Preschoolers’ “Animation” of Computer Games

# Details

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Nine preschool children (six girls and three boys) aged 3 to 5 in 3 preschools in Sweden.

## Implications For Educators About

Professional development

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

Research on preschool children's computer gaming often focuses on interview data or parental reports, leaving open the examination of children's actual game activity. This study explores how preschool children actually engage in gaming and their degrees of play immersion. Classroom observations of Swedish preschool children's gaming revealed their involvement in computer games took the forms of responding to characters through instructed actions, recycling the game characters' talk, and engaging in dialogues with the game characters as if they were “real.” These results are discussed in relation to previous research on children’s play, and their implications for future research and educational policy.

# Outcome

"Swedish preschoolers in three different settings engaged in different kinds of animations. First, children responded through game moves, that is, by physical action (e.g., pressing buttons) in response to game characters’ directives. Second, they recycled game characters’ talk in stylized fashions for their own enjoyment. Moreover, sometimes children animated game elements such as spontaneously honking the car horn without any prior directive to do so. Third, children engaged in animated dialogues with the game characters when they disputed or challenged the game characters. In so doing, they “animated” not only the game action (as when, e.g., honking the horn of a car), but also the game characters, treating them as real and “live” dialogue partners, impersonating them or talking back to them. These gaming activities—ranging from those structured by the game mechanics to those involving peer interaction were similar to what has been documented as teenagers’ and older children’s play practices in game play (e.g., Piirainen-Marsh Tainio, 2009; Sjöblom Aronsson, 2012). The present observations of children’s gaming in their own classrooms revealed significant features of animation and their peer interaction that provided the context for their gaming. First, children’s animation emerged as a two-way affair.... econd, animation emerged as a social activity and this is evidenced in many ways.... That children’s animation is a social activity receives strongest support from their coordination of improvised responses to the computer characters with those of their co-players’ in creating a shared focused and orientation to the game." (Authors, 330-331)