

Chapter I

Introduction

Although human-beings are social animals, we are not born socially competent.

Everyone must learn how to fit in and integrate into his or her own culture group.

From turn-taking to expressing opinions, we all have to learn from childhood how to communicate properly and efficiently in our own cultures and social groups. Some learn faster and some slower, while others never quite master these skills. Socially competent adults might take communication for granted, but socially developing children must go through a constant process of trial and error before eventually reaching full competence.

Pretend play is one activity through which children can efficiently develop their cognitive and linguistic skills, which together contribute to social competence.

Through pretend play, children try out the skills and knowledge they have acquired through observation of and interaction with adults. Through the process of reproducing what they have learned, and incorporating the feedback that they receive, children's social competence improves. Through this process they gradually learn what is appropriate within their group and what is not, thus becoming "socialized."

Children begin to engage in pretend play when they are very young, but it is typically not until the age of three that they start to participate in social pretend play, in which the individuals involved participate in a shared meaning constructed collaboratively by all participants (Göncü, 1998). Once the play begins to acquire these social characteristics, communication becomes necessary. Children must come to terms with the potentially conflicting desires and expectations of the other participants, who have dissimilar life experiences and varying social backgrounds. If unable to successfully address this issue, they will not be able to enter into social pretend play, an outcome which may detrimentally affect their linguistic, cognitive, and social development.

In addition to social pretend play between children, some researchers have looked into children's social pretend play with their caregivers. In these situations, the children's behavior often exhibits the so-called "modeling effect." This effect occurs when children imitate the actions or speech patterns of the adults with whom they have regular contact (Freyberg, 1973).

However, it would be inaccurate to say that children's behavior during social pretend play is solely an imitation of adult behavior. Although the pretend play's scripts, defined as a series of activities (Bochner, 2003), may be taken from the children's experiences and interactions with caregivers, they tend to practice the

scripts in their own way (Singer, 1973). The dynamics of peer interactions increase this tendency because of individual variation among the participants. Each child has a unique combination of life experiences, and even when children share similar experiences, their interpretations may still diverge according to individual levels of cognitive, linguistic, and social competence. Since they do not have caring adults waiting for their turns or helping make decisions (though the latter may be sought as a last resort), the children must resolve their differences between themselves. Through this process of determining their own social environment, children are in a sense creating their own language and culture, which leads to dramatic improvement in many areas of their development.

During the complex process of social pretend play with peers, an observer can identify various strategies used by the participants when communicating about constructing the play. Giffin (1984) proposed a set of seven metacommunication strategies for categorizing the ways in which children construct and negotiate shared meaning in social pretend play, induced from the observation of episodes of natural conversation among children.¹ Giffin defines metacommunication as “communication that indicates to others how to interpret and how to respond to events [in play]” (1984, p.76). When children’s pretend play becomes more mature, they

¹ Detailed descriptions and examples of each strategy are presented in the methodology section of this paper.

engage in social pretend play and begin to introduce more elements into the play (e.g. objects, characters, events). They then must develop an awareness of the various and possibly conflicting desires, understandings, and expectations of other participants within the social pretend play. Being aware of the possible conflicts and able to deal with them efficiently is an important mark of progress in children's cognitive, linguistic and social development. The point at which conflicting ideas emerge is the time when metacommunication comes into the picture.

Children apply many metacommunication strategies – strategies for communicating about how to communicate in social pretend play – even though they most likely are unaware of it. As mentioned above, the fact that the children involved in an episode of pretend play possess differing life experiences contributes to each having a different script in mind before arriving at a shared meaning for the play. They must communicate a great deal in order to construct shared meaning, and they need to apply strategies to pursue what they want or to come to a consensus with their peers. If there is no consensus and both parties insist on conflicting ideas, no shared meaning can be reached and social pretend play will not exist. During the communication process, each participant must indicate to others how he or she wants to carry out the pretend play; that is, communicating “how to interpret and respond to the elements and events of pretend play” (Giffin, 1984, p.74). As Giffin (1984) asserts,

“one of the distinguishing characteristics of [social] make-believe play² is that it is itself essentially a metacommunicative activity” (p.76). During this process, children developing their cognitive, linguistic and social abilities, all of which may contribute to determining their future success in both academic and social spheres.



² The term “make-believe play” is used by Giffin (1984) as an equivalent to the term “pretend-play” used in the present study.

Chapter II

Literature Review

2.1 Children's socialization

During the 1970s and 1980s, an increasing number of researchers began to examine the acquisition of communicative competence, looking into how children learn to use language in a socially appropriate way. As discussed by Cook-Gumperz & Kyratzis (2001), this approach focusing on children's communicative competence was "influenced by ethnography of communication, and involved theory of sociolinguistics, speech act usage, and conversational analysis" (p.590). The use of an ethnographic approach redirected the researchers' interest to language socialization, which is "how language learners are able to be participating members of a social group by acquiring social and linguistic skills" (p. 590). By the mid-1980s, the focus was on children's discourse competence, in a search for answers to the question of how children participate meaningfully in specific conversation contexts.

The methods for studying child pragmatics and discourse also changed in the late 1980s. Some researchers stopped looking at children as simply learners who imitate adults' culture. Children in peer interactions were analyzed in a new way, which

treated the subjects as active members of their groups who could construct their own cultures (Corsaro, 1985), giving birth to the notion that children are active constructors of their identity, culture and social rules (Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2007). Topics such as how children argue and play with each other have been under increased investigation since then.

Studying children's peer interaction is an especially efficient way to examine how children construct their own language and culture among themselves. In peer settings, children are interacting with individuals who are more likely to possess cognitive, linguistic and social skills similar to their own. They learn to observe and interpret other people's feedback, and also acquire other important social skills such as turn taking and thinking from others' perspectives. These abilities are all beneficial to their continuing socialization later in life. Through observing children's interactions, it is easy to determine what they know and do not know about the world, and through their mistakes, we can better understand what makes a successful member of society who can act and communicate properly within his or her own group.

2.2 Children's pretend play and social pretend play

Pretend play is a kind of symbolic play in which the time and participants in the play undergo transformations from reality to the "as if" mode (Garvey, 1977; Garvey

& Berndt, 1975; O'Connell & Bretherton, 1984). According to Piaget, children's symbolic play starts when they are only 18 months old and begins to gradually decline when they reach the age of seven. After this point, children are more mature in terms of social development, and they engage less in symbolic plays but more in pretend play with specific rules (Singer, 1973). The definition of pretend play presented above treats transformation as a crucial part of pretend play. Transformation in pretend play involves the participants using some objects (e.g. toys) and actions in play to symbolize or represent objects and actions in real life (O'Connell and Bretherton, 1984). For example, children might use a few small blocks to represent mugs, and use a big block to pretend to pour water into the "mugs."

According to Piaget's four stages of cognitive development (Piaget, 1932), the major development of the second stage (between two and seven years old), the preoperational stage, is symbolic thinking, which is important for participating in social pretend play. This is a major advancement in the children's cognitive development because it enables them to develop "schemes" which help them learn new words rapidly. Symbolic thinking also enables children to communicate about objects that are not in the immediate present, which makes them capable of communicating about thoughts and receiving information. Once they attain the ability to think symbolically, they can use verbal communication to socialize with people

around them, thus making possible the appearance of social pretend play.

Social pretend play is play in which the participants together maintain shared meaning. This is also termed a “shared fantasy game” by some previous researchers (Singer, 1973). Shared meaning is the script constructed and shared by participants in the play, in which the objects, actions, settings and roles of the participants are defined (Giffin, 1984; Göncü, 1998; Howe, Petrakos, Rinaldi & LeFebvre, 2005).

When children participate in social pretend play, the actions, settings, characters and objects they propose to bring into the play will be regulated according to the shared meaning they establish together. They can have different understandings about the established shared meaning or how to further develop the shared meaning, in which case they must work out a consensus in order to fulfill their need for participation in social activity.

If no shared meaning is established among the participants, the play cannot be regarded as “social.” Instead, each child is simply engaging in pretend play with her or himself. For example, a child might pretend to be a mother giving food to her “baby,” a doll. In this kind of situation, she is pretending by herself, not with others.

As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, it is typically not until the age of three that children’s pretend play becomes social (Göncü, 1998).

Before this stage, they more often pretend on their own, imagining the settings or

creating imaginary playmates. Children at this stage may not be cognitively and linguistically ready to attend to other people's semantic content in speech (Eisenberg and Garvey, 1981; Dunn, 1996). Even when they are together with other children, parallel monologues often appear (see Example 1), showing that their development of social competence is limited.

Example 1

Dora and Sally are in the play area playing with toys.

Dora: 要送免費玩具。

Yao4 song4 mian3fei4 wan2ju4.

"Gonna give out some free toys."

Sally: 這就是桌子。

Zhe4 jiu4 shi4 zhuo1 zi.

"This is the table."

Dora: 免費玩具。

Mian3fei4 wan2ju4.

"Free toys."

Sally: 這是小 baby 桌。

Zhe4 shi4 xiao3 baby zhuo1.

"This is a table for little babies."

Dora: 免費玩具。

Mian3fei4 wan2ju4.

"Free toys."

As children's pretend play becomes more mature, they will start to interact with other people and learn to participate in social pretend play by constructing shared meaning together (Giffin, 1984). As soon as this begins happening, children must learn to communicate and get along with other individuals whose behaviors and expectations often differ from their own. The ability to attend to their partners' speech and behaviors is crucial. Being able to attend to the interlocutor's semantic context

and behaviors means that they can actually listen to what their partners are saying and consider what their actions mean, then produce a logical and efficient response. This is a critical improvement in cognitive and linguistic development which is prerequisite to young children's successful engagement in social pretend play. If they cannot even attend to what their partner is saying to them and produce a proper response, then no shared meaning can ever be constructed, and their opportunities to engage in social pretend play will be limited. Similarly, if they cannot understand what others' behaviors mean, it will be extremely difficult to maintain shared meaning. If the communication is successful, however, the children will make great progress in their development of social competence. Meanwhile, as their play structures become more mature, their cognitive and linguistic skills will also develop to meet standards needed for social activity (Giffin, 1984).

