Strauss and Corbin's

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(1990) paradigm was used to build action/interaction categories which were elaborated in the dissertation research to include a model of collaboration which included both assistive and distractive elements.

Summary and Recommendations

The process of children's story construction was explored and described in terms of collaboration among adults and kindergartners in classroom sociodramatic play. Researcher assumptions (see Table 1, page 10) were both confirmed and challenged as children's play was analyzed. Assumptions 2, 3, and 5 were confirmed by the data to suggest that sociodramatic play is indeed symbolic, thematic, and a valuable context for studying children. Assumptions 1 and 4 were challenged by the data, implying that perspectives of children and adults differ and that collaboration included elements of assistive and distractive actions and language. Responsive conversations, such as focus groups, offer opportunities to resolve differing perspectives and to clarify and question meanings among individuals in classroom communities.

Thus, the process of videotaping combined with focus groups is both exciting and challenging. It requires sensitivity to multiple actions and reactions reflecting both power and joy at the opportunity for viewing and reflecting upon oneself.

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In conclusion, recommendations (see Table 2, page 11) were generated from focus group and videotape data which included opinions of all participants, i.e., children, teachers, and researcher. From the pilot study valuable information was elicited which may be used to inform subsequent research for those who wish to videotape classroom play.

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Table 1: RESEARCHER ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT COLLABORATIVE PRETENSE

1. Social pretense is collaborative when two or more children communicate shared meaning either through language or actions.

2. Story construction involves understanding of abstract symbols and the substitution or transformation of objects, roles, and sense of time.

3. Story construction in sociodramatic play involves stated or implied themes about which children communicate.

4. Through instructional conversations, children and adults may share mutual understanding regarding the meanings of stories constructed in classroom play.

5. Sociodramatic play is a valuable context in which stories are constructed.

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Table 2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CLASSROOM VIDEOTAPING

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(1) Initially, it is important to allow
time for children to explore the camera through both
guided exploration and discussion.

(2) For research purposes, however, limited
access to the camera is required after the
initial exploratory experience.

(3) For a view of their play which may be minimally
influenced by the camera, do not allow children to
view themselves until the research is complete.

(4) The camera may never be accepted as an
"ordinary"classroom object, yet its value lies in
its "extraordinarimess". As a multi-sensory tool to
which children respond eagerly, the camera can be an
invaluable asset for extending small group
discussion in play and literacy research.

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