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Teacher's Interaction Styles during Sociodramatic Play that Promote Reading and Writing among Preschoolers

Excelsa C. Tongson
University of the Phlippines Diliman

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to help understand a teacher's facilitation of reading and writing during sociodramatic play among Filipino preschoolers. It describes how Filipino preschool teachers demonstrate redirecting and extending style interactions as they participate during sociodramatic play. It also identifies the ways by which the teacher provided print-rich environments in the dramatic play area to promote early reading and writing among Filipino children with ages ranging from four years old to five years old and 11 months. Five female teachers from four schools in Quezon City that adopt the play curriculum based on a set of criteria were studied. Each teacher was interviewed regarding play, her role, and how she prepares the dramatic play area. She was observed for 10 consecutive school days. The teachers' interaction styles were classified as either extending or redirecting. Four of the five teachers demonstrated at varying degrees both extending and redirecting styles as they participated in the children's sociodramatic play. The interaction style of the teacher revealed her ability to perform within the context of the play and the ways she assisted children in performing reading and writing activities. The considerable increase in the frequency of children's literacy activities during sociodramatic play could be attributed to the combination of extending style interaction and the integration of literacy materials in the dramatic play area.

Keywords: Sociodramatic play, teacher's interaction style, reading and writing

Early childhood care and development (ECCD) experts worldwide stress the value of play as a vehicle for and an indicator of development among young children. Defining play has challenged researchers (Pellegrini, Dupuis, & Smith, 2007; Pramling, Samuelsson, & Carlsson, 2008; Wallerstedt & Pramling, 2012). Researchers generally agree that play possesses eight features, namely: "is pleasurable and enjoyable, has no extrinsic goals, is spontaneous, involves active engagement, is generally engrossing, often has a private reality, is nonliteral and

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contains a certain element of make-believe" (Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2008, p. 2). Rubin, Fein, and Vanderberg (1983) identified five essential characteristics for an activity to be considered play, as follows: intrinsically motivated, freely chosen by the children, pleasurable, non-literal, and engaged in by the player.

One form of play a child begins to engage in starting at around 15 months of age is pretend play. It is also known as dramatic play, where children enact and perform dramatizations of real-life situations such as pretending to put a doll to bed or drive a car (Smith & Pellegrini, 2008). During preschool years, children carry out increasingly intricate dramatic themes in the form of sociodramatic play. Dramatic play becomes sociodramatic play when a group of children create and act out character roles and deliver lines similar to those in reality such as those between a patient and a nurse during doctor play or a customer and waiter during a restaurant play (Keiff & Casbergue, 2000; Smith & Pellegrini, 2008).

Like play, literacy development has also attracted much attention from ECCD researchers and practitioners. It is not difficult to understand society's desire for children to learn how to read and write. As Otto (2008) puts it, literacy development is both "an academic goal" and "a lifelong necessity" (p. 2).

During the preschool years, children become more aware of the written language as they observe adults making use of it in daily life. As children continue to interact with the literate world, they soon attempt to demonstrate their knowledge of the written language through drawing, scribbling, and making letter-like symbols, which is called invented spelling. Otto (2008) cites four types of invented spelling: prephonemic, early phonemic, letter name, and phonetic or transitional. In prephonemic spelling, children may use random letters but the letters do not represent the exact words. In early phonemic spelling, children use only some letters to represent the sounds in a word such as "SW" for Snow White. In letter-name spelling, children attempt to represent some sound by using the corresponding letters in a word such as "LADE" for lady. Phonetic or transitional spelling signifies that children can already represent several phonemes in a word such as "spas" for space.

In the past two decades, a plethora of research has established the link between sociodramatic play and literacy development (Klenk, 2001; Korat, Bahar, & Snapir, 2002-2003; Morrow, 1990; Neuman & Roskos, 1997; Roskos & Christie, 2001; Rowe & Neitzel, 2010). Roskos and Christie (2001) made a critical review of 20 studies, including their own research on the connections of play and literacy – that is, how play provides a setting that promotes literacy skills and strategies, serves

as a language experience that can build connections between oral and written modes of expression, and provides opportunities to teach and learn literacy. In a related study, Rowe and Neitzel (2010) explored how cultural orientation and personal interests of two- and three-year-old children influence their preferred types of writing activities in the classroom during play. Findings revealed that children's writing activities during play are related to conceptual, creative, and social orientation and personal interests. They observed that the children demonstrated literate behaviors while engaging in sociodramatic play.

Vygotsky (1978) provided a basis for research on the link of dramatic play and literacy development. According to him, children can give another meaning to an object. For example, they transform a stick into a horse by putting the stick between their legs and demonstrating behavior associated with horseback riding. He notes that children's dramatic play "can be understood as a very complex system of speech through gestures that communicate and indicate the meaning of play things" (p. 108). In this way, a child's symbolic representations of things during a dramatic play serve as a vehicle for written language development.

Vygostky also viewed dramatic play as an important social activity when a child participates in cooperative dialogues with more experienced partners and makes connections on what these partners say to him or her with what he or she says to himself or herself. He introduced the concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD), which offers theoretical support for the teacher's role in providing scaffolds to extend children's skills to higher levels of ability. Researchers of ZPD use the term "scaffolding" to identify the most vital element of teaching (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Scaffolding refers to the changing quality of support given to the child, allowing him or her to act on the problem with the help of a competent adult, taking into consideration the child's developmental level. More support is given when the task is new; less is offered as the child's competence increases. Newson and Newson (as cited by Berk & Winsler, 1995) introduced a feature related to scaffolding, called intersubjectivity. This refers to the process wherein two persons of different views discuss a problem to arrive at a common solution by means of communicating effectively during a joint activity. Intersubjectivity creates a common ground for communication as each participant adjusts to the perspective of the other. A teacher promotes intersubjectivity when he or she translates his or her own insights in ways that are within the child's grasp (Berk & Winsler, 1995).

According to Tamburrini (1986), the ZPD concept provides a coding scheme in analyzing the teacher's interaction style, whether extending or redirecting. Extending style interaction completely recognizes the value of play and sensitively takes the

view of the child by tailoring the assistance to the child's intention in solving the problem at hand. In contrast, redirecting style interaction disregards what the child is currently doing and directs his or her play into something the teacher has selected.

In their anecdotal analysis of sociodramatic play of 5.5- to 6.5-year-old children from a middle-class neighborhood in Tel-Aviv, Korat, Bahar, and Snapir (2002-2003) highlighted the importance of the teacher's presence and sensitivity to children's play interests and needs. By posing challenges, asking questions, and guiding children in solving problems related to reading and writing during sociodramatic play, the teacher scaffolds the children's learning. However, Korat, Bahar, and Snapir (2002-2003) point to the need to find out how teacher's participation during play supports children's literacy development and to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the teacher's participation during sociodramatic play.

Despite ample literature on the links between sociodramatic play and literacy development, only a handful of preschools and daycare centers in the Philippines integrate play in the curriculum. Paper and pen activities such as quizzes, worksheets, and workbooks continue to dominate the daily classroom activities. Conversely, little investigation has been done in the Philippines on the roles of teachers in sociodramatic play and their relationship to literacy behaviors of children.

A study of daycare centers in the National Capital Region and Cavite revealed that only 10 of 48 daycare teachers who participated in the study included play and games in their daily classroom activities (Abulon, 2013). A great majority of these daycare teachers put a high premium on academic-oriented subjects such as reading, counting, and writing; they conducted classes similar to formal schooling. Moreover, UNESCO in 2006 reported that the Department of Education's kindergarten curriculum is "more explicitly focused on supporting 'school readiness' and promotes the use of compiled worksheets, manipulative play materials as well as teacher-made resources" (p. 8). These practices are products of the thinking that play is an activity separate from academics.

For centuries, Filipinos have had an educational system whose aim is the internalization of values and knowledge of culture through teaching strategies in the form of drills, memorization, and rote learning. Estolla and Nuñez (1974) relate that preschool education in the country dates back to as early as the Spanish period, which emphasized memorization of prayers for the purpose of spreading the Catholic faith. At that time, two popular textbooks were used: the *Cartilla*, which contained the letters of the alphabet and common Catholic prayers, and *Pagina de la Infrancia*,

which contained religious teachings. The more educated adults in the community taught the Cartilla to children of well-to-do families (the *illustrados*) for about three to six months in a rigid fashion. Training in the Cartilla would eventually lead to the children's enrollment in Grade I. This method of teaching three- to six-year-old children, which also covered beginning reading or simple arithmetic, became popular for many decades.

According to Pangan (1972), in 1900 the Americans replaced the class programs dominated by prayers and moral teachings with "reading charts and attractive, seatwork exercises" (p. 12). They also introduced music and physical education in the elementary curriculum, initially in the lower section of the first grade; this became the basis of kindergarten education in the Philippines. However, memorization and drills still dominated the class sessions, with the teacher viewed as the only source of knowledge. Estollas and Nuñez (1974) note that the Cartilla method of teaching continued to be practiced in some rural areas up to the 1970s.

In the 1940s, the National Federation of Women's Clubs in Manila pioneered the "playroom idea" or the nursery school; later in 1960, the concept of play-based curriculum was introduced in the country through the initiatives of the Mental Health Department's Preschool Center (Estollas & Nuñez, 1974).

With the passing of the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Act of 2000 (Republic Act 8990) and the Kindergarten Education Act of 2011 (Republic Act 10157), ECCD practitioners now have the mandate to develop teaching strategies and learning materials as well as establish various avenues and innovate programs for children under five years old.