A great deal of research has already been conducted on children's social pretend play with caregivers. In this kind of play, it is not unusual to see the children recreating their experiences via reproduction of their caregivers' behaviors and speech. Singer (1973) suggested that it is important to children's pretend play development to have at least one parent (caregiver) whose speech patterns are available for the children to imitate. The results of the same study showed that children with high fantasy predisposition highly associated themselves with their parents, providing even

more evidence for the role of the modeling effect in children's development of pretend play.

Nevertheless, it must be remembered that children are not limited to simply imitating the speech and actions of adults. Even if scripts are taken from adult culture, children might act out the routines in their own way, based on their own interpretations of the world and the interactions they have observed. The social situation in which children work to get along with peers from differing backgrounds and objectives is very different from interactions between and with adults, who are more socialized and more mature than the children. When adults interact with each other, the exchanges are more sophisticated and socially appropriate than interactions between children. Exchanges between adults are also different from interactions between adults and children, in which adults must be more tolerant of ambiguity in the children's speech, and are also more obligated to retain their composure and control their tempers. Additionally, adults are prone to help solve problems for children (Vygotsky, 1978), whereas interacting with peers gives children opportunities to take on these responsibilities for themselves. They learn how to establish their own rules and make their own judgments. It is not uncommon to observe them recreating acquired scripts with the rules in their own favor, reflecting the propensity of younger children to think in a self-centered way. Since children are less socialized than adults

and are therefore less likely to hide all their “selfish” desires, peer interactions will be carried out very differently from adult interactions, and will sometimes be even more challenging. It is also common for them to create novel scenarios that they have not experienced in real life, such as traveling in space or living in a tree house containing large amounts of ice cream. In these instances, children have an extra need to communicate with each other regarding how to carry out the play because they do not have real situations to follow; they can only express what is happening in their own imaginations. During the process of communicating and socializing with other children, creating a unique group culture is an inevitable outcome. They are also developing their cognitive skills (e.g. symbolic thinking, being aware of possible conflicting desires), linguistic skills (e.g. communicating effectively, learning the traditional definition of words), and social skills (e.g. role-taking, self-regulating, controlling negative emotions) (Singer, 1973).

As stimulating as social pretend play with adults can be, social pretend play with peers may be even more helpful for young children’s development; although it is more challenging, it also gives children more motivation to participate. Previous literature indicates that, compared with children who play socially with peers, children who play with adults are less likely to develop linguistic and social sophistication. This is attributed to the observation that adults oftentimes take the

initiative to solve children's problems for them (Vygotsky, 1978; Pellegrini, 1984, 1985). In this way, opportunities for children to develop social skills through trial and error are taken away. In fact, children's language in pretend play with adults is often more simple than in peer interactions, where their language is relatively more explicit and more narrative-like (Pellegrini and Galda, 1993). Pellegrini and Galda called this "literate language," and indicated that it is correlated with early literacy.

As previously discussed, social pretend play is crucial for children's cognitive, linguistic, and social development. In fact, these three types of development are fundamentally interrelated, and the success of the former two often contribute to the success of the latter. Children's entry into a pretend play proves that they are developing skills to illustrate the concepts in their heads. As discussed above, this ability is known as symbolic thinking, and is developed when children are between two and seven years old. Symbolic thinking is important for children's cognitive development, because it indicates that they can work with an idea that is not grounded in the immediate present. Once children enter social pretend play, which starts around the age of three, opportunities for interacting with peers also become chances for them to improve their symbolic thinking and other cognitive abilities.

The contribution of social pretend play to children's linguistic development is quite significant, because as soon as children enter into social pretend play, they have

to talk about their conflicting desires and expectations. To be able to communicate efficiently, they must develop the ability to attend to other participants' semantic context and then produce a logical and coherent response. This is in fact a very demanding task for young children. However, they are motivated to overcome the challenge because of their desire to be included in a social group. This need to participate in social activity motivates young children to observe, listen and solve problems. During the process, they develop linguistic competence in communicating efficiently within their own social groups. As discussed in Giffin (1984), children's play becomes more social as their ability grows higher, in turn bringing them more opportunities for further development to meet the needs of future play. Novel words or nonsense words have also been observed to be used in young children's pretend play, when the participants create names for characters or events not available in reality. This creative language use helps children to extend their linguistic and cognitive development, and it is also through the processes of attending to partners' semantic context and creating their own words that children create their own language and culture.

Pretend play with peers is especially valuable for developing children's social competence because it provides children with secure surroundings where they can test the scripts they have observed in their daily lives with little at stake. They can monitor

the correlation between their actions and other people's feedback, and through this process become aware other people's varying desires and expectations, thus becoming socialized within their own groups. This is helpful for children's development of self-regulation, such as control of negative emotions (Berk, Mann & Ogan, 2006), as well as role taking, turn taking, and thinking from other perspectives. The increased problem-solving necessary for peer interactions, as opposed to interactions with adults, also contributes to the growth of children's cognitive skills.

2.3 Children's metacommunication in social pretend play

The key to social pretend play is construction of shared meaning, a script that defines the actions, settings, objects and characters in a social pretend play (Giffin, 1984; Göncü, 1998; Howe, Petrakos, Rinaldi & LeFebvre, 2005). As mentioned above, understandings about the shared meaning may vary between the participants according to their own experience. For example, in a doctor-patient play, one child might think that the doctor should be mean but another might assume the doctor should be smiley and caring. Additionally, it is worth remembering that play imagining novel situations that the children have not actually experienced, such as living in a candy house or traveling in outer space, needs to be negotiated in much more detail. Children might also have variant ideas of how a given shared meaning

should proceed. For example, they might disagree on whether or not it is appropriate to bring in a cup of tea when in a doctor's office. The participants involved in the play have to construct and sustain the shared meaning together through discussion and extensive communication about the objects or events they wish to introduce. Then, once the "as if" mode of pretend play is in effect, every little transformation and introduction of objects, event structures, and characters needs to be communicated, understood, and accepted by all the participants in order for the shared meaning to be carried out successfully and cooperatively.

The entire communication process entails talking about how to communicate and act within the shared meaning in play; that is, metacommunicating about the shared meaning. Bateson (1951, p.209) defines metacommunication simply as "communicating about communication," and metacommunication in pretend play is "communication that indicates to others how to interpret and how to respond to events [in play]" (Giffin, 1984, p.74). Giffin (1984) further indicates that pretend play is "essentially a metacommunicative activity" (p.76). Within the shared-meaning constructed together in social pretend play, the participants need to constantly monitor whether the shared-meaning is being carried out as they see fit; if not, they have to redefine it together according to their partners' perspectives and opinions. The ability to see the parts that do not fit and to communicate about them is metacommunication.

To study how children metacommunicate in social pretend play, Giffin induced from her observation of children's natural conversations a system of metacommunication strategies. She approached her participants' speech data in natural conversations without any pre-established categories, cataloguing every utterance to develop a list of seven types of strategies used in children's metacommunication: (1) enactment, (2) ulterior conversation, (3) underscoring, (4) storytelling, (5) prompting, (6) implicit pretend structuring, and (7) overt proposals to pretend. She introduced these categories for the purpose of more effectively comparing different utterances in her study, inducing the seven categories from observations of multiple children in their natural conversation settings. By foregoing the use of any previously established framework, this open-ended approach made it possible to find patterns that would not otherwise have been noticed. Because of this, Giffin's framework of metacommunication strategies has the advantage of presenting a comprehensive system for analyzing the strategies that can be seen in children's metacommunicative pretend play behavior. Therefore, it was used in the present study to examine children's metacommunication in social pretend play.

Of the seven strategies, some are more explicit or implicit than others. Enactment and ulterior conversation are strategies that implicitly send hints to the other participants by acting out the play directly. By acting out the scenario as she or he

wishes it to proceed, the child is implicitly communicating to others an understanding of the shared meaning, while instructing the others in how they are expected to react.

Underscoring, storytelling and implicit pretend structuring are strategies used more explicitly than enactment and ulterior conversation. Participants using these strategies spell out their desires in words to clarify their actions and intentions in case the others do not understand. However, they are still not the most explicit metacommunication strategies, because they operate under the restrictions of the shared meaning.

Prompting and overt proposals to pretend are the strategies used most explicitly to communicate to others how their users want to construct the shared meaning, and operate by means of briefly leaving the shared meaning and making direct suggestions about what to pretend.

Qiu (2007) used Giffin's framework of metacommunication strategies to study the developmental trend of young children's social pretend play with their caregivers. She found that a two-year-old and a four-year-old would choose different strategies to initiate social pretend play. The older child could also maintain the pretend play more effectively than could the younger, and the older child's social pretend play was found to be more complete than that of the younger.

However, to understand children's development of social competence, it is children's social pretend play with peers that most needs to be examined, since the

previously mentioned issue of adults solving problems for the children otherwise makes it more difficult to observe what children actually do or do not understand (Vygotsky, 1978; Pellegrini, 1984, 1985). In other words, studying children's peer interaction makes it easier to get a complete picture of their cognitive, linguistic and social competence.

The purpose of the present study was to examine the metacommunication strategies used in children's social pretend play with peers. Analysis of the data was conducted using Giffin's framework of metacommunication strategies, applied for the purpose of examining children's social pretend play with peers in the language setting of Taiwan Mandarin. The research questions are presented as follows.

- 1) What are the metacommunication strategies used in children's social pretend play with peers?
- 2) When children want to construct shared meaning, which metacommunication strategy leads to a higher success rate for shared meaning construction?

Chapter III

Methodology

3.1 Participants

There were two participants in this study, both of whom were female. The participants were referred to as Dora and Sally, and they were four and five years old respectively. The reason for choosing children at the ages of four and five had its basis in the previous literature, according to which children's pretend play starts from the age of 18 months (Singer, 1973) but does not acquire social properties until the age of three (Göncü, 1998). Thus a four-year-old and a five-year-old were chosen as participants in order to ensure that there would be plenty of social pretend play for observation. The two participants were first cousins, and attended the same day-care center in Taipei, Taiwan, where they were taught mathematics, English, and music on a daily basis. Their first language was Taiwan Mandarin. They sometimes spoke Taiwanese Southern Min at home, and also spoke a bit of English at the day-care center. Their usual break time activity involved playing with toys together.

