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### Discourse practices in preschool

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# Discourse Practices in Preschool

Young Children's Participation in Everyday Classroom Activities

Marjolein Deunk



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**RIJKSUNIVERSITEIT GRONINGEN**

# Discourse Practices in Preschool

Young Children's Participation in Everyday Classroom Activities

## **Proefschrift**

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aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen  
op gezag van de  
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door

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Prof.dr. C.E. Snow

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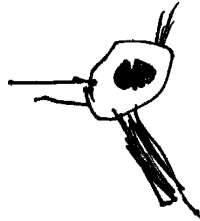
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# 1. INTRODUCTION: LEARNING THROUGH PRESCHOOL INTERACTIONS

## 1.1 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

### 1.1.1 *The Dutch context*

In the Netherlands, compulsory school attendance starts at age 5, but most Dutch children enter primary education<sup>1</sup> at age 4. At even younger ages, many children attend early childhood institutions, which are the first settings in which children experience social life outside the family. In the Netherlands, there are two different institutionalized early childcare facilities for children up to 4 years of age: *day care* ('kinderdagverblijf') and *preschool* ('peuterspeelzaal')<sup>2</sup>. Day care is primarily organized to enable parents to go to work and offers care for children from birth to age four, for up to five days a week. Preschools, on the other hand, are primarily organized for the benefit of children and have the educational goal of providing children with new experiences and socializing them into the routines, procedures and ways of talking in classroom. Children from around 2;6 years of age visit preschool for two to four (sometimes even five) mornings or afternoons a week.

Preschools started as playgroups organized by parents in the 1960's and were meant to increase the child's social and cognitive experiences. Over the years, preschools have become more professional, with a larger emphasis on educational activities and a role in tackling the problems of disadvantaged children. Since the year 2000, the Dutch government made extra money available to increase the stimulating role of preschools and to establish collaborations between preschools and primary education (van der Vegt, Studulski & Kloprogge, 2007; van Kampen, Kloprogge, Rutten & Schonewille, 2005a).

Ninety percent of the children between age 2 and 4 receive some kind of early child care (daycare and/or preschool). However, only half to two-thirds of the children 'at risk' (i.e. children with poorly educated parents, often from minority language groups, with Dutch as their second language) receive early childhood education before the age of 4 (Jepma, Kooiman & van der Vegt, 2007; van der Vegt, Kooiman & Jepma, 2008; Westenbrink & Versteegen, 2006). The government emphasizes that, by 2011, *all* at risk children need to attend preschool and obliges municipalities to try

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<sup>1</sup> In 1986, Dutch kindergarden and elementary school merged into one institute for primary education. Since then, the word 'kindergarden' for the first two years of education for 4 to 6 year olds is not used anymore.

<sup>2</sup> Preschool and day care are two separate organizations in the Netherlands, although the Ministry of Education recently urged them to attune (Ministerie van Onderwijs Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2008a). Moreover, there are proposals to integrate preschools and day care in primary education, creating educational centres for children from birth to age 12 (G27, Association of the 27 largest Dutch towns, 2007; Meijnen, 2008).



## 2 INTRODUCTION

to enroll all at risk children in their community in preschool education, lest they are irreversibly disadvantaged when they enter the educational system as ‘old’ as age five (Dijksma, 2008; 2009; Ministerie van Onderwijs Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2008a; 2008b).

In order to reduce and prevent learning- and language delays of at risk children, preschools use special early childhood educational (ECE) programs. Over a decade ago, the Dutch government funded the development and implementation of the ECE programs *Piramide* and *Kaleidoscoop* as part of the policy of effective preschool education (Leseman & Cordus, 1994). Dutch municipalities use a range of ECE programs now, developed by different educational organizations. Among the current Dutch integral, (pre)school-centered programs, *Piramide*<sup>3</sup> is used most frequently (used by 51% of the municipalities), followed by *Startblokken/Basisontwikkeling*<sup>4</sup> (36%), *Ko Totaal*<sup>5</sup> (11%), *Kaleidoscoop*<sup>6</sup> (11%) and small regional programs (24%). There are also programs that focus on a specific area of cognitive development and that can be used in combination with the integral programs, like *Ik ben Bas*<sup>7</sup> (31%), *Taallijn VVE*<sup>8,9</sup> (30%) and *Boekenpret*<sup>8</sup> (29%). In addition to the school-centered programs, municipalities may use family-oriented programs like *Opstapje*<sup>6</sup> (25%, Jepma et al., 2007).

In this study, I focus on preschools using the programs *Piramide*, *Kaleidoscoop* and/or *Boekenpret*. *Piramide* is a highly structured program with a strong emphasis on cognitive development. The program offers daily activities, which are organized around themes (van Kuyk, 2000). The program *Kaleidoscoop* is based on the US program *High/Scope* (Barnett, 1985; Schweinhart, 2004; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997) and emphasizes children’s motivation, own initiative and independence. Daily activities within *Kaleidoscoop* are generally not based on themes, but depend on the child’s own interest. One of the domain specific ECE programs is the literacy promoting program *Boekenpret*, related to the UK program *Bookstart* (Booktrust, 2009; van den Berg & Middel, 1996; van der Pennen, 2001). In *Boekenpret*, preschools and elementary schools, libraries and health centres cooperate in order to stimulate book reading with children.

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<sup>3</sup> Cito, Central Institute for Test Development, Arnhem

<sup>4</sup> APS, center for school improvement, Utrecht

<sup>5</sup> CED-groep, teaching education and childcare, Rotterdam

<sup>6</sup> NJI, Netherlands Youth Institute, Utrecht

<sup>7</sup> Cedin, educational services, Drachten

<sup>8</sup> Sardes, education welfare and youth, Utrecht

<sup>9</sup> Expertisecentrum Nederlands, language education, Nijmegen

### 1.1.2 Educational language practices

Verbal communication is central to education, since it is the medium by which information is conveyed, by which social relations in the classroom are managed and by which children express themselves (Cazden, 2001; Wells, 1981). The classroom is a context for the use of a special type of language: *academic discourse*. Academic discourse consists of *educated discourse* and *educational discourse*. In practice, of course, educated discourse and educational discourse go together and cannot be separated as strictly as is suggested here. When children are involved in educated discourse, they use language to think and to communicate, and when they are involved in educational discourse, they use practices to participate in the classroom (Mercer, 1995). The type of talk used in educated discourse is associated with thinking and interacting in school, and contains stretches of extended discourse in which children establish common ground, check agreement and engage in joint, explicit and collaborative reasoning (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2002; Mercer, 1995; Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Mercer, Wegerif & Dawes, 1999). Educated discourse does not only manifest itself on the level of interactional structures, but also in the educational *register* (Aarts, Demir, Kurvers, Laghzaoui & Henrichs, 2006; Schleppegrell, 2001). Educational discourse is related to the conventions of classroom communication (Cazden, 2001). The conventions are different across classrooms and age groups, but in general they have to do with the way children and teachers interactionally construct speech events, like talking during circle time, cooperating during play and following teacher instructions. A frequently used structure in traditional classroom lessons is the IRE sequence: the teacher asks a child a question (Initiation), the child answers (Reply) and the teacher responds (Evaluation or Follow Up; Mehan, 1979).

Studies on learning through interaction often emphasize the importance of active involvement in *extended discourse*. Snow and Beals define extended discourse as “talk centered on a particular topic that extends over several utterances or conversational turns” (Snow & Beals, 2006, p.54). Different types of talk can be extended discourse, like explanatory talk or narratives. These types of talk might introduce children to new vocabulary and/or knowledge about the world. A special type of extended talk is *decontextualized talk*, about non present topics, like someone who is not present, something that happened in the past or a hypothetical situation (Smith & Dickinson, 1994). *Joint book reading* is often studied as a context for extended discourse and decontextualized talk (Goodman, 1986; Leseman, 1998; Snow & Ninio, 1986). Another extensively studied activity is *dinner table interaction* (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2002; Cook-Gumperz & Kyratzis, 2001; Ely, Gleason, MacGibbon & Zaretsky, 2001; Ochs & Shohet, 2006; Snow & Beals, 2006; Sterponi,

2003; Tulviste, 2001). Through dinner time conversations, children may learn to use complex vocabulary, literacy, the conventions of their speech community and cognitive and metalinguistic skills. A third category of interactions in which extended discourse may occur are *specific routine activities*, like gift-opening sequences during birthday parties (Good & Beach, 2005) or parent-child interaction during cognitively challenging tasks and games. Snow and Kurland (1996), for example, studied parent-child interactions during play with magnets and found types of talk that had to do with scientific processes and procedures. The authors point out that ‘science talk’ might prepare children for school, in other areas than literacy alone, because it can familiarize children with practices like asking questions, collecting data and hypothesizing.

Specific routine activities in institutions, like preschool classrooms, are often structured by Situated Activity Systems (SAS, Goffman, 1961). Situated Activity Systems provide a global structure to activities in which participants work towards a certain goal, like borrowing a book or closing a crafts task. A SAS consists of a sequence of interactional *moves* (Goffman, 1961; Goffman, 1981) to which participants are oriented. Moves structure activities, since “each move must be selected from a small number of possibilities, these being largely determined by the previous move of the opposing team [the interaction partner, MD], just as each move largely determines the possibilities next open to the opponent” (Goffman, 1961, p.32). Situated Activity Systems, with accompanying moves, structure the use of specific verbal and nonverbal acts (C. Goodwin, 1997; C. Goodwin, 2000b; M. Goodwin, 2006) and thereby provide a scaffold for children to use language and participate in interactions. This way, participation in SAS’s is essential for children’s socialization into preschool classroom.

A classroom is a community of users, with specific classroom practices. Lave and Wenger (1991) use the concept *legitimate peripheral participation* to describe the way children and other newcomers learn the practices of a community and become part of it. The legitimate, peripheral aspect of the participation indicates that learners take part in the practices of the community, but do not have to meet expert standards yet and receive help and facilitation when needed. Lave and Wenger do not distinguish between ‘learning to participate’ and ‘learning content’, but view learning as a principally social practice: participating in practices is equivalent to learning cognitive skills (Lave, 1996; Wenger, 1998). Wenger even claims that “school learning is just learning school” (1998, p.267). This may lead to the incorrect impression that learning is about learning procedures only. However, within situated learning, there is no distinction between content and participation: content is learned

through participation and educated discourse thus always occurs within the context of educational discourse.

Rogoff and Gee orient themselves to learning in out-of-school settings. Rogoff (1990) described how children in different cultures learn to participate in communities by parents through ‘guided participation’. Gee (2004; 2007) argues that it is easier and more relevant to learn through participation in the practices of a community than through formal instruction in educational settings. The more the practices of children’s home environments resemble the practices of the classroom community, the more familiar children are with the practices that are the framework for learning content and the easier it is for them to participate in classroom. For example, children coming from environments where reading and writing is highly valued and practiced, will learn to read more easily than children who come from communities where literacy is less used and considered to be less important. Gee explains this by referring to a difference in *learning opportunity*: the first group of children learns literacy through an instructed and cultural process, while the second group has to learn through an instructed process only.

### 1.1.3 Effects of educational programs

Preschools can increase the learning opportunities for at risk children. The general aim of early childhood education is to stimulate cognitive- and social emotional development and emergent literacy and to prepare children for formal schooling by familiarizing them with academic discourse practices. The more children are involved in extended discourse, the more chances they have to learn how to use language for cognitive and social goals, and the better they are familiarized to language use and conventions in educational settings. Because not all children experience much extended discourse in their home situations, preschool could be a good context for increasing the learning opportunities of children. The use of special ECE programs should optimize this.

The Dutch government acknowledges *Piramide*, *Kaleidoscoop* and *Boekenpret* as effective programs, as they are listed in the database of effective interventions of the Dutch institute for youth (Ince, 2005a; 2005b; 2006). However, different evaluation studies of ECE programs often report only small to moderate effects, especially when implementation is poor or not all program requirements are met (Doolaard & Leseman, 2008; van Kuyk, 2000; Veen, Overmars & de Gloppe, 1995; Veen, Roeleveld & Leseman, 2000)<sup>10</sup>. Doolaard and Leseman (2008) argue that

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<sup>10</sup> In the four major Dutch municipalities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht), preschools often have two fully licensed teachers available and offer care for four mornings or afternoons a week. Preschools in smaller Dutch municipalities more often have only one licensed teacher and offer care for two to three mornings or afternoons a week (Jepma et al., 2007).

early experimental schools might have been extra motivated and precise in implementation of the program, but larger effect studies include schools that may have started to use programs due to the political emphasis on the role of ECE. These schools may be less motivated and may be less strict in following implementation conditions.

Aside from problems with implementation, the reason for the lack of convincing effects in evaluation studies may also lie in the measures that are used. Effectiveness studies often use global measures, aimed at limited areas of development (Nap-Kolhoff, van Schilt-Mol, Simons, Sontag, van Steensel & Vallen, 2008). Language development, for example, is often measured with vocabulary tests (e.g. with the PPVT, Dunn & Dunn, 1997) and cognitive development is often measured with ordering- or counting tasks (e.g. tests from Cito, the Dutch Central Institute for Test Development) and social-emotional skills are reported in teacher questionnaires (e.g. SCHOBL, Bleichrodt, Resing & Zaal, 1993). Furthermore, effects are often measured on group level or school level. For example, in an effect study by the Inspectorate of Education (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2008), preschools were scored on different quality aspects, like ‘curriculum content’, ‘pedagogic climate’ and ‘personnel and housing’. These variables were not studied on child level in detail, but were scored on a 4-point scale on school level. Another problem with using global measures is that the results might be difficult to interpret. Studies on the effects of ECE using correlational data, sometimes report results that are counterintuitive, difficult to explain or even invalid. Schooten and Slegers (van Schooten & Slegers, 2009), for example, report correlations between weekly teacher-parent meetings and *less* vocabulary growth and between *less* experienced teachers and more progress in children’s work attitude.

So, there have been many evaluation studies on the effects of ECE programs, in which the focus lied on level of implementation and children’s later test scores, but none of them focussed on the specific activities and interactions of children in their preschool classrooms. The lack of significant results of ECE evaluation studies does not mean that individual children do not develop *communicative* skills or educational language practices, important for future formal school settings<sup>11</sup>.

Different researchers acknowledge the drawbacks of the global measures used in effect studies. For example, the Inspectorate of Education (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2008) reported to be unable to present effects of ECE on general child development. Effects were measured with standardised tests of the Central Institute

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<sup>11</sup>ECE programs often do not specify what the verbal interactions of children with teachers and peers should look like, although there are some initiatives to give preschool teachers more practical information on how to interact effectively with children (van Elsäcker, van der Beek, Baack, Janssen, Peters & Kooiman, 2005).

for Test Development (Cito), but the Inspectorate notes that these tests only measure a small area of cognitive- and language development and therefore are not valid for measuring the more general effect of ECE on child development. A similar conclusion was drawn in a large-scale study on the effectiveness of ECE in the UK (EPPE, Effective Provision of Pre-School Education; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004). In this study, children's development was measured with standardized tests, but to enhance understanding of the findings, the researchers conducted additional qualitative case studies of effective classrooms (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Taggart, Melhuish, Sammons & Elliot, 2003). Two recent Dutch evaluation reports, recommend to include detailed observations of classroom activities and interactions and detailed description of implementation quality in future research to enhance understanding of the effectiveness of ECE (Doolaard & Leseman, 2008; Nap-Kolhoff et al., 2008). In sum, there is a clear need for additional studies on ECE that focus on children's experiences in preschool and the language opportunities that different preschool contexts offer.

## 1.2. PRESCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND INTERACTIONS GRONINGEN (PRACTING) PROJECT

### *1.2.1 General design and research question*

An important feature of learning through interaction is that the 'lessons' are embedded in everyday activities and arise in the course of everyday interaction. To be able to understand how children learn and develop in preschool classrooms, it is necessary to get a grip on the key interactions that children have during their days at preschool. With the current study, I aim to add to an understanding of the different interactions children have in preschool and the things they can learn through these interactions. By describing naturally occurring everyday interactions, I will show the classroom routines and practices that children are oriented to in the process of being socialized into the classroom community. My overarching research question is: *How do young children learn to participate in discourse practices in preschool?*

Probably the most well known longitudinal and extensive study of children's interactions in natural context is the *Bristol Study* conducted by Gordon Wells and colleagues in the 1970's (Wells, 1981; 1985; 1986). The aim of this longitudinal study was to make a representative sample and a comprehensive description of children's language use. To achieve this goal, 128 children were followed from age 1;3 to 5;0 in their natural environments. Every three months, the children's speech was recorded with a wireless recording device, which made multiple random recordings of 90 seconds each during the day. No researcher was present during recordings, children (wearing the microphone) could move freely in their natural environments and parents

and children were involved in their natural occupations. This way of data gathering ensured a realistic view on children's natural activities and interactions. Analysis of the *context* in which language use took place was an important element of the study<sup>12</sup>.

The *Bristol Study* is special because it follows a large group of children for a long period and is high in ecological validity. There are not many studies on child development in natural context as extensive as the *Bristol Study*. Wootton (1997) conducted an longitudinal case study of his daughter, and analyzed the development of her requests in interaction with her parents during everyday domestic activities. Catherine Snow and colleagues conducted the longitudinal *Home-School Study of Language and Literacy Development* (Snow, Porche, Tabors & Harris, 2009), in which, among others, mothers were asked to play and read with their children. Other researchers focused on the role of communicative action gaze in the interactions of very young children (Kidwell, 2009; Kidwell & Zimmerman, 2007; Lerner & Zimmerman, 2003). In addition, there are studies with a focus on the relation between language use and specific conditions in which interactions take place. Tulviste (2001), for example, studied mother-child interactions during mealtime and puzzle solving. Leseman and colleagues (Leseman, Rollenberg & Rispen, 2001) studied children's cooperation and decontextualization 'work' and 'play' in Dutch preschools. Another Dutch study in the ECE setting is performed by Damhuis (1995). In her study on L2 acquisition in kindergarten, she took into account natural interactions and the importance of different types of contexts (although these were only broadly defined) and the roles peers and teachers play in children's language use. Steensel (van Steensel, 2006) studied, among others, the effect of preschool activities on the development of emergent literacy. Haan and Singer (de Haan & Singer, 2008) studied children's conflicts during free play in preschool. There are many other studies in which the importance of natural talk is acknowledged and the connection between specific settings and language use is made, but detailed analysis of truly natural interaction of a large group of children over time, like in the *Bristol Study*, is rare.

To be able to answer questions about ordinary preschool interactions and child development, I studied a group of children in their preschool classrooms. Following the example of the *Bristol Study*, I designed a longitudinal study, in which I follow a relatively large group of children over time in their natural environments and record their speech using wireless and non-obtrusive recording equipment. The focus of the study lies on children's natural interactions in different preschool contexts. The difference with many other studies is that I am studying child development from a qualitative, interactive perspective with a focus on the development of discourse

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<sup>12</sup> In order to get a full view of the context, a researcher played back the recordings to the parents at the end of each day of recording, and asked them for contextual and background information about the language samples.

practices. In line with scholars like Charles and Marjorie Goodwin, who state that “talk is intrinsically interactive, and thus shaped as much by recipients as by speakers, as well as by the activity within which the talk and its participants are embedded” (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992, p.47), I study child development in its natural context. A conversational analytic approach may be especially fruitful in early childhood research, because its focus on the sequencing of naturally occurring interaction gives an insight in how children interpret the meaning of prior turns in the interaction (Church, 2009; M. Goodwin, 2006).

### 1.2.2 Method and corpus

To acknowledge the variation between children and classroom communities, I study multiple children in multiple preschool classrooms. In my search for preschool classrooms to participate in the study, I asked local authorities, managing different ECE programs, to provide me with a list of experienced preschool teachers they thought highly of. This resulted in a selection of high quality preschools in the North of the Netherlands which used one of the ECE programs *Piramide*, *Kaleidoscoop* and/or *Boekenpret* (described in paragraph 1.1.1). I used these lists to find four teachers who were willing to participate in the study with one of their preschool groups<sup>13</sup>. All preschools are located in middle sized towns in the North of the Netherlands and are named A, B, C and D, for reasons of anonymity. I contacted the parents of the children in the selected classrooms and asked them for their cooperation. All parents gave their informed consent to the study. In every classroom, I selected 7 or 8 children who were approximately 2;6 years old at the start of the study<sup>14</sup> and followed them up to approximately age 4;0, when they left preschool and entered primary education.

I recorded children’s interactions during the day<sup>15</sup> at preschool every three months by letting the children wear a little jacket with audio equipment inside. Picture 1 shows children wearing ‘recording jackets’ in classroom. Children did not know that the recording device (a minidisc player) was hidden underneath the ‘fur’ at the back. This recording method made it possible to record everything an individual child said and everything that was said to him or her, without a researcher needed to be near. In addition to the individual audio recordings, I made an overview video recording for information on context and nonverbal communication. For 25 children, I collected

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<sup>13</sup> I started with three preschools, but when it became clear that the group in one of the preschools (preschool D) was unstable and it would be difficult to make a longitudinal dataset for that classroom, I contacted an additional preschool.

<sup>14</sup> Often, there were not enough young children at the first date of recording, so I added new young children who entered preschool after the start of the study until I reached 7 or 8 focal children per classroom.

<sup>15</sup> One day at preschool is one morning or afternoon in classroom, lasting about 3 hours.



five to twelve recordings of preschool interaction (i.e. 15 to 36 hours of recording for each child). For 5 other children, all from preschool D, I could only make up to 4 recordings (i.e. 3 to 12 hours of recording for each child), because these children switched to other play groups, were ill or did not want to cooperate. The datasets in preschools A, B and C are thus more complete and make it possible to follow children over a longer period of time. Children in these three preschools generally did not protest against wearing the recording jacket and merely accepted it as a given. The recording jacket did not seem to influence children's interactions and except when the student assistant and I helped the children to put the jacket on, it was not a topic of conversation. The complete PRACTING corpus consists of 221 recordings, adding up to in total approximately 663 hours of natural preschool interactions. An overview of the dataset is given in appendix A.

**Picture 1.** Children wearing jackets with recording equipment inside



### 1.2.3 Data and analysis

I transcribed the data in cooperation with a team of trained student assistants. After I provided the student assistants with the video recording of a child, they first made a rough chronological description of the recording (a 'log'), in which they described the activity the child engaged in (duration, place, participants and content) and gave an indication of the level of active participation by the child. Due to time constraints, we could not transcribe the entire recording. Therefore, I indicated fragments in the logs that needed to be transcribed. I selected fragments in which the child participated (relatively) actively and focused on the following *focal events* (Goodwin & Duranti, 1992): literacy events, other cognitive events (like making a puzzle), pretend play, events with social emotional content (for example children arguing) and other moments of extended discourse. The student assistants then transcribed the selected parts with the transcription software Transana (Fassnacht & Woods, 2005), using

Jeffersonian transcript conventions (Jefferson, 1984, see appendix B). For each of the studies in this dissertation, I drew different selections of data from the main PRACTING corpus. I checked the fragments in these selections and, if necessary, adapted or extended the transcription before and during data analysis. So, the transcripts used in the different studies are transcribed in multiple rounds.

To study children's interactions in preschool, I worked in the tradition of applied conversation analysis (CA). Conversation analysis can be used to understand contexts by examining the moves people make, since they show their understanding of the event through their actions and at the same time, they are contributing to this event by their actions. I use CA to look at the interactions of children and teachers in the specific institutional context of the preschool classroom.

Institutional talk (Heritage, 2005; Richards & Seedhouse, 2005) differs from 'ordinary' conversation in that it is related to specific settings and tasks. Examples of institutional talk in other settings are: emergency phone calls, radio interviews or doctor's consultations. It is the talk that people use to "manage those practical tasks, and to perform the particular activities associated with their participation in institutional contexts" (Drew & Sorjonen, 1997, p.92). The three basic elements of institutional talk are: 1) interaction partners show an orientation to specific goals, relevant to the social institution; 2) there are special constraints about which interactional contributions are appropriate; and 3) the institutional context is related to specific ways of making inferences (Drew & Heritage, 1992). The variation that participants show in their talk in institutional settings is limited by the goal and the constraints of the event (Heritage, 2005). I am applying institutional conversation analysis to understand the practices of a classroom community and how children learn to participate in these practices.

To illustrate the type of data and analyses that are central in this dissertation, I will provide here an example of Dion (2;8), who wants to join some other children in play (excerpt 1).

(1) “I want too” [Dion (2;8); Nicole (2;9), Miss Laura]

*Situation: the children are playing outside. Dion cruises the playground on a car. He drives up to the sandpit where Miss Laura and some children are playing*

<i>Line</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Dion:	I want <u>too</u>	ik wille <u>ook</u>
2		(0,6)	(0,6)
3	Miss L.:	there is Dion!	hier is Dion!
4		(1,1)	(1,1)
5	Miss L.:	but I see Dion is not alone=	maar ik zie dat Dion niet alleen is=
6	Dion:	=yes!	=ja!
7		(0,6)	(0,6)
8	Miss L.:	Dion brought somebody	Dion heeft iemand meegenomen
9		(0,3)	(0,3)
10	Dion:	yes	ja
11	Miss L.:	who did you bring?	wie heb je meegenomen?
12		(0,4)	(0,4)
13	Dion:	doll!	pop!
14		(0,2)	(0,2)
15	Miss L.:	do::ll! ((takes Dion's doll))	po::p!
16		(0,3)	(0,3)
17	Miss L.:	doll I'm baking a cake ((with low voice))	pop ik bak een taart
18		(1,5) ((Miss Laura puts the doll head down in the bucket of sand))	(1,5)
19	Miss L.:	o (.) <u>no no</u> doll wait a minute de cake is not ready yet!	o (.) <u>nee nee</u> pop ho ho ho de taart is nog niet klaar!
20		(1,8)	(1,8)
21	Dion:	(N)O not doll!	EE niet pop!
22		(0,3)	(0,3)
23	Miss L.:	no wait doll	nee ho pop
24		(0,4)	(0,4)
25		((Dion laughs and presses the doll to his body))	
26	Miss L.:	don't dive into the cake	niet in de taart duiken
27		(0,3)	(0,3)
28	Dion:	no not into [the <u>cake</u>	nee niet in [de <u>taart</u>
29	Miss L.:	[the cake is not	[de taart is nog niet

	ready yet=	klaar=
30	Nicole: = <u>my</u> cake	= <u>mijn</u> taat
31	(0,5)	(0,5)
32	Miss L.: that's Nicole's cake	dat is de taart van Nicole
33	(0,4)	(0,4)
34	Dion: yehehes!	jahaha!
35	(2,0)	(2,0)
36	Dion: it's <u>Nicole's</u> !	tis van <u>Icole</u> !
37	(0,2)	(0,2)
38	Dion: ye:::s that is Nicole's!	ja::: dat is van Icole!
39	(0,3)	(0,3)
40	Miss L.: ye:::s	ja:::
41	(0,5)	(0,5)
42	Miss L.: what kind of cake is it Nicole	wat is het voor taart Nicole

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Excerpt 1 is a naturally occurring interaction of Dion during free outside play. When I want to study Dion's language development, it is not very informative to look at his talk at the word level. Dion says: *I want too; yes!; yes; doll!; (N)O not doll!; no not into the cake; yehehes!; it's Nicole's!; ye:::s that is Nicole's!*. We could calculate mean length of utterance, type token ratio, or number of content words, but these kinds of measures do not take into account the *context* in which Dion talked. Taking into account the conversational context shows, for example, that the *yes* in line 6 is very different from the *yehehes* in line 34. In the first case, Dion replies to an implicit question, in the form of a statement (*but I see Dion is not alone*, line 5) and in the second case, he responds to a more clear-cut statement (*that's Nicole's cake*, line 32). Thus, a focus on isolated words and utterances does not provide information about what happened and why this episode may be meaningful.

On the discourse level, however, the episode is more interesting. Dion's goal is to join his peers in a sandpit activity and Miss Laura helps him to achieve this goal. Joining a group activity is a complex activity that requires children to adapt to the ongoing activity of a group of children and to understand what is happening in the play and how roles and ownership are divided. Miss Laura helps Dion to shift his self-focussed approach (*I want too*, line 1) into a more appropriate group focused approach of joining (*it's Nicole's! (0,2) ye:::s that is Nicole's!*, line 36-38). So, language learning in preschool is for a great part learning the appropriate ways of talking to accomplish (social) goals.

#### 1.2.4 Four mundane activities: from free play to school-like tasks

Language use is always situated in specific activities, with specific practices and interactional roles. I therefore focus on *activities* in the classroom context. Meaningful elements of language use may be very situated and local. Sometimes they may be located in certain moves in certain activities, which may even be optional and not always realized, as I will for example illustrate in chapter 4, when I study the activity of borrowing a book. If I would have studied average language use during the day, I would have run the risk of losing these meaningful, sometimes rare, language uses. Moreover, it shows why it is problematic to simply ‘count’ language measures without taking into account their situational context. The function of a language feature is related to the interactional and situational contexts in which this feature is likely to occur.

Children do many different things in preschool and because the PRACTING corpus consists of recordings of complete classroom days, there are many different activities I could have studied in detail. To account for the range of different types of activities and interactions in preschool classrooms, I selected four different activities, which vary in the degree in which the child can take initiative and has influence. The activities I selected range from ‘play’ to ‘work’: from the relatively ‘free’ activities *pretend play* and *spontaneous conversations about literacy* to the more ‘structured’ activities *borrowing a book* and *doing a crafts assignment*. In chapter 2, I describe the development of early pretend play, using different pretend play interactions of the young girl Peggy. I show how Peggy interprets an increasing amount of play elements at the pretend level as she gets older. In chapter 3, I take a more educational discourse perspective and study the ways children encounter literacy in preschool. The focus here is on *mundane literacy events*: interactions about literacy that naturally rise out of the ongoing activity of the child and to which the child may take the initiative. Chapter 4 is about literacy as well, but describes an event much more structured by the teacher: the routine of borrowing a book, an activity that is part of the ECE program *Boekenpret*. In chapter 5, I describe a routine activity that is structured by the teacher as well and focus on the joint construction of the closings of crafts assignments. Chapters 2 to 5 are mainly qualitative descriptions of different activities and routines and educational language practices. In chapter 6, I take a quantitative approach to analyze variation in children’s speech act use during different activities and with different interaction partners and its development over time.

## 2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY SOCIODRAMATIC PLAY<sup>16</sup>

### ABSTRACT

In this paper we study the beginnings of sociodramatic play. We examine the pretend play interactions of a Dutch girl, Peggy, and focus on her transition into sociodramatic play. Initially, Peggy interprets only some elements of her play interactions at the pretend level. At age 2;9 Peggy shows symbolic substitution for *objects* and *actions*. In the course of seven months, the features *participants*, *roles* and *place* gradually become substituted and specified at the pretend level in Peggy's play. In the earlier play interactions, Peggy and her interaction partner keep a discourse identity and only assign new meaning to objects and to their local acts. In a later play interaction, Peggy and her play mate take roles and interpret their situated identities in the pretend layer. The use of situated identities allows for a range of possible acts and a sociodramatic story line, which increases the complexity of the pretend play.

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Sociodramatic play, or character play, is pretend play with characters and their accompanying roles, behaviors and mental states. Before children create sociodramatic play, they engage in 'ordinary' pretend play: play with symbolic substitution, but no character roles. Symbolic substitution is substituting certain elements of an interaction with a new meaning, for example: pretending a block is a car or pretending a cup contains tea. Sensory-motor games and routine interactions are precursors of pretend play (Leslie, 1987; Singer & Singer, 1990) and early forms of pretend play with might take a routine format, like the *give-and-take* routine (Deunk, Berenst & de Glopper, 2007). Sociodramatic play is too complicated to take the format of a routine. This does not mean the play is not loosely rule-governed, since children need to negotiate the rules and the course of the activity during the play. Negotiating joint activities in pretend play seems to be more difficult for children than coordinating other types of play, like constructive play (Budwig, Strage & Bamberg, 1986), because it requires children to interpret pretence as well.

Children are reported to start to engage in pretend play interactions from around age 2;0 (for example Bosco, Friedman & Leslie, 2006; Harris, 2000; Howes & Matheson, 1992; Lillard & Witherington, 2004), but this early pretend play is not sociodramatic play yet. Early pretend play tends to be shorter in duration and about different topics than sociodramatic play. According to Harris (2000) pretence at 2 or 3 years of age is often short and fluid, although some children do create a sustained

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<sup>16</sup> also appeared as: Deunk, M., Berenst, J. & de Glopper, K. (2008). The development of early sociodramatic play. *Discourse Studies*, 10 (5): 615-633.

pretence, in the form of an imaginary friend. Also the themes of pretend play are related with age: young children are found to use mostly domestic themes in comparison to more adventurous or fantastic themes (Halliday-Scher, Urberg & Kaplan-Estrin, 1995). Sociodramatic play and metacommunication in play seem to emerge between 3;0 and 3;6 years of age. Through sociodramatic play, children can practice taking different roles and experience the outcome of varying scenarios. There are several studies focusing on aspects of sociodramatic play in children between 3 and 6 years old (see for example Blum-Kulka, Huck-Taglicht & Avni, 2004; Elias & Berk, 2002; Halliday-Scher et al., 1995; Pellegrini & Galda, 1998; Sawyer, 1993).

Character play is thus more complicated than earlier forms of pretend play, among others because it is more extended, less dependent on routines and requires more symbolic substitution. Before children start to engage in sociodramatic play, they engage in play with pretend actions and objects. Previous research has focused on either early forms of pretence or on sociodramatic play. In this paper we will focus on the transition from early pretence into sociodramatic play. Our research questions are: *what does early sociodramatic play look like and how does the transition into early sociodramatic play take place?*

## 2.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.2.1 *Interpreting pretence*

A key feature of pretend play is that it is non serious or non literal. There are different (related) models describing the distinction between here-and-now serious interaction and pretend non-serious play interaction. Harris (2000) gives an extensive account of the development of pretence. Two other important theories are Goffman's (1974) frame analysis and Clark's (1996) notion of layeredness. We will describe Harris' four features of pretence first and then turn to Goffman and Clark, whose notions are the basis of this paper.

Harris conducted several experiments to study children's appreciation of pretence (summarized in Harris, 2000). He argues that (joint) pretence consists of four elements: *pretend stipulations, causal powers, suspension of objective truth* and *unfolding causal chain*. First, the child needs to understand acts of symbolic substitution, for example tilting a teapot above a cup, means pouring tea into the cup. Second, the child needs to assume that the substituted or stipulated elements of the pretence have the same features as their real counterparts. For example, real tea is hot, so pretend tea is too and spilling pretend tea will make the floor pretend wet. Third, the child needs to ignore the 'objective' truth temporarily. For example, when pretend tea is poured in a cup, the cup is full even though the cup is really empty. Fourth, pretence actions built on each other. For example, one can drink from the (objectively

empty) teacup only after one pretended to pour tea in it and drinking the pretend tea will quench your make-believe thirst. Especially Harris' third element of pretence, suspension of objective truth, needs some elaboration, because it connects to Goffman's and Clark's ideas, which we will discuss next. Harris argues that when children are engaged in pretence, they process information in a different way and "they stop scanning the immediate environment for situations that literally fit the utterances being produced or ways to comply literally with the requests that are being made" (Harris, 2000, p.22). In addition, Harris introduces the notion of *mental flags*. He hypothesizes that children add markers for an *alternative interpretation* of the environment during the course of the play. So when a child sees someone pretend to pour tea in a cup, s/he marks the empty cup as containing tea and s/he will use this flagged information to make sense of the next action when the interaction partner pretends to drink by holding the teacup to his/her mouth. Mental flags are thus superimposed on reality.

According to Goffman (1974), frames are a device for making sense of the world. He defined frames as the principles of organization that govern (social) events and people's involvement in those events. Events can be divided in strips, which are pieces from a stream of ongoing activity. People assign meaning to otherwise meaningless events by applying primary frameworks. A *social* primary framework helps to understand events that are guided by somebody's will, aim and control. The person who is performing a social event is judged on this by social norms. The social frameworks that a group uses are part of the culture of that group. People use these frameworks to make sense of events and to interpret the world.

Primary frameworks give meaning to otherwise meaningless events, but sometimes meaningful events have to be interpreted with another meaning and that is when *keys* are used. When two children are for example playing house, a strip of domestic behavior is transformed into a strip of play. Important is that all participants know that this transformation occurred and everybody will thus be able to interpret the event as play. People can transform events and interpret transformed events correctly by using keys. A key is a set of conventions by which a given activity (which is already meaningful in itself) is transformed into something that is patterned like the original activity but is interpreted as something else. There are different kinds of keys helping to establish and interpret different kinds of transformations. The most relevant key for the current study is the key for *make believe*. Goffman categorizes *playfulness*, *fantasy* and *dramatic scriptings* as make believe. Children's pretend play is part of the subcategory fantasy.

Meaningful events can get new meaning by transformation. Each transformation adds a layer or lamination to the activity. The outermost layer (also



called the *rim* of the frame) reflects the status of the activity in the real world. The innermost layer is the most direct meaning of the event. For example when two children play house the rim is *two children engaging in pretend play* and the innermost layer is *father and mother making dinner*. Goffman's idea of layering is one of the bases of Clark's notion of layered interaction.

According to Clark (1996), pretend play is a form of layered interaction. Actions in a layered interaction can be interpreted at multiple levels. To understand the pretend play, participants must appreciate the layers and jointly imagine the 'pretend' layer. Layer 1 is the base (or real world) and layer 2 is the theatrical stage (or pretend world). More layers are possible. In Goffman's (1974) terms: layer 1 is the rim of the frame and layer 2 is a more inward layer. An example of a pretend play interaction described in layers (this example is based on an interaction we will discuss later):

Layer 1: Peggy and Alex are playing together

Layer 2: Two helpers are fixing a boat

In the real world (layer 1) Peggy and Alex are playing make believe together. In the staged pretend world (layer 2) they are two helpers fixing a boat. The actions of the children in the real world are interpreted differently in the pretend world and objects from the real world have substituted meanings in the pretend world. In other words, elements in layer 1 are treated as something else in layer 2 (they are symbolically substituted). The correspondence between the two layers is jointly negotiated and established. Also the utterances of the participants have to be interpreted in one of the multiple layers. Words can have different meaning in the different layers. Deictic elements like *I*, *you*, *here* and *now* have different meanings at different levels (Clark, 1996). For example, if Alex says *you* to Peggy he might refer to Peggy his classmate who is playing with him (layer 1) or to the helper who is fixing a boat with him (layer 2). In a fully layered pretend play interaction the layers of interaction are distinguished by *participants*, *roles*, *place*, *time*, *objects* and *actions*. In Clark's scheme, 'time' is taken literally, it indicates the (approximate) date at which the play takes place. At level 1 this is the current date, at level 2 this can be sometime in the past or present, for example in the middle ages. The reader should not confuse Clark's notion of time as the setting of the play with *imaginary past* within the unfolding play episode. Imaginary past can be used as a key to indicate that the interaction should be interpreted at the pretend level. It can also be used to distinguish specific types of talk within the pretend play episode. We will elaborate on imaginary past in the next paragraph.

### 2.2.2 Framing or staging play

When two interaction partners are involved in play, they know that their actions are to be interpreted as play and not as 'serious'. They have to understand that their interaction is layered and that some actions and utterances are to be interpreted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> pretend layer. There are ways to signal in which mode the interaction takes place. *Activity type* and *keying* are contextualizing features that give interaction partners cues as to what to expect in a conversation. In preschool, the specific activity type, such as free play or arts-and-crafts, is set by the teacher. Also factors like duration and timing of the activity and objects that are allowed to be used are usually determined by the teacher. So, being in preschool, having free play time, being in a specific location and handling specific objects, externally frames pretend play (Blum-Kulka et al., 2004; Pellegrini & Perlmutter, 1989). Activity type sets an external frame for interaction because it influences the situation in which the interaction takes place and this might influence the interaction itself.

Interaction partners can also provide cues for how to interpret the play themselves. *Keying* (Goffman, 1974), also called internal or secondary framing, is signaling how to interpret the actions in an interaction. Whereas the external frame is set by the teacher, keying is done by the interaction partners themselves (Blum-Kulka et al., 2004). A key consist of a set of conventions used for interpretation. Keying helps participants to interpret each others moves as being something different from the literal interpretation. Rekeying is shifting the nature of the interaction from a non literal interpretation to another interpretation. An interaction can for example shift from pretend play into an argument. In Clark's (1996) terms, rekeying is moving from one layer to another and according to Harris (2000), rekeying would be adding or removing mental flags.

Interaction partners in pretend play need to do more than just signaling that the interaction is to be interpreted as pretend. If they want to engage in pretend play, they need to *share* a pretend frame: they will have to construct the elements of the 2<sup>nd</sup> layer together or at least know that they will use the same pretend interpretation. Sawyer (1993) assumes that younger children approach play from their own play frame and the mutual play therefore consist of multiple frames. As children get older, they are better able to combine the individual frames and adapt them to each other. There are several metacommunicative tools to adapt different frames to each other in one play.

### 2.2.3 Pretend play and metacommunication

There are different ways of communicating ideas about the play frame. In sociodramatic play, it is important to establish and reinforce the different roles of the interaction partners. An implicit way of doing this is using character-appropriate

speech. A more explicit way is using proper names. By addressing a play partner with a certain name, a role is assigned or emphasized (Blum-Kulka et al., 2004). Using proper names can help children to structure pretend play and to adjust the play if interaction partners have different ideas about details of the play. Other ways of communicating the play frame are explicit instruction, using past tense, moving between frames and using character appropriate speech.

Older preschoolers (children around age 5) are found to explicitly signal going into pretend play by saying things like ‘let’s do as if’ and ‘let’s pretend’. These children might also use past tense verbs to indicate a pretend frame. Blum-Kulka and colleagues describe the use of *imaginary past*, based on a Hebrew paper of Henkin (1991, see Blum-Kulka, 2005; Blum-Kulka et al., 2004). Imaginary past can be used to refer to different parts of the pretend play. The authors distinguish 1) *imaginary performative-past*, used to verbalize what is currently happening in the play, for example saying “*and then I had to go to the hospital*” while walking towards the pretend hospital; 2) *imaginary future-past*, used as stage directions, for example assigning character roles by saying “*I was the baby and you were the mummy*”; and 3) *imaginary pas-past*, used to refer to the past within the pretend play, for example when one character tells another what happened some time ago within their pretend world.

