Toddlers perceive preschool teachers not only as caregivers but also as life partners

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保育園における乳幼児から保育者への行動―保育者は養育者かつライフパートナー―

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要約

保育園で、自由遊び場面における乳幼児の保育者への行動を 1 年間縦断的に観察した。9 名の保育者（4 名は 1 歳児、5 名は 0 歳児担当）に対する 1 歳児 23 名（女児 12 名、男児 11 名）と 0 歳児 9 名（女児 4 名、男児 5 名）の行動を、3 期 4 回ずつ、各 15 分ずつ記録した。すなわち一人の保育者に対し各時期 1 時間、計 3 時間ずつ観察したことになる。観察者は、なるべく自然な形で保育者の近くにいて、乳幼児の保育者に対する行動を IC レコーダーに口述記録した。1 歳児は 1 歳児の部屋で 3、4 名の保育者と遊んでおり、0 歳児は 0 歳児の部屋で 4、5 名の保育者と遊んでいた。乳幼児の保育者に対する行動は時期を追う毎に増加した。どの時期においても 0 歳児よりも 1 歳児の行動の方が多く、またほとんどの場合、女児の行動の方が男児よりも多かった。保育者に対する行動で多いのは“ことばかけ”と“物を渡す”行動で、1 期では後者が最も多かったが、2 期 3 期では前者が最も多い行動であった。特徴的だったのは、乳幼児が保育者を“遊びを誘う”行動や保育者の“手を取る”行動が観られたことである。乳幼児は積極的に遊びを誘ったり、場所を移動させたりした。さらに興味深いのは、保育者が玩具を布でふくのを手伝うというような行動も記録されたことである。つまり、保育園の乳幼児にとって、保育者は養育者であるだけでなく、ライフパートナーでもあるのである。

Key words

toddlers, observations, teacher-directed behaviors, longitudinal study, life partners

1. Introduction

Currently, direct observation methods have been formerly adapted to study teacher-child relationships in preschool, (e.g. Inoff & Halverson, 1977; Schindler, Moely, & Frank, 1987; Howes & Hamilton,1992), whereas many previous studies used assessment scales (e.g., Birch & Ladd,1998; Doumen, Koomen, Buyse, Wouters, & Verschueren, 2012; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Li, Liu, Lv, Wang, & Huntsinger, 2015; Zang, 2011; Zang & Nurmi, 2012). Although data acquired by using assessment scales are important, we cannot expect to discover new behaviors that are not incorporated in the scales. Therefore, in this study we used direct observations on toddlers' behaviors in a preschool, similar to our previous studies (Kawakami, 2014; Kawakami & Takai-Kawakami, 2015). In a study reported in 2014, we recorded toddlers' behaviors directed at the first author. Peer-directed behaviors of toddlers were also observed in a study reported in 2015. Toddlers' teacher-directed behaviors were also analyzed in this study, which suggested interesting findings. Comparison of data between the 2014 and this study is expected to shed light on the role played by preschool teachers for children.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Female preschool teachers (N = 9) were longitudinally observed (4 teachers [(1)] for one-year-olds, M age = 43.50 years, SD = 15.70, and 5 teachers for children under 12 months, M age = 43.00 years, SD = 15.56). Teacher directed behaviors of one-year-olds (N = 23, 12 girls and 11 boys, M age, 618.09 days, SD = 107.15) and children under 12 months of age (N = 9, 5 boys and 4 girls, M age, 293.44, SD = 81.48) were recorded in a free play setting (ages of all children are those at the beginning of observations). The economic backgrounds of the children were middle class.

2.2 Materials

The observer (O, who is the first author), a middle-aged male, recorded children's behaviors directed at teachers by using a Sony ICD-SX1000 recorder concealed in his chest pocket.