This paper, which focuses on teachers' interaction style during sociodramatic play, could provide useful insights on how such interactions can promote reading and writing among Filipino young children. It is part of a bigger research that sought to describe Filipino teachers' interaction styles with preschool children, 4-5 years of age, as they participate in sociodramatic play and to identify the ways teachers prepare the environment in the dramatic play area to promote reading and writing.

METHODS

Sampling

Five preschool teachers from four preschool centers in Quezon City were selected using criterion sampling. According to Patton (1990), this type of purposive sampling

"exhibit[s] certain predetermined criterion characteristics [that] are routinely identified for in-depth, qualitative analysis" (p. 177). The criteria used were education and training in early childhood education, teaching experience of at least three years in a school that adopts the play curriculum, and currently teaching four- to five-year-old children. To protect the identities of the participants as well as the children in their classes, the study adopted fictitious names for them.

The five teacher-participants received education and training in early childhood education; they used play to teach the various subject areas in the classroom (Table 1). Teachers Lorie and May have a graduate and bachelor's degree in child development, respectively. Teacher Irene had obtained 18 units of graduate study in early childhood education. Teacher Claudine had received extensive training in early childhood education provided by the school where she formerly worked. Teacher Grace has a graduate degree in psychology and majored in child and family development. Among the five teachers, only Teachers Claudine and Grace had attended seminars on play and literacy in the last three years.

The participants were considered experienced teachers, having 4-14 years of teaching experience in preschools whose philosophy promotes active exploration – that is, children are free to select their activities from a combination of spontaneous and guided play (Table 2). Teacher Lorie has 14 years of experience; Teacher Irene, 10 years; Teacher Grace, 6 years; and Teachers May and Claudine, 4 years each.

Table 1. Profile of the teacher-participants

Number	Name of teacher	Age	Educational background	Number of years of teaching in preschool
1	Lorie	38	Graduate degree in child development	14
2	May	26	Bachelor's degree in child development	4
3	Irene	36	Bachelor's degree in mass communication, with 18 units toward MS in early childhood education	10
4	Claudine	26	College graduate, with extensive training in early childhood education	4
5	Grace	31	Graduate degree in psychology, major in child and family development	6

Table 2. Size of classes handled by the teacher-participants

Name of teacher	Number of children		Total
	Male	Female	
Teacher Lorie	12	5	17
Teacher May	9	10	19
Teacher Irene	10	4	14
Teacher Claudine	15	2	17
Teacher Grace	3	4	7
Total	49	25	74

Five to six children in each class were observed to be participating during sociodramatic play in each day of observation. Both male and female children participated, except in Teacher Claudine's class, which has only two female children. Children were allowed to assume a role of their choice during sociodramatic play such as cook, waiter, cashier, seller, mother, father, pilot, and passenger. They were free to join and leave the play to engage in activities in the other learning areas in the classroom.

Written permissions, countersigned by the administrator of each school, were sought from the parents of the children in classes that were observed. The parents were assured that the videos taken of their children would be used exclusively for the purpose of this study. All parents gave their permission.

Locale of the Study

Quezon City is the biggest city in terms of population among the highly urbanized cities (HUC) in the country (NSCB, 2008), making it one of the most diverse areas in terms of socioeconomic groupings and cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In school year 2009-2010, the city had the largest school-age population in the country, comprising 1.88 million students from preschool to tertiary education, which represented 4.3 percent of the country's total enrolled population. The preschool-age population (3-5 years old) totaled 269,610 children in 2010 (www.quezoncity.gov.ph). Hence, Quezon City is a fertile ground for exploring how sociodramatic play could promote reading and writing among preschool children.

Only preschool centers in Quezon City whose philosophy supports children's active exploration to select their activities from a combination of spontaneous and guided play were chosen as sites of this study. These schools highly value play and use it as a curricular tool for teaching various subject areas.

Potential preschool centers and teachers for this study were initially identified through information obtained from friends and colleagues. An ocular inspection of 12 referred schools and a preliminary interview with the school administrators were done. A school was dropped or retained from the list based on the results. While seven schools qualified and agreed to participate in this study, only four of them had teachers who met the selection criteria.

The area in the classroom where sociodramatic plays are done was used to conduct the observation during free play or choice time on regular class hours. Five classrooms used the term "free play" or "choice time" to refer to a transition period from home to school. During this time, the children can choose their own activities in the classroom. The other two classrooms called the dramatic play area as housekeeping area.

Instruments

Two instruments were developed and used in the study. Three ECCD experts validated them. Both instruments were revised based on the comments of the experts and the pretest results.

Interview guide. The interview guide was divided into four parts; it comprised 21 open-ended questions, which included those on the demographic characteristics of the teacher, her view of children and play, role as a teacher, and how she creates reading and writing opportunities during sociodramatic play as well as the materials found in the dramatic play area. The interview guide was pretested on two preschool teachers who were not included in this study. Based on the pretest results, the guide was revised to improve the sequencing and phrasing of some questions.

Observation guide. The observation guide contained 20 observation points regarding the teacher's participation and ways in which she creates reading and writing opportunities during sociodramatic play. It was pretested in a preschool class that was not included in this study. Based on the pretest results, a two-day orientation of the preschool children was included in the research activities. The orientation time served as an opportunity also for the children to get used to the presence of a video camera in the dramatic play area before the actual data collection. Likewise, an item was included in the observation guide to record the kind of materials found in the dramatic play area as well as roles that the teacher assumed during sociodramatic play.

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview was conducted to gather each teacher's views on children, play, her role, and how she provides opportunities for reading and writing during sociodramatic play. Nonparticipant observation was used to record specific occurrences related to the teacher's interaction styles, as well as reading and writing behaviors of children during sociodramatic play. No materials or toys, teaching strategies, nor training was provided prior to the observation. Likewise, the dramatic play area was not modified. The researcher did not interfere in any way while the teacher interacted with the children during sociodramatic play. The children and the teacher entered and left the dramatic play area as they pleased.

A calendar of activities that included the schedule of interviews with the participants, the children's orientation, and the observation period was organized in collaboration with the school administrators and the teachers. The observation schedule was adjusted according to the availability of the teacher and her class. Observations were suspended when the school had field trips, holidays, and other activities where regular classes were not held.

The teacher was contacted initially by means of a letter that requested a meeting to discuss the objectives of the study and her involvement throughout the observation period. The teacher was interviewed one week before the observation period to gather information on her demographic characteristics and views of play, reading and writing. The interview was audio recorded with her permission.

The children were given a two-day orientation before the observation period in order for them to get used to the presence of the researcher and video camera in the dramatic play area. On the first day of orientation, the teacher introduced the researcher to the children and showed the video camera mounted on a tripod. The researcher talked with the children about the purpose of her presence, the frequency and the duration of her stay in the classroom, and the reason for the video camera. The children looked and touched the video camera and made faces in front of it. After sometime, they no longer minded the researcher and just went on with their play.

During the children's free play or choice time, the researcher recorded (video and audio) the teacher for 10 consecutive regular school days as she participated in the children's sociodramatic play in the dramatic play area. A total of 12 days – 2 days for the orientation and 10 days for observation – were spent in each classroom.

Processing and Analysis

The study applied hermeneutic analysis (Addison, 1992; Patterson & Williams, 2002), which permitted the researcher to take into account the teachers' views of children, play, and her role; how they interacted with the children during sociodramatic play; and how such play is used to create opportunities for reading and writing. This allowed for concurrent coding and analysis while the data were being gathered. Data analysis commenced during the data collection process and continued until the last interview and the last observation. The analysis of the observations and interviews reflected the views of the researcher (Patterson & Williams, 2002) about children, play, and how the teachers use sociodramatic play for reading and writing.

Data came from the interviews with the teachers, video recording of sociodramatic play episodes, the children's written productions, and the researcher's field notes. At the end of each observation day, the audio and video recordings were transcribed and compared with the field notes to check for consistency. The field notes also served as back up of the video recording in case of unexpected technical problems and inaudible dialogue due to background noise. Moreover, they documented episodes that could not be captured by the video camera. The written productions of the children provided tangible outputs to document further reading and writing during sociodramatic play.

Interview transcripts were examined also to identify meaningful statements related to the research topic. Statements common among the participants were considered meaningful. The use of multiple methods of data collection or triangulation was done to provide a deeper understanding of the topic under study.

Data generated from the observations were grouped into data sets for analysis. The episodes were classified into play and nonplay activities. Play activities should meet the five essential characteristics of play: intrinsically motivated, freely chosen by the children, pleasurable, nonliteral, and activity engaged in by the player (Rubin et al., 1983). Activities that do not possess these characteristics were categorized as nonplay. Examples of nonplay activities include forcing a child to manipulate the toys or materials prepared by the teacher and assigning a child to assume a role in sociodramatic play by the teacher, with the children not showing interest or enjoyment in the activity.

The teaching episodes related to reading and writing during sociodramatic play were categorized within the vicinity of two interaction styles: extending and

redirecting (Tamburrini, 1986). Extending style interaction refers to the ability of the teacher to support children's current interest and extend it into reading and writing activities within the context of their sociodramatic play. On the other hand, redirecting style interaction ignores children's current interest as manifested in their sociodramatic play and instead directs their activities into the teacher's liking such as forcing the child to read and write and suggesting that children play a sociodramatic theme of the teacher's choice. The analysis excluded nonplay and teaching-learning episodes not related to reading and writing. An expert was consulted regarding the categories of activities for validation.

