

Children's Voices on Play in a Mosaic Approach Study: Children as Conscious Participants in a Case Study

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Abstract

This inquiry addresses the important topic of children's play within Early Childhood Education. While much research on play showed perspectives from different disciplines, this case study firstly attempts to add the children's views. Secondly, this study aims to provide participatory opportunities for children to review their play and by this, become conscious participants in the research process. Within a post-modern perspective of children as holder of rights and experts of their life, the research question was: How do 4-5 year old children themselves perceive their self-initiated social pretend play with peers in kindergarten? In this case study a group of ten children in one kindergarten participated in a range of methods taken from the Mosaic Approach (Clark & Moss, 2008) over a period of ten weeks. Following a fluid, qualitative multi-method approach to data, children's play episodes were video-recorded and reviewed with them. In pair interviews children reflected on their play episodes. Participatory techniques such as photographs or drawings facilitated children's ability to express their reflections in a creative, non-verbal way. The data from each child was pieced together into little mosaics. Simultaneously, the whole data set became a collective entity which created one mosaic of children's voices on play centred around the emerging themes of flexible resources, self-control, sharing meanings, joy and friendship. Within a trusting atmosphere, children feel emotionally secure and consciously take control over their participation in research. Putting participatory techniques into practice and reflecting on children's play with them offer new insight for children and practitioners.

Keywords: Children's voices, social pretend play, mosaic approach, participatory techniques

Introduction

This study investigates children's social pretend play in kindergarten and attempts to listen to children's voices about their perspectives on play. Simultaneously, it looks for emancipatory research methods to include children as conscious participants. Traditional research on play showed perspectives from different disciplines (Pramling Samuelsson & Asplund Carlsson, 2007; Sutton-Smith, 1997), most of them focused the developmental functions of play (Moyles, 2006b; Piaget, 1976), while few acknowledged children's own play culture (Corsaro, 2003).

There is a common belief, that play is the child's way to explore and acquire the surrounding world, and that learning takes place in play (Schäfer, 2001). Johansson & Pramling Samuelsson (2006) even identify the phenomena play and learning as inseparable dimensions. While restructuring Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) provision around Europe and discussing the quality in childcare, the discourse

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on play and learning is on agenda. For example, curricula are in place or are currently implemented in many European countries that all value play in children's learning (Alvestad & Samuelsson, 1999; Karlsson Lohmander & Pramling Samuelsson, 2003; Ministerium für Kultus Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg, 2006; Senatsverwaltung für Bildung Jugend und Sport, 2004; Sollars, 2003).

However, play seems to disappear in public childcare in order to give space for more school oriented forms of learning (Pramling Samuelsson & Asplund Carlsson, 2007). König (2008) identifies a general shift in thinking from play to learning with a higher emphasis on academic skills like sciences and literacy in ECEC. Through international and national pressure the focus on intellectual learning areas, school readiness and language development increased.

Nevertheless, play is listed as a right of children (UNICEF, 1989), and so should receive high attention in ECEC. Children as 'natural users' of play are experts on this phenomenon. They therefore should be heard how they experience and perceive play. Adding the children's perspectives on play sheds a new light on play in ECEC.

This study followed a dual function. It was not only to get information from the children about play. On the same time, the participating children should become "conscious participants" (Brooker, 2008) in the research process. Much research has been undertaken *on* children while more recent research is *with* children. When researching childhood and early childhood education, the social-emotional well-being of children must be the main focus of the research and within the research design. In this qualitative study, a group of children in one kindergarten setting participated in a range of methods in order to make their voices not only heard but 'visible'. The methods were part of the Mosaic Approach (Clark & Moss, 2008). Because the children in this approach voluntarily express their views in creative ways, the structures of the Mosaic approach appeared to be the most appropriate for this study.