3.2 Settings

The participants' natural conversations were recorded when they were playing

with toys in the day-care center's play area during their break time between classes. No solicitation or activities were designed or necessary in order for them to begin social pretend play, because engaging in social pretend play with toys was their usual routine during the break. A digital video camera was set up at the corner of the room, and the researcher sat adjacent to the device. The participants were aware of the camera's presence, but seldom appeared to take notice of it. Their behaviors did not seem to be affected by the presence of the recording device. They sometimes would speak to the researcher, but the researcher only responded with passive replies carrying minimal information. Sometimes, the recordings captured interference from other people, such as the participants' teachers or other classmates. This interference appeared not to affect the children's social pretend play. Whenever the social pretend play was interfered with or interrupted, the participants would leave the play briefly, then promptly resume the play again once the interference ended. Three recording sessions were conducted. The first lasted for 60 minutes, the second for about 41 minutes, and the third for about 53 minutes.

3.3 Coding

The three sessions of the recordings were transcribed into the CHILDES format (see Appendix II)³. In this study, Giffin's framework (1984) of metacommunication

³ The speech data was transcribed by the assistants of the Child Language Acquisition Lab of the Graduate Institute of Linguistics affiliated with National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan. The researcher of this study is one of the assistants.

strategies was applied to examine how children metacommunicate to construct and develop shared meaning in social pretend play. There were eight categories used in the framework for this study, including Giffin's seven categories and one added in the present study, simple acceptance. These categories are presented below and illustrated with data from the present study. The strategy of storytelling was not found in the current data, so the corresponding example for that category was taken from Giffin (1984).

Enactment (ENA):

Participants in play implicitly enact a previously established shared meaning or a cultural tradition understood by both participants. In sequences of enactment, the participants do not add new elements into the shared meaning previously proposed.

Example 2

Sally and Dora have previously established themselves in the roles of older sister and younger sister in the play.

Sally: 跟姐姐來吧。 [Enactment]

Gen1 jie3jie lai2 ba.

“Follow your older sister (Sally).”

Dora: 姐姐姐姐 +... [Enactment]

Jie3jie jie3jie +...

“Older sister, older sister ...”

In this sequence, Sally's utterance was acting out the previously established shared meaning in which she played the role of an older sister. Playing along with Sally, Dora was calling Sally “older sister.” Neither of the participants introduced any

new elements (e.g. characters, objects, actions or settings) into the play in this sequence. They were simply acting out the established shared meaning. This kind of speech was coded as enactment.

Ulterior conversation (ULT):

Ulterior conversation can be thought of as performance of the shared meaning with new elements added into the play in a supportive way. This strategy can be carried out by asking questions or reporting one's actions while implicitly eliciting a response (Example 3); by reporting warning or foretelling events in the future (Example 4); or by directly naming the objects (Example 5) or the partner for some role.

Example 3

Sally is preparing to deliver the meal she has made to the teacher.

Sally: 我要去送囉。 [Ulterior Conversation]

Wo3 yao4 qu4 song4 luo.

"I'm going to serve it."

Dora: 好。

Hao3.

"Okay."

When Sally says "I'm going to serve it," she is reporting her action to Dora, and with the use of "luo," a particle that warns the listener to take note, she is implicitly eliciting a confirmation from Dora. Pragmatically, the particle "luo" in Mandarin implies that a response is expected from the listener. Therefore, this kind of utterance was coded as ulterior conversation.

Example 4

Sally has just come back from serving the meal to the teacher.

Sally: 妞 [=Dora] 快點我們要下班了。 [Uterior Conversation]

Niu1 [=Dora] kuai4dian3 wo3men2 yao4 xia4ban1 le.

“Quickly, Niu (nickname for Dora), we’re going to get off work soon.”

Dora: 還沒要下班 # 十二點半不准下班。

Hai2mei2 yao4 xia4ban1 # shi2er4dian3 ban4 bu4 zhun3 xia4ban1.

“It’s not time to get off work yet. We can’t get off work at half past twelve.”

What Sally says in this example shows her wish to introduce an action, “getting off work,” into the shared meaning. With this utterance, Sally reports an event implying a change she wishes to occur in the future of the shared meaning. Use of this kind of implication was categorized as ulterior conversation.

Example 5

Sally has found a toy on the table.

Sally: 這是水晶架對不對? [Uterior Conversation]

Zhe4 shi4 shui3jing1jia4 dui4 bu2 dui4?

“This is a crystal shelf, right?”

Dora: 嗯 # 水晶架。

En1 # shui3jing1jia4.

“Yeah, a crystal shelf.”

Right after Sally picked up the toy from the table, she directly indicated that the object was to be considered “a crystal shelf.” This type of direct naming of an object was also coded as ulterior conversation.

Underscoring (UND):

When children describe an action verbally while performing it, this is called underscoring (e.g. saying “I’m crying” when they are performing the action of pretending to cry). This is often similar to a monologue and not appropriate

within the play script (i.e. a sad, crying person would not say “I’m crying” in the real world), but is sometimes used regardless. This strategy provides children a way to clarify their actions to their play partners.

Example 6

Sally is standing up while holding the toy meal she and Dora have made.

Sally: 我來送餐。 [Underscoring]

Wo3 lai2 song4 can1.

“I’m bringing a meal.”

Dora: 對。

Dui4.

“Yes.”

When Sally acted out serving a meal to the teacher, she also uttered her action aloud, resulting in an instance of underscoring.

Storytelling (STY):

When children use a sing-song way of talking or produce several phrases connected together in a narrative style using the past tense, this would be coded as storytelling. The following example is abstracted from Giffin’s 1984 study.

Example 7

“Kathy uses the cadence when she attempts to establish the following situation: ‘pretend I was crying at the wedding place because you...you guys yelled at me.’”

In this example, one of Giffin’s participants, Kathy, tried to construct shared meaning with her peers via a narrative, which was spoken in past tense as if she was telling a story.

Prompting (PRO):

This strategy is used when children leave the pretend play to negotiate, clarify meaning, or give directions outside of the play. It is characterized by its short duration of time, and is usually related to the actions currently under way.

Sometimes it leads to further pretense-exposing discussions or conflicts.

Example 8

Sally and Dora have just established that Dora is going to be a little sister sitting in the chair at the other end of the room, and Sally is going to bring her a meal. Dora is putting on her shoes to walk to the chair.

- Sally: 我會做蛋糕給你吃。
Wo3 hui4 zuo4 dan4gao1 gei3 ni3 chi1.
“I will make cakes for you to eat.”
- Dora: 還沒開始喔。 [Prompting]
Hai2 mei2 kai1shi3 o.
“It (the pretend play) has not started yet.”
- Sally: 我知道 # 我會等你 # 弄完鞋子。 [Prompting]
Wo3 zhi1dao4 # wo3 hui4 deng3 ni3 # nong4wan2 xie2zi.
“I know. I’ll wait for you to finish dealing with your shoes.”
- [Pausing for a few seconds]
- Sally: 再重來一次吧。 [Prompting]
Zai4 chong2lai2 yi2 ci4 ba.
“Let’s start over again.”
- Dora: 0 [% running to the chair and sitting down].
- Dora: 我點的餐怎麼還沒來啊？
Wo3 dian3 de can1 zen3me hai2mei2 lai2 a?
“Why isn’t the meal I ordered here yet?”

In this example, it can be seen that Dora departed from the pretend play briefly to indicate to Sally that she was not yet ready to enact the shared meaning. She left the pretend play completely and said that the pretense had not started yet. Sally responded by indicating that she was in an agreement. After a few seconds, Sally initiated the shared meaning over again. When the participants left the pretense briefly as

presented in this example, it was coded as prompting.

Implicit pretend structuring (IMP):

Implicit pretend structuring involves communicating about the actions and communication in the play, but without verbally exposing the pretense.

Participants draw their arguments and reasons from within the shared meaning, despite the communication itself being inappropriate to the shared meaning.

Example 9

Sally and Dora have been talking about going on a picnic, but Sally begins to talk about roller-skating.

Sally: 妹妹要不要來溜冰？好無聊。

Mei4mei yao4bu2yao4 lai2 liu1bing1? Hao3 wu2liao.

“Sister, do you want to come roller skating? So boring/bored.”

Dora: 我們不是要去野餐嗎？ [Implicit Pretend Structuring]

Wo3men2 bu2 shi4 yao4 qu4 ye3can1 ma?

“Weren’t we going to have a picnic?”

Sally: 可是 # 這邊有溜冰場啊。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]

Ke2shi4 # zhe4bian1 you3 liu1bing1chang3 a.

“But...we have an roller skating rink here.”

In this sequence, when Sally wanted to introduce a new action, roller skating, into the pre-established shared meaning involving going on a picnic, Dora expressed reservations. However, Sally drew her justification from within the shared meaning of the picnic and explained that there was a skating rink at the picnic site. When doing so, she did not expose the pretense, but rather tried to redefine the shared meaning while still working within the boundaries its internal restrictions.

Overt proposals to pretend (OVP:)

This strategy occurs when the participants expose the pretense or when they explicitly say “Let’s pretend...”

Example 10

Dora: 欸 # 對了 # 我 # 我當 # 小妹妹好不好? [Prompting/Overt Proposal]

Ei4 # dui4 le # wo3 # wo3 dang1 # xiao3 mei4mei hao3 bu4 hao3
“Hey, by the way, can I be a little sister?”

Sally: 好。 [Simple Acceptance]

Hao3
“Okay.”

When Dora asked “Can I be...,” she exposed the pretense and stated that what she was going to do was just pretend.

In addition to the seven categories presented above, simple acceptance (ACC) was added as an eighth strategy, because it was observed to play an important role in shared meaning construction in the data collected. The dialogue presented in Example 10 provides illustrates the usage of simple acceptance.

3.4 Data Analysis

The three recordings were completely transcribed into the CHILDES format.

After data collection and transcription was complete, social pretend play involving only the two selected participants was identified. The percentage of social and non-social pretend play was calculated, and any interaction involving people other than the two participants was removed from consideration.

Every utterance by each participant within the selected sessions of social pretend

play was coded for metacommunication strategies, as all were believed to be relevant to constructing shared meaning in the play. Each utterance was either related to metacommunicating to build up a shared meaning, or to further developing and participating in an established one. A single utterance was sometimes coded for more than one strategy. When there were two or more strategies used in one utterance, each strategy would be counted once. For example, in one utterance where prompting and ulterior conversation were used, both strategies would be counted once.