The results were developed into individual cases that presented how each teacher demonstrated extending and redirecting style interactions with the children during their sociodramatic play and the ways in which she provided materials in the dramatic play area that encouraged reading and writing.

VIEWS ON CHILD AND PLAY

The interviews with the five teachers revealed that they share the same views of children. All of them articulated that each child is unique and has a different learning style from other children, and that children are naturally curious and playful. Teacher Lorie and Teacher Grace believed that children are influenced by their environment. Teacher Irene and Teacher Grace saw children as creations of God. Teacher Claudine and Teacher Irene said that children possess different intelligences. All of them mentioned the importance of giving a child enough time to develop the different domains of development — cognitive, social, emotional, and physical.

> "Children have [their] own biological clock, therefore, their pacing is totally different from one another. Their skills and abilities, although they [may be] of the same age, are totally different from [one another]. This captures the uniqueness of each child. The child is also affected by the environment, especially the family and also the neighborhood. These affect the relationships, how the child relates and sees the world. So you will see the way he interacts with peers, with adults." - Teacher Lorie

> "*Para sa akin*, *ang bata ay* playful, curious.'*Yon ang natural nilang pag-uugali at saka* behavior. Ready *din silang matuto kasi kahit anong ipakita mo sa kanila i-a-*absorb *agad nila... madali silang maka-grasp...*"

> (For me, a child is innately playful and curious. They are ready to learn; whatever you show them, they will absorb it easily. They can grasp concepts easily.) – Teacher May

> "...Creation of God. Therefore, a child is very, very special, unique... a child has his own individual pattern and timing of growth...*kasi iba't ibang stages ang kanilang* development in all areas... *kaya titingnan mo ang mga bata, hindi lahat pare-pareho...iba ang* family background*, iba 'yung* personality. A child develops in his own way... *may kani-kaniyang* learning styles ... can be logic smart... others can be word smart, body smart... *hindi mo pwedeng sabihin na s'ya lang ang matalino. Lahat matalino*."
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> (Creation of God. Therefore, a child is very, very special, unique...a child has his own individual pattern and time of growth... They have different stages of development in all the areas...you will see that not all children are the same...different family background...different personalities...They have their own style of learning...can be logic smart...others can be word smart, body smart. You cannot say that only one child is intelligent because all children are intelligent.) - Teacher Irene
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> "For me, a child is very special...children have their own special intelligences, multiple intelligence that we need to nurture, to look out for...they are naturally curious and active. They enjoy exploring, discovering, and observing a lot of things, and playing... Some are body smart and some are word smart. These intelligences need to be respected and nurtured." - Teacher Claudine
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> "I see [children] when they enter the classroom for the first time as bundles of potentials...meaning, they carry with them experiences, skills, and knowledge to be enriched inside the classroom...socio-emotional, physical, cognitive, and spiritual aspect..." - Teacher Grace

When asked about their views of play, all five teachers said that play is natural to children and an important activity in childhood. They explained that children in different age groups perform different types of play.

> "... Play is something that they do. It is something that you don't [have to] ask them [to do]...you really don't need to encourage them to play. They'll do it on their own. It is something natural for them." - Teacher Lorie
>
> "...*Lahat ng bata, dumadaan sa* play. *Iba't iba nga lang ang* level *kaya kahit 'yung pinakamaliit na bata, kung mapapansin natin nagmu-*move *na iyong* body parts, *para sa kanya* play *na iyon*. Some children*, makakita lang sila ng isang* object *tapos kinakausap nila, para sa kanila* play *na iyon*..."
>
> (All children experience playing. Play has different levels. If you noticed for some children, moving their bodies is already a form of play. Some children, you will see that they are playing simply by talking to an object.) – Teacher May

> "... It is the constant activity of a child ...That is their favorite thing to do. There is observation..., repetition, exploration... They are not wasting their time when they are playing because they are learning...play can be child-directed or teacher-directed." - Teacher Irene

> "Play is very important for children... very important aspect of child development. It is inherent in children... you cannot take it away from them... children are engrossed in play..." - Teacher Claudine

The five teachers mentioned that play is both a developmental indicator and an educational tool. Teacher Irene explained that children learn more effectively through play because when they are playing, the whole body is involved. Teacher Lorie added that play reaches out to the different domains of development. For Teachers Claudine and Grace, play is the main vehicle for children's learning.

> "...*Para sa akin*, children learn most effectively through play...When they play, *maraming nangyayari* ... it is the best vehicle for learning... Open *silang matuto kapag 'yon ang ginagawa nila. Doon mo makikita kung ano siya*. Logic smart *ba siya,* physical, cognitive? ... *'Pag naglalaro, lahat sila gumagana*."

> (For me, children learn most effectively through play...When they play, many things happen... Play is the best vehicle for learning... Children are open to learning when they are playing. You will see what interests the child and what he can do: logic smart, physical, cognitive... When children are playing, all domains of development are tapped.) – Teacher Irene

> "*Ang* play *para sa isang teacher ay isang tool para matuto ang mga bata* ... to extend play to learning skills... *katulad ng* cooking *na akala natin ay hindi importante, 'yung pag*-set *ng* table, *pag*-dress up... *'Yon ang mga* skills *na hindi natin napapansin pero* through playing, *natutunan nilang gawin*."

> (Play for a teacher is a tool for children to learn... to extend play to learning skills... For example, cooking, which we think is not important, and also setting the table, dressing up... These skills seem trivial but children learn through playing.) – Teacher May

> "...Children really love to play so why don't we tap that... For example, blocks, physical *'yun*. You carry the blocks, you put things together for fine motor and gross motor [skills development]... For cognitive... you try to balance, you think about how you put the different sizes and shapes in order to create something. So, there is the thinking process. Socially, you are in a small group, you learn to interact, you learn how to work with the group. Play reaches out to the different domains..." - Teacher Lorie

> "...Learning in school takes place because of play... [Children] learn a lot of concepts. Like when they play with blocks, they learn about weight, balance, and symmetry. When they work with manipulatives, they do addition, subtraction, and measurement...[In] doctor play, the teacher can teach reading and writing... for example, they will make the prescription. For science, they identify the different parts of the body when checking the patients. Play is the main vehicle or tool for the children to learn..." - Teacher Claudine

> "Play is where children learn. It is what children do best... an educational tool. While others see play as just play, I see play both as an educational tool and a developmental indicator...learning tool...It does not have any pressures for the children... they are very comfortable when they are playing." - Teacher Grace

Teacher Grace and Teacher May mentioned that play is an observational tool and that they get to know more about the children in their play.

> "... It is an entry point. You get to know more about the children in their play... get a lot of information on what their concerns are, possible issues at home. It is an observation tool. I have to study what they [children] are playing, what the play is about...while other teachers see play as just play, see the child at this level... Is the child having cooperative play? ...Those are cues for us to somehow either integrate in lesson planning or [suggest to us to] add materials that would enrich their play..." - Teacher Grace

> "... *Nakikita natin ang ugali ng mga bata habang naglalaro sila kasi lumalabas doon ang kanilang* experiences at interest ... they take on roles like [being] the parents. *Kunwari sila 'yung* daddy or mommy. *So, pag-ino*-observe *mo sila* while playing, *makikita mo rin kung ano sila sa bahay. Parang* mirror *mo iyon kung ano ang* experiences *nila doon.*"

> (We can see the attitudes, interests, and experiences of the children when they are playing. They take on roles like being the parents. For example, the child assumes the role of a daddy or mommy in play. You then can have an insight how they are at home.) - Teacher May

Regarding their role as teachers, all of them mentioned that they are "facilitators" who prepare the curriculum and the learning environment that respect children's interests and developmental characteristics. Since they recognize that play is part of children's interest, they ensure that the classroom provides opportunities for spontaneous and guided play that could be used to teach concepts.

Four of the teachers (Teachers Lorie, Irene, Claudine, and Grace) see themselves as "playmates" of the children. They enter the children's play any time to pose

questions and provide suggestions to enrich the play. They view their participation as necessary to determine the children's current interests, issues, and developmental level. In this way, they could modify or completely change the learning environment.

> "Teachers don't just allow the children to play. They prepare the environment and choose the materials...I come in and play with them. The children enjoy when the teacher comes in and plays with them. As a facilitator I ask questions to enrich and enliven children's play that would let them think. '*Yon ang role ng* teacher (that is the role of the teacher), preparing the environment and [joining the] play, asking questions, and synthesizing afterwards." - Teacher Lorie

> "First of all I am a playmate... [so I am] able to do things with them in play in order to observe and study what they are playing, what their play is about and link it to whatever I know... [I] don't see play as just play. When I play that is also the time I evaluate." - Teacher Grace

> "I am part of their play. I listen to their conversations. I process what they are thinking, feeling, and saying...you are also playing with them, you are not only going around to see... It is like you integrate your thoughts in their play..." - Teacher Claudine

All five teachers recognized the need for the children to become successful readers and writers. They believe that children already know how to read and write even before their first day in school. They pointed out that children are writing when they scribble on paper. Moreover, the children are reading when they recognize the name of a familiar restaurant or grocery label.

Although they share the same view about reading and writing, the teachers differ in terms of integration of literacy materials in the dramatic play area. Teachers Lorie and May believed writing activities should be done in the writing area only even if the writing activity is related to the children's sociodramatic play, and reading should be done in the reading corner only. It was noted that the writing areas in the classrooms of Teachers Lorie and May were far from the dramatic play area. Similarly, the writing materials in Teacher Irene's classroom were found in the writing area only. In contrast, the dramatic play areas of Teachers Claudine and Grace were equipped with all sorts of materials for writing.

