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Stivaros, H., Tobbell, Jane and Hardman, M.

‘If you don’t understand this don’t worry, for the rest of you I will go on’: Deconstructing children’s opportunity to participate in the classroom community of practice

Original Citation

Stivaros, H., Tobbell, Jane and Hardman, M. (2005) ‘If you don’t understand this don’t worry, for the rest of you I will go on’: Deconstructing children’s opportunity to participate in the classroom community of practice. In: Developmental Psychology Section Annual Conference., 2-5 September 2004, Leeds Metropolitan University.

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Singing with infants: Balancing control with collaboration

A. STREET University of Roehampton.

This paper presents the second of a two-part study exploring mothers’ attitudes towards singing to their infants in daily caring routines. The first part was a survey of 104 mothers’ attitudes to singing. This second part is a qualitative study of video-recordings of mothers’ interactions with infants between four and 10 months old. Recordings were made in naturalistic settings (at home or in an equivalent convenient venue) of 10 mother-infant pairs, followed by immediate playback and recall, to obtain mothers’ comments on their infants’ responses and their own feelings. These comments are reported and transcribed. The video recordings were classified into six types of singing activity: 1) what the baby is seen to do; 2) what the adult is seen to do; 3) what the baby is seen to say; 4) what the adult is seen to say; 5) what the baby is seen to think; 6) what the adult is seen to think.

Agency: Measuring self-hood in toddlers’ social actions

L. VITTOIRINI & A. CHADDOCK, University of Durham.

This paper presents a new measure of self-hood in two-year-olds - interagency - that quantifies the ability of a child to act effectively upon the self's goals and desires. Using social play and interpersonal conflict as arenas of analysis, individual differences in interagency among toddlers are described and exemplified. The differences are significant, with two years of age vary quite widely in their ability or willingness to affect the social environment, that this variation is consistent across a range of interactional contexts, and that it is predicted by security of attachment such that securely attached children are more agentic than their insecure peers. Interactions in the self's goal development have been observed in two settings: one, a child’s self-regulation through body states and on their own needs to communicate, streetela@ aol.com

Drawing to differentiate: The effects of colour

F. SPENSLEY, S. McGINLEY & C. MORGENSTERN, Oxford University.

Sitton and Light’s (1992) drawing differentiation tasks (draw a man, woman, boy & girl) were presented to 30 four- to six-year-old children, to complete either with a black pen or with 10 coloured pens (repeated measures). Differentiation by height was found in the black pen condition, comparable to Sitton and Light’s findings, but not in the coloured pen condition where the additional cognitive load also lead to a decrement in the number of features produced. In contrast, copying differing dolls between subjects, 60 four- to six-year-old children) found that coloured pens facilitated copying performance. Children produced greater differentiation by salient features (e.g. hair), and differentiated by height with coloured pens, but not in the black pen condition. In this case the colours seemed to relieve the problem of translation into monochrome, by providing a direct representational translation that was simpler than shade. fiona.spensley@psy.ox.ac.uk

If you don’t understand this don’t worry, for the rest of you I will go on:

Deconstructing children’s opportunity to participate in the classroom community of practice

H. STIVAROS, J. TOBBELL & M. HARDMAN, Leeds Metropolitan University.

Learning is a fundamental concern within Western societies as demonstrated through the development of schooling systems and National Curriculums, both of which strive to charge of and advance children’s learning. Current Government ideologies and classroom practices implicitly assume a sociocentre learning processes and unproblematic individual competence despite acknowledgement by psychologists of the constructive and interactive nature of children’s learning. According to the Community of Practice formulation, learning is characterized as participation in the practices of the environment. Drawing on the ethnographic research of one of the authors, who explores the quotidian learning experiences of year six children, this paper illustrates the role of teacher as gatekeeper to pupil’s learning. It is argued that teachers’ classroom practices serve to dictate pupils’ opportunities for learning. This is a powerful supposition and in terms of children’s educational development, suggests teachers and schools need to access to participation levels of information. hstiv@ yahoo.com

Reconceptualising learning: Legitimate participation in communities of practice, explaining transition from primary to secondary school