#### 2.2.4 *The developmental role of pretend play*

There are different ideas on the developmental functions of pretence. Pretence is thought to play a role in socio-emotional, cognitive and language and literacy development. Pretend play gives children the opportunity to experience things they would otherwise not experience. In this new pretend world, children can experiment with language, behavior, social roles and social conventions. Through role play children can take another persons point of view and so develop their Theory of Mind and other social and emotional skills (Aronsson & Thorell, 1999; Elias & Berk, 2002; Harris, 2000; Lillard, 1993; Pramling Samuelsson & Johansson, 2006). Role play can also give children the opportunity to experiment with vocabulary and genres they might not use in their ordinary daily life (Aukrust, 2004). Pretence is also thought to be important for learning how to understand and participate in connected discourse (Harris, 2000). To process a narrative, people create a mental model of the narrated situation in their minds, using general knowledge. They take the viewpoint of the main character and adapt the model as new information is given in the narrative (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983; Zwaan, Langston & Graesser, 1995). Harris argues that children create similar mental models when they are engaging in pretend play. Pretend

play might help children to learn how to build mental models, and therefore prepare children for the later understanding of connected discourse.

### 2.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

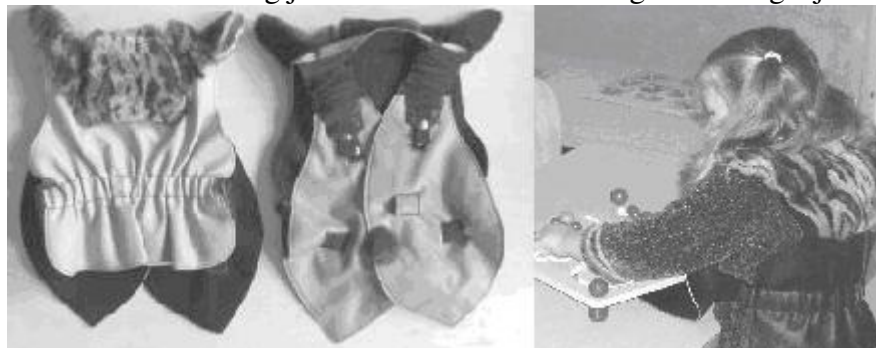
As we described in the previous paragraph, pretend play is an important activity in preschool and plays a role in socio-emotional, cognitive and language development. Despite the fact that pretend play is widely studied, to our knowledge, the development from symbolic substitution to sociodramatic play is not yet thoroughly addressed. A notable exception is made by Harris (2000). According to him, children can engage in sociodramatic play by using *simulation*. According to Simulation Theory, people explain behavior of others not by using a (folk psychology) theory, but by ‘experiencing’ how they would react themselves if they were that other person (Gordon, 1992; Harris, 1992). In sociodramatic play, the character role is created by “feeding pretend input into the child’s own knowledge and planning mechanisms” (Harris, 2000, p.35). This means that children use their understanding of pretense (which they developed at an earlier age) and combine it with their own world knowledge and they process this information in their own system to determine the reactions and behavior of the character they are pretending to be. We agree with Harris that earlier forms of pretense are important for later sociodramatic play, but instead of viewing early pretense as *input* for sociodramatic play, we propose an alternative mechanism in which early play *transforms into* sociodramatic play. We hypothesize that this transition is gradually: more and more features will be substituted, leading to sociodramatic play. To gain insight in the beginnings of sociodramatic play, we examine the pretend play interactions of a girl between 2;9 and 3;4 years old. We redefine the research questions we formulated in the introduction as follows: *what are the characteristics of early sociodramatic play?* and *what elements of pretend play are symbolically substituted in the transition into early sociodramatic play?*

### 2.4 DATA

The data used in this article are drawn from a broader study investigating pragmatic development in preschool. In this longitudinal project, 25 children are followed from 2;6 to 4;0 years old in their preschool. The children’s interactions during the day at preschool are recorded every three months. Recordings are made with a recording device that is sown into a little jacket. Individual audio recordings for every focal child and an overview video recording are made. Picture 1 shows the recording jackets from both sides (left) and a child wearing a jacket in preschool (right). The

recording device is hidden underneath the ‘fur’ at the back to make the recordings as unobtrusive as possible.

**Picture 1.** Recording jackets at both sides and a girl wearing a jacket in class



We use the pretend play interactions of “Peggy” to answer our research questions. Peggy comes from a middle to highly educated family. She has one older and two younger sisters. There were no problems in her early development, as reported by the parents in a short questionnaire. Peggy attends a preschool in a middle sized town in the North of the Netherlands which uses the literacy promoting program *Boekenpret* (related to Bookstart, Booktrust, 2009). The main aim of this program is to stimulate literacy development (van den Berg & Middel, 1996; van der Pennen, 2001). We studied Peggy’s early play during a 7 month period, from 2;9 to 3;4 years of age and described her interactions with discourse analytic concepts.

Peggy’s corpus consists of recordings of 8 mornings and afternoons in preschool. Mornings and afternoons last approximately three hours, so in total the corpus contains 24 hours of Peggy’s interactions at preschool. We have recordings of Peggy the ages 2;9, 2;11, 3;1 and 3;4. The data contain 21 episodes (total duration: 47 minutes) of interactions in which there were verbal signs of symbolic substitution. In addition there were 4 episodes (12 minutes) of solitary play in which Peggy’s verbal behavior indicated symbolic substitution. The interaction partner during the pretend play was in 8 cases a peer (29,5 minutes), in 11 cases an adult (15,5 minutes) and in 2 cases a mix of both children and an adult (2 minutes). There is a striking difference between the number and total duration of play interactions at age 2;9 and at the other ages. The corpus is summarized in table 1.

**Table 1.** Description of pretend play episodes in Peggy's corpus

Age Peggy	Nr of pretend play eps. *,**	Nr of episodes of pretend play <i>interactions</i>			
		Total	with peer	with teacher	with peers and teach.
2;9	14 (31)	12 (30)	3 (14,5)	8 (14)	1 (1)
2;11	4 (2,5)	4 (2,5)	1 (1)	2 (1)	1 (1)
3;1	3 (13,5)	2 (4)	2 (4)	0 (-)	0 (-)
3;4	4 (12)	3 (10,5)	2 (10)	1 (0,5)	0 (-)
<b>Total</b>	<b>25 (59)</b>	<b>21 (47)</b>	<b>8 (29,5)</b>	<b>11 (15,5)</b>	<b>2 (2)</b>

\* Number of pretend play episodes during two mornings and/or afternoons in preschool, in approximately 6 hours of recording.

\*\* In between brackets the total duration in minutes of the pretend play episodes<sup>17</sup>.

## 2.5 RESULTS

### 2.5.1 Layering of early pretend play

At age 2;9, Peggy engages in pretend play episodes in which she and her interaction partners use symbolic substitution. Excerpt 1 is an example of such a pretend play episode. In this excerpt, Peggy (2;9) offers her teacher Miss Laura a clay object to eat.

#### (1) "You can eat that" [Peggy (2;9), Miss Laura]

	Speaker	Transcript	Dutch Original
1	Peggy:	((holds out clay)) you can eat that	die mag je opeten
2		(0,7)	(0,7)
3	Peggy:	you can	die mag je
4	Miss L.:	(0,4) ((crouches next to Peggy.))	(0,4)
5	Peggy:	you can eat that	die mag jij opeten
6	Miss L.:	(2,1) ((pretends to eat))	(2,1)
7	Peggy:	all [of it!	hele[maal!
8	Miss L.:	[m:: tasty. ((looks at Peggy and pulls her towards herself)) yes, I ate it all, eh (.) and I will get nauseous if I'll have to eat more	[m:: lekker hoor↑ (.) ja ik heb het helemaal opgegeten hoor (.) >en anders word ik misselijk als ik nog meer moet eten

<sup>17</sup> Durations are measured in minutes, rounded per half a minute. We feel it would be unreliable to give more precise durations, since (play) interactions are fluid and it is often not clear what the exact boundaries of an interaction are. Because of the rounding on half minutes, the durations of the last three columns do not always add up exactly.

Excerpt #1 is an example of an early and relatively simple form of pretend play. The play is structured by a give-and-take routine (Deunk et al., 2007). The interaction is not fully layered. As we described earlier, Clark (1996) schematizes layering of different elements in the interaction: *participants*, *roles*, *place*, *time*, *features* and *actions*. In Peggy and Miss Laura's interaction, *features* and *actions* are substituted with a new meaning. The clay object is represented as something edible, *holding out clay* is interpreted as *offering food* and when Laura makes eating gestures, this is taken as *eating*. The elements *roles* and *place* are reinterpreted at a basic level in this interaction. The roles in the play are the routine roles of giver and taker. Also the classroom has a slightly different but not fully specified meaning: it is now a place in which food can be offered and eaten. In the real world children do not eat things in class when it is not lunchtime. The play is therefore staged in a place different from the real world classroom, but the nature of this location is not clearly established. The elements *time* and *participants* are not overtly reinterpreted in the play. Peggy is Peggy and Miss Laura is Miss Laura and the activity takes place in the here and now<sup>18</sup>. The amount of layering in excerpt 1 is schematized in table 2.

**Table 2.** Layering in excerpt 1: "You can eat that"

	<i>Real world (layer 1)</i>	<i>Pretend Play #1 "You can eat that" (layer 2)</i>
<b>Participants</b>	<i>Peggy Miss Laura</i>	Peggy Miss Laura
<b>Roles</b>	<i>Players at make-believe</i>	Giver and taker
<b>Place</b>	<i>Classroom</i>	Somewhere where food can be offered and eaten
<b>Time</b>	<i>Now</i>	Now
<b>Features/objects</b>	<i>Clay object</i>	Something edible
<b>Actions</b>	<i>Holding out clay object Making eating gestures</i>	Offering food Eating food

As we already pointed out, the participants in this excerpt do not take new specific identities or roles. Their roles in this play are divided very basically as 'giver' and 'taker'. The discourse identities (Zimmerman, 1998) of *giver* and *taker* shape the

<sup>18</sup> The play episode itself is not placed in another time than the current time. *Within* the play, Miss Laura does refer to another time: by saying *I ate it all* (line 8) she refers to her pretend act in the recent past. This use of imaginary past is interesting in the analysis of the developing pretend play, but is not relevant for the layering of the interaction, since according to Clark, the feature *time* refers to the setting of the overall pretend episode, not to tense shifts within the play.

interaction because Miss Laura and Peggy orient to these identities. Discourse identities determine what the partners are doing at a certain point in the interaction. This is linked to the moment-by-moment organization of the interaction. Taking a discourse identity implies projecting another discourse identity onto the interaction partner. For example, taking the discourse identity of *someone who does an offer* projects the identity of *someone who takes an offer* to the interaction partner. Situated identities are created on the basis of discourse identities and form a framework to which participants orient themselves in the interaction (Zimmerman, 1998). The identities of ‘giver’ and ‘taker’ can be seen as discourse identities or as very basic situated identities. The roles of ‘giver’ and ‘taker’ in the give-and-take routine could be seen as basal situated identities because the roles are constant during the interaction. However, the identities of ‘giver’ and ‘taker’ are not real character roles yet and do not have implications for other relevant acts in the interaction.

The play is not sociodramatic in nature because Peggy and Laura do not take character roles as situated identities and they do not enact a real story. Although the play is not sociodramatic, the interaction is more than just functional play. What makes the interactions pretence is the fact that objects and actions are layered. A real world object like clay is interpreted as food in the pretend layer. The same counts for actions: an action like holding out clay is interpreted as offering food. The interaction is a pretend play interaction because Miss Laura accepts Peggy’s offer and treats the clay as edible by pretending to eat it in line 6. If Miss Laura would have said something like “that’s pretty, but clay is not for eating!” the interaction would not have developed into pretend play. The play is jointly constructed because Miss Laura pretends to eat the clay. Peggy and Miss Laura use substituted objects or actions and are therefore engaging in symbolic play. They are able to jointly create the symbolic elements and stage them at layer 2 without explicitly talking about the play or organizing the pretend elements.

### 2.5.2 *Towards early sociodramatic play*

In the previous section we described how Peggy at 2;9 years old engaged in pretend play with her teacher and we showed that she is able to actively incorporate pretence elements in a joint activity. As Peggy gets older, her pretend play develops. Peggy gradually loses the need for a routine to frame her play, the possible topics of play broaden and she starts enact situated identities in her play. In the following excerpt, Peggy plays with 3-year-old Nicole. The girls are in the “house area”. Both have a toy telephone and are pretending to make a telephone call.



## (2) "Daddy on the phone" [Peggy (3;1), Nicole (3;0)]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch Original</i>
1	Peggy:	I have (still) (( <i>holds receiver to her ear, talks to Nicole</i> ))	ik heb nog
2		(0,6) (( <i>Peggy and Nicole look at each other</i> ))	(0,6)
3	Peggy:	I have	ik heb
4		(1,1)	(1,1)
5	Peggy:	I have (.) daddy on the phone	ik heb (.) >papa aan de lijn
6		(2,9) (( <i>Peggy and Nicole look at each other. Nicole takes a receiver and holds it to her ear</i> ))	(2,9)
7	Nicole:	(and) I (m) have my mummy	(e) (.) ik m heb mijn mama
8		(1,5)	(1,5)
9	Peggy:	I have my mummy on the phone too	ik heb mijn: mama ook >aan de lijn<
10		(7,7) (( <i>Peggy and Nicole are standing with the receivers at their ears. After a while Peggy starts pushing the buttons of her phone</i> ))	(7,7)
11	Nicole:	thanks [[unclear]] (( <i>puts down receiver</i> ))	dan(k u weer)
12	Peggy:	yes (( <i>puts down receiver</i> ))	ja

Peggy initiates the pretend interaction by telling Nicole that she has her daddy on the phone. The realistic prop (the telephone) is relatively easy to use in the pretend play. Saying you have your parent on the phone however requires a more difficult 'ideational' transformation (imagining instead of substituting). Nicole accepts Peggy's initiation by performing a similar action: she takes another phone and tells Peggy she has her mother on the phone. Peggy replies that she has her mother too. The children add coherence to their interaction by using repetition and by varying each others utterances (Budwig et al., 1986). Nicole closes the episode by putting down the receiver. Peggy accepts this action by imitating Nicole's action and agreeing verbally. The children have no chance to reinitiate the play or to shift the topic because Miss Laura announces they will have lunch and with that she rekeys the situation and externally closes it.

Objects and actions are symbolically substituted in excerpt 2, like in excerpt 1. Peggy and Nicole pretend the phones are real working phones and by holding the receivers to their ears they are pretending to be calling. Peggy and Nicole are still ‘themselves’ in the play and the roles they take are not fully defined, although the identity of ‘caller’ influences their actions in the play. The identity of ‘caller’ is more fully defined than the identities of ‘giver’ and ‘taker’ in excerpt 1, but is still rather basic and unspecific. The location of the play is substituted in a basic way, like in excerpt 1. In the play, the house area is a place where one can make phone calls, whereas in the real life classroom, the children cannot make phone calls. The layering in the 2<sup>nd</sup> play fragment is summarized in table 3.

**Table 3.** Layering in excerpt #2: “Daddy on the phone”

	<i>Real world (layer 1)</i>	<i>Play #2 “Daddy on the phone” (layer 2)</i>
<b>Participants</b>	<i>Peggy Nicole</i>	Peggy Nicole
<b>Roles</b>	<i>Players at make-believe</i>	‘callers’
<b>Place</b>	<i>Classroom, house area</i>	Somewhere where you can make phone calls
<b>Time</b>	<i>Now</i>	Now
<b>Features/objects</b>	<i>Real phone for play</i>	Working phone
<b>Actions</b>	<i>Holding receiver to ear</i>	Calling daddy/mummy

### 2.5.3 Early sociodramatic play

In the previous section we described how Peggy engages in pretend play interactions and how she increasingly substitutes elements in her play. In the following fragment, Peggy engages in pretend play in which she and her partner create some kind of a storyline and in which they are not ‘themselves’ but play they are somebody else. In this fragment, Peggy (3;4) and Alex (3;7) are engaging in sociodramatic play. They are playing together at an indoor climbing object and pretend the climbing object is a boat they have to fix. It is the day after the Dutch national celebration of ‘St. Nicolas’, a saint similar to Santa Claus. St. Nicolas arrives in the Netherlands from Spain by boat. He gives children presents and has helpers called ‘Piet’. Peggy and Alex are playing they are Pieties who are fixing St. Nicolas’ boat.

**(3a)** “Fixing the boat”, excerpt “Thanks Piet” [Peggy (3;4), Alex (3;7)]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch Original</i>
1	Peggy:	can I have the drill?	mag ik de boor ehen?
2	Alex:	(0,6) (( <i>turns towards Peggy</i> ))	(0,6)
3	Alex:	ye:s	ja:
4	Alex:	(0,5) (( <i>gives Peggy the drill</i> ))	(0,5)
5	Peggy:	thanks	dankje
6	Peggy:	(0,4) (( <i>takes the drill</i> ))	(0,4)
7	Peggy:	Piet	Piet
8	Peggy:	(1,4) (( <i>starts to drill</i> ))	(1,4)
9	Alex:	er (.) you have to	ey (.) jij moet
10		(0,5)	(0,5)
11	Alex:	say thanks (.) climbing-piet	dank je (.) klimpiet zeggen
12	Peggy:	(0,5) (( <i>looks at Alex</i> ))	(0,5)
13	Peggy:	thanks cimbing-piet	dank je kimpiet

Peggy and Alex are playing they are fixing St. Nicolas' boat. They are not fixing the boat as themselves, but as St. Nicolas' helpers. By addressing Alex with 'Piet' (line 7), Peggy reinforces Alex' role in the play. By doing this she helps to construct Alex' situated identity. In other words, Peggy and Alex are substituting Alex' 1<sup>st</sup> layer identity with the pretend identity of 'Piet' and by saying “thanks Piet” to Alex, Peggy reinforces the *roles* they play. Alex accepts this role/identity, but his play frame appears to be slightly different from Peggy's: in his mind he is not just a Piet, but he is a special climbing-Piet. In lines 9-11, we can see how using proper names can help children to structure pretend play and to adjust it, if interaction partners have different ideas about details of the play. It also illustrates how children can create a shared play frame by explicit instruction. Alex explicitly tells Peggy what she has to say (“you have to say thanks climbing-Piet”). Alex thus interrupts the play in order to give his instruction. Peggy accepts this instruction and repairs her previous utterance by now saying “thanks climbing-Piet” instead of “thanks Piet”.

Peggy and Alex not only take local discourse identities in this interaction, but also situated identities. Alex' situated identity as climbing-Piet is constant during the interaction and influences what is relevant for him to do. The pretend situated identity or role shapes the interaction and turns the pretend play into sociodramatic play.

Fragment 3 “Fixing the boat” is not only distinct from the fragments 1 and 2 because of the character roles, but the play is also more extended. In another segment of the interaction 3 “Fixing the boat” we can see that the substitution of objects is more advanced than in the previous interactions.

**(3b)** “Fixing the boat”, excerpt “Thermometer” [Peggy (3;4), Alex (3;7)]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Original</i>
57	Alex:	can I have something?	mag ik wat hebben?
58	Alex:	(0,3) (( <i>lies on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and reaches down</i> ))	(0,3)
59	Peggy:	which one then?	welke dan?
60		(0,3)	(0,3)
61	Alex:	er (.) that pliers	e:m (.) die tang
62		(7,3) (( <i>Peggy gives Alex a wrench and Alex starts to tinker</i> ))	(7,3)
63		... ( <i>14 lines skipped. During this period Alex tinkers and Peggy saws. After a while Alex throws down his wrench, which falls behind Peggy. Alex then asks Peggy for the drill, which he uses for a short while and then gives back to her</i> ).	...
78	Alex:	can I have	mag ik even
79		(0,5)	(0,5)
80	Alex:	the	de
81		(0,5)	(0,5)
82	Alex:	thermometer?	thermometer?
83		(0,6) (( <i>Peggy looks up to Alex.</i> ))	(0,6)
84	Peggy:	thermometer? (.) where is it then?	thermometer? (.) waar is die dan?
85		(0,3) (( <i>Alex looks down</i> ))	(0,3)
86	Alex:	er there	em daar
87		(0,5)	(0,5)
88	Alex:	behind you	achter je
89	Peggy:	(1,2) (( <i>turns and takes the wrench.</i> ))	(1,2)
90	Peggy:	this one?	dehe?
91	Peggy	(1,1) (( <i>shows the wrench</i> ))	(1,1)
92	Alex	y::es (.) that therm:ometer	j::a (.) die therm:ometer

The play interaction of Peggy and Alex is a nice example of the increasing complexity of symbolic substitution of objects. In fragment 1, Peggy and Miss Laura substituted a

clay object for something edible. In fragment 2, Peggy and Nicole made the relatively easy substitution of a toy phone for a real phone. In fragment 3, Peggy and Alex start out with an easy substitution when they take the toy wrench to be a pliers, but just a few turn later they assign a *new* meaning to the same toy wrench and call it a thermometer now: Peggy asks: “this one?” and shows the wrench and Alex replies: “yes (.) that thermometer” (lines 90-92). Peggy and Alex thus show to be quite flexible in the symbolic substitutions they use in their play. The layering in the play interaction #3 is summarized in table 4.

**Table 4.** Layering in fragment 3: “Fixing the boat”

	<i>Real world (layer 1)</i>	<i>Play #3 (layer 2)</i>
<b>Participants</b>	<i>Peggy</i> <i>Alex</i>	Piet Climbing-Piet
<b>Roles</b>	<i>Players at make-believe</i>	Piets fixing St. Nicolas’ boat
<b>Place</b>	<i>Classroom, indoor climbing object</i>	At St. Nicolas’ boat
<b>Time</b>	<i>Now</i>	Now (?)
<b>Features/objects</b>	<i>Climbing object</i> <i>Toy wrench</i> <i>Toy drill</i>	St. Nicolas’ boat Pliers / thermometer Drill
<b>Actions</b>	<i>Holding drill to the balustrade</i> <i>Twisting toy pliers at the balustrade</i>	Drilling Fixing the boat

#### 2.5.4 Development of layering

The play in fragment 3, “Fixing the boat”, differs from play #1, “You can eat that”, in the way certain elements are interpreted at the pretend level. First of all, in the third play, Peggy and Alex take the new identities of ‘Piet’, whereas Peggy and Miss Laura were themselves in play #1. Also the definition of roles is different: in the first play Peggy and Miss Laura take the general routine roles of giver and taker and in the third play Peggy and Alex take the specific roles of Piets fixing St. Nicolas’ boat. The location of the play is defined differently too: in the first play the classroom is redefined as a place where one can offer and eat food; in the third play climbing object in the classroom is reinterpreted as being a boat. The differences in layering between the first and the third play interaction are summarized in table 5. We make the development in layering more clear by adding play #2, “Daddy on the phone”, as an intermediate level. In table 5 we show for each play interaction whether certain features are interpreted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> pretend level.

**Table 5.** Layering of the three pretend play episodes

	<i>Play #1</i>	<i>Play #2</i>	<i>Play #3</i>
	<i>“You can eat that”</i>	<i>“Daddy on the phone”</i>	<i>“Fixing the boat”</i>
	<i>Peggy 2;9</i>	<i>Peggy 3;1</i>	<i>Peggy 3;4</i>
<b>Participants</b>	-*	-	+
<b>Roles</b>	--/+	-/+	+
<b>Place</b>	--/+	-/+	+
<b>Time</b>	-	-	- (?)
<b>Features/objects</b>	+	+	+
<b>Actions</b>	+	+	+

\* Signs indicate whether or not the specific feature is interpreted at the 2<sup>nd</sup> pretend level

Peggy and her interaction partners show substitution of features, objects and actions in all three plays. Apparently Peggy masters the layering of these features already at 2;9. We can see development in the layering of the participants: in the first two interactions Peggy, Miss Laura and Nicole are *themselves* in the play. In the third play, Peggy and Alex are not themselves, but they pretend to be Piets. Related to the layering of the participants, the roles gradually get more clear in these three plays. In play #1, Peggy and Miss Laura take the very general roles of giver and taker. In play #2, the roles are still general, but more specific than in the previous play: Peggy and Nicole are calling their parents, they are ‘callers’. In play #3 the roles are specific: Peggy and Alex are Piet and Climbing Piet. The staging of the play gradually gets more substituted too. In play #1, the play takes place somewhere where food can be offered and eaten. Normally one does not eat during free play in preschool, which indicates that there is a substitution of place. But although the classroom is substituted for a place where one can offer and eat food, the substitution is not clearly specified. Place is slightly more specified in the second play: Peggy and Nicole are somewhere where they can call their parents. The third play has the most specified substituted place: Peggy and Alex are not on the climbing object in the classroom, but on St. Nicolas’ boat. Place is layered in all three play interactions, because the play can not take place in the ordinary classroom with its ordinary features and rules, but the interactions differ in how specifically the 2<sup>nd</sup> meaning of place is realized. It is difficult to say something about time, possibly because Clark’s interpretation of this feature is broad: it’s about the setting of the entire play episode, not about use of past within the pretend world. The general timing of the play episode is often unspecified. Play interaction #3 has the most specific timing, because Saint Nicolas is only in the Netherlands for a couple of weeks in November and December. Peggy and Alex’s

play takes place one day after Saint Nicolas returned to Spain, so the time of layer 1 seems to be more or less the same as the time of layer 2. However, in the absence of an explicit pretend narrative, it is difficult to place the pretend play in a different time than the current time, although it is a 'virtual' current time.

## 2.6 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

To understand pretend play, children have to interpret actions, objects and events as pretence. The pretence is like a separate world within real world which gives different meanings to elements of the real world. A pretend interaction consists of frames or layers. The layeredness means that elements in the interaction have one meaning in the real world and another in the pretend world. Interaction partners know which meaning or interpretation to use during the interaction. The following elements of an interaction could be interpreted with a substituted meaning: *participants, roles, place, time, objects* and *actions*. In sociodramatic play, participants and roles get an explicit new interpretation. In early pretend play, children do not reinterpret characters in the pretend layer and they do not have specific reinterpretations for other elements of the situation like roles, time and place. In early pretend play only actions, objects and events are substituted or imagined and only local discourse identities are placed in the pretend layer. Later, children can take roles, which offers an orientation for what they can do in the interaction. In other words, by constructing situated identities in the pretend layer, children can create sociodramatic play.

The elements *participants, roles* and *place* are interpreted with a new meaning in sociodramatic play. Play interactions of Peggy from 2;9 to 3;4 years old show how play with symbolic substitution can develop into sociodramatic play. At a younger age, Peggy engages in pretend play, which is not sociodramatic play yet, because she does not use symbolic substitution for participants and roles. However, the beginnings of substitutions are seen in Peggy's pretend play interactions, especially in the elements *roles* and *place*. The interactions show how Peggy and her interaction partners can engage in pretend play where the roles and place do not have their real world meaning anymore, but do not have an explicit new meaning either.

The more complex pretend play becomes, the more interactional practices children will need to manage their play. One of the reasons for pretend play to become more complex is that children start to interpret not only local discourse acts but also situated identities in the pretend layer. The pretend situated identities help children to focus on a set of relevant actions. The more pretend elements are involved and the less routinized the play is, the more need will arise for directing and organizing the play by metacommunication. Specific characters, roles and situations are hard to establish by simple referring and showing. In addition, sociodramatic play

involves a more complex story, which means it takes more effort to keep individual play frames adapted to each other. In other words, early pretend play is relatively simple and structured because children only use their discourse identities in the pretend play and thus only assign a new meaning to objects and their local acts. When pretend play develops, children start to take roles and interpret their situated identities in the pretend layer. Situated identities allow for a range of possible acts and a sociodramatic story line. The pretend play interactions children have at younger ages form the basis for their later episodes of sociodramatic play.

Pretend play is a widely studied topic, but the transition from early forms of symbolic substitution into sociodramatic play is not often addressed. One possible relation between early play and later sociodramatic play is that early pretend play may be used as input for acting out a character role. In this paper we propose an alternative view of the relation between early play and later role play. We showed how early pretend play is extended and gradually builds up into sociodramatic play and thus how early pretense is the basis for sociodramatic play.





### 3. EMERGENT LITERACY IN PRESCHOOL: THE NATURE OF MUNDANE LITERACY EVENTS<sup>19</sup>

#### ABSTRACT

In this paper we examine the quantity and nature of literacy experiences of 13 children between 2;6 and 4;0 years old in preschool. One of the ways children encounter literacy is by *mundane literacy events*: spontaneous interactions about reading environmental text, writing names or short messages, or book use that are embedded in relevant and familiar activities. Mundane literacy events are contexts for situated learning and can create a rich opportunities for learning. The strength of mundane literacy events is their opportunity for legitimate peripheral participation: they provide an opportunity for children to take part in genuine practices of the literate community.

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs can be used in preschools, nurseries, daycare institutions and kindergarten to stimulate children's development. ECE programs provide guidelines for teacher behavior, daily schedules and classroom setup in an aim to offer children a "rich" environment, and experiences that might differ from the ones children encounter at home. These experiences are important for the social-emotional and cognitive development of children (Kontos, Burchinal, Howes, Wisseh & Galinsky, 2002; Leseman et al., 2001; Smith & Dickinson, 1994).

One of the focal topics in ECE is *emergent literacy*. Emergent literacy is a broad concept: it includes becoming aware of literacy in the environment, learning about the features and use of written language, and experiencing personal relevance of literacy. Children who experience written language in joint interactions at an early age can form ideas about the use and function of reading, writing and text. This informal knowledge about literacy is an important basis for later formal reading and writing instruction and further literacy development (Bus, IJzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995; Duke & Purcell-Gates, 2003; Neuman & Roskos, 1997; Teale & Sulzby, 1986b).

Emergent literacy is stimulated in different ways in preschools. In the United States, for example, the National Reading Panel recommends preschools to train skills like phonemic awareness and sound-to-letter mapping (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). The problem with these activities is that children may not see the *relevance* of the tasks. Furthermore, children may have difficulties making the connection to their informal, everyday knowledge about

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<sup>19</sup> Submitted; some of the data in this chapter are used in: Deunk, M.I. (2007). Emergent literacy in everyday preschool interactions. *Toegepaste taalwetenschap in artikelen*, 77: 103-112.

literacy. It is therefore useful to provide alternative ways of stimulating emergent literacy. Preschools could try to engage children in more relevant literacy stimulating activities, for example by designing special play areas. These areas could be familiar contexts where literacy practices are used, like at a post office, a fast-food restaurant and a doctor's office (Neuman & Roskos, 1997). In this paper we will illustrate a third way of stimulating emergent literacy, namely by *informal learning* facilitated by genuine literacy practices that spontaneously occur during the child's activities in preschool. We will analyze these spontaneous, mundane literacy activities and describe their occurrence and functionality in early childhood literacy development.

## 3.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 3.2.1 *Situated learning*

Letting children experience and practice literacy in daily life is important for the development of later literacy skills. There is a positive relationship between the amount of early literacy experiences at home, the level of parental education and children's later scores on reading achievement measures (PIRLS, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, Mullis, Martin, Kennedy & Foy, 2007). Literacy is everywhere; it often occurs as a component of every day social events, such as making a grocery list. Virtually all children from modern societies encounter these literacy events and environmental print in their homes, although families may differ in the opportunities they create for their children to learn from this informal literacy (Barton, 1994; Leseman & de Jong, 2000; Teale, 1986). The importance of learning by being part of a community where literacy is a highly valued practice is stressed by researchers like Lave and Wenger and Gee.

Lave and Wenger (1991) use the concept *legitimate peripheral participation* (also see Wenger, 1998) to describe the way children or novices learn the practices of a community and become part of this community. The term *legitimate* refers to the status of the newcomer: the members of the community accept the child and treat him or her as a potential member. *Periphery* is opposite to central and is 'an approximation of full participation that gives exposure to actual practice' (Wenger, 1998, p.100). This means that the activities of the child are genuine, but the practice is facilitated, for example by providing help or allowing the child to take more time. In the periphery, the child takes part in the practices of the community, but is not subjected to all the demands of the community.

Learning can be natural, cultural or formal. According to Gee (2004), learning to read and write is a cultural form of learning, accomplished through participation in the practices of a community than through formal instruction in educational settings. He argues that children coming from environments where reading and writing is

relevant and valued will learn to read more easily than children who come from communities where literacy is less used and considered to be less important. Literacy development is a cultural process; it does not develop naturally, so children have to learn it from their environment. To stimulate literacy development, it is therefore important to make young children members of communities where reading and writing is a relevant part of daily life. Preschool classrooms, as the link between home and formal educational settings, could form such communities.

Duke and Purcell-Gates (2003) studied different ways of using literacy (“genres”) that children encounter at home and at school at the age of 6. They found that most genres are either only used at home or only used at school. This means that children may not be able to use their home literacy experiences in the school setting. Examples of genres that occurred at home as well as in school are: *names, labels, children’s books, individual words and letters* and *lists*. The authors stress the importance of building on the children’s home literacy knowledge to stimulate literacy development in schools. Preschool education may be a context in which children can use their home literacy knowledge and can familiarize themselves with literacy genres used in school.

### 3.2.2 *Emergent literacy in early childhood education*

Dutch preschools mainly try to stimulate early literacy by emphasizing book reading: teachers (interactively) read picture books, children have free access to books in the classroom and can take books home to read with their parents.

Book reading is indeed important in stimulating early literacy. Mother’s talk during book reading is more dense, has a greater vocabulary and is less regulatory than their talk in other settings (Weizman & Snow, 2001). Furthermore, effects of maternal education and/or social economic status are smaller during book reading than in other settings like meal time (Hoff, 2003). From joint reading interactions, children learn that pictures and text are meaningful and can be related to real world experiences. Children also learn about the relevant aspects and conventions of book reading, for example about the structure of a book and a page, the structure of a story, the relationship between pictures and story components, how to hold a book and how to turn pages. Reading also provides children with knowledge about specific genres, increases vocabulary and adds to more general knowledge. In addition, joint book reading can be a setting for *decontextualized talk*. This is talk about non present topics, for example about someone who is not present, about past experiences or about a hypothetical situation (Berenst, 2006; Goodman, 1986; Leseman, 1998; Pellegrini & Galda, 1998; Smith & Dickinson, 1994; Snow & Ninio, 1986).

We acknowledge the importance of book reading as a curricular activity in preschools. However, in this paper we would like to examine other, more informal ways of stimulating emergent literacy. We would like to focus on literacy events which are relevant for the child and in which the child can take the initiative. The aim of this paper is to study preschool interactions in which children and teachers share knowledge and ideas and focus on different aspects of reading, writing and text. This leads to the following research question:

*What is the nature of interactionally constructed mundane literacy events?*

### 3.3 DATA

The data presented here are drawn from a broader study investigating pragmatic development in preschool. In this longitudinal project, 25 children are followed from approximately 2;6 to 4;0 years old in their preschool. The children's interactions during their day at preschool are recorded every three months. Recordings are made with a recording device that is sewn into a little jacket (see Picture 1). The recording device is hidden underneath the 'fur' at the back to make the recordings as unobtrusive as possible. Both individual audio recordings for every focal child and an overview video recording are made.

The data were gathered in four preschools, located in middle sized towns in the North of the Netherlands. Three of the preschools use the literacy promoting program *Boekenpret* (a program related to Booktrust, see Moore & Wade, 2003 for a review) The main aim of this program is to stimulate literacy development in preschool and at home (van den Berg & Middel, 1996; van der Pennen, 2001). Two preschools also use the educational program *Piramide*, a curriculum of thematic projects in which children learn through playful exploration and in which individual extensive tutoring is available when necessary (van Kuyk, 2000). One preschool uses the educational program *Kaleidoscoop*, a Dutch version of High/Scope (Schweinhart, 2004).

We extracted 84 recordings from the PRACTING corpus. Each recording consists of the activities and interactions of one child during one morning or afternoon while in preschool, during approximately 2½ hours. The recordings are transcribed using Jeffersonian conventions (Jefferson, 1984). We made a selection of the recordings of 13 children (6 girls and 7 boys) at different ages, ranging from 2;4 to 3;11 years old. This collection captures in total 210 hours of recording. An overview of the collection is summarized in appendix C.

**Picture 1.** Two girls wearing recording jackets in class



### 3.4 RESULTS

#### 3.4.1 Literacy events in preschool

We analyzed the recordings in our collection and selected every interaction that contained elements of literacy. Barton defined *literacy events* as “all sorts of occasions in everyday life where the written word has a role” (Barton, 1994, p.36). Literacy events are in other words interactions in which reading, writing and text come up in any way. Examples of literacy events include being read to, picking a loan book, writing a name on a drawing and talking about environmental print. In our collection we found a total of 136 literacy events; this is on average 0,65 literacy event per hour<sup>20</sup> The frequency of events for individual children varied: the number of literacy events that a child experienced during a morning or afternoon at preschool ranged from 0 to 5.

These 136 literacy events found in our corpus can be categorized into 4 different types. The most frequent literacy event is when the teacher reads to the children, either to the whole group, to a small group or individually. The second type of literacy event is the activity of picking a book to borrow. The third event is a child ‘reading’ to him or herself. The fourth type of events are mundane, spontaneous interactions about literacy. The distribution of the different types of literacy events are given in table 2. A more detailed overview, of the occurrences per child is given in appendix C.

The most common way to encounter literacy in preschool is when the teacher reads to the children: 79 of the 136 literacy events (58%) are events of joint picture

<sup>20</sup> For comparison, Purcell-Gates (1996) studied literacy events in the homes of 4- to 6-year olds and found on average 1,16 literacy events per hour, dropping to 0,76 when only events with actual reading or writing were considered.

book reading, in which the teacher reads to the whole group 42 times (31%) and to a small group 37 times (27%). The event of picking a loan book (28 times, 21%) is an element of the ECE program ‘Boekenpret’ (van der Pennen, 2001). Preschools using this program let children take home a book once a week to read with their parents<sup>21</sup>. When children ‘read’ themselves (11 times, 8%), they flip through a book, look at the pictures and sometimes accompany their reading with talk. This is typically an individual activity without interaction with peers or the teacher. The fourth type of literacy events are the *mundane literacy events*. These are spontaneous interactions about literacy that arise during other activities. In the remainder of this paper we will focus on these mundane interactions.

**Table 1.** Number of events containing elements of literacy, divided by type

<i>Type of literacy event</i>	<i>Nr of literacy events (%)</i>
1. Teacher reads a book	79 (58%)
a. to the whole group	42 (31%)
b. to a small group (or individually)	37 (27%)
2. Child picks a loan book	28 (21%)
3. Child ‘reads’ him/herself	11 ( 8%)
4. Mundane literacy event	18 (13%)
<i>Total</i>	<i>136</i>

### 3.4.2 Mundane literacy events

When literacy events arise during ordinary activities in preschool and are embedded in the child’s ongoing activity, it is very likely that the interaction is *relevant* to the child. Children know relevant literacy events from their home environments. Everyday literacy experiences are provided by home literacy genres, like comic books, print in games, newspapers and mail (Duke & Purcell-Gates, 2003), text and cartoons on cereal boxes (Lynch, 2008) and, as Wells (1986) described more than two decades ago, looking up a program in the television guide. Watching television programs, surfing on the internet and playing video games can provide relevant literacy experiences as well (Gee, 2003; 2004).

Teale found that children from low-income families primarily encounter literacy in day-to-day life: “For the most part, reading or writing functioned not as isolated events but as components of the social activities of the persons in their homes and communities” (Teale, 1986, p.184). Barton (1994) stresses the importance of mundane literacy events, where literacy is part of other activities, for example when making a grocery list. In these types of activities, literacy is not the goal and many of

<sup>21</sup> See chapter 4

the activities may not even be meant for children, but since children are part of the household practice, they are part of these mundane literate activities anyway. Through mundane literacy events, children are exposed to the literacy practices of a community and through legitimate peripheral participation in this literate community, they will develop their own literacy practices.

Mundane literacy events in preschool do not occur very often: we found only 18 instances in our total of 136 literacy events. We can distinguish three topics within the mundane literacy activities, roughly described as: *reading*, *writing* and *use of books*. Mundane interactions about reading (4 cases) are about reading environmental print or signs, for example when a child points the teacher's attention to a nametag. Mundane interactions about writing (7 cases) are almost always about writing the child's name (or in one case a one-line message). Teachers often do the act of writing, but we see also examples of children trying to write themselves. Mundane interactions about the use of books (7 cases) are about rules and routines in the use of books and about expressing the willingness to read a book. Within this category we see children for example acting out a bedtime story routine, or arguing about who can read which book.

The set of mundane literacy events in our selection is limited but the interactions can still be characterized generally. First, all instances take place inside the classroom, not during outside play. More specifically, half of the instances take place at the arts-and crafts table, often during crafts activities or transfer moments. A transfer moment is the period when the group shifts from one activity to another, for example when finishing up lunch time or when a crafts activity is being prepared. All the mundane literacy events about writing in our selection occur during crafts activities. During the literacy events, both the teacher and other children can be the child's interaction partner. The initiative of the interaction can be taken by all the interaction partners: by the child him- or herself, by the teacher or by a peer. When we only consider teacher-child interactions, the child takes the initiative 6 out of 10 times. We can conclude from these numbers that the child has as frequent an opportunity to initiate mundane literacy events as the teacher. Finally, the duration of the mundane literacy events is short: on average 58 seconds, ranging from 12 seconds to just over 4 minutes. Out of 210 hours of recording, we found 17½ minutes of mundane literacy events, approximately one thousandth. An overview of the characteristics of the mundane literacy events is given in appendix D.

Our collection also demonstrates the richness of mundane literacy events. Mundane interaction can arise during reading (when a child notices environmental text), writing (e.g. when a teacher helps a child to write her name), and use of books. We analyzed each of these situations.