> ...They [children] get the paper and bring it to the housekeeping area... they know that if [an activity] involved writing, they should do it in the writing area. The books are in the reading area. I can provide [writing implements], especially when I notice that they are interested in writing, for example, a grocery list or order slip. But, basically, writing is done in the writing area." - Teacher Lorie

"...*Pupunta ang mga bata* sa writing area *para magsulat... ganoon ang* training *nila. Hindi pwedeng dalhin ang papel doon sa* housekeeping area *para doon magsulat... kung saan ka pwedeng magsulat, nandoon 'yung* writing tools*, so [dahil] wala kang makikitang* writing tools *sa* housekeeping area*, ang ibig sabihin, hindi ka pwede doon magsulat... ganoon talaga dito...*"

(Children go to the writing area to write... that is how they are trained. Paper cannot be brought to the housekeeping area because it is not the place for writing... Children can only write in the area where writing materials are found. Since there are not materials in the housekeeping area, they cannot do their writing there... This is the practice here.) – Teacher May

"...We don't have paper, crayons, pencils, and marking pens at the housekeeping area...*pero pagka kailangan nila, kinukuha nila sa* writing area... *Wala ring* books and magazines..."

(When they need paper, crayons, pencils, and marking pens at the housekeeping area, they get them from the writing area. There are no books and magazines as well in the housekeeping area.) -Teacher Irene

"Crayons are always available, different writing tools. We have an art area but we make it a point to put paper there [dramatic play area] because there are opportunities for reading and writing... There was a time when they made fruit salad while having cooking play. I asked them if they could help me make the recipe. We enumerated and drew the ingredients. During doctor play, we ask them to write the prescription...[For] the weather bureau [play], we ask them to read and identify the clouds. Then, we asked them to write their [weather] prediction... " –Teacher Claudine

"Writing materials are also found in the dramatic play area even if there are also pencils and marking pens at the art area... class directory, recipes that they [children] cooked, and menu books..." - Teacher Grace

PREPARATION OF THE DRAMATIC PLAY AREA

In Teacher Lorie's class, the dramatic play area is called the housekeeping area. It contains materials found in a house. The setting remained as a small house even when the children were constantly playing restaurant. The only modification Teacher Lorie made to accommodate the children's interest in restaurant play was placing six plastic cups and a plastic pitcher on the dining table. Literacy tools were not readily available for children to use in their sociodramatic play. Paper and pencils were only introduced when Thomas, the child who played the role of waiter, asked for them so he could write his classmates' orders.

Table 3 lists the materials found in the dramatic play area of Teacher Lorie's classroom during the time of observation.

Table 3. List of materials in the dramatic play area of Teacher Lorie

Baby things	Computer	Plastic fruits
Bags	Cook set with sink	Plastic vegetables
Baskets	Dishes	Pots and pans
Bed	Dolls	Shoes
Carpentry tools	Eggs	Spoons and forks
Cash register	Ladle	Stroller
Cleaning materials	Pillows	Tables and chairs
Clothes	Pitcher	Telephone

Teacher May called her dramatic play area the housekeeping area. It contained materials traditionally found in a house (Table 4). All materials were properly labeled. During the time of the observation, she did not add any new materials that can support the children's interests in families. No literacy tools were found in the dramatic play area.

Table 4. List of materials in the housekeeping area of Teacher May

Baby things	Cook set	Sink
Bags	Dishes	Shoes
Baskets	Dolls	Spoons and forks
Books	Eggs	Stroller
Carpentry tools		
Cash register	Ladle	Tables and chairs
Cleaning materials	Plastic fruits	Typewriter
Clothes	Plastic vegetables	Telephone
Computer	Pots and pans	

In Teacher Irene's classroom, the class called the dramatic play area the housekeeping area even though the children played different themes at the time of observation. Occasionally, Teacher Irene introduced new materials that may support the children's current interest in community helpers (Table 5). On one occasion, Teacher Irene introduced Kiko, a puppet who bought grocery items by saying the initial letter of the item he wanted to purchase. The children then identified the particular grocery item that begins with the letter specified by Kiko. She also incorporated real objects in the children's ABC Store such as dishwashing liquid, baby powder, and soap.

In one house play episode, Teacher Irene provided some storybooks for the children to read to their baby doll. Her idea of putting books in the housekeeping area gave the children a chance to read within the context of their sociodramatic play.

No paper and writing implements were provided in the housekeeping area.

Table 5. List of materials in the housekeeping area of Teacher Irene

Baby things	Doll crib	Pots and pans
Bags	Dishes	Puppet
Baskets	Dolls	Sink
Carpentry tools	Eggs	Spoons and forks
Cleaning materials	Grocery items	Storybooks
Clothes	Plastic fruits	Stroller
Computer	Plastic vegetables	Refrigerator
Cook set	Play money	Tables and chairs
		Telephone

The dramatic play area in Teacher Claudine's classroom supported the children's current interests in air transportation. At the time of the observation, the materials found in the dramatic play area were necessary for an airplane play (Table 6). The children wrote the labels in the dramatic play area with the teacher's assistance during their work time period. The teacher-made airplane was made up of a thick cardboard box painted with yellow and blue poster paints and divided into different parts: the cockpit, the passenger area, and the luggage compartment. Likewise, a ticket booth, where the children wrote their destinations and names on both the tickets and the passports, was also provided. A world atlas found near the ticket booth encouraged the children look for their destinations. Teacher Claudine also hung on the walls of the dramatic play area the writings the children made during sociodramatic play. She believes that when children see their classmates' work, they would be encouraged to do their own writing.

Table 6. List of materials the dramatic play area of Teacher Claudine

Teacher-made passports	Recorded sound of an airplane	Paper
Plane tickets	Stamp	Pencils
World atlas	Computer keyboard	Crayons
		Marking pens

Teacher Grace divided her large dramatic play area into a house and a store. With the help of the children, she created a grocery store named Little Angels Store,

with empty boxes of grocery items brought by the children, a grocery cart, cash register, note pads, and marking pens and pencils (Table 7). The children played simultaneously the two themes as they naturally incorporated reading and writing during play.

During one house play episode, the children needed milk, water, and wet tissue for the baby, and so one of them had to go to the grocery store. The children read the labels of the grocery items and wrote receipts for their purchases. During a restaurant play, Teacher Grace incorporated two teacher-made menu books containing pictures in full color of foods commonly mentioned by the children during their sociodramatic play such as hamburger, chocolate cookies, spaghetti, chicken, rice, and vegetables. She properly labeled all the dishes. Writing materials are readily available for the children.

Table 7. List of materials in the dramatic play area of Teacher Grace

Assorted fruits	Doll	Placemats
Assorted vegetables	Forks and spoons	Plates
Baby bottles	Ice cream cones	Pots and pans
Carpenter tools	Ladle	Recipes
Class directory	Marking pens	Refrigerator
Cups and saucers	Menu books	Rugs
Different hats	Mirror	Shopping cart
Cash register	Oven	Small broom
Different vests	Paper	Tables and chairs
Doctor's kit	Paper money	Grocery boxes

INTERACTION STYLES

The teachers in the study, except Teacher May, interacted with the children by participating in the children's sociodramatic play. While the teachers joined the children in their play a great deal of time, they remained aware of their role as facilitators and guides.

Teacher Grace demonstrated the most number of extending style interactions, followed by Teachers Claudine and Irene. Teacher Lorie demonstrated the least number of extending style interactions. On the other hand, Teacher Claudine exhibited the most number of redirecting style interactions, followed by Teachers Irene and Lorie. Teacher Grace exhibited the least number of redirecting style interactions (Figure 1).

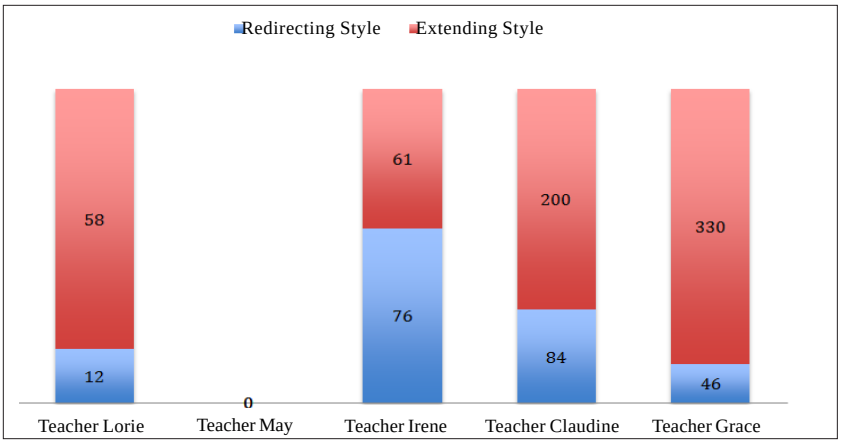


Figure 1. Frequency of extending vs. redirecting style interactions of teachers during the children's sociodramatic play for 10 days

Teacher Lorie participated enthusiastically in the children's sociodramatic play everyday. Her enthusiasm may be attributed to her warm disposition toward children. She played with them, assuming whatever roles the children assigned to her such as being a cook, waitress, house guest, or restaurant customer. Figure 2 shows her interaction style during the 10 days of observation. She demonstrated relatively more extending style interactions than redirecting style interactions, except on the second day when she predominantly used more redirecting style. On the 3rd, 9th and 10th day of observation, she interacted with the children's sociodramatic play but failed to extend these to literacy activities.

