

Children's comprehension of symbolic play

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The aim of this dissertation was to explore whole experiences of young children through symbolic play, because almost previous studies concerning symbolic play had focused on specific functions under certain conditions.

In chapter 1, to address the purpose, following three approaches were suggested. (1) Various situations which children face in daily life do not have to be excluded. (2) To regard another as an intentional agent not only who has a same intention like "me" but also whose intention is different from "me". (3) Experiences of young children through symbolic play have to be considered based on findings of specific functions. Concrete matters for the investigation were also presented.

In chapter 2, eighty-nine children (ages 30-59 months) participated in an experiment and children's reactions to unexpected another's pretense and symbol comprehension were investigated. As a result, both reactions to another's pretense and symbol comprehension changed around 42 months. Based on these findings, how comprehension of another's pretense developed was discussed.

In chapter 3, eighteen young children (ages 29-41 months) participated in an experiment. When a "pretend scenario" was not shared with another, whether young children perform an understood another's pretense or not was investigated. As a result, a certain proportion of children who answered the question concerning symbol comprehension refused to perform another's pretense. This finding was considered in terms of self-other differentiation.

In chapter 4, twenty-one young children (ages 29-40 months) participated in an observational study. It was confirmed that children experienced symbolic play in various situations and episodes were analyzed by the findings of the experimental studies.

Finally, in chapter 5, the results and problems of this dissertation were put in order as general discussions. And implications concerning the education for young children and the education for children with special needs were discussed.