*Mundane literacy events about reading.*

Our selection consists of four mundane literacy events about reading. In three cases a child notices text and talks about this with the teacher (once with a peer as well) and in one case a teacher and a child check something on a list. The knowledge of the teacher is important in these interactions, since she is the one who can actually read. The teacher provides the children with access to the content of the text and this can create a rich context for children to experience literacy. We will illustrate this with an example interaction of Raoul (3;6), who is involved in a coloring activity, with Miss Diana and some other children.

**(1) “Hema” [Raoul (3;6), Melanie (2;4), Marcel (2;5), Assistant Diana]**

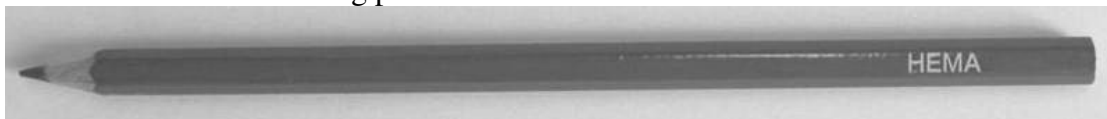
	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Raoul:	hm color	hm kleur
2	Melanie:	blue!	blauw!
3	Ass. D.:	yes there you’ve got ↑light blue Melanie, well done=	ja daar heb je ↑lichtblauw Melanie, goed zo=
4	Marcel:	=(( <i>coughs</i> ))	=(( <i>coughs</i> ))
5	Ass. D.:	gosh Marcel (.) that’s a cough	hai Marcel (.) wat moet jij hoesten
6	Raoul:	this is another (light), look	dis nog een (licht), kijk
7	Raoul:	(1,7) (( <i>holds up pencil</i> ))	(1,7)
8	Raoul:	look! (( <i>leans over to Miss Diana</i> ))	kijk!
9		(1,1)	(1,1)
10	Raoul:	look! (( <i>leans closer. Miss Diana looks at the pencil</i> ))	kijk!
11	Ass. D.:	that’s <u>purple</u>	dat is <u>paars</u>
12	Raoul:	look (( <i>points to text at pencil</i> ))	kijk
13		(1,0)	(1,0)
14	Ass. D.:	yes it says- it says <u>Hema</u> (( <i>points to text at pencil</i> ))	ja daar staat- daar staat <u>Hema</u>
15	Raoul:	Hema?	Hema?
16	Ass. D.:	<u>Hema</u>	<u>Hema</u>
17	Raoul:	yes?	ja?
18	Ass. D.:	yes	ja
19	Raoul:	have (bought)?	heb e koch?

During the activity of coloring, assistant Diana and the children are naming the colors of the pencils they use. Melanie identifies a pencil as blue, and assistant Diana rewards her by saying *yes there you've got light blue Melanie, well done* (line 3). A little while later, Raoul takes a pencil and tries to get assistant Diana's attention by holding out the pencil, saying 'look' and leaning over to her (lines 6-10). Miss Diana is still under the impression that they are naming colors and she says that the pencil is purple (line 11). This is not what Raoul is after. Apparently his focus is on the text *Hema* on the pencil. Hema is a well-known Dutch shop for everyday household items and clothing. Picture 2 shows a coloring pencil with the Hema brand name. Raoul tries to orient assistant Diana to this text by saying 'look' again and pointing to the text on the pencil (line 12). With this repetition, Raoul re-initiates his attention getting. Assistant Diana treats his utterance as an other-initiated self-repair (Schegloff, 2007) and repairs by pointing to the text on the pencil and saying *yes it says- it says Hema* (line 14). This is what Raoul wanted to know, because he makes no further attempts to direct assistant Diana's attention to the pencil. Instead, he initiates a couple of non minimal post expansions (Schegloff, 2007), which project an agreement by assistant Diana (lines 15-18: R: *Hema?* Miss D: *Hema* R: *yes?* Miss D: *yes*).

It is interesting to note that Raoul reacts to the *content* of the text and not to the text itself, as indicated by his final remark *have (bought)?* (line 19). His orientation to the content of the text and the implication of its position on the pencil is evident from his final remark. With *have (bought)*, Raoul is referring to buying. This means he understood that the word *Hema* on the pencil has something to do with the shop Hema and with buying things there.

What is particularly interesting about this example is that Raoul wants to know something (he wants information about the print on the pencil) and persists in getting his teacher to give him the information he needs. When assistant Diana provides him with this information, he *uses* it to make an inference about the meaning of the text. Raoul needed assistant Diana's input (*it says Hema*, line 14) to say something about buying. In this way Raoul created a context for learning: he needed information, made sure he got it from his teacher and acted upon it.

**Picture 2.** A Hema coloring pencil



#### *Mundane literacy events about writing*

In our selection we also had 7 cases of mundane literacy events about *writing*. Five cases were about writing a name on a drawing or artwork. Writing a name on an

artwork is a relevant activity for children. Five-year-old children spontaneously write their names on their drawings (Yang & Noel, 2006). In our preschool data sometimes the teacher and sometimes the child suggests writing the name and does the act of writing. The two other cases in our selection are about different types of text. In one case the teacher writes a short message for a child (we will describe this case in paragraph 3.4.3) and in the other case a child wants to paint on a newspaper, which was used as a placemat during a free paint activity. Mundane literacy events about writing are particularly interesting because emergent writing is less emphasized in the preschool curriculum than emergent reading (Bus, 1995) and 3-year-olds may therefore not experience many relevant interactions about writing.

We will illustrate the mundane literacy events about writing with Peggy (3;4) who writes her own name. This activity is initiated by the teacher, Miss Laura. In a proper teacher-initiated mundane literacy event, the teacher is sensitive to the child and initiates a literacy practice at a relevant moment. When the literacy practice is indeed relevant to the child, the child may extend the interaction him- or herself. This is exactly what happens in excerpt 2. We will discuss three parts of the interaction, which lasts for over 4 minutes.

The excerpt starts when Miss Laura finishes a name writing activity with Alex. She praises him and reads what he wrote (*well done! (1,1) <A:lex!*, line 1-3). Miss Laura then turns to Peggy and asks her whether she would like to write her name too (line 7). Notice how Nicole hears this and tries to get Miss Laura to help her as well (*me too Miss Aura*, line 8), but she does not get a response as Miss Laura stays involved in her interaction with Peggy. Overhearer contributions can be useful in the social construction of literacy practices in the classroom and Miss Laura could have tried to actively involve Nicole in her dyad with Peggy, but she did not. Nicole's request is interesting because it shows that children can be aware of other interactions in the classroom. Overhearer participants are paying active attention to the interaction they are overhearing, which means learning can occur for children in more peripheral positions as well (Larson, 1999).

(2a) "Name" [Peggy (3;4), Nicole, (3;2), Miss Laura]

*Setting: some children are making free crafts by gluing colored shapes on a sheet of paper. Miss Laura has helped Alex to write his name on his sheet.*

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Miss L.:	well done! ((to Alex))	heel goed!
2		(1,1)	(1,1)
3	Miss L.:	<A:lex! ((reads))	<A:lex!
4		(1,8)	(1,8)
5	Miss L.:	okay	oke
6		(0,8)	(0,8)
7	Miss L.:	>Peggy did you want to write your name on it too?	>Peggy wou je ook zelf je naam d'rop schrijven?
8	Nicole:	me too miss Aura	ikke ook juf Aura
9	Miss L.:	>shall I show you first?	>moet ik het nog even voordoen eerst?
10		(1,1)	(1,1)
11	Peggy:	yes=	ja=
12	Miss L.:	=how it should be?	=hoe 't moet?
13		(1,4) ((Miss Laura writes down Peggy's name on a separate sheet))	(1,4)
14	Miss L.:	this one you need to write	deze moet je schrijven
15		(0,8)	(0,8)
16	Miss L.:	and that one	en die

In this excerpt, Miss Laura takes numerous initiatives: she suggests the activity (*Peggy did you want to write your name on it too?*, line 7), offers help (*shall I show you first?* line 9; *how it should be?*, line 12) and gives instructions (*this one you need to write* (0,8) and *that one*, lines 14-16). Peggy's role is responsive. She does not give a verbal agreement in reaction to Miss Laura's invitation, although she might have nodded. When Miss Laura asks Peggy whether she should give instructions (*shall I show you first?*, line 9), Peggy accepts by giving an agreement token (*yes*, line 11). Miss Laura continues by writing Peggy's name on a separate sheet and pointing to the different letters that Peggy is supposed to write. Hence, Miss Laura took the initiative in the literacy event and Peggy followed her. A little bit further in the interaction, Peggy begins to show more initiative (excerpt 2b).

## (2b) “Name”, continued [Peggy (3;4), Miss Laura]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
25	Miss L.:	and then that one with the dot >on top< (o) grea:t! (( <i>about the letter i</i> ))	en dan die met die punt >erop< (o) gewe:l:dig!
26		(2,4)	(2,4)
27	Miss L.:	yes!	ja!
28		(0,8)	(0,8)
29	Miss L.:	<Pe-ggy (( <i>reads</i> ))	<Pe-ggy
30		(1,8)	(1,8)
31	Peggy:	wha: (.) wha goes here?	wa: (.) wa moet(e) hier?
32		(0,3)	(0,3)
33	Miss L.:	this one	deze
34		(2,8)	(2,8)
35	Peggy:	yes?	ja?
36		(3,8)	(3,8)
37	Peggy:	(t) like this?	(t)zo?

While Peggy writes her name, Miss Laura verbalizes what she is doing and gives positive evaluations. Laura describes the letter “i” as *that one with the dot on top* (line 25)<sup>22</sup>. When Peggy finished the “i”, Miss Laura reads what is already written (the first two letters of the name: *pe*) and after a brief pause continues with the rest (*Pe-ggy*, line 29). Peggy now has to proceed to the next letter. This time, she takes the initiative and uses Miss Laura to continue her writing. She asks Miss Laura how she should proceed (*wha: (.) wha goes here?*, line 31). Miss Laura uses a deictic and probably points to the next letter on the example sheet (*this one*, line 33). Peggy then asks for feedback (*(t) like this?*, line 37). In this part of the interaction, Peggy started to take the initiative in the writing process: Miss Laura suggested to her to write her name and helped her do so, and now Peggy continues the activity on her own initiative. A little while later Peggy directs Miss Laura’s attention to the construction of a letter (excerpt 2c).

<sup>22</sup> For the reader it might be somewhat confusing why they are referring to the letter “i”. To ensure anonymity, we do not use the children’s real names. Miss Laura and Peggy are referring to the letter “i”, because it’s the second letter of Peggy’s real name.

## (2c) "Name", continued [Peggy (3;4), Miss Laura]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
55	Peggy:	this one (ontop) (( <i>points to the example, looks up to Miss Laura and points again</i> ))	dehe (bovena)
56		(1,4) (( <i>Miss Laura nods</i> ))	(1,4)
57	Miss L.:	yes! (.) yes yes (.) you should just add that line too	ja!(.) ja ja (.) dat streepje moet je er ook nog even opzetten
58		(3,9) (( <i>Peggy writes something and Miss Laura watches her</i> ))	(3,9)
59	Peggy:	look!	kijk!

Peggy continues to write the letters of her name and initiates a conversation about the construction of a letter. She uses the example Miss Laura wrote as a help for her writing and tries to copy the example to her own sheet. Peggy already wrote part of the letter and needs to add one more stroke to finish it. She tells Miss Laura about this next step (*this one (ontop)*, line 55) and Miss Laura agrees (*yes! (.) yes yes (.) you should just add that line too*, line 57). This far in the interaction, Peggy asks for Miss Laura's encouragement and agreement while she is trying to write her name.

In the course of the interaction, Peggy in a sense *took over* the activity. Miss Laura suggested the activity and provided help and support, but once they started, Peggy took the initiative and was involved in the interaction. This involvement shows how relevant the task is to Peggy and indicates that Miss Laura proposed the name writing activity at the right moment.

The interaction is a model example of legitimate peripheral participation: it is *legitimate* because Miss Laura treats Peggy as a (potential) name writer and it is *peripheral* because Miss Laura helps Peggy to perform the task and does not place full demands on her: it does not matter that the work pace is slow or that Peggy uses an example sheet. Peggy is involved in a real, meaningful task (writing her name on her work) that reflects a practice of the literate community (people write their name on their work to indicate ownership). In this sense the interaction meets the function of legitimate peripheral participation: "to offer them various forms of casual but legitimate access to a practice without subjecting them to the demands of full membership" (Wenger, 1998, p.117).

*Mundane literacy events about the use of books*

Apart from mundane literacy events about reading and writing we also found interactions about the use of books. Our selection consists of 7 cases in which children discussed when to read a book, indicated specific books they were interested in and acted out how books could be used, for example in a bedtime routine. We will discuss this bedtime routine in excerpt 3, in which Sabine (3;1) and Karin (3;1) are involved in pretend play.

**(3) “Bedtime” [Sabine (3;1), Karin (3;3)]**

*Setting: Sabine and Karin are in the house play area. Karin lies on a big pillow, Sabine pulls a ‘blanket’ (=dishtowel) over her*

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Sabine:	<u>slee</u> :p tight	lekker <u>slape</u> :n
2		(1,1)	(1,1)
3	Sabine:	shall <u>just</u> (take) that <u>book</u>	zalle 's <u>eeve</u> dat <u>boekje</u> derbij
4		(0,2) ((walks away))	(0,2)
5	Sabine:	she still needs that <u>book</u>	ze moet nogge dat <u>boekje</u> derbij
6		(7,3) ((Sabine returns with a book))	(7,3)
7	Sabine:	hey little child	hee kindje
8		(4,0) ((Sabine seats herself next to Karin))	(4,0)
9	Sabine:	shall just <u>read</u> book of the doggy now?	zal nu's even boekje <u>lezen</u> van de hondje?
10		(0,5)	(0,5)
11	Karin:	°yes	°ja

In excerpt 3 Sabine and Karin are using a bedtime routine in their pretend play. For Sabine, a bedtime routine includes reading a book. After she pulled a blanket over Karin and said *sleep tight* (line 1) she introduces the book reading as another element of the pretend play (*shall just (take) that book (0,2) she still needs that book*, lines 3-5). She walks away to get a book and when she returns, she creates joint attention by saying *hey little child* and seating herself next to Karin (lines 7-8). She then proposes to her ‘child’ Karin to read from the book (*shall just read book of the doggy now?*, line 9). Sabine keeps up the play frame by addressing Karin as ‘little child’. This indicates that the book reading is part of the pretend play, not a suggestion to switch to a new activity.

Reading a book before bedtime is a practice of a literate community and Sabine and Karin use this practice in a peripheral activity. Literacy practices in pretend play episodes are peripheral versions of the practice of the literate community (Bruner, 1972; Wenger, 1998). Acting out practices of the community in play helps children to get a grip on the practice. Children can view the activity from different perspectives through their play, like Sabine does when she takes the role of adult in the bedtime routine.

Neuman and Roskos (1997) studied the use of pretend play areas for stimulating emergent literacy and described that during pretend play in literacy enriched environments, children can explore literacy objects, roles and scripts. The interaction of Sabine and Karin illustrates how children can create such pretend play environments themselves as well. The teacher did not create a bed-time play area for children to play in, but Karin and Sabine created their own play and gathered their own props (Sabine used a dishtowel as a blanket and left the play area to get a book) and thus were in charge of their own meaningful literacy experience. An interaction like this is instructive because the play enhances relevant literacy practices of a shared reading event, like creating joint attention and proposing to read a book.

#### 3.4.3 *The richness of mundane literacy events*

Mundane literacy events are contexts for children to experience literacy, but some instances are ‘richer’ than others. To illustrate this difference in richness we will discuss two mundane literacy events in which the teacher writes something on a child’s work. In both interactions the children can learn aspects of writing and text, but the information about literacy is more detailed in the second example. In excerpt 4, Robbie made a colored drawing for his father’s birthday. Miss Krisje turns this colored drawing into a festive gift by gluing it to a piece of colored paper, adding ribbons and writing a birthday wish.

#### (4) “Hurray for daddy” [Robbie (2;9), Miss Krisje]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Miss K.:	there (.) hurray for <u>daddy!</u> right? <i>((takes a pencil))</i>	zo (.) hoera voor <u>pappa!</u> of niet?
2	Robbie:	yes	ja
3	Miss K.:	yes <i>((Miss Krisje writes on the coloring picture))</i>	ja

Miss Krisje announces the birthday wish she is about to write by taking a pencil and saying: *there (.) hurray for daddy! right?* (line 1). Robbie agrees (*yes*, line 2) -which



is projected by Miss Krisje's use of the tag *right?*- and Miss Krisje writes something on the drawing. The reader of this paper, as a literacy 'expert', might infer that Miss Krisje writes down the text 'hurray for daddy'. Robbie is a novice, and we do not know whether he made the connection between Miss Krisje's utterance and her writing on the coloring paper. We do see in the transcript that he is not scaffolded in making this connection. The interaction in excerpt 5 is similar to the one in excerpt 4, but this time the teacher provides more scaffolding in an attempt to increase the child's understanding of what is happening.

(5) "It says Kirsten" [Kirsten (2;6), Miss Molly]

*Setting: Some children are making drawings during free play. Miss Molly just wrote Kimberly's name on her drawing*

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Kirsten:	me too!	ik ook!
2	Miss M:	write something 'too'?	'ook' wat schrijven?
3		(0,7)	(0,7)
4	Miss M:	I'll write here	ga ik hier schrijven.
5		(2,1) ( <i>Molly writes and Kirsten watches</i> )	(2,1)
6	Miss M:	<Kirsten::>	<Kirsten::>
7		(0,7)	(0,7)
8	Miss M:	it says <u>Kirsten</u>	daar staat <u>Kirsten</u>

In excerpt 5, Kirsten takes the initiative to gain access to writing and text. Miss Molly wrote down the name of another child on a drawing, and Kirsten indicates she wants that as well (*me too!*, line 1). Kirsten makes Miss Molly provide a skill that is not available to her yet: she cannot write or read, but she can have Miss Molly perform the technical skill and provide her with information about the written text. Miss Molly in her turn is very precise in the information she gives Kirsten. When she writes down Kirsten's name, she verbalizes what she is doing: first she *announces* what she will do (*I'll write here*, line 4), then she *expresses* what she is writing (<Kirsten::>, line 6) and finally she *describes* the end product (*it says Kirsten*, line 8). That is, in *announcing*, *expressing* and *describing* her actions, the teacher makes made explicit the different aspects of the literacy practice of writing a name, thus giving the child the opportunity to reflect on them.

### 3.5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Even though three-year-old preschoolers cannot read or write yet, written language is part of their daily life. Children experience literacy in different ways in preschool. The main literacy event in preschool is joint teacher-group book reading. When we studied the literacy experiences of preschool children in the classroom, we found another, infrequent, but interesting type of literacy event: *mundane literacy events*. These are interactions about literacy that are embedded in an ongoing activity and that are relevant to the child. We found three main topics in mundane literacy events: reading, writing and use of books. Mundane interactions about reading are mostly about environmental text. Children notice text, which the teacher can read, or the child and the teacher look something up. Mundane interactions about writing are mostly about the child's name on a drawing or craft. These interactions always occur during crafts activities. Free crafts or crafts tasks are apparently suitable contexts for mundane interactions about writing. Mundane interactions about the use of books are about the rules and routines of book reading. It covers statements, discussions and preferences about when and what to read.

We also suggested that preschool may be a context in which children can use their home literacy experiences and familiarize themselves with school literacy. The mundane uses of literacy in preschool in our study fall into Duke and Purcell-Gates' (2003) category of genres used both at home and at school. The genres *children's books, lists, individual letters and words, messages, labels* and *names* are used in both settings, although the last two are more frequently used at home. These genres show overlap with the mundane literacy events about reading, writing and book use. This illustrates the stimulating function of preschools: to provide all children with experiences that they ideally would also get at home and which prepare them for future school settings.

Mundane literacy events create a setting for situated learning: they show children how literacy practices are used by the literate community. Active engagement is important in literacy development (Gee, 2004; Teale & Sulzby, 1986a) and children are likely to be active participants in the mundane literacy events because the events are embedded in the activities of the child. As bystanders are also able to participate actively in literacy events (Larson, 1999), the mundane literacy events can play an important role for other children than the main participant as well. Furthermore, mundane literacy events can be a setting for legitimate peripheral participation: children engage in a genuine, purposeful and relevant literacy practice, which is facilitated by for example scaffolding or a pretend play frame.

Mundane interactions are infrequent in the preschool classrooms of our study. Nevertheless, these events may serve as useful additional literacy experiences for

children. With the efforts in mind of early childhood education to stimulate emergent literacy and creating facilitating contexts for learning, we suggest that preschools should aim at increasing mundane literacy events. The strength of mundane literacy events is the opportunity they provide for legitimate peripheral participation: with some help, children can take part in genuine practices of the literate community. Preschool teachers, for example, sometimes write in the presence of children, which is a potential literacy experience for the child. The teacher can increase the richness of the experience by talking during her writing and following the child. Teachers influence the richness of literacy experiences through the way they involve the child in their actions and verbalize their literacy actions and thus help the child to take a legitimate peripheral role in the mundane literacy event.

## 4. PROMOTING LITERACY IN PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS: THE ACTIVITY OF *BOOK LOAN*<sup>23</sup>

### ABSTRACT

In this paper, we analyze how the activity of *book loan* is accomplished in daily practice in two Dutch preschools and which emergent literacy practices are attached to this routine. Every week, preschool children (2;6 to 4;0 years old) choose a book in classroom to read at home with their parents. The basic structure of the *book loan* activity is: 1) the teacher orients the child to the activity; 2) the child browses books and selects one; and 3) the teacher acknowledges the child's choice. The basic *book loan* routine can be supplemented by two additional moves: one to stimulate reading and one about the registration of the choice. Teachers can orient children to reading by talking about the content of the story and by emphasizing that the child will read the book at home with a parent. Orientation to the registration procedure serves a more general role in emergent literacy since it illustrates the use and function of writing down "contracts".

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Compulsory school attendance in the Netherlands starts at age five, but many children enter preschool or day care years earlier and are already beginning to be socialized into the educational system from age 2;6. In the Netherlands, Early Childhood Education is considered to be important for preparing children from minority language groups and disadvantaged backgrounds for formal education (den Elt, van Kuyk & Meijnen, 1996). Dutch preschools therefore are increasingly employed in attempts to reduce and prevent learning and language delays in 'at risk' children (van der Vegt et al., 2007; van Kampen, Klopogge, Rutten & Schonewille, 2005b). Two thirds of the children between 2;0 and 4;0 years old attend preschool (Westenbrink & Versteegen, 2006).

Emergent literacy is one of the focal issues in Early Childhood Education in the Netherlands. Preschools should provide children with the opportunity to experience the use and relevance of written language (Bus, 1995; Leseman, 1998; Neuman & Roskos, 1997). A literacy promoting program that is often used in Dutch preschools is *Boekenpret*, a program related to *Bookstart* (Moore & Wade, 2003; van den Berg & Middel, 1996; van der Pennen, 2001). One of the activities of the *Boekenpret* program is *book loan*: every week the children get to pick a book in preschool to take home and to read with their parents. The main aims of this activity are to make books available to children and parents, and to teach the child how to

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<sup>23</sup> Submitted

choose a book (van der Pennen, 2001). In this paper, we will study how the *book loan* activity in two Dutch preschools is structured, what kind of teacher-child interactions are accomplished and what children can learn from participating in this activity.

#### 4.2 *BOOK LOAN* AS A SITUATED ACTIVITY SYSTEM IN PRESCHOOL

Educational settings with a focus on emergent literacy should stimulate children to experience the joy of reading and to make recreational reading part of their (daily) occupations (Morrow & Weinstein, 1986). According to Nell (1988), one important influence in reading for pleasure, is having selected a book that meets the reader's expectations about what the book will be like and what kind of reading experience it will provide. The purpose of having children borrowing books in preschool is to make books available, to let children read with their parents regularly and, eventually, to encourage families to visit the library. Access to books is facilitated by distributing them via preschools or nurseries. Through borrowing books, children and parents are stimulated to read regularly and to experience a range of different books (van der Pennen, 2001).

In this paper, we will argue that the routine activity of book loan functions as a *Situated Activity System* (Goffman, 1961). The Situated Activity System provides a global structure to a routine activity. Within this global structure, verbal and nonverbal acts are connected, norms and procedures apply and participants are working towards an end state. In the case of *book loan*, the end state is that the child needs to borrow a book. Participants are oriented to the global structure of the SAS, but they can vary the ways they go about this routine together.

Situated Activity Systems often develop in institutional settings, like workplaces or schools (C. Goodwin, 1997; C. Goodwin, 2000b), but can also occur in structured activities outside of institutions. Marjorie Harness Goodwin for example described the specific roles, acts and ways girls talk during a game of hopscotch (M. Goodwin, 2006). The sequential moves, norms and procedure of the SAS structure the way people act and talk. The concept of SAS is closely related to the notion of *speech event*: an activity that is 'directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech' (Hymes, 1974, p.52). Within the SAS, use of and orientation to objects and body positioning play an essential role. Archaeologists, for example, use a classification chart to negotiate the color of soil, and girls playing hopscotch refer to the grid in their disputes (Goodwin, 2000a). Likewise, orientation to the collection of books is part of the SAS of *book loan*.

By learning to participate in an SAS, children learn to participate in verbal interaction that is used in specific (classroom) situations. Berenst (2003), for example, described the SAS of *checking presence* during morning circle time in preschool. He

described the routine of ritual language use during *checking presence* and showed how children are oriented to preferred language practices in the routine. By learning to participate in a SAS, young children learn specific ways of using language. In routines like the activity of *book loan* or the like game *peek-a-boo*, there is a restricted and shared set of meaningful elements. As the child becomes familiarized with the routine of subsequent moves, he or she can start to reproduce the interactional moves in the routine and increasingly fill these moves with linguistic content. As long as the child and the teacher keep oriented to the elementary structure of the routine, they can use a variety of language forms in the interactional moves (Bruner & Sherwood, 1976; Camaioni, 1986).

In this paper, we will describe the structure of the SAS of *book loan* in daily practice in two preschool classrooms. We will focus on how the activity is accomplished, how moves in the routine are verbally realized, and what implicit and explicit ‘rules’ play a role in the activity. Our main research question is: *Which emerging literacy practices can be learned from participating in the SAS of book loan?*

#### 4.3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data used in this paper are drawn from a broader study investigating pragmatic development in preschool. In this longitudinal project 25 children from 4 preschools were followed from 2;6 to 4;0 years old in classroom. The children’s interactions during the day at preschool were recorded every three months. Individual audio recordings for every focal child and an overview video recording were made. The audio recording device was sewn into a little jacket (see picture 1, the recording device is hidden underneath the “fur” on the back). Each recording consists of the activities and interactions of one child during one morning or afternoon at preschool. Selections of the recordings are transcribed using Jeffersonian conventions (Jefferson, 1984).

**Picture 1.** Recording jackets back and front



From the PRACTING corpus, we drew a collection of 37 fragments of interactions during the *book loan* activity in preschool, with a total duration of over an hour (68 minutes). We selected interactions from children in two of the four preschools (22 and 15 fragments, respectively, from preschool A and C<sup>24</sup>). The two preschools are located in a middle-sized town in the North of the Netherlands. Both preschools use the literacy promoting program *Boekenpret* (van den Berg & Middel, 1996; van der Pennen, 2001). Preschool C also uses the educational program *Kaleidoscoop*, a Dutch version of the High/Scope program (Barnett, 1985; Schweinhart, 2004; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997). Both classrooms consist of 12 to 15 children, a teacher (two teachers in preschool C), an assistant and often an intern. The 37 fragments in our selection are *book loan* interactions of 14 children (9 girls and 5 boys). We selected two to three fragments for most children at different ages to create a wide age range (2;1 to 3;10 years old). An overview of the corpus is given in appendix E.

The qualitative analysis used in this study is based in the conversation analysis framework. Conversation analysis can be used to understand contexts by examining the moves the participants make, since participants show their understanding of the event through their actions, which at the same time contribute to the event. In this study, we apply conversation analysis in an institutional context (Heritage, 2005). Institutional talk differs from "ordinary conversation" in that it is related to specific settings and tasks, for example, making emergency phone calls, having a radio interview or, in this case, borrowing a book in classroom. It is the talk people use to "manage those practical tasks, and to perform the particular activities associated with their participation in institutional contexts" (Drew & Sorjonen, 1997, p.92). The three basic elements of institutional talk are 1) interaction partners show an orientation to specific goals, relevant to the social institution; 2) there are special constraints about which interactional contributions are appropriate; and 3) the institutional context is related to specific ways of making inferences (Drew & Heritage, 1992). Most institutional talk is not as scripted as, for example, wedding ceremonies. Nevertheless, the variation that participants show in institutional settings is limited by the goal and the constraints of the event (Heritage, 2005). We use applied institutional conversation analysis to understand how children learn the practices of a classroom community and what they may learn from these practices.

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<sup>24</sup> In preschool B, *book loan* was organized before the school day started and therefore fell outside the range of our recordings. In preschool D there was no *book loan*.

## 4.4 RESULTS

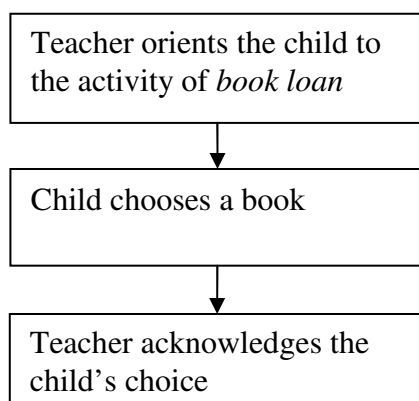
### 4.4.1 General description

The *book loan* is organized within the period of free play: teachers sit somewhere in the classroom with the loan books and registration material, while the children are involved in free play and have to interrupt their activity when it is their turn to borrow a book. The duration of the activity of *book loan* varies from 6 seconds to 7½ minutes, on average just under two minutes (1 min 51 sec). The *book loan* activity is most often lead by the intern (21 times out of 37), but also the assistant, the teacher or a parent can be in charge of the loan. *Book loan* is generally done in a one-to-one interaction (26 times out of 37), but this also occurs in small groups of two to four children. However, when it is organized as a group activity, children do not really borrow a book together, but get a mutual instruction, pick their book individually and present their choice to the teacher individually. Children have to present the book they chose to the teacher, who registers the choice and puts the book into a special bag, which the children take home at the end of the day.

### 4.4.2 The routine of *book loan*

We analyzed the *book loan* fragments and extracted one basic pattern and two supplemental patterns, which can be added to the basic routine. The basic *book loan* routine consists of three moves: 1) the teacher orients the child to the activity of *book loan*, 2) the child selects a book and 3) the teacher acknowledges this choice. All the *book loan* activities are based on this structure, which is schematized in figure 1. The three moves of the routine are analyzed in more detail in the next paragraphs.

**Figure 1.** Basic routine of the activity of *book loan*





*Basic routine: orientation to the activity of book loan*

Before the activity of *book loan* can start, the teacher makes some preparations: she sets out a box with books, a box with yellow book bags to take the books home and a registration folder. When the books and book bags are in place, the teacher invites children to come to her to borrow a book. The teacher's preparation can function as a visual cue of the start of the *book loan* activity and children may approach the teacher on their own initiative and volunteer to pick a book. However, in most cases the child enters the activity upon the teacher's explicit verbal invitation (33 times out of 37 cases). An example of a teacher inviting a child to the *book loan* activity is given in excerpt 1.

(1) "Pick a book at Miss Trynke's" [Ryan (2;6), Paula (3;11), Miss Trynke, Miss Molly]

*Situation: Ryan is playing with blocks with Paula and Miss Molly. Miss Trynke is in charge of the book loan at the other side of the classroom.*

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Miss T.:	Ryan (( <i>Miss Trynke is holding up a book bag</i> ))	Ryan
2		(0,7)	(0,7)
3	Miss T.:	Ryan	Ryan
4		(0,9)	(0,9)
5	Paula:	you have to pick a <u>book</u>	je moet een <u>boekje</u> <uitzoeken>
6	Miss M.:	°can pick a book at Miss Trynke's (( <i>leans towards Ryan</i> ))	°mag nog een boekje uitzoeken bij juf Trynke
7	Miss M.:	look↑ (( <i>points towards Miss Trynke</i> ))	kijk es↑
8		(0,5)	(0,5)
9	Miss M.:	Miss Trynke has all kinds of books and you can pick one	juf Trynke heeft allemaal boeken en daar mag jij eentje uitzoeken
10		(1,5) (( <i>Ryan runs towards Miss Trynke</i> ))	(1,5)
11	Miss T.:	come: you can pick a book	kom maa:r mag je even een boekje uitzoeken

Excerpt 1 shows how children are supposed to interrupt their play when they are invited to pick a book. Ryan is playing with blocks when Miss Trynke calls his name. Ryan does not react to Miss Trynke's call, so an *extended pre-expansion* (Schegloff,

2007) follows. This example illustrates how teachers manifest themselves as a team: the book loan activity is an interaction between Ryan and Miss Trynke, and the extended pre-expansion is between Ryan and Miss Molly. The two teachers together construct the move of orienting Ryan to the activity of book loan. Even Paula plays a role in the teamwork of orienting Ryan to respond appropriately to Miss Trynke's invitation. Paula is an experienced preschooler of almost 4 years old and interprets correctly that Miss Trynke calls Ryan because she wants him to pick a book, which we can infer from her remark: *you have to pick a book* (line 5). Miss Molly then extends the pre-expansion and tells Ryan what he is supposed to do (*°can pick a book at Miss Trynke's*, line 6; *Miss Trynke has all kinds of books and you can pick one*, line 9) and directs his attention by pointing to Miss Trynke and saying *look* (line 7). Miss Molly's encouragement is effective and Ryan runs to Miss Trynke. When he is with her, she explicitly gives her invitation again (*come: you can pick a book*, line 11).

This pattern indicates the effort it takes to reorient children from their free play activity to the new activity of *book loan*. Sometimes it is even more difficult for the teacher to orient the child to the *book loan*, when the child initially gives priority to his current activity of free play. There are three cases in our selection, in which a child initially refuses to interrupt his or her own play, and obeys the teacher only after a negotiation. The refusals are given by children at younger ages: Kirsten at age 2;6 and Danny at the ages 2;4 and 2;8. An example of Danny is given in excerpt 2. A refusal does not have consequences for the general pattern of *book loan*, but does lead to an extended first move of orienting the child to the new activity.

(2) "Just into the house" [Danny (2;4), Intern Denise]

*Situation: Danny is playing in the house area. Intern Denise is in charge of the book loan and walks towards the house area to get Danny to pick a book with her.*

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch Original</i>
1	Intern D.:	Danny (( <i>looks into the house area</i> ))	Danny
2		(0,3)	(0,3)
3	Intern D.:	will you join picking a book?	kom je even mee een boekje zoeken?
4		(0,7)	(0,7)
5	Danny:	n:o	n:ee
6		(0,5)	(0,5)
7	Intern D.:	[just come	[kom maar even
8	Danny	[what	[wat
9		(0,8)	(0,8)

10	Danny	no [I'm just going into the	nee [ik gaat even in de
11	Intern D.:	[( )	[( )
12		(0,9)	(0,9)
13	Danny	going into the house	gaat in huisje
14		(5,0) ((Interns Denise enters the house area))	(5,0)
15	Intern D.:	you can play again later	kan je straks weer spelen
16		(0,7) ((Intern Denise squats at Danny's))	(0,7)
17	Intern D.:	is that okay?	is dat goed?
18		(1,2)	(1,2)
19	Intern D.:	first just er nicely pick a book	eerst even eh leuk een boekje uitzoeken
20		(0,7)	(0,7)
21	Intern D.:	ok[ay?	ok[e?
22	Danny	[h: kay	[h: ke

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In Excerpt 2, intern Denise calls Danny to come and pick a book with her (*Danny (0,3) will you join picking a book?*, lines 1-3). She phrases this as a yes-no question and Danny replies with the disagreement token *no* (line 5). Danny's dispreferred response results in a series of *post-expansions* (Schegloff, 2007) in which intern Denise challenges Danny's second pair part. Intern Denise rephrases her request as a more reassuring directive (*just come*, line 7). In response, Danny then gives an account for his refusal (*no I'm just going into the (0,9) going into the house*, lines 10-13). By walking over to Danny, intern Denise makes her request more compelling in the second post-expansion. She acknowledges his wish to play and says he can continue his play after he has picked a book (*you can play again later (0,7) is that okay? (1,2) first just er nicely pick a book (0,7) okay?*, lines 15-21). Notice how she tries to get Danny's agreement in this turn by asking *is that okay?* and *okay?* (lines 17 and 21). Normally, children do not need to give verbal agreement to the teacher's invitation to the activity of *book loan*, but in this case, intern Denise prompts Danny to verbally agree to her invitation of coming to pick a book with her (lines 17 and 21). Finally, Danny gives the projected second pair part, by minimally agreeing (*h: kay*, line 22) and he joins intern Denise to the *book loan* location.

So, we see that both teacher and child are using stronger means during the first post-expansion, giving arguments for their position. Intern Denise then uses some arguments with requests for confirmation and that brings Danny to an agreement. The teacher's effort illustrates that children may have to be *convinced* of the importance of

the book loan activity. Children are not looking forward to the book loan activity as a new and interesting event, which also shows from the minimal or even lacking verbal acceptance of the invitation for joining by the other children.

*Basic routine: choosing a book*

When the child enters the *book loan* activity, he or she has to select a book. Once oriented to the activity of *book loan*, the child is not necessarily oriented to the actual books themselves. There is always a box with books to choose from and sometimes a couple of books are laid out on the table. Teachers may explicitly point children to these books.

Children often browse the books in silence and the time they take to reach their choice may be short. Children do not open the books they are considering, so the only information they have about the book is visual from the cover. Teachers do not guide the choosing process, either verbally or non-verbally. Teachers sometimes ‘facilitate’ choosing by orienting children to a limited number of books instead of the complete collection. They may present the child a couple of books, a choice between two books or only one book, which the child should accept or refuse. Teachers may use these strategies when children do not select a book on their own initiative *or* when the teacher wants to direct the child into making a different choice. Teachers do not seem to expect that children browse all books or take a long time before they make a decision, as is illustrated in excerpt 3.

(3) “Browsing books” [Nicole (3;5), Intern Alice]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1		(51,0) ((Nicole sits in front of the book boxes and flips through the books. She takes out one book, glances at the cover and puts it back))	(51,0)
2	Intern A.:	can you find it Nicole? (.) heh ((laughs a little))	kun je het vinden Nicole? (.) heh
3		(26,5) ((Nicole flips through the rest of the books. When she arrives at the last book, she takes one of the first books in the box and stands up))	(26,5)
4	Nicole:	°that one. ((Nicole walks with the book to intern Alice))	°die.

In excerpt 3, Nicole (3;5) takes almost 1½ minutes to browse all the books in the book box, and half way she even takes out a book, glances at the cover and puts it back.

Intern Alice comments with a little chuckle on Nicole's extensive book search, which indicates that Nicole is browsing books more thoroughly than children usually do.

Nicole, however, does not respond to intern Alice and silently continues her search until she has reached a decision.

The way children indicate their choice for a book is straightforward: they generally use a verbal and nonverbal deixis. Children often say *this one* or *that one* (in Dutch: *deze* or *die*) in combination with pointing to the book, touching it or showing it. In some cases, a child *only* uses nonverbal means to indicate his or her choice. Just handing a book to the teacher or pointing to a book can thus serve as a way of making a choice in the routine of *book loan* as well. An example of the way a child may choose a book is given in excerpt 4.

(4) "This one" [Peggy (3;7), intern Alice]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
7	Intern A.:	look (.) (the box) is over there <i>((referring to the box with books to choose from))</i>	kijk (.) daar staat (de doos)
8		(23,8) <i>((Intern Alice talks to Sarah, who has made her choice for a book))</i>	(23,8)
9	Peggy:	<u>this one</u>	<u>dehe</u>
10		(0,8)	(0,8)
11	Peggy:	<u>this one</u>	<u>dehe</u>
12		(0,3)	(0,3)
13	Intern A.:	>do you want to< take that one?	>wil je< die mee?
14		(0,3)	(0,3)
15	Peggy:	yes	ja
16		(0,3)	(0,3)
17	Intern A.:	okay	oke
18		<i>((Peggy walks away and intern Alice writes down Peggy's choice in the registration folder))</i>	

Excerpt 4 starts with intern Alice orienting Peggy to the box of books and inviting her to select a book (*look (.) (the box) is over there*, line 7). Peggy selects a book in the

second pair part of the adjacency pair that started with intern Alice's orientation to the book box. Peggy browses the books on her own, while intern Alice talks to another child. Peggy takes about 24 seconds to browse the books and then indicates her choice by saying *this one* (line 9) which she repeats when Intern Alice does not react. Intern Alice asks for confirmation of the choice in a post-expansion (*do you want to take that one?* line 13). When Peggy confirms, Intern Alice acknowledges the choice by a sequence closing third (okay, line 18; Schegloff, 2007). With this sequence closing, the joint activity of *book loan* is closed and Peggy and intern Alice proceed to their next activities: Peggy walks away to play and intern Alice writes down Peggy's choice.

*Basic routine: acknowledging the choice*

After the teacher's acknowledgement of the child's selection, the *book loan* activity can be closed and the child may leave the *book loan* scene. The teacher may also prompt the child to leave, like in the excerpt of Sarah (2;11, excerpt 5).

(5) "Acknowledging the choice" [Sarah (2;11), Assistant Eva]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Sarah:	( ) this one I want to take home	(bloe-ee) deze wil ik(ke) naar huis brengen
2		(0,5)	(0,5)
3	Sarah:	this one [(er) I like best	deze [(eh) vin ik het mooist
4	Ass. E.:	[this one?	[deze?
5	Ass. E.:	o:kay	o:ke
6		(0,8)	(0,8)
7	Ass. E.:	that one you'll take	die neem je mee
8	Sarah:	↓hm↑hm ((confirming))	↓hm↑hm
9	Ass. E.:	you can go and play outside	je mag buiten gaan spelen

Sarah uses a rather elaborated way of verbally indicating her choice (*this one I want to take home* (0,5) *this one (er) I like best*, lines 1-3). Assistant Eva acknowledges Sarah's choice by saying *okay* (line 5). After another confirmation round (assistant E.: *that one you'll take*, Sarah, confirming: ↓hm↑hm, lines 7-8), assistant Eva prompts Sarah to continue her free outside play, which she was doing before she entered the *book loan* activity.