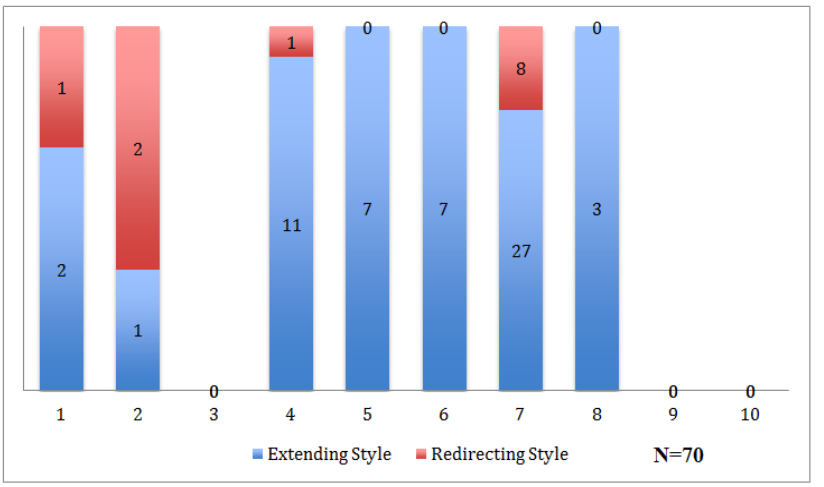


Figure 2. Frequency of extending vs. redirecting style interactions of Teacher Lorie for 10 days

Teacher May did not demonstrate any interaction style. She had very little interaction with the children in the dramatic play area and mostly not in the context of their sociodramatic play. There were days when she only went to the dramatic play area to mediate between quarreling children or to tell the children to put away the materials. There were days when she did not go at all to the dramatic play area.

The following are excerpts from two episodes that illustrate Teacher May's interactions with the children during sociodramatic play.

Episode 1:

Teacher: [Approaches Becky who was pouring water from the pitcher to the cup.]

Sino ang sumundo sa iyo kahapon? Nakita kita kahapon. Mommy mo ba iyon? Tita? (Who fetched you yesterday? I saw you yesterday. Is she your mother or aunt?)

Becky: *Sino?* (Who?)

Teacher: *Mommy mo ba iyon? Hindi ko pa siya kilala, e.* (Is she your mother? I have not met your mother yet.)

Becky: [Not paying attention to Teacher May, gives a cup to Crissa.]

Crissa: *Hindi dapat dito!* (This does not belong here.)

Teacher: [Fixes the toy typewriter.] *Maluwag na ito.* (This seems broken.) [Then leaves the housekeeping area.]

Episode 2:

Teacher: *Si Rina pala ang Mommy. Sino naman ang Daddy?* (Rina is the mommy. Who is the daddy?)

[To Tim.] *Ano ba 'yung suot mo? Nagsuot ka ng jacket tapos may salamin pa. Sino ka ba?* (What are you wearing? You are wearing a jacket and shades. Who are you?)

Rina: *Siya ang daddy*. (He is the daddy.)

Teacher: *A, si* Daddy. *May* jacket *tapos may* shades. (Ah, you are daddy. With jacket and shades.)

Rina: *Ako ang* mommy. (I'm the mommy.)

Teacher: *Si Mommy. Saan ang* baby*? Sino ang* baby*, si Teacher Lilia* (Assistant Teacher)? (You're the mommy. Is Teacher Lilia the baby?)

Children: *Oo.* (Yes.)

Teacher: *Aba, ang laki ng* baby *ninyo, a?* (You have a very big baby.)

Si Susan, ano ba siya? (How about Susan, who is she?)

Daddy, saan ka pupunta? Kumain ka na ba? (Daddy, where are you going? Have you eaten?)

Tim: [Nods.]

Teacher: [Leaves the housekeeping area.]

Teacher Irene participated in the children's sociodramatic play daily. She asked the children for the name of their store or restaurant. She requested the children to make signboards, telling them that all stores and restaurants have names so that customers would know where to go for their needs. There were instances when she tended to control the children's play and intervene too much (Figure 3). In one doctor play, she assigned herself to be the nurse.

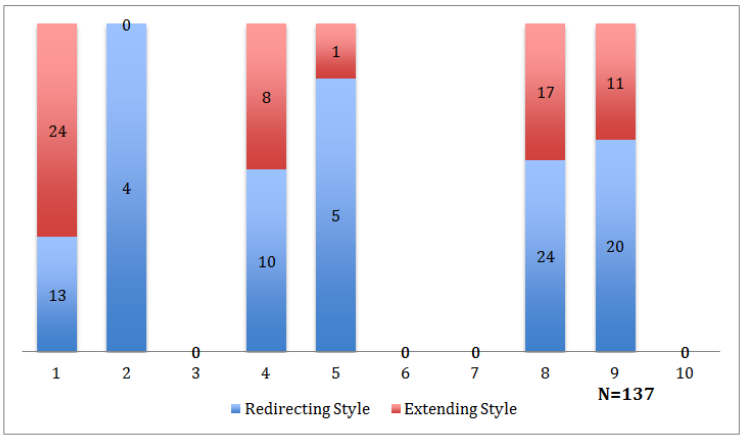


Figure 3. Frequency of extending vs. redirecting style interactions of Teacher Irene for 10 days

Teacher Claudine participated almost daily in the children's sociodramatic play, assuming roles assigned by the children, e.g., a passenger, a co-pilot, or a ticket agent. Figure 4 shows her interaction style during the 10 days that she was observed. She normally had more extending style interactions than redirecting style , except on the seventh day. She did not participate in the children's sociodramatic play on the 8th day. There was no nonplay episode during the observation period.

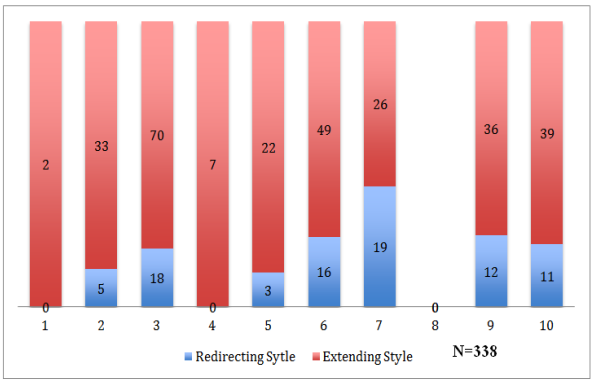


Figure 4. Frequency of extending vs. redirecting style interactions of Teacher Claudine for 10 days

Similarly, Teacher Grace participated in the children's sociodramatic play every day, taking on roles assigned to her by the children. She extended play episodes by making suggestions for continued reading and writing. Figure 5 shows her interaction style during the 10 days that she was observed. She consistently exhibited more extending style than redirecting style. There was no nonplay episode recorded during the observation period.

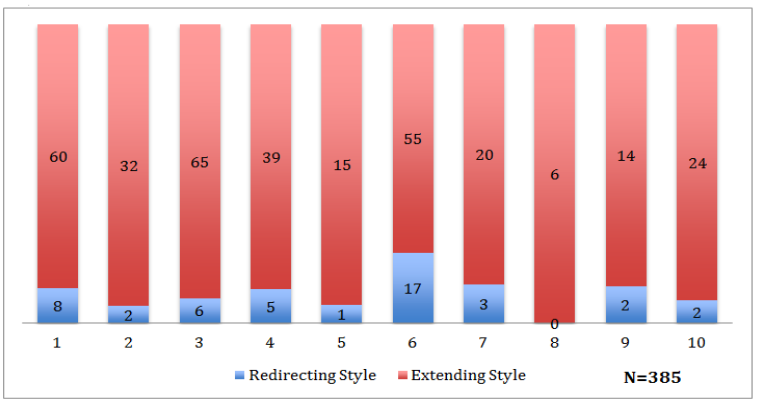


Figure 5. Frequency of extending vs. redirecting style interactions of Teacher Grace for 10 days

Teachers Lorie, Claudine, and Grace consistently followed a sequence when they intended to participate in the children's sociodramatic play. First, they determined the children's course of play by observing them before joining in and playing with them. Then they left the children by themselves to pursue their sociodramatic play interests. For example, Teacher Grace was seen observing children from a distance, intently listening to the children at play, and assessing what they seemed to need before joining them in their play. On the other hand, Teacher Lorie's statements were adjusted to the play topics of the children, such as *"Sandali lang, pupunta lang ako doon kasi nandoon ang boyfriend*" (Wait a while. I will go there to meet my boyfriend.), and "Wait, I will go to the CR (toilet). When I come back, I want my food there already."

Extending Style Interaction

Teacher Lorie joined the children who were busy playing by approaching them and inquiring, "What are you cooking today?", *"Wow, ang dami namang niluluto! Ano ba ang mga iyan?"* ("Wow, you're cooking a lot! What are they?"), *"Masarap ba 'yan*?" ("Are they delicious?"). She listened attentively to the children as they explained the intentions of their play: "*Sinigang. Tikman mo*" ("Sour soup. Do taste it."). If needed, she assisted the children in writing by articulating the sounds of the letters. She motivated the children to read their writings by asking them about what they wrote or drew.

The following excerpt is an example of Teacher Lorie's extending style interaction.

Thomas: Hello! Nico. Do you like to go to our restaurant?

Nico: [Enters the dramatic play area.]

Thomas: What do you like today, Sir?