J. TOBBELLI, Leeds Metropolitan University.

The structural and pedagogical differences between primary and secondary school have been identified as one of the reasons for the difficult process of transition. However, to date these differences have been largely conceptualized (e.g. original ORACLE project and the follow-up 20 years on) and subsequent assumptions made about why they prevent difficulties. In this paper I will discuss a six-month research project which followed 55 children from primary to their first year in secondary school. The outcomes demonstrated that primary and secondary schools constitute two cultures so different that notions of smooth transitions are rendered an impossible dream. I will use the learning as participation literature to demonstrate how the learning and performance are embedded in the wider practices of the schools so that, in order to succeed, children need to reevaluate and forget primary practices and involve themselves in a set of new procedures, which a significant proportion of children struggle to carry out because of the shift in emotional and motivational factors pursuant to the transition. I will use the data to challenge traditional notions of learning and to suggest how intermediary practices can address transition problems. j.e.tobbelli@ledsmet.ac.uk

A connectionist approach to teaching rhythm notation to three- to four-year-old pre-school children

Y. TOMMIS & D.M.A. FAZEY, University of Bangor.

In many countries, including Britain and the USA, rhythm notation is traditionally taught utilising the mathematical concept of note values (for example, one semibreve equals four crotchets). The purpose of this study was to investigate whether it was possible for very young children to learn from conventional rhythm notation without being taught such rules. Here the children were simply exposed to rhythmic phrases along with their correct performance. Subsequently they were able to accurately perform previously unseen phrases comprised of the learned note values (semibreves, minimis, crotchets and quavers). The children (n=10) received a pre-test, 2010 minutes of instruction followed by post-test. Pre- to post-test gains were significant (p<0.001). Scores on a re-test administered seven weeks later were not significantly different from post-test scores (p=0.45). ynonnull@ bangor.ac.uk

Academic achievement and social functioning of children with and without learning difficulties

A. WALKER, University of Leeds & D. NABUZOKA, Sheffield Hallam University.

A academic achievement and social functioning of children with learning difficulties (LD), and high achieving (HA) children was examined. The children were seven- to 12-years-old (n=75), including 30 children with LD (all without ID were assigned to the LD or HA category on the basis of attainment scores on exams for Mathematics and English. Sociometric and behaviour scores were collected for each child. Findings indicated positive correlations between academic attainment and positive social behaviours; and negative correlation between academic attainment and negative social behaviours. Behavioural attributes accounted for greater variance in social preference than in academic achievement. HA children scored higher on social preference and positive behaviours than LA and ID children. Only help-seeking behaviour discriminated between LA and ID groups – children with LD scoring significantly higher. These findings indicate a relationship between social adjustment and academic achievement, and that intervention strategies need to target social relationship difficulties in LA children as well as children with LD. A.Walker@ leeds.ac.uk

‘He takes after his father’: Children’s reasoning about parent-offspring and sibling resemblance


This paper is part of a three-year longitudinal project funded by the Wellcome Trust examining the development of children’s intuitive inheritance concepts. It reports cross-sectional comparisons on a matched-rats task. Children (four and four cohorts n=8, 7, 10 and 14 years; n=180) were interviewed individually using a forced-choice procedure about the resemblance of a biological child’s inheritance of three different feature types (physical characteristics, personality traits and disabilities). They were presented with one of the biological mother and father exhibiting variation in the feature at issue. Children were asked to select the most likely offspring out of four alternatives; same feature as the mother, same feature as the father, combined features of mother and father, neither parental feature. Children then make judgements about the older child. By both judgements the child was required to provide an explanation of inheritance. The results showed significant age and feature differences in children’s belief regarding the inheritance of characteristics. Although younger children have a general understanding of parent offspring resemblance, overall the results indicate that older children develop more complex conceptions of inheritance which include a recognition of multiple sources of inheritance, awareness of genes and genetic uncertainty. Joanne Williams@ education.ed.ac.uk

Emotion recognition by children with Down’s syndrome: Effects of varying emot on label and expression intensity


Socio cognitive ability is often thought to be a relative strength amongst those with Down’s syndrome (DS). However, recent work suggests that some children with DS may experience difficulties with certain aspects of social cognition, including recognition of specific facial expressions of emotion. The study was to report used a photo matching task to further explore emotion recognition ability amongst children with DS (n=28), and compared DS performance with that of children with non-specific intellectual disabilities (n=25) and typically developing children (n=28) matched on cognitive scores. All children were aged eight and four conditions (regular or exaggerated emotions, emotion labelling vs generic task instructions) were used in an attempt to the extent to which emotion recognition task difficulties in DS relate to perceptual aspects of facial expression or to