Children do not always make a preferred choice, though, and teachers sometimes reject the choice. Based on our analysis of the data, we can infer that the teachers base their (dis)approval of books on the idea that *book loan* should provide

children with *new* books. The situated activity system of *book loan* consists of two kinds of rules: *procedural rules* and *content rules*. Procedural rules are implicit discursive rules, which structure the routine. In addition, within the move of *choosing a book*, there are *content rules*, which define the type of book that has to be chosen. The content rules are not explicitly stated either, but are referred to when children are about to break them. Two content rules become clear in an excerpt of Danny (2;8), as he is browsing books and making his choice.

(6) "That one again" [Danny (2;8), Assistant Karla]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch Original</i>
1	Ass. K.:	just have a look (.) just pick a book	ga maar kijken (.) zoek maar 'n boekje uit
2		(1,4)	(1,4)
3	Danny:	that one I already have with my mummy this one?	die heb ik al bij mijn mama deze?
4		(0,5)	(0,5)
5	Ass. K.:	that one you already have with mummy? >well quickly pick another book < there are so many nice books	die heb je al bij mama? >nou gauw een ander boekje zoeken< zijn zoveel leuke boekjes
6		(0,6)	(0,6)
7	Danny:	e:r <u>this</u>	u:hm <u>dees</u>
8		(0,9)	(0,9)
9	Danny:	one	ze
10		(0,5)	(0,5)
11	Danny:	<u>this</u>	<u>dees</u>
12		(0,6)	(0,6)
13	Ass. K.:	the <u>train</u> book (( <i>part book title</i> <sup>25</sup> )) you <u>had</u> that one once already too dear	het <u>treinenboek</u> die heb je ook al een keer <u>meeg</u> ehad lieverd
14		(0,4)	(0,4)
15	Danny:	no:	nee:
16		(0,5)	(0,5)
17	Ass. K.:	did you want that one <u>again</u> ?	wou je die <u>nog</u> een keer?
18		(0,2)	(0,2)
19	Danny:	ye:s	ja:

<sup>25</sup> *My big train book* by Roger Priddy, Dutch title *Mijn grote treinboek*

20	(0,8)	(0,8)
21	Danny: <u>that one</u> again	<u>die</u> nog een keer
22	(0,7)	(0,7)
23	Danny: aga[i:n	nog een ke[e:r
24	Ass. K.: [don't you see another nice book?	[zie je niet >nog een< ander leuk boekje?
25	(0,5)	(0,5)
26	Danny: no [ <u>that one</u>	nee [ <u>die</u>
27	Ass. K.: [look three hares are going to sleep (( <i>book title</i> <sup>26</sup> ))	[kijk drie haasjes gaan <u>slapen</u>

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When Danny is browsing books, he sees a book that he already has at home (*that one I already have with my mummy this one?* line 3). There is no direct indication that Danny wants to select this book, but assistant Karla uses his comment to refer to the content rule that you should not borrow books that you already have at home (*that one you already have with mummy? >well quickly pick another book < there are so many nice books*, line 5). Then Danny chooses a book, but with this choice, he violates the content rule that you should not pick books that you have already picked before. The wish to re-read books is not uncommon for children (Sulzby, 1985) or adolescents (Hopper, 2005), and experimental studies report positive effects of repeated reading on vocabulary development (e.g. Biemiller & Boote, 2006), but the teachers in our selection discourage children to choose books they already know. When Danny indicates he wants to have the ‘train book’, Assistant Karla considers Danny’s choice, refers to the book title and rejects his choice (*the train book you had that one once already too dear*, line 13). In the unmarked case, the child complies and picks another book, or agrees with an alternative that the teachers suggests. In this case, however, assistant Karla does not put the train book out of sight, and Danny firmly sticks to his choice. Assistant Karla even gives Danny conversational space to confirm the choice she disagrees with. First, she asks *did you want that one again?* (line 17), which Danny confirms (*ye:s (0,8) that one again (0,8) agai:n*, lines 19-23). Assistant Karla then tries to prompt Danny to consider other books (*don't you see another nice book?*, line 24), but her question is phrased in such a way that it is not hard for Danny to refuse. Assistant Karla then switches to another strategy and proposes a specific book (*look three hares are going to sleep*, line 27). After this first suggestion, assistant Karla proposes two other book titles (not in the excerpt), but Danny keeps saying he wants to have the “train book”. In the end, assistant Karla grants him his choice. This

<sup>26</sup> Dutch picture book *Drie haasjes gaan slapen* by Betty Sluizer



is the only case in our collection in which a child is allowed to take a book that the teacher disapproved of.

The procedural rules and content rules are part of the situated activity system of *book loan*. The rules are known by the members of the community and have to be learned by newcomers, like new children or new interns. The exact meaning of the content rule that one should choose a new book, is neither explicit nor strict, as we can infer from teachers talking amongst themselves or to new interns, as is illustrated by excerpt 7, in which Miss Trynke intervenes in the *book loan* activity of Shamira (3;0) and intern Denise.

(7) “You’ve already read this one” [Shamira (3;0), Intern Denise, Miss Trynke]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Shamira:	<u>that one</u>	<u>die</u>
2		(6,7)	(6,7)
3	Intern D.:	you’ve already read this one	deze heb je al gelezen
4		(1,2)	(1,2)
5	Miss T.:	just pick another [one	moet je even andere [zoeken
6	Intern D.:	[look	[kijk
7		(0,6)	(0,6)
8	Miss T.:	right? (.) if you just read that one	he? (.) als je die net gelezen hebt
9		(0,4)	(0,4)
10	Miss T.:	or two weeks ago then er ( [     ] )	of twee weken geleden dan eh ( [     ] )
11	Shamira:	[that one::! (.) that one that one that one	[die::! (.) die die die

In excerpt 7, Shamira picks a book that is not new to her. Intern Denise refers then to the content rule that chosen books should be new and comments *you’ve already read this one* (line 3). There is a 1,2 second pause and then Miss Trynke intervenes and prompts Shamira to choose another book (*just pick another one*, line 5) and intern Denise aligns by orienting Shamira to other books (*look*, line 6). Miss Trynke then explicates the content rule a little bit further (*right? (.) if you just read that one (0,4) or two weeks ago then er ( [     ] )*, lines 8-10). Shamira interrupts this explanation by emphasizing her new choice (*that one::! (.) that one that one that one*, line 11). Both the child and the intern are relative novices to the routine and the teacher’s elaboration orients both of them to the meaning of the content rule of *new books*.

#### 4.4.3 Additional routines

The basic routine of *book loan* (teacher orients child to the activity, child chooses a book, teacher acknowledges the choice) can be extended by two types of teacher moves. The first type of move is to stimulate reading, and with the second type of move, teachers orient children to the registration of their choice. We will illustrate the two types of expansions below.

##### *Expansion: stimulating reading*

When a child presents a book choice to the teacher, the teacher can “just” acknowledge the choice, but she can also refer to the content of the book after the choice has been made. Teachers may read the title of the book, refer to the topic or main characters of the story or read a few pages (or even the entire book) to the child. In excerpt 5, the teacher does all these three things.

#### (8) “It’s about an egg” [Ryan (2;6), Miss Trynke]

*Situation: Ryan picked a book and gave it to Miss Trynke. Miss Trynke suggested reading the book to see what it is about and asked Ryan to take a seat next to her.*

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Miss T.:	the <u>egg</u> ((reads title <sup>27</sup> ))	het <u>ei</u>
2		(1,3)	(1,3)
3	Miss T.:	it’s about an <u>egg</u>	het gaat over een <u>ei</u>
4		(0,3)	(0,3)
5	Ryan:	lo[o:k!	ki[j:k!
6	Miss T.:	[o: (.) that’s the <u>egg</u> [you see?	[o: (.) dat is het <u>ei</u> zie [je dat?
7	Ryan:	[er ye:s	[uh ja:
8		(0,4)	(0,4)
9	Miss T.:	there lay an <u>egg</u> as white as (snow) ((reads first line and continues reading))	er lag een <u>ei</u> zo wit als (sneeuw)

In excerpt 8, Ryan picked a book and gave it to Miss Trynke. Miss Trynke confirmed his choice and suggested they read the book. First she reads the book title (*the egg*, line 1), then she describes the topic of the book (*it’s about an egg*, line 3). Ryan is sharing the attention for the book with Miss Trynke, and he directs the focus to the picture of the egg on the cover of the book by excitedly saying *loo:k!* (line 5). After joint attention is established, Miss Trynke starts to read to Ryan.

<sup>27</sup> Dutch picture book *Het ei* by Dick Bruna

Another way of orienting the child to read is to refer to the future use of the book: the child will take it home and read it with a parent. Apparently, reading at home is seen as a mother's job by the caregivers in preschool (or alternatively, mothers are the ones who generally take up this task), because the mother is mentioned every time 'reading with a parent' comes up. Fathers are sometimes mentioned, but only when the mother is mentioned as well. Excerpt 9 illustrates how teachers orient children on taking the book home and reading it with a parent.

(9) "Read it with mummy" [Rachid (3;0), Miss Trynke]

*Situation: Miss Trynke read a few pages from the book that Rachid chose*

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Miss T.:	look (.) shall I put that one in your <u>bag</u> then?	kijk (.) zal ik die dan in je <u>tas</u> doen?
2		(0,3)	(0,3)
3	Rachid:	[yes	[ja
4	Miss T.:	[you can take this one with ((closes the book))	[mag jij deze meenemen met
5	Rachid:	yes	ja
6	Miss T.:	with mummy and with	met mama en met
7		(0,4)	(0,4)
8	Miss T.:	Manisha ((older sister)) continue reading	Manisha verder lezen
9		(0,3) ((Miss T. takes Rachid's book bag))	(0,3)
10	Miss T.:	ok[ay?	ok[e?
11	Rachid:	[yes	[ja

In excerpt 9, Miss Trynke orients Rachid to the reading of the book by reading a couple of pages herself. She then announces to put the book into his special book bag (*look (.) shall I put that one in your bag then?*, line 1) and tells Rachid he can read the book at home with his mother and sister (*with mummy and with (0,4) Manisha continue reading*, lines 6-8). So, teachers can execute or discuss the intended emergent literacy skill of reading books during the *book loan* activity.

*Expansion: registration*

When the child selected a book, the teacher has to process this choice: she writes down the book title in a folder and the child's name in the book, and puts the book in the child's special book bag. Although teachers always register the child's choice, this

move is not part of the mutual SAS of *book loan* for all children. Teachers may register the choice after the interaction is closed and the child has left the *book loan* scene, but children may also stay while teachers register the choice, and teachers orient children to this registration process. An example of an orientation to registration is given in excerpt 10.

**(10) “I’ll put your name in it” [Kirsten (3;5), Miss Trynke]**

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch Original</i>
1	Miss T.:	shall I put it in your bag	zal ik die in jou tas doen
2		(0,3)	(0,3)
3	Miss T.:	you can take it home Kirsten I’ll put your <u>name</u> in it	mag jij die mee naar huis Kirsten zet ik jouw <u>naam</u> d’r in
4		(1,6)	(1,6)
5	Miss T.:	<Kirsten>	<Kirsten>
6		(0,6)	(0,6)
7	Miss T.:	you can nicely read it at home with mummy right?	kan je thuis lekker met mama lezen heh?
8		(0,6)	(0,6)
9	Kirsten:	no Brit (( <i>older sister</i> )) wants to read it always	nee Brit wil hem graag lezen altijd
10	Miss T.:	oh Britney?	oh Britney?
11		(0,7)	(0,7)
12	Miss T.:	°er which day was it? (.) november three°	°ehm welke datum was 't nou? (.) drie november°
13		(0,7)	(0,7)
14	Miss T.:	°october three? °	°drie oktober?°
15		(3,0)	(3,0)
16	Miss T.:	°well°	°nou°
17		(2,4)	(2,4)
18	Miss T.:	°three ten o six° (( <i>3 oct. '06</i> ))- can your sister read well	°drie tien nul zes°- kan jouw zusje goed lezen
19		(0,5)	(0,5)
20	Kirsten:	yes	ja°
21	Miss T.:	yes? can she read well to you?	ja? kan die goed <u>voorlezen</u> aan jou
22		(2,3)	(2,3)
23	Miss T.:	° (that one is)	°(die ligt nou)
24		(2,5)	(2,5)

25	Miss T.:	just get your bag	even jouw tas zoeken
26		(1,6)	(1,6)
27	Miss T.:	Ryan (( <i>Miss Trynke is searching Kirsten's bag and sees Ryan's bag</i> ))	Ryan
28		(2,2)	(2,2)
29	Miss T.:	°(Sven) (( <i>Miss Trynke sees Sven's bag</i> ))	°(Sven)
30		(2,2)	(2,2)
31	Miss T.:	Annet (( <i>Miss Trynke sees Annet's bag</i> ))	Annet
32		(3,2)	(3,2)
33	Miss T.:	Kirsten! (( <i>Miss Trynke found Kirsten's bag</i> ))	Kirsten!
34		(0,4)	(0,4)
35	Miss T.:	Kirsten do you want to se- ask Annet if she will come to Miss to pick a book?	Kirsten wil jij Annet even naar juf st- vragen of ze een boekje komt zoeken?
36		(0,5)	(0,5)
37	Kirsten:	yes	ja
38	Miss T.:	yes?	ja?
39		(( <i>Kirsten walks outside and tells the assistant that Annet should go inside to pick a book</i> ))	

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In excerpt 10, Miss Trynke verbalizes the things that she has to do herself to process Kirsten's choice: placing the book in the special book bag (*shall I put it in your bag*, line 1) and writing the child's name in the book (*I'll put your name in it* (1,6) <*Kirsten*>, lines 3-5). Miss Trynke alternates between an orientation to registration and to reading. After she wrote down Kirsten's name in the registration folder, she refers to reading (*you can nicely read it at home with mummy right?*, line 7). Kirsten in her turn identifies a trouble source (Schegloff, 2000) and says her older sister always reads her books (*no Brit wants to read it always*, line 9), and Miss Trynke gives another initiated repair (*oh Britney?*, line 10). Miss Trynke will resume this topic later, but inserts a sequence of private speech when she needs to write down the date in the registration folder (*°er which day was it? (.) november three°* (0,7) *°october three?* (3,0) *°well°* (2,4) *°three ten o six°-*, lines 12-18). This sequence is an example of peripheral learning (Wenger, 1998) as it provides Kirsten as a bystander

with literacy experience (Larson, 1999). Miss Trynke proceeds straight into a renewed take up of the previous topic: Kirsten's sister reading the book (*can your sister read well*, line 18 and *can she read well to you?*, line 21). This topic was still active for both speakers, so they do not have to go through a re-opening sequence. After this second orientation to reading, Miss Trynke shifts again to organizational matters: she puts the book in the special bag and instructs Kirsten to ask a new child to enter the *book loan* activity.

Through orientation on the administration of *book loan*, children are oriented to a special type of literacy event (Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic, 2000), namely 'administrative conduct'. The administration serves as a relevant, mundane literacy event (see chapter 3): writing down the child's choice is a natural and relevant move in the child's current interaction and follows from the previous actions. In addition, administration is a way of familiarizing children with the routine of real library loan. Just how relevant administration can be, is shown in excerpt 11 where Nicole is denied her choice at the very last moment.

**(11) "You've already had that one!" [Nicole (2;7), intern Ellen]**

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch Original</i>
1		(7,3) ((Nicole picks a book and nonverbally indicates her choice to intern Ellen))	(7,3)
2	Intern E.:	yes? (.) do you want that one	ja? (.) wil je die
3		(0,3)	(0,3)
4	Intern E.:	okay	okee
5		(17,3) ((Nicole is about to walk away))	(17,3)
6	Intern E.:	<u>oh no</u> (.) you've already had that one! you've already had that one!	<u>oh nee</u> (.) die heb je al gehad! die heb je al gehad!
7		(1,2)	(1,2)
8	Intern E.:	↑look↑ (.) ((points to the registration folder)) you've already had that one (.) just pick another book okay? ((takes the disapproved book and puts it back in the book box))	↑kijk↑ (.) die heb je al gehad. (.) moet je even ander boekje uitzoeken oke?

In excerpt 11, Nicole chose a book, which intern Ellen acknowledged (*yes? (.) do you want that one (0,3) okay*, lines 2-4). Initially, it looks like the *book loan* activity of Nicole and intern Ellen follows the basic pattern and Nicole is about to walk away. Intern Ellen then re-opens the activity when she notices in the registration folder that the book is not new to Nicole (*oh no (.) you've already had that one! you've already had that one! (1,2) ↑look↑ (.) you've already had that one (.) just pick another book okay?*, lines 6-8). The special function of registration is emphasized by intern Ellen, when she points to the registration folder and repeats that Nicole 'already had that one'. Intern Ellen uses the registration folder as holding authority: because it is written in the registration folder that Nicole chose this book before, the *book loan* activity must be reopened. When children are aware of the power of the registration, it is not surprising that they are oriented to the registration move, like Danny seems to do in excerpt 12.

**(12) "That was all" [Danny (2;4) Intern Denise]**

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch Original</i>
1	Intern D.:	you can take it home and then mummy will read it to you (.) okay?	mag je die mee naar huis en dan gaat mamma die voorlezen (.) oke?
2		(0,6) (( <i>Danny nods</i> ))	(0,6)
3	Intern D.:	you can go and play now	mag je weer gaan spelen
4		(0,5) (( <i>Danny nods</i> ))	(0,5)
5	Intern D.:	that was all	dat was het
6		(0,3)	(0,3)
7	Intern D.:	just go and play (( <i>puts her hand on Danny's shoulder</i> ))	ga maar spelen
8		(2,7) (( <i>Denise starts writing in the registration folder</i> ))	(2,7)
9	Danny:	can I go home? (( <i>points to the house area</i> ))	mag ik naar huis?
10		(0,7)	(0,7)
11	Intern D.:	yes (.) just go to the house	ja (.) ga maar naar het huis
12		(( <i>Danny runs to the house area</i> ))	

In excerpt 12, intern Denise refers to the use of the book by telling Danny he will take the book home to read from (*you can take it home and then mummy will read it to you (.) okay?*, line 1). Intern Denise then tries to close the activity by telling Danny: *you*

*can go and play now* (line 3). With this directive, she projects the action of walking away, but Danny stays where he is and nods instead of leaving the *book loan* scene. Intern Denise repeats her attempts to encourage Danny to go by saying *that was all (0,3) just go and play* (lines 5-7). She emphasizes her directive by putting her hand on his shoulder. Danny stands up, but does not leave. When her actions do not have the desired effect, intern Denise moves on to a next activity herself and she starts registering Danny's choice. When intern Denise is writing in the folder, Danny asks after a little while whether he can go to the house area (*can I go home?*, line 9), which Denise grants (*yes (.) just go to the house*, line 11).

Apparently, to Danny it is not clear when he can actually leave the *book loan* scene. He does not react to the teachers' permission to go and play (*you can go and play now*, line 3), the pre-closing formulation (*that was all*, line 5) nor to the prompt that follows (*just go and play*, line 7). It seems to be unclear to Danny what he is exactly supposed to do. We can interpret his question (*can I go home?* line 9) as a repair-initiation, to which intern Denise responds by confirming and expanding the propositional content of her permission. Danny's waiting and his question indicate uncertainty about what he is supposed to do. This uncertainty could be related to the position of the teacher's permission to go and play: at the border of the registration move. Danny and intern Denise seem to disagree on whether the administrative move requires a change in the participation structure of the activity. Intern Denise tells Danny to go and then starts to work on her administrative tasks. This behavior indicates that to *her*, the move of administration leads to a shift in participation structure: the child does not need to be there anymore. This seems to be less clear for Danny, as he did not leave the activity when intern Denise told him to.

#### 4.4.4 Differences between the preschools

Our selection consists of *book loan* fragments of children and teachers in two preschool classrooms. Each preschool is a community with shared background knowledge, best practices and routines. We can expect that activities are structured differently within different community of users. The SAS of *book loan* indeed differs between the two preschools. The three moves of the basic routine (orientation, choice and acknowledgement) are the core of all *book loan* interactions in both preschools. However, the preschools differ in how frequently teachers and children include the two expansion moves to the routine. In preschool A, children and teachers frequently follow the basic routine only: of the 22 interactions, 1 has an additional orientation on reading and 3 are expanded with a registration procedure. In preschool C, expansions are more frequent: of the 15 fragments, 4 include an orientation to reading, 3 an orientation to registration, and 4 are expanded with both types of moves. We did not



find clear evidence explaining when expansions do or do not occur, but we can formulate two possible influences. The orientation to reading may partly be influenced by time constraints of the teacher – especially when she wants to read to the child. Whether the move of registration is part of the *book loan* depends in part on the child: the teacher has to register the choice anyway, and when the child chooses not to leave the *book loan* scene, he or she is oriented to the registration. Teachers may tell children they can go and play after they have acknowledged the choice, but they never *prevent* children from leaving after the acknowledgement: children may leave when the teacher registers the choice (and are sometimes even urged to leave), but they can stay as well. Children create their own learning this way.

#### 4.5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The basic version of the activity of *book loan* consists of three moves. In the first move, the teacher orients the child to the activity of *book loan*. Children often are reoriented to the new activity of *book loan* from their free play activity. This reorientation takes effort because children do not seem to consider the book loan activity as having priority over their own free play activity: they accept the teacher's invitation, but only with minimal verbal agreement and sometimes even after some negotiation.

Once the child is oriented to the new activity, child and teacher proceed to the second move in which the child selects a book. Children choose a book on their own. The teacher may provide guidance by orienting the child to (part of) the collection of books. Children can only base their choice on information from the cover of the book (except when teachers suggest a particular book by reading its title). Children generally indicate their choice minimally by saying *this one* or *that one* and/or pointing to the book or handing it to the teacher.

In the third move, the teacher acknowledges the child's choice. Teacher approval depends on implicit content rules that state that children should choose *new* books. After this third move, the child can leave the *book loan* activity.

Two additional moves may be used: the teacher can orient the child to reading the book (by talking about the story, referring to use at home or reading a bit herself) and the child can be oriented to the registration process. The child him- or herself influences the occurrence of the orientation to registration: the teacher has to register the choice anyway and by choosing not to leave the activity, the child includes this move in the SAS of *book loan*.

The activity of *book loan* seems to be more about learning to take part in the routine than about learning how to make an educated choice for a book. One might expect that the move of *choosing* the book would be essential in the routine, but in

reality, the teacher provides only a minimal amount of guidance, verbally as well as nonverbally. Apparently, for the teacher, the essence of the move of choosing is the structure, not the content of the move. There is no emphasis on *choosing strategies* in this move, as children are not scaffolded into how to make an educated choice. Teachers generally do not guide the children into making an educated choice, but let the child choose whatever book they want, as long as it is new. So, the move of choosing a book seems to be a ritualized action where content and choosing strategies are not verbalized. However, teachers do refer to the content of the book *after* the child has made his or her choice, with the expansion that orients to reading. The content of the book is not used as a way of choosing, but it is used afterwards as a way of justifying the choice. By doing this, teachers treat the child's choice as a conscious one and acknowledge the choice by referring positively to the content of the book.

We suspect that children *do* use choosing strategies during their search for a book, but these seem to be implicit and not verbalized. British adolescents reported 5 factors on which they base their book choice: 1) positive previous experiences with the book or the author, 2) an attractive and colorful cover, 3) recommendation by family and peers, 4) appearance in the media, for example a film version of a book, and 5) a popular genre (Hopper, 2005). We hypothesize that preschool children use the strategy of choosing based on an *attractive cover* and *appealing topic*, as shown on the cover (Kragler, 2000; Mohr, 2006; Popma-Kraan, 1987), since they only see the book covers when they are browsing the books and they do not flip through the books before they reach a decision. In other words, the cover is their only source of information. A book cover may be especially attractive when it shows a character children know from television or toys. Albert (3;7) for example excitedly announced his choice when he saw a book about Bob the Builder, saying: *BOB THE BUILDER! yes (0,5) bob the builder (0,7) I bob the builder (BOB DE BOUWER! ja (0,5) bob de bouwer (0,7) ik bob de bouwer*). When children choose a book, they may thus use a combination of the strategies: attractive cover and familiarity with topic or main character.

A different type of expansion to the routine in the two preschools is the orientation to registration of the choice. This administration is a special type of literacy event and serves in a more general role in emergent literacy: every relevant instance in which written language is used can add to children's understanding of the use and function of literacy. The "power" of writing is strong in registration activities: a choice is only definite when it is written down in the special folder, and a choice can be rejected because it is noted in the registration folder that the child has already chosen the book before. It is interesting to see that there seems to be some uncertainty

about the participation structure of this expansion phase, i.e. whether children are supposed to stay during the administration move.

This paper illustrates the importance of studying elements of educational curricula in daily life to understand what children experience, what they might learn and how learnability may be increased. The activity of *book loan* can play a multifaceted role in emergent literacy: children not only have access to books, they can also be oriented to the activity of reading, the use and purpose of registration and the practice of choosing a book. These meaningful elements are mainly found in the supplemental moves of the activity *book loan*.

## 5. “MISS! I’M DONE!” FINISHING CRAFTS ASSIGNMENTS AS A SITUATED ACTIVITY SYSTEM IN PRESCHOOL<sup>28</sup>

### ABSTRACT

We describe the Situated Activity System of finishing crafts assignments in preschool: the specific, routinized way that child and teacher jointly close the child’s crafts assignment, employing a specific discourse pattern. We analyzed the interactions of 14 Dutch children between 2;1 and 3;10 years old while they were finishing their crafts assignments. The finishing of crafts assignments takes a routine format: the child indicates ‘being done’, the teacher acknowledges this and the child enters a new activity. By participating in the situated activity of finishing crafts assignments, children learn to assess when they are done, to indicate this to their teacher, and to participate in the ritual sequence of the closing activity. The situated activity system of closing crafts assignments is a context in which children are beginning to be socialized in to the academic discourse practice of task fulfillment.

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Daycare and other early (educational) settings are the first settings in which children experience social life outside the family and thereby prepare children for participation in later organized settings, like school. Children in early childhood education settings are beginning to be socialized into the routines, procedures, and ways of talking in the classroom. We will illustrate this socialization with a specific activity in Dutch preschool classrooms (for children aged 2;6 to 4;0) that is relevant for future participation in more formal school assignments: crafts assignments. Before we will turn to preschool crafts assignments, we give an overview of early childhood education in the Netherlands, since childhood education is influenced by local and cultural beliefs (Huijbregts, Leseman & Tavecchio, 2008; Tobin, Wu & Davidson, 1989).

In the Netherlands, compulsory school attendance starts at age 5, but most Dutch children enter kindergarten (which is integrated in the primary education) at age 4. Children younger than age 4 can attend *preschool* or *day care*. Preschools have an educational goal and aim at providing children new experiences, while day care is primarily organized to enable parents to go to work. Children can enter preschool from around 2;6 years (Jepma et al., 2007). Two thirds of the children between 2;0 and 4;0 years old attend preschool (Westenbrink & Versteegen, 2006).

Preschools started as playgroups organized and conducted by parents in the 1960’s and were meant to increase the child’s (social) experiences. Over the years,

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<sup>28</sup> Submitted

preschools have become more professional, with a larger emphasis on educational activities and a goal of reducing and preventing learning- and language delays of ‘at risk’ children (van der Vegt et al., 2007; e.g. those with poorly educated parents and/or from minority language groups with Dutch as their second language; van Kampen et al., 2005b).

The professionalization of preschools and their role in preventing developmental delays led to a focus on the cost and effectiveness of early childhood education (ECE) programs. Among the most frequently used ECE programs in the Netherlands are *Piramide* (used by 51% of Dutch municipalities) and *Boekenpret* (which is used by 29% of the municipalities, and can be combined with other programs, like *Piramide*; Jepma et al., 2007). *Piramide* is a highly structured program with a strong emphasis on cognitive development, in which individual extensive tutoring is available when necessary (van Kuyk, 2000). The main aim of the program *Boekenpret* (related to Bookstart, Booktrust, 2009) is to stimulate literacy development. To reach this goal, preschools, libraries and health centers work together to expose children and their parents to a wide variety of books and reading experiences (van den Berg & Middel, 1996; van der Pennen, 2001).

Half of the at risk children currently attend preschool with an ECE program. The Dutch government aims to reach *all* at risk children from at-risk families, lest they are irreversibly disadvantaged when they enter the educational system as ‘old’ as age five (Dijksma, 2008; Ministerie van Onderwijs Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2008b). Early childhood education has come to be considered important for preparing all children, particularly those from at risk backgrounds, for formal education (den Elt et al., 1996). Compulsory school attendance may start at age five, but many children enter preschool/day care years earlier and are already beginning to be socialized into the educational system from age 2;6.

To understand how early childhood education can influence certain aspects of children’s development, we study how different activities in preschool are unique contexts for learning. In this paper, we investigate the context of crafts assignments, to see if and how children use early academic discourse practices in the supervised, routinized closings of the assignment. Crafts assignments are one of the more structured activities in Dutch preschool classrooms: the activity is teacher-directed, the teacher defines a clear end-state and often the children get instruction on how to work towards that end state (Leseman et al., 2001). Crafts assignments are an early form of the obligatory, teacher-directed tasks that children will encounter many times in their future school life. In addition to ‘curricular’ knowledge, children need to know how to *participate* in various classroom practices (Björk-Willén & Cromdal, 2009; Cazden, 2001; Mehan, 1979; Mehan, 1984). Successful performance of teacher-

directed activities is a key component of overall academic success, and preschool work situations can prepare children for such demands.

## 5.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 5.2.1 *Task-like activities in preschool*

The three basic activities in Dutch preschools are: *circle time*, *free play* and *'work'*. In a study on learning in kindergarten, Leseman, Rollenberg and Rispens (2001) defined *work* as a situation, organized by the teacher, in which a group of children sit at a table doing for example crafts or drawing. Berenst (2003) identified *instruction* as the key element of work and he described how the teacher in preschool uses instruction to let a small group of children do certain things in a prescribed way. In this paper, we define *work* as an activity, organized by the teacher, which is obligatory to the children and in which the children must follow the teacher's specific directions. One activity that meets our definition of work is the *crafts assignment* (but not free crafts: when children choose to draw or glue during free play, are free to make whatever they want to and can quit the activity when they want to, we do not consider this work).

Crafts assignments activities are common in preschool and kindergarten (Janssen-Vos & Laevers, 1996). Examples of crafts assignments are: decorating a strawberry shape with snippets of paper, decorating a strip of paper which will later be turned into a hat, and assembling a snowman from pre-cut shapes. The main features of this type of tasks are: a) end products look alike across students, the main differences are in the neatness or sloppiness of the work; b) the teacher makes an example and gives instruction on how to work; c) apart from decorations, creativity is often not appreciated.

There is some work on the effect of classroom crafts activities on cognitive and social emotional development, attention, motor skills and specific crafts skills (Beeldonderwijs, 2007; Braswell, Rosengren & Pierrousakos, 2007; Breeuwsma, 1994; Dunsmore, Halberstadt & Robinson, 2004; Fair, Vandermaas-Peeler, Beaudry & Dew, 2005; Leseman et al., 2001; Stewart, Rule & Giordano, 2007), but the more structured forms of crafts tasks are less studied than those that employ creative expression, like free painting or drawing (Breeuwsma, 1994; Gardner, 2006 [1989]). It is not our intention to discuss the possible need for more creativity and child-initiative in crafts assignments; instead we want to focus on the *activity* of crafts assignments. We think crafts tasks might be important contexts for socialization into the situated educational practice of working on a task. We will study crafts assignments as a *Situated Activity System* (Goffman, 1961) to explore this idea.

### 5.2.2 *Situated activity systems and early academic discourse practices*

Goffman (1961) introduced the notion of *Situated Activity System* (SAS) to refer to encounters in which people perform “a single joint activity, a somewhat closed, self-compensating, self-terminating circuit of interdependent actions” (Goffman, 1961, p.96). Goodwin defines a Situated Activity System as “the range of phenomena implicated in the systematic accomplishment of a specific activity within a relevant setting” (Goodwin, 1997, p.115). A Situated Activity System provides a global structure of a routine activity, in which verbal and nonverbal acts are connected. Within this global structure, with norms and procedures, participants are working towards an end state. There is variation in the ways participants locally construct the different moves in the routine pattern, but globally, they are oriented to the structure of the SAS. The washing and dressing activity in a nursing home is an example of a situated activity system (Mazeland, 2007), in which participants are oriented to a fixed sequence of activities which have a clear endpoint, in this case ‘being dressed’. Situated Activity Systems often develop in institutional settings, like workplaces or schools.

Children (and other novices) learn by participating in the practices of the community. These practices are not static, and evolve when new members join the community, or as Wenger puts it: a “practice is a shared history of learning” (1998, p.102). Many routine activities are structured by a SAS, for example children’s games, like hopscotch, have specific roles, rules, acts, order of events and orientation to relevant objects (like the hopscotch diagram) in a joint participation framework (Goodwin, 1997; Goodwin, 2007).

Another example of a Situated Activity System is gift opening during birthday parties (Good & Beach, 2005). Good and Beach analyzed the routine activity of receiving birthday presents of a young girl from her 3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> birthday. They described the routine of birthday gift opening and argued that by participating in gift opening interactions, children develop a competence in doing the actions of the activity and, more general, learn to manage social relations and to give appropriately positive reactions to others.

More ‘educational’ activities, like object labelling, can be structured by a SAS as well. Björk-Willén and Cromdal (2009) describe among others how two bilingual children in an Australian preschool reproduce an object labeling activity during free play and show they have learned the features of this educational practice: they organize their turn taking by reproducing an IRE sequence (initiation-reply-evaluation; Mehan, 1979), take the roles of teacher and student and switch to English, the language of instruction in their classroom.

Another example of the occurrence of SAS in preschool classrooms is the routine of *attendance checking* during circle time, as described by Berenst (2003). The attendance checking in preschool classroom is a sequence of elicitations in which the teacher repeatedly, in a similar manner, invites a child to confirm his presence. This routine has a practical, administrative goal for the teacher and at the same time it is a context for children to experience this school-specific way of using language, which is also used in kindergarten and in later classroom settings. The attendance checking routine in the study of Berenst has the following basic structure:

<i>Teacher:</i>	<i>is [name C1] there?</i>	<i>is [name C1] er ook?</i>
<i>Child 1:</i>	<i>yes Miss</i>	<i>ja juf</i>
<i>Teacher:</i>	<i>well done</i>	<i>goed zo</i>

The structure of this routine is quite strong: the teacher only varies her question when the child does not respond and *yes Miss* is clearly the preferred response to be given by the children. The attendance checking routine is very simple, but children have to learn it in preschool, as kindergarten teachers of 4 and 5 year old children expect them to be able to participate in this specific participation structure.

The routine of attendance checking is just one example of the school-specific participation structures children must learn to be able to participate successfully in classroom settings. Classroom participation is made up of many classroom discourse practices, since different (learning) situations are related to different discursive practices (Kovalainen & Kumpulainen, 2005). Different aspects of children's everyday life are structured according to local routines and participation frameworks (Cromdal, 2008). These sociocultural practices in preschool classroom are generally not explicated by the teacher. They are merely reproduced by the way the teacher structures the routine interactions and this way the teacher orients children to participation structures appropriate for that given activity.

Verbal moves are an essential part of Situated Activity Systems. By participating in a SAS, children learn to participate in the discourse structure of that routine interaction. By participating in classroom routines, young children therefore learn specific ways of *using language*. Spoken and written language are very important in school because language is the medium by which learning is conveyed, by which social relations in the classroom are managed and by which children can express themselves (Cazden, 2001; Mehan, 1984; Mercer et al., 1999; Wells, 2006). In school, children are involved in *academic discourse practices*: a combination of *educational* and *educated* discourse practices. *Educational discourse practices* refer to the way children talk when they behave like a pupil in class and *educated discourse*



*practices* refer to the way they use language to think and to communicate (Mercer, 1995). Educated discourse practices can also occur in home situations, but this varies between families and social economic class (Gee, 2004; van der Geest, Gerstel, Appel & Tervoort, 1973; Wells, 1986).

Beginning pupils will need to learn the ways of interacting and using language at school. Some children are prepared for this way of talking at home, but others come from different cultures or families and are less familiar with the language of schooling (Gee, 2003; Snow, Dubber & de Blauw, 1982; Wells, 1986). It is important that all children have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the conventions of academic discourse in preschool so that they can participate in elementary school.

In this paper we study the Situated Activity System of finishing crafts tasks as a context for learning classroom conventions and as a preparation of the practice of doing assignments in school. 'Being a good pupil' means to know classroom conventions and to act upon them. The cultural practice of 'finishing an assignment' is such a classroom practice that children need to know to succeed in school. In our preschool setting, we will focus on the common assignment of making a craft. Our research question is: *What elements of emerging academic discourse practices can be learned from participating in the SAS of finishing crafts assignments?* To be able to answer this question, we need to know what the SAS of finishing crafts assignments in preschool looks like. We will start with a description of the practices during finishing crafts assignments and turn to their role in learning and development later.

We chose the activity of crafts assignments because it is one of the more school-like tasks in preschool classrooms. Social hierarchy between the child and the teacher is a feature present in all classroom interaction, but is especially present in assignments, where the child is much less free to follow his own ideas than during other preschool activities. We specifically focus on *closings* of crafts assignments, because this part of the activity is a joint construction between the child and the teacher. While openings are relatively simple moments of agreement in which participants mark the start of an activity (Atkinson, Cuff & Lee, 1978; Schegloff, 2007; Zimmerman, 1984), closings are complex joint constructions, rooted *within* the ongoing activity. Interaction partners need to bring the activity to a close together (see Church (2009), on closings of children's disputes), and an attempt of one partner to initiate a closing (a pre-closing) may or may not lead to a closing of the conversation (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). We chose to focus on the closing of crafts assignment, because this phase of the crafts assignment has the most complex structure and requires the child and teacher to jointly work towards a mutual end state.

### 5.3 DATA

The data in this article are drawn from the PRACTING project, a broader study investigating pragmatic development in preschool. In this longitudinal project, 25 children are followed from approximately 2;6 to 4;0 years old in their preschool. The children's interactions during the day at preschool are recorded every three months. Recordings are made with a recording device that is sewn into a little jacket. Individual audio recordings for every focal child and an overview video recording are made. The recording device is hidden to make the recordings as unobtrusive as possible.

We drew a collection of 30 fragments of interactions during crafts assignments from the PRACTING corpus. We selected the two preschools in our corpus in which crafts assignments occur most regularly and analyzed crafts assignments from boys and girls at a variety of ages to get a full view of the practice of closing crafts assignments. The two preschools in our selection are located in middle sized towns in the North of the Netherlands. Both preschools use the literacy promoting program *Boekenpret*, one preschool also uses the center-based program *Piramide* (both briefly described earlier in this paper). The 30 fragments in our collection take place around 7 different crafts assignments. The children used glue in all of their crafts assignments. The 30 selected fragments include 14 children (9 girls and 5 boys). For most children we included multiple crafts activities at different ages to make a selection with a wide age range from just over two to almost 4 years old (2;1 to 3;10). The duration of the crafts assignments varied widely: from under 4 minutes (3:42) to almost 24 minutes (23:53). For an overview of the collection, see appendix F.

Selections of our recordings are transcribed using Jeffersonian conventions (Jefferson, 1984). Methodologically, our focus is on the discourse structure of the closing of crafts assignment and we supplement our findings with some quantitative data about the occurrence of the different patterns and moves.

We study situated practices, which are by definition specific for a community. We should therefore beware of differences between the two preschools in how they organize their crafts practices. The preschools differ in practical organization of the crafts task (all children work at a time or children work in smaller groups, see picture 1) and in the amount and level of detail of instruction (Hamstra, 2009). However, the closing of the crafts assignments is organized similarly in the two classrooms, as we will show later.

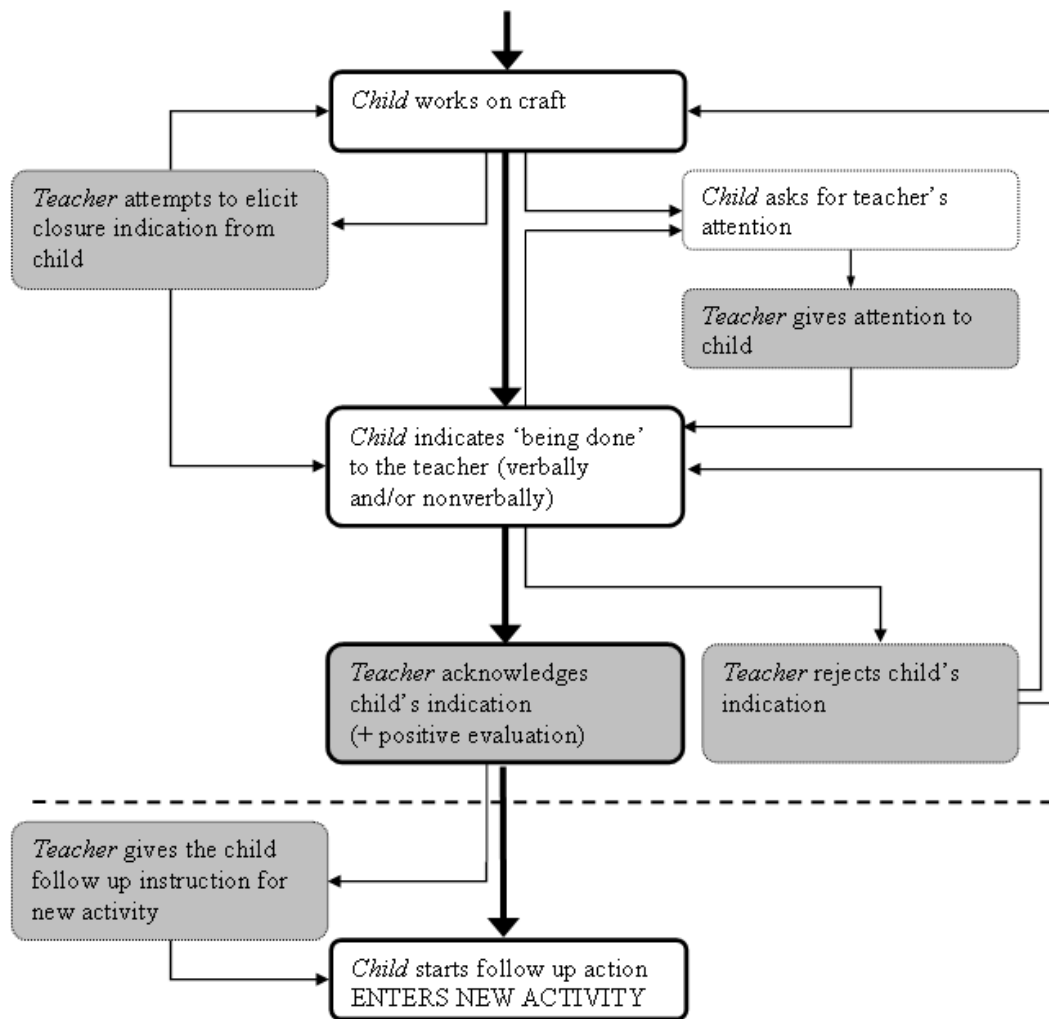
**Picture 1.** Organization of the crafts assignment. *Left:* whole group setup, where all children work at the same time (most children are already done); *right:* small group setup, where 3 or 4 children are working at the same time.