Nico: [Sits and smiles at Thomas.]

Thomas: [Gives Nico food. Goes to the cash register as if looking for something.]

Teacher, can I have a rectangle paper for the order?

Teacher: [Gives paper and pencil.]

Thomas: [Fixes the paper for the orders.]

Teacher: [Enters.] What did you do? What is it now?

Thomas: I will get the orders.

What is your order?

Nico: Nothing.

Thomas: What about fried fish? [Writes.]

Nico: Okay.

Teacher: Do you like mango shake? [Shakes the cup with plastic mango inside. Pretends to be the cook.]

Dan: [Enters and sits with Nico.]

Nico: Hotdogs and eggs.

Thomas: One hotdog and egg.

One moment, there are two customers here.

Teacher: Okay. Kindly wait. The cook is going to cook the hotdog and eggs.

Dan: I want bananas.

Nico: Mango.

Thomas: [Writes the orders.]

Teacher: /m/ [Articulates the sound of m.]

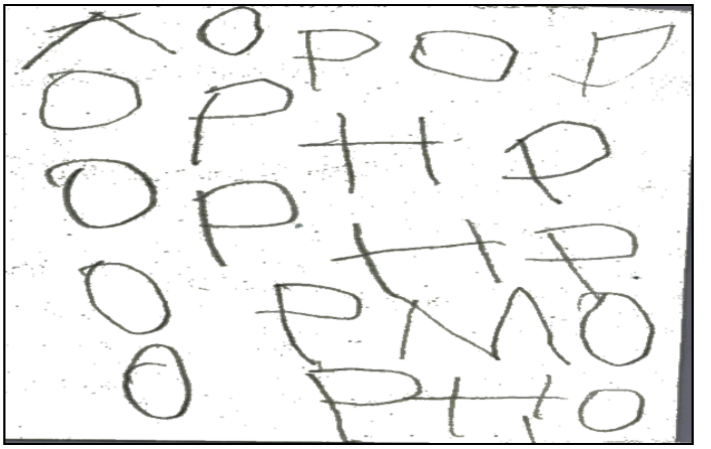
Letter M. /m/

/a/ Letter A.

Mango.

What did you write?

Thomas: [Reads, recalling his classmates order.]



"Fried fish, Choco-milkshake, Hotdogs & Eggs, Mango"

Figure 6. Written production of Thomas, 5.25 years old, when he got his classmates' orders during a restaurant play

As shown in Figure 6, Thomas wrote from left to right and made almost similar markings on the paper to represent his classmates' orders. When requested to read what he wrote, he read from the top and from left to right. It was noted that Thomas mentioned the five items his classmates ordered, represented by the five lines he wrote.

On the other hand, Teacher Irene approached and joined the children at play by inquiring about their restaurant play. She was able to extend the children's sociodramatic play into reading and writing. The following excerpt provides a description of Teacher Irene's extending style interaction:

Teacher: *Ano ba ito?* (What is this?)

Pauline: House.

Teacher: House *pala 'yan?* (Is that a house?)

Other Kids: *Hindi*, restaurant *ito*. (No, this is a restaurant.)

Teacher: *Ano ito?* [Points to a cup.] (What is this?)

Jojo: *Sopas*. (Soup.)

Teacher: *Wow, ang sarap naman. Mukhang marami kayong* customer. *Kaya lang, mukhang di nila alam ang pwedeng orderin. Ilagay natin ang pwedeng orderin.* (Wow, this tastes good. You have plenty of customers. However, they don't know what they can order. Let's write what they can order.)

Jomar: Egg.

Teacher: *Ano pa*? (What else?)

Mike: Juice.

Jomar: Hamburger.

Jojo: French fries.

Teacher: *Kaya lang, may kulang pa dito.* (There's something missing here.)

Teacher Irene wrote down as the children enumerated what can be ordered from the restaurant. She left a blank at the beginning of the word and asked the help of Jomar to fill in the blanks with the beginning letter as she articulated the beginning sound of the word (Figure 7). She pointed out that there are missing letters on the signboard. Teacher Irene used this opportunity to teach about beginning letters and initial sounds of common words in their restaurant play.

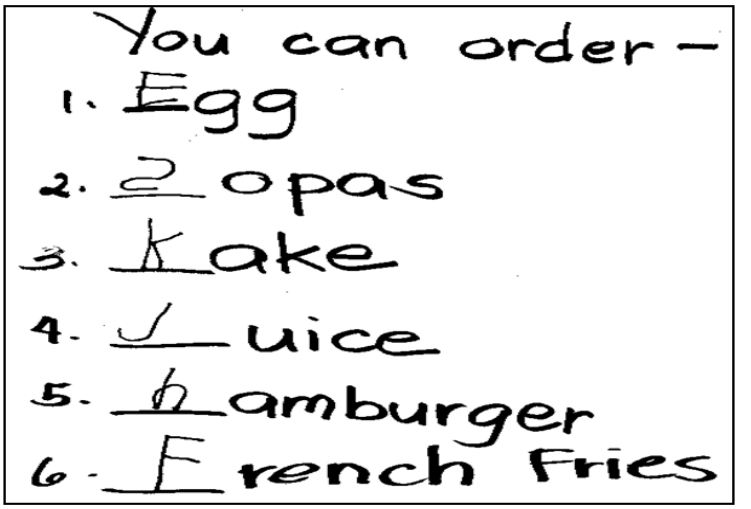


Figure 7. Beginning letters written by Jomar, 5.75 years old, as a list of menu for the restaurant play

The fourth teacher, Claudine, extended the children's sociodramatic play into reading and writing. For writing, she articulated the sounds of the letters and wrote the conventional spellings beside the written productions of the children when needed. She attempted to expand the children's airplane play by asking: "What are you going to see there?" The children's answers were based on what they saw in the world atlas she provided. The following example was a common occurrence in the dramatic play area as the children engaged in airplane play. The excerpt reflects Teacher Claudine's extending style interaction:

Teacher: Where are we going today?

RC: [Looks at the world atlas.] I think we are going…here… Jungle. [Points at the picture of the jungle.]

Teacher: It says, Brazil. Are we going to Brazil?

RC: Yes! We're going here. There's the monkey. [Points at the monkey in the world atlas.]

The bird and the parrot. We are going to talk to the parrot.

Teacher: What are you going to say to the parrot?

RC: [Talks, inaudible.]

Teacher: Do you think we're going to be happy there?

Okay, let's write where we are going so your passengers will know that you're going to Brazil.

RC: (Gets pen.)

Teacher: /b/ /b/ /b/ /r/ /r/

RC: B.

Teacher: (Nods yes.) /a/

RC: A.

Teacher: Very good. /z/ /z/

RC: (Writes s.)

Teacher: /l/ Brazil. /l/

RC: (Writes L.) (Figure 8)

Figure 8. Written production of RC, 4.75 years old, and a teacher-made passport

Teacher Grace approached the children in play by posing questions to motivate the children to discuss the course of their play, such as "Can you tell me what you are doing?", "What are you cooking today?" During a grocery play, Teacher Grace extended episodes by making suggestions for continued writing and reading. After telling the children that all items in a grocery store have prices, she suggested that they assign a price on each item in their grocery store. She then showed how prices look like by pointing to a price tag on a cereal box. Thereafter she left three children to write on their own the prices on small sheets of paper, which were then taped on the boxes of the grocery items. The children assigned prices randomly from 1 to 5,000 for the grocery items, indicating low numbers for small grocery items and high numbers for large grocery items.

In two episodes in the grocery play, Teacher Grace approached the children with more specific suggestions that involved reading and writing. She requested to be given an official receipt while paying at the cashier. In this particular instance, she again assisted the children in reading and writing as they simulated real-life

situations. In real-life settings, grocery stores are required by law to issue official receipts for all purchases. An excerpt from this episode is as follows:

Teacher: You know sometimes, we can write the prices on a small piece of paper. We call it a receipt.

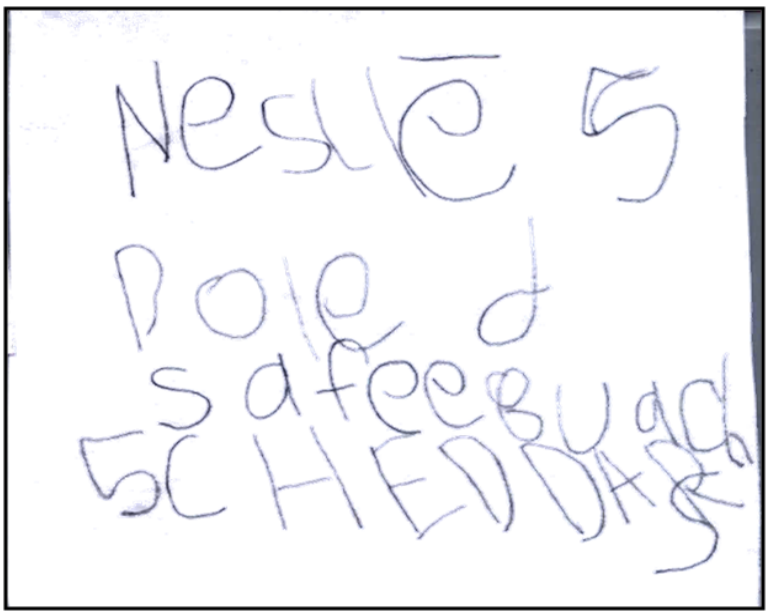
Corine: What is it?

Teacher: It's a small paper that has the items and the prices.