After determining what strategies children used in the social pretend play and how they used them, the success rate of each strategy for constructing shared meaning was examined. Shared meaning construction involves changes in characters, objects or settings, so all utterances involved in making these types of changes were examined. Utterances not involving character, object or setting changes were not included in data analysis for the second research question. An utterance would be coded as successful if the participant who produced the utterance achieved what she wanted. For example, if Dora said “Give me that toy” to Sally, and she afterwards actually obtained possession of the toy, the strategy coded for the utterance “Give me that toy” would be recorded as successful in that instance. There were cases when a participant’s utterance did not receive a response. In these cases, the context of the utterance would be taken into consideration. If the element intended to be introduced

was later included in the play, the strategy was considered to have been successful. If the element intended to be introduced made no appearance later in the play, then the utterance was considered not to have been successful.

There were cases in which the audio quality of the recordings was low, and the utterances of the participants could not be identified and transcribed. In these cases, it was not possible to include the unclear speech data for analysis.



Chapter IV

Results

4.1 General results

There were three recordings and the total duration of the recordings was two hours, 33 minutes, and 55 seconds. All interactions involving teachers or other individuals were eliminated to avoid any possible outside influence on the participants' speech and behavior. All remaining data involved only interactions in social pretend play between Sally and Dora. Every utterance within the social pretend play was coded for at least one metacommunication strategy. Most of the utterances involved changes in characters, objects or settings. Those utterances that did not involve changes were coded as enactment, the strategy which simply entails carrying out the shared meaning without any new elements added. Sometimes, a single utterance was coded for more than one strategy.

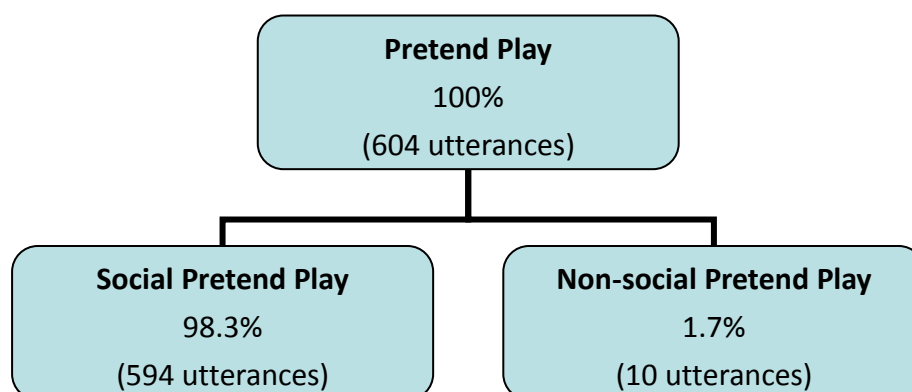


Figure 4.1 Percentage of pretend play which was social versus non-social

Pretend play can be social or non-social. It is considered to be social when there is a shared meaning between the participants in the pretend play. Play is considered to be non-social when the participants do not have shared meaning with others and are pretending on their own. As Figure 4.1 shows, the vast majority of pretend play in which this study's participants engaged was social. Out of the total of 604 utterances in the pretend play involving interactions between two participants, 594 (98.3%) of the utterances were identified as being social.

It was observed that the shared meaning was constantly being constructed and reconstructed by the two participants. Once constructed, shared meaning could be further developed by the addition of more characters or objects by the participants. It was observed that the changes from one shared meaning to another were rather gradual. It can be said that each shared meaning transitioned gradually into the next, with all meanings in each recording being interrelated.

Neither of the participants strongly resisted changes to the established shared meanings, but were generally rather flexible. The same appeared to be the case when further developing established the shared meanings. They were flexible about bringing and accepting new elements into the established shared meaning

Metacommunication was an on-going process within the social pretend play.

This was related to the participants creating novel scenarios in which the shared meaning had to be communicated between the participants because there were no scripts readily available for them to refer to from reality. This finding supported Giffin's (1984) results. Each utterance within the social pretend play displayed at least one metacommunication strategy, and as Giffin (1984) stated, metacommunication is one of the key features of social pretend play. Example 11 serves as an illustration of the participants' typical ongoing metacommunication during social pretend play.

Example 11

- Sally: 你先回家。 [Ulterior Conversation]
 Ni3 xian1 hui2jia1.
 “You go home first.”
- Dora: 好 # 我先回家囉。 [Enactment]
 Hao3 # wo3 xian1 hui2jia1 luo.
 “Okay...I'm going home first.”
- Sally: 快啦! [Prompting]
 Kuai4 la.
 “Quickly!”
- Dora: 欸 # 對了 # 我 # 我當 # 小妹妹好不好? [Prompting/Overt Proposal]
 Ei4 # dui4 le # wo3 # wo3 dang1 # xiao3 mei4mei4 hao3 bu4 hao3.
 “Hey, by the way, can I be a little sister?”
- Sally: 好。 [Simple Acceptance]
 Hao3.
 “Okay.”
- Sally: 然後 # 坐在雨傘旁邊。 [Prompting]
 Ran2hou4 # zuo4 zai4 yu3san3 pang2bian1.
 “Then...sit next to the umbrellas.”
- Sally: 我會做蛋糕給你吃。 [Prompting/Ulterior Conversation]
 Wo3 hui4 zuo4 dan4gao1 gei3 ni3 chi1.
 “I'll make some cake for you to eat.”

Before Sally told Dora to “go home,” they were making a cake together. Wishing to

alter the event, Sally suggested to Dora another event by saying “You go home first,” which was then accepted by Dora and acted out accordingly. Therefore, instead of Sally and Dora making a cake together, now Dora had to “go home” and the shared meaning was changed to Sally making a cake for Dora while the latter was at home. Within the newly altered shared meaning, Dora suggested right away to change her character to a little sister, a request which was subsequently accepted by Sally. Right after Sally agreed to Dora’s introduction of her new role (i.e a little sister), the former suggested an event structure for how they would carry out the new shared meaning involving Sally making a cake for Dora, who was a little sister. She told Dora where to sit and what to expect next. In this example, it can be seen that metacommunication was used both for changing the shared meaning and for introducing new elements (e.g. characters and actions). This is representative of the typical metacommunication in progress during the participants’ social pretend play, a continuous process in which both parties monitored and adjusted for each other. Or as Giffin described it in her 1984 study, the participants were continuously “indicat[ing] to others how to interpret and how to respond to events [in play]” (Giffin, 1984, p.74).

4.2 Metacommunication strategies used in social pretend play

There were a large variety of metacommunication strategies identified in the social pretend play, because the metacommunication was on-going during the entire

period of each play. All the metacommunication strategies included in the coding model used by this study showed up in the data, with the exception of storytelling.

Figure 4.2 shows the number of times each strategy was used by each participant in the social pretend play.

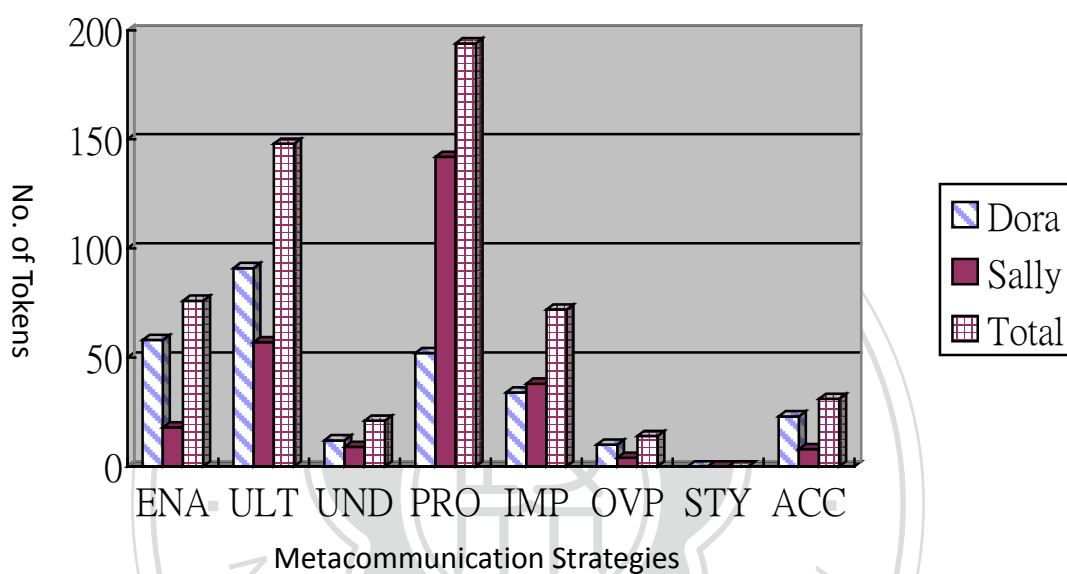


Figure 4.2 Metacommunication strategies used in social pretend play⁴

The data shown in Figure 4.2 indicates that prompting was the most frequently used metacommunication strategy during social pretend play, followed by ulterior conversation, enactment, and implicit pretend structuring. Sally's most frequently employed strategy was prompting, followed by ulterior conversation, implicit pretend structuring and enactment, while Dora's most frequently used strategy was ulterior conversation, with enactment coming in second, prompting third, and implicit pretend structuring fourth.

⁴ ENA: enactment, ULT: ulterior conversation, UND: underscoring, PRO: prompting, IMP: implicit pretend structuring, STY: storytelling, OVP: overt proposal to pretend, ACC: simple acceptance

Prompting, the most frequently used strategy overall, was used when the participants left the pretense briefly to clarify their understanding or expectations of the shared meaning, including communicating about the transformations of the objects or how exactly they expected each other to carry out the shared meaning. The previously mentioned Example 8 is a classic illustration of prompting used as a strategy for communicating the participants' understandings and expectations in the social pretend play. The example is reproduced here for reference, and followed with a more detailed explanation.

Example 12 (Example 8)

Sally and Dora have just established that Dora is going to be a little sister sitting in the chair at the other end of the room, and Sally is going to bring her a meal. Dora is putting on her shoes to walk to the chair.