Literature review

Researchers from different academic disciplines investigated play from different perspectives (Bruner, Jolly, & Sylva, 1976; Schäfer, 2001). In this wide range of scientific areas and over the years, contradictory assumptions arose. The Classical Play Theories in the 19th century reduced play to a means of relaxing or to using up the leftover energy after work (Saracho & Spodeck, 1998). These theories laid the foundation for viewing play as the opposite of work (Caiati, Delač, & Müller, 1990; Moyles, 2006a). Developmental theorists like Piaget argued, that play prepared the child for adulthood (Piaget, 1976; Saracho & Spodeck, 1998). So, child play was seen as a pre-exercise of adult forms of culture. The developmental theorist Vygotsky focused on the social aspect of play. He looked at how interactions with other persons enhance the child's learning and development (Vygotsky, 1976). Further, much research on children's play was on their behaviour. Experimental research designs were common; these included observing children in play rooms that were unfamiliar to them, laboratory situations or time-sampled observations (Bruner, Jolly, & Sylva, 1976; Löfdahl, 2005). Other scholars criticised experimental research and the focus on one individual child for excluding the socio-cultural context (Garvey, 1976) and putting children in unnatural or uncomfortable situations (Garvey, 1977).

In the last couple of years many research projects have used a ‘child-appropriate’ methodology (Christensen & James, 2008). Kalliala (2002), for example, showed that playing together created a community of learners where collectively shared meaning-making happened. By chatting with the children in natural kindergarten situations, she sought to grasp pure, unadulterated perspectives from the children. Corsaro’s investigations in Italian and North-American kindergartens offer insight into children’s culture and their play (Corsaro, 2003). Corsaro’s model of interpretive reproduction identifies children as active contributors and creative inventors of the society, that collectively co-create their own peer culture (Corsaro, 1997; Riihelä, 2002). Inside this peer culture, children are in control and share it with each other (Corsaro, 2003; Guss, 2005; Pound, 2005; Saracho & Spodeck, 1998). Löfdahl (2005), for example, described observed play episodes of kindergarten children to investigate in children’s ability of shared meaning-making.

Methodology

The research question was: How do 4-5 year old children themselves perceive their self-initiated social pretend play with peers in kindergarten? Thus, the play that researcher wanted to investigate in was defined as a play situation between two or more children, and action and speech were part of the interactions which underline the sharing of meaning.

This research follows an inductive fluid methodology within a qualitative approach to data. The researcher aimed to create rich detailed data and an understanding of the studied phenomenon, rather than generalisability (Rolfe & Mac Naughton, 2008).

Over a ten week period, ten target children in a German kindergarten were observed during free play time. The kindergarten hosted around 50 children in two groups at that time. The staff contained three qualified pedagogues and one trainee. Each group had a group room and two smaller rooms, a construction area and a home corner, where children normally could play without adult supervision. Apart from these rooms, children’s play appeared also in the hall and entrance area of the kindergarten and in another room that was used for staff meetings or special activities with children. During free-play time, children were allowed to expand their play space to almost all these areas. The visits for the data gathering spanned three to four hours a day during the morning sessions, depending on the kindergarten’s planned activities.

The researcher focused an average age sample of 4-5 year old children. As children in Germany generally enter kindergarten with the age of three it would be relatively sure that the participating children were already settled in with the age of four. So, the children were not new to the setting, but rather were familiar with staff, other children, rooms, rules, etc²

There was a mixture of boys and girls, but gender did not have a significant role to the research question. Rather, the sample represented to some extent the mixture of all children attending the kindergarten.

² Children in a regular German kindergarten attend the setting from 3 years on to compulsory school age which is 6 years.

The children visited two different groups within the setting, so they played in two different class rooms, although some play episodes also took place in common used rooms in the kindergarten. The sample arose from the age group, teachers' suggestions but lastly on children's interest to participate. The voluntary participation, in fact, was the most crucial factor for choosing the children's sample.

Methods of Data Gathering

For the methods of data gathering, a multi-method approach was chosen, as it is outlined in the Mosaic Approach (Clark & Moss, 2008). By using several methods and triangulating the data, internal validity could be established. The main methods were video-records of play episodes, pair interviews of children and participatory techniques as photographing and drawings.