Corine: With small numbers?

Teacher: Yes! [Then she modeled how to write a receipt.]

While Corine was making an official receipt for Teacher Grace's purchases, Nely, the assistant cashier, was watching closely. When it was Nely's turn to be the cashier, she wrote an official receipt for Nathan's purchases (Figure 9). Teacher Grace allowed Nely to write on her own by copying the labels of the grocery items and their corresponding assigned prices.



"Nestle – 5, Dole – Safeguard – 5, Cheddar – 5"

Figure 9. Written production of Nely, 4.67 years, serving as the official receipt for Nathan's purchases

Redirecting Style Interaction

Teacher Lorie occasionally exhibited redirecting style interaction as she directed the children's play to an activity of her choice. In two sociodramatic episodes, Teacher Lorie missed an opportunity for writing and reading when she asked for the name of the restaurant. The children suggested "Toppings" and "Noodles" in one episode, "SM Fairview" and "Shangrila" in another episode. She replied, "Is that the name of the restaurant?" and did not ask any follow-up questions that could have motivated the children to make a signboard for their restaurant. Instead, she just reminded the children that it was time to put away the toys. When the children initiated a restaurant play on another day, she entered the scene, asking the children to buy something for their restaurant. She then asked them to draw some fruits and vegetables on the chalkboard located in the housekeeping area.

In the case of Teacher Irene, there were times when she stayed in the housekeeping area almost the entire free play period. When she approached the children, she ignored what they were working on and redirected their interest to a writing or reading activity that she had selected. The children followed, rejected, or disregarded her redirections. Many times she did not recognize the children's efforts to take control of their play. What follows were some of her statements.

"*Ibigay mo sa kanya ang* beginning letter *ng pangalan niya. /d/ /d/ Doris*." (Give her the beginning letter of her name.)

"*Isulat natin ang sinabi mo*." (Let's write what you said.)

"*Sandali lang po*, Dr. Dave. *Titingnan natin kung mare*-recognize *ni Miguel ang mga* letters." (Wait a second, Dr. Dave. Let us see if Miguel can recognize the letters.*)*

"*Halika dito. Piliin natin kung alin ang pwedeng gamitin sa paliligo*." (Come here. Let us choose which can be used for taking a bath.)

"*Tingnan ninyo 'yung* drawing." (Look at the drawing.)

"*Ito ang listahan*. *Basahin natin*." (Here is the list. Let us read it.)

Even though these statements were in the form of requests, they appeared to be redirectives.

The episode below demonstrates how control of a play transferred from the children to Teacher Irene.

Teacher: *Sandali lang po*, Dr. Dave. *Titingnan natin kung mare*-recognize *ni Miro ang mga* letters. (Wait, Dr. Dave. Let us see if Miro could recognize the letters.)

Dave: [Ignores the teacher's request and continues to check on Miro.]

Teacher: *Dr. Dave, sandali lang po. Ito, mga* upper case letters. *Ito, mga* lower case letters. *Miro, anong* letter *'yan?* (Excuse me, Dr. Dave. These are upper case letters. These are lower case letters. Miro, what letter is it?)

Miro: *Nakalimutan ko*. (I forgot.)

Teacher: *Ay, nakalimutan niya. Pero nakikita mo?* (Oh, you forgot. But can you see it?)

Miro: *Opo, nakikita ko pero nakalimutan ko*. (Yes, I can see it. But I really forgot it.)

Teacher: Dr. Jojo, *ano ba ang sakit niya?* (Dr. Jojo, what is wrong with him?)

Dave: [Checks on Miro's eyes.]

Teacher: *Sandali lang*, Dr. Dave. (Excuse me, Dr. Dave.)

[to Miro] *Anong* letter *ito?* (What letter is this?)

Miro: M.

Teacher: Letter M for Miro. *Ito*? *(How about this?)*

Miro: H.

Teacher: Letter H for /h/ /h/ Heidi. What letter is this?

Miro: A.

Teacher: Letter A for…?

Miro: Apple.

Teacher: *Ang galing naman*. Healthy *talaga ang* eyes *niya*. (You are smart. You really have healthy eyes.)

The episode above showed that Teacher Irene took center stage by asking a patient to identify the letters in the letter chart. She even ignored the intentions of Dave, the other doctor in the play who got a small column from the blocks area and used it as a flashlight in checking the eyes of the patient. She ignored Dave's actions twice that day and proceeded to ask the patient to identify the letters in the chart. On the eighth day, some children refused to join the other children in the dramatic play area who were playing doctor with Teacher Irene. They brought some pots, pans, eating utensils, and chairs near the classroom entrance and began a restaurant play on their own. This particular episode showed that the children found ways to pursue their own interest even though Teacher Irene controlled most of their sociodramatic play in the housekeeping area that day.

Similarly, Teacher Claudine redirected children to a writing and reading activity of her choice from time to time. When the children rejected or ignored her redirections while in an airplane play, she pressed them to record their experiences as pilots by writing or drawing what they might have seen from the airplane. The episode below illustrates Teacher Claudine's redirecting style interaction.

Justin and Mica: [Laughing and talking about their trip. They just have landed the plane.]

Teacher: Come here first, let's write what you saw.

Justin and Mica: [No answer.]

Teacher: Are you done?

Justin: [Pretends to swim.]

Teacher: Swimming inside the plane?

Justin: [No response.]

Teacher: You have to land your plane first.

Mica:	We have already landed.
Teacher:	Justin, come here.
Mica:	Teacher, I've found a treasure.
Justin:	We saw pirates and we ride the horses.
Teacher:	Justin, "What we saw." [Reads while pointing at the words in a teacher-made worksheet.] What did you see when you went to Dolphin Island and Shark Island?
Justin:	[Draws.] Snake, shark, seaweed, clam, and sea snake.
Teacher:	[Transcribes Justin's and Maggie's writing. Then, reads the words.]
Justin and Mica:	[Read their work with the teacher.]

In the case of Teacher Grace, redirection style interactions were observed in very few instances only. These were when Teacher Grace redirected children from their play to writing activities of her choice: "You help write the prices." "You have to write it down." "You have to make your grocery list." "Can you write that down?" "How about you, will you not buy something from the store?" Though the previous statements were in the form of requests, they were classified as redirectives.

LITERACY EVENTS IN EACH CLASSROOM

Children in each class, except in Teacher May's, demonstrated both writing and reading behaviors related to their sociodramatic play (Table 8).

Teacher Lorie assisted the children to read and write during the sociodramatic play but just minimally; only 71 literacy events were recorded. The literacy activities in the classroom were mostly sorting or classifying toy foods into vegetables or fruits and reading the labels of objects in the dramatic play area.

In Teacher Irene's classroom, the literacy activities during the children's sociodramatic play focused on identifying letters and articulating letter sounds. A total of 115 literacy events were observed.

The children in Teacher Claudine's class wrote and read naturally while engaged in airplane play: writing their names and destinations, making all sorts of drawings,

putting stamps, pointing at words, articulating the sounds of the letters, and interpreting the map. A total of 521 literacy events were observed.

In Teacher Grace's classroom, literacy activities were likewise inherent during the children's sociodramatic play. The children purposefully and meaningfully read and wrote while acting out roles during a restaurant and grocery play. A total of 534 literacy events were recorded during the observation period.

Table 8. Frequency of literacy behaviors of children during sociodramatic play

Literacy behavior during sociodramatic play	Teacher				
	Lorie	May	Irene	Claudine	Grace
Reading	27	0	72	336	183
Writing	44	0	43	185	351
Total	71	0	115	521	534

DISCUSSION

Teacher training shapes teacher's attitudes and practices toward young children's play, development, and learning (Klenk, 2001; Powell, Diamond, & Cockburn, 2013; Schrader, 1990). All teachers who participated in the study have had the necessary preparation for teaching preschoolers. Their statements show the extent of their knowledge of children, play, literacy, and teacher's roles. Likewise, their views of children and play were reflected in the way they interacted with children during sociodramatic play and how they prepared the dramatic play area. The teachers' beliefs and perspectives influence their behaviors, which, in turn, are translated to certain play patterns and arrangement as well as to approaches that direct children's learning (Pramling et al., 2008; Shu-Chen Wu & Rao, 2011).

The five teachers in the study believed that the uniqueness of the child must be recognized and respected. Two teachers viewed that a child's environment shaped his or her development. Two teachers saw children as "naturally curious and playful." Two teachers said that a "child learns through play."

All of the teachers recognized the importance of play in development and learning. They talked about play and the interests of children, and how these varied interests influenced the way they prepared classroom environments. They said play is both a developmental indicator and an educational tool. They defined play as any activity happening in the play areas of the classroom or how children use playthings and

how the activity is supported by the play curriculum. Teacher Lorie viewed play as natural for and beneficial to children. Teacher May saw play as a medium for learning among young children. Teacher Irene said play makes children happy so it can be used as an effective vehicle for learning. Teacher Claudine also saw play as natural to children and as a way to teach them. Teachers Grace and May said that in addition to its educational value, play is an observational tool.

The teachers' views of play and children are congruent with the core values of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), as articulated in its *Principles of Child Development and Learning that Inform Developmentally Appropriate Practice*. Based on empirical studies, this set of principles serves to inform early childhood practitioners that children have full participation in their learning and development without discounting the role of the social environment as well as the ability of the teacher to support children's needs and interests.