#### 5.4 RESULTS

Children and teachers are oriented towards a closing routine when they are jointly constructing the finishing of the activity. We schematized the discourse pattern of this closing routine by describing the action slots of the teacher and the child (see figure 1). In the collection of crafts assignments, there is almost always some kind of *verbal* closure: in 29 out of 30 times a child or teacher refers to finishing the activity by saying something before or after the child left the crafts scene. The case where there is no verbal closure is Miranda's at 3;3 years old. Miranda is seated next to Peggy (3;10) when they are working on their craft. Peggy is involved in a closing routine with the intern and leaves the crafts scene and Miranda follows her. In this case, Miranda was not involved in a closing routine herself, but her neighbor Peggy was. Miranda tags along with Peggy without saying anything and without the intern commenting on this. In all other cases, children and teachers are involved in individual closing routines.

The closing sequence is of course embedded in the context of the total crafts assignment. Several phases in the assignment already took place: a child got a turn, received instruction and worked on the craft. In other words, the closing routine follows a period of work. The top arrow in the scheme, coming from 'nowhere', indicates that the closing activity is jointly constructed from *within* the crafts assignment. The closing routine consists of a preferred route -indicated by the bold boxes and bold arrows- and several optional additional moves. Not all moves are necessarily verbal; the discourse pattern can be filled with some nonverbal moves as well. The routine ends when the child enters a new activity. Entering a new activity is not part of the closing routine anymore, but since it marks the finishing of the closing, it is part of the scheme, below the dashed line. The moves in the white boxes are slots to be taken by the child and the moves in the gray boxes are to be taken by the teacher.

**Figure 1.** Schematized discourse pattern of the closing routine of crafts assignments

The basic, most straightforward closing pattern is indicated in bold in figure 1: the child indicates to the teacher that he is done, the teacher acknowledges the child's indication and may give positive evaluation and the child leaves the crafts context and enters a new activity. In addition, the child may explicitly ask for the teacher's attention before indicating 'being done'. This pattern occurs most frequently in our corpus (occurrences are given in table I). The teacher may also scaffold the child into taking his action moves by eliciting a closure indication from the child. By responding with an agreement token, the child is helped to take his slot with minimal effort. Both types of routes are illustrated in figure 2, further down in paragraph 5.4.2 (the schemes in figure 2 are a selection from the main closing routine in figure 1). An alternative route is when the teacher rejects the child's indication of 'being done'. In reaction to a rejection, the child may continue working or may repeat the indication of 'being done' (see figure 3 in paragraph 5.4.3 for a schematic representation).

The most frequent closing pattern is the situation in which the child indicates that he is done and the teacher acknowledges this. This occurs 14 out of 30 times. We call this the unmarked pattern because it requires no scaffolding from the teacher, there are no disagreements or negotiations and it is most frequent. In 5 cases, the teacher helps the child to take the slot of indicating he is done by eliciting an indication. In 4 cases the child indicates he is done, but the teacher disagrees. Seven cases do not fit the first three patterns. First, there is Miranda who tags along with Peggy in her closing routine as we described above and in the other 6 cases the interaction is unconventional because the action moves have a different sequence, some action moves are skipped or the child continued working after the teacher attempted to elicit an indication of 'being done'. The distribution of the different patterns is summarized in table 1 (Chi square=8,1, df=3, asymp. sig.=.043).

**Table 1.** Distribution of closing patterns

<i>Pattern</i>	<i>Nr of occurrences<sup>a</sup></i>
<i>Unmarked:</i> child indicates, teacher acknowledges	14 <sup>a</sup>
<i>Scaffold:</i> teacher elicits indication from child	5
<i>Negotiation:</i> child indicates, teacher rejects	4
<i>Marked:</i> marked sequence of action moves or no verbal closing routine or rejected teacher elicitation	7

<sup>a</sup>The unmarked pattern is most frequent,  $p < .05$

#### 5.4.1 Unmarked pattern

Cases in which the child indicates 'being done' and the teacher agrees are labeled 'unmarked' because it is the most frequent pattern, it is the quickest route of closing and it does not contain moments of disagreement. An example of this pattern is given with excerpt 1. In this excerpt Sarah (2;11) announces she is 'done', which Miss Laura acknowledges by giving a positive evaluation.

In excerpt 1, Sarah is gluing 'scales' to a piece of construction paper shaped like a fish. We can see how Sarah orients herself to the closing routine before she indicates she is done, by announcing she is *almost done* (lines 1-3). This indicates that Sarah knows the structure of the closing routine, and that she can indicate she is done when her craft is finished. Sarah announces she is done by simply saying 'DONE!' (line 5). According to the unmarked closing routine, the teacher should now provide evaluation. When Miss Laura does not react to Sarah's announcement, Sarah uses the attention-getter 'look?' (line 7). Joint attention is part of the closing routine and normally this is established when the child indicates she is done. When Miss Laura does not react, Sarah tries to (re)establish joint attention by using an explicit attention

getter. She succeeds and after a pause Miss Laura acknowledges Sarah's indication by giving a positive evaluation (*well done*, line 9). The schematic route of this closing routine is given in the left scheme of figure 2. It represents how Sarah and Miss Laura jointly construct the closing on the crafts assignment in an unmarked way.

(1) "Almost done", unmarked pattern [Sarah (2;11), Miss Laura]<sup>1</sup>

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Sarah:	I ALMOST	IK BIJNA
2		(2,7)	(2,7)
3	Sarah:	I'M ALMOST <u>DONE</u>	IK BEN BIJNA <u>KLAAR</u>
4		(13,1)	(13,1)
5	Sarah:	DONE!	KLAAR!
6		(0,7)	(0,7)
7	Sarah:	look?	kijk?
8		(1,0)	(1,0)
9	Miss L.:	well done	goed zo

When the child indicates he is done, the next preferred teacher move is to acknowledge this. In 25 of the 30 cases, there is teacher acknowledgement. The acknowledgements are typically accompanied by a positive evaluation, but this is not a necessary element of the acknowledgement move. Examples of acknowledgements with and without a positive evaluation are given in excerpts 2 and 3.

(2) "Pretty", acknowledgement *with* positive evaluation [Robbie (3;4), Miss Krisje]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Robbie:	miss I'm done:	juffrouw ik ben klaa:r
2	Miss K.:	yes! how pretty:	ja! wat moo:i

(3) "Well come then", acknowledgement *without* positive evaluation" [Albert (3;7), Miss Laura]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Albert:	I have done	ik heb klaar voor
2		(0,5)	(0,5)
3	Miss L.:	you're done too	jij bent ook klaar
4		(0,3)	(0,3)
5	Miss L.:	well come then (.) come and pass here at the <u>back</u> (( <i>helps Albert to leave the bench</i> ))	nou kom maar dan (.) kom maar d'r <u>achterlangs</u> lopen

Acknowledgements are more often given with a positive evaluation than without (respectively 19 and 6 times, Chi square=6,8, df=1, asymp. sig.=.009, table 2). Note that the numbers only show that the chance of getting a positive evaluation is higher than the chance of not receiving one. The positive evaluation does not seem to be explicitly preferred by the children (yet) because they show no signs of orientation to the positive evaluation when it is absent.

**Table 2.** Number of acknowledgements by the teacher with and without positive evaluation

<i>Acknowledgement</i>	<i>Nr or fragments<sup>a</sup></i>
+ positive evaluation	19 <sup>a</sup>
- positive evaluation	6

<sup>a</sup>There are more acknowledgements with than without a positive evaluation,  $p < .01$

#### 5.4.2 Scaffold pattern: teacher helps child to take his action slots

A variation on the unmarked pattern is when the teacher elicits a closing indication from the child. By doing this, she helps the child to take the slot of indicating 'being done', just by giving an agreement token. When the child responds affirmative to the teacher's elicitation, the interaction can proceed as in pattern 1. In our corpus, teachers elicit closings from children 5 times. An example is given with excerpt 4. In this excerpt, Miss Laura asks Jennifer (2;1) whether he is done and orients her to the closing routine.

#### (4) "We are done", scaffold pattern [Jennifer (2;1), Miss Laura]

*Situation: Jennifer is one of the last children still sitting at the table with her crafts work. She is sucking glue (made of potato starch) from her glue brush.*

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Miss L.:	(are:) we are <u>done</u> Jennifer?	(zij:n) we zijn <u>klaar</u> Jennifer?
2		(0,8)	(0,8)
3	Miss L.:	>I guess< you've had enough	>volgens< mij heb je genoeg gehad
4		(0,8)	(0,8)
5	Miss L.:	your fish turned out ve::ry pretty!	je vis is hee::l mooi geworden!
6		(1,0)	(1,0)
7	Jennifer:	(da bo:h)	(da bo:h)
8		(1,2)	(1,2)
9	Miss L.:	your fish turned out ve::ry pretty	je vis is hee::l mooi geworden

10		(1,0)	(1,0)
11	Jennifer:	•ah!	•ah!
12		(0,6)	(0,6)
13	Jennifer:	(hoe mah!)	(hoe mah!)
14	Miss L.:	no the <u>glue</u> has been enough	nee de <u>plaksel</u> is genoeg geweest
15	Jennifer:	hoh (.) [↑he?	hoh (.) [↑he?
16	Miss L.:	[look just wipe your <u>hands</u>	[kijk ga je <u>handjes</u> maar afvegen

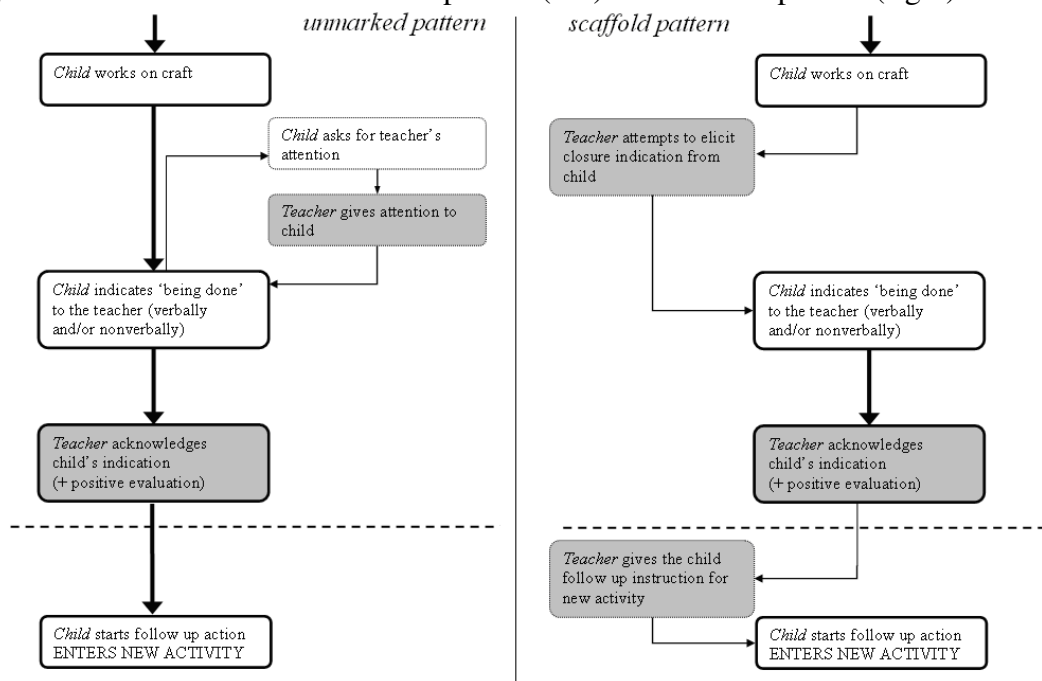
In excerpt 4 we see how Miss Laura initiates and structures the closing routine and orients Jennifer to the routine. Jennifer does not make clear utterances and does not take her action moves in the routine, but is nevertheless involved in the closing routine, thanks to the efforts of Miss Laura. Jennifer is not involved in task relevant behavior anymore (she is sucking potato starch glue from her glue brush) and Miss Laura seems to interpret this as an indication Jennifer is done. Miss Laura initiates the closing sequence by prompting Jennifer to indicate she is done (*(are:) we are done Jennifer?* line 1). When Jennifer does not respond, Miss Laura changes her prompt from a question into a statement (*>I guess< you've had enough*, line 3). With this statement, Miss Laura proposes to close the current activity again and perhaps she also gives indirect negative feedback on the inappropriate behavior of sucking glue (since 'having enough' could mean 'having enough of working' or 'having sucked enough glue'). Jennifer does not respond verbally to Miss Laura's statement, but she does not show disagreement either. Miss Laura seems to interpret the absence of protest on Jennifer's side as an indirect indication of being done and proceeds to the next move of acknowledging the child is done by giving a positive evaluation (*your fish turned out very pretty*, line 5) and repeats this positive evaluation after an (unintelligible) contribution of Jennifer. Jennifer then exclaims some more (*•ah! (0,6) (hoe mah!)*, lines 11-13) and appears to attempt to grab the glue, perhaps to continue working on her crafts. Miss Laura orients Jennifer to the fixed sequence of the routine of closing a craft (after the child indicated to be done and the teacher acknowledged this, the child needs to proceed to a new activity) by correcting her attempt to return to the glue (*no the glue has been enough*, line 14) and by prompting her to start a follow up activity (*look just wipe your hands*, line 16).

This excerpt nicely shows how Miss Laura provides scaffolding and includes Jennifer in the closing routine. Miss Laura projects the structure of the routine and sets up slots for Jennifer. Even though Jennifer does not verbally fill her slots in the discourse structure, she is part of the structure and thanks to Miss Laura's efforts, the



closing routine can be seen as a joint construction between the teacher and the child. The interaction of Miss Laura and Jennifer is schematized in the right scheme of figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Action schemes: unmarked pattern (left) and scaffold pattern (right)



#### 5.4.3 Negotiation pattern: child indicates 'being done', but teacher disagrees

In the previous cases the teacher and the child both agreed with the fact that the activity could be closed. However, sometimes children indicate they are done, while the teacher disagrees. In the typical case, the child has to continue working after a rejection and can attempt a new closing initiative later. Our corpus contains 4 fragments in which the child attempts a closing which the teacher rejects. We will illustrate this pattern with an excerpt of Karin (3,0) and Miss Krisje. Karin is decorating a strip of paper with colored squares, which will later be turned into a hat. The excerpt starts with classmate Jordy (3;4) who is about to finish his crafts assignment.

(5) “You have to glue way more”, negotiation pattern [Karin (3,0), Jordy (3;4), Miss Krisje]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Jordy:	miss	juffrouw
2		(0,5)	(0,5)
3	Miss K.:	yes	ja
4	Jordy:	(I have finished)	(ik heb klaar)
5		(3,6)	(3,6)

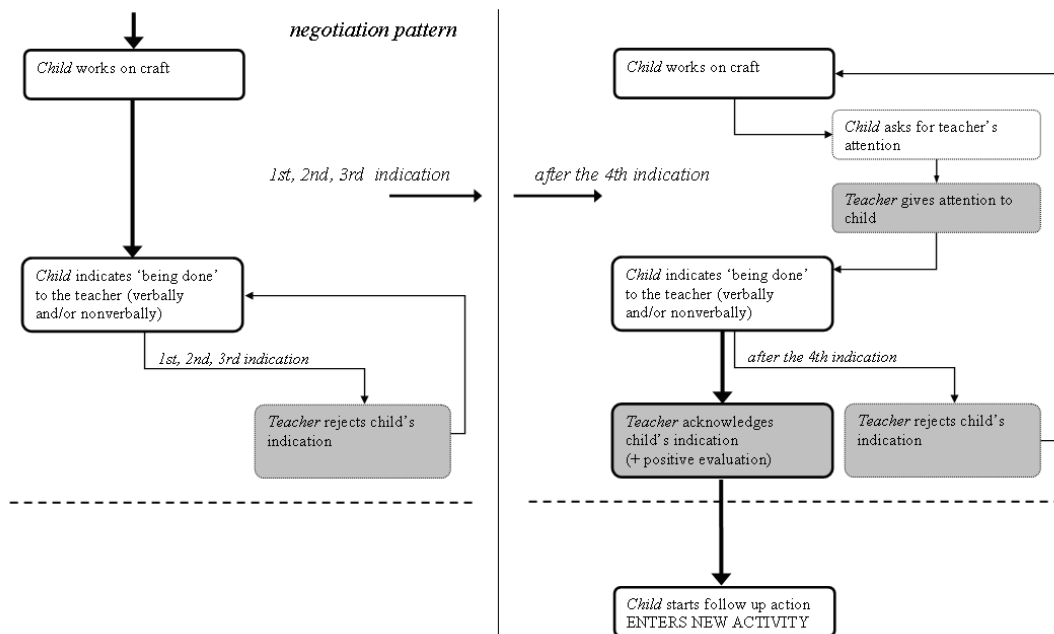
6	Miss K.:	prett↑↓y	moo↑↓i
7		(0,6)	(0,6)
8	Miss K.:	[well	[nah
9	Karin:	[me too!	[ik ook!
10		(0,6)	(0,6)
11	Miss K.:	no: you have to glue way more	nee: jij moet nog veel meer opplakken
12		(0,5)	(0,5)
13	Karin:	I have finished	ik heppe klaa:
14	Miss K.:	loads	een heleboel
15		(9,2)	(9,2)
16	Karin:	DO:NE	KLAA:R
17		(8,9)	(8,9)
18	Karin:	I have finished it	ik heppe klaa:r maak
19	Miss K.:	no:	nee:
20		(1,0)	(1,0)
21	Miss K.:	look	kijk eens
22		(1,2)	(1,2)
23	Miss K.:	some can be added here	hier kan ook nog wat
24		(26,9)	(26,9)
25	Karin:	look miss	kijk juf
26		(6,0)	(6,0)
27	Karin:	I HAVE FINISHED!	IK HEPPE KLAAR!
28	Miss K.:	<u>this way</u> I think it's very pretty	<u>zo</u> vind ik 'm heel mooi

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Excerpt 5 starts with Jordy who indicates he is done (lines 1-4). Jordy and Miss Krisje nicely follow the unmarked pattern of the closing routine: first Jordy calls his teacher to establish joint attention (line 1-3), then he indicates that he is done (*I have finished*, line 4) and Miss Krisje acknowledges Jordy's indication by giving a positive evaluation (*pretty*, line 6). At this point, Karin tries to tag along with the closing that Jordy and Miss Krisje established and she says: *me too* (line 9). Miss Krisje rejects Karin's indication and tells her to continue working (*no you have to glue way more*, line 11). Karin in her turn disagrees with Miss Krisje and persists in her indication (*I have finished*, line 13) but without success: Miss Krisje implies that she still has to do quite some work, indicated by her use of the quantifying terms *way more* and *loads* (lines 11 and 14). Karin is persistent and after less than 10 seconds, she indicates she is done again (*DONE*, line 16) and when Miss Krisje does not react, she rephrases her indication a few seconds later (*I have finished it*, line 18). Again, Miss Krisje gives a

rejection and tells her to work more. This time she tells Karin a bit more specifically where she has to glue more squares (*no (1,0) look (1,2) some can be added here*, lines 19-23). Karin accepts this rejection and continues working for almost half a minute. After this period of working she first establishes joint attention (*look miss*, line 25) and then indicates she is done for the 5<sup>th</sup> time (*I HAVE FINISHED!*, line 27). This time, Miss Krisje acknowledges Karin's initiative and gives a positive evaluation. Miss Krisje refers to the previous rejected attempts by emphasizing she likes the craft in the current state (*this way I think it's very pretty*, line 28). Karin then can proceed to the next action. Karin's closing routine is schematically given in figure 3. The left scheme represents the first part of the interaction when Karin keeps re-initiating her indication of 'being done' after Miss Krisje's rejection. The right scheme represents the last part of the interaction in which Karin continues to work, and then initiates a final successful closing sequence.

**Figure 3.** Negotiation pattern: child rejects teacher's rejection (left); child continues to work after a rejection by the teacher (right)



#### 5.4.4 Marked cases

In the previous paragraphs, we have described the 3 main patterns of closing crafts assignments. It is interesting to take a closer look at the 7 marked cases as well. The marked cases have elements of the closing scheme, but the action moves and the preferred sequence seem less strict. In the next example Nicole (3;0) finishes her activity without having indicated 'being done' (excerpt 6). Children always need permission to leave the crafts scene and teachers will reorient children to the closing

routine if they did not jointly construct a closing routine, as we will show in excerpt 7. Nicole's case in excerpt 6 is different because the teacher acknowledged Nicole being done *before* Nicole indicated that she was.

(6) "I bench too leave", marked pattern [Nicole (3;0), Dennis (3;4), Alex (3;5), Miss Laura; *Nicole talks unclear*]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1		((Jennifer touches Nicole's face with a glue brush))	
2	Nicole:	no:, missaura::! ((crying voice))	nee:, joefaura::!
3	Miss L.:	yes I'm coming to save you	ja ik kom jou redden
4		(6,5) ((Miss Laura walks towards Nicole))	(6,5)
5	Miss L.:	are you done?	ben jij klaar?
6		(0,6)	(0,6)
7	Nicole:	(wuh tuh)	(wuh tuh)
8	Miss L.:	are you done? ((leans towards Nicole))	ben je klaar
9	Nicole:	and that and that (er water) on= ((points to her face))	en tie en tie (eh waaf) oppe,=
10	Miss L.:	=yes.	=ja.
11	Nicole:	but	maar
12		(6,3) ((Miss Laura seats Jennifer in another bench))	(6,3)
13	Nicole:	my	mijn
14		(0,4) ((Miss Laura gives Jennifer her craft))	(0,4)
15	Nicole:	(not) clean up ((rubs her face))	nie toom maken
16		(0,7)	(0,7)
17	Nicole:	missaura!	toefaura!
18		(0,8)	(0,8)
19	Miss L.:	[yehes!	[jaha!
20	Nicole:	[miss (.) Aura clean that ((rubs her cheek))	[joef (.) Aura tie toommaken
21	Miss L.:	yes I'll get you a washcloth	ja ik pak een washand voor jou
...		(40,5) ((Miss Laura gives Nicole a washcloth. Nicole cleans her hands and face and	(40,5)

*reorganizes her crafts material.*  
*Meanwhile, Miss Laura helps other children finishing their crafts. Nicole then wipes her hands with the washcloth and slides towards the end of the bench))*

33	Nicole:	I <u>bench</u> too (°leave)	ikke <u>bank</u> ook (°uit)
34		(38,2) ( <i>Nicole leaves the bench and goes to play on the climbing object. Laura sends another child to the bathroom</i> )	(38,2)
35	Miss L.:	Nicole you'll have to go to the bathroom too ( <i>while she cleans up the crafts table</i> )	Nicole jij moet ook even gaan plassen
36		( <i>Nicole says she does not have to go to the bathroom and stays on the climbing object. After a second prompt from Miss Laura, assistant Eva helps Nicole to go to the bathroom</i> )	

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In the beginning of excerpt 6, Jennifer touched Nicole's face with a brush, leaving glue on Nicole's cheek. Nicole responds to this by calling for her teacher. Miss Laura seems to interpret Nicole's bid for attention as a pre-sequence for Nicole to indicate she is done. When Nicole does not indicate she is done, Miss Laura tries to elicit this action move from her (*are you done?* lines 5 and 8). Nicole does not accept this elicitation attempt and asks Miss Laura to clean her face. After she cleaned her face, Nicole reorganizes the left over snippets of paper from her craft and when she is done with that she wipes her hands with the washcloth (line 28). Meanwhile, Miss Laura has told a child to leave the table and another child announces he wants to leave the bench. Nicole now closes the crafts activity without initiating a closing interaction and she leaves the table. She comments on her own action (*I bench too (°leave)*, line 33), but does not jointly construct the closing routine with her teacher at that moment. In a way, Miss Laura already acknowledged Nicole's indication of 'being done' by asking whether Nicole was done *twice*, the second time leaning over to Nicole (lines 5-8). When a teacher tries to elicit a closing indication of a child, she indirectly also agrees with the projected closing indication. This, in combination with the other children

who are allowed to leave the bench might have been sufficient for Nicole to feel she is allowed to finish the crafts activity. Considering Miss Laura's behavior, she indeed seems to agree with Nicole leaving the crafts scene. Miss Laura does not comment on the fact that Nicole has left the table, but she does prompt her to go to the bathroom (*Nicole you'll have to go to the bathroom too*, line 35), which is the next move in the closing routine. With this directive, Miss Laura implicitly acknowledges Nicole's 'being done' again.

This marked case can be analyzed in terms of our presupposed routine. Even though the case is different from our 3 main patterns, we can see how Nicole and Miss Laura are oriented to the routine of indicating 'being done', acknowledgement and new activity. The orientation to 'being done' confirms that, also in the marked cases, the children are participating in the Situated Activity System of closing crafts assignments.

#### 5.4.5 *The developing routine*

As we have pointed out earlier, preschool children learn the Situated Activity System of closing a crafts assignment by participating in it. We will discuss the examples of two children, Peggy and Sabine, to illustrate different phases in the learning process. Peggy is in an early phase of learning the routine, and Sabine is more advanced. We will start with Peggy (2;8). She leaves her crafts assignment without a closing routine, but Miss Laura initiates a routine later (see excerpt 7).

#### (7) "You're done too aren't you?" beginning learner [Peggy (2;8), Miss Laura]

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Peggy:	<i>((leaves the crafts table and goes to play with cars))</i>	
2		(39,7)	(39,7)
3	Miss L.:	Peggy you are done too aren't you?	Peggy jij bent toch ook klaar?
4		(0,6)	(0,6)
5	Peggy:	YES!	JA!
6		(0,5)	(0,5)
7	Miss L.:	okay	okee
8		(3,3) <i>((Miss Laura walks towards Peggy with the decorated strip to measure her head size))</i>	(3,3)
9	Miss L.:	it's loaded!	zit heel veel op!

In excerpt 7, Peggy goes from working on her craft directly to the new activity of playing with cars. The closing routine is apparently not yet a condition for finishing the activity to her. After Peggy unilaterally closed the crafts activity, Miss Laura initiates the closing routine. Miss Laura structures the routine and helps Peggy to take her action move of indicating she is done in a simple way by giving an agreement token (Miss Laura: *Peggy you are done too aren't you?* Peggy: *YES!*, lines 3-5). Thanks to Miss Laura's efforts, the crafts activity is closed with a closing routine, even though Peggy initially left the crafts table without one. This case illustrates how children can be oriented to a new routine and how they can be scaffolded into participating in it.

In excerpt 7, a closing routine was not a necessary condition for Peggy to enter a new activity, but she could be part of the routine when her teacher helped her. In other words, when the teacher created the structure and projected the slots, Peggy could participate in the closing routine. For a contrast, we will discuss a case in which the child is oriented towards the closing routine and even projects a teacher slot herself. In excerpt 8, Sabine (3;1) is making a craft. The curriculum theme is *size* and the concepts 'big' and 'small' are introduced by a mouse and an elephant. Sabine has to glue big squares (called elephants) and small squares (called mice) on a sheet of paper.

**(8) "Am I done now?" advanced learner [Sabine (3;1), Miss Krisje]**

	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Sabine:	am I done now?	ben ik nu klaar?
2		(0,4)	(0,4)
3	Miss K.:	well you could glue some more mice I'd say	nou je mag nog wel wat muisjes plakken dacht ik zo
4		(0,5)	(0,5)
5	Miss K.:	couldn't you?	of niet?
6		(0,4)	(0,4)
7	Sabine:	yes=	ja=
8	Miss K.:	=yes you only have a very few mice	=ja je hebt maar heel weinig muisjes
9		(14,1) ((Sabine continues working. Miss Krisje talks to another child, Sabine interrupts them))	(14,1)
10	Sabine:	IS ENOUGH LIKE THIS?	ZO IS WEL GENOEG?
11		(0,4)	(0,4)

12	Miss K.:	well (.) yes (.) it's kind of nice like this	nou (.) ja (.) 't is wel mooi zo
13		(0,5)	(0,5)
14	Miss K.:	do you consider- do you think you're done like this?	vind je- denk je dat je zo klaar bent?
15	Sabine:	yes	ja
16	Miss K.:	okay	okee
17	Sabine:	((leaves table and washes hands))	

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Excerpt 8 starts when Sabine asks her teacher *am I done now?* (line 1). This is the only instance in our corpus that a child *asks* whether she is done. By phrasing the closing indication as a question, Sabine leaves her teacher more space to reject. Miss Krisje indeed rejects the indication, but does so less firmly than she for example did in the interaction with Karin (excerpt 5). Miss Krisje rejects Sabine's indication by saying: *well you could glue some more mice I'd say* (line 3). When Sabine does not react, Miss Krisje elicits an acknowledgement by adding the tag question *couldn't you?* (line 5). Sabine agrees and Miss Krisje continues by giving an account for her rejection (*yes you only have a very few mice*, line 8). This account could serve as an indication that there is a good, 'objective' reason for the rejection. By giving an account, the teacher orients Sabine to the reasonableness of her rejection (Lubeck, 1985, in Golden, 2006). Miss Krisje and Sabine herewith jointly construct teacher authority through this local action (Macbeth, 1991). At the same time, the account functions as an instruction and prompts Sabine to continue working for a while. When Sabine indicates she is done again (*IS ENOUGH LIKE THIS?*, line 10), she again uses a question, but this time the degree of certainty is higher and the space for rejection is smaller. Miss Krisje acknowledges Sabine's closing indication, but she hesitates in her reaction (*well (.) yes (.) it's kind of nice like this*, line 12). One of the reasons of her hesitation might be that Sabine only worked for a short period (14 seconds, line 9). After a little pause, she 'takes a step back' in the routine and elicits a closing indication from Sabine by asking her opinion (*do you consider- do you think you're done like this?* line 14). Now, the discursive identities are reversed, which creates equality between Sabine and her teacher. Once Sabine responds to the closure elicitation with an agreement token (*yes*, line 15), the closing routine can be completed by the acknowledgement of Miss Krisje in the third position (*okay*, line 16).

The interesting feature of this excerpt is that Sabine does not use a *statement* to indicate she is done, but a *question*. By using a yes/no question, she projects the



teacher's answer, which is now to accept or reject the indication of 'being done'. *Asking* this way stronger projects a response than *stating*. In all our other excerpts, children *state* they are done. In these cases it is mainly the teacher who creates the routine frame: she gives her next move of acknowledging or rejecting, but this move is not projected by the child. We call Sabine an advanced learner because she is overtly oriented to the elements of the routine, projects teacher moves and builds the routine together with her teacher. The closing routine is always jointly constructed by teacher and child, but in this case, Sabine takes a more proactive role than children generally do.

#### 5.4.6 Learning the concept of 'being done'

As we have shown in this paper, the closing of crafts assignments is structured by a Situated Activity System in our preschool classrooms. The closing routine is strongly related to the concept of 'being done', which is an important move in the routine. To be able to do this move, the child needs to have some idea of what it *means* to be done. Children learn this concept among others by participating in the activity of closing the crafts assignment.

'Being done' is a situated, cultural concept. How many snippets of paper do you have to glue to finish decorating your craft? There are no explicit rules about 'being done' and children have to learn the content of the concept by participating in interactions where the concept of 'doneness' plays a role. Charles Goodwin (1997) described how novice geochemists learn to distinguish different shades of black by participating in the activity of deciding what is black enough during the preparation of a fiber. The geochemists learn to become competent practitioners by participating in the activity. One of the practices the geochemists have to learn is what 'jet black' means in the context of making the fiber. Similarly, preschool children learn to become competent task-fulfillers<sup>29</sup> by participating in the activity of closing crafts assignments. One of the practices they have to learn is what 'being done' means in the context of closing a crafts assignment.

'Being done' is a concept that is situated in the SAS of closing crafts assignments in a particular classroom community. It is not a static state, but it is jointly constructed by teacher and child. In the routine, the child can indicate when he is done, but in doing so he has to take into account the norm that is part of the SAS. The teacher can reject the child's closing initiative when the child did not work enough according to her. The child has to learn how to make a decision about when he is done, taking into account the norms of the teacher and the classroom community and making these norms his own.

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<sup>29</sup> We would like to thank Harrie Mazeland, University of Groningen, for suggesting this term.

We can see how children are exploring the concept of ‘being done’ in our preschool crafts data. Sarah (2;11) in excerpt 3 announced that she was *almost done*. Being ‘almost’ done is of course related to ‘being done’. Sarah’s announcement indicates that she had an idea of when she would be done and she knew that she was approaching this state. Karin (3;0) in excerpt 5 announces she is done multiple times without taking into account the norms of the SAS. A rejection can learn the child something about these norms, but this lesson can be quite implicit. In the first rejection, Miss Krisje tells Karin to glue *way more* and *loads* (line 11 and 14), not very specific quantifiers. In the second rejection, Miss Krisje gives Karin a more specific clue about her norms of ‘being done’: she shows her where Karin could add some geometrical figures (*look (1,2) some can be added here*, lines 21-23). Also in the more advanced example of Sabine (3;1, excerpt 8), the instruction is not very specific: the teacher talks about *some more mice* and *very few mice* (lines 3 and 8). It is not clear what this means in concrete numbers: how many small squares/mice are *some more* and how many does Sabine have to glue to change *very few* in *enough*? We can see how Sabine is exploring these concepts when she asks her teacher about the state of her craft after some more work (*IS ENOUGH LIKE THIS?*, line 10). Interestingly, the teacher does not explicitly react to this question of what counts as ‘enough’, but interprets the question as an indication of ‘being done’ and reacts according to the routine with an acknowledgement and a (hesitating) positive evaluation.

The concept of ‘being done’ is one of the essential things the child has to learn to be able to participate in the Situated Activity System of closing a crafts assignment. The child can only learn this by participating in the activity. Our data shows how children are trying to get a grip on complex concepts like ‘done’ and ‘enough’ while they are participating in the activity of closing the crafts assignment and are thus involved in situated learning.

## 5.5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In preschool, children can develop academic skills that they will need in later school life. One of the competences children need to develop is how to work on assignments. Preschool crafts assignments are activities that resemble later school assignments because they are obligatory, initiated by the teacher and they have to be completed. Crafts assignments are group activities, in which children work individually. The closing of crafts assignment is a joint construction between the teacher and an individual child.

In our study, we showed how the closing of crafts assignments in preschool classrooms is constructed as a Situated Activity System with clear action structure,

rules and roles. The basic structure of the routine is: the child indicates *being done* after having worked on the task, the teacher acknowledges the child is done and the child enters a new activity. When children are still learning the routine, the teacher may scaffold the child by keeping up the interactional frame and by projecting action slots for the child. Children and teachers are oriented to this routine: it is present in all fragments of our corpus and even in the marked cases there is an orientation to the closing routine, although some interactional moves might be skipped or used in a different order.

To succeed in school, children will have to fulfil the assignments they get from their teacher. This requires more than having enough capacities to do the task: it is not enough to have the cognitive skills to be able to solve the problem in the task, the child also has to know how to handle the *completion* of the task *as a pupil*. The importance of educational discourse practices is illustrated by Margutti (2006). She showed that the way a teacher asks a question influences how pupils respond to the question and points children to the correct answer. Margutti described how children in a primary classroom learned the procedures of teacher questioning in the classroom. Knowing these procedures helps children to give the correct response to the question. Note that teachers may not be aware that the children could use educational discourse practices to answer the question and may draw conclusions about the children on an educational level. So, when a child answers a question correctly, the teacher might think the child showed content knowledge, while he actually showed to know how to give a correct answer in class.

Through the SAS of closing crafts assignments, children learn to participate in a classroom practice, shared by the teacher and the children, with specific rules and norms and a predictable structure. Classroom life (and later working life) is full of situated practices, which children will need to learn. The SAS of closing crafts assignments is revealing, as it is a local practice of how to complete a task as a good pupil. Task completion in an educational setting requires the use of specific words and ways of talking. Our data for example contains the concepts ‘being done’, ‘glue enough’, ‘add many’ and ‘add more’. These concepts are unspecific for an outsider (there are no objective rules or numeric standards connected to these concepts), but members of the classroom community know what the concepts mean in the context of closing crafts assignments. By being involved in crafts assignments, children are learning the situated norms of ‘being done’ in the context of their preschool classrooms. One of the competences of a good task-fulfiller is *being able to assess and to indicate when you are done*. Preschool crafts assignments can be a context for children to develop this academic discourse practice.

## 6. USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF SPEECH ACTS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS IN PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS<sup>30</sup>

### ABSTRACT

In this paper we study the language that 2;6 to 4;0 year old children use in different contexts in preschool classroom. We looked at the language children use during 1) pretend play, 2) literacy activities, 3) crafts assignments and 4) free crafts and in interaction with 1) peers, 2) the teacher, 3) a mixed group of the teacher and peers and 4) during solitary play. We found that the distribution of children's speech acts is related to the activity children are engaged in and the interaction partner they have. Children use more complex speech acts during pretend play and in interactions with peers. Solitary verbal play is related to complex language use as well. In interactions with the teacher, children are more responsive and use fewer complex speech acts. We found high variability between children and within children over time.

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

#### 6.1.1 *Speech acts*

Speaking is performing speech acts. Austin (1962) described language use as producing an *utterance*, with an *intended meaning*, which has an *effect*. In this paper we will focus on intended meaning in talk, also called the *illocutionary acts*. Austin described 5 classes of illocutionary acts: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives and expositives. A couple of years later, Searle (1975) proposed an improved taxonomy. He defined the illocutionary acts: representatives (also called assertives), directives, commissives, expressives and declarations.

Most studies on the development of the use of speech act date from the '70's and '80's. In accordance with researchers of that time (like Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Snow, 1977; van der Geest, 1977; Wells, 1985) we want to focus on the functions of language and the way children learn to use these functions in interaction. Bruner (1975) describes how speech acts can play a role in the acquisition of language and grammar by young children. The basic element of mother-child interaction is joint attention and joint activity. When mothers and children have achieved joint attention, mothers will say something about the object of mutual attention or do something to it. This 'routine' is the basis for elementary grammatical structures like *object-name* and *object-act*, which is expressed with the speech act *labeling*, which in turn is one of the earliest speech acts that children acquire (Ninio & Bruner, 1978).

The difficulty of studying early speech acts is that it can be hard to determine the meaning the young child intends to express. *Labeling* for example can be

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<sup>30</sup> Submitted

described as an example of the speech act category *statements*, although early forms of labeling could also function as attention getters within the category *directives*. Dore (1975) used the communicative intents of young children as a frame for studying early child language. He proposed to use speech acts as units of analysis in the study of children's language in the one-word phase and described how young children produce 'primitive speech acts' with their one-word utterances (Dore 1973a, in Dore, 1975). Primitive speech acts refer to something and are combined with some other indication, like intonation or gesture. Using this theory, Dore can explain how a child can express two meanings by saying the same single word. For example, a child may say *ball* to label the object, but on another occasion *ball* might be a directive and mean that the child wants to have the object. The nine primitive speech acts that Dore lists are: *labeling, repeating, answering, requesting (action), requesting (answer), calling, greeting, protesting and practicing*.

As children get older, they will start to use more and more different speech acts. Children as young as 1;2 years old are found to be able to use *directives* like *requesting* and *protesting* in interaction with their parents (Snow, Pan, Imbens-Bailey & Herman, 1996). These young children could also make simple *statements*, they mastered *markings* like greeting and they could give *responses to product questions* with a statement. Six months later, around 1;8 years of age, most children could also give *responses to directives* by agreeing or refusing to carry out a request, they could use the *commissive* speech act of stating intent and they could *answer affirmative* to yes/no questions. Around age 2;8, the speech acts *asking product- and yes/no questions* and *responding to directives with acknowledgments* began to emerge.

### 6.1.2 Speech act use in different contexts

Like Wells (1985) did in his Bristol study, we focus in this paper on how different contexts are related to different language use. Wells (1985) acknowledged that language use is related to the context in which the interaction takes place:

“During the course of a normal day, a child engages in many activities, which involve different fellow-actors and different materials. Some of these activities are familiar routines, such as getting dressed; others are more or less novel. In some activities it is the child who is the initiator, in others a parent, and in still others it may be another child. Each of these dimensions is likely to have an effect on the language that occurs.” (Wells, 1985, p.322).