The videos "acted as a catalyst for children to reflect" (James, Bearne, & Alexander, 2004, p.117) and were the starting point for the pair interviews. The interviews were semi-structured and were more arranged as a dialogue. I first wanted to let the children talk to each other while they were watching the video, and only if it would suit pose some questions like: where do you prefer to play? What resources do you draw on?

Children were interviewed in pairs, as they share meaning in groups and are social constructors (Corsaro, 1997; Eide & Winger, 2005). To counter unequal power relations between adult researcher and child participant, pair or group interviews are of importance. I chose some additional non-verbal methods to back up and widen the data and also because children use different ways than the spoken language to express themselves. Children were asked to take photographs of everything that is important to them when playing at the kindergarten. Drawings were another method. In order, that this action would have meaning to them, I asked children to draw their favourite play experience.

The child conferencing method of the Mosaic Approach, a more formal way of interviewing a child provided another source for backing up the data. "Recalling the highlights of their best game is enjoyable" (Kalliala, 2002, p.23). For closure, a group discussion with all children took place, where they could tell me, what they liked or disliked during my investigations, and how they felt being a participant.

Data Analysis

The analytical phase was organised by going back and forth (Bae, 2005) between dialogues from the interviews, from the non-verbal data collected by the children and my interpretations of them. First, the data was gathered for each child building an individual mosaic, and later be completed and concluded in one mosaic from all children's voices on their social pretend play with peers. The interviews were seen as a whole data set in order to look at relevant collective conceptions from the children on their play (Pramling, 1983). I searched for links between categories that arose from the theoretical background (Svensson & Theman in Pramling, 1983) and the children's responses to my questions. I compared their answers with the photographs and drawings if same or various messages could be found. The overall impressions I got

from watching the video-records, observing children's reaction towards them and also their actions in their free play time, influenced the interpretations of the data.

Findings

The findings were categorized by identifying themes that all children expressed. These were joy and fun, peer cultural aspects as shared meaning-making and co-construction, friendship and identity, and preferences in play places and material, children's resources and adult role.

Joy and Fun

All children participating in the child conferencing method said that they felt good when they played. One child mentioned that it was fun to play; two identified the act of playing as the key factor for their positive feelings. "Because I wanted to play", "Because we played", "Because I had fun" were responses on the question why they felt good. One boy held the opinion, that play is a tool against boredom. He said: "Because we were bored. And then we wanted to play knights"³. The children themselves started to reflect on their play on the fun aspect during the video watching. So, Moritz⁴ and Jasmin repeatedly mentioned that it was funny.

Peer Culture: Shared Meaning-making and Co-construction, Friendship and Identity

Evidence for the special peer culture and its characteristics as shared meaning-making and friendship could be found in almost all collected data, from all children throughout the range of methods. These cultures could be displayed through using a special fantasy language or talking on kids' interests or TV programmes. Here is one example:

Robert: "Kevin, do you know Power Rangers Over Truck too?"

Kevin: "Yes, I always play that too. I watched that on TV."

Robert: "Do you know what I find the coolest? Power Rangers Over Truck."

Kevin: "I find that the coolest too."

Shared meaning-making occurred in the children's play episodes and in the interviews. Two children co-constructed a story-line about Fenja's toy at home, the donkey, even though Philip had never seen the donkey before.

Fenja: Donkey always wants to go into the mud when it sees it.

I: Does it go into the mud then?

Fenja: Yes and then...

Philip: Then he goes into the river.

³ All children's quotes from field notes, child conferencing questionnaires and from the interviews have been translated by the researcher herself. Grammatical expressions that do not meet the standards appear to stay close to things children say.

⁴ All children's names were changed for privacy reasons. The adopted children's names are used for reasons of readability.

Fenja: Then he swims down the river, really long, and sleeps. And when it wakes up, it is somewhere else.

Philip: Do you have a real one? A real donkey, Fenja?

