

Theoretical and methodological issues based on Play-shop of KODOMO project:  
Current state for research

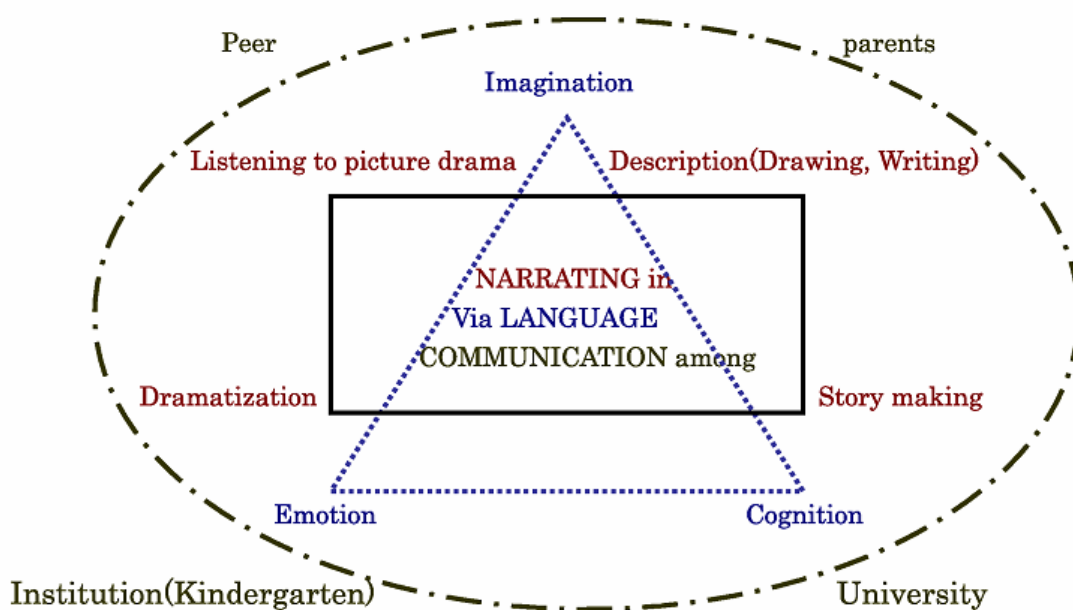
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### 1. What's the play-shop?

Shortly speaking, it is a place for play for participants with an emergent or situated negotiating curriculum. It is held once a week for two hours program in after-preschool program for the KODOMO club members who are volunteering to participate in Play-shop.

Strictly speaking, it is a crossing point among several axes as following conceptual map.

Conceptual Map of Three Dimensions on Psychological, Practical, and Human Resources in Play-shop of KODOMO Project



Notes: Triangle indicates the dimension of psychological relationship among mental functions  
Rectangle indicates the dimension of practical or expressive mode in Play-shop  
Circle indicates the dimension of human resources to participate in play-shop.

There are three dimensions of Play-shop.

Play-shop includes four kinds of participant: Peers (children), Adults (Graduate Students), Adults (Kindergarten's staffs), and Adults (Parents).

Play-shop consists of four activities: listening to the drama picture, dramatization, description, and improvisational story making with depicted pictures. First of all, children listen to the

drama picture created by staffs. It is a main resource for dramatization. Secondly, they dramatize the theme which is included in the drama picture. Thirdly, they draw pictures about it. Most of them write words besides pictures to add comments or stories. Fourthly, they talk their own picture to the other members. The activities are changeable by each course. The activities are mainly related to three psychological dimensions: imagination, cognition, and emotion. Imagination is supported by cognitive function and emotional one together and its development is promoted by language development.