Yont, Snow and Vernon-Feagans (2003) found that interactions during toy play and book reading are related to differences in language use by children as young as one

year old. During free toy play, children directed their mothers' attention more often and produced longer utterances. During book reading, there were more discussions of joint attention and children used the speech act *labeling* more frequently. Pellegrini (1984a) was interested in the effect of thematic play areas ('learning centers') on the language use of 4 to 5 year olds. He compared the common house area and block area and found that children use more 'imaginative language' (all language during pretend play) in the house setting. Ryckebusch and Marcos (2004) studied the pattern of speech acts in different situational contexts of young French children (from 1;5 to 2;3 years old). They looked at the children's use of *representatives*, *directives* and *expressives* and found that children used more directives with their fathers than with their mothers and that they used more requests during construction play than during free play with dolls and toys. Martlew and colleagues (Martlew, Connolly & McCleod, 1978) did a case study on a 5;6 year old boy in play interactions with a peer, his mother and solitary. They found that in interactions with his mother, the boy gave more responses to 'questions' (Martlew and colleagues used a broad definition of questions and included speech acts like *asking for permission*, *asking for opinions*, *attention getting* and *asking for objects*). The researchers also found that the child used 'commands' (indicated by the use of an imperative) frequently in solitary play and only rarely in interactions with his mother.

Studies on the effect of context on children's speech act use have led to predictions on optimal adult support. According to Geest (van der Geest, 1998), children are more likely to use to use high quality language in interactions in which they can take the initiative and in which the teacher responds carefully to them. Wells (1985) notes the importance of meticulous responses of parents, in which they attempt to understand the child's intention and use the child's contribution to sustain the conversation as well. In a study on second language learners in kindergarten, Verhallen (1987) notes that *descriptive* statements are frequent in teacher interaction during circle-time, but the use of *reflective* statements and other analytic speech acts by the children depend on the elicitation skills of the teacher.

There are strong suggestions that peer interactions provide good opportunities for talking (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2004; Damhuis, 1995). Smiley (2001) found that children use more *directives*, *statements* and *commitments* (in her paper described as: 'State Intention' and 'Request/Propose Action') in peer play. She explains her finding by arguing that regulating behavior of the other and making one's own intentions clear are very important in peer play because peers are not as accommodating in interaction as adults. According to Martlew and colleagues (1978), pretend play with peers is an important setting for collaborative patterns, where children can use *directives* and *declaratives*. One of Wells' (1985) findings was that children use more

'control speech' - a set of different directives, commitments and declaratives- during pretend play, especially when children played with peers. Control speech also tends to be more aggravated and repeated more often in peer interaction, compared to the control speech children use with their teacher (Georgalidou, 2008).

## 6.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A variety of scholars have studied children's functional language use and development. There are clear suggestions that the activity children are involved in (for example toy play, pretend play, block play or book reading) influences children's language use. Moreover, the child's interaction partner (a mother or a peer) seems to be related to the type of speech acts children use. In this study we will explore these findings further and look at children's speech act use in different activities, with different interaction partners in preschool classrooms.

Preschools in the Netherlands provide playful activities for 2 to 4 mornings or afternoons a week for children from 2;6 to 4;0 years old. The preschools are supposed to play a role in reducing and preventing learning- and language delays of 'at risk' children from disadvantaged families (van der Vegt et al., 2007; van Kampen et al., 2005b). Two thirds of the children between 2;0 and 4;0 years old visit preschool and estimations are that half of the group of 'at risk' children visit preschool (Jepma et al., 2007; Westenbrink & Versteegen, 2006).

We focus on naturally occurring interactions in preschool, where children between 2;6 and 4;0 years old are being prepared for more formal educational settings and where children are in contact with a group of peers. The main focus of this study is *how contexts in preschool classrooms are related to talk*. This is interesting because it can give clues about the different things children can learn in preschool classrooms. Children learn to use talk for cognitive and social means by being involved in social interactions. When we can influence the social interactions children are involved in, we may be able to influence the things children say and learn. In order to design effective preschool stimulation, we need to know when different types of social interactions occur and what kind of talk is used within these interactions. Our main research question is:

*How are different contexts in preschool related to the distribution of children's use of speech acts and complex language?*

During their days at preschool, children are involved in different activities, with different interaction partners. We used this combination of *activity* and *interaction partner* as an indication of *context*. Different contexts influence the structure of the

interaction and the type of talk that is used. For this study we analyzed four types of activity and four types of interaction partners. The activities are: 1) *pretend play*: play in which children may use character roles and in which they use symbolic substitution, like pretending a block is a car or pretending a cup contains tea; 2) *literacy activities*: activities which involve reading, writing or books, like reading a book, choosing a book to take home, or talking about environmental text; 3) *crafts assignments*: obligatory crafts works, in which all children glue, paint or draw something as initiated and designed by the teacher; and 4) *free crafts activities*: when children choose to draw, paint or play with clay and are free to make whatever they want. The four types of interaction partners are: 1) *peer(s)*: children interacting with one or more classmates; 2) *teacher*: children interacting with the teacher, an assistant, an intern or another adult in the classroom; 3) *mixed group*: children interacting with the teacher and one or more peers; and 4) *solitary play*: children playing alone and talking during their play.

We expect variation in the distribution of children's speech act and complex language use in different contexts. With *complex language use*, we refer to advanced cognitive- and social meanings, and not to the linguistic complexity of for example constructing syntactically complex sentences, although there is of course a relationship between complex meaning and complex grammatical structure. Complex language can be described as a set of linguistic features (like Schleppegrell (2001) did for the register of school-language), but we will use a *functional* approach here and use speech acts as our units of measurement. Complexity of speech acts is indicated by 1) *length*, since – in analogy to MLU – the use of more words may indicate a more complex speech act; and 2) *complexity of the intent*, when children express analytic thought, abstract content or project future actions, for example with the speech acts *commitments* and *reflective statements* or *elaborations in response to questions* (Wells, 1985) and *declarations* to announce character roles in pretend play (Sawyer, 1993).

## 6.3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

### 6.3.1 Corpus

To study the use of speech acts in different contexts, we selected longitudinal data of 11 children in three preschools. The data in this study were drawn from the PRACTING corpus, a broader longitudinal project on the activities and interactions of children in preschool, in which 25 children are followed from 2;6 to 4;0 years old in their preschool classrooms. Every three months, the children's naturally occurring interactions were recorded on audio and video. We were able to make individual audio recordings by letting children wear a jacket with an integrated recording device.



Picture 1 shows two children wearing a ‘recording jacket’ in class. The recording device is hidden beneath the ‘fur’ at the back.

**Picture 1.** Two children in preschool wearing ‘recording jackets’



For the current study, we chose 11 children (‘focal children’, 5 boys and 6 girls) from the PRACTING corpus with the most complete data sequences. Our collection consists of 48 data points, from which 191 fragments of interaction are selected. The fragments have a total duration of 20 hours and 40 minutes. The selection consists of 4656 speech acts produced by the children, of which 4433 are intelligible. Speech acts from conversational partners are used to interpret the interactions and to score the speech acts of the focal children, but are excluded from the calculations. The children are followed over a period of time. The youngest child in the selection is Rachid, who was 2;4 at his first recording and the oldest is Shamira who is followed until she was 3;11 years old. The details of the data selection are given in appendix G.

Our data collection consists of 191 transcribed fragments of the children’s interactions during 4 different activities: *pretend play*, *literacy activities*, *crafts assignments* and *free crafts*. Because we did not manipulate the data and selected fragments in which children participate actively, the distribution of activity and interaction partner in our selection is not even and the data is not representative for complete school days. More than half of all the interactions in our selection take place during pretend play (107 fragments, 56%). Literacy activities, crafts assignments and free crafts are less frequent in our selection ( $\chi^2=101,1$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p<.00$ ). In addition, we took the child’s interaction partner into account. In most fragments (73 fragments, 38%) the children interact in a mixed group with the teacher and peer(s). Solitary play is least frequent (17 fragments, 9%;  $\chi^2=34,7$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p<.00$ ). The distributions are given in table 1.

**Table 1.** Number of selected fragments, specified for activity and interaction partner

		<i>Interaction Partner</i>				<i>Total</i>	
		<b>Peer(s)</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Mixed group</b>	<b>Solitary</b>		
<i>Activity</i>	<b>Pretend play</b>	52	13	27	15	107	(56%)
	<b>Literacy act.</b>	2	17	16	2	37	(19%)
	<b>Crafts assign.</b>	-	6	14	-	20	(11%)
	<b>Free crafts</b>	2	9	16	-	27	(14%)
	<i>Total</i>	56 (29%)	45 (24%)	73 (38%)	17 (9%)	191	

If the fragments in our selection would have been equally distributed over activity types and interaction partners, every combination would have occurred about 12 times, but, as can be seen in table 1, the distribution is not even ( $\chi^2=67,5$ ,  $df=9$ ,  $p<.00$ ). During pretend play, children interact mostly with peers: in 52 of the 107 pretend play interactions, children play with peers. During literacy activities, children are often interacting with the teacher or in a mixed group (respectively 17 and 16 fragments of 37 fragments of literacy activities). Crafts assignments and free crafts are activities in which the child mostly interacts in a mixed group of the teacher and one or more peers. Note that the status of solitary play is somewhat different here. In solitary play there is no interaction partner and we could only select fragments of solitary play when children talked aloud. Our selection shows that solitary *verbal* activities occur mostly during pretend play. This is in line with the results from a study of Winsler and colleagues (Winsler, Feder, Way & Manfra, 2006) in which mothers report that their 3 to 5 year old children use private speech mostly during pretend play. Of course, children could very well be involved in free craft solitary, or doing a crafts assignment with peers, but when they did not talk (a lot) during their activity we could not select these fragments.

### 6.3.2 Coding scheme

Our speech act coding scheme is based on the classification system Inventory of Communicative Acts-Abridged (INCA-A) of Ninio, Snow, Pan and Rollins (1994), which in turn is based on the more extended version INCA by Ninio and Wheeler (1986). These classification methods are used to score communicative intents of young children in natural interactions. The work of Ninio and colleagues focuses on interactions of children with their parents, but of course they can also be used with other (familiar) caregivers like preschool teachers.

It is important to realize that a speaker may *intend* a certain communicative goal, but *achieve* another. Ninio and colleagues interpret speech acts from the

speaker's perspective, like Austin (1962) and Searle (1975) did before. We take the perspective of the speaker as well, but we use the interaction as a whole to interpret individual speech acts. We use the interpretation of the interaction partner – as can be inferred from his or her response – to determine the child's intent as well.

In INCA-A there are 12 main speech act pairs defined to code communicative intents. Six speech acts of the INCA-A are similar to the categories in our scheme: *questions*, *directives*, *statements*, *commitments*, *declarations* and *evaluations*. We defined the category *markings* slightly different: we included vocalizations in this category and we did not code separately for responses to markings (since these are markings themselves). In addition, we do not have a separate category for *speech elicitations*. The only forms of elicitation present in our data are elicitation questions, which fall in the category *questions*. We classified the INCA-A category *demands for clarification* as *questions* as well. We did not include a category to code for the corrections of verbal forms ('text editing' in INCA-A).

We defined 12 main speech acts, of which the first ten are initiative-response pairs. The speech acts are listed in table 2. These 12 main speech acts are at the core of our study. In addition, we scored more detailed subcategories within main speech acts. In this paper we will use the subcategories *elaborative* and *non elaborative* within the category *responses to questions* and, *descriptive* and *reflective* within the category *statements*. These additional distinctions are used to reflect the complexity of the communicative intents. Our final speech act coding scheme is an interactional scheme which allows the researcher to take into account the interactional context of the child's speech act. An overview of the speech acts with extended descriptions and examples is given in appendix H.

**Table 2.** Speech acts coding categories

<i>Nr.</i>	<i>Speech act (SA)</i>	<i>Short description of the speech act</i>
1&2	Questions and responses	Asking another to provide you with information. Responses take the form of statements or tokens of (dis)agreements.
3&4	Directives and responses	Making someone do something for you. Responses are agreements or refusals.
5&6	Statements and responses	Describing something in the world. Responses are agreements or disagreements.
7&8	Commitments and responses	Committing yourself to (do) something. Responses can be acknowledgements, protests or refusals.

9&10	Declarations and responses	Changing the immediate context by making a statement. Responses are agreements or disagreements.
11	Evaluations	Giving a positive or negative evaluation about something or someone.
12	Markings	Short routine utterances, often with fixed formats.

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### 6.3.3 Coding method

To analyze children's talk, we divided their speech in speech acts, which we defined as independent units in the light of the ongoing conversation (similar to other researchers like Martlew et al., 1978; Ninio, Snow, Pan & Rollins, 1994; Snow et al., 1996). In our study a speech act is an act which is not interrupted by another speaker's turn or by a pause longer than 0.2 seconds. Within-turn pauses longer than 0.2 seconds but shorter than 1.0 seconds were ignored when the speech act parts could not be interpreted independently.

The data are scored by two trained research assistants. Inter rater reliability is acceptable, with a mean percentage of agreement of 75%<sup>31</sup>. After the assistants scored the dataset, the reliability is improved by a second coding round in which the first author checked -and if necessary- recoded the data.

## 6.4 RESULTS

### 6.4.1 Mean length of speech act (MLSA)

One rough measure of complexity of talk that is often used is the mean length of utterance (MLU, Brown, 1973). The rationale of using MLU in studies of language development is that more complex grammatical structures are made with longer utterances. We study *functional* units of talk and -in analogy to MLU- we will analyze length of speech acts (MLSA), in number of words.

Our data collection consists of 4433 intelligible speech acts of the focal children. On average, these acts are just under 3 words long (2,94 words), with a standard deviation of just over 2 words (2,09 words). The large standard deviation can be explained by the fact that these values are the averages of *all* the speech acts in the dataset, with children of different ages. We will have a closer look at the growth over time and differences between children in the next subparagraph. Then, we will turn to children's MLSA when they are involved in different activities and interact with

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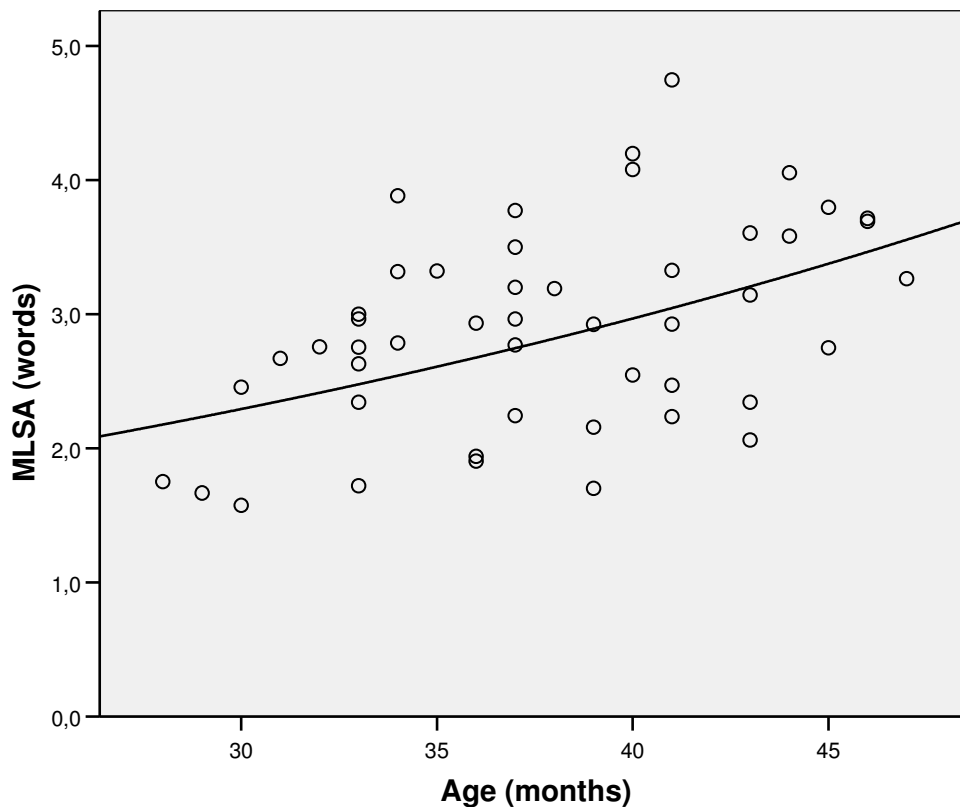
<sup>31</sup> Van Geert and van Dijk (2003) argue that it is impossible to reach an inter rater reliability of 100%, because ambiguity in child behavior is part of development and ambiguous data will always be subject to interpretability problems by different raters.

different interaction partners. Finally, we will study the MLSA of the different speech acts.

#### *Development of MLSA*

The MLSA of the children is positively correlated with age: the older children are, the longer their speech acts are (R Square = .221,  $F=13,065$ ,  $p<.00$ ). In the course of about one and a half year, the average MLSA increases from 2 to 3½ words per speech act. The children's MLSA at different ages and the general growth curve are given in figure 1.

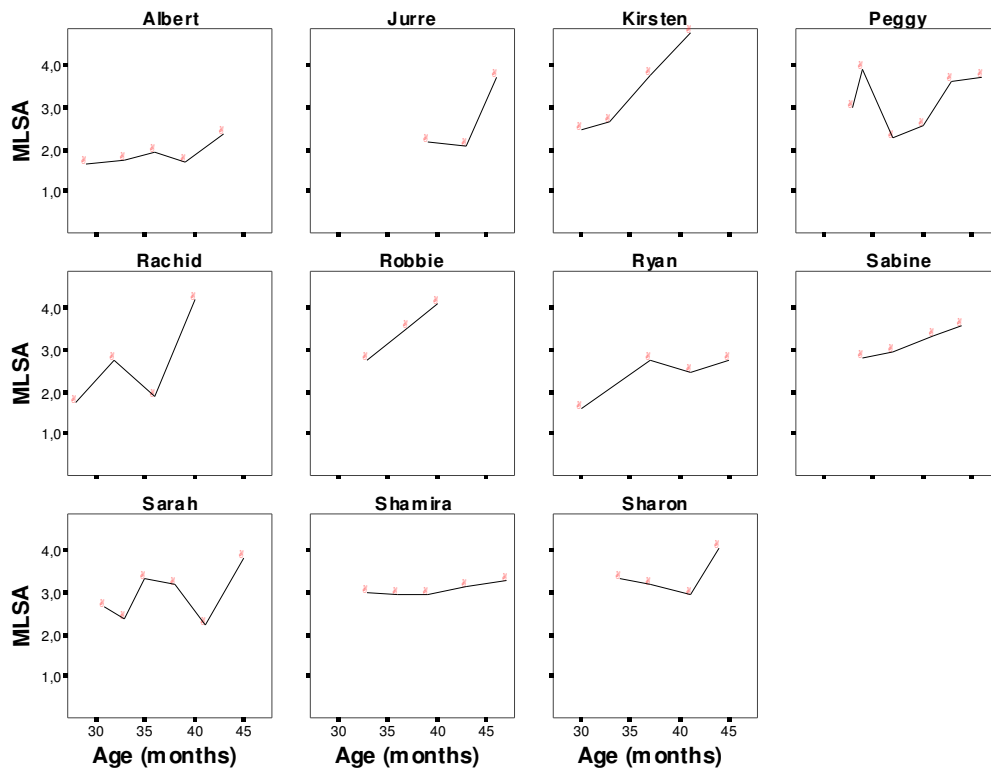
**Figure 1.** MLSA growth over time



Older children have higher mean length of speech act. It is important to realize that despite this positive relation, there is quite some variation between the children. Figure 1 shows the average MLSA values of all children at different ages in one picture. Extracting the individual patterns from picture 1 reveals the growth patterns of our 11 focal children (see figure 2). Although children on average make longer speech acts as they get older, there are differences between and within children. For example, at age 3;1 (37 months), Kirsten has an MLSA of 3,8, compared to Ryan's MLSA of 2,8 at the same age. Another example, Sarah shows peaks and drops in her

MLSA trajectory, while Shamira's MLSA seems to stay pretty stable over time. This inter- and intra-variability is not uncommon in studies on child (language) development, although variation is often disguised by group averages. Variability within children is sometimes even seen as a *characteristic* of development and growth (Ruhland, 1998; van Dijk, 2004; Wells, 1985).

**Figure 2.** Individual MLSA development



MLSA gives information on overall performance, but does not reveal variation in speech act length per data point. Looking at the *longest* speech acts tells us something about the capacities of speakers in an optimal situation. In research on MLU, it is not uncommon to take longer utterances into account as an additional measure of utterance length to indicate complexity (Martlew et al., 1978; for example van der Geest et al., 1973; Wells, 1985). Only about 1% of the speech acts in the dataset consist of 10 or more words. Twenty percent of the speech acts in the corpus consist of 5 or more words. In general, as children get older, the percentage of 1 word speech acts decreases (growth curve,  $R^2=.127$ ,  $F=6,716$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and the percentage of speech acts of 5 or more words increases (linear equation<sup>32</sup>,  $R^2=.178$ ,  $F=9.933$ ,

<sup>32</sup> In this case we could not calculate a growth equation. A growth model requires all values to be positive, but in the data of Albert, Jurje and Ryan the percentage of 5+ utterances is zero at some data points. We used a linear model because it does allow for zero values.

$p < .01$ ). In other words, children produce less speech acts of 1 word and more speech acts of five or more words as they get older.

#### *Context and MLSA*

The average MLSA of all the children together, in all contexts, regardless of age is 2,9 words. The MLSA of children during the four activities *pretend play*, *literacy activities*, *crafts assignments* and *free crafts* ranges between 2,6 and 3,0 words and does not differ significantly. However, children's MLSA during interactions with different interaction partners does differ significantly: their MLSA with *peers* (MLSA=3,1), *solitary play* (3,1) and *mixed group* (2,9) are higher than during interactions with the *teacher* (2,4; Kruskal-Wallis,  $\chi^2=12,346$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Children's MLSA is especially low during *literacy activities with the teacher* (MLSA=2,1, Kruskal-Wallis,  $\chi^2=11,150$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The results are given in table 3. Note that the row and column with totals are weighted averages; the number of fragments on which MLSA is based are given in table 1.

**Table 3.** Average MLSA per fragment, specified for activity and partner \* $p < .05$

		<i>Interaction Partner</i>				<i>Total</i>
		<b>Peer(s)</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Mixed group</b>	<b>Solitary</b>	
<i>Activity</i>	<b>Pretend play</b>	3,1	2,9	2,9	2,9	3,0
	<b>Literacy act.*</b>	3,3	2,1	2,8	4,2	2,6
	<b>Crafts assign.</b>	-	2,4	3,0	-	2,8
	<b>Free crafts</b>	3,5	2,5	2,9	-	2,8
	<i>Total*</i>	3,1	2,4	2,9	3,1	2,9

We are interested in the *development* of MLSA, but the data in table 3 does not provide information on changes in MLSA over time. In general, we found that MLSA increases as children get older, but we want to know whether this is true for all activities and all interaction partners. When we look at the influence of age on MLSA for the four different activities, we find a positive relationship between age and MLSA for literacy activities and free craft. Children produce longer speech acts during literacy activities and free craft as they get older. Children's MLSA for pretend play and crafts assignments do not change significantly as children get older. Results are given in the upper half of table 4.

Looking at the influence of interaction partners, we found that as children get older, they will use longer speech acts in interactions with teachers and a mixed group

of teacher and peers. There are no significant effects for interactions with peers and solitary play. The results are given in the lower half of table 4.

**Table 4.** Growth models of MLSA per activity and interaction partner

		<b>R square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<i>Activity</i>	<b>Pretend play</b>	.043	1,791	.188
	<b>Literacy act.</b>	.191	5,901	.023*
	<b>Crafts assign.</b>	.144	3,207	.089
	<b>Free crafts</b>	.223	6,388	.020*
<i>Partner</i>	<b>Peer(s)</b>	.008	0,234	.632
	<b>Teacher</b>	.171	4,346	.049*
	<b>Mixed group</b>	.142	6,613	.014*
	<b>Solitary</b>	.268	3,652	.085

\*  $p < .05$

Combining the results from table 3 and 4 we can infer that children's interactions with teachers may be related with a lower MLSA (especially during literacy activities), but as children get older, the length of their speech acts increases. Interactions with peers are associated with higher MLSA from early on, but this MLSA does not change significantly in the course of 1½ year.

#### *MLSA of different speech acts*

With different speech acts, one can express different meanings. Some speech acts may, therefore, be more likely to be expressed with more words than others. There is indeed a relation between type and length of speech act (Kruskall Wallis  $\chi^2 = 1090$ ,  $p < .00$ ). The different speech acts, their occurrence, mean lengths and standard deviations are given in table 5.

**Table 5.** Speech acts, their occurrence, MLSA and SD

<b>Nr.</b>	<b>Speech Act (SA)</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>MLSA</b>	<b>SD</b>
1&2	Questions	286 (6,5%)	3,61	2,1
	and responses	284 (6,4%)	2,10	1,8
3&4	Directives	955 (21,5%)	2,92	2,2
	and responses	158 (3,6%)	2,26	2,3
5&6	Statements	1344 (30,3%)	3,51	2,0
	and responses	136 (3,1%)	1,74	1,2
7&8	Commitments	469 (10,6%)	4,19	2,1
	and responses	101 (2,3%)	1,97	1,6



9&10	Declarations	38	(0,9%)	4,16	1,9
	and responses	4	(0,1%)	4,75	5,2
11	Evaluations	84	(1,9%)	1,76	1,1
12	Markings	574	(12,9%)	1,46	0,9
	<i>Total</i>	<i>4433</i>	<i>(100%)</i>	<i>2,94</i>	<i>2,1</i>

The speech act types that are longer are: *commitments* (MLSA=4,19) and *declarations*<sup>33</sup> (4,16) and also *questions for information* (3,61) and *statements* (3,51). Examples of speech acts that are more often produced with more words are given below.

(1) “Pancake” [Kirsten (3;5), commitment]

*I'm going to make pancake and I throw it very high!*

ik ga pannekoek maken en die gooi ik hee hoog!

(2) “Parents” [Sabine (3;1), declaration]

*We are daddy and mummy's*

wij zijn papa en mama's

(3) “Book” [Peggy (2;10), question for information]

*what kind of book do you have in your hands?*

wat heb jij voor boekje in de handen?

(4) “Work out” [Shamira (3;11), statement]

*I did gymnastics and I dance:d*

ik ging gymmen en danse:n

Note that the speech acts that are longer are all *initiating* speech acts. We compared the set of initiating speech acts (questions, directives, statements, commitments and declarations) to the set of responsive speech acts (the responses to the five types of initiating acts), and found that initiating speech acts are almost 1½ words longer than responsive speech acts (respectively on average 3,5 and 2,1 words long; Mann Whitney U=559089, p<.00).

<sup>33</sup> The MLSA of *responses to declarations* is also high (4,75), but this is only based on 4 utterances.

#### 6.4.2 Distribution of speech acts

Utterance length is a widely used, but very rough measure of complexity of language. Some authors even doubt whether it reflects the complexity of production (Martlew et al., 1978). We may cast the same doubts at our measure of speech act length. Our main interests are the *meanings* that children convey and the *functions* of their talk. By analyzing speech acts we aim to create a picture of the children's communicative intent, the things children *do* with their talk. In this paragraph we will analyze the occurrence of different speech acts and the contexts in which they are used.

As we described in the *method* section, every speech act is scored into one of 12 categories. Some speech acts are more frequent than others. Return to table 5 in paragraph 6.4.1 to see that *statements* and *directives* are very frequent, while *declarations* and *responses to declarations* are infrequent. Because our primary focus is on interactions in which children participate actively, our corpus is somewhat biased towards *initiating* speech acts. Interactions in which children talk a lot are apparently not the interactions in which they are primarily responsive. Of the 3775 speech act-response pairs (excluding *evaluations* and *markings*), 3092 (82%) were initiating acts and 683 (18%) were responsive acts. When we look at the distribution of initiative and responsive speech acts in the different activities, we see that children especially use initiatives during pretend play (85%) and relatively less during literacy activities (64%, Kruskal-Wallis  $\chi^2 = 16,369$ ,  $p < .00$ , see table 6). Children use many initiatives in interactions with peers (86%) and during solitary play (90%<sup>34</sup>), but less during interactions with the teacher (70%, Kruskal-Wallis  $\chi^2 = 10,167$ ,  $p < .05$ , see table 7). This bias towards initiating speech acts may seem counter intuitive, although Snow and colleagues (1996) in a study of mother-child interactions with younger children (up to 2;8) also found that children's early communicative intents were mostly initiating instead of responsive. Apparently, the interactions in preschool classrooms *in which children talk a lot* are interactions in which children predominantly use initiating speech acts.

**Table 6.** Average distribution of initiatives and responses during different activities

	Activity				Distribution	
	<i>Pretend play</i>	<i>Literacy act.</i>	<i>Crafts assign.</i>	<i>Free crafts</i>	$\chi^2$	Sig.
<i>Initiative</i>	85%	64%	76%	79%	16,369	.001*
<i>Response</i>	15%	36%	24%	21%		

\*  $p < .05$

<sup>34</sup> Responses during solitary play for example occur when the child acts out a scenario with different partners who talk to each other or pretends to be in a telephone conversation

**Table 7.** Average distribution of initiatives and responses during interactions with different partners

	<b>Partner</b>				<b>Distribution</b>	
	<i>Peer(s)</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Mixed group</i>	<i>Solitary</i>	$\chi^2$	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Initiative</i>	86%	70%	76%	90%	10,167	.017*
<i>Response</i>	14%	30%	24%	10%		

\* $p < .05$

In this section, after a short description of the speech acts in our selection, we will first describe how use of speech acts develops over time. Next, we will turn to the use of speech acts in different contexts and we will analyze the speech acts children use in different activities and with different interaction partners. We will look at what van Geert and van Dijk (van Geert & van Dijk, 2002) call *qualitative variability*: the distribution of the set of speech acts in each fragment.

#### *Development of speech act use*

For almost all speech acts, the age of the child was not related to the use of the speech act. Age only mattered in the use of *declarations*: the older the children are, the more declarations they use (Spearman's Rho correlation = .4383,  $p < .00$ ). The first declaration in the corpus is from Shamira at age 3;0 when she loudly announces: *I AM THE PRINCE* (IK BEN DE PRINS). The children are using the other 11 speech acts from early on and the distribution stays stable over time.

Even though children use most speech acts from early on, the form and content of the speech acts may change over time. Children may for example pack more complex meanings in their speech acts. We will take a closer look at complexity within some speech acts in paragraphs 6.4.3 and 6.4.4.

#### *Context and use of speech acts*

Different activities and interaction partners can create different opportunities for the child for using language. We will first see how each of the four activities –pretend play, literacy activities, crafts assignments and free crafts- are related to children's use of speech acts. Then we will look at speech act use of children in interaction with the four types of interaction partners: peers, the teacher, a mixed group of teacher and peers and solitary play. When we look at the speech acts separately, we find that half of the speech acts are used differently by the children, depending on the activity they are in. These results are summarized in table 8.

**Table 8.** Average distribution of children's speech act use in different activities

Nr.	Speech Act	Activity				Distribution	
		<i>Pretend play</i> ( <i>N</i> <sup>a</sup> =107)	<i>Literacy act.</i> ( <i>N</i> =37)	<i>Crafts assign.</i> ( <i>N</i> =20)	<i>Free crafts</i> ( <i>N</i> =27)	$\chi^2$	Sig.
1&2	Questions and responses	6,9% 4,7%	7,6% 18,2%	4,2% 6,6%	6,6% 5,5%	0,314 19,653	.957 .000*
3&4	Directives and responses	21,6% 1,9%	6,7% 5,5%	19,9% 10,3%	24,1% 7,9%	22,700 13,609	.000* .003*
5&6	Statements and responses	27,4% 2,7%	39,9% 4,6%	38,0% 1,7%	26,4% 2,3%	9,983 1,393	.019* .707
7&8	Commitments and responses	12,1% 2,7%	2,9% 2,3%	6,0% 1,4%	10,1% 2,5%	20,409 0,274	.000* .965
9&10	Declarations and responses	1,4% 0,0%	- -	- -	- -	13,603 2,380	.003* .497
11	Evaluations	2,4%	2,4%	0,5%	1,3%	3,946	.267
12	Markings	16,1%	10,0%	11,6%	13,3%	6,029	.110
	<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>		

<sup>a</sup>*N*=the number of fragments, \* *p*<.05

Table 8 shows the distribution of speech acts used by the children for each of the four activity types. We can see that the distributions of seven speech acts differ, depending of the type of activity the child is in. *Responses to questions* are used frequently during literacy activities (18,2%), but less during pretend play (4,7%), crafts assignments (6,6%) and free crafts (5,5%, Kruskal Wallis  $\chi^2=19,653$ , *p*<.00). Children use *directives* frequently during pretend play (21,6%), crafts assignments (19,9%) and free crafts (24,1%), but not during literacy activities (6,7%, Kruskal Wallis  $\chi^2=22,700$ , *p*<.00). *Responses to directives* are relatively frequent in interactions during crafts assignments (10,3%), but infrequent during pretend play (1,9%, Kruskal Wallis  $\chi^2=13,609$ , *p*<.00). Children use many *statements* in their interactions overall, especially during literacy activities (39,9%) and crafts assignments (38%, Kruskal Wallis  $\chi^2=9,983$ , *p*<.05). The child's use of *commitments* is related to the type of activity he or she is engaged in as well (Kruskal Wallis  $\chi^2=20,409$ , *p*<.00). Children do not use many commitments during literacy activities (2,9%), compared to the frequency of this speech act during pretend play (12,1%) or free craft (10,1%). The speech act *declaration* is infrequent in general, and we only found children using declarations during pretend play (Kruskal Wallis  $\chi^2=13,603$ , *p*<.00).

We showed that the use of some speech acts is related to the activity children are involved in. However, some partners are more likely to interact with the child during certain activities than others, for example peer interactions are frequent during pretend play but infrequent during literacy activities (see table 1, paragraph 6.3.1). We will have a closer look at the fragments in which children interact in a *mixed group* and with the *teacher* to see whether we still find the differences in distribution of speech acts between the activities.

When we consider *all* interactions, we found that the child's use of *responses to questions, directives, responses to directives, statements, commitments and declarations* is related to the activity the child is involved in. When we *only* look at interactions in a mixed group of teacher and peers, we lose most effects. Nevertheless, the general distributions of the speech acts that do not reach significance stay the same: high frequencies stay high and low frequencies stay low. We explain the decrease in significant results by a decrease of the fragments available.

The differences between the use of directives and commitments are still significant when we look at activities within a mixed group. Children use few *directives* in literacy activities in a mixed group (3,3%), compared to their use of directives in interactions with a mixed group during pretend play (18,9%), crafts assignments (20,6%) and free crafts (23,2%, Kruskal Wallis  $\chi^2=17,662$ ,  $p<.00$ ). Children also use few *commitments* during literacy activities in a mixed group (1,9%), compared to their use of commitments during pretend play (10,2%), free crafts (8,5%) and, to a lesser extend, crafts assignments (5,7%). The results are given in table 9.

**Table 9.** Average distribution of children's speech act use in interactions in a mixed group of teacher and peers during different activities

Nr.	Speech Act	Activity of <u>mixed group</u> interaction				Distribution	
		<i>Pretend play</i> ( $N^a=27$ )	<i>Literacy act.</i> ( $N=16$ )	<i>Crafts assign.</i> ( $N=14$ )	<i>Free crafts</i> ( $N=16$ )	$\chi^2$	Sig.
1&2	Questions	4,7%	8,9%	4,8%	7,2%	0,159	.984
	and responses	6,3%	20,8%	3,9%	5,4%	7,377	.061
3&4	Directives	18,9%	3,3%	20,6%	23,2%	17,662	.001*
	and responses	1,4%	5,6%	7,0%	11,1%	3,933	.269
5&6	Statements	34,3%	41,3%	42,6%	27,1%	6,059	.109
	and responses	2,4%	5,5%	2,1%	1,5%	1,614	.656
7&8	Commitments	10,2%	1,9%	5,7%	8,5%	7,931	.047*
	and responses	6,7%	2,0%	1,5%	4,2%	2,185	.535

9&10	Declarations and responses	0,7% -	- -	- -	- -	7,104 0,000	.069 1.00
11	Evaluations	1,9%	2,0%	0,6%	1,0%	0,874	.832
12	Markings	12,5%	8,7%	11,2%	10,9%	1,794	.616
	<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>		

<sup>a</sup>*N*=the number of fragments, \*  $p < .05$

When we consider children's interactions with the teacher only, most effects of activity for children's speech act use disappear. The results are based on just 45 fragments, and within these 45 fragments the average distributions of children's speech acts do not differ significantly between the activities (see table 10). The only difference we still see is in children's use of *responses to directives*. Children produce more responses to directives during crafts assignments with the teacher (18,1%) than during other interactions with the teacher (Kruskal Wallis  $\chi^2=7,973$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

**Table 10.** Average distribution of children's speech act use in interactions with the teacher during different activities

Nr.	Speech Act	Activity of <u>teacher</u> interaction				Distribution	
		<i>Pretend play</i> ( <i>N<sup>a</sup>=13</i> )	<i>Literacy act.</i> ( <i>N=17</i> )	<i>Crafts assign.</i> ( <i>N=6</i> )	<i>Free crafts</i> ( <i>N=9</i> )	$\chi^2$	<i>Sig.</i>
1&2	Questions and responses	11,8% 6,3%	3,0% 18,5%	2,8% 12,7%	3,2% 5,7%	0,115 5,075	.990 .166
3&4	Directives and responses	15,7% 2,2%	8,3% 4,6%	18,2% 18,1%	28,5% 2,2%	6,986 7,973	.072 .047*
5&6	Statements and responses	14,5% 5,6%	40,0% 4,8%	27,1% 0,9%	25,0% 4,4%	6,100 1,247	.107 .742
7&8	Commitments and responses	19,6% 1,4%	4,2% 3,2%	6,5% 1,0%	9,6% 0,0%	7,204 2,524	.066 .471
9&10	Declarations and responses	0,4% -	- -	- -	- -	2,462 0,000	.482 1.00
11	Evaluations	3,8%	3,3%	0,0%	2,0%	4,274	.233
12	Markings	18,5%	10,3%	12,6%	19,6%	4,433	.218
	<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>		

<sup>a</sup>*N*=the number of fragments, \*  $p < .05$

Now we will look at the types of speech acts children use in interaction with different *interaction partners*. We find that there are three speech acts that children use differently, depending on their interaction partner. The distributions of the different speech acts children use with different partners are given in table 11.

**Table 11.** Average distribution of children's speech act use with different interaction partners

Nr.	Speech Act	Partner				Distribution	
		Peer(s) (N <sup>a</sup> =56)	Teacher (N=45)	Mixed group (N=73)	Solitary (N=17)	$\chi^2$	Sig.
1&2	Questions	8,1%	5,6%	6,2%	7,6%	5,167	.160
	and responses	4,3%	11,7%	8,8%	2,6%	13,630	.003*
3&4	Directives	26,5%	15,8%	16,7%	11,4%	9,606	.022*
	and responses	3,0%	5,2%	5,5%	0,6%	5,247	.155
5&6	Statements	26,7%	27,8%	35,9%	30,4%	7,191	.066
	and responses	2,3%	4,4%	2,8%	1,2%	1,275	.735
7&8	Commitments	10,4%	10,0%	7,1%	14,2%	3,358	.340
	and responses	1,4%	1,7%	4,1%	1,0%	6,016	.111
9&10	Declarations	2,2%	0,1%	0,2%	-	14,099	.003*
	and responses	0,2%	-	-	-	7,309	.063
11	Evaluations	1,2%	2,8%	1,5%	5,5%	7,260	.064
12	Markings	13,8%	14,8%	11,1%	25,4%	4,063	.255
	<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>		

<sup>a</sup>N=the number of fragments, \* p<.05

Table 11 shows the distribution of speech acts used by the children for every type of interaction partner. We can see that three speech acts are used differently, depending on the interaction partner the child has. Children produce more *responses to questions* in interactions with the teacher (10%) and with the mixed group of teacher and peers (8%) than in interactions with peers (4%) or in solitary play (3%). Kruskal Wallis  $\chi^2=13,630$ , p<.00). The use of *directives* is also related to children's interaction partner (Kruskal Wallis  $\chi^2=9,606$ , p<.05). In peer interactions, children use many directives (26%), while they use less directives in interactions with the teacher (16%), a mixed group (21%) or in solitary play (19%). We already showed that *declarations* are infrequent, but when children use them, it is mostly in peer interactions (2%, Kruskal Wallis  $\chi^2=14,099$ , p<.00).

We will now consider the distributions of speech acts during pretend play interactions only. Within the pretend play interactions, the effect for declarations does not reach significance anymore, although the distribution is still similar: declarations are most frequent in peer interactions. We find a new effect for *evaluations* (the results are given in table 12). Like we saw in solitary play in general, during solitary pretend play, children give few *responses to questions* (1,3%), compared to pretend play with peers (4,5%), the teacher (6,3%) or a mixed group of teachers and peers (6,3%, Kruskal Wallis  $\chi^2=8,324$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Children also use few *directives* during solitary pretend play (10,8%), while they give many directives during pretend play with peers (27,6%, Kruskal Wallis  $\chi^2=8,144$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Finally, children give relatively many *evaluations* during pretend solitary play (6,2%), compared to their use of evaluations in interactions with peers (1,3%), the teacher (3,8%) or a mixed group (1,9%). We saw the same pattern for use of evaluations when we considered interactions during all activities, but this difference in distribution did not reach significance ( $p=.064$ , as reported in table 11).