2.3 Observational indexes

O determined potential categories for coding person-directed behaviors of children, based on his prior experience in the school (Kawakami, 2014; Kawakami & Takai-Kawakami, 2015), with the objective of analyzing toddlers' behaviors directed at teachers, which included the following. (1) Touching (TO), when a child touches a teacher by hand. (2) Giving (GI), when a child gives a teacher something. (3) Pointing (PO), when a child

points out something to a teacher by finger. (4) Verbalization (VE), when a child says something to a teacher. (5) Showing (SO), when a child shows something to a teacher. (6) Clinging (CL), when a child clings with her/his body to a teachers' body. (7) Sitting on a teacher's lap (LA). Verbalizations (VE) were observed simultaneously with other indexes. Moreover, other rare but important indexes that were observed are discussed in the results section below. When toddlers repeated the identical behaviors during an observation session, the first instance of the behavior in each session was analyzed.

2.4 Procedure

O attended free play sessions at a preschool in Tokyo, Japan, once a week for 7-10 weeks in 3 blocks, in early summer (first session), fall (second session) and winter (third session). The first and second sessions were separated by 10 weeks and the second and third sessions were separated by 6 weeks. *O* played with the children from 9 to 11 a.m. during each session, and observed each target teacher in succession for 15 minutes (M = 14.49, *SD* = 2.21), with each teacher being observed four times in each block. One-year-olds were in a room with three or four preschool teachers, and children under one year were in a different room with four or five preschool teachers. Therefore, we could not directly compare the data between the two groups. Moreover, as stated above, the total number of teachers were different in the two groups.

To ensure reliability, 30 minutes session was recorded by using a digital video camera. The first and the second authors checked the video by using the observational indexes. Only 20 behaviors were recorded, which indicated 100 % agreement regarding observations between observers. The data were analyzed by the first author.

The design of the study was explained to the head teacher of the preschool and informed consent was obtained for conducting the study. This research was conducted with the approval of the Research Ethics Committee of Department of Psychology, University of the Sacred Heart.

3. Results

Each teacher was observed for 1 hour in three blocks, such that each teacher was observed for a total of 3 hours in all the sessions. The total observation time was 27 h (3 × 9 teachers).

3.1 Developmental changes across observations

Figure 1 shows the total numbers of seven observational indexes across observations. It can be seen from the figure that both one-year-olds and children less than 12 months of age showed developmental changes. Moreover, in almost all phases, female children displayed more teacher directed behaviors than males. The stable developmental changes in Fig.1 indicate the reliability of methods adapted in this study.

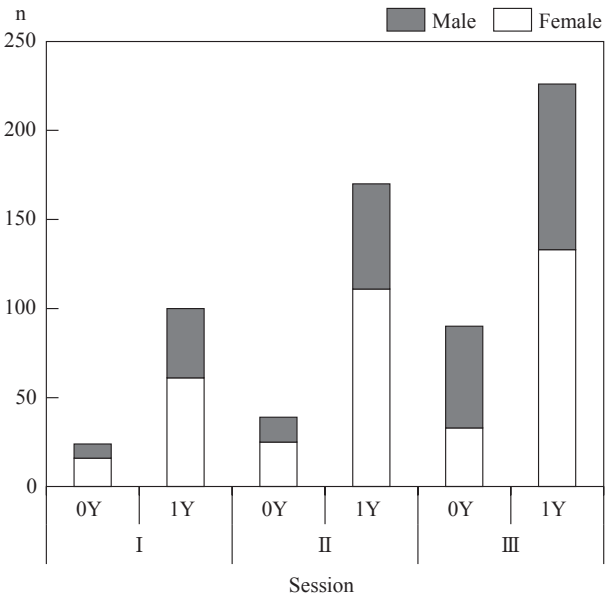

Figure 1: Developmental changes (the total numbers of all observational indexes)
Note: 1Y: one-year-olds, 0Y: children under age 12 months.

3.2 Giving and verbalization

Giving (GI) and Verbalization (VE) were important teacher directed behaviors. In the first session, the most observed index was GI and in the second session it was VE followed by GI. Moreover, the results of the third session were identical to the second session. Figure 2 shows the developmental changes in GI and VE in the two age groups.