## 2. Current interests for researchers

Graduate staffs have their own interests. One graduate student was interested in the literacy development. She collected any inscriptions from playing activities. One undergraduate was interested in the social relation on one boy. She observed his human relationship with others in play. In the present course, four university staffs including two graduate students and two researchers commits to the play-shop. Azusa Kobayashi focuses on improvisational collective story making process in dramatization with actions. Sachiko Uchida is interested in drawing pictures. She compares drawn pictures and actions in dramatization in referring to any narration in drawing and story telling. Yuki Fujino participates in Play-shop since the second course in 2005 which started from this October. She is interested in the role of adults in playworld. Hiroaki Ishiguro is interested in the imaginative development.

## 3. Research questions

I analyzed in improvisational collaborative story making process of the second course in 2004 and reported it in the ISCAR conference of this year. In the paper, I asked "What skills do children develop when they engage in drama play with adults?" In the second course, there are few interconnections between the drama play and the story making with pictures. I guess they were separate activities at all in the second course in 2004. If children felt something in the performance or dramatization, their feeling was not left over in the narration. It is a narration with pictures itself that the children were attracted in. They might not revive the mind in the dramatization. They did not reconsider the feeling in the dramatization to make it into the area of consciousness. MA referred to "insects", "monster" and "season change." They were in the drama of a fairly Hopper in the day but the plot and the feeling were not embedded in the narration. The lack of the connection with the dramatization is actually as same as the drawn picture itself

In sum, it is concluded that the picture drama narration contributed to the development of linguistic devices and the narrating style such as the formula "once upon a time" but not to the development of the dramatized world. The narrating activity was just as "a language play

with pictures" or "a reporting play. It did not have a close relationship with the development of thinking. It was not a tool to reconsider the experience in the dramatization in the linguistic frame. The motive to narrate in the picture drama making might have a relationship to the audience at the floor but it was not a strong connection to the drama play experience in the past. Consequentially, the narrating in story making could not mediate thinking and imagination.

Vygotsky (1932) pointed out that there are close relation between language development and imaginative one. However, this research indicates that the language development does not automatically train the development of imagination. I think the irrelevant relation between two activities is similar phenomenon to the result of the mediated memory experiment conducted by A. L. Leont'ev (1965), in which the introduction of the picture for memory aid could not foster the recall rate for the children with special needs and the preschool children. The picture might mediate the thinking in the story making at the time but it did not functioned as a stimuli-mean to activate the psychological states in dramatization for the children at the preschool age.

How can the drama play and the narrating in story making for it meet? It is the next inquiry for me.

#### 4. Theoretical background

##### 4.1 Play is the source of development and creates ZPD (Vygotsky, 1933)

Child' behavior is always guided by meaning. It is equal to that child can subordinate to rules in play activity. In play, it is as though he were a head taller than himself. Play is the source of development and creates the zone of proximal development. The child moves forward essentially through play activity. Only in this sense can play be termed a leading activity that determines the child's development."

In play-shop, I would like to know what kind of development can be created in comparison in child's daily activities.

*"a child's behavior is always guided by meaning, that a preschooler's behavior is so arid that he never behaves with candy as he wants to simply because he thinks he should behave otherwise? This kind of subordination to rules is quite impossible in life, but in play it does become possible; thus, play also creates the zone of proximal development of the child. In play a child is always above his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form; in play it is as though the child were trying to jump above the level of his normal behavior.*

*The play-development relationship can be compared with the instruction-development relationship, but play provides a background for changes in needs and in consciousness of a much wider nature. Play is the source of development and creates the zone of proximal development. Action in the imaginative sphere, in an imaginary situation, the creation of voluntary intentions and the formation of real-life plans and volitional motives – all appear in play and make it the highest level of preschool development.*

*The child moves forward essentially through play activity. Only in this sense can play be termed a leading activity that determines the child's development.*

*(Play and its role in the Mental Development of the Child by Lev Vygotsky, First Published: 1933; Source: Voprosy psikhologii, 1966, No. 6; Translated: Catherine Mulholland; Transcription/Markup: Nate Schmolze; Online Version: Psychology and Marxism Internet Archive (marxists.org) 2002.)*

#### 4.2. The development of imagination is essentially connected to one of children's language

*“The development of imagination is essentially connected to children's language and their psychological and communicative mode in which children interact with surrounding people.  
“ (Vygotsky, 1932)*

4.3 imaginative activities are not random but purposeful one. If a fancy arises in the purpose activity, to fostering the imagination is not leaving it, but setting the resources to make the new problem which changes reality and to cause the purpose activity for transforming it in play.

