

Development of Imagination through Dramatic Play with Adults

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What skills do children develop when they engage in dramatic play with adults? This study was conducted during 2004 at the play-shop of the *kodomo* project. Play-shop creates one sequential *playworld* (Lindqvist, 1995) in a three-month course. It is usually conducted once a week by graduate and undergraduate students, as well as teachers in a private kindergarten. Play-shop is an implementation of the formative experimental method (Elkonin, 1978) and represents a flexible, process-oriented, program of play activity. The background to the *kodomo* project is twofold. One is the recent need for high quality, after school, kindergarten childcare programs in Japan. The other is related to the socio-historical perspective of play (Vygotsky, 1933; Elkonin, 1960; Leont'ev, 1965). In the socio-historical tradition, play is considered a critically important activity during the preschool period. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the characteristics of play in the in this period, and to clarify the role of play activities as a link between preschool and school years. This study focused on the collaborative story-making processes in dramatization, especially picture-dramatization, which is a story telling activity, or a verbal creation with a series of pictures. The original text for the dramatization was rooted in Ants and the Grasshopper: one of "Aesop's Fables". Children listened to the story without pictures in the first day of the course. Since the second week, every play-shop in the course was composed of four main play activities: story telling the original picture-drama, an actual dramatic play, picture drawing, and post-drawing picture-drama discussion. In the first step of the play-shop, one staff member read the original picture-drama to the children. The pictures were drawn by children who participated in the play-shop in the previous week and the story was written by a staff member who collected the children's ideas during the last play-shop. Secondly, they dramatized their unique Ants and the Grasshopper story. Then, children individually drew pictures of the drama. At the end, a staff member showed the children's pictures, individually, to everyone, and asked them to explain the picture and improvise a story. The picture-drama story of the following week embedded these discourses. There were differences and interconnected relationships among dramatization in play, picture-drawing, and picture-drama discussion. Dramas are a physical and collective activity in a real space. Drawing is also a physical activity, but it is executed individually in a limited space. Post-drawing-picture-drama discussions are an occasion for the child to reconsider his or her own picture from the perspective of making a complete story. Through these activities, children develop the linguistic knowledge to composite events

represented by pictures within a story. It is also a chance to find a new “sense” based on the overall story. They consequentially contribute to children’s development of imagination.

(reference: *kodomo project* in [http://www.hucc.hokudai.ac.jp/~m16005/English version initial page.htm](http://www.hucc.hokudai.ac.jp/~m16005/English%20version%20initial%20page.htm))