**Table 12.** Average distribution of children's speech act use during pretend play with different interaction partners

Nr.	Speech Act	Partner during pretend play				Distribution	
		Peer(s) (N <sup>a</sup> =52)	Teacher (N=13)	Mixed group (N=27)	Solitary (N=15)	$\chi^2$	Sig.
1&2	Questions	7,4%	11,8%	4,7%	5,0%	1,021	.796
	and responses	4,5%	6,3%	6,3%	1,3%	8,324	.040*
3&4	Directives	27,6%	15,7%	18,9%	10,8%	8,144	.043*
	and responses	2,3%	2,2%	1,4%	0,7%	1,910	.591
5&6	Statements	26,4%	14,5%	34,3%	29,5%	7,725	.052
	and responses	2,5%	5,6%	2,4%	1,4%	0,804	.849
7&8	Commitments	10,2%	19,6%	10,2%	15,7%	1,815	.612
	and responses	1,5%	1,4%	6,7%	1,2%	5,055	.168
9&10	Declarations	2,3%	0,4%	0,6%	-	4,861	.182
	and responses	0,2%	-	-	-	3,233	.357
11	Evaluations	1,3%	3,8%	1,9%	6,2%	7,982	.046*
12	Markings	13,9%	18,5%	12,5%	28,2%	4,235	.237
	<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>		

<sup>a</sup>N=the number of fragments, \*  $p<.05$



### 6.4.3 A closer look (1): reflective statements

Within a category of speech acts, different varieties of complexity can occur. Of the initiating speech acts, *statements* are most frequent (30,3% of all speech acts in our corpus are statements, as reported in table 5). Within the category *statements* there are *descriptive* statements and more complex *reflective* statements. Descriptive statements are about the here and now. Reflective statements have a more complex, abstract, extended content and by producing them, the child reflects on ‘the world’ in some way. Reflective statements are less frequent than descriptive statements: of the 1351 statements in the corpus, 136 (10%) are reflective. Reflective statements are longer than descriptive statements: on average reflective statements are 5,2 words long, compared to 3,3 for descriptive statements. Examples of reflective statements are:

(5) “Lights” [Sharon (3;5)]

*mummy turns (.) when it gets dark then mummy turns (.) in the room lights o:n*  
*mama doet (.) als het donker wordt dan doet mama (.) in de kamer licht aa::n*

(6) “Birthday” [Ryan (3;5)]

*NOBODY IS HAVING HIS BIRTHDAY HERE*  
*NIEMAND IS HIER JAADIG*

In this section, we will first study the development of the use of reflective statements. Next, we will turn to the use of reflective statements in different contexts: we will analyze whether children use more or less reflective statements in different activities and in interactions with different interaction partners.

#### *Development of use of reflective statements*

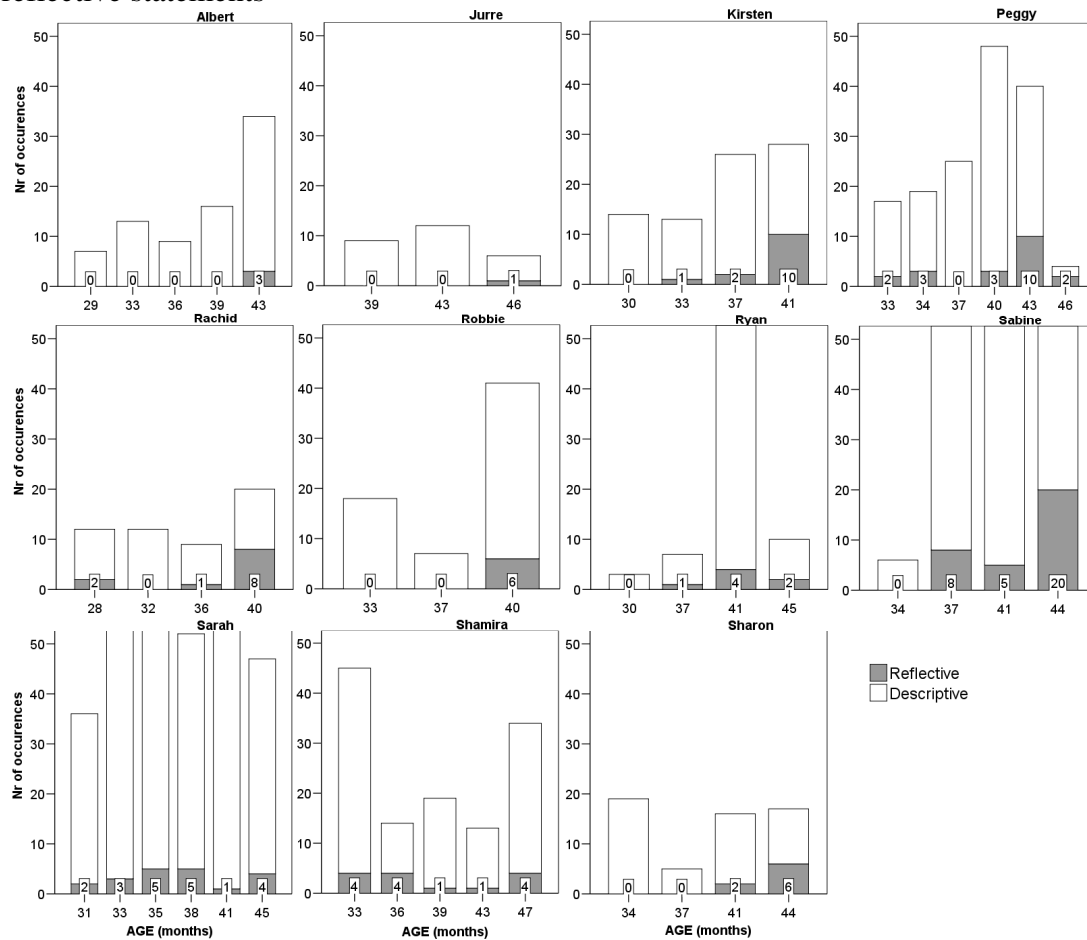
In paragraph 6.4.2, we described that the proportion of statements is stable over time. Relatively to the other speech acts, children do not start to use more (or less) statements as they get older. However, the *nature* of the statements does change over time: as children get older, the proportion of reflective statements increases (Spearman’s Rho cor.= .313,  $p < .00$ ).

Children vary in the amount of descriptive and reflective statements they use. Figure 3 shows the absolute occurrences of descriptive and reflective statements per child over time. Ryan, Sabine and Sarah produce more than 50 statements at times. Children vary in the amount of descriptive and reflective statements they use.

Sabine uses as many as 118 statements at age 3;1 (37 months), of which 8 are reflective statements, while Robbie produces only seven descriptive statements at that same age. The first reflective statement in the dataset is made by Rachid at age 2;4 (28

months) when he tucks in a doll in a pram and says *nice like this* (lekker °so°). Another early reflective statement is made by Sarah at age 2;7 (31 months). She used a watering can to fill a container with sand. When the container is full, she empties the watering can in the sandpit and says *now it's really full* (nu:::↑ >is het echt vol<). In general, children's use of reflective statements increases as they get older. However, visual inspection of the data reveal more stable uses for Sarah and Shamira.

**Figure 3.** Number of descriptive and reflective statements for every child over time. The values at the x-axis are age in months; the values in the bars are the number of reflective statements



*Context and use of reflective statements*

In paragraph 6.4.2, we described that children use fewer statements when they are doing pretend play or free craft than when they are involved in literacy activities or crafts assignments. Even though children use fewer statements during pretend play, they use relatively many *reflective* statements during this activity: on average 12,3% of children's statements during pretend play episodes are reflective (Kruskal Wallis  $\chi^2=9,209$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The results are given in table 13.

**Table 13.** Average distribution of descriptive and reflective statements during different activities

Statement	Activity				Distribution	
	<i>Pretend play</i> ( <i>N</i> <sup>a</sup> =87)	<i>Literacy act.</i> ( <i>N</i> =35)	<i>Crafts assign.</i> ( <i>N</i> =18)	<i>Free crafts</i> ( <i>N</i> =25)	$\chi^2$	Sig.
<i>Descriptive</i>	87,7%	91,9%	94,8%	92,0%	9,209	.027*
<i>Reflective</i>	12,3%	8,1%	5,2%	8,0%		

<sup>a</sup>*N*=the number of fragments in which children use statements, \**p*<.05

Children use similar amounts of statements when they interact with peers, the teacher, a mixed group of teacher and peers or when they are playing alone. When we look at the distribution of descriptive and reflective statements, we find that children use relatively many reflective statements during solitary play (23,6%) and also during interactions with peers (13,7%, Kruskal-Wallis  $\chi^2= 12,500$ , *p*<.01). See table 14 for the results.

**Table 14.** Average distribution of descriptive and reflective statements during interactions with different partners

Statement	Partner				Distribution	
	<i>Peer(s)</i> ( <i>N</i> <sup>a</sup> =46)	<i>Teacher</i> ( <i>N</i> =36)	<i>Mixed group</i> ( <i>N</i> =68)	<i>Solitary</i> ( <i>N</i> =15)	$\chi^2$	Sig.
<i>Descriptive</i>	86,3%	93,6%	93,6%	76,4%	12,500	.006*
<i>Reflective</i>	13,7%	6,4%	6,4%	23,6%		

<sup>a</sup>*N*=the number of fragments in which children use statements, \**p*<.05

When we look at the use of reflective statements during pretend play interactions only, it seems to matter less who the child is interacting with (see table 15). The proportions of reflective statements children produce in interactions with different partners do not differ significantly during pretend play episodes. In other words: in general children use less reflective statements in interaction with the teacher, but during pretend play, the interaction partner does not matter. When we compare the proportions of the child's reflective statements in interactions with different partners in general to the proportions in interactions during pretend play, the increase of reflective statements in pretend play interactions with the teacher stands out. Children do not use many reflective statements in interactions with teachers (6,4%, table 14), but when children are involved in pretend play with the teacher individually, their

statements are more frequently reflective (12,8%, table 15). The activity of pretend play thus seems to be a stimulating setting for children to use reflective statements.

**Table 15.** Average distribution of descriptive and reflective statements during pretend play interactions with different partners

Statement	Partner during pretend play interactions				Distribution	
	Peer(s) (N <sup>a</sup> =42)	Teacher (N=7)	Mixed group (N=25)	Solitary (N=13)	$\chi^2$	Sig.
Descriptive	87,4%	87,2%	95,0%	74,8%	5,267	.153
Reflective	12,6%	12,8%	5,0%	25,2%		

<sup>a</sup>N=the number of fragments in which children use statements

#### 6.4.4 A closer look (2): elaborative responses to questions

The type of response that is most frequently produced by the children in our corpus, are *responses to questions* (6,4%, as reported in table 5). Within this speech act category, we can distinguish answers with and without *elaboration*. When the child elaborates, he or she gives extra information, more than was asked for. Answers without elaborations are all other responses to questions for information, like simple *yes* or *no*, repeating what was already said in the question, answering with a statement, answering with a specification, or giving a counter question. Responses to questions with elaboration are not very frequent: of the 284 responses to questions in the corpus, 36 (13%) are responses with elaborations. Not surprisingly, responses to questions with elaborations are longer than responses to questions without elaborations (respectively 4,5 and 1,8 words on average). Two examples of elaborative responses to questions are given below: a straightforward example of Shamira, who tells her teacher Miss Trynke about her new diary and an example of Danny and Kirsten during pretend play, pretending Danny is the doctor.

(7) “Diary” [Shamira (3;9), Miss Trynke]

Sh: *I've got a new book!*

IK heb een nieuw boekje!

((turns to Miss Trynke))

(0,3)

Tr: *you've got a new book?*

heb je nieuw boekje?

→ Sh: *yes with key with (er) (.) keyring*

ja met sleutel met el-(.) sleuterhangertje

(8) “Ouch” [Danny (3;0), Kirsten (3;5), pretending Danny is the doctor]

Da: ((*Danny uses the polite form of ‘you’*)) *do you have ouch? (.)* *do you have ouch? (.)* [*do you have ouch?*

*hebt u auw? (.)* *hebt u auw? (.)* [*hebt u auw?*

→ Ki: [*no me! (.)* *no you don’t have ouch*

[*nee ik! (.)* *nee jij hebt niet auw*

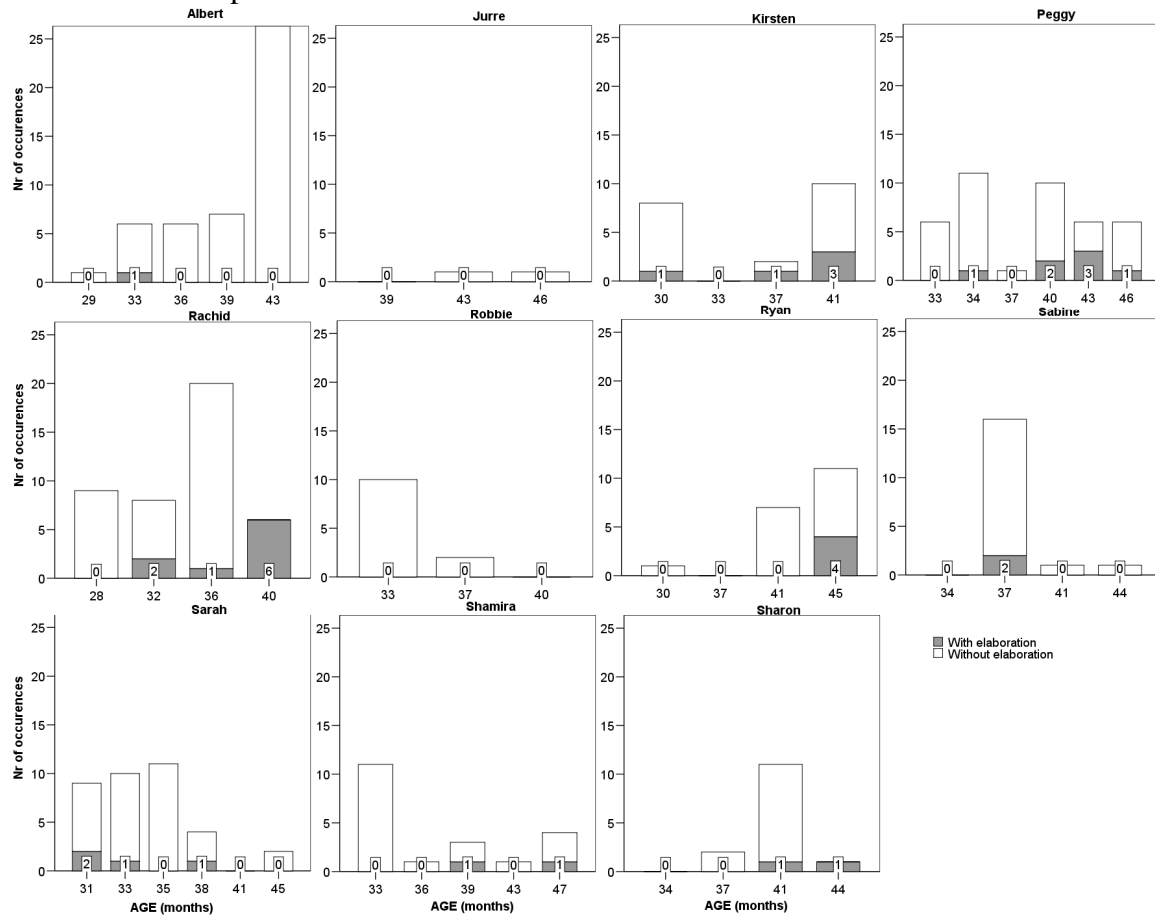
In the First example, Miss Trynke responds to Shamira’s statement with a yes/no question (*you’ve got a new book?*). Shamira responds with an agreement token (*yes*) and adds more detailed information about her new book (*with key with (er) (.)* *keyring*). The second example shows a negative answer with elaboration. Danny asks Kirsten in a polite way whether she is in pain (*do you have ouch?*). Kirsten responds by correcting Danny (*no me! (.)* *no you don’t have ouch*). This correction may be inappropriate, since Danny did not say he was in pain himself, but it does show that elaborations can have different interactional functions.

#### *Development of use of elaborative responses to questions*

We did not find age effects for responding to questions in general nor did we find any for the use of elaborative answers: children do not use more (or less) elaborative responses to questions as they get older. Again, there is variation within and between children. The numbers of responses to questions with and without elaboration for every child over time are given in figure 4. For two boys— Jurre and Robbie – there are no elaborative answers at all in the corpus.

We already showed that our corpus contains more initiating than responsive speech acts. Responses to questions are the most frequent type of response, but still only 6,4% of the speech acts are responses to questions. The interactional contexts in our corpus apparently do not ask for many responses, and children do not use many elaborative responses in these activities, with these partners. The occurrence of elaborative answers is so low, that we can not see developmental growth. The tables in figure 4 show that children sometimes use elaborative responses to questions, sometimes even at a young age (like Sarah at 2;7), but these preschool contexts in general do not seem to ask for this type of complex speech act.

**Figure 4.** Number of responses to questions with and without elaboration for every child over time. The values at the x-axis are age in months; the values in the bars are the number of responses with elaboration.



*Context and use of elaborative responses to questions*

We described in paragraph 6.4.2 that responses to questions in general are frequent during literacy activities and in interactions with the teacher. We see no significant differences in the proportions of children’s elaborative responses when they are involved in different activities, although children use no elaborative responses to questions at all during crafts assignments (see table 16). The child’s interaction partner does influence his or her use of elaborative responses to questions (see table 17). Children do not use many responses to questions in interaction with peers or in solitary play, but when they do, their responses are relatively frequently elaborative (respectively 33,2% and 35,0%, Kruskal-Wallis  $\chi^2= 9,111, p<.05$ ).

**Table 16.** Average distribution of responses to questions with and without elaboration during different activities

Response to question	Activity				Distribution	
	<i>Pretend play</i> ( <i>N</i> <sup>a</sup> =41)	<i>Literacy act.</i> ( <i>N</i> =25)	<i>Crafts assign.</i> ( <i>N</i> =11)	<i>Free crafts</i> ( <i>N</i> =14)	$\chi^2$	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Without elaboration</i>	81,7%	84,4%	100%	86,9%	5,470	.140
<i>With elaboration</i>	18,3%	15,6%	-	13,1%		

<sup>a</sup>*N*=the number of fragments in which children use responses to questions

**Table 17.** Average distribution of responses to questions with and without elaboration during interactions with different partners

Response to question	Partner				Distribution	
	<i>Peer(s)</i> ( <i>N</i> <sup>a</sup> =18)	<i>Teacher</i> ( <i>N</i> =23)	<i>Mixed group</i> ( <i>N</i> =45)	<i>Solitary</i> ( <i>N</i> =5)	$\chi^2$	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Without elaboration*</i>	66,8%	94,0%	90,9%	65,0%	9,111	.028*
<i>With elaboration*</i>	33,2%	6,0%	9,1%	35,0%		

<sup>a</sup>*N*=the number of fragments in which children use responses to questions, \**p* < .05

## 6.5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

We designed this study to explore how context is related to language use in preschool classrooms. We analyzed how several contextual variables (4 different activity types and 4 different types of interaction partner) were related to the speech acts children use in preschool and we were especially interested in children's *complex* talk. We can confirm the finding of Wells (1985), Damhuis (1995) and Yont and colleagues (2003) and other researchers that there is a relation between context and language use.

Children use different kinds of speech acts, depending on the activity they are involved in. During *pretend play*, children use relatively many *commitments*, *declarations* and *reflective statements*. During *literacy activities*, children use relatively many *responses to questions* and *statements* and relatively few *directives* and their speech acts are shorter in length. When children are involved in *crafts assignments*, they give relatively many *responses to directives*. *Free craft* is an activity in which children use relatively many *commitments*.

Moreover, the child's interaction partner influences the child's use of different kinds of speech acts. In interactions with *peers*, children use relatively many *directives* and *declarations* and *responses to questions with elaborations* and their

speech acts are longer. When children interact with the *teacher*, they give relatively many *responses to questions*, but few of these responses are *elaborative* and their speech acts are shorter in length. In interactions with a *mixed group* of the teacher and peers, children give relatively few *reflective statements*. During *solitary play*, children give relatively many *reflective statements* and few *responses to questions*, but the responses to questions they do give are relatively often *elaborative*.

We looked at four different activities that children encounter in preschool: pretend play, literacy activities, crafts assignments and free crafts. In terms of the speech acts children use, we found that pretend play and free crafts are relatively similar and that they differ from literacy activities and crafts assignments. During pretend play and free crafts, children use high proportions of commitments and low proportions of statements. Literacy activities elicit a very different pattern of speech acts: during literacy activities, children use low proportions of commitments and high proportions of statements. The stimulating effect of pretend play is also found in previous research: Pellegrini (1984b) for example found that learning centers in which children are prompted to use fantasy (for example the house area) were related to the use of more and more different kinds of speech acts.

Wells (1985) argued that some activities have a more predictable pattern of speech than others. He gives the example of *getting dressed*, in which the content and structure of speech is more patterned than during pretend play. In other work, we describe that *the closing of crafts assignments* is organized according to a structured routine (see chapter 5), as well as the literacy activity of *borrowing a book* in classroom (see chapter 4). The activities pretend play, literacy activities, crafts assignments and free crafts differ in how much they are structured according to a routine. Literacy activities and crafts assignments are highly structured while pretend play and free crafts seem to be more loosely structured. This varying degree in structure might be an explanation for the similarity in speech acts distributions in pretend play and free crafts and their difference with the other two activities.

For educational reasons, it is interesting to see how context influences the child's use of complex language. Longer speech acts of 5 words or more are more frequent during interactions with peers and in a mixed group. The speech acts *commitments* and *declarations* are generally produced with more words and occur more frequently as children get older. Declarations are only used in the context of pretend play when children announce a character role. Children do not use many statements during pretend play, but when they do, the proportion of reflective statements is high. Children use relatively many reflective statements in peer interactions and during solitary play. Responses to questions with elaborations were



infrequent in our corpus (they occurred 36 times), but when they were used, it was mostly during peer play or solitary play.

We found that peer interactions can provide children with opportunities for using complex language, like Damhuis (1995) and Blum-Kulka and Snow (2004) already suggested. Children use less complex language during literacy activities and in interactions with the teacher: in these cases, children's speech acts are shorter and they produce fewer commitments. Apparently, literacy activities with the teacher are a different type of context, in which the child may hear complex language, but gets less opportunity to produce complex language. Book reading interactions are known to be very profitable for children (for example Berenst, 2006; Snow & Ninio, 1986; Weizman & Snow, 2001), and when children talk while reading on their own they can use complex speech acts, but in other classroom literacy activities, children do not have much opportunities for using language themselves. It could be worthwhile to focus on literacy activities that create more opportunities for the child, like in mundane literacy activities: spontaneous interactions about literacy that are embedded in the child's ongoing activity and that are therefore relevant to the child (see chapter 3).

In their study on language use of 12 month old babies during book reading and toy play, Yont and colleagues (2003) conclude that context influences children's talk considerably and they urge researchers to take this into account when studying children's language development. The final statement in their paper is that it is unclear whether context influences the language use of older children as well. We can conclude from the current study that it does for children from 2;6 to 4;0 year old, the age at which many Dutch children visit preschool. By using early childhood curricula in preschool classrooms, we influence the children's interactional environment in an attempt to influence their behavior and development. There is still much to explore on how interactional environments or contexts are related to children's behavior and language use. We showed that different contexts in preschool are related to the ways children use language and we would like to emphasize the importance of exploring this further to understand how children learn in preschool settings and how various sorts of language use can be stimulated best.

To conclude, there is an notable amount of inter- and intra variability: children differ in the speech acts they use and the length of their speech acts, but also in the activities they choose to be part of and the interaction partners they choose to interact with. When children have different preferences for activities and interaction partners, it follows that their language measures will show individual differences and peaks and drops as well. This study indicates that the teacher is certainly not the only source for learning for young children in preschool classroom settings and that the activities of

pretend play and interactions with peers provide children with opportunities for using complex language. We recommend teachers to stimulate children to get involved in such activities and to try to enrich literacy activities and teacher-child interactions.



## 7. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

### 7.1 BACKGROUND OF THE PRACTING PROJECT

Preschools can increase the learning opportunities for at risk children. The general aim of early childhood education is to stimulate cognitive- and social emotional development and emergent literacy of (at risk) children and to prepare them for formal schooling. In the Netherlands, 90% of the children under age 4 receive early childhood education, but only half to two-thirds of the at risk children attend preschool (van der Vegt et al., 2008). The Dutch government aims to increase this number, because it is difficult for at risk children with language delays to be successful in school when they did not have any (pre)school experience before age 5 (the age of compulsory school attendance).

Preschools use ECE programs in order to improve the quality and effects of their education. However, the effectiveness of the different programs is not yet clearly established. Results of evaluation studies of ECE programs are ambiguous: significant effects on the performance of children, especially on the long term, are absent or of small to moderate magnitude.

The lack of clear results in ECE effect studies could be explained by poor implementation of the programs and by the use of global tests and measurements. In other words, it may be hard to find results because programs are not implemented well or because researchers use less appropriate tests and effect measures. A solution to this problem could be to analyse classroom interaction in more detail to understand how programmatic elements are used in classroom and what behaviour and skills children show during preschool interactions. Studies on the effectiveness of ECE and attempts to improve the quality of ECE programs could benefit from additional studies with a stronger focus on children's experiences in preschool and the language opportunities that different preschool contexts offer.

The current study adds to an understanding of the different interactions children have in preschool and the things they can learn through these interactions. By describing naturally occurring everyday interactions, I showed the classroom routines and practices that children are oriented to in the process of being socialized into the classroom community. My study is inspired by the *Bristol Study* (Wells, 1981; 1985; 1986), in which the natural language use in everyday situations of a large group of children is studied over several years. In my *PRACTING project* (an acronym for preschool activities and interactions Groningen), I followed 30 children in their natural classroom environments over time from approximately age 2;6 to 4;0. I recorded the children's spontaneous interactions by letting them wear a jacket with a recording device inside.

Early analyses of the data showed that children's language use is very situated: the activities and routines in which the interactions took place appeared to be very important for the children's language use. Children need to (learn how to) participate in an activity, in order to (learn to) use the language that is appropriate in that activity. This meant I needed to study the contexts of interaction in detail first, before I could make full use of the longitudinal design in my study. I study the practices and routines in the context of Situated Activity Systems (Goffman, 1961) that provide a global structure to specific classroom events. By being oriented to these Situated Activity Systems in preschool, children learn to use language and educational language practices. I worked in the tradition of applied conversation analysis to understand how children learn the practices of their classroom community and what they may learn from participating in these practices.

## 7.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

To account for children's experiences in preschool classrooms, I selected four different preschool activities, varying from the relatively 'free' activities *pretend play* and *spontaneous conversations about literacy* to the more 'structured' activities *borrowing a book* and *doing a crafts assignment*. Below, I will provide a short summary of the structure of these four activities and the discourse practices that are part of them. I will conclude with a description of the distribution of speech acts over different contexts.

### 7.2.1 *The increasing complexity of early sociodramatic play*

In the study on pretend play, I show how children extend their play with more pretend elements as they get older. During pretend play, elements in the interaction have one meaning in the real world and another in the pretend world (layeredness, Goffman, 1974). In pretend play interactions, children need to know which meaning or interpretation to use during the interaction and when to switch to another interpretation. Elements of play that can be interpreted on a pretend level are: *participants, roles, place, time, objects and actions* (Clark, 1996).

In a case study of Peggy, I showed that Peggy does not use all these pretend elements from early on. Rather, her early pretend play contains only pretend *objects* and *actions* and perhaps *place*. In her early pretend play, Peggy uses pretend objects and actions. She would for example offer her teacher a pretend cup of tea. The cup of tea and the offering of the tea are pretend elements in the play, but Peggy does not use other substitutions yet. As Peggy's play develops, she adds more pretend elements to her play and the level of pretending becomes more complex. She would for example pretend to talk with her daddy on the telephone. Imagining a pretend interaction

partner is more complex than using substitutions, like pretending a toy phone is a real phone. Moreover, the situated identities of Peggy and her interaction partner become more complex. Peggy for example pretends to be a 'caller': she is still herself, but the situated identity of 'caller' structures her interactional moves. Peggy's play develops into early sociodramatic play, as she starts to include pretend roles and participants. She would for example pretend to be a Black Pete, and participate in the play with this pretend identity. By constructing these pretend situated identities, children can turn early pretend play into sociodramatic play.

The development of early sociodramatic play can play a role in the use of complex language. Early pretend play is relatively simple and structured, because children only assign a new meaning to objects and local acts. The pretend play interactions children have at younger ages form the basis for their later episodes of sociodramatic play. When pretend play develops, children start to take roles and interpret their situated identities in the pretend layer. Situated identities allow for a range of possible acts and a sociodramatic story line. To sustain pretend play with more pretend elements and less routinized acts, children need to direct and organize the play more, using metacommunication. Metacommunication is necessary because specific characters, roles and situations are hard to establish by simple referring and showing. Children do not need metacommunication in early phases of pretend play, but they do when their play becomes more complex and develops into early sociodramatic play.

Sociodramatic play is a rich context for complex language use. The play gives children the opportunity to experience things they would otherwise not experience, and in their new pretend world, children can experiment with language, behavior, social roles and social conventions. Sociodramatic play for example can be a context for using vocabulary and genres that children might not use in their ordinary daily life. Peggy and her playmate Alex, for example, use a 'pliers', 'drill' and 'thermometer' when they are pretending to fix a boat. The more complex joint play becomes, the greater the need to communicate about the play frame and the story line and to structure and adapt the play, especially when interaction partners have different ideas about details of the play. Children may influence the story line by using explicit instruction, talking in past tense, marking shifts between the play frame and the real world frame and using character appropriate speech.

Once children have learned to participate in sociodramatic play, their opportunities for using language are endless. The play can be extended and varied, and children can take different character roles and negotiate about details of the storyline. Since the play is organized on the pretend level, children need to use language to explicate the play. Children can either do this implicitly, for example by

using character speech, or explicitly, for example by talking about elements of the play. In the context of pretend play, children use language on the one hand for creating and structuring the play, and on the other hand as part of the character role they have taken on.

### *7.2.2 Mundane literacy events as genuine practices of the literate community*

Emergent literacy includes becoming aware of literacy in the environment, learning about the features and use of written language, and experiencing the personal relevance of literacy. Children who experience written language in joint interactions at an early age can form ideas about the use and function of reading, writing and text. This informal knowledge about literacy is an important basis for later formal reading and writing instruction and further literacy development (Bus et al., 1995; Duke & Purcell-Gates, 2003; Neuman & Roskos, 1997; Teale & Sulzby, 1986b).

One of the goals of ECE programs is to stimulate emergent literacy in children. I analyzed a collection of children's days from the PRACTING corpus and selected every 'literacy event' that took place. I distinguished four types of literacy events: book reading by the teacher, borrowing a book, children reading to themselves and mundane literacy events. The most frequent literacy event is when the teacher reads to the children. Joint book reading is a thoroughly studied literacy event and is found to be beneficial for children's development (e.g. Berenst, 2006; Hoff, 2003; Weizman & Snow, 2001). Another frequent type of literacy event is the activity of borrowing a book (see paragraph 7.2.3). A third event is a child 'reading' to himself, which children can do in silence or out loud. The last type of event is mundane, spontaneous interaction about literacy. I analyzed these *mundane literacy events* in more detail.

Mundane literacy events are a collection of events in which literacy is relevant to the child in some way and include all interactions in which literacy plays a role and that are embedded in the ongoing activities of the child. There are three types of mundane literacy events: events about reading, writing or use of books. In the contexts of these events, there is an orientation to literacy, followed by an explication of the literacy event. Mundane literacy events can be initiated by teachers as well as children: teachers can orient children to an aspect of literacy, but children can also orient teachers and each other. The explication can take many forms, but always includes some kind of literacy event, for example writing a name, or acting out a bed-time reading routine. In teacher-child interactions, the teacher can function as an expert member of the literate community and provide the child access to the content of text or to the technical skills of writing. In peer interaction, children explicate the

literacy event themselves, by using their knowledge about the literacy event in conversation or play.

Mundane literacy events create a setting for situated learning: they show children how literacy practices are used by the literate community. Children are likely to be active participants in the mundane literacy events, because the events are embedded in the activities of the child. The strength of mundane literacy events is the opportunity they provide for legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991): with some help, children can take part in genuine practices of the literate community.

The importance of mundane literacy events is that children experience literacy at moments relevant to *them*. Mundane literacy events were infrequent in the preschool classrooms under study. Nevertheless, they may serve as useful additional literacy experiences for children. Through mundane literacy events, children are exposed to the literacy practices of a community and through legitimate peripheral participation in this literate community, they will develop their own literacy practices. Teachers may stimulate mundane literacy events in two ways. Teachers could make sure a literacy event is explicated after an orientation took place, especially when the child took the initiative and oriented the teacher to an aspect of literacy. Moreover, teachers could orient and actively engage children to literacy events every time they are involved in reading and writing themselves, for example when they write a child's name on a crafts work or when they look something up on a list.

### 7.2.3 *Learning to participate in the book loan activity*

The activity of *book loan* is one of the programmatic activities of the ECE program *Boekenpret*. One of the main findings of the analysis of the *book loan* activity is that children learn how to participate in *book loan*, but that how to select a book is hardly dealt with. The routine of *book loan* is fairly straightforward and consists of three basic moves: reorientation to the new activity, choosing a book and acknowledgement of the choice.

The move of reorientation has a prominent position. Children are often involved in free play when they need to enter the activity of *book loan*. Teachers spend time and effort in reorienting the children to the new activity, because children often do not seem to consider *book loan* as having priority over their own free play activity: they often accept the teacher's invitation with only minimal (verbal) agreement.

When the child needs to choose a book, the teacher does not scaffold the child into how to do this. One might expect that the move of *choosing* the book would be essential in the routine, but in reality, the child receives only a minimal amount of



guidance from the teacher during this move. The teacher points the child to the collection of books, and then the child browses the books (without flipping through them) and often quite quickly selects one. So, children need to choose a book without much help from their teacher. Since the teacher does not provide the child with information about the content of the book, the child can only base his choice on visual information from the book cover. The teacher rejects a choice when a child wants a book that he (recently) borrowed before. The ‘content rule’ that children should choose new books applies in the classrooms, but children are only oriented to this rule when they are about to break it.

When the child made a choice, the teacher may acknowledge the choice by accepting the book. The child may leave the *book loan* activity at this point. However, two literacy related moves can be added after the choice is acknowledged: the teacher can orient the child to reading the book and the child can be oriented to the registration process. The child is oriented to reading of the book when the teacher and child talk about the topic or main characters of the story or read from the book. Another way of orientation to reading is when teacher and child talk about the future use of the book: the child will take the book home and read it with a parent. The second additional move has to do with the registration process, as the teacher writes down the child’s choice in the registration folder. Through this additional move, the child is oriented to the “power” of the written word in a specific *literacy practice* (Barton et al., 2000): a choice is only definite when it is written down in the special folder, and a choice can be rejected because it is noted in the registration folder that the child has already chosen the book before.

Both additional moves are optional and do not always occur. The teacher and child influence the occurrence of additional moves. The first move, in which the child is oriented to reading, depends more on the teacher and whether she decides to read from the book or to initiate a conversation. The second move, in which the child is oriented to registration, depends more on the child and whether he chooses to stay while the teacher does her administrative tasks.

The activity of *book loan* is designed to stimulate emergent literacy. Microanalysis of this activity shows that *book loan* indeed plays a role on different areas of emergent literacy, not only because children have access to books and therewith are stimulated to read, but also because children are oriented to the activity of reading, the use and purpose of registration and potentially to the practice of choosing a book. These meaningful literacy stimulating elements are mainly found in the supplemental moves and are thus not always realized in the activity of *book loan*.

#### 7.2.4 Closing a crafts assignment: learning to indicate 'being done'

One of the central activities in formal education is 'working on assignments'. Preschool crafts assignments, as one of the more structured activities in Dutch preschool classrooms, resemble later school assignments because the activity is teacher-directed, the teacher defines a clear end-state and often the children get instruction on how to work (Leseman et al., 2001). Furthermore, all end products look alike, the main differences are in the neatness or sloppiness of the work and creativity is often not appreciated.

The activity of doing a crafts assignment has different phases, which are related to different types of language use. I focussed on the joint construction of teacher and child of closing the craft task. Closings are complex joint constructions, rooted *within* the ongoing activity. This phase of the crafts assignment has a complex structure and requires the child and teacher to jointly work towards a mutual end state.

The completion of crafts assignments has a routine structure: the child indicates *being done*, the teacher acknowledges the child is done and the child enters a new activity. There are some variations to this routine: interactions can include scaffolding, negotiation or other variations. When the child is scaffolded, the teacher helps him to take the slot of indicating he is done by eliciting an indication, so that the child can take his move by simply giving an agreement token. The child's choice may also be rejected, when the teacher does not agree with the child that the activity could be closed. In this case, the child has to continue working and can attempt a new closing initiative later. There may also other variations to the routine, when action moves are skipped or switched, but even in the marked cases, child and teacher show an orientation to the basic elements of the closing routine: the indication of being done, the acknowledgement and the new activity.

Task completion in an educational setting requires specific ways of talking, including some specific words. The collection of crafts interactions, for example, contains concepts like 'being done' or 'glue enough'. These concepts may seem unspecific for an outsider, but members of the classroom community, who participate in the routine of closing a crafts activity, know what the concepts mean in the context of closing crafts assignments. Children are thus learning the situated norms of 'being done' in the context of the crafts activity. One of the competences of a good task-fulfiller is being able to assess your own work and to indicate when you are 'done'. Preschool crafts assignments can be a context for children to develop this aspect of educational discourse, that characterizes the classroom as a community of practice.

Crafts tasks might be important contexts for socialization into the situated educational practice of working on a task. In later school life, children will encounter tasks and assignments which are obligatory and teacher directed. Children will have to

learn how to act successfully within such school assignments and preschool work situations may help them to prepare for this. 'Being a good pupil' means to know classroom conventions and to act upon them. The cultural practice of 'finishing an assignment' is such a classroom practice that children need to know to succeed in school.

#### 7.2.5 *Different patterns of speech act use in different contexts*

The four activities described above, show how children learn to participate in 'ordinary' preschool activities that are structured and, as such, are part of the specific ways of talking in preschool. Each activity requires different ways of acting and talking. To study this in more detail, I analyzed the use of speech acts in different types of activities (pretend play, literacy activities, crafts assignments and free crafts) and in interaction with different types of partners (peers, teachers, mixed group of teacher and peers and solitary). I developed a speech act coding scheme, based on the work of Ninio and colleagues (Ninio et al., 1994; Ninio & Wheeler, 1986) to analyze the distribution of speech act use in the different contexts. I focused specifically on children's use of complex talk.

I found that the pattern of speech act use is related to the activity the child is involved in, and interaction partner he has. During pretend play, children use relatively many *commitments*, *declarations* and *reflective statements*. During literacy activities, children use relatively many *responses to questions* and *statements* and relatively few *directives* and their speech acts are shorter in length. When children are involved in crafts assignments, they give relatively many *responses to directives*. Free craft is an activity in which children use relatively many *commitments*.

The child's interaction partner influences the child's use of different kinds of speech acts as well. In interactions with peers, children use relatively many *directives*, *declarations* and *responses to questions with elaborations* and their speech acts are longer. When children interact with the teacher, they give relatively many *responses to questions*, but few of these responses are *elaborative* and their speech acts are shorter in length. In interactions with a mixed group of teacher and peers, children give relatively few *reflective statements*. During solitary play, children give relatively many *reflective statements* and few *responses to questions*, but the responses to questions they do give, are relatively often *elaborative*. There is quite some variation between and within children, though, in the speech acts they use, the length of their speech acts, the activities they engage in and the interaction partners they have.

The use of complex language is related to specific contexts. Longer speech acts (5 words or more) are more frequent during interactions with peers and in a mixed group. *Declarations* are only used in the context of pretend play, when children

announce a character role. Children do not use many *statements* during pretend play, but when they do, the proportion of *reflective statements* is high. *Responses to questions with elaborations* were infrequent, but when they were used, it was mostly during peer play or solitary play.

So, pretend play and peer interactions can provide children with opportunities for using complex language. Children use less complex language during literacy activities and in interactions with the teacher. Apparently, literacy activities with the teacher are a different type of context, in which the child may hear complex language, but gets less opportunity to produce it. Children thus learn different ways of using language from participating in different activities.

### 7.3 MEANINGFUL CONTEXTS IN PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM

My studies show how different contexts in preschool are related to the ways children use language. This leads me to the viewpoint that, to understand how children learn in preschool settings and how various sorts of language use can be stimulated best, there is a need for more microanalyses of various activities in preschool settings.

The research question that was at the base of my study was *How do young children learn to participate in discourse practices in preschool?* I looked at four different typical preschool activities and illustrated how these activities were contexts for children to participate and use language and cognitive skills. Pretend play, mundane literacy events, *book loan* and the closings of crafts assignments, are contexts for children to use complex language and metacommunication, and to experience emergent literacy and classroom conventions.

Considering the results from chapter 6, on the relation between context and speech act use, one could conclude that interactions with the teacher are not beneficial for children, since especially peer interactions provide children with opportunities for using complex language and children talk less during interactions with the teacher. Indeed, the teacher is not the only source for learning for young children in preschool classroom settings and peer interactions are positively related to children's language use. The essential role of the teacher, however, seems to lie more in scaffolding the child into participating in different routines and discourse practices. Special language stimulating modules of ECE programs (like *Taallijn VVE*<sup>35</sup>) focus on the teacher's role in stimulating children to use more and more extended language. I would like to argue that teachers may also play an important stimulating role in situations in which they do not merely stimulate children to use language, but in which they scaffold the child into participating in specific activities. Since participation is fundamentally

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<sup>35</sup> Developed by *Sardes*, education welfare and youth, Utrecht and *Expertisecentrum Nederlands*, language education, Nijmegen

connected to language use, these kinds of scaffolding by the teacher may play an important role in the development of language use as well (Snow, 1977; 1989). Teachers may increase rich preschool interactions by stimulating pretend play between peers and by actively involving children in mundane literacy activities like writing a name on a drawing or administrating the choice of a book during the activity of *book loan*.

To illustrate the scaffolding role of the teacher in helping children to participate, I will reproduce the excerpt I presented in the introduction, of Dion (2;8) and Miss Laura. Recall that Dion wanted to join his peers in play, and tried to achieve this by making a less appropriate (because self-centered) request for joining. An effective way of joining others is being group oriented and focussing on the activity and the play materials of the group, whereas it is less effective to focus on yourself or to try to alter the play (Russell & Finnie, 1990). Miss Laura helps Dion to reach his goal by orienting him to the group, the activity and materials relevant in the play.

