Enrichment of Game Actions of Children in Transition Period from Early Childhood to Pre-School Age

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the issue of studying techniques which facilitate enrichment of game actions in transition period from early childhood to pre-school age. The authors propose original scheme for observation over game actions of children aged 1,8-3,5 with detailed description of parameters of assessment which include: play-like attitude towards things (objects), active use of substituting objects, extension of already learned game actions to other objects and situations, independent non-specific use of substituting objects, use of emotional verbal phrases in a dialogue with a toy. Importance of studying the basic techniques which facilitate enrichment of game actions in transition period from early childhood to pre-school age is emphasized. The author gives specific values of parameters which refer to different levels of game actions of children and analyzes the conditions and ways of development of game actions of children of mentioned age.

Key words: Early age children • Infant pre-school age children • Game actions • A play • Enrichment of game actions • Level of development of game actions

INTRODUCTION

During early age a child actively perceives external environment, gets to know how to make actions using things [1]. In this period general functions of things, techniques to perform actions and relationship with grown-ups are merged into single whole unity [2,3]. A game as a separate kind of activity in the beginning of such period is absent yet. The leading activity which characterizes psychological development of children of this age is a game with objects (toys). D. Elkonin pointed out to developmental significance of oriented and functional actions (use of things in accordance with their purposes), in the same he did not recognize a game in actions with toys, underlying that in ontogenesis, chronologically, a game is the first form [4].

Different authors consider a game in pre-school age as already having a story-line (a plot) not paying attention to the game actions with things [4, 5]. Non-specific use of things is important because it facilitates development of game actions without which it is not possible to form a game with a plot. A child starts to look for new impressions: it varies a place, way of action (rearranges the position of an object putting it on the table’s edge, on the floor, on his head, covers something with it). Here we see a kind of changes of surrounding conditions, active making of new impressions - and this is what is characteristic of game activity. Like in a game a child has full power over things, he uses them not in a fixed, learned, way but in different ways in order to create something brand new. During direct emotional communication 'a child - grown-up' a transition to forming of object actions takes place [6] and they, in their game-like multi-variant use, become the foundation for development of a game with a plot and characters (socio-dramatic play) [7].

Significance of game skills of children of early age is emphasized in the works of N. Palagina [8]: use of a thing (object) in different, not-characteristic for it functions animation of things, talking to a thing, modeling of habitual plots in a form of repetition or parallel action etc. is unsaturated and determines psychological development of a child. When N. Palagina was studying techniques of folklore pedagogics she underlined developmental significance not only of functional actions with things but game actions as well which form game-like attitude to things and develop earlier forms of imagination [8]. The authors also emphasize significance of game-like actions with things in development of curiosity, creative activity, independence, thinking and imagination of a child [9-11].

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Many scientists pay more attention to study of the whole range of actions with objects (things) in the early age, in particular to development of creative work, curiosity through the game with things and investigation of particularities of a story-line game of pre-school children. The issue of enrichment of game actions in transition period from early childhood to pre-school age is left without consideration. That is why it is especially important, in our point of view, to study techniques, which facilitate game actions in transition period from early childhood to pre-school age. The aim of our study is to find out basic techniques facilitating enrichment of game actions in above-mentioned period.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

We suggested that enrichment of game actions (game-like attitude to things, active use of substituting objects, transferring of learned earlier game-like actions to other things and situations, independent non-specific use of substituting objects, use of emotional-verbal phrases in a dialogue with a toy) in transition period from early childhood to pre-school age will be more successful if development will take place in the framework of specially developed program.

Sample of experimental investigation included 2 groups of children of kindergarten # 11 of Belgorod (46 children each, aged 2,5-3,5). One group was taught under the Program of the kindergarten. The second group was taught under the Program elaborated by us which was based on the concept of simulation as a form of cognitive activity of N.Palagina. The children had to listen three times (in 1 day) to a text from literary work after which they were supposed to play the plot in every detail and include the other characters or substituting objects which were not connected with the plot of a fairy tale or a poem. The tasks set forth were as follows: to teach children a) to perform game actions by themselves (manifest initiative); b) to use substituting objects actively; c) to extend use of speech in game actions; d) to increase number of variants of game actions and number of details.