- Sally: 我會做蛋糕給你吃。
 Wo3 hui4 zuo4 dan4gao1 gei3 ni3 chi1.
 “I will make cakes for you to eat.”
- Dora: 還沒開始喔。 [Prompting]
 Hai2 mei2 kai1shi3 o.
 “It (the pretend play) has not started yet.”
- Sally: 我知道 # 我會等你 # 弄完鞋子。 [Prompting]
 Wo3 zhi1dao4 # wo3 hui4 deng3 ni3 # nong4wan2 xie2zi.
 “I know. I’ll wait for you to finish dealing with your shoes.”
- [Pausing for a few seconds]
- Sally: 再重來一次吧。 [Prompting]
 Zai4 chong2lai2 yi2 ci4 ba.
 “Let’s start over again.”
- Dora: 0 [% running to the chair and sitting down].
- Dora: 我點的餐怎麼還沒來啊？
 Wo3 dian3 de can1 zen3me hai2mei2 lai2 a?
 “Why isn’t the meal I ordered here yet?”

The pre-established shared meaning in Example 12 was that Sally was making a meal

for Dora, who was a little sister waiting at home. When the shared meaning was first established, Sally used ulterior conversation to tell Dora that she was going to make a cake for her. Sally assigned herself the role of making a cake, and also reported an event that she wanted to happen in the future in the play. Dora interrupted Sally, saying that the shared meaning had not started yet, at the same time leaving the pretend play to communicate explicitly (prompting). Sally addressed Dora's utterance, using the same strategy, explaining to Dora that she already knew when to initiate the scenario. After a brief pause, Sally used prompting to tell Dora to start enacting the pre-established shared meaning, and Dora showed her acceptance through the strategy of enactment, directly acting out the shared meaning.

From Figure 4.2, it can be seen that Sally used considerably more prompting than did Dora. In the speech data, it was observed that Sally often ordered Dora around, and she often used prompting to do that. It is also apparent from the figure that Sally used the strategy of prompting much more than she used the other strategies. In other words, Sally exhibited a preference for using prompting to metacommunicate her expectations with Dora. Dora's behavior did not show this preference; her choice of metacommunication strategies was relatively more evenly distributed.

Ulterior conversation, the second most used strategy, was employed when the participants wanted to introduce new elements into the pre-established shared

meaning (see Examples 13 and 14).

Example 13

Sally: 啊我們要去野餐喔? [Ulterior Conversation]

A wo3men2 yao4 qu4 ye3can1 o?

“Ah, are we going on a picnic?”

Dora: 對。 [Simple Acceptance]

Dui4.

“Yeah.”

Example 14

Dora: 你看 # 結婚蛋糕。 [Ulterior Conversation]

Ni3 kan4 # jie2hun1 dan4gao1.

“Look, a wedding cake.”

Sally: 好。 [Simple Acceptance]

Hao3.

“Okay.”

Sally: 好結婚蛋糕收好。 [Simple Acceptance/Enactment]

Hao3 jie2hun1 dan4gao1 shou1 hao3.

“Okay, put away the wedding cake.”

Before Sally said “Ah, are we going on a picnic?” in Example 13, Dora and Sally had established the shared meaning of “Sally making a cake for Dora.” Then Sally used ulterior conversation, asking a question that implicitly needed an answer, in order to suggest the new setting and action of “going on a picnic,” and was subsequently accepted by Dora. Therefore, a new element was successfully brought in and the previous shared meaning was developed into a new one. In Example 14, Dora introduced the new element of “a wedding cake” into the shared meaning by using ulterior conversation, directly naming the object in her hand “a wedding cake.” This strategy was also used by Sally in the same manner and for the same purpose.

Dora used significantly more ulterior conversation than did Sally, but the intention

when using this strategy appeared to be the same for both participants.

The use of ulterior conversation often led to a successful change in the shared meaning as per the above examples. However, there was one instance in which Sally failed to change the shared meaning when using ulterior conversation.

Example 15

- Sally: 妞 [=Dora] 快點我們要下班了。 [Ulterior Conversation]
 Niu1 [=Dora] kuai4dian3 wo3men2 yao4 xia4ban1 le.
 “Quickly, Niu (nickname for Dora), we’re going to get off work soon.”
- Dora: 還沒要下班 # 十二點半不准下班。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Hai2mei2 yao4 xia4ban1 [pause] shi2er4 dian3 ban4 bu4 zhun3
 xia4ban1.
 “It’s not time to get off work yet. We can’t get off work at half past twelve.”
- Sally: 我是 # 那個 # 班[si]那個 # 不是那個啦 # 是那個 # 那邊的 #
 那個 # 開店的人。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Wo3 shi4 # na4ge # ban1 [si] na4ge # bu2 shi4 na4ge la # shi4 na4ge #
 na4bian1 de # na4ge # kai1 dian4 de ren2.
 “I’m, um, class, um, no, not that...it’s that, over there, that...shop owner.”
- Sally: 所以我來規定。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Suo3 yi3 wo3 lai2 gui1 ding4.
 “So I make the rules.”
- Sally: 再一分鐘。 [Ulterior Conversation]
 Zai4 yi1 fen1zhong1.
 “One more minute.”
- Dora: 我是同學。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Wo3 shi4 tong2xue2.
 “I’m the classmate.”
- Dora: 所以我要 +... [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Suo3yi3 wo3 yao4 +...
 “So I want...”
- Sally: 快兩 +...
 Kuai4 liang3 +...
 “Almost two...”

- Sally: 快二 # 二 xxx。
 Kuai4 er4 # er4 xxx.
 “Almost two...two.”
- Sally: 兩點喔。 [Ulterior Conversation]
 Liang3 dian3 o.
 “Two o’clock.”
- Dora: 兩點也不准下班。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Liang3 dian3 ye3 bu4 zhun3 xia4 ban1.
 “Can’t get off work even if it’s two o’clock.”
- Sally: 可以。
 Ke3yi3.
 “We can.”
- Sally: 那等一下等媽咪來 # 啊你又不要回去囉？
 Na4 deng3 yi2xia4 deng3 ma1mi1 lai2 # a1 ni3 you4 bu2 yao4 hui2
 qu4 luo?
 “Then later our mom comes, and again you don’t want to go back?”

In this example, Sally wanted to alter the shared meaning by adding a new action, “getting off work,” using ulterior conversation by foretelling a desired future event. However, after the end of this sequence, Dora and Sally still continued carrying out the shared meaning “making and serving meals.” In other words, Sally’s use of ulterior conversation did not successfully change the shared meaning to “getting off work.”

Enactment was the third most used metacommunication strategy in the participants’ social pretend play. Dora used significantly more enactment than did Sally. It was observed that Dora often used enactment to carry out Sally’s suggestions, usually brought into the social pretend play by the use of prompting and ulterior conversation. Example 16, showing the continuation of the conversation from

Example 15, illustrates this pattern.

Example 16

- Sally: 再重來一次吧。 [Prompting]
 Zai4 chong2lai2 yi2 ci4 ba.
 “Let’s start over again.”
- Dora: 0 [% running to the chair and sitting down].
- Dora: 我點的餐怎麼還沒來啊？ [Enactment]
 Wo3 dian3 de can1 zen3me hai2mei2 lai2 a?
 “Why isn’t the meal I ordered here yet?”
- Sally: 那你要說 # 我的餐怎麼還沒來啊。 [Prompting]
 Na4 ni3 yao4 shuo1 # wo3 de can1 zen3me hai2mei2 lai2 a.
 “Then you should say # why isn’t my meal here yet.”
- Dora: 我已經說了。 [Prompting]
 Wo3 yi3 jing1 shuo1 le.
 “I have already said it.”
- Sally: 那你要說很多遍啊。 [Prompting]
 Na4 ni3 yao4 shuo1 hen3 duo1 bian4 a.
 “Then you should say it more times.”
- Dora: 我點的餐怎麼還 # 沒送來啊。 [Enactment]
 Wo3 dian3 de can1 zen3me hai2 # mei2 song4 lai2 a.
 “Why hasn’t the meal I ordered been served yet?”
- Dora: 我點的餐怎麼還 # 沒送來啊。 [Enactment]
 Wo3 dian3 de can1 zen3me hai2 # mei2 song4 lai2 a.
 “Why hasn’t the meal I ordered been served yet?”
- Dora: 我點的餐怎麼還 # 沒送來啊。 [Enactment]
 Wo3 dian3 de can1 zen3me hai2 # mei2 song4 lai2 a.
 “Why hasn’t the meal I ordered been served yet?”

In this example, the shared meaning involved Sally making a cake for Dora. Even though making cakes and ordering food are situations that are possible to encounter in real life, this specific shared meaning was apparently not a situation in which the participants had real world experience. Therefore, they both had their own ideas of how to carry out the shared meaning. When Sally told Dora to initiate the scenario,

Dora immediately began to enact the shared meaning based on her own understanding, which included her asking “why isn’t my meal here yet?” This utterance did not introduce any new element or transformations into the play – it simply acted out the shared meaning based on Dora’s understanding of and expectations for the imagined situation. By doing this, Dora used enactment to accept Sally’s suggestion of restarting the shared meaning. When Sally told Dora to say “why isn’t my meal here yet” more times, Dora accepted the suggestion by enacting it right away.

Implicit pretend structuring was the fourth most used metacommunication strategy in the children’s social pretend play. The strategy was often used by the participants to talk through the discrepancies between their understandings and expectations within the restrictions of what was considered appropriate within the shared meaning. This strategy was often found to be used when there was extensive conversation about their differing ideas regarding the shared meaning. Sally and Dora contributed to equal amounts of its total usage in the speech data. From their usage of implicit pretend structuring, showing differing expectations of the same shared meaning, the incompleteness of their social and linguistic development would often be exposed. To illustrate this idea, the data from Example 15 is presented again here.

Example 17 (Example 15)

Sally: 妞 [=Dora] 快點我們要下班了。 [Ulterior Conversation]

Niu1 [=Dora] kuai4dian3 wo3men2 yao4 xia4ban1 le.

“Quickly, Niu (nickname for Dora), we’re going to get off work soon.”