(1) “I want too” [Dion (2;8); Nicole (2;9), Miss Laura] (*repeated*)

*Situation: the children are playing outside. Dion cruises the playground on a car. He drives up to the sandpit where Miss Laura and some children are playing*

<i>Line</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Transcript</i>	<i>Dutch original</i>
1	Dion:	I want <u>too</u>	ik wille <u>ook</u>
2		(0,6)	(0,6)
3	Miss L.:	there is Dion!	hier is Dion!
4		(1,1)	(1,1)
5	Miss L.:	but I see Dion is not alone=	maar ik zie dat Dion niet alleen is=
6	Dion:	=yes!	=ja!
7		(0,6)	(0,6)
8	Miss L.:	Dion brought somebody	Dion heeft iemand meegenomen
9		(0,3)	(0,3)
10	Dion:	yes	ja
11	Miss L.:	who did you bring?	wie heb je meegenomen?
12		(0,4)	(0,4)
13	Dion:	doll!	pop!
14		(0,2)	(0,2)
15	Miss L.:	do::ll! ((takes Dion's doll))	po::p!
16		(0,3)	(0,3)
17	Miss L.:	doll I'm baking a cake ((with low voice))	pop ik bak een taart

18		(1,5) ((Miss Laura puts the doll head down in the bucket of sand))	(1,5)
19	Miss L.:	o (.) <u>no no</u> doll wait a minute de cake is not ready yet!	o (.) <u>nee nee</u> pop ho ho ho de taart is nog niet klaar!
20		(1,8)	(1,8)
21	Dion:	(N)O not doll!	EE niet pop!
22		(0,3)	(0,3)
23	Miss L.:	no wait doll	nee ho pop
24		(0,4)	(0,4)
25		((Dion laughs and presses the doll to his body))	
26	Miss L.:	don't dive into the cake	niet in de taart duiken
27		(0,3)	(0,3)
28	Dion:	no not into [the <u>cake</u>	nee niet in [de <u>taart</u>
29	Miss L.:	[the cake is not ready yet=	[de taart is nog niet klaar=
30	Nicole:	= <u>my</u> cake	= <u>mijn</u> taat
31		(0,5)	(0,5)
32	Miss L.:	that's Nicole's cake	dat is de taart van Nicole
33		(0,4)	(0,4)
34	Dion:	yehehes!	jahaha!
35		(2,0)	(2,0)
36	Dion:	it's <u>Nicole's</u> !	tis van <u>Icole</u> !
37		(0,2)	(0,2)
38	Dion:	ye:::s that is Nicole's!	ja::: dat is van Icole!
39		(0,3)	(0,3)
40	Miss L.:	ye:::s	ja:::
41		(0,5)	(0,5)
42	Miss L.:	what kind of cake is it Nicole	wat is het voor taart Nicole

First, Miss Laura makes a *broadcast* announcement<sup>36</sup>, for everybody in the group to hear: *there is Dion!* (line 3). By announcing Dion has arrived, Miss Laura brings Dion's presence to the attention of the other children in the sandpit. She then invites Dion's doll as a partner to the interaction and orients Dion to the activity the group is engaged in, by saying: *doll I'm baking a cake* (line 17). In a playful way, she involves Dion in the activities and objects that are relevant to the play activity. Finally, Nicole

<sup>36</sup> I would like to thank prof. Charles Antaki to pointing me to this descriptive term.

announces that the cake is hers (*my cake*, line 30). Miss Laura acknowledges the ownership (*that's Nicole's cake*, line 32) and Dion accepts and confirms (*yehehes! (2,0) it's Nicole's! (0,2) ye:::s that is Nicole's!* lines 34-38). Miss Laura then asks Nicole about the kind of cake she is making (*what kind of cake is it Nicole*; line 42). At this point, Dion is introduced to the group, to the activity the group engages in and to some of the features and social relations operating in the activity. Dion is now in a position to join the others in their activity and his request to participate is finally granted.

With the example of Dion and Miss Laura, I illustrated how teachers can help children to reach their interactional goals. As I already pointed out in the introduction, Dion's language use is not particularly extended or complex. The richness of the situation is in the scaffolding role of the teacher. Thus, preschool interactions may also be meaningful to children, not because they are stimulated to use (complex) language, but because they are oriented to appropriate ways of acting and talking.

#### 7.4 RELEVANCE AND FUTURE RESEARCH

With this study, I emphasized the importance of studying elements of educational curricula and other preschool interactions in daily life, to understand what children experience, what they might learn from these experiences and how learnability may be increased. Although this study is not an effect study and it was not designed to evaluate different ECE programs, it can add to the insight about the meaningful elements of ECE programs and the role of preschool in preventing developmental delays of at risk children.

This study provides a wealth of information on the things children experience in preschool classrooms, what they do and what they might learn. The PRACTING database contains much more information than I could use in this study. Some additional work is done by students from the University of Groningen. For example, detailed analyses are made of pretend telephone calls (Duursma, 2007) and instruction during crafts activities (Hamstra, 2009; Hamstra, Deunk & Berenst, 2009), but many activities and interactions are still unexplored. Furthermore, not all 663 hours of interaction in the corpus are transcribed. For reasons of efficiency, I transcribed only a selection of events, in which the children participated (relatively) actively. The parts of the data that are yet untranscribed, in which children are perhaps less actively involved and participate in other activities (e.g. circle time and transit moments, like dressing up to go outside) may be very interesting and meaningful as well. Furthermore, there is a clear longitudinal design in the study, which is yet underexplored. The interactions I studied were so highly connected to the contexts they appeared in, I decided to focus on specific contexts first, as I mentioned before. I

could only start analyzing development of individual children within and across these specific activities, after detailed analyses of the children's discourse practices. It would be very interesting to explore the longitudinal data in the PRACTING corpus in more detail.

The PRACTING database also contains unique information on preschool experiences from the perspective of individual children. Because the children were wired during complete days at school, there is information on everything they do and hear while they are at preschool. Classroom studies often focus on the activities of the group, for example, a group is involved in a teacher-led discussion about the zoo and contributions from individual children are taken as contributions to the group discussion. However, during such an activity, an individual child may talk to another child, quietly give an answer which gets lost in a louder group answer or perhaps say nothing at all. This information on individual experiences is easily lost in studies with a group perspective, but is available in the PRACTING corpus. Studying what classroom activities look like from the perspective of individual children, could lead to very valuable information for the development of ECE programs. The detailed approach of applied CA, as an extended form of video interaction guidance, could be useful in teacher training as well. Mercer and colleagues (Mercer et al., 1999), for example, used conversation analysis in the development of a teaching program to stimulate collaborative thinking of 9 and 10 year old children in classroom. Detailed analyses of children's joint reasoning led to the formulation of a series of 'ground rules' for effective collaborative thinking. This example shows how qualitative methods and close analyses of classroom interaction could play a role in the development of educational programs.

To conclude, the PRACTING corpus contains many more contexts and interactions to study in detail, and offers possibilities for longitudinal analyses and extended case studies, for future studies of the daily lives of children and for the development of practical applications. Although I may have only used a fraction of the rich data on children's preschool lives, I hope my studies will contribute to the insight in how special 'ordinary' preschool activities are for the development of young children.





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## **APPENDICES**



**Appendix A.** Overview PRACTING corpus

	Child	Sex	Preschool	Age at recordings											
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Albert	boy	A	2;4	2;5	2;7	2;7	2;9	2;9	3;0	3;0	3;3	3;3	3;7	3;7
2	Annet	girl	C	2;7	2;7	2;10	2;10	3;2	3;2	3;6	3;6	3;10	3;10		
3	Brenda	girl	D	2;9	2;9	3;0	3;0	3;3	3;4						
4	Danny	boy	C	2;4	2;4	2;8	2;8	3;0	3;0						
5	Dion	boy	A	2;6	2;6	2;8	2;8	2;10	2;11	3;1					
6	Freddy	boy	D	2;2	2;2	2;11	2;11								
7	Janet	girl	C	2;3	2;3	2;6	2;6	2;10	2;10	3;1	3;1	3;6			
8	Jeffrey	boy	D	2;4	2;4	2;7	2;7								
9	Jennifer	girl	A	2;1	2;1	2;4	2;4	2;7	2;7	2;11	2;11	3;2			
10	Jesse	boy	A	2;0	2;0	2;3	2;3	3;0							
11	Jurre	boy	B	2;11	3;0	3;3	3;3	3;7	3;7	3;10	3;10				
12	Karin	girl	B	3;0	3;0	3;3	3;3	3;7	3;7	3;10	3;10				
13	Kirsten	girl	C	2;6	2;6	2;9	2;9	3;1	3;1	3;5	3;5				
14	Lucy	girl	D	2;8											
15	Merel	girl	B	2;10	2;10	3;1	3;2	3;5	3;6	3;9	3;9				
16	Michael	boy	B	2;6	2;6	2;9	2;9	3;1	3;1	3;4					
17	Miranda	girl	A	2;5	2;5	2;8	2;8	2;11	2;11	3;3	3;3	3;6			
18	Nicole	girl	A	2;7	2;7	2;9	2;9	2;11	3;0	3;2	3;2	3;5	3;5	3;9	3;9

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19	Paul	boy	D	2;5	2;5	2;8	2;8								
20	Peggy	girl	A	2;8	2;9	2;10	2;11	3;1	3;1	3;4	3;4	3;7	3;7	3;10	3;11
21	Peter	boy	B	2;6	2;6	2;9	2;9	3;1	3;1						
22	Rachid	boy	C	2;4	2;4	2;8	2;8	3;0	3;0	3;4					
23	Raoul	boy	D	2;11	3;3	3;6	3;6	3;9	3;9						
24	Robbie	boy	B	2;9	2;9	3;1	3;1	3;4	3;4						
25	Ryan	boy	C	2;6	2;6	3;1	3;1	3;5	3;5	3;9	3;9				
26	Sabine	girl	B	2;10	2;10	3;1	3;1	3;5	3;5	3;8	3;8				
27	Samantha	girl	D	2;11	2;11										
28	Sarah	girl	A	2;7	2;9	2;9	2;11	2;11	3;2	3;2	3;5	3;5	3;9	3;9	
29	Shamira	girl	C	2;9	2;9	3;0	3;0	3;3	3;4	3;7	3;7	3;11	3;11		
30	Sharon	girl	B	2;10	2;10	3;1	3;1	3;5	3;5	3;8	3;8				

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**Appendix B.** Transcript notations

Based on Jefferson (1984):

[text	overlapping speech; point at which an ongoing utterance is joined by another utterance
=	break and subsequent continuation of contiguous utterances
(0,4)	pause (in seconds)
(.)	micro pause (less than 0,2 seconds)
.	stopping fall in tone (not necessarily at the end of a sentence)
,	continuing intonation (not necessarily between clauses of sentences)
?	rising inflection (not necessarily a question)
!	animated tone (not necessarily an exclamation)
-	halting, abrupt cutoff
↓	marked falling shift in intonation
↑	marked rising shift in intonation
◦	talk that is quieter than surrounding talk
TEXT	talk that is louder than surrounding talk
<u>text</u>	emphasis
:	extension of the preceding sound (0,2 seconds for every colon)
>text<	speech is delivered at a quicker pace than surrounding talk
<text>	speech is delivered at a slower pace than surrounding talk
hhh	audible aspiration
●hhh	audible inhalation
(text)	transcriber is in doubt about the accuracy of the transcribed stretch of talk
( )	transcriber could not achieve a hearing for the stretch of talk
((text))	description of a phenomenon, of details of the conversational scene or other characterizations of talk
[[text]]	personal comment of the transcriber

**Appendix C.** Data collection chapter 3: literacy events

<i>Child</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Pre-school</i>	<i>Age range (y;m)</i>	<i>Hrs of recording</i>	<i>Total nr of lit. events</i>	<i>Distribution per type of literacy event</i>				
						<i>1a. T reads - whole group</i>	<i>1b. T reads - small group</i>	<i>2. C loans book</i>	<i>3. C 'reads' self</i>	<i>4. Mundane literacy events</i>
Albert	boy	A	2;4-3;3	25	17	8	2	3	2	2
Brenda	girl	D	2;9-3;0	10	9	5	3	0	1	0
Danny	boy	C	2;4-2;8	10	8	1	4	2	0	1
Dion	boy	A	2;6-3;1	17,5	9	4	2	1	0	2
Kirsten	girl	C	2;6-2;9	10	10	0	4	2	0	4
Merel	girl	B	2;10-3;9	17,5	4	1	0	3	0	0
Peggy	girl	A	2;8-3;11	30	21	8	4	5	2	2
Rachid	boy	C	2;4-3;0	10	7	1	3	3	0	0
Raoul	boy	D	2;11-3;9	12,5	10	4	3	0	1	2
Robbie	boy	B	2;9-3;4	15	10	2	1	3	1	3
Sabine	girl	B	2;10-3;5	15	4	0	0	3	0	1
Sarah	girl	A	2;7-3;9	27,5	21	8	7	2	4	0
Shamira	girl	C	2;9-3;0	10	6	0	4	1	0	1
<i>Total</i>				<i>210</i>	<i>136</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>18</i>

**Appendix D.** Data collection chapter 3: mundane literacy events

	<i>Child</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>During activity</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Interaction partner</i>	<i>Initiative by</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Albert	3;0	writing	crafts	arts and crafts table	teacher	focal child	0:01:06
2	Albert	3;3	use of books	group activity	lunch table	peer	focal child	0:00:45
3	Danny	2;8	use of books	group activity	other	teacher	focal child	0:01:05
4	Dion	2;6	reading	transfer	lunch table	teacher	focal child	0:00:12
5	Dion	2;8	reading	transfer	arts and crafts table	peer and teacher	focal child	0:00:46
6	Kirsten	2;6	use of books	pretend play	thematic area	peer and teacher	teacher	0:01:10
7	Kirsten	2;6	writing	crafts	arts and crafts table	peer and teacher	focal child	0:02:03
8	Kirsten	2;6	use of books	transfer	lunch table	peer	peer	0:00:42
9	Kirsten	2;6	writing	crafts	arts and crafts table	teacher	teacher	0:00:12
10	Peggy	3;4	writing	crafts	arts and crafts table	teacher	teacher	0:04:07
11	Peggy	3;7	use of books	group activity	lunch table	peer	peer	0:00:40
12	Raoul	3;6	reading	crafts	arts and crafts table	teacher	focal child	0:00:14
13	Raoul	3;9	writing	crafts	arts and crafts table	peer	peer	0:01:14
14	Robbie	2;9	reading	transfer	other	teacher	teacher	0:00:22
15	Robbie	2;9	writing	crafts	arts and crafts table	teacher	teacher	0:00:25
16	Robbie	3;4	use of books	transfer	other	teacher	focal child	0:00:16
17	Sabine	3;1	use of books	pretend play	thematic area	peer	focal child	0:01:50
18	Shamira	2;9	writing	crafts	arts and crafts table	teacher	focal child	0:00:19
<i>Total</i>								<i>0:17:28</i>

**Appendix E.** Data collection chapter 4: *book loan* activities

<b>Nr</b>	<b>Child</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Pre-school</b>	<b>Age (y;mm)</b>	<b>Adult</b>	<b>Group size</b>	<b>Duration (m:ss)</b>
1	Albert	boy	A	3;0	Intern	Individual	1:10
2	"	"	"	3;3	Intern	Individual	0:55
3	"	"	"	3;7	Intern	Individual	0:49
4	Annet	girl	C	2;7	Parent	Individual	1:04
5	Danny	boy	C	2;4	Intern	Individual	1:17
6	"	"	"	2;8	Assistant	Individual	1:57
7	Janet	girl	C	2;3	Parent	Individual	1:12
8	"	"	"	2;6	Intern	Individual	1:20
9	"	"	"	2;10	Assistant	Individual	2:24
10	Jennifer	girl	A	2;1	Assistant	Individual	3:07
11	"	"	"	2;4	Intern	multiple	1:01
12	"	"	"	2;7	Intern	multiple	1:33
13	Jesse	boy	A	2;3	Assistant	Individual	2:00
14	Kirsten	girl	C	2;6	Parent	Individual	0:22
15	"	"	"	2;9	Intern	Individual	0:53
16	"	"	"	3;5	Teacher	Individual	3:58
17	Miranda	girl	A	2;11	Intern	Individual	1:40
18	"	"	"	3;3	Intern	Individual	0:36
19	"	"	"	3;6	Teacher	multiple	2:25
20	Nicole	girl	A	2;7	Intern	Individual	1:12
21	"	"	"	2;9	Intern	multiple	1:23
22	"	"	"	2;11	Assistant	multiple	2:50
23	"	"	"	3;2	Intern	multiple	0:51
24	"	"	"	3;5	Intern	multiple	2:20
25	Peggy	girl	A	2;9	Intern	Individual	0:56
26	"	"	"	2;10	Intern	multiple	1:51
27	"	"	"	3;1	Assistant	multiple	0:45
28	"	"	"	3;7	Intern	Individual	0:06
29	"	"	"	3;10	Intern	Individual	1:35
30	Rachid	boy	C	2;4	Intern	Individual	0:49
31	"	"	"	2;8	Assistant	Individual	3:00
32	"	"	"	3;0	Teacher	Individual	3:00
33	Ryan	boy	C	2;6	Teacher	Individual	4:00
34	"	"	"	3;5	Teacher	multiple	2:30
35	Sarah	girl	A	2;11	Assistant	multiple	3:30
36	"	"	"	3;5	Intern	Individual	7:30
37	Shamira	girl	C	3;0	Intern	Individual	0:51

**Appendix F.** Data collection chapter 5: crafts activities

<b>Nr</b>	<b>Child</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Preschool</b>	<b>Age (y;mm)</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Duration (m:ss)</b>
1	Albert	boy	A	2;4	crown	0:04:11
2	"	"	"	2;9	fish	0:13:40
3	"	"	"	3;7	strawberry	0:13:26
4	Dion	boy	A	2;11	fish	0:23:53
5	Jennifer	girl	A	2;1	fish	0:20:59
6	"	"	"	2;11	strawberry	0:11:56
7	Jurre	boy	B	3;3	squares	0:14:36
8	"	"	"	3;10	spider	0:13:14
9	Karin	girl	B	3;0	hat	0:06:44
10	"	"	"	3;10	spider	0:03:42
11	Merel	girl	B	2;10	hat	0:12:21
12	"	"	"	3;9	spider	0:11:15
13	Michael	boy	B	2;6	hat	0:09:27
14	"	"	"	2;9	squares	0:09:50
15	Miranda	girl	A	2;5	fish	0:21:01
16	"	"	"	3;3	strawberry	0:23:12
17	Nicole	girl	A	2;7	crown	0:11:55
18	"	"	"	3;0	fish	0:15:57
19	"	"	"	3;9	strawberry	0:15:01
20	Peggy	girl	A	2;8	crown	0:10:59
21	"	"	"	3;10	strawberry	0:23:06
22	Robbie	boy	B	2;9	snowman	0:17:52
23	"	"	"	3;4	spider	0:05:12
24	Sabine	girl	B	2;10	hat	0:22:45
25	"	"	"	3;1	squares	0:04:30
26	"	"	"	3;8	spider	0:08:37
27	Sarah	girl	A	2;11	fish	0:14:22
28	"	"	"	3;9	strawberry	0:14:34
29	Sharon	girl	B	2;10	hat	0:23:29
30	"	"	"	3;8	spider	0:09:10

**Appendix G.** Data collection chapter 6: speech act use

<i>Child</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Preschool</i>	<i>Age range</i>	<i>Nr of data points</i>	<i>Nr of fragments</i>	<i>Nr of speech acts</i>	<i>Total duration of fragments (h:mm)</i>
Albert	boy	A	2;5-3;7	5	28	438	1h06
Jurre	boy	B	3;3-3;10	3	7	159	3h02
Kirsten	girl	C	2;6-3;5	4	15	323	2h26
Peggy	girl	A	2;9-3;10	6	34	461	1h15
Rachid	boy	C	2;4-3;4	4	13	231	3h47
Robbie	boy	B	2;9-3;4	3	10	208	0h39
Ryan	boy	C	2;6-3;9	4	10	288	1h13
Sabine	girl	B	2;10-3;8	4	19	800	1h49
Sarah	girl	A	2;7-3;9	6	30	1106	2h00
Shamira	girl	C	2;9-3;11	5	15	453	1h38
Sharon	girl	B	2;10-3;8	4	10	189	1h08
<i>Total</i>				<i>48</i>	<i>191</i>	<i>4656</i>	<i>20h40</i>



**Appendix H.** Speech act coding scheme chapter 6

	<b>Speech act</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example</b>
1&2	Questions and responses	The main purpose of the speech act pair ‘questions and responses’ is getting and giving information. Different types of questions fall in this category, like: open questions, yes/no questions, elicitation questions, clarification questions and display questions for checking knowledge. Answers can take the form of statements or tokens of (dis)agreement, with or without elaborations.	<p><b>(1) “Breadtopping”</b> [Sabine (3;8); John (2;11)]</p> <p>Sab: <i>do you want peanut butter or chocolate spread or sprinkles?</i></p> <p>wil je pindakaas of chocopasta of hagelslag? (0,9)</p> <p>Jn: <i>er chocolate spread</i></p> <p>eh chocopasta</p>
3&4	Directives and responses	Directives are speech acts to make another person do something. This varies from getting someone’s attention, to asking someone to do something, to giving instructions. The tone of the directive ranges from softened and mitigated to direct and aggravated. Responses can take the form of agreements or refusals, with or without providing reasons.	<p><b>(2) “Piglet”</b> [Jurre (3;10), solitary play]</p> <p>Ju: <i>piglet (.) oh come out</i></p> <p>varkentje (.) oh kom erui::t (2,1)</p> <p>Ju: <i>I’m coming out</i></p> <p>ik kom eruit</p>

5&6	Statements and responses	Statements are used to describe something in the world. Statements can be local, situated in the direct environment, like labeling, counting or informing someone about something. There are also more abstract, decontextualized statements, which show a more complex thought or relation. Responses are agreements or disagreements to the statement.	<p><b>(3) “Elephant”</b> [Nicole (2;11), Peggy (3;1)]</p> <p>Ni: <i>look! (.) (an)other elephant</i>  <i>kij:k! (.) nog olifat</i>  (0,4)</p> <p>Pe: <i>yes</i>  ja:</p>
7&8	Commitments and responses	Commitments are a sort of directives, directed at oneself. They are used to announce or promise something. Also asking permission to do something belongs to the category of commitments. In responses to a commitment, one can give an acknowledgement, protest or refuse, or in the case of asking permission, granting permission.	<p><b>(4) “Zoo”</b> [Ricardo (3;11), Robbie (3;4)]</p> <p>Ri: <i>we’re going to make a zoo</i>  <i>we gaan een dierentuin maken</i>  (1,6)</p> <p>Rb: <i>yeah!</i>  jah!</p>
9&10	Declarations and responses	With declarations, the speaker sets the stage in a situation. This is the case when children take or divide roles in pretend play. Responses to declarations are agreements or disagreements.	<p><b>(5) “Ill”</b> [Annet (3;10), Rachid (3;4)]  <i>((Annet lays herself down on a big pillow))</i></p> <p>An: <i>I’m ill</i>  <i>ik ben ziek</i>  (0,8)</p> <p>Ra: <i>yes</i>  ja:</p>

11	Evaluations	To give a positive or negative evaluation of an act or a state of affair. Also 3 <sup>rd</sup> position (dis)agreements are categorized as evaluations.	(6) “Tasty” [Peggy (2;10)] Pe: o:::!/ tasty! (1,0) m:::! o:::↑! lekker! (1,0) m:::!
12	Markings	Markings are a range of –often short– routine speech acts. It includes politeness markers like greeting and thanking, expressive utterances like <i>er</i> , <i>oh</i> , <i>ouch</i> , and singing.	(7) “Bless you” [Iny (assistant), Sharon (2;10)] <i>((Iny sneezes))</i> Sha: <i>bless you!</i> <i>zondheid!</i>
99	Unclear	Unclear utterances in which it is not clear what the child said and which type of speech act is conveyed.	-

# **SAMENVATTING**

## **TAALGEBRUIKSPRAKTIJKEN IN DE PEUTERSPEELZAAL**

De deelname van jonge kinderen aan alledaagse activiteiten in een educatieve setting

### *Introductie*

Met Voor- en Vroegschoolse Educatie (VVE) wordt geprobeerd de ontwikkeling van kinderen te stimuleren door leerzame activiteiten aan te bieden. Evaluatiestudies naar de effecten van VVE hebben echter niet tot eenduidige resultaten geleid. Onvolledige implementatie en gebruik van globale meetinstrumenten zouden het gebrek aan overtuigende resultaten kunnen verklaren. Om beter te begrijpen hoe VVE effectief kan zijn bij de ontwikkelingsstimulering van jonge kinderen zijn kwalitatieve analyses van de dagelijkse praktijken en interacties in de peuterspeelzaal nodig.

In dit onderzoek is nagegaan bij welke activiteiten kinderen gedurende de dag in de peuterspeelzaal betrokken zijn en wat de aard is van de interacties die tijdens deze activiteiten plaatsvinden. Uitgangspunt is dat interacties een goede context kunnen bieden voor zowel de taal(gebruiks)ontwikkeling als voor de sociaal-emotionele ontwikkeling en voor de cognitieve ontwikkeling in het algemeen. Er is geanalyseerd hoe de verbale interacties waarin peuters in de peuterspeelzaal betrokken zijn eruit zien en hoe die interacties zijn ingebed in bepaalde situaties en globale activiteiten.

Voor dit longitudinale onderzoek zijn anderhalf jaar lang 30 kinderen van 2;6 tot 4;0 jaar oud in 4 peuterspeelzaalgroepen gevolgd. Elke drie maanden zijn de natuurlijke interacties van de kinderen in de peuterklas vastgelegd met audio- en videoapparatuur. De geluidsopnames zijn gemaakt door de kinderen een hesje te laten dragen waarin draadloze opnameapparatuur is verwerkt. Deze manier van dataverzameling maakte het mogelijk om de verbale interactie van kinderen in een natuurlijke situatie te onderzoeken.

Door delen van het uitgebreide corpus micro-analytisch te bekijken, kan een beeld verkregen worden van de ontwikkeling van kinderen en van de leerzame situaties die in de peuterspeelzaal kunnen ontstaan. Er is hiertoe gebruik gemaakt van de methode zoals die is ontwikkeld in de conversatie analyse. De resultaten hebben een wetenschappelijk belang omdat ze de kennis ten aanzien van de conversationele praktijken van jonge kinderen en de contextuele inbedding daarvan vergroten, maar kunnen daarnaast worden gebruikt in het kader van de verdere ontwikkeling van de bestaande VVE programma's en de professionalisering van leidsters in peuterspeelzalen en de kinderopvang.

### *Resultaten*

Er zijn vier verschillende activiteiten onderzocht, die variëren in de mate van gestructureerdheid. In hoofdstuk 2 wordt de ontwikkeling van *fantasiespel* beschreven. De volgende drie hoofdstukken betreffen meer schoolse activiteiten en interacties, namelijk *terloopse geletterdheidsinteracties* (hoofdstuk 3) en interacties die nog duidelijker kenmerkend zijn voor de institutie, namelijk het *lenen van een boekje* (hoofdstuk 4) en het *afsluiten van een knutseltaak* (hoofdstuk 5). In hoofdstuk 6 is een wat ander perspectief gekozen: daar zijn de taalhandelingen van de peuters geanalyseerd zoals ze die realiseerden in interactie met de leidster(s) en met hun groepsgenoten tijdens verschillende activiteiten. De resultaten van de afzonderlijke hoofdstukken worden hieronder besproken.

### *Hoofdstuk 2: de ontwikkeling van vroeg fantasiespel*

Ten eerste zijn de vroege voorkomens van fantasiespel beschreven. Gedetailleerde analyse van het fantasiespel van de peuter 'Peggy'<sup>37</sup> laat zien hoe ze haar spel na verloop van tijd uitbreidt tot een sociodramatisch (rollen)spel. In eerste instantie worden alleen objecten en activiteiten geïnterpreteerd op fantasieniveau (bijv. als Peggy in spel haar juf iets te eten aanbiedt). Later wordt het spel ingewikkelder door het gebruik van meer en meer complexe fantasie-elementen. Peggy doet bijvoorbeeld alsof ze met iemand belt. Het creëren van een fantasie-interactiepartner is complexer dan het gebruiken van fantasieobjecten, wat Peggy op jongere leeftijd al deed. De gesitueerde fantasie-identiteiten die kinderen in spel gebruiken, worden ook steeds complexer, in die zin dat de bijbehorende activiteiten complexer worden. De identiteit van 'beller' bijvoorbeeld, die Peggy op een bepaald moment construeert, structureert een reeks van handelingen van Peggy. De fantasie-identiteiten leiden tenslotte tot fantasierollen, bijvoorbeeld wanneer Peggy speelt dat ze een Zwarte Piet is. Door steeds meer elementen in het fantasiespel te integreren, ontwikkelt vroeg fantasiespel zich dus tot sociodramatisch spel. Sociodramatisch spel vormt een rijke context voor complex taalgebruik. Kinderen kunnen daarin experimenteren met rollen waarbij taalgebruikspatronen en vocabulaire horen die ze in het dagelijks leven niet gebruiken. Bovendien ontwikkelen kinderen in complex gezamenlijk fantasiespel vormen van metacommunicatie om het spel in stand te houden en te sturen.

### *Hoofdstuk 3: terloopse interacties rond lezen en schrijven*

Het tweede type interacties dat onderzocht is betreft de ontluikende geletterdheid. Kinderen komen in de klas op verschillende manieren in aanraking met geletterdheid, maar voornamelijk door voorgelezen te worden. Voor dit hoofdstuk zijn echter

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<sup>37</sup> De namen van de peuters en de leidsters zijn gefingeerd.

*terloopse geletterdheidsactiviteiten* geanalyseerd. Deze komen niet vaak voor, maar zijn wel erg belangrijk in het licht van de ontluikende geletterdheid. Terloopse geletterdheidsactiviteiten bestaan uit interacties over lezen, schrijven of boeken die *en passant* tot stand komen, vanuit andere bezigheden van het kind. Doordat deze spontane interacties over geletterdheid ontstaan vanuit andere bezigheden, zijn ze niet alleen ingebed in de activiteiten van het kind, maar hebben ze ook een hoge relevantie. Een ingebedde, terloopse interactie rond geletterdheid kan bijvoorbeeld ontstaan als een leidster de naam van het kind op een tekening schrijft. Kinderen kunnen ook zelf het initiatief nemen tot een dergelijke praktijk.

Bij terloopse geletterdheidsactiviteiten rondom *lezen* speelt de leidster een belangrijke rol, omdat zij degene is die daadwerkelijk kan lezen. De leidster kan de kinderen daarom toegang geven tot de inhoud van tekst. Kinderen kunnen de leidster aansporen hen deze informatie te verschaffen, als zij willen weten wat ergens staat. Terloopse geletterdheidsinteracties rondom *schrijven* (meestal in de context van een naam op een werkje schrijven) worden zowel door kinderen als leidsters geïnitieerd en ook het schrijven zelf kan zowel door leidsters als kinderen worden gedaan. Kinderen kunnen daarbij de expertise van de leidster gebruiken om hun doel te bereiken (namelijk iets opgeschreven te krijgen). Bij terloopse geletterdheidsinteracties over *boeken en boekgebruik* ligt er minder nadruk op de expertise van de leidster. Kinderen weiden in dit type interactie zelf uit over routines rond lezen, zoals het voorlezen voor het slapen gaan, of geven aan geïnteresseerd te zijn in een bepaald boek. Omdat het hier niet gaat om het lezen of schrijven van tekst, maar om het gebruik van boeken, krijgen kinderen meer gelegenheid om hun eigen kennis en ideeën te delen. In de context van boekgebruik zien we peuters dus zelfstandiger experimenteren met de praktijken van de geletterde gemeenschap.

Het participeren in geletterdheidsactiviteiten speelt een belangrijke rol in de ontluikende geletterdheid van kinderen, omdat ze in deze activiteiten georiënteerd worden op de functies van tekst in de geletterde gemeenschap. Het belang van *terloopse* geletterdheidsactiviteiten is dat kinderen hiermee nog sterker georiënteerd worden op de zin van lezen en schrijven in het dagelijks leven, omdat het een situatie betreft waarin ze zelf al bezig zijn met (een of meerdere aspecten van) geletterdheid.

#### *Hoofdstuk 4: het lenen van een boekje*

Ten derde zijn de interactionele praktijken rondom de boeken uitleen in de peuterklas onderzocht. Deze activiteit is onderdeel van een VVE leesbevorderingsprogramma. De boeken worden tijdens het vrije spel uitgeleend in de klas. Kinderen moeten hun eigen spel dus onderbreken om een boekje uit te zoeken bij de leidster. Omdat kinderen de boeken uitleen niet zonder meer prioriteit geven boven het eigen spel,

nemen de leidsters soms veel tijd nemen om het kind te oriënteren op de specifieke activiteit van boeken uitleen. Als het kind eenmaal gericht is op de boeken uitleenactiviteit, wijst de leidster het kind op de reeks boeken en mag er een boekje uitgezocht worden. Tijdens dit keuzemoment kijken kinderen zelf tussen de boeken, maar slaan ze de boeken niet open en praten ze niet met de leidster over de inhoud van het boek. De leidster biedt dus ook weinig ondersteuning en oriënteert de kinderen nauwelijks op het maken van een onderbouwde keuze voor een boek, bijvoorbeeld op basis van onderwerp of genre. Als het kind een boek gekozen heeft en de keuze is goedgekeurd, kan het kind in principe terug gaan naar zijn spel.

De uitleenroutine biedt twee uitbreidingsmogelijkheden die van belang zijn voor de geletterdheidstimulering, namelijk een oriëntatie op het lezen van het uit te lenen boek en een oriëntatie op de administratieve praktijken. Leidsters oriënteren kinderen op de activiteit van het lezen door bijvoorbeeld alvast een stukje voor te lezen uit het boek, of met het kind te praten over met wie hij of zij het boekje thuis gaat lezen. Daarnaast kunnen de kinderen georiënteerd worden op een specifieke administratieve interactionele taalgebruiksactiviteit, de registratie. De leidster noteert in die interactie in een speciale map welk boek het kind gekozen heeft. Als kinderen niet direct na goedkeuring van de keus teruggaan naar hun eigen spel kunnen ze deelnemen aan deze registratiepraktijk. Door het kind te betrekken bij het noteren van de keus ontstaat terloops een bijzondere geletterdheidsactiviteit, waarin kinderen georiënteerd worden op het gebruik en de status van gegevensregistratie. Dat gebeurt als de leidster verbaliseert wat ze moet doen om de keus van de peuter te verwerken, namelijk datum en naam van het kind in het boek en in de map noteren. Kinderen worden zo georiënteerd op een belangrijke functie van het schrijven, namelijk gegevens vastleggen. De status van die registratieactiviteit wordt voor het kind ook zichtbaar als de genoteerde gegevens worden gebruikt in het boekenkeustraject. Leidsters lezen namelijk in de registratiemap welke boeken een kind de afgelopen tijd geleend heeft. Een keus kan dan geweigerd worden omdat in de registratiemap staat dat het kind het betreffende boek al eerder geleend heeft. Leidsters verwijzen dan soms naar de gegevens in de map om hun weigering te motiveren. Zo zijn de twee uitbreidingsmogelijkheden van de uitleenroutine dus belangrijk voor de ontluikende geletterdheid, ook al worden ze niet altijd tijdens de boeken uitleen gerealiseerd.

#### *Hoofdstuk 5: het afsluiten van een knutseltaak*

De vierde activiteit die is beschreven, betreft het afsluiten van een knutseltaak. Verschillende typen knutselopdrachten waarbij kinderen iets moesten plakken volgens de instructies van de leidster zijn geanalyseerd wat betreft de interactionele praktijken waarmee ze tot stand komen. In dit hoofdstuk is met name de manier waarop de taak

wordt afgesloten onderzocht. Afsluitingen zijn complexe gezamenlijke constructies, omdat ze vanuit de lopende activiteit gerealiseerd moeten worden. De taakafsluitingen blijken gestructureerd te zijn op basis van een basisroutine: het kind geeft aan klaar te zijn, de leidster erkent dit (met of zonder positieve evaluatie) en het kind gaat verder naar een nieuwe activiteit. Variaties op de basisroutine zijn ‘ondersteuning’ en ‘afwijzing’. Ondersteuning kan plaatsvinden tijdens verschillende momenten van de afsluiting. Als kinderen zelf niet aangeven dat ze klaar zijn met hun werkje, kan de leidster hulp bieden door het kind te vragen of hij of zij klaar is. Als kinderen aan het eind van de afsluitingsroutine niet uit zichzelf hun werkplek verlaten en bijvoorbeeld hun handen gaan wassen, kan de leidster hen daartoe aansporen. De afwijzende routine is aan de orde als het kind aangeeft klaar te zijn, maar de leidster het daar niet mee eens is. Het kind moet in dit geval eerst weer even werken, voordat een nieuwe afsluitingsroutine kan worden geïnitieerd.

Binnen de taakafsluiting zijn gezamenlijke onderhandeling en invulling van begrippen zoals ‘klaar zijn’ en ‘genoeg plakken’ van belang. Door te participeren in de taakafsluiting leren kinderen in te schatten en aan te geven wanneer hun werk klaar is. Dit wordt vooral duidelijk in afwijzende routines, als het kind aangeeft klaar te zijn en de leidster hier niet in mee gaat. In deze gevallen kan de leidster meer of minder expliciet duidelijk maken wat het kind nog meer moet doen. In de afsluitroutine is aangegeven ‘klaar’ te zijn een belangrijke activiteit voor de kinderen. Om die succesvol te kunnen realiseren, moeten kinderen kennis hebben van het begrip ‘klaar zijn’. ‘Klaar zijn’ is een gesitueerd concept en de invulling ervan (bijvoorbeeld hoe lang je moet werken of hoe veel je moet plakken) is specifiek voor de groep waarin het begrip gebruikt wordt. Door deel te nemen aan de afsluitingsroutine, leren kinderen de betekenis van ‘klaar zijn’ *in hun groep*. In een andere groep zal de invulling van ‘klaar zijn’ mogelijk anders zijn. Het zicht krijgen op de gesitueerde betekenis van ‘klaar zijn’ is een belangrijke voorwaarde om een goede ‘taak-volbrenger’ te zijn. Het leren deelnemen aan afsluitingsroutines van knutseltaken in de peuterspeelzaal draagt op deze manier bij aan de ontwikkeling van de belangrijke schoolse praktijk van ‘taakafsluiting’.

#### *Hoofdstuk 6: taalgebruik in verschillende contexten*

De analyses van de vier activiteiten in de hoofdstukken 2 tot en met 5 laten verschillende taalgebruikspatronen zien. Om de verschillen wat betreft het taalgebruik van de kinderen in de peuterspeelzaal verder in beeld te brengen is een overkoepelende analyse uitgevoerd van het gebruik van taalhandelingen in de interacties tijdens verschillende activiteiten (fantasiespel, geletterdheidsactiviteiten, knutseltaken en vrij knutselen) en met verschillende interactiepartners (klasgenoten,



de leidster, een combinatie van leidster en klasgenoten en zonder partner). Het blijkt dat kinderen complexere en langere taalhandelingen gebruiken in interacties met groepsgenoten en tijdens fantasiespel. Met complexe taalhandelingen refereren kinderen bijvoorbeeld aan gevoelens en onderwerpen buiten het hier en nu, formuleren ze regels of hypothesen, reflecteren ze op de dingen om hen heen, maken ze beloften of geven ze uitgebreid antwoord op vragen. Kinderen gebruiken complexe taalhandelingen bijvoorbeeld als ze aankondigen wat ze straks gaan doen (*ik ga pannenkoek maken en die gooi ik hee(l) hoog!*), of als ze een rol aannemen in fantasiespel (*IK BEN DE PRINS*). Tijdens de interacties met de leidster en tijdens geletterdheidsinteracties gebruiken kinderen juist minder complexe taalhandelingen, die bovendien korter zijn in die setting. Kinderen geven in deze contexten relatief veel korte antwoorden op vragen en beschrijvingen in het hier en nu, bijvoorbeeld door een plaatje in een boek te benoemen.

#### *Conclusies en discussie*

Dit onderzoek laat zien dat gedetailleerde analyses van activiteiten en interacties in de peuterspeelzaal niet slechts tot inzicht in de aard van de taalgebruikspraktijken van peuters in relatie tot die van leidsters leidt, maar ook bijdraagt aan ons inzicht in de leerzaamheid van de bepaalde activiteiten in de peuterspeelzaal. Dergelijke activiteiten komen tot stand door specifieke taalgebruikspraktijken. Door te leren deelnemen aan verschillende activiteiten leren peuters dus ook die gesitueerde taalgebruikspraktijken. Als die taalgebruikspraktijken in de verschillende situaties vergeleken worden, blijkt dat de kinderen in interacties met klasgenoten meer complexe taalhandelingen gebruiken dan in interacties met de leidster en ook dat ze vooral veel complexe taalhandelingen gebruiken tijdens fantasiespel. Een verklaring voor het relatief complexere taalgebruik in interactie met groepsgenoten is dat kinderen daar de gelegenheid krijgen om zelf initiatief te tonen, ook verbaal. In interacties met de leidster worden kinderen echter vooral geholpen om te participeren in schoolse routines, waarbij de leidster relatief veel initiatieven realiseert en de kinderen dus responsiever zijn.

Er zijn dus contexten in de peuterspeelzaal waarin kinderen zelf relatief veel complexe uitingen produceren en er zijn andere contexten waarin de nadruk meer ligt op participatie aan schoolse routines. Om goed te worden voorbereid op toekomstig onderwijs, is het belangrijk dat kinderen zowel hun taalvaardigheid ontwikkelen als bekend raken met gebruiken en routines in schoolse settings. Kinderen worden georiënteerd op 'schoolse taalgebruik' door deel te nemen aan schoolse routines. Het gebruik van het begrip 'klaar zijn' tijdens de routine van taakafsluiting is hier een mooi voorbeeld van. De peuterspeelzaal kan dus een goede

voorbereiding bieden op het latere onderwijs omdat kinderen hier leren te participeren in verschillende interacties, waarin de ontwikkeling van schoolse routines en daarmee de ontwikkeling van bijbehorend taalgebruik gestimuleerd wordt.



## GRONINGEN DISSERTATIONS IN LINGUISTICS (GRODIL)

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