We developed and tested a series of studies with use of specially selected exercises aimed to enrich game actions of children from early childhood to infant preschool age. The program consisted from 24 lessons which lasted 30 minutes each, during 8 weeks. The lessons were divided into 2 parts: 1 - teaching new actions and plots, 2 – turning of obtained knowledge into a game, modeling of images by means of some detail, modeling of the plot by children’s own actions, by actions of toys, by schematic correlation of things by means of symbols. Studies of every week (3 lessons a week) had common topic, plot, or didactical tasks. The contents of the first lesson on a week was repeated at the next 2 lessons in a form of text (poems), extract from the plot, separate phrases and dialogues, verbal support of a child’s actions or interpretation of his play, variants in playing the plot of the lesson's topic.

In control test we used method of observation over game actions of children, method of analysis of products of activity, our own questionnaire for parents. Being guided by the observation method we developed a report form for data registration, which included the following data a) need for game actions: initiative is absent (0) points, a child does not play on his own even after he was shown a game by a grown-up; weak manifestation of a wish to play (1 point), first game actions are performed thanks to initiative of a grown-up, own initiative of a child is one-off; average (2 points), a child starts to play because of his own wish but in the course of a game is often waiting for initiative from a grown-up; high (3 points) - a child organizes a game by himself, chooses a plot, selects all what is necessary for a game; b) length of game: absence of game (1-2 min) - 0 points, a child does not play (manipulating with toys, communicating with grown-ups in regard to other issues etc); short play (5 minutes) - 1 point, most of the time the child is busy with manipulation of objects; average length (10 minutes) - 2 points, process of a game is alternating with manipulation with objects, periods of a game and of manipulation are approximately equal; continuous play (15-20 min) - 3 points, most part of time a child is busy with game actions; c) emotional state in the course of the game: indifferent (0 points), toys do not provoke emotional response, mien is not expressive, game actions are lazy and without proper care; calm (1 point), emotions of a child are calm, relaxed state, game actions without haste (weak manifestation of emotions, calm posture, the tempo of a play is not quick); vivid (2 points), a child is playing with pleasure, smiling happily, makes many verbal remarks, does not distract himself from the game, his actions are energetic; d) the character of game actions: no variety of game actions (0 points), a child performs only one kind of game actions (for example, only combs a doll); weak (1 point), a child performs only 2-3 kinds of game actions (for example during a game he only feeds a doll (put a spoon in a plate then puts it to a doll's mouth; average (2 points), a child will perform 2-3 variants of one and the same action (for example, he feeds a doll...
A child starts to play by his own initiative but in the course of a game he is often waiting for what a grown-up will do. High level was observed with 35% from total number of children, a child unfolds the doll himself, chooses a plot, selects ‘accessories’ for a game (test 0%). For example, Angelina G., Alina S., Ksyusha Zh. performed game actions most often with grown-ups and by grown-up initiative, but after the experiment children themselves started to manifest initiative in the choice of a toy, what game to play etc. In regard to the parameter "need for game actions" statistically significant differences were found: T=92 (where p≤0.05).

In regard to "length of game actions" positive changes and statistically important differences on a reliable level of significance were observed T=78 (where p≤0.05). The length of game actions up to 10 minutes was demonstrated by most children in experimental group (for example, while performing parts from fairy-tale "Turnip" before the experiment Daniil D., Vanya B. demonstrated how they pulled the turnip and after the experiment they showed to which height turnip had grown up, who was the first to pull it, which characters were asked to pull next). Percentage of children who showed short-time game actions in manipulations with objects has reduced to 15% (test: 45%).