- Dora: 還沒要下班 # 十二點半不准下班。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Hai2mei2 yao4 xia4ban1 [pause] shi2er4 dian3 ban4 bu4 zhun3
 xia4ban1.
 “It’s not time to get off work yet. We can’t get off work at half past twelve.”
- Sally: 我是 # 那個 # 班[si]那個 # 不是那個啦 # 是那個 # 那邊的 #
 那個 # 開店的人。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Wo3 shi4 # na4ge # ban1 [si] na4ge # bu2 shi4 na4ge la # shi4 na4ge #
 na4bian1 de # na4ge # kai1 dian4 de ren2.
 “I’m, um, class, um, no, not that...it’s that, over there, that...shop
 owner.”
- Sally: 所以我來規定。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Suo3 yi3 wo3 lai2 gui1 ding4.
 “So I make the rules.”
- Sally: 再一分鐘。 [Ulterior Conversation]
 Zai4 yi1 fen1zhong1.
 “One more minute.”
- Dora: 我是同學。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Wo3 shi4 tong2xue2.
 “I’m the classmate.”
- Dora: 所以我要 +... [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Suo3yi3 wo3 yao4 +...
 “So I want...”
- Sally: 快兩 +...
 Kuai4 liang3 +...
 “Almost two...”
- Sally: 快二 # 二 xxx。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Kuai4 er4 # er4 xxx.
 “Almost two...two.”
- Sally: 兩點喔。 [Ulterior Conversation]
 Liang3 dian3 o.
 “Two o’clock.”
- Dora: 兩點也不准下班。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Liang3 dian3 ye3 bu4 zhun3 xia4 ban1.
 “Can’t get off work even if it’s two o’clock.”
- Sally: 可以。
 Ke3yi3.
 “We can.”

Sally: 那等一下等媽咪來 # 啊你又不要回去囉?
 Na4 deng3 yi2xia4 deng3 ma1mi1 lai2 # a1 ni3 you4 bu2 yao4 hui2
 qu4 luo?
 “Then later our mom comes, and again you don’t want to go back?”

In Example 17 above, Sally and Dora used implicit pretend structuring to try to convince each other to carry out the shared meaning in each one’s preferred way. First, Dora used the “time issue” (twelve thirty) to reject the idea of “getting off work” proposed by Sally. Subsequently, Sally used the “character issue” to counter Dora, saying that she was the boss of the restaurant, so she had the power to decide. Interestingly, Sally could be seen struggling to come up with the “right” character. This suggested that she had a sense of which character was suitable for which situation, but did not quite have the linguistic item ready for speech. In contrast, Dora was apparently not competent in this technique. She tried to copy Sally’s strategy of choosing a character of an authority figure in order to get what she wanted, but she chose “classmate,” which was not considered an authority figure capable of making final decisions in the pre-established shared meaning “making and serving meals.” However, her objection using the “time issue” in the beginning was still a successful move, because it countered Sally’s proposal of the shared meaning change. Toward the end of the conversation in this extract, the intention of Sally’s last utterance was unclear. It seemed as if she was trying to criticize Dora’s behavior in the social pretend play (i.e. not wanting to get off work) by using an example from some real

experience in which Dora had not wanted to go home. This utterance was ignored by Dora, and they did not carry out the suggested action of “getting off work.” They continued with the shared meaning “making and serving meals.”

Finally, the importance of simple acceptance should not be underestimated. It is the most uncomplicated and direct way for a new element to be introduced or a pre-established shared meaning to be changed. Example 14 (reproduced here as Example 18) illustrates an instance of simple acceptance contributing to the success of introducing new elements into the pre-established shared meaning.

Example 18 (Example 14)

- Dora: 你看 # 結婚蛋糕。 [Uterior Conversation]
 Ni3 kan4 # jie2hun1 dan4gao1.
 “Look, a wedding cake.”
- Sally: 好。 [Simple Acceptance]
 Hao3.
 “Okay.”
- Sally: 好結婚蛋糕收好。 [Simple Acceptance/Enactment]
 Hao3 jie2hun1 dan4gao1 shou1 hao3.
 “Okay, put away the wedding cake.”

In Example 18, Dora was trying to introduce a new element, “a wedding cake,” into the shared meaning using ulterior conversation, by directly naming the object in her hand as a wedding cake. The integration of Dora’s suggestion followed immediately because of Sally’s simple acceptance. Dora was also observed to use simple acceptance to facilitate the shared meaning in the same way, as shown in Example 19.

Example 19

- Sally: 老師今天生日所以我們要做蛋糕給她。 [Uterior Conversation]

Lao3shi1 jin1tian1 sheng1ri4 suo3yi3 wo3men yao4 zuo4 dan4gao1
gei3 ta1.

“The teacher’s birthday is today, so we’re going to make a cake for her.”

Dora: 對 # 做蛋糕。 [Simple Acceptance/Enactment]

Dui4 # zuo4 dan4gao1.

“Yeah, make a cake.”

In Example 19, the success of Sally’s use of ulterior conversation to change the shared meaning can be attributed to the simple acceptance employed by Dora. Before the conversation in this example, Sally and Dora had the shared meaning “making meals and serving them to their teacher.” However, in the middle of making a meal for the teacher, Sally suggested that they change the shared meaning to making a cake for their teacher’s birthday, a change which was approved by Dora’s use of simple acceptance, and subsequently enacted first by Dora and then by Sally as well.

The data showed that the participants sometimes used more than one strategy even within a single utterance. Example 20 (again reproduced from Example 14) illustrates one of these situations.

Example 20

Dora: 你看 # 結婚蛋糕。 [Uterior Conversation]

Ni3 kan4 # jie2hun1 dan4gao1.

“Look, a wedding cake.”

Sally: 好。 [Simple Acceptance]

Hao3.

“Okay.”

Sally: 好結婚蛋糕收好。 [Simple Acceptance/Enactment]

Hao3 jie2hun1 dan4gao1 shou1 hao3.

“Okay, put away the wedding cake.”

In Sally's second utterance in this example, she repeated her strategy of simple acceptance and followed it with enactment, acting out the new element that Dora had just introduced into the pre-established meaning involving a wedding cake. Use of more than one strategy within a single utterance was not uncommon in the speech data collected.

It was also observed that both participants sometimes changed their strategies when their first try did not work out the way they wanted. Changing the strategies sometimes led to the introduction of new elements or to successful changes in the shared meaning (see Example 21).

Example 21

- Dora: 我拿到的這個是 # 水餃皮。 [Ulterior Conversation]
 Wo3 na2 dao4 de zhe4ge shi4 # shui3jiao3 pi2.
 "What I have here is dumpling wrappings."
- Sally: 欸不行拿那張 # 的東西。 [Prompting]
 ei4 bu4xing2 na2 na4 zhang1 # de dong1xi1
 "Hey, you can't take that piece...of the thing."
- Sally: 不然等一下我們會搶。 [Prompting]
 Bu4ran2 deng3yi2xia4 wo3men hui4 qiang3.
 "Otherwise, we would argue over it in a little bit."
- Dora: 欸?
 Ei2?
 "Huh?"
- Dora: xxx 啊。
 xxx a.
 "xxx ah."
- Dora: 有兩個黃的啊。 [Prompting]
 You3 liang3 ge huang2 de a.
 "There are two yellow ones."

Sally: 這不需要因為這是我們的那個 # 家的那個菜 x 的。

[Implicit Pretend Structuring]

Zhe bu4 xu1yao4 yin1wei4 zhe4shi4 wo3men2 de na4ge # jia1 de
na4ge cai4 x de.

“We don’t need this, because this is our, um, family’s food/vegetables.”

In this example, Sally at first used prompting to reject Dora’s intention to bring in the new object (e.g. dumpling wrappings). However, after realizing that Dora had responded and the result was not what she wanted (the introduction of the new object was rejected), Sally switched to implicit pretend structuring. She drew her reasons from within the pre-established shared meaning (making a meal), saying that they did not need the dumpling wrappings because of some reason related to the vegetables or food at home. In the end, the change of strategy worked in the way Sally desired: the dumpling wrappings did not come to be integrated into the pre-established shared meaning.

4.3 Success and Failure of Metacommunication Strategies

Figure 4.3 shows the success and failure rates of each metacommunication strategy in the data – a success rate of 100 percent indicates that the strategy was successful every time it was used. Enactment had success and failure rates of zero percent because it was never used to attempt changes to objects, actions, settings or characters. Storytelling was not observed to be used by either participant in the entire data set, and thus also shows success and failure rates of zero percent.

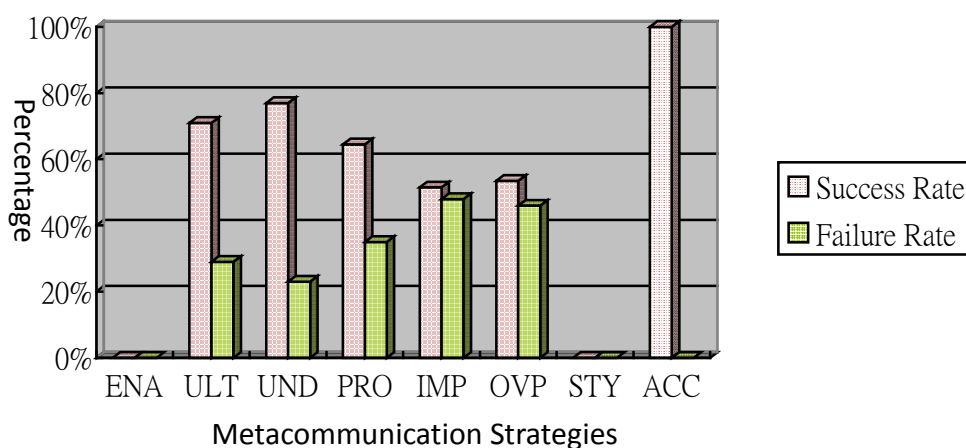


Figure 4.3 Success and failure rates of metacommunication strategies⁵

As Figure 4.3 indicates, the metacommunication strategy with the highest rate of successful shared meaning construction was simple acceptance. The strategy with the second highest success rate was underscoring, which was not one of the most commonly used metacommunication strategies (see Figure 4.2). The strategy showing the third highest success rate was ulterior conversation, which was one of the metacommunication strategies used most often in the participants' social pretend play. In fourth place for success rate was prompting, and in fifth was implicit pretend structuring. For implicit pretend structuring, which was mostly used when the participants were having extensive discussion about the shared meaning construction, the success rate was almost equal to the failure rate.