They both constructed meaningful games that strengthened their joint play, as the video-recorded game of playing police-staff that entailed drawing and running towards the trainee. The drawings presented the tickets that the trainee received from the police. A second record showed them playing in the home corner. First it looked as if the two would not share a joint play theme, but when Sandra tried to enter it, Philip explained: "I am the airplane pilot man, and here would be coffee in it, ok, and she would need medicine, ok?" Sandra's idea of being a cow was rejected by the two children because "we do not have cows here", as Philip argued.

Also, Philip shared meaning with Yannis in the interview. One example was when they reflected what the one play space was for. Yannis convinced Philip that it was the prison. An interesting form of sharing meaning and co-construction occurred when I video-recorded Jasmin and Moritz playing with Sandra. They started to give instructions to me, when I was allowed to film and when I had to stop the recording, so they could prepare props in order to set their imaginative world in scene. In sum, all children shared meaning and co-constructed stories in their play. During the interviews they often backed up their answers with their friend's consent, asking: "Right?"

Another aspect of the peer play culture was friendship. Here, the photo-tour method brought significant insight and backed up children's verbal expressions. Almost all children took photographs of their friends⁵. Madeleine especially wanted to be photographed together with her best friends, hugging each other. But also in the interview she cares about her friends, for example she asked where Christine was. In the video-recorded scene, she waits for Eva, even though the other girl suggested to go into the hall, and Madeleine was already about to follow her. Christine, Madeleine, and some other girls often gave each other nicknames, and Christine played word games with these names in the interview.

Jasmin expressed her friendship to Sandra by drawing both playing princesses. Further, she tried to capture her friend on a photo when Sandra withdrew. So, Jasmin photographed Sandra's wardrobe place, as it was really important to her. Oppositely, friendship can stop as soon the children do not play together anymore. In one interview, Christine and Sonja explained, why Lena stopped being Christine's friend.

Sonja: "Now, she (*Lena*) doesn't want to be Christine's friend anymore."

I: "And then Lena did not want to play anymore?"

Both: "Yes."

Sonja: "Now she is not friend."

An intense expression of friendship can be found in Robert's and Kevin's mosaics. First of all, when the photo-tour method was introduced to Kevin, the first thing he realized was that Robert had not arrived in the kindergarten yet. He immediately thought of his friend when being asked to take pictures of "everything"⁶

⁵ Children see these children as friends, which they often play with (Corsaro, 2003).

⁶ Everything stands for things and people.

that was important to him for his play. Further, Kevin's response to why he felt happy in the play scene was: "Because Robert is my friend and he was with me." He was very conscious about the connection to his friendship with Robert and playing. Similarly, Robert's favourite play memory is connected to Kevin and he explains: "I like best when I play together with Kevin."

Identity

Lastly, identity was a theme that emerged among all children in diverse forms. Photographs were captured from one's own parts of the body. So, Jasmin took a photo of her hand, saying "I need my hand for playing!", whereas Fenja photographed her shoe. Some children asked me to photograph them. Kevin even turned the camera towards his face and took a picture of himself. Self-identity was displayed also by taking pictures of self crafted works or belongings. Jasmin said proudly: "I have never been allowed to really hammer before!" when she showed me the picture of her hammered number.

In play, especially the girls Eva, Christine and Madeleine showed high attention towards gender identity. Their role play most of the time was about being a girl, reinterpreting stereotypical female behaviour with a focus on mother roles. However, Yannis and Philip's knights theme could be their expression of gender identity because there, they could be strong and outlived and reinterpreted stereotypical male behaviour. My impression of Kevin and Robert was that they focused on play with construction, so they could experience self-efficacy. Also, Robert, for example, photographed the castle he had built. The attention of identity and self-efficacy could be evidence for Corsaro's impression that children sought for control in play (ibid., 2003).