*“the imaginative activity has the activity, which has a direction in the meaning that we are fully aware of the purpose and the motive to pursue the imagination activity. It is not unconscious activity. It is turned to a certain specific purpose; the action plan of the child to affect the future “etc.  
The law of reality in fantasy activity: it is based on observing facts.*

4.4 The emotion is strongly connected to the imagination.

4.5 The emotional leap from emotion to cognition can happen through the dialogue is the essential idea of Vygotsky. (Sacks, 1989)

In play-shop, we try to foster the imaginative development through the four kinds of activity. In listening to the picture book in the first phase, the children are invited to the fantasy world. But they are still in the real world as audience. Then they transform themselves into the

member in the fantasy world through dramatization. They reflect it via drawing pictures in talking with other participants including adults in the third phase. They talk about their own picture for all in the fourth phase. It is important that there is rich dialogue among participants including adults who has experienced a same playworld. Emotional leap might be happened in collective manner through the rich interaction.

##### 5. Focused point: comparison study on children's narration among activities

Narrations are focuses for analysis. Play-shop consists of four activities; listening to the drama picture, dramatization, describing, and story telling, that is, improvisational story making. In each activity, children talk about the theme. They develop the theme through four activities. In other words, they add special senses into the theme in four activities. I would like to follow the transition.

Let compare the narration in each activity. In the listening to the picture drama, children often tell their words to the story. They are audience to the drama in this point. They react to the story in the picture drama from their own perspective. They talk anything from "I" in the real world. It is called as the first person narration in the real world. In dramatization, they are actors. They talk anything from the role in the fantasy world. They talk as "I" of the role in the story. I call it as "the first person narration in the playworld". After dramatization, they draw pictures in talking with peers and adults. Children explain their pictures to the partners who were accompanied by them in the playworld. It should be called "the second person narration" because it is a conversation between "I and You" to share the playworld. "I and You" share "extra verbal context" (Volosinov, 1973).

*"This extraverbal context of the utterance is comprised of three factors: (1) the common spatial purview o the interlocuters (the unity of the visible –in this case(to understand the word "Tak" in the situation(I added for the complement), the room, the window, and so on), (2) the interlocuter's common knowledge and understanding of the situation, and (3)their common evaluation of that situation. (Volosinov, 1973, pp. 99)*

Fourthly, they report their own story with their own picture. In the second course in 2004, they made story collectively. An adult staff put their pictures up to the all of children successively and they commented anything. The adult staff connected each comment to make a coherent story then. However, we do not adopt this collective method in this course. They talk their own picture to the other participants who experienced in a same playworld and parents who do not participate in it. I call the narration as "the third person narration" because the

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audience does not share the extraverbal context.

We can follow the transitional process in the theme for each child through the comparison among the four kinds of narration: the first person narration in the real world, the first person narration in the playworld, the second person narration, and the third person narration. The narrations are interconnected in each activity. The four kinds of narration will be resources to foster their literacy and imaginative development.

Appendix

Fig.1: The first phase: Listening to the original picture drama



Fig.2: They go to the fantasy world from the real world via the flight of a magic carpet.  
(Transitive phase from the real world to the fantasy one via a magic carpet as an transitive artifact.)



Fig.3: In the second phase, adult participants invites children to the fantasy world their dramatization at first.



Fig.4: Children participate in the fantasy world.

UCSD conference on Play in Nov. 4 - 10

Fig. 5: In the third phase, children draw pictures with adult participants.



Fig.6: in the fourth phase, they talk about their pictures.



Fig.7: one child talked her picture in the front in the fourth phase.