Simple acceptance, the strategy that showed the highest success rate, brought forth the successful construction of a shared meaning in a passive way only. Simple

⁵ ENA: enactment, ULT: ulterior conversation, UND: underscoring, PRO: prompting, IMP: implicit pretend structuring, STY: storytelling, OVP: overt proposal to pretend, ACC: simple acceptance

acceptance was used when one participant agreed to what the other participant had suggested, and hence the strategy was never rejected, as it was by definition consistent with what the first participant had already said.

The strategy that had the second highest success rate, underscoring, was not frequently used, but was likely to work when employed. In most of the contexts in which underscoring was successful, the utterance itself did not receive a response of any kind. In such cases, the participants often later showed that they had understood and agreed, by integrating the new elements into the play. One of these uses of underscoring is shown in Example 22.

Example 22

Dora: 我正在寫完這 <堂> [?] 功課。 [Uterior Conversation,
Underscoring]
Wo3 zheng4 zai4 xie3 wan2 zhe4 <tang2> [?] gong1ke4.
“I’m finishing up this homework.”

In this example, Dora uttered a description of her action of doing homework, while she was simultaneously acting like she was writing something in a book. The utterance was also coded as ulterior conversation because Dora directly named the book as her “homework.” She was clarifying her actions to the other participant while also introducing the event “doing homework” into the shared meaning. Sally did not reject this utterance of Dora’s, and therefore the shared meaning was brought about successfully. It was observed that Sally herself referred to Dora’s action as involving “homework” later in the social pretend play, which showed that Sally had agreed to

this new element “homework” brought in by Dora. Sally then integrated the element into the play, even though she did not respond to it directly when it was first introduced.

Ulterior conversation was also a strategy that led to much successful shared meaning construction. In the data collected, it was commonly observed that ulterior conversation succeeded when the participants used it to introduce the transformation of an object by naming it directly. Example 23 demonstrates this observation.

Example 23

- Dora: 這個是 +...
Zhe4 ge shi4 +...
“This is...”
- Sally: 棉花軟糖。 [Ulterior Conversation]
Mian2hua1 ruan3tang2.
“Cotton candy gummy.”
- Dora: 對 # 棉花軟糖。 [Simple Acceptance]
Dui4 # mian2hua1 ruan3tang2.
“Yeah, cotton candy gummy.”

In this example, Dora had a toy in her hand, and she paused before assigning the toy a pretend role. Soon after Dora paused, Sally assigned the toy a transformed identity (i.e. “cotton candy gummy”), which was immediately accepted by Dora. Sally named the object directly, an instance of ulterior conversation, successfully bringing the transformation of the object into their shared meaning. As in this example, many successful uses of ulterior conversation to construct shared meaning accomplished success via simple acceptance from the other participant. Other times, the ulterior

conversation received responses using other metacommunication strategies which also implied that its goal was implicitly accepted, as shown in Example 24.

Example 24

Sally: 你先回家。 [Uterior Conversation]

Ni3 xian1 hui2 jia1.

“You go home first.”

Dora: 好 # 我先回家囉。 [Enactment]

Hao3 # wo3 xian1 hui2 jia1 luo.

“Okay. I’m going home first.”

In Example 24, Sally used ulterior conversation to try bringing in a new element, “Dora going home.” Dora accepted it via the use of enactment, directly acting out the suggested shared meaning. If she had not agreed with Sally’s proposal, she would not have acted out a behavior that was supportive of it.

On the other hand, when ulterior conversation failed to lead to successful shared meaning construction, it was observed that the instance of ulterior conversation was followed by the other participant effectively employing another strategy or strategies. This kind of situation is demonstrated in Example 18.

Prompting was the metacommunication strategy used most often in children’s social pretend play, but only the third most successful in constructing shared meaning. The contexts in which prompting was most successfully employed to construct shared meaning included situations in which the participants gave each other orders, as well as situations in which they had a disagreement about the assignment of the transformed identity of the objects in their play. It was common to see the participants

leave the pretense completely, albeit briefly, to explicitly discuss their expectations.

Implicit pretend structuring was often observed when the participants were engaged in extensive discussion about what they wanted. During the discussion, most of the utterances would be unsuccessful, until one was finally found that was considered convincing enough for both the participants. Sometimes, consensus was achieved by one of the participants' use of simple acceptance or simply by silence, with construction of shared meaning following. Sometimes, however, the shared meaning was never constructed, in which case the participants would usually resume with the shared meaning they had been using prior to the discussion (Example 18).

4.4 Other phenomena observed in children's social pretend play

As in the previous literature (Berk, Mann & Ogan, 2006), some instances were found in which the participants displayed self-regulation (see Example 25). This suggested that social pretend play does have some influence over young children's development of self-regulation.

Example 25

Sally is trying to move something but Dora is in her way. She tries to tell Dora to move.

Sally: 你去那邊啦! [Prompting]

Ni3 qu4 na4bian1 la

“You move over there!”

Dora: 我要這樣子做啊。 [Prompting]

Wo3 yao4 zhe4 yang4zi zuo4 a.

“I want to do it this way.”

Dora: /ha/ -: [Prompting]

(making complaining sound)

Sally: 好好好好 # 隨便你啦。 [Prompting]

Hao3 hao3 hao3 hao3 # sui2bian4 ni3 la.

“Okay okay okay okay, do whatever you want.”

Sally: 那這兩個就不行。 [Prompting]

Na4 zhe4 liang3ge jiu4 bu4 xing2.

“Then these two won’t work.”

In this example, Dora did not accede to Sally’s demand of moving away. She rejected Sally’s instructions by saying directly what she wanted to do. Instead of pushing harder, Sally withdrew and gave in right away. By talking to herself, Sally comforted herself when she did not get her way. This is a common method used by children to control their negative emotions (Berk, Mann & Ogan, 2006). She also changed her original plan because of Dora’s rejection. This could be seen as a sign of the development of her self-regulation.

Dora also showed some signs of development of self-regulation ability. When the two participants were carrying out the shared meaning “Sally making a cake for Dora,” Sally was taking a long time to bring Dora the cake, and Dora uttered her desire to go over to Sally to see what she was doing. Sally objected to this desire of Dora’s and successfully “prompted” Dora to agree with her (Example 26-1).

Example 26-1

Dora: 點的 # 怎麼還沒來呀!

Dian3 de # zen3me hai2 mei2 lai2 ya!

“How come what I’ve ordered hasn’t come yet?”

Dora: 我先過去看看好了。

Wo3 xian1 guo4 qu4 kan4kan4 hao3 le.

“Let me go over there and check.”

- Sally: 不要過來 # 我快好了。
 Bu2 yao4 guo4 lai2 # wo3 kuai4 hao3 le.
 “Don’t come here. I’m almost ready.”
- Sally: 我好囉。
 Wo3 kuai4 hao3 lu.
 “I’m almost ready.”
- Sally: 啊你要說好。
 A1 ni3 yao4 shuo1 hao3.
 “Then you should say okay.”
- Dora: 好。
 Hao3.
 “Okay.”

After a few more exchanges, Sally still did not bring Dora the cake. Dora then uttered the following sentences (Example 26-2):

Example 26-2

- Dora: 不行。
 Bu4 xing2.
 “I can’t.”
- Dora: 一定要撐住。
 Yi2 ding4 yao4 cheng1 zhu4.
 “I have to hold back.”

From Examples 26-1 and example 26-2, it can be seen that Dora was at least simulating or “practicing” holding back her desire, as she was prompted to do by her peer. This situation is a perfect illustration of how engaging in social pretend play with peers can help a child develop the social skill of self-regulation.

Some instances of the participants trying to understand the emotions of other people in the social environment were also observed. Example 27 below illustrates one such scenario.

Example 27

Dora has just come back from giving the teacher some “birthday gifts,” and she is telling Sally about her success.

Dora: 她確定收了我兩個禮物。 [Prompting]

Ta1 que4ding4 shou1 le wo3 liang3 ge li3wu4.

“She definitely accepted my two gifts (this time).”

Sally: 那為什麼上次不收啊? [Prompting]

Na4 wei4she2me shang4 ci4 bu4 shou1 a?

“Then why didn’t she accept it last time?”

Dora: 我不知道啊。 [Prompting]

Wo3 bu4 zhi1dao4 a.

“I don’t know.”

Dora: 就是 # 因為 # 我要送她禮物 # 看到玩具會 # 嗯 +...

[Prompting]

Jiu4 shi4 # ying1wei4 # wo3 yao4 song4 ta1 li3wu4 # kan4 dao4

wan2ju4 hui4 # en +...

“It’s, because, I wanted to give her a gift, seeing the toy...hm...”

Sally: 害羞。 [Prompting]

Hai4xiu1.

“Shy.”

Dora: 對啦。 [Prompting]

Dui4 la.

“Yeah.”

In Example 15, Dora and Sally were discussing and trying to make sense of their teacher’s reasons for not wanting to accept the toys that they presented to her as “birthday gifts.” They left the shared meaning briefly to talk about their teacher’s emotions. Dora could not quite come up with the right word. Sally suggested a possible answer, that the teacher was “shy,” which was subsequently accepted by Dora.

Chapter V

Discussion

The two participants engaged in social pretend play almost through the entire period of each recording. Over 98 percent of the pretend play was social, showing that both participants had the social maturity to construct shared meaning together, and the cognitive maturity to engage in “symbolic play,” which requires the ability to separate reality from pretense, understanding when they were communicating under the “as if” mode and when they were not. The participants’ cognitive competence was further supported by their usage of the metacommunication strategy of prompting. When applying this strategy, the participants jumped out of the pretense briefly with the understanding that they would enter the shared meaning again soon. There was only one time when it seemed that Sally confused the pretense with the reality, which was presented at the end of Example 18. The participants’ social competence was clearly shown by their ability to carry on shared meaning using turn taking, and by their efforts to understand, explicitly or implicitly, the other person’s expectations via metacommunication.