Preference in Play Places and Material, Children's Resources and the Role of the Adult

Children showed in their play and through various expressions a preference towards playing in the construction area, the home corner or in the hall. What these three places have in common are that there are less children than in the group room, and normally they are out of direct adult supervision in the three places. Fewer children could be understood as the opposite to the category of peer presence, but I explain it more in connection to Corsaro's mentioned protection children show towards their play. That means that children would protect their play space and episode, and often new children who asked for play entry would be rejected, just in order to keep the play with its already set rules going (Corsaro, 2003).

Jasmin was very reflective concerning playing in the hall. She responded to the child conferencing questionnaire: "That we play there in the front [the hall], here [the group room], it is too loud." Also, during the interview she commented on this topic:

I: I also often see you playing in the hall.

Jasmin: Yes, we play there often.

I: Why do you often play there?

Jasmin: Because it is fun playing there.

I: Why is it fun?

Jasmin: Because you can run and there are not so many children.

Even though the home corners are explicitly set up in order to support and facilitate role play, more children displayed a preference of the construction area and the hall. My reflection and interpretation was that these two areas allowed more freedom of movement, less adult intervention and less predetermined structures. The home corners instead are highly structured through the material like a little stove, bed and other home furniture. The restricting feature of home corners was expressed within a study on cooperation in open-ended role play of children (Broadhead & English, 2006). However, some children reinterpret the home corners as airplanes like Philip who sat on the stove pretending he was piloting an airplane.

Nevertheless, the construction area provides unstructured play material as the soft blocks and cushions that were used for constructing houses, castles, cars, airplanes or an ice cream shop. The hall was used for chasing games or big adventurous tours such as Moritz and Jasmin set in scene. They imagined finding a secret path, because they were on a treasure hunt which was connected to another story about a found dragon or dinosaurs tooth. The potted plants, the tables and anything else in the hall offered best play equipment. Christine, Eva and Madeleine pretended the hall was a public swimming pool and the table was the diving platform.

The adult role was reflected dichotomously. There were some children who wanted the practitioner or the researcher in their photo-tour pictures, but they did not verbally express anything about adult absence or presence. I had only once observed a social pretend play in the ten weeks, where an adult was involved, that was the trainee who received the tickets. However, there is no exact message on adult's role. The children's play preference of rooms with less adult supervision is in line with adult absence perception in the Australian study of children's categorisation of play and learning (Howard, Jenvey, & Hill, 2006).

Furthermore, the children clearly expressed in various ways that peers were necessary when playing in the kindergarten. I identify peers and especially friends as the most important resource for children's social pretend play. Further, space to move freely about and material, which offers flexible interpretation and stability, or that empowers the child in her identification with her gender group were other resources. Lastly, resources for play ideas were mentioned by the children that were books and TV, friend's suggestions and experiences.

Discussion

The research question in my study was how 4-5 year old children perceive their self-initiated social pretend play with peers in kindergarten during their free play time. The categories that I identified show what children thought of and felt towards their play. So, play was experienced as an enjoyable situation, and the children had fun during their play episodes. I had found the same characteristics of play in the literature (Garvey, 1977; Hutt, 1976; Saracho & Spodeck, 1998). However, not only did the children express joy and fun, but rather pointed out to the seriousness of what happened in play. The children shared meaning-making and co-constructed play worlds. The play world is important for their peer culture. Corsaro's ethnographical study in Italian and

American kindergartens has shown that children co-create their own peer culture as a societal sub-culture and that the children are not only imitating but redefining and contributing to the society (Corsaro, 1997).

Friendships also are connected to play (Corsaro, 2003). All the children participating in my study expressed the importance of having a friend to play with, and that play was enriched by a friend's presence. Peer-presence was also a category children had used to identify a situation as playing in a study Howard, Jenvey and Hill (2006) had conducted. However, they had shown pictures to the children in order to gain insight in their perceptions on play while I took a multi-method approach in order to do so.

In play, the children from the study developed and redefined their identity. Themes where gender identity could be lived out were often found when I observed them playing. Boys mostly chose themes of being strong, like knights, and the girls preferred playing female characters that go dancing, shopping or caring for babies. However, both boys and girls always played that of being part of a community.