Next parameter to analyze – ‘the character of game actions’: after the experiment low level of diversity of game actions was showed by 10% (30% before the experiment) of the total number of children - when a child performs only one kind of game actions (for example, combs the doll only or makes the doll ‘walk’). Average level is now observed with 40% of the total number of children - when a child tries 2-3 variants of the same action (for example when performing the parts from the fairy-tale 'Turnip' Angelina G. and Marina B. included in their game the rings of different size ( they were a turnip and a mouse) and 2-3 kinds of game actions (for example, playing the parts from the fairy-tale "Turnip" Vanya B., Liza T. used rings of different colour as vegetables: potatoes, onion). High level is observed with 25% of total number of children - when a child constantly varies game actions, renewing them every time, alternating the order (for example playing the game based on the poem "Striped and whiskered" Alina S. and Anya S. told how they organized a sleeping place for their cat, then they showed how naughty he was and criticized him); includes in the game more than 3 kinds of game actions, (for example playing the game based on the poem "Striped and whiskered" Ksyusha Zh., Daniil, E. told the whole poem, prepared the bed, then showed what a pussy-cat did, criticized him and re-arranged his sleeping place).
In regard to ‘speech activity’ we also observed positive change on the reliable level of significance (T=78 (where p=0.05)), children in the course of game actions started to reproduce speech of a toy, to make dialogues with it, use phrases from familiar poems and fairy-tales, thanks to these actions children develop active vocabulary. In experimental group high level was observed with 25% (test: 0%) - when a child talks to a toy and answers for it.

In regard to the parameter which indicates movement activity “Show how” low level was observed with 35% (test 50%) of the total number of children - when a child, at the request of a grown-up, shows little interest in display of animals’ behaviour by sounds or movements. 25% of the total number of children demonstrated high level - when a child performs animals’ actions by himself. For example, while playing the game based on the fairy-tale "Turnip" Danii E., Ksyusha Zh., Anya S. showed how to pull the turnip (a grandmother after the grandfather, granddaughter after grandmother- they tried to pull but can’t – then they asked a little dog etc.), or playing the game based on the poem ‘Striped and whiskered’- how to make a bed: under the back there must be a very soft feather bed, on the feather bed there must be a sheet and so on. This result demonstrates positive dynamics in game actions of children from experiment group as well.

In regard to the parameter 'use of substituting objects' we found out statistically significant differences on the very high level of significance (T=62 (where p<0,01)). Percentage of children with low level reduced to 35% (test: 70%) from the total number of children, when children do not use or use substituting objects a little. Average level was observed with 50% of the total number of children - when children use 1 object shown by a grown-up. High level was manifested by 15% - when children actively use substituting objects. For example, playing the game based on the fairy-tale "Kolobok" Marina B., Alina S., Ksyusha Zh. substituted Kolobok for mosaic and a hare for a joystick.

The parameter 'acceptance of game initiative of a grown-up'. High level was observed with 20% of total number of children - when children do game actions by themselves, without help from grown-up side. For example Marina B., Vanya K. chooses toys by themselves with which they will play (a doll, hare, blocks etc.) without a clue from grown-ups. Percentage of children with low level reduced to 25% (test: 65%) from total number of children when a child repeats his actions after grown-ups. Average level is observed with 55% (test: 35%) of the total number of children - when a child performs actions with a toy shown by a grown-up (for example grown-up has shown that it is possible to take other toys into the game: a squirrel, a mammoth, a hedge-hog) and a child following the example extends actions over to new objects.

CONCLUSION

Reference stage of an experiment proved effectiveness of our lessons, having shown an average and high level of game actions with children of experiment group. By the end of experiment children's game actions had become more arbitrary, children in order to get new impressions started to extend game actions to new situations and use substituting objects, manifest independence in game actions and more diversity while using substituting objects in non-specific way; speech and movement activity during game actions had also increased. In experiment and reference groups after experiment influence (re-test) in regard to such parameters as ‘acceptance of game initiative of a grown-up’, movement and speech activity, using mathematical criteria of U-Mann-Witney statistically-significant differences were found on reliable level (p=0,05). In regard to the parameters ‘initiativity’ and ‘use of substituting objects’ statistically significant differences on the high level of significance were found (p=0,01).

Inference: The diagram of observation proposed by us which includes mentioned above parameters allows to investigate the particularities of game actions and evaluate the level of development of game actions of children in transition period from early childhood to preschool age. Analysis of diagnostic study has shown that the level of game actions in experimental group after realization of developmental program in comparison with reference group has become much higher which confirms positive influence of this program on enrichment of game actions. High dynamics in game actions of children can be determined by sensitivity of this age.

REFERENCES