Additionally, the children in this study were linguistically sophisticated enough

that they could attend to each other's semantic context and produce efficient responses. This is the reason why they did not go off into separate monologues when participating in the play, resulting in over 98% percent of the pretend play being social. Their linguistic competence could also be observed through their use of the strategy implicit pretend structuring. The participants often used implicit pretend structuring to draw reasons from within the shared meaning in order to reconstruct the play with the elements they wished to introduce. Moreover, there were a few examples in which the participants engaged in extensive reasoning involving implicit pretend structuring (Example 28). Oftentimes, Dora and Sally would have conflicting ideas about how to carry out the shared meaning. In these cases, it was seen that each one would utter efficient and appropriate (i.e. logical) responses to the other, which served as a proof that they were attending to their peers' semantic context. Moreover, the results also showed that the participants were relatively socialized in that they used communication rather than physical force to solve disagreements, in contrast to the behavior often exhibited by younger children.

Example 28

- | | | |
|--------|---|--------------------------------|
| Dora: | 起來囉。
Qi3lai2 luo.
“Let's get up.” | [Ulterior Conversation] |
| Sally: | <還沒> [/] 還沒。
Hai2 mei2 [/] hai2 mei2.
“Not yet. Not yet.” | [Prompting] |
| Sally: | 這是自動車。 | [Implicit Pretend Structuring] |

- Zhe4 shi4 zi4 dong4 che1.
 “This is an automatic car.”
- Dora: 嗯 - [Simple Acceptance]
 En -
 “Mm-hm.”
- Sally: <趕快> [/] 趕快睡晚一點。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 %act: changing her voice to higher pitch.
 Gan3kuai4 [/] gan3kuai4 shui4 wan3 yi4 dian3
 “Hurry up. Hurry up and sleep a little later.”
- Dora: 我已經睡好了。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Wo3 yi3jing1 shui4 hao3 le.
 “I’ve already finished sleeping.”
- Dora: 那是因為我只有一點點累。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Na4 shi4 yin1wei4 wo3 zhi3 you3 yi4 dian3 dian3 lei4.
 “That’s because I’m only a little bit tired.”
- Sally: 那 # 再睡 # 因為我要畫那個書。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Na4 # zai4 shui4 # yin1wei4 wo3 yao4 hua4 na4 ge shu1
 “Then, sleep again, because I want to draw that book”
- Dora: 沒關係啦。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Mei2 guan1xi1 la.
 “It’s okay.”
- Dora: 我可以忍住累累。 [Implicit Pretend Structuring]
 Wo3 ke3yi3 ren3 zhu4 lei4lei4
 “I can stand the tiredness.”

However, failures of metacommunication resulting from the lack of further linguistic competence were also observed. From time to time, the participants could not express a complete argument, which sometimes led to the other ignoring and just accepting the argument. Sometimes they had to struggle to come up with the appropriate words (Example 18). Sometimes one participant would not respond to the other’s suggestion, a behavior which might not be considered socially appropriate in adult culture. It was not clear whether the other participant did not hear the suggestion,

agreed with it, or was intentionally ignoring it. A possible explanation for this phenomenon could be that the listener was concentrating on planning what she herself was going to do next, and consequently was not able to devote full attention to the other speaker's suggestions. Interestingly, it was found that the frequent lack of response actually helped maintain the established shared meaning, with the utterances and suggestions which were not responded to or explicitly rejected being subsequently integrated and carried out in the social pretend play.

It could be that the peer culture between Dora and Sally accepted silence as an appropriate response, which would explain why there were no objections to this behavior. As discussed earlier, each peer group constructs its own culture due to the fact that all the children arrive in the social group with different backgrounds and different levels of linguistic and cognitive development. Because social structure must be created spontaneously between differing individuals, unique group dynamics and patterns of interaction will emerge. Observation of peer interactions provides us a window into how children's culture, constructed between children using their current cognitive, linguistic, and social competence, is different from adult culture. If we do not examine peer interaction and simply look at children's performance as "immature," we will overlook a great deal of interesting data which could provide insights into many areas of children's development as well as human society.

In terms of the variation between the two subjects in this study, it was observed that Sally used a great deal more prompting than did Dora. Sally would simply leave the pretense and use prompting to direct Dora in the direction she desired. It was also found that Sally often successfully used implicit pretend structuring, drawing reasons from within the established shared meaning, to convince Dora. Dora, on the other hand, rarely ever used prompting to give Sally orders, and when she attempted to use implicit pretend structuring to reason with Sally, that latter often simply rejected her suggestions and refused to cooperate. This frequent rejection on Sally's part contrasted with the behavior of Dora, who oftentimes simply accepted Sally's orders. Dora also did not seem to be as competent in reasoning as was Sally, using simple acceptance to agree to Sally's reasoning more often than not, and other times not responding to Sally at all. Dora sometimes would appear not to know what to say to Sally, for example while staring at a toy that had been grabbed out of her hands; sometimes she kept silent, and when she did not, she sometimes still failed to produce an efficient and logical response. Dora also spoke and responded more slowly than Sally. Furthermore, from Example 18 above, we can also see that Dora was probably not as socially competent as Sally, as indicated by her apparently not understanding the social hierarchy (the positions that are in power in certain situations) very well. These discrepancies in skill between the two participants can probably be accounted

for by the fact that Dora was one year younger than Sally, and thus her linguistic and social development would be expected to be less advanced than Sally's.

The differences observed could also be the result of individual variations in the personalities of the two participants. During the pretend play, it was seen that Sally generally behaved more aggressively than Dora. She would sometimes take things from Dora directly, and Dora would not say anything. In contrast, when Dora wanted an object that was currently in use by Sally, she often used implicit pretend structuring to try to convince her, even though most of the times this strategy failed due to Sally's unwillingness to cooperate.

Sally's use of prompting was more than double Dora's, and more than half of Sally's prompting involved giving direct orders to Dora. A large part of the success rate for prompting in the data can be attributed to Sally's successful orders given to Dora. Conversely, Dora's unsuccessful use of prompting contributed to at least half of the strategy's failure rate.

Prompting was also the most used strategy overall, possibly because leaving the pretense to metacommunicate directly was relatively easier than drawing reasons from within the pretense in order to convince each other as with implicit pretend structuring. In any case this may explain why implicit pretend structuring was used considerably less than prompting.

As mentioned in the Results section, prompting and overt proposal to pretend seemed to overlap in many situations. Further studies should focus on comparing these two metacommunication strategies in order to determine whether they could be combined into one. Ulterior conversation was observed to be used to develop already established shared meanings, introducing new characters, objects, event structure or settings. It was probably used more often than most other strategies for the reason that it was crucial to developing the shared meanings in this way. When the participants used ulterior conversation, they were refining their basic script by adding more details. Ulterior conversation's high success rate in constructing shared meaning might be the result of the participants having roughly the same idea about each established shared meaning and understanding each other's expectations. If their idea of how to develop the established shared meaning was already similar, they would be more likely to succeed when using this strategy. This situation might prove to vary if the social and cultural backgrounds of the participants in the social pretend play are more divergent. This not only might lead to a greater degree of divergence in expectations, but also would probably significantly increase the use of prompting or implicit pretend structuring.

The results found that underscoring was not one of the strategies used most often by the participants in social pretend play, but was the second most successful in

constructing shared meaning. Unlike ulterior conversation, prompting or implicit pretend structuring, which are strategies used to clarify the other participant's actions or expectations, underscoring is a strategy that is more oriented towards talking about one's own actions. When a participant used underscoring to clarify her actions to the other, the utterance would resemble a monologue. In fact, the listener might sometimes have interpreted instances of underscoring as monologues, not responding to them as often as she would to other strategies such as ulterior conversation, prompting, and implicit pretend structuring, all of which had lower success rates and higher failure rates than underscoring. When they did not respond, the elements were often later integrated, resulting in a success for the underscoring.

As mentioned in the previous literature (Berk, Mann & Ogan, 2006), engaging in social pretend play with peers is a good opportunity for children to make progress in social competence, including control of negative emotions and self-regulation. Both participants in this study were observed to be developing in these areas. Not only was the important social skill of self regulation seen to be developing, but the children also were observed thinking from others' emotional perspectives, also an important social skill to master before reaching adulthood. Situations such as the one in Example 15 illustrate how social pretend play with peers is beneficial for young children in order for them to learn to understand other people's perspectives and emotions. If young

children are deprived of the chance to engage in social pretend play, they will not have this kind of opportunity to observe and make sense of the world alongside peers of a similar age. Interacting with peers and discussing their observations gives them a chance to solve the problems on their own and make sense of the world based on their current level of cognitive, linguistic and social competence. At the same time, they can learn from their peers' feedback to their own opinions and interpretations. This process of communicating and receiving feedback is crucial to children's socialization, because they can not always count on a more experienced person to help them out.



Chapter VI

Conclusion

The current study used Giffin's framework to examine the metacommunication strategies children used in their social pretend play with peers, applying the framework in the setting of Taiwan Mandarin, which has not been done previously. It was found that prompting, ulterior conversation, enactment and implicit pretend structuring were the four strategies used most often by the participants. For constructing shared meaning successfully, among the most successful strategies were underscoring, ulterior conversation and prompting. Simple acceptance, a category not used by Giffin, had the highest success rate because it was the most passive constructor of shared meaning, simply involving agreement with the other participant's suggestions.

Future studies should seek to reproduce or contest the present results using a greater number of participants. This study has touched on the issue of what metacommunication strategies were used in children's social pretend play and which were among the most successful ones in constructing shared meaning. Future studies with larger samples are needed in order to conduct systematic research on the issues

discussed. Refining Giffin's framework by examining children with different social or cultural backgrounds is also necessary for a full understanding of children's development. Studying how children possessing different cultures metacommunicate is crucial for better understanding what factors are universal in children's thinking and development. More research on peer interactions in this area should be encouraged, for studying these interactions is important to the pursuit of knowledge about children's cognitive, linguistic and social development.



Appendix I

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Appendix II

Transcription symbols

(Adopted from MacWhinney, Brian. 1995. The CHILDES project: Tools for analyzing talk. Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum.)

xxx; x unintelligible speech

. period

? question

pause

-: lengthening

+... trailing off

[=text] explanation

[/] retracing without correction

[//] retracing with correction

<> portion of utterances been overlapped

[>] [<] overlapping utterances

[=!] paralinguistic material

%act: action tier

%sit: situation tier

%exp: explanation tier