Children expressed their preferences in play material and what resources were important to them in order to play. They named the same resources which I found in the literature (van Oers, 2003). The preference of spaces to play showed that children played without adult supervision⁷, and where they could "protect" their play from interruptions through other children as Corsaro (2003) had expressed it as well.

As my study aimed for a dual function, I tried to set up emancipatory techniques. In order to give the children the feeling of respecting their own cultural world, it was important to get their allowance. My first contacts with the children, children were in control. After asking if I was allowed to watch them play or enter their play room, one child indirectly offered me to play with them by saying: "That is your car!" Philip said on the first day: "I would like you to watch us." But after a while he changed his mind: "You have to play with us now, otherwise it is getting boring." So, the first days the children accepted me as a play partner and made not much difference between other children and me though I am an adult. My knight figure was attacked as everyone else's too.

Simultaneously, they must have been aware of my function as an adult in the kindergarten. For example, they left me alone when I started to take notes in a corner while observing them. Sometimes they asked me what I was writing down, and then I said that I would note everything I observe in their play. They assigned me the practitioner role, e.g. by asking for help in a conflict situation. But here, inner conflicts can arise. What was my role as a researcher? Considering ethical issues, I decided I wanted to protect the children from harm and to feel safe in my presence. Children are used to caring adults in the kindergarten environment. However, I see a dilemma of playing the different roles as a researcher as it is also discussed by Bae (2005) and Birbeck & Drummond (2007).

The danger of manipulating children's answers during the interviews was another important issue. Brooker (2008) suggests to state own opinions so the child does not have to think about what the adult wants to hear. However, when I openly discussed

⁷ That is in line with the adult-absence category (Howard, Jenvey, & Hill, 2006).

my interpretations of play scenes, I wondered whether the children agreed with me in order to please me. However, Robert made clear that I misinterpret one occasion:

I: Kevin did find a kind of tool and repaired the airplane.

Robert: Wrong!

I: Wrong? Explain it to me what you were doing.

Robert: Fixed the helicopter so that it cannot fly apart.

In sum, interviewing and researching with children is like walking a tightrope. Where does intervention start? Where is it manipulation? What relationship do I have as a researcher towards the participants? Careful reflection and continuing dialogue with the children is necessary to learn from this challenge.

In this study children were active contributors of the research process by designing participatory methods and by the overall mutual interactions with the researcher. When I introduced myself to the target children in a special occasion, I confronted them with the letters I had given to their parents, explaining that I had asked all their parents for permission to do a study with them. One child immediately said: "I did not receive a letter from you!" Some others agreed. So, we decided that the children would receive a letter, which they could sign like their parents did. One boy mentioned that he could not write his name yet, so new ideas came from the children, such as drawing pictures of themselves, taking a photograph or all three together. The children themselves had asserted their rights.

Reflecting the video-records and the interviews, the children's reactions towards their videos gave me the feeling that all enjoyed watching themselves. They laughed together, commented on their actions and almost all exchanged thoughts with the friend to play the same play from the record again. Having a friend with them during the interview was an enriching feeling for the children as they shared the enjoyment of reviewing their play. The interviews though lost the function of gathering information towards the preset questions, rather gave insight into children's own reflection instead. However, the method of child conferencing then closed the gap and answered the question set.

Conclusion

By piecing the mosaic together from all the collected data in my study, the discussion on children's perspectives on play was enriched. The participatory methods enabled the children to express their individual voices in many ways. So, the children could express in their preferred ways, and through triangulating their various expressions validity was ensured.

In my single case study, children were empowered to enter a process of reviewing their own play and to reflect on their own perceptions. The children reflected on spaces to play⁸, material they preferred, and their individual experiences.

⁸ My field work was limited to the interior of the kindergarten. Only for the time before parents collected their children, everyone stayed inside. So, the free play I observed took place inside rooms. It would be interesting to compare indoor play to outdoor play. If the study had taken place in summer, free play would have been appeared very differently in my opinion, because then children would have been outside for most of the time in the kindergarten that was the setting for my study.