The results of this study were nearly identical to those of

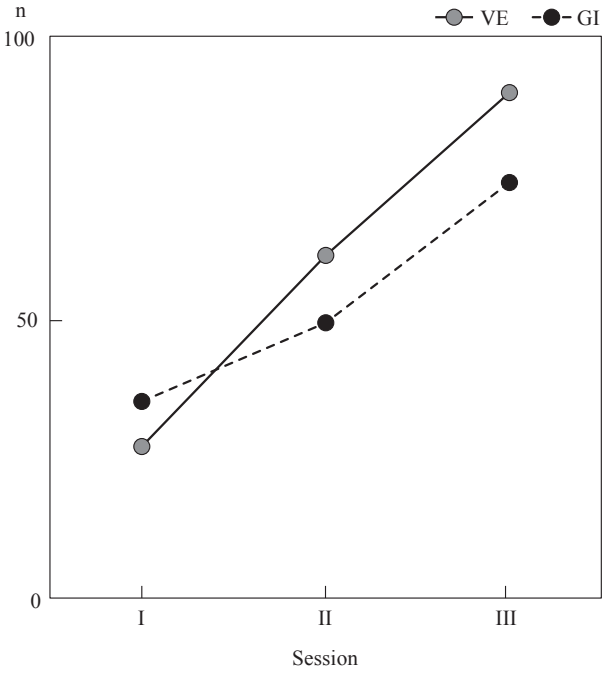

Figure 2: Developmental changes (Giving and verbalization)

the 2014 study (Kawakami, 2014) and indicated the stability of preschool children's adult-directed behaviors. This and our previous study confirmed the reliability of the method that we adapted for investigating preschool children's behavior.

3.3 Interesting behaviors

It is necessary to further explain certain behavioral indexes, such as Playing (PL), in which a child initiated a teacher to play, e.g. peek-a-boo, pretended play. The other was hand-taking behavior (HT), in which a child took a teacher's hand and did a certain action. PL and HT were also occasionally observed in the 2014 study. PL by toddlers in this study was recorded 30 times, and HTs 12 times. In 9 pretending PLs, children gave the teacher something (air?), which was not a physical object.

On four occasions, we recorded children's helping behaviors directed at teachers. The children helped teachers to clean the toys.

4. Discussion

Figure 1 shows not only developmental changes, but also gender differences in the children. Female children directed more behaviors at the teachers than males, in almost all phases of development. Could this be taken as evidence of a "female superiority in folk psychology, and male superiority in folk physics," as explicated by Baron-Cohen (2000)? It has been suggested that HT (Hand-taking) behaviors are observed in autistic children, but rarely in typically developing children (cf. Gómez, 2004; Phillips, Gómez, Baron-Cohen, Laá, & Rivière, 1995). We demonstrated HT behaviors in this and previous studies among typically developing children (Kawakami, Kawakami, Tomonaga, Kishimoto, Minami, & Takai-Kawakami, 2011). It is suggested that HT behaviors should be investigated in more detail in order to better understand the development of person-directed behaviors in toddlers.

Both PL (Playing) and HT behaviors, which were occasionally observed in the 2014 study but common in this study, might be a scaffold between children and their social world. Scaffold behaviors might show the important role that preschool teachers play as social agents of the children. Moreover, children helped teachers to clean toys, suggesting that for children, their teachers are not only caregivers, but also life partners. It is suggested that future studies should focus on the unique roles of teachers by comparing teachers with mothers, such as the meta-analysis published from the perspective of attachment. (cf. Ahnert, Pinquart, & Lamb, 2006).

Data of both 2014 and 2015 studies consisted of children that played with absent entities (Kawakami, 2014; Kawakami & Takai-Kawakami, 2015). Similar data are also presented in this study, which indicate that toddlers are sophisticated social beings.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Keiko Teramura, Keiko Watanabe, Jun Nakamura, and Jackie Mast. And the authors wish to express their appreciations to the teachers and toddlers for their help.

Note

(1) We observed 5 teachers at the beginning of the observations, but one teacher retired during the study.

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(Received December 11, 2016; accepted April 5, 2017)