Two teachers in the study mentioned that they prepare a safe and loving environment for the children. Two others said that part of their role is to make relevant observations to understand better the children in their classes. When asked about their role as teachers, all the respondents spontaneously mentioned "facilitator" of learning. They elaborated that as facilitators they pose questions to help the children make sense of their experiences. These findings supplement Field, Groth, and Spangler (2008) and Otto (2008) who recommend that in order to facilitate children's learning and development, the teacher's role should involve organizing the learning environment to promote meaningful experiences and providing children ample time to reflect on their experiences by posing questions to encourage an exchange of ideas among adults and children.

The five teachers differed in their views about the integration of literacy tools in the dramatic play area. Three of the teachers shared the view that writing activities should only be done in the writing area even if the writing activity is related to sociodramatic play. In contrast, the other two teachers made literacy tools readily accessible in their dramatic play areas, allowing the children to use these tools in contexts meaningful to them.

Although obviously limited due to the small number of participants and the lack of description from a comparison group, the case studies provided an understanding of the five teachers' participation in the children's sociodramatic play and how such participation did or did not foster reading and writing during play.

All but one teacher demonstrated varying degrees of extending and redirecting style interactions as they participated in the children's sociodramatic play. The interaction styles of each teacher showed her ability to perform within the context of the children's sociodramatic play and to assist the children in performing meaningful reading and writing activities (Korat, Bahar, & Snapir, 2002-2003; Shrader, 1990).

Extending style interaction is seen as instrumental in increasing literacy activities during sociodramatic play. Teachers Claudine and Grace, who exhibited relatively more extending style interaction, generated the most number of literacy events during the 10-day observation period: 521 and 534, respectively. Teacher Lorie, who also demonstrated relatively more extending style interaction, had 71 literacy events only during the children's sociodramatic play. In contrast, Teacher Irene, who exhibited a more redirecting style interaction, facilitated 115 literacy events, which are more than those observed in Teacher Lorie. Teacher May did not facilitate any literacy activity.

These findings support a proposition of Love, Burns, and Buel (2007) that the dramatic play area is an ideal learning area where some forms of reading and writing related to, for example, a restaurant, bakery, medical office, or a post office scenario could be natural occurrences that could foster both literacy and cognitive skills. Teachers can engage children in demonstrating literate behaviors during sociodramatic play by creating opportunities and providing a variety of interesting materials that would support children's developing skills (Wood, 2010).

According to Morrow (1990), dramatic play settings — with the provisions of literary materials and the teacher's ability to demonstrate literate behaviors within the context of children's sociodramatic play — generated the most number of literacy behaviors in dramatic play settings. An earlier study (2006) conducted by the author validated Morrow's findings: literacy events increased when the teacher deliberately placed books, pencils, marking pens, and paper in the dramatic play area and guided the children on how to use them in relation to their sociodramatic play. However, findings of this current study suggest that the teacher's participation in sociodramatic play is not enough to promote reading and writing. The considerable increase in the frequency of children's reading and writing behaviors could be attributed to the combination of extending style interaction and the integration of functional and meaningful literacy-enriched environments in the dramatic play area. Take, for example, Teacher Claudine who did not hesitate to ingeniously dress her dramatic play area into an airplane to respond to the children's interest in air transportation,

complete with the necessary paraphernalia such as teacher-made passports and plane tickets, world atlas, marking pens, pencils, and paper. Similarly, Teacher Grace divided her large dramatic play area into two – a small house and a grocery store — to accommodate the children's desire to play both themes. The grocery play in her classroom generated 57 writing events on the first day of observation alone. Children in these two classrooms talked, read, and wrote with or without the teacher's help, using words typically heard in a restaurant, a grocery store, and an airport.

This study documented only the written forms of language, which are reading and writing; it did not cover other aspects of literacy development such as listening and speaking. The sociodramatic play episodes provided some understanding of the numerous opportunities for literacy activities for children. Teachers may facilitate writing and reading of orders during a restaurant play, writing names on passports and destinations during an airplane play, and writing labels on grocery items and official receipts during a grocery play. The results indicated also that literacy behaviors demonstrated by the children during sociodramatic play were literacy behaviors they normally do with their families as they go about their daily activities.

The children's written outputs showed that they were in the invented spelling stage as described by Otto (2008). Thomas wrote random letters A, O, P, H, M to represent fried fish, choco-milkshake, hotdogs and eggs, and mango during a restaurant play. Thomas' writing illustrated prephonemic spelling. On the other hand, Jomar indicated being in the early phonemic stage because he supplied correctly the missing letters in the menu. Meanwhile, RC who wrote "brASL" for "Brazil," indicating a phonetic or transitional spelling stage. His writing correctly represented several phonemes when he was requested to write the destination in the teacher-made passport.

Reading and writing are closely related to particular relationships and specific contexts found in children's daily experiences. Correspondingly, children's first reading and writing attempts and their earliest literacy understandings are possibly generated by means of explicit social interactions (Fields, Groth, & Spangler, 2008; Neuman & Roskos, 1997). On the other hand, Roskos and Christie (2001) point out that even if children could observe and perform literacy activities in play, they could also acquire misconceptions and an incorrect understanding of reading and writing. In addition, play conditions may not sufficiently support children's learning of print conventions and specific literacy skills crucial in making children become successful readers and writers. Although all the children in this study belonged to the same age group, they demonstrated different types of invented spelling, which

were oftentimes difficult for others to understand and unacceptable to some who may interpret the children's writing as nonsense or incorrect (Otto, 2008).

The descriptions provided in this study suggest that preschool teachers could use sociodramatic play as a teaching-learning medium for reading and writing. The results of this study are in line with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of zone of proximal development. That is, a new task is made much easier for the child to do with the guidance of the teacher. The social interactions that occurred in guided learning episodes during sociodramatic play offered vital avenues in which the adult and the child were able to work collaboratively. Being more experienced, the teachers were able to break down information into smaller bits so that the children could digest the purposes of written language. By modeling literate behaviors and assisting children in practicing reading and writing as they engaged in sociodramatic play, the teachers were able to provide scaffolds (Berk & Winsler, 1995) for the children to practice their budding reading and writing behaviors.

It is striking that all the teachers who participated in this study were females. All of them emphasized the importance of a caring environment for the children, where their interests and needs are given primary importance. All the 12 schools referred for this study had no male preschool teachers. There is no existing data on the number of male and female preschool and daycare teachers in the Philippines. But if the respondents of this study are any guage, it could be safe to assume that most of these teachers are females.

While this study did not account for gender in any manner, it may be worth to study gender in the context of children's sociodramatic play and how male and female teachers promote gender. If literacy is tied to the daily experiences of children as Neuman and Roskos (1997) put it, learning about gender could take the same path. According to Paechter (2007), children learn about masculinity and femininity by participating as apprentices in the world of adult males and females. She proposed that gender identities are developed and constructed through interaction in families and in schools. Sanderberg and Samuelsson (2005) found that male and female preschool teachers differed in their views and willingness to participate in children's play. The teachers' perspectives on play were influenced by their childhood play, which they considered exceptionally gender stereotyped. Play activities were labeled as feminine and masculine. Male teachers were more willing to engage in physical play while female teachers encouraged calm play. These observations need to be validated by more empirical studies.

Excerpts from sociodramatic play in this paper have traces of male and female gender roles, such as mother and father. Being a cook was usually associated with a female and being a pilot with a male. An analysis of gender roles assumed by the children is not part of this study; it would be interesting to consider how gender development and construction of femininity and masculinity take place and are manifested in children's sociodramatic play.

The availability of participants limited the study to preschools that have adopted the play curriculum and have teachers who qualified as respondents based on the criteria set. Still, this study has widened the understanding of children's ability to read and write. More importantly, it enabled the recognition that sociodramatic play could be used to teach reading and writing among preschool children.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A teacher's fundamental role remains being the best guide for children's learning. Therefore, the preparation of the learning environment in schools to ensure the development of competencies, including literacy, continues to be a primary task of the teacher. The teacher has the responsibility also to update her knowledge and skills to enable her to create sociodramatic play settings that uphold children's natural literacy development as she works within these contexts. In this connection, both the teachers and the school administrators must recognize the need for continuing teacher education programs.

Preschool centers should have dramatic play areas to support sociodramatic play themes initiated by children. More importantly, teachers need to create settings other than a house and provide crayons, pencils, marking pens, different types of paper, books, directories, magazines, charts, grocery items, and other literacy tools in the dramatic play area.

Future research can be conducted in both urban and rural areas using a bigger sample size; it can include hypothesis generation such as which dramatic play area setting and type and duration of teacher participation can generate the most number of reading and writing behaviors during sociodramatic play.

Such research should also head toward documenting the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of sociodramatic play as a vehicle for literacy development among Filipino preschoolers. The research could explore answers to questions such as:

What is the teacher's understanding of her role in the sociodramatic play of children?

What factors contribute to a teacher's ability to extend sociodramatic play to reading and writing activities?

What factors motivate teachers to use redirecting style interaction instead of extending style interaction?

What dramatic play setting and duration of teacher participation generate the most number of functional and meaningful behaviors during sociodramatic play?

In a preschool setting dominated by female teachers, how do preschool children demonstrate the concept of gender through sociodramatic play?

How do male and female children use the materials and toys in the dramatic play area that reveal something about gender?

How do preschool teachers influence gender development as they prepare the learning environment and interaction with and among children?

The answers to the above questions could enable a better understanding of the value of sociodramatic play in children's learning and development.

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Excelsa Columna Tongson <etchel.tongson@gmail.com> is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Family Life and Child Development, College of Home Economics (CHE), University of the Philippines Diliman.