Simultaneously, I think using pair interviews offered me insight into the children's peer culture. The response rate was high. Out of ten children only two rejected 50% of the methods presented, whereas the other eight children tried out at least four of the six methods.

There is a dilemma within the different roles of the researcher; there is always the gap between the need to gather data and simultaneously respecting participant's rights and personality. Clark & Moss (2008) discuss the right to withdraw and the "pitfalls of listening" (p.61) and demand that the researcher respects children's privacy. It is the participant's right to withdraw. But the researcher should also reflect why participants withdraw and what would make them participate.

Through their expressions during the group discussion and during my overall study, I think the children enjoyed taking part. Their pride and their laughing faces were evidence of this. They felt they were taken seriously and treated as experts. It was an important life experience for the children being heard. As other studies following the Mosaic Approach, e.g. Spaces to Play (Clark & Moss, 2005), this study on children's voices on play shows that this approach and its methods are appropriate for young children.

In conclusion, my study "Children's voices on Play" contributes to the studied field of children's play, and empowered children to reflect on their social pretend play with peers in kindergarten.

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Mozaik Yaklaşımı Çalışmasında Çocukların Oyun içindeki Sözleri: Bir Vaka Çalışmasına Çocukların Bilinçli olarak Katılımı

Özet

Bu araştırma Erken Çocukluk Eğitiminde önemli bir konu olan çocuk oyunları üzerinde durmaktadır. Oyun konusunda yapılan birçok araştırma farklı disiplinlerden çeşitli bakış açıları göstermiş olsa da, bu çalışma öncelikli olarak çocukların görüşlerini de eklemeyi amaçlamıştır. İkinci olarak, bu çalışma çocukların kendi oyunlarını gözden geçirebilecekleri katılım olanakları sunarak araştırma sürecinin bilinçli katılımcıları olmalarını sağlamayı hedeflemiştir. Post modern bir yaklaşım çerçevesinde çocukların kendi haklarının sahibi ve yaşamlarının birlikteliği oldukları düşüncesinden kaynaklanan araştırma sorusu şudur: "Anaokulunda akranlarıyla oynayan 4-5 yaş grubu çocukları kendi başlattıkları sosyal rol oyunlarında kendilerini nasıl algılıyorlar?". Bu vaka çalışmasında, anaokuluna devam eden on kişilik bir çocuk grubu on hafta boyunca Mozaik Yaklaşımı'ndan (Clark ve Moss, 2008) alınan bir dizi düzenlemeye katılmışlardır. Verilere nitel çoklu-yöntem çerçevesinde yaklaşılarak çocukların oyunlarının video kayıtları alınmış ve kendileri ile birlikte gözden geçirilmiştir. Çiftli mülakatlarda çocuklar kendi oyun görüntüleri üzerinde düşünerek fikir yürütmüşlerdir. Çocukların kendi düşüncelerini ifade etmelerini kolaylaştırmak için fotoğraf ve çizim gibi yaratıcı ve sözsüz teknikler kullanılmıştır. Her bir çocuktan gelen veriler küçük mozaikler oluşturacak biçimde düzenlenmiştir. Eş zamanlı olarak, tüm veri seti toplu bir bütün olarak çocukların oyun sırasındaki sözlerinden oluşan büyük bir mozaik oluşturmuştur ki bu mozaik esnek kaynaklar, öz denetim, anlam paylaşımı, neşe ve arkadaşlık gibi ortak temaları yansıtmaktadır. Güvenli bir ortamda çocuklar kendilerini duygusal olarak güvende hissetmişler ve bilinçli olarak araştırma içindeki katılımlarının idaresini üstlenmişlerdir. Katılımcı tekniklerini uygulamaya koymak ve çocuklarla birlikte kendi oyunlarını gözden geçirmek hem çocuklar hem de uygulayıcılar için yeni içgörülerin ortaya çıkmasını sağlamıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Çocukların sözleri, sosyal rol oyunları, mozaik yaklaşımı, katılımcı teknikler